

## VANCOUVER POLICE ABORIGINAL CADET PROGRAM

The Vancouver Police Aboriginal Cadet program began in 2007, a summer employment initiative for Aboriginal youth aged 19 to 29 to learn about policing firsthand by riding with police officers on patrol and working with specialty squads.

"The VPD wants to see the diversity of the city represented in our police force," says Detective Jason Tremblay of the VPD's Recruiting Unit. "But whether these cadets ultimately choose policing as a career or not, they'll learn a lot of useful life skills."

Of the nine cadets that have graduated from the program, two have already become police officers and several more are in the recruiting process.

"I grew up on a small reserve just outside of Williams Lake," says Kyle Allen, a brand new cadet who began the program just two weeks ago. "I've witnessed, experienced and been exposed to the issues that Aboriginal communities are continuing to struggle with. I have been determined to make positive, healthy choices for myself."

Allen, who has wanted to become a police officer for many years, sees a need for more visible, strong Aboriginal role models for the youth in these communities. "The Aboriginal Cadet Program with the Vancouver Police Department is a huge step in my effort to become that - a role model for our communities."

Constable Maria Starrs has been a patrol officer with the VPD for just over a year. She completed the program in 2008 and was hired directly afterward.

"I'm very happy that I decided to participate in the Aboriginal Cadet Program. It definitely helped with my transition from civilian to police constable."

The program is funded by the [Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society \(A.C.C.E.S.S.\)](#), which provides employment and training initiatives. "Our mission is to inspire, nurture and encourage urban Aboriginal people on their journey to success," says Blair Bellerose, Director of Employment Services.

There are presently 21 Aboriginal officers in the Vancouver Police Department -13 men and eight women. Not all officers choose to identify their ethnic background.