

LOREENA SEYMOUR



MOUNT PAUL BARBERS - KAMLOOPS, BC

Several transformations take place as men walk into Mount Paul Barbers, looking unkempt, yet they leave feeling confident and well-groomed. This is Mount Paul Barbers, located on Tk'emlups te Secwepemc reserve in Kamloops, BC. This iconic barbershop is Loreena Seymour's pride and joy.

Loreena started her career as a stylist in a high-end hair salon in Kamloops, then rented a chair in a barbershop in Salt Spring Island, gaining experience in both high-end hair styling and detailed-oriented men's barbering. In 2021, after starting at Mount Paul Barbers, she learned that the owner wanted to sell the business.

"I already had the background of knowing what it was like to rent a chair from a business owner. I wanted to learn the role of management as well. So, I jumped on the opportunity to buy the barbershop."

Loreena put her stamp on the business when she took it over. This involved many hours of renovating the studio at night while working full days. Her goal was to create a space that truly felt like her own shop while also ensuring that the positive reputation built up over the years by the previous owner continued. "It is a highly rated barbershop. That was probably my biggest fear. I was like, 'Oh my goodness, can I live up to these standards'? So, I just continue to show up, do my best work, be as friendly and courteous and welcoming as I can to the clients that are coming in."

The chair rental business model means that the barbers in her shop are responsible for their own micro-businesses within the barbershop. "It really relieves a lot of responsibility on me as the business owner when the barbers are able to run their own micro-businesses as contractors within my business." In addition to running the shop, Loreena continues to build her knowledge of the latest trends, techniques, and styles in today's haircuts for both men and women. "I'm always educating myself in both business and hair design. If you want to become the best at what you're doing, you need to continuously learn."

A key challenge that Loreena overcame was learning to rely only on herself. "If I was able to rely on somebody else, then I wouldn't have learned the role of relying solely on myself. At the end of the day, all you have is you. And that's okay. You grow mentally, physically, and emotionally. That was the hardest part. Growing with my business and management role, I've learned to challenge myself in all possible ways, shapes, and forms."

Loreena is very grateful for the support provided by the Community Futures Development Corporation of Central Interior First Nations. "[They] helped me tremendously. They were always there to answer the phone if I had any questions, give me reassurance, and provide advice when I needed it. They are just a phone call away."

Loreena enjoys that she gets to decide how to run the shop. The pride of ownership is evident as she talks about the impact it has had on her family and community. "There are so many rewards of owning my own barbershop. The pride I have comes from being an inspiration to my children, letting them know that their mom owns her own business. Many community members have expressed how proud they are that a woman owns her own business on the reserve. That has been the best feeling in the world - knowing that you're inspiring other people within your community, that they see and recognize your hard work and effort."

"So, I would say, chase your dream. Don't hold yourself back. The only person standing in your way is you. Feel the fear. Do it anyway. Follow your dream. Follow your passion. Continue to build on your talents and strengths, and it won't even feel like work; it will feel like purpose."

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