

# 'Turn learning into a lifestyle'

## Graduates urged to seize opportunities as baby boomers head to retirement

BY SUSAN MOHAMMAD

After an especially tough year marked by a three-week strike that left already stressed graduating students and faculty worried they wouldn't finish the year on time, the convocation ceremonies for Algonquin College students this week were especially sweet.

More than 600 graduates proudly marched into Scotiabank Place Thursday afternoon for the first of the spring convocations, as their families and friends nearly drowned out the organ with their applause. Altogether, 5,674 students graduated from the school this week in four separate ceremonies.

Ron Lavergne was at the afternoon event to support his stepson, 21-year-old Joey Larche, who was graduating from the School of Advanced Technology with seven other family members.

As the graduates from the School of Advanced Technology, School of Transportation and Building Trades and the Police and Public Safety Institute broke a little pre-event tension with some horsing around in the pit of the arena, Mr. Lavergne spoke emotionally about the success of the students.

"It's just great," he said, adding his stepson was passionate about comput-

### ALGONQUIN COLLEGE BY THE NUMBERS

<b>Full-time students:</b> 14,857	<b>About the class of 2006</b>
<b>Part-time students:</b> 23,000	<b>Class size:</b> 5,674 — a six-per-cent increase over the class of 2005.
<b>Faculty:</b> 515 (full time)	<b>Programs:</b> 140
<b>Foreign students:</b> 930 (from 100 countries)	<b>Base annual tuition:</b> \$2,276
<b>Leading origin of Canadian students:</b> Ottawa	<b>Gender:</b> 49% male, 51% female
<b>Leading origin of foreign students:</b> People's Republic of China	<b>New Programs this academic year:</b> Game Development, Fitness and Health Promotion, General Arts and Science, Water and Waste Water Technician, Internet Application Programmer, Professional Writing, Autism and Behavioural Science.
<b>President:</b> Robert C. Gillett	
<b>Operating budget:</b> \$193 million	
<b>Research Projects:</b> \$10.4 million (projects currently worth that amount)	

ers, cars and life in general. "He's a good lad, highly intelligent. He's gonna go a long way."

Algonquin College president Robert C. Gillett presided over the convocation and congratulated students for completing a journey "that wasn't easy," but made no reference to the strike. He asked students to applaud those in the audience who helped them get to where they are today.

He quoted Sir Winston Churchill and anthropologist Margaret Mead to inspire the class.

"Never doubt that a small group of committed people could truly change

this world. In fact, it is the only way the world has ever changed," he told the students, quoting the anthropologist.

"People regret more what they don't do than what they do."

In her convocation address, Constable Wendy Sparrow of the RCMP spoke to students about the future job market, highlighting the fact the baby-boom generation will be retiring faster than they can be replaced.

"The opportunities are endless," she said, and pressed them to continue their quest for knowledge.

"I urge you not to let your learning stop here. I challenge you to turn learn-

ing into a lifestyle.

"Your lifestyle."

In an address that congratulated the graduates for their achievements, but mainly concentrated on the future, asking the students to trust that they had given themselves the solid foundation needed to succeed in their fields.

In writing her speech, she said, she tried to think back on what she herself wanted to hear when she sat waiting to receive her own diploma five years ago.

Dr. Jason Heavens of The Ottawa Hospital spoke to students graduating from the School of Health and Community Studies on Thursday evening.

Cyril Leeder, chief operating officer for Scotiabank Place and the Ottawa Senators Hockey Club; and Michael O'Byrne, news producer and co-anchor of CTV News at Noon, were the keynote speakers at yesterday's convocations.

Perhaps one of the most meaningful moments of the first ceremony was the matched appreciation the students shared for their faculty.

To display their affection for a group that was dedicated to not compromising the quality of their education when faced with having to rush the school year, the students whistled and smiled as heartily for the teachers on-stage as they did for each other.

# Big things can start in a backyard sandbox

Adam Gal began his future in civil engineering technology as a boy, building tiny cities in his backyard, writes  
**SUSAN MOHAMMAD.**

His roommates sometimes got worried. They would often call Adam Gal on his cellphone to make sure the busy student was alive, and were baffled as to whether he had slept at home at all.

"I used to show up to sleep after my roommates and leave for school before them," says the 24-year-old about the more hectic times he endured as a graduating Algonquin College student who was also president of the students association — twice.

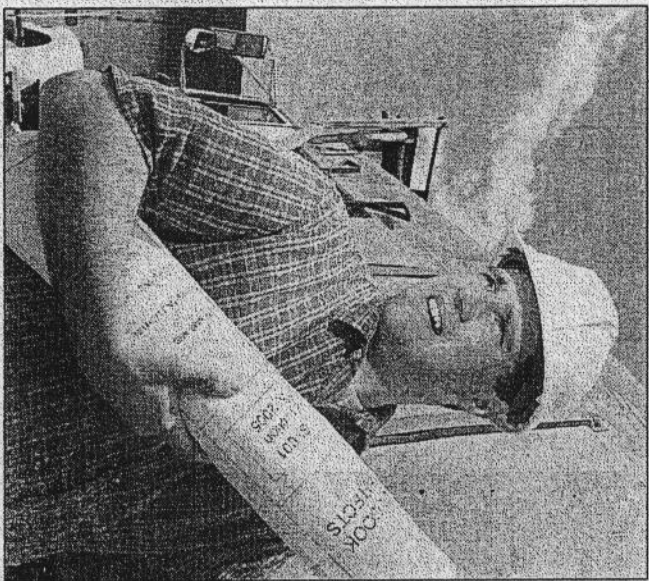
The active former student is getting some much-needed rest now that he has finished school. On Thursday, Mr. Gal proudly graduated as a civil engineering technology — a goal he's been working toward ever since he was a child constructing complex cities in his 25-by-25-foot sandbox.

"It was detailed, not just a road. I'd make a ramp or some bridges to go over," says Mr. Gal, who would spend hours building and little time playing in the backyard of his parents' home in North Bay.

"I remember one day I had a highway going into a city. I got sticks and made power lines with yarn; my mom used to hate that."

It took him two weeks to properly build his sand-city and every time it rained or the wind blew, he marched back outside to repair the tangled yarn power lines.

In Grade 10, when he and a friend added underground parking and a subway system to the sandbox structure, it became clear to Mr. Gal's family what his talents were. But despite



WAYNE CUDDINGTON, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

knowing he had a knack for construction, the creative student first decided on electronics engineering technology and telecommunications as a program — something he later realized was not for him.

"I've always tried something before I say I don't like it. That's how I've picked up different things here and there," says Mr. Gal. However, he increasingly found his classes uninteresting and his marks began to slip.

During one class in particular, he remembers having to probe different areas of a board using a prod to check the voltage levels and figure out where there was a problem.

"I just (thought) 'ugh, I don't know where to begin.' That was the beginning of the end of that course. It wasn't what I wanted to do."

He rarely quits anything so, even after two difficult years in the program, it was hard for Mr. Gal to switch to civil engineering technology. But when he looks at the wide smile

**'I had professors who would sit down with me and teach me afterwards. They were a big help.... Sometimes when I sit down, I can't believe what I've done.'**

**ADAM GAL**  
Two-time president,  
Algonquin College Students  
Association

on his face in a recent picture taken at age 21 with his young cousins in the old sandbox, he knows he made the right choice, and his grades started improving quickly after he made the switch.

Outside the classroom, he was just as active, playing hockey, soccer and frisbee while making time to volunteer with the Centre for Students with Disabilities. At the centre, he helped students with invisible disabilities such as dyslexia and attention deficit disorder to use technology as study aids.

But it was his role as president of the students association that kept him away from his bed the most.

"We ran athletics at the college; we ran the campus bar and soccer field," says Mr. Gal, who also serves on the school's board of governors and was this year's recipient of the President Rosse Prize for his commitment to the college community, and his academic achievements.

In mid-May, the star student, who al-

so plays the violin, clarinet and percussion, was hired as a project co-ordinator with Bernard Benoit Project Management Inc., in Ottawa.

He says he will miss his classmates the most. When he was active in school politics, he sometimes would drag his tired self in late for class but he found that his classmates would take notes for him and his teachers always understood.

"I had professors who would sit down with me and teach me afterwards. They were a big help." He also credits his sister and parents for giving him a supportive environment and pushing him forward in any new goal he sets.

"Sometimes when I sit down, I can't believe what I've done."

Next, the busy graduate says he would some day like to try being a police officer. He's already been on 12 ride-alongs with the Ottawa police and remembers one in particular that "stood apart" from the rest.

After shots were fired around a west-end apartment building, he and the officer he rode with were among the first on the scene to assess the situation.

"I won't lie, my heart was pounding," he said, adding that he was told to stay in the car while the officer met with the tactical team that took control of the area. He says he was scared, but not fearful.

"We didn't know who it was or what kind of gun it was. I love dealing with people in general, it's the community basis. I know there is dealing with an ugly side of it but there is the good part of it too."

To celebrate his graduation, Mr. Gal has started to lease his first car with some of the money his parents have given him. He is still in close contact with his former roommates, who don't have to worry as much about him anymore.

"Now I get to see them more — let's put it that way."

# College award recognizes contribution to education

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For Janet Crupi,  
her students' successes  
are the greatest reward

BY SUSAN MOHAMMAD

Walk into Janet Crupi's office at Algonquin College and, instead of paper-stacks and academic books, you will soon notice her workspace is wallpapered with cards and photos of former students sharing their life celebrations and achievements.

You will find the usual "to-do" lists cluttering her desk, but the co-ordinator for the Correctional Worker Program at Algonquin College is mainly surrounded by the reminders of the bonds and friendships she's forged with her students over the years.

Her dedication to her students hasn't gone unnoticed. The college has named Ms. Crupi this year's recipient of the Dr. Laurent Isabelle Award for her significant contribution to education.

"Working with young people is a real passion of mine," says Ms. Crupi, who started teaching at the college in 1986.

She mainly teaches "soft skills" in the program, like group counselling and youth justice courses, as well as classes on ethical or social issues. The Correctional Worker Program will be re-named the Community Justice Services Program, a change she believes is fitting because of the stereotypes commonly associated with the correctional system and its workers.

"The traditional idea is of people being locked up and punished, but (the program is also about) how to prevent people from getting into trouble in the first place."

She's taught or developed almost all the courses in the program and, since January, works without a full-time faculty.

Ms. Crupi makes it a priority to draw up class contracts that reflect what her students intend to get from the program and from her as an instructor.

In 1990, Ms. Crupi was asked to teach full-time on the condition she complete an undergraduate degree. She took a leave of absence as an employee of The Children's Aid Society of Ottawa so she could attend courses at Carleton University in the evenings while teaching at the college in the day.

With the support of her husband, who often looked after their young children, Ms. Crupi earned her Bachelor of Arts in 1996, the same year the Student's Association awarded her for her dedication as a teacher.

"I can remember Christmases when my husband and children were decorating trees while I was studying and marking," she says. Her two sons are now both students at the college.

During the two-year program, Ms. Crupi helps her students decide on one of 52 sites for their 14-week field placement in a correctional facility or community organization like a domestic violence shelter.

She was chairwoman of the Ottawa Youth Justice Services Network and is vice-chairwoman of a crime prevention board in Ottawa. She still finds time to spend five days a week coaching seven- to 10-year-olds in the Bel-Air Lions Football Club like she's been doing for the past 15 years.

This queen of multi-tasking, however, faced a stressful situation this year during the three-week strike at the college. As she walked the picket line, Ms. Crupi shuffled a revised curriculum in her head daily because she didn't want to compromise the education of her graduating students.

She is proud of their successes.

"I'm very fortunate to see the success of my students in the community. I'm committed to what I do because I see the difference in young people in the community."

In many ways, the Dr. Laurent Isabelle Award will be right at home in Ms. Crupi's office with the many letters and cards from her former students.



ROD MACIVOR, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Janet Crupi is this year's recipient of the Dr. Laurent Isabelle Award for her significant contribution to education.