

How Luc Rodrigue got hooked on school

A lesson in perseverance

By Matthew McCully

This week schools and education centres across Quebec will participate in Hooked on School Days, a province-wide campaign initiated in 2005.

The goal of the campaign is to encourage students to stay in school and help support them through their school careers to earn a diploma or qualification.

Who better to relay the importance of perseverance than a high school dropout who would go on to eventually become a teacher, a principal and then director of the Lennoxville Vocational and Training Centre (LVTC).

This is the story of Luc Rodrigue.

"I refer to myself as a rebel without a clue," Rodrigue said, looking back at his time in high school (he wasn't a huge fan).

He sees a glimmer of his former self from time to time in some of his students.

"They think they know it all: you can't tell them anything," commented Rodrigue.

"I thought I knew."

He was so sure he knew that in his last year of high school, just a few months away from graduation he quit.

Rodrigue had a rocky road in high school, constantly butting heads with administration.

"I didn't fit in the box," he said.

There was no room in the box for Rodrigue's long hair and his big leather jacket.

He was given an ultimatum one day: clean up, get a haircut, dress appropriately and fall in line, or get out.

Rodrigue went home and thought about what to do.

He then went to a barber shop and got his hair cut nice and short and went to see the principal the next day.

"I'm glad you came to your senses," his principal said.

"Rodrigue replied "I'm just here so you can sign these papers for me. I'm out."

"I wanted to make sure they knew it wasn't about the hair," he said.

"I was disgusted with the whole thing."

Rodrigue headed out west. He worked on the railroad for CNR, did some tree planting and a few other jobs and became a decent cook.

After around two years, he came back

to Lennoxville, his hometown, and got a job running the kitchen at the Golden Lion Pub alongside his mother. He also worked as a sous-chef at Hovey Manor.

Smack dab in the middle of a cooking career, Rodrigue met his future wife, Dawn Irving.

"She was just finishing the education program at Bishop's University."

Irving got a job teaching at Cookshire Elementary School and Rodrigue popped in from time to time to lend a hand.

"I had a good rapport with the kids," he said, realizing his calling was in education.

Thanks to some substantial support and encouragement from Irving, Rodrigue headed back to Adult Education to get his high school leaving.

He then enrolled as a mature student at Bishop's and completed a double major in French and Fine Arts, followed by a one-year education program at L'Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières.

Today, Irving and Rodrigue are both school administrators. Looking at them, it's impossible to tell that one followed a traditional education path and one took a slight detour, spending eight or nine years at the school of life.

"The path I went through, I think it made me a better teacher," Rodrigue commented, adding if he had it to do over again he wouldn't change anything.

Now that he is on the flip side, part of Rodrigue's job is to help students like him, who don't fit the box.

He recently attended a two-day consultation on vocational education in Quebec City.

"I realized it wasn't just me," Rodrigue said, hearing the testimonials and different life paths described at the conference.

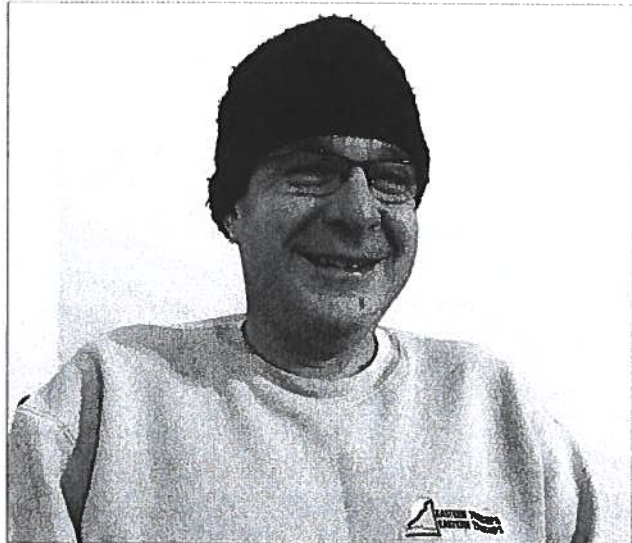
"Today there are more options," he said.

According to Rodrigue, there is a misconception that all students should get a university degree, and then get a haircut and get a real job.

"There are no elite jobs. Every job is important," Rodrigue said.

At the recent conference, Rodrigue learned that by 2020 there will be a shortage of around 750,000 trade workers in Quebec.

"You should do what you like," Rodrigue said, explaining that his philosophy in the classroom and as an administrator is to make students feel included and welcome in a school envi-



MATTHEW MCCULLY

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ronment while they find the path that is right for them.

"If you have students that don't even know they are learning, that's my goal," he said.

Rodrigue has a familiar adage posted on the wall at the LVTC. "An attitude is

like a flat tire: until you change it, you're not going anywhere."

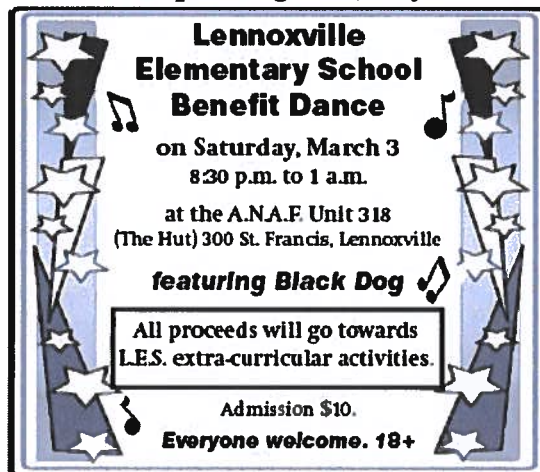
Leading by example, Rodrigue demonstrates that perseverance isn't about trying and trying until you fit into the box; it is about continuing to look until you find the box that fits you.

What do you want to be when you grow up?

Waterloo Elementary celebrates career day

Sherbrooke Record · 14 Feb 2018 · By Gordon Lambie

Tuesday was a special day for the students of Waterloo Elementary School (WES) as invited guests shared stories of their careers with students across all levels of the school. Moving from room to room, groups from the four-year old kindergarten right up to the sixth grade got first-hand information on what it means to be a dog behaviour therapist, a paralympian, a visual artist, a prison guard, Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer, and a newspaper reporter.



“We try to get different jobs every year,” said organizing committee member and WES teacher Jennifer Buck, explaining that past visitors have included nurses and veterinarians.

Although only grades three through six were able to see every presentation, all age groups got a varied experience over the course of the day.

Dog behaviour therapist Jennifer Boyle of the Super Puppy training program shared the details of her life and work with all kinds of different breeds over the last decade. Prepared with a large number of visuals, the trainer offered the students an in-depth look into the life of a dog trainer while also touching on aspects related to her work with the MIRA foundation training helper dogs. Although the students were interested in Boyle and her work, it was clear that Ha-grid, one of two dogs who came along with her for the visit, stole the show.

Canadian Paralympian Caroline Viau shared stories of her experience competing in the 1992 Tignes Paralympics, the first winter paralympic games held in the same location as the winter Olympics of that year, and showed off the gold and two bronze medals she won as a part

of that competition. She also fielded numerous questions about how she lost her arm and what life is like with prosthesis.

Sculptor Philippe Mori brought in an array of different artworks he has created as well as the tools of his trade. Specializing in plant and animal sculptures made out of old tools, bicycle and motorcycle parts, the artist impressed by students and staff with his ability to create life from leftover odds and ends.

Students also got a look into the criminal justice system through the eyes of a local prison guard as well as RCMP officer David Buck. In the latter presentation the children were given a walkthrough of the officer's equipment and what it is used for, and a few lucky students even got to try on a police vest or handcuffs. Each group also took a trip outside to the parking lot at the end of their visit to see Buck's truck and hear its sirens.

Students in grades three through six also got the chance to learn more about the life of a reporter for a local community newspaper. (The Hut) 300 St. Francis, Lennoxville Admission \$10.

Quebec invests \$740 million in schools

Victoria Vanier

To keep schools in good shape and to carry out renovations in schools in the Estrie region, an investment of close to \$16 million was announced on Friday, February 9th. The amount is part of a larger budget of close to \$740 million for the 2017 – 2018 year, the biggest annual investment ever announced for this type of work.

Sherbrooke MNA Luc Fortin, also the Minister of the family and the Minister responsible for the Estrie, made the announcement last Friday on behalf of the Minister of Education, Sports and Leisure, Sebastien Proulx.

An amount of \$15,839,317 will go to the four school commissions of the Estrie region to carry out 81 infrastructure projects during the 2018 summer work season: Eastern Townships School Board, \$1,741,850 for 12 projects; Hauts-Cantons, \$3,151,015 for 31 projects; Region-de-Sherbrooke, \$6,833,480 for 22 projects; Des Sommets, \$4,112,972 for 16 projects.

Of the \$740 million announced, \$724 million falls under the “Plan Quebecois des infrastructures 2017-2027” and includes measures aimed at maintaining buildings and bringing down the maintenance deficit for the 2017-2018 school year. An extra amount of \$15 million is also now available to all the school commissions to carry out urgent work that is not covered by the usual measures. For example, painting, student locker door replacement, broken windows, defective door handles or the individual replacement of floor and ceiling tiles is the type of work that falls under this budget.

This year alone, the amount of \$724 million for the renovation of Quebec schools brings to \$1.215 billion the sum for building maintenance, along with \$400 million announced in June of 2017 (“Ajout d’espace” program) to build and enlarge schools in all the regions.

“I am sure that the students in the Orford riding will appreciate the improvements made to their schools and will profit from these stimulating living environments and aim for school success. Many studies prove that the quality of our environment affects our performance. With these investments, our government is showing that educational success is a priority,” said Orford MNA Pierre Reid.

“The students of the Richmond riding, like those all over the Estrie, don’t just learn at school but also forge their personality, develop their social network and nourish their passions. With these investments, they can now evolve in improved, safer and more pleasant surround-

ings. I know that their educational success will be greatly improved as will their pleasure in attending school. To learn with pleasure is without a doubt the best way for our youth to achieve their full potential,” commented Richmond MNA and the Premier’s parliamentary assistant for Youth, Karine Vallieres.

“With this major financial aid, our government is showing that education is at the heart of its priorities and it is listening to the population and to the schools. The students and the school personnel of the Estrie region will see their living environments improved thanks to these investments. We want to offer an environment that promotes educational success for a larger number of students and the announcement today represents a concrete gesture in this direction,” said the Minister of the Family and the Minister responsible for the Estrie, Sherbrooke MNA Luc Fortin.

Local schools receiving funding are: Jardin-des-Frontieres, \$166,600 to improve the heating system; Mansonville Elementary, \$325,000 for interior construction, electrical work and exterior doors and windows; Ayer’s Cliff Elementary School, \$175,000 for interior lighting and rain drainage outdoors; and North Hatley Elementary School, \$75,000 for exterior windows.



SONDAGE AUPRÈS DES 18-34 ANS

22 % ont pensé décrocher dès 13 ans

ISABELLE PION

isabelle.pion@latribune.qc.ca

SHERBROOKE — Près du quart des jeunes vulnérables au décrochage ont commencé à penser à abandonner l'école dès l'âge de 13 ans, montrent les résultats d'un sondage Léger dévoilé à l'occasion des Journées de la persévérance scolaire (JPS) 2018. On y apprend également que 52 % ont été victimes d'intimidation et que 43 % consommaient des drogues ou de l'alcool de façon occasionnelle ou régulière.

Les résultats du sondage ont été dévoilés lundi matin avec le coup d'envoi des JPS, qui se déroulent jusqu'à vendredi. Ce coup de sonde a été mené auprès de Québécois âgés entre 18 et 34 ans qui ont décroché, pensé à abandonner l'école ou encore qui ont raccroché. Un peu plus de 1000 personnes ont été sondées.

« Le premier grand constat du sondage est qu'il existe une multitude de facteurs qui font une

différence dans la réussite des jeunes », note Josiane Bergeron, coordonnatrice du projet Partenaires pour la réussite éducative en Estrie (PRÉE). « On sait entre autres aussi que pour les raccrocheurs, à 34 %, c'est une expérience de travail qui a motivé leur choix de retourner à l'école. Le rôle du milieu des affaires dans la persévérance scolaire est essentiel pour ces jeunes-là. Ils ont fait le choix d'aller chercher un diplôme ou une qualification à cause de leur expérience de travail. »

La moitié des répondants ont rapporté avoir subi de l'intimidation. Quelle réflexion les intervenants peuvent-ils tirer devant une telle donnée?

« Ces jeunes-là qui ont été interviewés de 18 à 34 ans, pour certains leur parcours à l'école date d'il y a quelques années (...) Dans les 10 ou 15 dernières années, beaucoup de mesures ont été mises en place dans les écoles ou dans les différents organismes du milieu. Ça vient juste renforcer l'importance de continuer à mettre en place différentes mesures pour

faire en sorte que les jeunes ne vivent pas de l'intimidation », commente Mme Bergeron. Sept pour cent des répondants ont commencé à penser à abandonner l'école dès le primaire.

Les décrocheurs sont « significativement plus nombreux » à ne pas occuper un emploi et ils sont deux fois plus nombreux à gagner 20 000 \$ et moins.

En Estrie, plus de 275 activités auront lieu dans le cadre des JPS.

« Pendant ces cinq jours, c'est le Québec qui se mobilise pour la cause », a souligné Christian Provencher, coprésident de la Table estrienne de concertation interordres en éducation (TECIE) et du projet PRÉE.

Les intervenants présents au lancement ont rappelé que de nombreux gestes peuvent être posés afin de donner le goût de l'école aux jeunes, comme valoriser l'éducation ou leur donner accès aux livres. D'ailleurs, le sondage montre que 45 % des répondants ne lisaient pas à la maison, mis à part les lectures pour les travaux scolaires. De plus, quelque 18 %



Johanne Levasseur, directrice du CPE Jardins d'A.M.I.S., Judith Munger, bibliothécaire scolaire, Josiane Bergeron, coordonnatrice du projet PRÉE, Ramon Candelario Vasquez, élève, Marie-France Bélanger, coprésidente de la TECIE et du projet PREE, Lisette Maillé, mairesse d'Austin, et Christian Provencher, coprésident de la TECIE et du projet PREE. — PHOTO SPECTRE MÉDIA, RENÉ MARQUIS

n'avaient pas de livre à la maison et 65 % ne fréquentaient pas leur bibliothèque municipale. Les trois quarts des jeunes interrogés ont affirmé qu'ils s'ennuyaient à

l'école. Le sondage a été mené à la demande du Réseau des instances régionales de concertation sur la persévérance scolaire et la réussite éducative du Québec.

la Tribune, 13/02/18

Heroes' Memorial public speaking showcase

Sherbrooke Record · 13 Feb 2018 · 7 · By Louise Smith

On Friday, February 9, the top public speaking winners from Grade 3 up gave their speeches to a student and parent audience. The seven orators could make a speech that was designed to either entertain or to inform their audience. Connor Patch in Grade 4 had the audience in stitches as he spoke about his older sister, Kaylah. Shawn Needham, also in Grade 4, gave a speech about the beginnings of the NHL. James Piette, in Grade 3, spoke about endangered species. Kohle Devlin in Grade 6 had some interesting thoughts about an eight-hour road trip. Maxence Blanchard was the winner from Grade 6-7, but he was not able to give his speech. Runnerup Noah Sparling spoke about weird cake flavours that might sound good. Nathan Dresler in Grade 5 spoke about the Twin Towers.



PHOTOS BY LOUISE SMITH

Nathan Dresler, Shawn Needham, Noah Sparling, James Piette, Devon Whitehead, Connor Patch, and Kohle Devlin all presented their speeches at the Heroes' Memorial Public Speaking Showcase.

Devon Whitehead, in Grade 5-6, wrote about the importance of wearing helmets. Highlights from his speech are as follows:

The Importance of Helmets "... Today I will be discussing why it is important to wear a helmet while doing extreme sports. Extreme sports like skateboarding, snowboarding, skiing, motocross, and mountain biking are becoming more popular every year. These sports can be dangerous if you are not wearing a helmet. Eighty-three 83 per cent of injuries reported from those sports are head injuries and 17 per cent are neck injuries. The injuries reported may be crushed skulls, severe concussions, and broken blood vessels. Wearing a helmet can help to reduce how severe an injury will be. ...Studies prove that helmets save lives. Extreme sports are getting more dangerous all the time. Athletes push themselves to go faster, to go bigger, and to go longer as they try to become the best. ...

"I would like to tell you a story about Kevin Pearce. Kevin was a professional snowboarder sponsored by Burton Snowboards. He had made the USA Olympic Snowboarding Team in 2010. He was the favourite to win the gold medal, seeing how he had beat Shawn White in other competitions. While training in the halfpipe a few weeks before the 2010 Olympics, Kevin was gearing up to practice a new trick. He was getting closer and closer to landing the trick, and then he tried one last time, and it didn't end well. Kevin missed his landing and face-planted on the icy half-pipe. Luckily, he was wearing a helmet. His accident left him with life-long injuries. He suffered from constant double vision, memory loss, and seizures. Unfortunately, the helmet was not able to save his snowboarding career, but it did save his life. Kevin suffered a traumatic brain injury, and could no longer compete at a professional level. Today Kevin spreads his story with the Loveyourbrain Foundation. I was lucky enough to meet Kevin and one message was clear: 'Wear your helmet.'

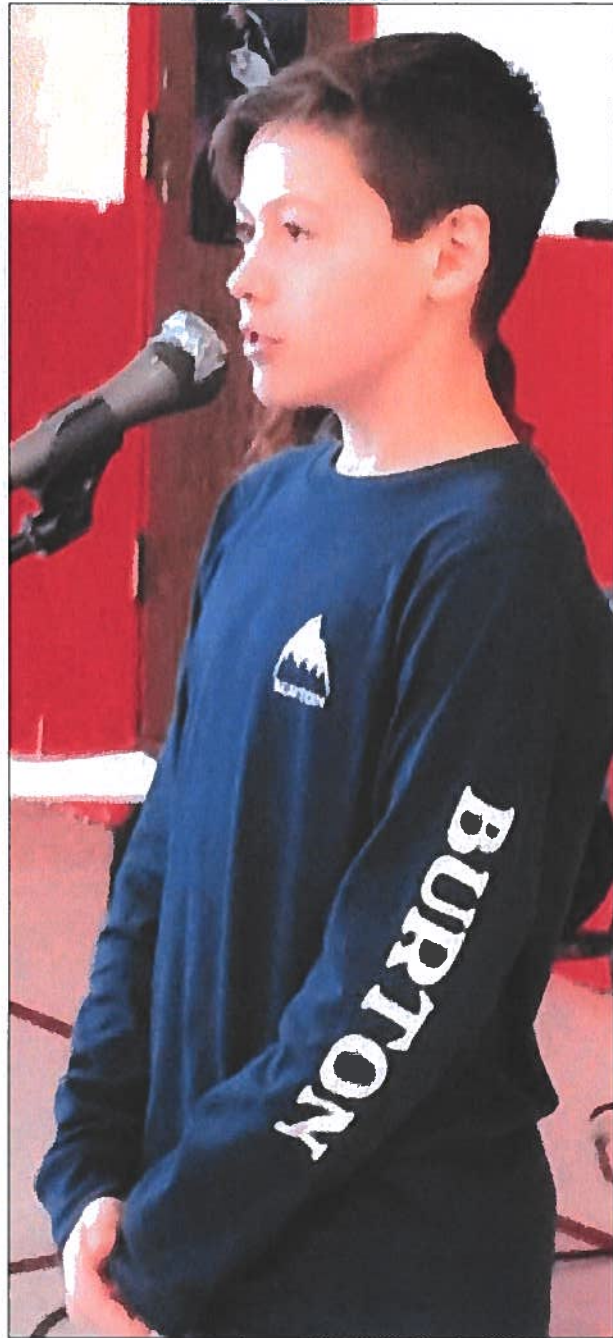
"In many of these extreme sports wearing a helmet isn't forced. Ski hills don't have a rule that you wear a helmet. Skate parks have signs that you should be wearing a helmet, but no one is there to force you to. Bike paths don't have someone watching to be sure you're wearing a helmet.

"I would like to end by saying, shoot for your dreams, be brave, and push yourself. But most importantly, be safe. I say wear the helmet. It may save your life."

These are wise words from someone so young.



Nathan Dresler spoke about the Twin Towers.



Devon Whitehead spoke about the importance of wearing helmets.