

ESL students make the news in Thetford Mines

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Deep inside a maze of hallways at the Cégep de Thetford Mines, more than a dozen ambitious adults are working to improve their English skills. The students in the Cégep's first English-second-language course seek to enhance their employability by refining their English, and they are having plenty of fun doing so.

On March 4, the QCT visited the class, specifically because students are currently working on producing their own newspapers. In groups of four, the students are responsible for a four-page publication which will include local news, cartoons, horoscopes, crossword puzzles, and breaking news (most of which is the product of the students' lively imaginations). Due to their editorial

projects, the students were deeply interested in the QCT's origins and contemporary activities.

Over the course of two hours, the students learned about the history of the newspaper, including recently discovered anecdotes. For example, the students and this writer were amused to learn that within its first year of publication, *The Quebec Gazette/La Gazette de Québec*, published in both English and in French at that time, was required reading during Sunday church services. Every parish was required to subscribe to the paper, and the priests and ministers were expected to read sections of it to the congregation, as a way of ensuring the news of important government ordinances reached the citizenry.

The English program students asked insightful questions

about how the QCT operates today, how many journalists are involved with an average edition of the paper, and in particular, how one gets a start at a community newspaper. In addition, an extensive discussion explored the modern role of a community newspaper, and students were intrigued by recent statistics which indicate that community newspapers are still Canadian's preferred and most trusted source for news and advertising.

The students will visit Quebec City in late March, when they will have a guided tour of the Morrin Centre, enjoy a ghost tour of Vieux-Québec, and deliver copies of their newspapers to the QCT. The field trip to Quebec City marks the conclusion of the program, although instructor Louise Carey is optimistic that the program will be offered again.



Photo by Bethann G. Merkle

Despite the presentation being scheduled during the Cégep's spring break, the English language program students were in full attendance for the QCT's recent visit. Their teacher, Louise Carey (centre), is holding a copy of a recent edition of the newspaper.

Editor's note: Schools and community groups interested in hosting a QCT presentation are invited to contact Shirley Nadeau or Bethann Merkle for more information.

Electricity in the air at auto show

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The Salon de l'Auto de Québec drew hundreds of people out to the Centre des Foires de Québec this past week, from vintage-car enthusiasts like the members of Quebec-based Club des Belles Autos d'Hier, to families looking for something to do over March Break.

Among the Ferraris and Lamborghinis, and the more wallet-friendly Subarus and Mazdas, one hot rod in particular was drawing a lot of attention.

The Dubuc Superlight Tomahawk, a kit-built electric car with a name that references fighter planes and a hard-to-miss green and black body, is the first car to be made entirely in Quebec. "The Quebec car was what jumped out at me the most," said student and car enthusiast Christophe Renaud, who visited the show. "I think we should be proud to have a Québécois product that

really performs and catches everyone's eye."

The car is the brainchild of Quebec City engineer Mario Dubuc and Montreale Mike Kakogiannakis, a printer turned car marketer. The electric engine was developed in a lab at the Université de Sherbrooke, and Dubuc and Kakogiannakis hope to make the 2015 models fully electric. The car is still in the late-prototype stage, for now, but Dubuc says production should begin at the end of this month.

"We built the chassis right here in Quebec City," Dubuc adds. "This is a project eight years in the making." "Mario's always been crazy about cars," says Kakogiannakis. "He said, instead of making car replicas why not create our own real car? We wanted to make custom cars the way some people make prefabricated homes."

A customer would buy the car kit and choose the engine specifications and

add-ons like sound systems, then assemble the car himself, her- or themselves. "We personalize the cars to fit your budget and your style," says Kakogiannakis. A \$5,000 down payment is required to reserve the kit, and the company tries to keep the total cost below \$30,000. "We sell the frame and the body and the customer chooses the add-ons," says Kakogiannakis. "It's a great father-and-son project, family project, or whatever, that people can build together."

Although the car debuted this weekend in Quebec, Kakogiannakis says his and Dubuc's ambitions are global. "The U.S. and Europe are our targets, [warm-weather] places where you can drive a car like this year round. We're going to the States after this and making our debut at the Carlisle Car Show in Pennsylvania. Then we're moving west and south; there's a lot of demand in Florida."

"People told us, 'You're



Photo by Ruby Pratkan

The Quebec-built electric Dubuc Superlight Tomahawk turned heads at the Salon de l'Auto.

crazy, you can't do this," says Kakogiannakis, his satisfaction obvious. "But when you know the idea is good, you just have to keep on working."

The Tomahawk was far from the only electric car at the show. The Canadian Auto Association, Hydro-Québec and several car-makers displayed electric cars. At

the CAA booth, visitors with a valid driver's licence and some patience for the queue could even test-drive one of several commercial electric cars.

"This is a unique opportunity for people to discover electric cars," said CAA researcher Jesse Caron. "In Montreal, we had over 3,600

test drives." In general, Caron says, the cars have good fuel economy and acceleration and zero emissions under many conditions.

"People are impressed," says Caron. "The electric car is not the car of the future. It's here now."

A Taste of Heritage: Bake to celebrate International Pi(e) Day

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Whether you are a fan of numbers, science, or desserts, March 14 is a fine excuse to celebrate. The mathematically endless number known as pi (π ; 3.14159...) is commonly abbreviated at 3.14.

For the past 26 years, the San Francisco Exploratorium has been celebrating Pi Day, and it is thought that the museum hosted the first official celebration of the event in 1988. Coincidentally, renowned physicist Albert Einstein was born on March 14 in 1879. More recently, Google and even the

U.S. House of Representatives have gotten in on the fun, with both institutions recognizing the date, in 2010 and 2009 respectively.

Conveniently for those who like their math equations to include sugar, flour, water, and fruit filling, Pi Day has also become Pie Day. Bakeries, home bakers and the baking industry have seized the opportunity to indulge in this timeless comfort food.

According to the *Food Timeline* website (www.food-timeline.org), the concept of pie has been around much longer than the word itself. Evidence confirms that civili-

zations in the Mediterranean region have been making savoury pie-like dishes for thousands of years.

As *Food Timeline* author Lynne Olver indicates, "Modern pie, as we know it today, descends from Medieval European ingredients (fat — suet, lard or butter) and technology (pie plates, free-standing pies, tiny tarts)." The Oxford English Dictionary first notes the word "pie" as being used for food in 1303, and the word was common by 1362. Fruit pies may have appeared as early as the 1500s, but dessert pies did not really become popular until the 1800s.

Here in Quebec, sugar pie and tourtière are as iconic as apple pie may be for Americans. Either would be an ideal way to mark March 14. If you would like to celebrate both the mathematical underpinnings of cooking and the heritage of pies themselves, flip open your favourite cookbook, pull out a cherished family pie recipe (as this writer will be doing), or visit <http://www.cbc.ca/bestrecipes> and search for sweet inspiration.



Photo by Bethann G. Merkle

The golden brown crust and tangy fruit filling of this homemade pie are possible thanks to the combination of technology and ingredients developed in medieval times. Prior to the use of pie dishes and fats such as lard or butter, pies were made with oils, which resulted in floppy crusts that could not stand up.