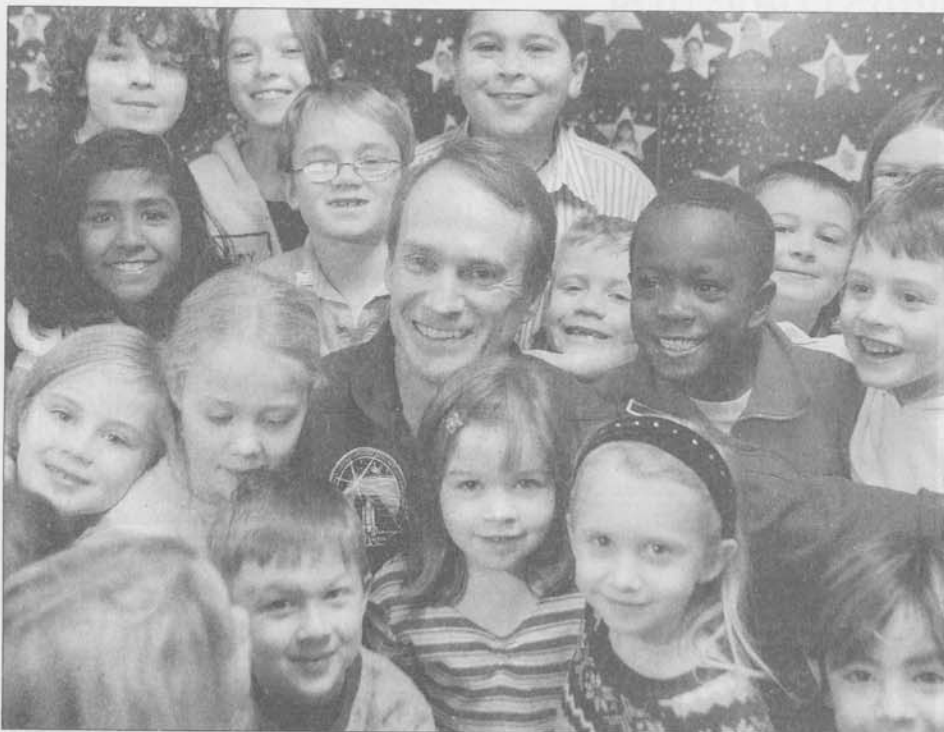


NEXT-GENERATION HERO



JULIE OLIVER, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Astronaut Steve MacLean, with children from the school, said he is happy if his visits change the course of even one child's life.

Inspired to reach for the stars

The only Canadian astronaut to have been born and brought up in Ottawa was at the school named after him yesterday, **GRAHAM HUGHES** reports.

Dressed in his blue flight suit, Canadian astronaut Steve MacLean was the centre of attention yesterday at the school named for him in Riverside South.

Mr. MacLean, 51, had the pupils from Steve MacLean Elementary School — and many of the adults in the audience — entranced as he narrated a video from his latest trip on the shuttle *Atlantis*, an 11-day supply and construction mission to the International Space Station last September.

After the ceremony, ending with a ribbon cutting, he seemed more like a piper as pupils swarmed around him at the side of the stage.

"This is just fun," he told reporters. "I was getting lots of questions while I was talking to them."

"It's just so much fun talking to children. They just want to

know the answer — how does it feel, what does this do?"

He said lending his name to the 60,000-square-foot Ottawa-Carleton District School Board school, which opened in September, was a great honour and a great surprise.

"I thought those honours went to people from a different generation — I never thought it would happen to me," he said.

He told the audience that as a youngster he'd often crossed the Rideau River on a raft to play in the fields near the school site.

"I was really pleased because it was in my old stomping grounds," he said.

The name was the suggestion of student Justin Shimizu, 9.

The youngster, the centre of a media storm yesterday, said meeting the astronaut "is really fun, because you don't get to see him a lot."

He confessed he hadn't slept well Sunday night.

Justin made his submission after a web search showed Mr. MacLean was the only Canadian astronaut who had been born and brought up in Ottawa.

Since boys and girls at the school are interested in space, it seemed like a good fit, his mother, Tawnya Shimizu said.

"I met Justin in the hallway when I first came in and he's a little guy you really like instantly," Mr. MacLean said. "He's only in Grade 4, but he has the social skills of someone a lot older."

Mr. MacLean said space agency representatives used to speak a lot at service clubs, but after a while realized their best target audience was in schools.

For 20 years, he's concentrated on elementary schools, and also sometimes speaks at high schools and universities.

"I said to my wife — it must be 20 years ago — that if just one child changes their path or changes the way they think because we visited them, then all the effort you put in over the

years to promote education, and to make people understand that education is important is worthwhile," he said.

"I could be pretty sure that there will be one child here today will work a little harder" (because of the visit), he added.

"If they can remember one fact — like it's 150,000 years to the next star at shuttle speed — if they just tell that to their parents tonight, then they know one thing they didn't know yesterday and I find that cool."

Mr. MacLean told the pupils the most interesting astronauts he's met are those who read all the time.

"Go to the library," he urged the pupils. "It's amazing what you can accomplish if you work hard."

The \$12.8-million Steve MacLean Public School offers regular English and Early French Immersion programs. It serves 338 pupils from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 5 and will add a grade a year until 2009 when it will have pupils up to Grade 8 in the 538-pupil capacity school.

Queen's Park soutiendra 27 projets dans les écoles de l'Est ontarien

Le Droit

Le gouvernement ontarien financera 27 projets phares locaux visant à aider les élèves des écoles secondaires de l'Est ontarien à obtenir leur diplôme. Cette aide permettra notamment d'offrir un soutien aux élèves qui éprouvent des difficultés en salle de classe traditionnelle.

« Ces programmes aident les élèves à acquérir une meilleure confiance en soi et des compétences leur permettant d'obtenir leur diplôme », croit la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, Madeleine Meilleur.

Les projets suivants recevront du financement: Build-a-House à Notre-Dame Catholic Secondary School, Rural Resource Management à St. Michael Catholic High School, CPR 16 à St. Thomas Aquinas SS, St. Francis Xavier SS, et Holy Trinity Catholic SS, Program Pathways au Collège Catholique Franco-Ouest et à Samuel-Genest, Strategies for Success à ESC Garneau, Program Pathways for Technology au Centre professionnel et technique Minto, Targeted Students - Reengage those at Risk à trois écoles secondaires, Expanded Programs à quatre établissements supplémentaires et un autre projet phare à l'École Secondaire publique Gisèle Lalonde.

Le front 05/12/2006

Les ACFO régionales ont-elles fait leur temps ?

Certains, plusieurs peut-être, diront que poser la question, c'est y répondre. Ils prendront à témoin le flop relatif des États généraux de Prescott-Russell, convoqués par l'ACFO régionale il y a une dizaine de jours, auxquels à peine une centaine de personnes ont participé. Ils prendront aussi à témoin le hara-kiri de l'ACFO Supérieur-Nord (Sault-Sainte-Marie), au cours de la même fin de semaine.

Ils savent que dimanche prochain, celle de Nipissing (North Bay) pourrait elle aussi décider de se démanteler et que la régionale de Cochrane/Iroquois-Falls, où il se passe bien peu de chose depuis un long moment, est susceptible de se donner le même sort dans un avenir rapproché. Et on ne parlera pas de celle de Cornwall.

Ils se souviennent également de l'ACFO Grand Nord, dans le corridor très francophone Smooth-Rock-Falls/Kapuskasing/Hearst, qui a discrètement rendu l'âme il y a déjà une décennie. Et de Timmins aussi, où l'ACFO s'est réincarnée en l'Alliance française de Timmins. (Savent-ils que le nom est pris depuis 1884 par un organisme international et qu'ils vont finir par recevoir une lettre d'avocats si jamais leur affaire lève sérieusement de terre, ce qui n'est pas très inquiétant jusqu'ici?).

Mais ce qu'on a entendu et lu sur les ACFO régionales au cours des deux dernières semaines, «c'est parfois vérité et c'est parfois mensonge», pour citer Gilles Vigneault. Vérité dans la mesure où il y a des problèmes très sérieux à bien des endroits. Mensonge dans la perspective où certaines régionales (bon, reconnaissons-le, de plus en plus rares) réalisent bien leur mission et s'acquittent bien de leur mandat.

L'ACFO d'Ottawa, par exemple, a été particulièrement active dans la récente campagne électorale municipale. Pas seulement pendant, mais avant et après, ce qui est aussi important, peut-être davantage. Maxine Hill, la présidente, et Jean-Louis Schryburt, le directeur général, n'ont pas eu besoin de subventions spéciales de Patrimoine canadien ou d'autres bienfaiteurs gouvernementaux pour élever la voix.

Ils l'ont fait de manière utile et efficace pour la communauté francophone de cette ville, sachant que parler, être compris et diffusés, si le message est suffisamment bien articulé et cohérent, c'est souvent gratis et que ça donne des résultats, surtout lorsque la cause est juste.

Regardons aussi du côté de



Adrien Cantin

collaboration spéciale



La présidente de l'ACFO d'Ottawa, Maxine Hill, donne l'exemple du discours plus moderne qui a du succès.

l'ACFO des Mille-Îles où l'activité acharnée des 10 dernières années, coordonnée par la directrice générale, Jeannine Proulx, a finalement mené à la reconnaissance de Kingston comme région désignée en vertu de la Loi sur les services en français. (Cette séquence d'événements, dans la même catégorie que la victoire de Montfort, est parmi les plus méconnues en Ontario français).

CHIENS DE GARDE

Ces deux régionales démontrent leur utilité et leur pertinence parce qu'elles n'ont pas oublié leur raison d'être et leur mission première : être les chiens de garde et, lorsque nécessaire, les chiens d'attaque des communautés qu'elles représentent. C'était comme ça à Prescott-Russell au temps où Jean Poirier tenait l'organisme à bout de bras. On faisait les manchettes régulièrement ; le message, d'accord ou pas, passait.

Certaines autres régionales semblent bien se tirer d'affaire. Comme celles de Hamilton et de London/Sarnia, en milieu très minoritaire. Elles réussissent à se maintenir en vie en se faisant, en quelque sorte, les agents généraux du gouvernement fédéral pour des services en français tels la recherche d'emplois et la formation à l'emploi.

Est-ce utile ? Sans doute. Et ça permet de continuer l'appui aux garderies et aux écoles. Mais on commence à être loin de la mission originale. Il faudrait peut-être songer à une

désignation qui reflète davantage ce qu'on y accomplit au quotidien. Que des organismes dont la mission est essentiellement politique s'occupent de cafés Internet, de tourisme ou de pistes cyclables, par exemple, est un peu distrayant.

Le plus gros problème, bien sûr, est le manque de participation.

On rapporte que dans Prescott-Russell, par exemple, une des régions les plus francophones de l'Ontario, la moitié des postes au conseil d'administration ne sont pas comblés, faute d'intérêt. L'ACFO Grand Nord est morte parce qu'il y avait rarement plus d'une demi-douzaine de participants aux assemblées générales annuelles.

FINANCEMENT

Les derniers irréductibles des ACFO régionales devraient peut-être être plus attentifs aux signaux qu'envoient ceux et celles dont ils prétendent défendre les intérêts. La réalité, sauf exceptions notoires, est qu'on ne veut plus entendre parler du type d'action qu'ils privilégient. Celles qui réussissent, notamment Ottawa et Mille-Îles, ont modernisé leur discours et leur mode d'intervention. Elles s'appelleraient autre chose qu'elles réussiraient tout aussi bien, le ramage étant bien plus important que le plumage.

Il n'est donc pas étonnant que le principal bailleur de fonds des ACFO régionales, Patrimoine canadien, soit devenu réticent, surtout dans le contexte politique actuel au fédéral. (Rappelons que c'est son prédécesseur, le Secrétariat d'état, qui a jadis créé de toutes pièces certaines de ces régionales, en période de vaches grasses).

Cette situation est clairement un autre défi pour l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario (AFO), si celle-ci parvenait finalement à occuper un peu d'espace sur la place publique.

LE FRONT, OTTAWA-GATINEAU, MARDI 5 DÉCEMBRE 2006

Preschool better than home for children, study finds

Gives youngsters step up in math, reading

BY SARAH SCHMIDT

Preschool is better preparation for kindergarten than the attention of a stay-at-home-mom, new research shows.

The national study in the United States found children who attend preschool enter public schools with higher levels of academic skills than their peers who experienced

other types of child care, including from stay-at-home parents, relatives and babysitters. And the advantage in reading and math persists through Grade 3 unless children are placed in small classes with high levels of reading instruction.

"The key is you really have to look at what happens at home versus what happens at preschool or centre-based care," lead author Katherine Magnuson of the University of Wisconsin at Madison, said.

See SCHOOL on PAGE A2

Wright S dec



WYNE CLUDINGTON, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Ottawa educator Tara Connolly, reading with her son Phoenix, 3, says she is 'saddened' by the federal government's lack of support for licensed daycares.

Schools: Children can be plopped in front of TV at home

Continued from PAGE A1

"A lot of centres in the past 10 years have adopted an early education curriculum," she said. "While it's true parents can give one-on-one attention, they also run errands, talk to their friends, put them in front of the television."

The study, to be published in the forthcoming edition of *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, assessed the skills of a national sample of 7,748 children who entered school in 1998. The researchers then tested their academic progress in math and reading in the spring of Grades 1 and 3.

After controlling for home and family resources, the team found that by the spring of Grade 1, the advantages in kindergarten associated with preschool attendance had largely dissipated for children experiencing class sizes of 20 youngsters or less and enjoying levels of reading instruction in excess of the average of 61 to 90 minutes a day.

"Whether their peers overcome their early deficits, or whether preschool attendees maintain their advantage, is in part a function of the subsequent classroom environment," concludes the study.

By the spring of Grade 3, the differences associated with preschool attendance had disappeared for those in the more enriched classrooms.

"By contrast, a marked advantage persists among their counterparts in low instruction or large classes," the study found.

In fact, for children who weren't enrolled in preschool before entering kindergarten and who subsequently attended large classes and received low reading instruction, the skills gap appears to grow, the study found.

"What is particularly interesting, however, is that estimated benefits of preschool appear to increase between spring of the first and third grades, suggesting that the benefits measured in the third grade may persist into subsequent school years and even raising the possibility of 'sleepier effects' that increase in size in later grades."

Tara Connolly, an Ottawa-based educator and consultant, believes there are a variety of child-care options that can be beneficial, depending on the needs of a child or family. But the licensed centre her family has chosen for her three-year-old son, Phoenix, is the right fit for him as he gears up for kindergarten next fall.

"We chose a centre-based care that could provide him with a chance to socialize as well as opportunities to see himself as a learner," she said.

For Ms. Connolly, a loving and caring environment is very important. But she's pleased to have access to a setting that also focuses on creating a solid learning foundation through quality programming.

Equally important for her family is the preschool opens up her son's world, building on his experiences at home and by providing an inclusive environment with a diverse group of children. This helps build his sense of community, she said.

Ms. Connolly hopes the conclusions of the study will help convince the federal government to support the development of licensed daycare, especially subsidized spots for low-income families.

"I'm saddened by the lack of support from government to support this kind of care," she said.

Child care has been a hot topic in Canada since the federal election earlier this year.

The Conservative government has since implemented its plan, a taxable \$100 monthly allowance for parents of children under six to be spent how they wish. The government favours this approach to creating child-care spaces.

The New Democrats have responded by pushing for its early learning and child care act to enshrine in federal law affordable and universal early learning and child care. The plan, modelled on the Canada Health Act, received a big boost last month when it garnered the support of the Liberals and Bloc Québécois in a key vote in the House of Commons. The bill has moved to the parliamentary committee level for examination.

WHAT IT TAKES TO RUN SCHOOL BOARD



RANDALL DENLEY
COMMENTARY

The most important position in public education in Ottawa will be filled tonight, but you have no say in the choice and probably don't even know much about the candidates.

The new chair of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board faces an enormous internal and external challenge. The board has had almost no public profile for three years, but now it must rally parents to prevent a significant blow to public education. The board is facing a deficit of nearly \$30 million next year, and must tackle the problem almost immediately.

Part of the solution is for the board to exert a little discipline over its own spending, but the province still isn't paying what it should. The new board chair has to make that case to the public and, if he or she can't, the board will be faced with having to close schools, lay off up to 175 teachers, reduce special education service and cut buses.

School board chairmen and chairwomen are elected by their colleagues in a miniature version of the horse-trading that goes on at a political convention. The 12 trustees have been privately discussing potential candidates and alliances for two weeks. Four trustees are considered to be in the running for chair and vice-chair. Among them are two long-serving trustees, one second-term and one of the board's five rookies.

Before any of the four agrees to take on one of the top jobs, he or she should step back and dispassionately assess their competence for the position. The new board chair must be a strong communicator, able to frame issues clearly for the media and public. He or she must be hard-nosed, able to explain to parents why change must be made, and able to push government for fair treatment. The majority on the board we've had the last three years thought sending letters to the education minister was an effective form of persuasion.

See DENLEY on PAGE B5

DENLEY: PUBLIC SHOULD CHOOSE

Continued from PAGE B1

The image the chair wants to project is that of a person who is reasonable and informed, a typical mom or dad, but one who is prepared to fight hard for public education. He or she must seem credible to the media and the public and be adroit enough to counter the provincial party line, that there's plenty of money and it's all the school board's fault.

With those qualities in mind, let's consider the four candidates. **David Moen** is frequently mentioned as a potential chairman. Moen certainly has the years of service and the intelligence for the job, but his rather eccentric personality and appearance can easily distract from his message. He's a former vice-chairman of the board, but not all were impressed with his performance. Moen is from the left wing of the board.

Lynn Scott is another board veteran being considered for chairwoman or vice-chairwoman. She knows the issues, has lots of experience and is the current vice-chairwoman. A logical choice, perhaps, but

Scott is not a great communicator and owns her share of the board's long do-nothing record. Scott is part of the board minority that is more cautious about spending. In fact, she's cautious in almost every respect. Perhaps not the best quality when you're facing a fight.

Riley Brockington is starting his second term and distinguished himself by taking calm command of the board's often chaotic budget discussions. He wasn't willing to run for the top jobs, but it appears now that he will step up. The youngish Statistics Canada employee has a logical mind and a good grasp of the issues. He's also more mainstream than some of his colleagues. Like Scott, Brockington has a proper focus on controlling spending.

The new trustees seem to have settled on **Rob Campbell** as their champion. He's a rookie, but he's the former head of the umbrella group for school councils. Campbell seems like a solid fellow, but he's obviously not comfortable yet with politics and doesn't have a gift for giving a concise answer. Campbell is part of the board's left

wing.

To win one of these positions, a candidate must capture seven of the 12 trustees' votes. If the vote is twice deadlocked at six, the matter will be settled by drawing cards; high card wins.

Given the board's internal divisions, one of the top jobs must go to a candidate from each of the wings. Or so trustees believe. They'd be serving the public best by choosing the people most able to carry the board's message and win the critical budget fight.

Of those under consideration, Brockington is the most capable of that. This board desperately needs a new face, and Moen and Scott simply can't be it.

In a more rational world, the chair of the school board would be directly elected by the public. That race would give education the profile it deserves. Think of it this way: Would you want Ottawa city councillors to choose the mayor from amongst themselves?

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