

# Climbing to a career in great outdoors

## New program trains for jobs full of thrills and spills

By MIKE DYNIE

EVER NODDED off in a classroom while dreaming of climbing the Rockies, cycling across France, or kayaking off the coast of California?

Then Algonquin College's new Outdoor Adventure-Training Education and Management (T.E.A.M.) program may be more in tune with your neck of the woods.

This new post-diploma certificate program will be offered from the College's Pembroke campus beginning next fall, and has been designed specifically to meet the needs of today's tourism industry in Canada and abroad.

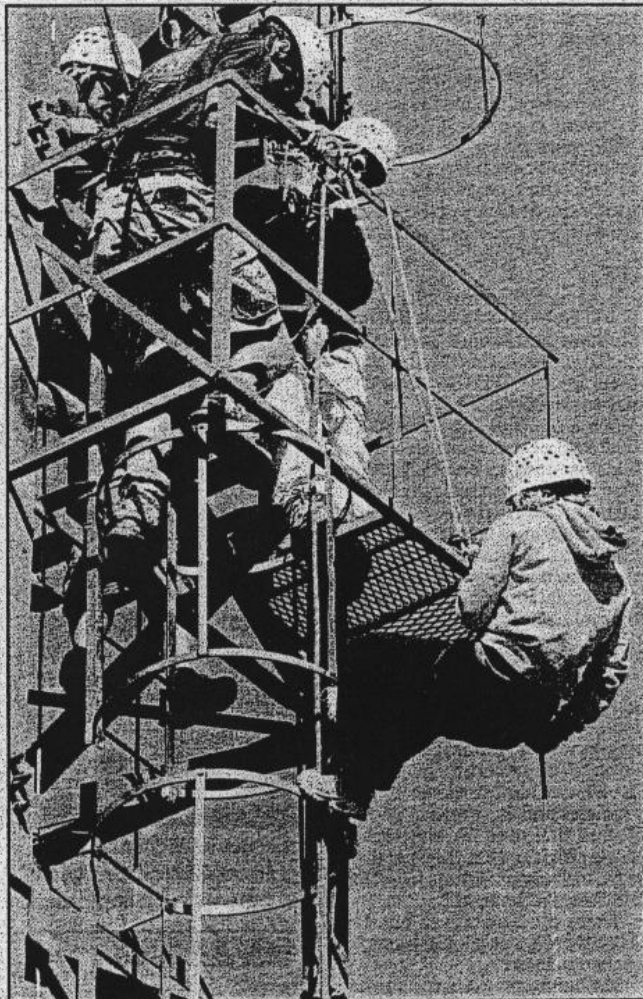
**"The graduates are ready to set the world on fire."**

—Joe Kowalski, Wilderness Tours

"Gone are the days when people traveled to a city and they might do a couple of museum tours," says Murray Kyte, the chair of the program. "Now what's happening is tourists want to experience the natural environment, they want to touch and feel. Baby boomers have retired, they have a lot of money, they want to travel, and they want to experience life."

The program provides experiential training as well as outdoor education, thanks to a partnership Algonquin established with Wilderness Tours five years ago when it launched the Outdoor Adventure and Outdoor Adventure Naturalist diploma programs.

The students' time is divided evenly between classroom instruction and the great outdoors. The college teaches the theoretical half of the program from the



Wilderness Tours photo

**THE OUTDOOR ADVENTURE** program at Algonquin College's Pembroke campus is physically demanding.

Pembroke campus, while the practical aspect is run through Wilderness Tours, one of Canada's largest outdoor adventure companies.

After two years of study, graduates will come out of the program with a broad range of skills applicable to the outdoor industry. Graduates can expect to find year-round work in positions as tour guides, hard-skill instructors, managers, marketers and conference presenters to name a few.

### Confident leaders

But the program does more than produce experts in the outdoors. It

trains highly confident people with strong leadership skills.

"The graduates are ready to set the world on fire," says Joe Kowalski, owner of Wilderness Tours. "They have a phenomenally high level of confidence when they graduate."

And making it through the program's application process is enough to bolster anyone's confidence.

"The graduates are ready to set the world on fire,"

Before students are accepted, they have to pass a physical readiness camp conducted during the

first two weekends in May. After plunging into the bitterly cold Ottawa River and swimming a section that's used for whitewater rafting, these applicants scale the 160 feet tall bungee tower at Wilderness Tours.

The next day, they complete a triathlon. Only once they've passed these tests are the students admitted to the program.

"We don't want to have students that aren't aware of how physically demanding it is," Kowalski says.

And students are constantly improving their leadership skills by guiding groups through skill-based lesson plans they develop themselves.

For instance, a group of private business workers may come to Wilderness Tours for several days to improve on abilities they can carry over to the workplace, such as effective communication and working together as a team.

A student would instruct them through several days of whitewater rafting.

"The participants coming in get their skills enhanced, but at the same time our own team students have the opportunity to apply their own learning T.E.A.M. activities," says Kyte. "Instead of learning through a textbook, the students are actually in the field doing it."

### Expeditions

The last thing the students do before they graduate is plan, organize and execute their own outdoor expeditions in groups of six elsewhere in the world. This has been done in the diploma programs for years, and has taken students to such destinations as Florida, Italy and Costa Rica.

If the success of Algonquin's outdoor programs continues, they may introduce a new program called Outdoor Adventure, therapeutic application.

"Our campus is really growing and a big part of that is outdoor training," Kyte says. "I've had so many parents come up to me and say, 'Murray if it we're not for your (diploma) program, our child would have never finished school.'"

For more information, visit Algonquin College's Pembroke web site [www.algonquincollege.com/pembroke](http://www.algonquincollege.com/pembroke).

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