

**JEFF JACKSON**, co-ordinator of Algonquin's Outdoor Adventure Program, takes a run down the rapids.

Scott MacGregor Rapid Magazine

## Back to school

4-part series  
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## Autism demands qualified workers

A rise in the number of children being diagnosed with autism has increased the demand for qualified professionals in the field.

This semester, La Cite Collegiale is hoping to meet that demand by becoming the only French language college in Ontario to offer a graduate certificate in autism and behaviour science.

The program is offered in both full-time and part-time studies and can be done either in the classroom or on the Internet.

It's a post-diploma program that was developed in collaboration with Algonquin College, George Brown College, St. Lawrence College and Mohawk College.

"The demand is very (high) because we have more and more children diagnosed as autistic and the demand for qualified employees is very important," said Dominique Godbout, director of community services at the French college.

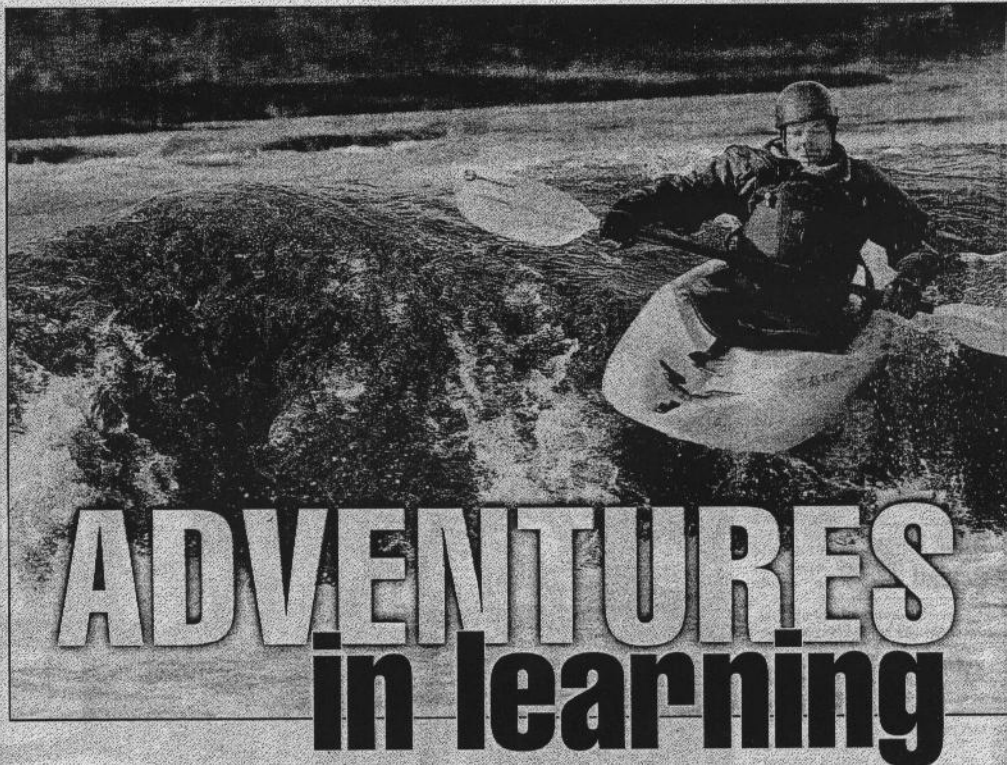
The high demand from organizations who work with autistic children for specialized workers has the college anticipating a subsequent growth in the program.

This term there are 15- to 20-part-time and full-time students.

Students taking the course are looking to specialize in the field.

"We think that the more the program will be known the more often organizations will ask for this kind of training for their employees," she said.

— Laura Czekaj



# ADVENTURES in learning

**Whether crashing through swirling rapids, rock climbing or mountain biking along a rocky trail, it's just an average school day for students in the Outdoor Adventure program at Algonquin College.**

Or how about learning river touring, wilderness and survival skills, flatwater canoeing, astronomy, edible plants and birding and horseback riding?

Those are just some of the subjects taught to students in the college's Outdoor Adventure Naturalist program.

Both programs are based out of the college's Ottawa Valley campus in Pembroke and have forged a relationship with Wilderness Tours, a local company specializing in Ottawa River rafting.

### 'New concept'

"This idea of formalized adventure industry education is a new concept that we are kind of on the ground floor of creating it and trying to can it into this structured school schedule," said Jeff Jackson, co-ordinator of the outdoor adventure program.

However, the concept of outdoor recreation as an academic pursuit has been around a long time. Historically, the adventure tourism industry has utilized modularized training through national bodies, said Jackson.

While both programs focus on the great outdoors, the similarities are few and far between.

The Outdoor Adventure Program, which is going into its sixth



**Laura Czekaj looks at the opportunities available for students looking for a career in the fast-growing outdoors business**

year, prepares students for the booming high adventure industry, dealing with such hair-raising activities as extreme sports.

"As a guide in the high adventure industry, you are essentially being paid to structure other people's play time," said Jackson.

Guides are basically facilitating people's vacations, building experiences for people based around fun, games and being outdoors. The students who tend to enrol in the program are right out of high school or are young at heart. This kind of business also appeals to those who want to travel, said Jackson.

"It's folks who really like to have fun, and I think that kind of weaves

itself into our course as well," he said. "As a student group, those folks really get along together and really grow much more than a standard college course would."

The Outdoor Adventure Naturalist program, on the other hand, attracts a wider age range and in some cases students who are seeking a career change, said program co-ordinator Ian Pineau.

"(Students) are more interested in the environment and knowing what is out there and being able to tell people what is out there," he said. "Most of them have a pretty big concern about the environment."

Pineau said there is some confusion about the differences between

the two programs and prospective students don't always understand the job opportunities available to them after graduating from the naturalist program.

"People don't particularly understand the demand that is out there and that it is going to continue to grow," he said. "We are having a little trouble convincing people there are actually jobs out there."

### Growing demand

But Pineau said market studies indicate there is a move towards the soft adventure side of the industry. He said resorts and parks want to have some type of naturalist guide on their staff to meet their clients' demands.

"They are looking for someone to take them out on a day hike around the trails and tell them what is there," said Pineau. "They are looking for someone to show them the basics of how to sea kayak, to take them out to show them around the coast or a lake. There are those types of things."

The naturalist program is going into its fourth year and looks at the ecology, cultural heritage and the natural history of an area.

There is a strong business component in both programs and several graduates have gone on to own or co-own the companies.

### Algonquin College 101

Some facts about Algonquin College going into the fall term:  
■ 15,000 full-time students

will be attending this fall.

■ Algonquin offers more than 120 programs.

■ There are 500 full-time faculty and about 450 full-time support staff.

■ In fall 2004, the Top 10 programs by registration were dental hygiene, police foundations, business administration, paramedic, child and youth worker, early childhood education, veterinary technician, social service worker, TV broadcasting and business marketing.

