



Mind Wide Open

## Québec Student and Graduate Profile



### Business expands as owner learns in virtual classroom



**Denis Michaud** lives on the Magdalene Islands in Québec, almost an eleven-hour drive from **Cégep de Matane**, but he took his CCNA courses through the college. It's not that Michaud likes to drive long distances; he took the course through the blended distance-learning format.

This innovative format allowed Michaud to take the semesters online. "I couldn't do it any other way, as it wasn't offered on the island. I would never have taken it otherwise. It was excellent for

me. I did it from my office," he says. He only had to go to the college three times which helped not only from a time perspective, but also cost. "Another advantage is that I was able to manage the company while taking the courses," he adds.

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Michaud owns **Électro Informatique Michaud Inc.**, a small company that started out offering local support for PCs, servers, and local networking. As Michaud says, "Basic stuff." But one day he got a call from a customer asking for network support. "My team and I didn't have enough knowledge," he recalls, "but by following the courses I was able to get it and I can now offer the service." He has expanded the company to 11 employees and has increased the services he offers to include wireless, broadband, and high-speed Internet access. Michaud now wants his employees to take CCNA courses.

Linda Viel is the coordinator of the distance-learning program at Cégep de Matane, in Matane, Québec. She says the college draws from all over the territory north of Québec City. Because of the virtual nature of their courses, they have been able to expand into new regions, including James Bay.

The college gets about 15 students a year who do the distance-learning CCNA semesters. Viel says all that students need from home is an Internet link on their PCs. "They can have a Web cam but that's not necessary."

Viel explains how the class is run. "It's all synchronous. It's simultaneous, so students can ask questions during the class. It's almost like the students were in the classroom. They can see the instructor and all the PowerPoint slides. They can interact by pressing a Raise Your Hand button. There is a virtual blackboard and all the participants can see the questions and answers. Students can communicate with each other as well as the instructor."

Viel describes Michaud as a visionary. "His love of technology and also his dedication and willingness to go the extra mile to get his work and studying done makes Denis special. He has his own company and being a visionary, he is trying to look at how to expand the services and grow the company, incorporating what he learned."

A college with a unique way of providing CCNA semesters, along with a business owner with a vision, has produced a winning situation for both.