

# R. D. Parker Collegiate



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Staff and students of R. D. Parker Collegiate in Thompson, Manitoba celebrated the opening of a new 360-square-meter (3,900-square-foot) hangar facility in November 2005. The hangar was designed to improve aviation technology and maintenance programs in Canada's north, and received \$150,000 in funding through various federal government programs.

High school students at R. D. Parker are now the only students in Canada to have both their own hangar and an airplane — a 1986 Piper Tomahawk that was flown in from Moncton Flying College. This aircraft was provided through CAMC's Youth Internship Program (YIP), part of The Leading Edge project. It is being used to teach students proper repair and inspection methods.

Students also do a local work placement at Calm Air, and a proposed partnership with Stevenson Aviation & Aerospace Training Centre and Red River College would give the students, in addition, one year's credit toward a four-year certification program.

CAMC's Aviation Maintenance Orientation Program (AMOP) has made an impact in the local industry of Thompson, Manitoba. Many of the shops north of the 53<sup>rd</sup> parallel in Manitoba employ successful graduates of our school's aviation program. The vast majority of our students proceed into aviation and its related occupations by simply being exposed to the training our school provides.

Skilled aviation maintenance worker shortages are now being forecast throughout Canada, but the recent expansion of the aviation technology and maintenance educational programs at our school will provide local aviation businesses with these skilled workers. This is our school's main priority. Already, local aviation companies eagerly await the end of the school year as the demand for graduates of our program far exceeds



Official opening of the new hangar facility. From left to right: Robert Pellizzaro, School Trustee; Steve Ashton, MLA for Churchill Riding; Wayne Scibak, Master of Ceremonies and School Trustee; Cynthia Foreman, Director of Urban Aboriginal Strategy for Manitoba; Mamie Hendren, School Trustee; Terry Sutherland, Instructor, R. D. Parker Collegiate

supply. Up to 16 students will graduate from the program in any given year, and we expect that four to six of these students will stay to live and work in our community.

We currently have 12 students working in the hangars of our aviation industry partners: 11 work full-time and one part-time. We have six students going on to post-secondary schools to study aviation and one going into the Canadian Armed Forces. During the past three years, we have had 44 CAMC AMOP program graduates, including 27 Human-Factors-certified students. This year there are nine R. D. Parker graduates working locally in the industry, and three in post-secondary training at various colleges across Canada.

R. D. Parker Collegiate provides local businesses with solid candidates for apprenticeship opportunities. During the past four years, we have partnered with local businesses — Skyward Aviation, Custom Helicopters, the Government of Manitoba Air Services, and Calm Air International — to offer our students practical training that augments their school courses.

We have taken part in intensive curriculum-development sessions with CAMC and 18 other Youth Internship

Program (YIP) schools from across Canada. Representatives from all the YIP schools also sit on the Youth Initiative Advisory Committee (YIAC) and attend meetings to help develop future training programs. We have an opportunity to network with industry leaders at these meetings. This has proven beneficial for both groups.

Stevenson Aviation & Aerospace Training Centre is an integral part of our support network. Dennis Doersam, Director of Stevenson Aviation's Winnipeg training centre, has helped establish a dual-credit link to be offered jointly by our two facilities in the very near future.

Our school is mandated to include Aboriginal communities in its staff and student body: we provide technical and vocational education through our aviation training courses to young people 15 to 18 years old belonging to the Dene, Inuit and Swampy Cree Nations.

The female student population in our Power Mechanics program has also shown a marked increase over the past few years, demonstrating the growing significance of the career opportunities offered by our aviation maintenance component.

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discussions and interaction throughout the year. The geography between us, members on the move chasing airplanes and everyone's busy schedules get in the way of keeping a clear focus on the task at hand. With e-mail and good pre-meeting preparation, we keep in touch and maximize the effectiveness of our bi-annual meetings.

***What do you think should be the Committee's next Number One Priority?***

The logbook is the pressing issue at this time. It is vital that the logbook accurately document tasks and do so in a user-friendly nature in order to make the CAMC logbook *the* logbook of choice.

***What would you say is your Committee's proudest achievement to date?***

It is probably too early to claim victory over any particular issue; however, the level of commitment and willingness to see things through should produce more than a few proud moments for this group.

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***When looking for new technicians or employees, what qualifications do you most look for in a candidate?***

We look for staff that we expect will remain at GAI as a career and establish roots in the area. The cost of hiring and training employees to work in a dynamic shop that intertwines four major business units in concert requires a long lead-in. We are very finicky about our systems, as they have been continuously developed for 13 years. They are the basis of our efficiency and quality, and it takes a couple of years to get new employees familiar enough to allow us to transfer responsibilities to them. Once we have reached that point we work very hard to keep our staff.

Familiarity, trust, understanding of our goals is a long process and once established the value of that employee to GAI rises significantly. We pay the best in the industry and our staff has a tremendous commitment to keeping the workplace fair and cooperative, with open communication. We establish clear expectations and we reinforce them without delay at any time they are not met. This leads to employees who are continuously improving and builds esteem and confidence. These are key ingredients to our high-performance team.

***Finally, where do you see the aviation and aerospace industry going in the foreseeable future? Do you have any advice or cautions to offer?***

Much advice and caution is included in my responses above. Our view of the immediate future is very positive. At some point the US deficit in trade and cash is going to affect the North American economy. Fortunately US productivity has been increasing and tax receipts from corporations over the next two years should decrease the budget deficit. If all the stars align, the US may miss a painful correction. Withdrawing from Iraq, increasing tax revenue, a weak dollar and increasing demand for high technology products and services from the US could create a perfect storm where US fortunes reverse substantially in a short period of time. On the other hand, terrorism, a prolonged stay in Iraq, high oil prices and declining US confidence in President Bush could lead to the opposite. With US sales effectively 90% of our business, we have had to cope with a strengthening Canadian dollar. Our success has continued despite this as a result of our conservative and cautious approach. GAI is entrepreneurial and so all of this could change if the right opportunity presents itself.