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## Quebec's latest Rhodes scholars are overwhelmed - for a moment

By PEGGY CURRAN, The Gazette November 22, 2010 8:48 AM

What's it take to become a Rhodes scholar in Quebec this year? Try poise, leadership, sporting prowess, a remarkable grade point average, a variety of interests outside the classroom and the ability to make a convincing argument or a delightful observation in English and French, not to mention Mandarin, Spanish, Arabic and maybe even beginner Farsi.

So what does one of these academic superstars say when they get the phone call learning they have been selected from a field of 34 candidates to receive the prestigious scholarship to study at Oxford University?

"Thank you, wow, thanks, merci," said L titia Villeneuve, a 23-year-old from Laval majoring in international law at Universit  du Qu bec   Monr al. "Oh, wow, thank you, vraiment, what a surprise," says Laurence Deschamps-Laporte, a 22-year-old from Repentigny who is majoring in international studies with a minor in Islamic studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

It's difficult to be articulate in any language when you are overwhelmed. Villeneuve and Deschamps-Laporte were chosen by the Quebec Rhodes committee after an intense weekend of interviews with 16 highly accomplished finalists.

Villeneuve recently returned from a six-month stint working for the City of Montreal at the Shanghai 2010 World Expo, where she had an opportunity to fine-tune her Mandarin, a language she began studying on her own initiative before a school trip with her CEGEP several years ago. She was general coordinator of her student association and headed an award winning delegation to the model United Nations in New York. At Oxford, she hopes to study for a masters in International Relations.

Deschamps-Laporte, who hopes to take a masters in Development Studies, received a Morehead-Cain merit scholarship to study at UNC. An accomplished artist with a keen interest in the Islamic world and the rights of women, she is also a long-distance runner.

She speaks French, English, Spanish, German, Arabic, as well as beginner Farsi and Luganda.

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