

CONSIDER THE JUSTIN TRUDEAU STORY



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CONTENDER

The Justin Trudeau Story

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The Candidate

Ladies and gentlemen, his opponent from the red corner, 180 pounds, the Papineau pugilist. Please welcome, Justin Truuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuudeuuuuuu!

His eyes are closed, his head bobs under the hood of a bright red robe. There are cheers and loud boos. Trudeau is the underdog, we've been told.

Look closely. There is a hint of a smile – some might call it a smirk – on the corner of his mouth, as if he knows how this will end.

Sun News host Ezra Levant tells the network's television audience: "He's wearing Liberal red, of course. I call him the shiny pony. He looks like he's in some sort of Zen yoga trance. All that dance training, that ballet training, it's going to come back tonight."

Co-host Brian Lilley: "Ah, there's his mother cheering on in the crowd, his wife sitting immediately behind us at a table of women. All have pink boxing gloves with them."

Levant: "I heard he wanted to use the pink boxing gloves, but that was vetoed by the Sun News Network."

Lilley: "Ooh, ooh... Ezra going for the... "

Levant: "...I saw him skipping rope..."

Lilley: "The low blow ... "

Levant: "He skips like my four-year-old daughter!"

Lilley: "The low blows before it's even started from Levant, but Trudeau walking in. He's got a determined look on his face."

Levant: "Yeah, he's a drama teacher. He's a high school drama teacher. This is called overacting, my friend. He's a dramatic thespian."

Politics is a blood sport fought in many rings. On this Saturday night, March 31, 2012, Liberal MP Justin Trudeau puts his reputation on the line for a charity boxing match against Conservative Senator Patrick Brazeau. The fight is broadcast on the Tory-friendly Sun News Network.

Ottawa has seen nothing like it. In the weeks leading up to the bout, there was a simmering Twitter rivalry, macho taunts and a topless weigh-in that featured Brazeau, wearing only a Speedo-like swimsuit and a headband, boasting about the size of his manhood.

The fight itself? It's over long before they can ring the bell on the third round.

In those five minutes in the ring, you learn everything you need to know about Trudeau, the man who wants to be prime minister, as he seeks the leadership of the moribund federal Liberal party.

He may not look like a traditional fighter, but he isn't afraid to get dirty.

He is often underestimated and relishes the role of the underdog.

He does little to dissuade people of their low expectations.

He will, when focused, outwork his competition.

He knows optics – loves the spotlight, and it loves him back.

He's shrewd, calculating.

Smarter than you think.

And, as he has shown from the hustings in Papineau, to that boxing ring in Ottawa, to his efforts to grab the leadership of the Liberal party, Trudeau picks fights he expects to win.

Hands in his pockets, Justin Trudeau swaggers into the conference centre lobby of Vancouver's swanky Westin Bayshore hotel. He's dressed in a slim navy suit and baby blue shirt, the top two buttons characteristically undone. Later this day, he'll wear a dark blue and yellow tie to spruce up the ensemble for the federal Liberal leadership candidates' first debate. (The red tie is nixed at the last minute to ensure that he stands out on stage against his four male competitors, all of whom, as predicted, wear red.)

Not that standing out is difficult. The 41-year-old politician sports brown wavy hair, trimmed to give him a more mature look. His skin is sun-kissed from a recent family holiday in Morocco.

Morning jitters appear to have calmed. The yoga session did the trick. Or maybe it was his walk along the Stanley Park seawall. Now, he is ready for the media and public attention he knows he attracts. As he chats with campaign volunteers, cameras flock to him like paparazzi to an A-list celebrity. Gerald Butts, his principal adviser, takes the role of unofficial photographer as dozens of Liberals seek to have their picture taken with the star candidate.

Some of the volunteers working the information tables of other leadership candidates look on with disdain as Trudeau shakes hands, poses for pictures and engages in small talk.

When Zlata Kosnica, a Westin hotel employee at the coat check, signals that she, too, would like a photo, Trudeau vaults over the four-foot counter to hug her and pose for a photograph. The scene is reminiscent of the whimsical ways of his father, the pirouetting Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

"He is amazing and I love him," Kosnica says of Justin. She was always fond of the elder Trudeau. "I am so happy that he is interested in politics the same way his father was."

Trudeau, the eldest child of Canada's 15th prime minister and Margaret Sinclair, enjoyed a moneyed and privileged upbringing. It's easy to dismiss him as a dilettante, someone who dabbled

in a wide range of academic and professional pursuits, committing fully to none, until his political destiny came knocking.

What has he done to deserve the leadership of a party that has held power for 84 years of Canada's 146 since Confederation?

He has a flare for the dramatic, in speech and action, and once referred to himself in the third person. When he gets excited, his narrow shoulders jump up and down and his arms flail about. He won't hesitate to take off his shirt or sport ridiculous facial hair for charitable causes. At times, he looks like a caricature of himself.

Trudeau has difficulty expressing himself. He is at once a staunch federalist but has said he might accept the breakup of the country and Quebec's independence if Stephen Harper moved the country so far to the right — on issues like abortion and gay marriage — that Canada was no longer recognizable to him.

He favours the Liberals' long-gun registry but as prime minister would not bring it back, except maybe in Quebec. He wants to run the country, but in his four years in Parliament has never brought forward a piece of legislation.

To his supporters and even some of his enemies, little of that matters. His good looks mask an intellect and work ethic that often go unnoticed, they say. Like boxing's best contenders, he's strategic, self-aware and takes calculated risks.

Trudeau, they say, is smarter than people give him credit for and should not be underestimated.

An Unusual Education

Justin Trudeau's c.v. does not read like those of most politicians: camp counsellor, white water rafting instructor, bungee jumping coach, snowboarding instructor, bouncer, high school teacher, radio host, engineer school dropout, grad school dropout, not-for-profit administrator, public speaker, member of Parliament.

His fans see the path of a smart, athletic young man who wasn't sure what he wanted to do. For critics, it's the résumé of a rich kid who can't commit.

At McGill University, where he earned his bachelor of arts in English and started his bachelor of education (he completed it at the University of British Columbia), Trudeau was a good student. He joined the debating union and worked as a peer leader for the sexual assault centre.

At the time, he was head over heels in love with a girl named Zully (pronounced Soolee), the daughter of a Colombian engineer who had moved his family to James Bay when she was an infant and then later settled in Montreal. The two had met at Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf, a private French Jesuit school that Pierre had also attended. Justin thought he would marry the young woman. She was gorgeous: brown skin, long curly black hair, brown eyes.

Then she dumped him and broke his heart.

The two dated for three years, plus another two on and off. In hindsight, Trudeau said the relationship was like any other first big love. "Always tough to end that first big relationship," he wrote in an email.

After graduating with his bachelor's degree in 1994, Trudeau, along with his longtime friend Mathieu Walker and two high school buddies, took a year off to travel the world. They started in London, and with 20 or so Brits, Australians and Finns, rented a modified truck and drove across France and Spain to Gibraltar. They caught a ferry to Morocco, travelled across the Sahara for three months, flew from Benin to Moscow, popped over to Finland and took the Trans-Siberian Railway east, eventually making their way to China, Thailand and Vietnam.

"I think Justin learned a lot on that trip as well, because, in the middle of the Sahara desert, no one cares about your name, no one cares who you are," Walker says.

In Africa, Trudeau decided to shave his long flowing locks on a lark. He thought it would be funny to pose like a celebrity mug shot, post-arrest.

"It was funny for like a day, but then he realized what he had done," Walker says. A few days later, Trudeau fell on his glasses and had to repair them with thick white tape. The handsome scion of a prime minister was suddenly a nerdy looking traveller in the middle of Africa with short-cropped hair and taped-up glasses.

"I think it took him down several notches," Walker says.

Trudeau and his friends, on similar tight budgets, cooked their food and camped. They had tense moments at border crossings when bribes were demanded and they feared losing their passports.

"I think he grew a lot just from this experience. I think it was a valuable character-constructing experience for him," Walker says.

Trudeau returned to Montreal to start his bachelor of education at McGill and two years later headed West. He wanted to get out of the "fishbowl" of Montreal and lead a more anonymous life, Butts says. He headed for Whistler.

Sean Smillie remembers the first time he laid eyes on Justin Trudeau, now a close friend. "He was wearing a ridiculous fireman's coat – an actual fireman's coat," Smillie says. "It was big and black, with yellow stripes and clasps on it."

Smillie, a B.C. native, was running a snowboarding program at the Whistler Blackcomb ski resort and was told that Trudeau would be one of his instructors. Trudeau would spend the week in Vancouver, attend classes at UBC and on Fridays drive his beaten-up Mercedes to Whistler. He slept on Smillie's couch for years, and the pair spent Saturdays and Sundays either teaching teenagers to snowboard or hitting the slopes on their free passes.

It took Smillie a few months to realize who his new friend was. He assumed Trudeau was a common French surname because so many French Canadians he had met on the ski hill shared the same last name. The discovery of his lineage had no effect on their friendship.

They watched B-horror movies, ate too many ramen noodles and discussed movie scripts. At the time, Smillie, who now runs his own video game company, Planet Fiction Studios, was trying his hand at scriptwriting. Trudeau offered advice. He was very creative and quite strict on grammar, Smillie says.

"To this day, we have been arguing one or two sentences that I wrote years ago in a werewolf script, just about the proper grammar," he says. Trudeau would make suggestions and Smillie would snap back: "It's a werewolf script. That's the way people talk in werewolf scripts."

The two hung out with what Smillie describes as a smart group of ski bums. They talked about books but never politics. They weren't big pot heads. Although everyone around them smoked marijuana, Trudeau says he only had a puff or so infrequently with friends and never instigated. He never smoked cigarettes, so any inhaling was invariably followed by unpleasant coughing, he says.

Smillie and Trudeau used their savings and tips instead for cheap beer, nachos and Jack and Coke at the Cinnamon Bear, a lounge at the base of Whistler Mountain. Trudeau prefers beer, but he still enjoys Jim Beam and Coke over ice – a drink that Smillie says he introduced him to because "it tastes so good and no one realizes how hammered you are."

Out in British Columbia, Trudeau never had a serious girlfriend. There were lots of girls, but they didn't stick around.

Trudeau was "smooth-ish" with the ladies, charming in an awkward goofy way, Smillie says. "We were all young and single, hanging out in Whistler together. So yeah, that was another big pursuit," he says with a smile.

And although Trudeau had some money, he didn't show it. Like his friends, he worked odd jobs to help pay the bills. At night, he served as a doorman at a bar, the Rogue Wolf nightclub. Tall and lean, he didn't have the build of a bouncer. "It was definitely his outgoing personality and his charm that got people out of arguments and fights," Smillie says.

On the ski hill, Trudeau was a menace. He was gangly and knocked kids down as he tried to help them. Riding next to him was like "riding next to a giant giraffe flailing and wailing all over the place," Smillie says. "Thankfully, he's toned that down a lot, but I still see it coming out when he gets really excited. You know the dramatic and the verbose, he was always like that."

Trudeau taught the more rambunctious teenagers. The program, Ride Tribe, was designed for 13- to 18-year-olds. Trudeau would teach them to snowboard, and when the kids got tired, he would build forts and organize snowball fights. He was always good with kids.

Eventually, Trudeau, Smillie and their group of friends tired of Whistler.

"Whistler was like Disneyland, but intellectually it was pretty weak," Smillie says. They packed up their gear and got grown-up jobs.

By this time, Trudeau had earned his bachelor of education degree. He had taught as a supply teacher and now had a regular teaching gig at West Point Grey Academy, an elite private school where tuition is now \$18,000 for Grades 8 to 12.

Between 1999 and 2001, Trudeau taught elementary school math and high school French, humanities and drama, taking over a class when a teacher went on maternity leave. Trudeau's boss, the head of the senior school, Stephen Anthony, describes him as "highly valued, spirited and enthusiastic teacher" who was liked by staff and students.

Although Trudeau spent most of his teaching time at West Point Grey, his campaign plays down the fact that he taught mostly rich kids.

During an interview with Global BC this January, in which he stressed his B.C. connections, Trudeau fibbed and said he had spent more time teaching at Sir Winston Churchill, a public school, than at West Point Grey.

"I lived here for five or six years, I absolutely loved it. I did a large part of my teaching here. And I was teaching mostly at Winston Churchill secondary school up on Oak. And I loved it," Trudeau told interviewer Jas Johal.

At a \$500-a-person fundraiser at the Quilchena Golf and Country Club in Richmond, B.C., later that evening, former Liberal MP Herb Dhaliwal introduced Trudeau as someone who

taught at Sir Winston Churchill, a school that Dhaliwal attended. He never mentioned West Point Grey.

Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School's principal, Jack Bailey, says nobody left at the school remembers Trudeau. "Nobody recalls him, nobody recalls anything," he says over the phone.

Bailey did remember Trudeau from a few of his stints supply teaching at another Vancouver school, Prince of Wales Secondary. "All the women thought he was Mr. McDreamy," says Bailey, who was vice-principal there at the time.

Many of the students at West Point Grey remember Trudeau fondly. Cameron Sinclair had Trudeau as a French teacher for Grades 10 and 11 and a drama teacher in Grade 12. He was also on the Ultimate disc team that Trudeau coached and liked him so much that he asked if he could job-shadow his favourite teacher on the weekend once at Whistler. Trudeau agreed.

"If I could have had every teacher to be like him, guaranteed I would have done better in school," the now 29-year-old says. Trudeau's door was open and he was always ready and willing to lend a hand.

The endorsements are not universal. Nicole Jinn, now 25, had Trudeau as a French teacher in Grade 9. In a phone interview from Blacksburg, Va., where she is finishing her masters degree, Jinn says she remembers Trudeau as an average teacher, someone who was involved with student groups and who hung out with the popular kids.

"I do recall what seemed to me like a favourite group of students who he would hang around with more," she says. "In terms of his teaching, there was nothing spectacular but nothing horrible either."

She was an extremely shy student and says Trudeau, like all the other teachers at West Point Grey, did nothing to reach out to her. "I was just not fitting in well with the school, and he was no exception to the teachers playing favourites with groups of students."

But for Sinclair, Trudeau was an inspirational teacher. "I learned to trust him as a teacher and as much as people say you can't trust politicians, I think he is one that you can."

Smillie, who visited Trudeau's classes, says he was surprised his friend didn't stick with teaching.

"I just thought he was a brilliant teacher," Smillie says.

In Vancouver, Trudeau shared a beautiful apartment at the corner of 12th Avenue and Granville Street with another West Point Grey teacher he had met at UBC, Christopher Ingvaldson, and his wife, Pansy. Their place was a hub for dinner parties and get-togethers.

"That was always a big thing with Justin, I always marvelled at his ability to bring people together... I met a tonne of friends in Vancouver through him," says Smillie, who also lived in the fourth-floor apartment at one point.

Thomas Panos, another friend of Trudeau's who lives in Vancouver, says Justin's wit, humour and a sarcastic bent drew people to him. Whenever they went to bars, boys and girls would

gather around. "You never got him alone, unless you went to the restaurant or you stayed at home," Panos says.

In Vancouver, Trudeau stayed the uncommitted lady's man. "He kind of liked it that way," says Panos, who runs a travel agency. Trudeau's friends took great pleasure watching him deal with the women who routinely threw themselves at him.

"There are a lot of fun stories about being at parties on 12th and having him juggle what was going on inside. It was hysterical to watch. Nothing bad, it was just he'd have three girls at one party who were all sort of interested in him and he's trying, going 'They are all here, what am I going to do?' sort of thing. And it was really funny watching him," Panos says.

Trudeau was a bona-fide chick magnet, despite the hideous tie-dyed kangaroo he wore incessantly.

"A tie-dyed pullover and he got more action in that pullover than I have got in my entire life," Panos says.

Even his aunt, Janet Sinclair, remembers the female attraction to young Justin. "My sister has two young, pretty, blonde daughters, and they would all be there, and it was pretty funny, because all the girls were after Justin, and they were giving these young girls the glare not knowing that they are Justin's cousins," Sinclair says laughing.

The bookies have already decided.

"Brazeau's a big favourite to win, we're saying there's an over 80-per-cent chance that he will win this fight," Adam Burns, the sports book manager for online casino Bodog.ca, tells Metro Ottawa. "Trudeau is a 3-to-1 underdog. Basically what that means from a gambling perspective is you would win three times your money if he wins."

Brazeau's black belt in karate and his physical strength have most convinced he is unbeatable.

"I wouldn't be surprised if Trudeau got knocked out or at least fell down once in this fight," Burns says.

Trudeau isn't convinced.

"I'm a better boxer than him; we're not doing karate," Trudeau tells the CBC's Julie Van Dusen.

"Boxing is muscles, yes, but it is also heart and brain power, strategy, and I think I'm going to beat him on all three of those things."

"You think you have a bigger brain than he has?" Van Dusen asks.

"I think I'm smarter," Trudeau says. "Certainly, he's gone into this announcing to everyone he is going to win, which means unless he wins decisively and early on, everyone will say 'Oh it was obvious he was going to win,' so he doesn't even win much. I go in as a massive underdog, nobody expects me to do well at all. If I do well, let alone

if I win — when I win — everyone will realize that there is a possibility that Justin Trudeau knows what he's doing"

Trudeau knows exactly what he's doing.

This fight is about more than boxing for charity and so he takes no chances. Over five months, he trains in Ottawa twice a week with Final Round Boxing club coach Matt Whitteker — who also trains Brazeau. And on weekends in Montreal, he has his own coach, Ali Nestor.

"He's a really, really hard worker," Whitteker, a self-described Conservative supporter, says. "When he got in the gym, he was 1,000 per cent focused on the task at hand."

No stranger to the gym, Trudeau has been boxing since his early 20s, drawn to the sport because "it was about hitting and it was about getting hit, and it was about real physical toughness in a way that I knew I relished," he says.

Trudeau skips rope and run stairs at Carleton University, learns to throw a better jab and a right hand. By the end of training, he spars against better and larger opponents. His wife is worried he will get seriously hurt in the bout, so he brings her to his Montreal gym to see him spar against bruisers bigger than Brazeau. She leaves with more confidence.

"Justin was really, really focused. His skill level increased, but it was more that he took really, really good instructions," Whitteker says. "He had Pat (Brazeau) go out and basically try to kill him, and he stayed relaxed, stayed focused and kept a calm, cool and collected head. And he ended up doing exactly what he was coached to do.

"I'm just saying that those traits are emblematic of what you'd want in a leader."



A Political Family

Sitting in a beige sofa chair in the warm yellow living room of her second-floor Vancouver apartment, his aunt Janet Sinclair, Margaret Trudeau's second oldest sister, says it was always assumed that her nephew would follow in his father's footsteps.

"It has always been talked about that Justin would be prime minister," Sinclair says. "My dad had hoped to be prime minister but didn't. I think with Justin it is just something that is in his blood. Politics is in his blood."

Many Canadians remember the day Justin Trudeau was born. He arrived on a snowy Christmas evening in 1971, less than 10 months after his father, prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, at age 51, had surprised the country by marrying Margaret Sinclair, a flower child 29 years his junior.

It was a Saturday and the nation's newspapers were still leading with the news of his birth two days later. "6-pound, 9-ounce boy born on Christmas to Trudeaus," read a headline in *The Globe and Mail*. "It's a son for Margaret and Pierre," said *The Ottawa Journal*, displaying a large photograph of Margaret and the Ottawa Civic Hospital. Justin's birth was the first for a sitting prime minister in 102 years. Thousands wrote to congratulate the couple. Hand-knitted baby sweaters, bonnets, bibs and booties flooded 24 Sussex Drive, the prime minister's residence.

"Every woman in Canada seemed to have knitted her appreciation of the event," Margaret Trudeau wrote in her book *Beyond Reason*.

His aunt, who often stayed with the boys in Ottawa, remembers Justin as a smart, caring kid, with a great sense of humour, who loved being outdoors and was exceptionally good with children. She remembers him organizing diving competitions for all his cousins one summer at the lake.

"He was a good kid. He followed rules. Obviously, he wasn't perfect. No child is ever perfect, but he was good," she says.

Like his brothers, Alexandre (Sacha), who was also born on Christmas two years later in 1973 and Michel (Micha) born on Oct. 2, 1975, Trudeau spent his early years in the public eye. The boys were mini-celebrities – regular features on their father's Christmas cards and the newspaper pages.

It didn't hurt that Trudeau was especially photogenic. As a baby, he had blond locks and skin that tanned easily. His mother described him as a cheerful, bright, "manically energetic little boy."

As a toddler, Justin was allowed to run wild during events at 24 Sussex. After the separation of his parents in 1977, he occasionally tagged along on his father's business trips. Reporters ate it up. During a 10-day European tour in 1980, they wrote about how the eight-year-old had made loon

cries on the steps of the Lapp museum in Norway and how he had refused to go to bed so he could take a helicopter tour with his dad to see the midnight sun.

By the time he was 13, Trudeau says he had visited about 50 countries.

Even then, he seemed to like the attention. A superb mimic and practical joker, he was a jovial kid who liked to make others laugh.

Fellow Liberal MP Dominic LeBlanc, a childhood friend and the son of former governor general Roméo LeBlanc, babysat the Trudeau boys and taught Justin how to make crank calls. LeBlanc was only slightly older, 14, when Trudeau was 11.

Using a list of parents' phone numbers from Rockcliffe Park Public School, they would call some of the mothers, assume fake identities and set up coffee dates, he explains. They used the yellow pages for classic pranks.

"Is your fridge running?"

"Yes?"

"Well you better run after it," LeBlanc recounts.

"We'd giggle and hang up," he says.

Justin could be a clown. He rode a unicycle in Ottawa and later as a highschooler in Montreal when he attended Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf. His staple of party tricks include the ability to fall down stairs without injury, yo-yo tricks and a flair for drawing.

The Trudeau boys, friends and family explain, are fearless, a trait many attribute to their father. It's why they excel at certain sports such as white water canoeing, backcountry skiing, snowboarding for Justin and mountain biking for Sacha. Trudeau once told a Radio-Canada program that he had two fears as a child: needles and waterfalls. Then he started giving blood regularly and became a white water rafting instructor.

His father, Justin says, taught his children to rise above what was safe and easy.

Some say the boys take unwarranted risks, as when Trudeau's youngest brother, Micha, was swept into Kokanee Lake in 1998 after he was caught in an avalanche while backcountry skiing in B.C.

The death rocked the family and shocked Pierre, who appeared to age overnight. Micha was a happy-go-lucky guy who loved the outdoors and had little interest in politics. He built bridges between his brothers. His death hit Justin hard.

It was a really dark time, Trudeau's longtime friend, Walker says. "He got stronger from it. It didn't take him down. It made him stronger."

Justin's relationship with his middle brother was always rockier. Sacha, now a freelance documentary filmmaker, is perceived as the intellectual in the family. When Justin decided to make the leap into federal politics, several Liberals thought the wrong Trudeau boy had made the plunge — and they didn't hesitate to tell him.

Where Justin is the family extrovert, Sacha is the opposite: he can be more aggressive, belligerent and impatient; he takes longer to warm up to. Although the two are close, they often argue.

As for Justin, he has a charisma and a magnetism that draw people to him, like his father. But like his mother, he's exuberant, warm and affectionate. Justin likes the spotlight, craves it. He wants people to like him and makes friends easily. At times, he has a thin skin.

"Justin is an emotional person. He's not a cold person, he is emotional. He is human," his aunt says.

Trudeau was a fun kid, but he was always serious, Sinclair adds, especially after his mother's mental health problems and his parents' separation.

"I think when Margaret was so sick and left, Justin took on a lot of the responsibility... . I think for a long time he thought it was his fault that his mom left, like the usual kid thing, and I think he sort of bore that as the oldest."

Trudeau was always protective of his mother, but he was extremely close to his father, who raised the three boys as a single parent after Margaret left. Pierre told an interviewer once that he thought Justin was more similar to him than his other boys.

But Trudeau's aunt says Justin most closely resembles her father, James Sinclair, a four-term Liberal MP for Vancouver North who served as fisheries minister under prime minister Louis St-Laurent. Like her dad, Justin is outgoing, approachable, likeable, and remembers names, she says.

"Justin is not as disciplined as his father (Pierre) was ... Sacha is more like Pierre."

"(But) Pierre had a twinkle, he liked to play tricks and fool people too. And Justin has that for sure," Sinclair adds.

While he doesn't often raise his voice, Trudeau likes a good debate and can mount a strong argument. Intelligence, his aunt Janet says, comes from his mother. People probably don't think Margaret is intelligent, "but Margaret was by the far the brightest of all of us," Sinclair says.

Trudeau the high schooler was a natural leader, says friend Mathieu Walker, now a cardiologist at St. Mary's Hospital Center in Montreal.

The two met in a Montreal school cafeteria in 1984, when Trudeau was in Grade 8. Walker was among the few bilingual students at Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf. He, Trudeau and a group of five other "anglo" guys started hanging out. They called each other "The Gang" and are close to this day.

Trudeau didn't stick out at school, except for the RCMP escorts who drove him to and from the Collège, Walker says. Trudeau's home was certainly unusual. The iconic Cormier House at 1418 Pine Ave. was filled with artifacts collected during Pierre Trudeau's tenure as prime minister. The marble-walled home wasn't very welcoming, and Walker was surprised that Justin's room was smaller than his. No one got the sense that Trudeau was rich, Walker says.

"I think his dad made a point of not spoiling his kids."

Walker recounts a lunchtime school break when Trudeau decided the two boys would explore an old abandoned hunting club near the school. The police were called and the boys ended up serving detention.

"I decided not to follow Justin without thinking about it first next time," Walker says. "He's a good charmer. He can make terrible things look sometimes good."

When asked about Trudeau's political career, Walker gets embarrassed explaining the gut feeling he always had about his friend.

"I can't explain it to you ... I guess because I'm a doctor and I really shouldn't be talking this way, but I always felt that this was his destiny," Walker says.

It wasn't that Trudeau was a particularly politically active student; he wasn't. He wasn't class president or a card-carrying Liberal. He was focused on the "now" and completely apolitical.

Still, Walker always knew that, at some point, Trudeau would enter politics.

"I just felt that that was his path, that was meant to be from an early point in time. I just felt that that was going to happen," Walker says. "Sometimes Justin would say, 'Nah, nah, nah,' but I never felt convinced by his no's. I always felt that when the time was right, he was going to make the leap. And so when he did, I wasn't surprised."

Canada has its own history of political dynasties. W.A.C. Bennett and his son, Bill, were each premier of British Columbia. Quebec premier Daniel Johnson's two sons, Pierre-Marc and Daniel, served short stints as provincial premier under different party banners. Prime minister Paul Martin Jr.'s father, Paul Martin, was a longtime Liberal cabinet minister. NDP leader Jack Layton's father, Robert, was a Mulroney cabinet minister; his widow is MP Olivia Chow, and his son, Michael, is a Toronto city councillor.

In the east, there's the MacKay family; in the west, the Mannings. But none has enjoyed the same sort of popular appeal as the Trudeaus.

When Trudeau is asked whether he considers himself part of a political dynasty, his answer: "...Dynasty? Nah."

"Dynasties are about passing on hereditary titles and there was nothing hereditary or inevitable about going into politics or me even being successful in politics," he says.

Still a backbencher, Justin Trudeau is already one of Canada's best-known and most recognized politicians. Searches for his name outrank all other politicians but Stephen Harper. On his recent trip to Kamloops, B.C., 600 showed up to hear him speak. Organizers had hoped for 200. A bar where Trudeau was holding a Monday evening meet-and-greet in Ottawa's eastern suburb of Orléans had to stop patrons and curious onlookers from coming in because it had reached fire capacity of 220 only 10 minutes after Trudeau had arrived. University halls are often packed wall-to-wall. Overflow rooms to accommodate all those interested in hearing him speak are not uncommon.

Trudeau knows the fascination around his candidacy is because of his last name and his father's legacy. At times, he embraces it, evoking his father's accomplishments in his speeches, talking up the Canada that once was. Other times, he shuns it.

When Justin is introduced to a group of staunch Liberal supporters at a Richmond fundraiser earlier this year by former Liberal MP Herb Dhaliwal, the introduction goes long on Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

"All of us, we feel part of your family because we've seen you grow up with your dad, and many of us knew your dad, who was a great Canadian, in my view one of the greatest prime minister's we'll have. In fact, let me say that I was to be involved in politics because of Pierre Elliott Trudeau," Dhaliwal says to applause.

"He is the one that started multiculturalism..."

On and on Dhaliwal goes about Pierre's legacy.

"So I'm so glad you decided to run," Dhaliwal concludes before passing over the podium to Trudeau.

In the car, on the way back from the event, Trudeau's first words, somewhat jokingly, between bites of a deli sandwich, are: "Thank you for introducing my father, Herb."

"He's not trying to be his father," says Walker. "He's his own man, and he has qualities from both of his parents and I think it makes him a very well-balanced kind of guy."

Later, in an interview, Trudeau says the family name opens doors, but makes it tougher to walk through them.

"To justify the fact that I have been given opportunities, I've had to make sure that I've worked harder than anyone else around," he says. "It would terrify me to think I was somehow coasting on the name."

Trudeau has thrown himself into the political limelight fully prepared. He knows the sacrifices he and his family will have to make if he wins the Liberal leadership, his aunt says. "It is not a nice life, really," Sinclair says. "(Politicians) are not treated well."

Rise Of The Son

The event is a charity boxing bout for Fight for the Cure. Trudeau and Brazeau, although always polite, love the thought of tearing each other apart.

Everyone in Ottawa knows it's a Conservative vs. Liberal brawl, and whoever wins will have bragging rights.

"He doesn't put a foot forward without thinking about it," Trudeau's friend Terry DiMonte says long after the event. "A lot of people saw the boxing match as something that was, you know, stupid, comical and frivolous."

Justin wanted the national attention without having to talk about his political ambitions, DiMonte says. It worked.

Weeks before the fight, DiMonte asks Trudeau why he's fighting.

"He started to laugh and I started to laugh along with him, because I knew that a) he had an agenda and b) he was training like a son of a bitch. He doesn't do anything with the idea of losing."

"The biggest bullet in Justin's gun – whether he is running for office or meeting people – is the way they underestimate him," DiMonte adds. "That's going to be one of his greatest advantages. People are going to underestimate him all the way to the top."

At the time, even his friend Mathieu Walker thinks Trudeau will get his "butt whipped" by Brazeau.

"What I told everyone was that he was going to win and surprise everyone, I said that because that is what he has done in the past in terms of sometimes people underestimating them, but deep down I had a fear that they were going to hurt him, that he was going to be bleeding or have a broken arm or something."

Trudeau's high school friend Allen Steverman brings his medical bag to the fight.

"We were scared he was going to get hurt," Walker says.

If Trudeau intended to plot his way to the country's top job, Gerald Butts, his college friend, says he didn't show any serious signs of it when he was at McGill University.

The two met in line at the University Centre, introduced by a common friend, Jonathan Ablett, when Trudeau was 19 and Butts, 20. Trudeau, who was coming out of an awkward phase, had long hair and black-rimmed glasses with Coke-bottle lenses. He cracked jokes and

talked more about hockey than politics. The two English majors, Trudeau and Butts, really got to know each other driving home to Montreal late one night from a debating tournament at Princeton. Trudeau's father had lent his son a ratty old Chevy that "drove like a tank," and the two friends, tired and giddy, kept each other awake during the 12-hour drive from New Jersey.

Trudeau was a good speaker but it was Butts who earned the accolades, twice winning the Canadian National Debating Championship. Walker says Justin looked up to Butts and respected his advice.

Theirs was a typical friendship. They talked about girlfriends, hockey, books, the debating union and what they wanted to do with their lives. At that point, Trudeau was keen on just about anything but politics, Butts says.

He acknowledges that they talked about Trudeau some day becoming prime minister, but the talk was never serious. "We talked about it like I'd like to be goaltender for the Montreal Canadiens. There was no serious discussion."

That changed when Trudeau delivered a moving eulogy at his father's funeral service in 2000.

At 80, Pierre Trudeau had been diagnosed with metastasized prostate cancer. His doctor had also told him he had early stages of dementia. The prostate cancer could be treated, but the former prime minister wanted the cancer to claim him before he lost his mind. With his sons, Pierre planned the last six months of his life. Trudeau returned from Vancouver to spend time at his dad's side in Montreal. They sat and talked often.

A week before his father's death, Trudeau approached Terry DiMonte for help. The two had been friends for about a decade, a relationship that Pierre had looked cautiously upon because DiMonte was a member of the media — a morning show host at a rock radio station who loved to talk politics. Justin loved rock and, as a late teen, had once called the station to win a prize.

Six months later, when Trudeau wanted tickets to The Rolling Stones, he called DiMonte. Despite the 14-year-age gap between them, the two became quite close. By Trudeau's early 20s, they were spending lazy summer afternoons on Magnan's terrace in Pointe-Saint-Charles in Montreal's west end talking politics: which cabinet ministers were doing a good job, whether the government should lower the voting age, what should be done about the environment. DiMonte says he didn't kowtow to Trudeau and enjoyed seeing him mature. "When I thought he was full of shit, I told him so, and I think he liked that," he says, laughing.

DiMonte remembers Trudeau telling him, in his late 20s, about the rivalry between then-prime minister Jean Chrétien and his finance minister, Paul Martin Jr. Trudeau predicted that there would be "a little bit of a civil war" and that Martin would end up prime minister. Then, Trudeau told DiMonte, the Conservatives would take power because "politics is cyclical" and they would govern for a term or two while the Liberals scrambled to pick a new leader. That would be his time to enter politics, he told DiMonte.

"Why would you like to run if the Liberals were not going to be in power?" DiMonte asked Trudeau.

"Because I don't want to be an MP while they are in power... . The thing you want to do is: you want to win a seat as a backbencher," Trudeau said, according to DiMonte's recollection of the conversation.

"With my profile, with my last name, I would be better off just being a backbencher. It will take me a while to get to know (Parliament) Hill, learn the ins and outs of the party, make my way through the snakes, through what's going on in the Liberal party and the changes they are going through, and, while I'm doing that, I can also begin to build a national network."

Trudeau's answer stunned DiMonte. "I said, 'How do you know all this is going to happen?'" "

"Well, I don't, but based on the political map and the timing and the way things work in politics, it's my best guess," he says Trudeau told him.

DiMonte went home that night convinced Trudeau would one day be prime minister.

When Pierre Elliott Trudeau died on Sept. 28, 2000, and a media circus erupted outside the family home on Pine Avenue, Trudeau sought refuge in DiMonte's home.

"I don't think (Justin) was ready," DiMonte says of Pierre Elliott Trudeau's passing. "I think there were more things he wanted to share with his father."

That week Trudeau was alternating between moments of breakdown and funeral planning. One day, Terry Mosher, the Aislin cartoonist, dropped by with a drawing of Pierre that he wanted to publish. Mosher was concerned that he might hurt the family's feelings and he wanted assurances Justin was okay with it. The drawing featured Pierre paddling in a canoe, alone, the sun setting. When Justin saw it, he broke down and cried.

Pierre Elliott Trudeau's funeral service on Tuesday, Oct. 3, 2000, at Montreal's Notre-Dame Basilica, drew dignitaries from all over the world. Among them: Cuban President Fidel Castro, former U.S. president Jimmy Carter, the Aga Khan and Prince Andrew, the Duke of York. Four former prime ministers attended: Joe Clark, John Turner, Brian Mulroney and Kim Campbell. Leonard Cohen was at the nationally televised service along with several colleagues and friends of Pierre.

Justin had spent a week working with Butts, DiMonte and several others on the eulogy, but he'd been thinking about it for much longer. "I knew this was going to be an important moment for me and for the country," Trudeau recalls.

At the service, he stood in front of a microphone, a red rose in his lapel, his father's coffin to his right.

He gazed around the room as he addressed the crowd, biting his lip before recounting, in a somewhat theatrical delivery that some would later dismiss as contrived, how his father and Grandpa Sinclair had taken him on his first official trip at the age of six. It was to Alert, Canada's northernmost point, and while he had hoped that the North Pole trip meant he would see more

of his dad, his father still had work to do, and Justin was getting bored. He didn't understand the purpose of the trip, he said, until he was hustled out in a Jeep one frigid afternoon on a "top-secret mission." They stopped at a red building, and he was boosted up to a window. He told the funeral congregation how he rubbed his sleeve up against the frosted glass, through which he saw a man hunched over a cluttered work-table.

"He was wearing a red suit with a furry white trim," Justin said with a smile, his eyes watering. "And that's when I understood just how powerful and wonderful my father was." The dignitaries and family members erupted in laughter and applause.

While many Canadians were brought to tears by Trudeau's speech, some saw the eulogy as part political performance. The Toronto Sun's Peter Worthington described it as a staged, calculated, neo-political speech by an actor, a poseur and an exhibitionist.

Indeed, Trudeau's last words "Je t'aime, papa," his slow approach toward the casket, how he dropped his head and wept – all made for a perfect television moment. But was it genuine or staged?

Canadians flocked to Justin's defence. The suggestion that politics played any part in the eulogy still rankles Butts.

"This is one of the type of things that gets my goat about the way people think about Justin," he says. "He is a human being. He was giving a speech eulogizing his dead father... . He wasn't thinking outside that church... . It wasn't the launch of his political career... . Justin wanted people to know that his dad really loved his kids. That was the purpose of that speech."

Trudeau knew the eulogy would draw lots of attention, but adds, "It wasn't a political speech at all." He wanted to give the country "one last big cry" and show what type of son Pierre Elliott Trudeau raised. "That may seem more, I don't know, self-centered than it actually is, but it was important for me to do right by him."

A month after the funeral, the Trudeau and Butts had a serious conversation about Justin running for office. Prime minister Jean Chrétien made it known there would be a place for Pierre's son, if he was ready. But Justin wasn't. Not yet.

Two years later, however, in an interview with Maclean's magazine, Trudeau revealed his ultimate intentions.

"When it happens, it will be in my own time," he told Jonathon Gatehouse. "My father was 20 years older than me when he got into politics. I won't be rushed."

"I'm far from a finished product," he explained. "I haven't done anything. I haven't accomplished anything. I'm a moderately engaging, reasonably intelligent 30-year-old, who's had an interesting life – like someone who was raised by wolves, or the person that cultivated an extremely large pumpkin."

Sometime in 2003, when Butts was working as policy secretary for then-Ontario Liberal opposition leader Dalton McGuinty, he met with Trudeau over dinner at a Toronto Indian restaurant, The Host.

Trudeau peppered his friend with questions about life in politics. "Was it bearable?" "Was it full of cynical bullshit?" "What did it do to your private life?" Butts told him it was doable if he wanted it.

Trudeau knew people were fascinated with him, but he thought he needed to do something with his life before he entered politics: build a business, perhaps, or get a law degree, maybe write a book.

He was restless. After returning to Montreal in 2002, he hadn't bothered to apply for his Quebec teaching certification. He joined the board of directors of Katimavik, the national youth volunteering organization that his father established in 1977, and became its chair in 2003, the same year he quit his engineering degree at l'École Polytechnique de Montréal. He started a masters degree in environmental geography at McGill in the summer of 2005, and then abandoned it in the fall of 2006.

Trudeau toyed with his B-list celebrity status: he took part in CBC's literary panel "Canada Reads" in 2003; introduced the Dalai Lama in 2004; worked for CKAC radio station in Montreal and reported on the Athens Olympics. He even played the role of Talbot Mercer Papineau in the 2006 CBC miniseries "The Great War." He joined the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society as an unpaid spokesman in 2003.

"He tried different things but ultimately realized that he wasn't getting true pleasure from those things," says friend Mathieu Walker. "What would happen is he would start into it and then his attention would sort of, he would get bored a little bit."

There was, however, no uncertainty about Sophie Grégoire, a Quebec television personality Trudeau fell immediately in love with in 2004.

The Political Ring

Friend Thomas Panos first learned that Trudeau was in love when he called in June of 2004 asking for a business-class ticket to Athens for his girlfriend. Trudeau was attending the Olympic Games as a reporter for CKAC.

"She's the one," he told Panos. He had met Sophie Grégoire, a childhood friend of his brother, Michel, when she and Justin co-hosted a Starlight Children's Foundation event. They'd hit it off, and the following day she sent him an email suggesting they meet up. But Trudeau never responded.

"I knew that the day I went out for coffee with her, that would be the last day I would ever have as a single man," Trudeau told CPAC's Catherine Clark on the program "Beyond Politics" in 2009. He had a few loose ends to wrap up, he said. Three months later, Trudeau bumped into Grégoire in Montreal and apologized for not writing back. They went out and over dinner he told her they would have to skip dating and go straight to engagement. "I am going to spend the rest of my life with you," he declared.

There was nothing impulsive about his decision, he told Clark. "It was a deep recognition that Sophie was the person I wanted to spend my life with."

Mathieu Walker says he understands what hit Justin. In his last year at Brébeuf, Walker was looking for a prom date and was set up with Sophie. After meeting her once, Walker wrote in his agenda: "She's the most beautiful girl, I am in love with her, she's so fantastic." A week later, she called him and said her dad wouldn't let her go to the dance. "My heart was kinda' broken, even though I had only met her once," Walker says.

Friends say Sophie, 38, is ideal for Trudeau: she is a strong independent woman who had her own career and wasn't besotted with the Trudeau name.

"Justin can be pretty charming and can charm his way out of most things," DiMonte says. "In Sophie, he met his match."

To be Justin's wife, you need a certain skillset, says Walker. "You have to have a certain personality, you have to like being looked at or spoken about, you have to be social and you've got to be accepting of this lifestyle and I think she's perfect for him."

Friends say Sophie thrives on attention, is high energy, likes action and needs to be entertained. Recently certified as a yoga instructor, she enjoys travel and has a great sense of humour. Unlike Trudeau, she's a big spender with a soft spot for luxury hotels.

She's a supportive wife who has always backed Trudeau's political aspirations, and she believes in destiny, his aunt Janet says.

An engaging speaker, Sophie talks often about motherhood and her volunteer activities with Plan and Shield of Athena, a non-profit organization for victims of family violence that operates in Trudeau's riding.

Trudeau and Grégoire were married on May 28, 2005. Always the showman, Trudeau arrived at the church in his father's 1959 Mercedes wearing a gold suit. Their first child, Xavier James, was born on Oct. 18, 2007, Pierre Elliott Trudeau's birthday. Their daughter, Ella Grace, was born on Feb. 5, 2009.

Married and earning several hundred thousand dollars on the public speaking circuit, Trudeau was ready for a professional change. (According to documents provided by his campaign, and first published in the *Ottawa Citizen*, Trudeau earned \$290,000 in 2006 and \$462,000 in 2007). Public speaking had bolstered his confidence. People wanted to hear what he had to say. Although he continued to chair Katimavik and sit on the board of directors of the Canadian Avalanche Foundation, he felt politics calling.

The Liberal leadership race in 2006 was a pivotal point. At the federal leadership convention, Trudeau backed Gerard Kennedy, an affable unilingual Ontario cabinet minister who ended up as kingmaker, crowning Stéphane Dion as leader over Bob Rae and Michael Ignatieff. Kennedy was preaching a message of party renewal, and Trudeau delivered, in the words of Bruce Young – one of his current leadership organizers in British Columbia – a "half-decent speech" to party delegates. Trudeau basked in the media and public spotlight.

"Frankly, I think he got a taste of how much he liked it and how good he was at it," Butts says.

Justin Trudeau's greatest political achievement to date is his electoral victory in Papineau. Trudeau likes to say he "outworked everyone else on the ground" and won a contest that no one expected him to take.

It is a testament to his political skills and calculation that he pulled it off.

In order to silence some of the critics who would predictably contend he was riding on his father's coattails, he felt he needed a fight. He needed to run and win in a riding where he would be viewed as the underdog.

The Papineau decision was long in the making. The day after he won the 2006 Liberal leadership, Stéphane Dion told Trudeau he needed his help and urged him to run. Trudeau mulled it over, talked about it with his wife, but was still unsure. Later that December, he sat down with Butts, Dick O'Hagan, his father's former communications adviser, and Gordon Ashworth, the Liberal party's former national director under Pierre Elliott Trudeau and the man who ran the Liberals' last election campaign. Both veterans strongly encouraged him to run. It

was not clear then that Dion would lose the next election, but even if he did, he might win the next go-round and give Trudeau the chance to serve in cabinet and gain experience.

The Liberal party had made overtures about offering Trudeau Outremont, a safe Liberal seat and the riding in which he lived. A few days before Christmas, Trudeau called Dion from a Canadian Tire and asked him if he could run in Outremont. In late January, after then-Liberal MP Jean Lapierre resigned his seat in Outremont, Trudeau says Dion offered him Saint-Lambert instead, a riding that had been held by the Bloc Québécois since 2004. But by then, Trudeau had his eye on Papineau.

"If I would have given him a safe seat, he wouldn't have had the ability to show that he had a first name," Dion says in an interview.

In mid-February Trudeau met with the riding executive for Papineau.

The multicultural riding is Canada's poorest, with the lowest average family income in the country, and is the smallest federal district at nine square kilometres. In 2006, it fell under the Bloc Québécois' hold. Vivian Barbot, the francophone MP, had beaten the Liberal incumbent by less than 1,000 votes. And although in enemy hands, it had a fifty-plus-year history of electing Liberal MPs. A section of the district had once formed part of Trudeau's father's Mont Royal riding.

Barbot was popular, especially in Villeray, a sovereigntist-heavy section in the middle of the district. Nearly 49 per cent of the riding was francophone. Another 46 per cent claimed neither French nor English as their first language and 5 per cent ranked English as their mother tongue. There were lots of Greeks, as well as South Asians, Arabs, Latin Americans, Italians and a number of anglophones. Some of the Greeks remembered volunteering for Trudeau's dad, and they were ready to lend his son a hand.

Justin's first meeting with Luc Cousineau, the president of the Papineau Liberal riding association (and now the chief financial officer for his leadership campaign) was at the Queen Elizabeth, a downtown luxury hotel.

"Ça pas été smooth," Cousineau says over lunch at a Montreal food court. It was a bit bumpy, he says of their chat.

Trudeau thought the meeting was at 4 p.m. while Cousineau was sure it was scheduled for 4:30 p.m. When he arrived, possibly 30 minutes late, Trudeau was frustrated, Cousineau says.

Then Cousineau's cellphone rang. It was his ailing father's oncologist, so he kept 35-year-old Trudeau waiting while he spoke with the doctor. After hearing Trudeau's pitch, Cousineau informed him that he hoped for a race and as riding president planned to stay neutral. "That may not have been the message he wanted to hear," Cousineau says.

Butts also had misgivings.

"I thought maybe he hadn't thought through what winning the nomination, let alone winning an election, in Papineau would entail," Butts recalls. "He said to me, 'If I can't beat a separatist in Montreal, what good am I in politics?'" "

Butts thought Trudeau was brave and crazy. He told him: "This may be a much shorter lived political career than you had anticipated."

But Trudeau knew, just as he had told Terry DiMonte years earlier, what was in store. If he beat the pavement, he would not only prove his friend wrong, but he would create his own narrative about the candidate who ran and won in in a longshot riding.

On Feb. 22, 2007, Trudeau announced he would seek the nomination in Papineau.

The announcement hit Mary Deros, a popular city councillor since 1998 for Villeray–Saint-Michel–Parc-Extension, a borough that was part of the federal riding, particularly hard.

"It was like the wind was punched out of my stomach, you know," Deros says, with a loud sigh, during an interview in her Park Extension office in Montreal.

That fall, Liberal incumbent Pierre Pettigrew had informed Deros he wouldn't run again, and she thought Ottawa might be her next career move. She called the Liberals, sent in her c.v., had meetings with officials and started to assemble her team. Then she heard that Justin Trudeau – the Justin Trudeau whom she had been so excited to meet and get her picture taken with at the Liberal convention that fall – would be her opponent.

Deros thought of pulling out, but her supporters wanted to see her through and the party wanted a race. "It was good for Justin to have a battle, so I stayed. And because I understood that it was good for the party, I stayed. I worked hard also, but I knew it wasn't going to happen," she says.

Deros watched Trudeau's team. Nearly everything was organized to make sure that he won, she says, pointing to the army of people from Ottawa and volunteers from all across the country who arrived to help. Trudeau gave a moving speech about his father's legacy and on April 29, he won 690 of the 1,266 votes to rout Deros, who came in second with 350 votes.

Dion says he told Trudeau he was "very pleased for him because he achieved something personally that would show that he has what it takes."

Trudeau did his homework, pounded the pavement, contacted all the associations, Deros says.

On Oct. 18, 2008, in an election that saw support for the Liberals led by Stéphane Dion plummet and the party lose 18 seats, Trudeau managed an unexpected upset. He narrowly won the riding by 1,189 votes. Trudeau captured 17,724 votes cast compared to Barbot's 16,535.

In Ottawa, where he thought his new colleagues might expect him to throw his father's name around to gain special treatment, Trudeau says he kept his head down and went out of his way to be a humble and hard working MP.

In the riding, he has been a regular presence on the weekends. "He goes walking the streets with his children, he eats in our restaurants, and when you see him and he's genuinely interested in the people, he will sit down and exchange with them," Deros says. "He's not just someone who shakes your hand while looking elsewhere to shake someone else's hand."

Around Park Extension many people are fond of Trudeau. When George Karazginiannidas, the owner of Afroditi, a Greek bakery shop on St-Roch St., hears that I will be seeing Trudeau later on, he prepares a box of pastries to take to him.

"Justin Trudeau is a very nice young man," Karazginiannidas says. "He always comes in to say hello, and his father was a great man."

Karazginiannidas likes having Trudeau as his MP, but he isn't sure he should be running for the Liberal leadership. "He has the family in the back, but not the experience," he says.

Over at the barbershop Salon de coiffure pour homme, George Glicakis will not talk about Trudeau.

"I believe that if you have nothing good to say about somebody, you should not say anything at all," he says, between haircuts.

"He's a rich boy," patron Philip Hatzimanolis says.

"People think he hasn't earned his stripes to be a leader, he's too young and he's going through this because of his father and not because he's earned his stripes," he says between sips of raki, a smooth Greek moonshine that Glicakis serves in styrofoam cups.

Hatzimanolis helped Trudeau campaign in 2008, afraid that the young man wasn't smart enough to win the seat. But in 2011, he sat on the sidelines knowing Trudeau would easily win the riding.

Despite the NDP's orange wave in Quebec and Liberal fortunes' being in a free fall, Trudeau won his riding in 2011, leading his second-place NDP challenger by more than 4,000 votes compared with a 1,200-vote lead over the Bloc candidate in 2008. His margin of victory in 2011 surprised several of his caucus colleagues.

Trudeau's youthful energy and honesty impress Hatzimanolis, but he thinks "Justin is too much in a hurry" and compares him to Icarus, the iconic figure in Greek mythology who flew too close to the sun on wings made of feathers and wax.

Politically, at least, Trudeau concedes that he has grown up "in a very sort of compressed time frame from a simple rookie opposition backbencher to a simple leadership candidate opposition backbencher, I guess," he says with a laugh.

Trudeau, of course, has a large number of fans in the riding. At Marché Janata, grocery store clerk Malik Muhmmad says he is always there when you need him, attending every community event and "always listens to the people."

"Actually, I like him, because my English is not good, that is why I cannot explain to you good. I want to say many things about him: I appreciate him and I want to elect him prime

minister of Canada," Muhammad says from behind the counter of his brother's crammed shop. "I trust him not 100 per cent but 200 per cent," he adds.

Deros thinks Trudeau has more work to do to look and sound prime ministerial. "I am hoping that the people around him will make him more polish. He is not the top top, but he is the best that we have."

"You can't help but like him," she says with a bright smile. "What's the right word?" she says, pausing.

"He has seduced us."



Dodging Blows

Trudeau's blue eyes stare straight ahead, and he can barely hide his smile. A droplet of water hangs on his lower lip. The Sun News television camera closes in on his face. Conservatives expect him to be carried out of this Hampton Inn hotel ballroom on a stretcher. But no one is looking at his opponent, Patrick Brazeau.

Host Ezra Levant: "Imagine the adrenaline, the pressure has been on these guys for months."

Brian Lilley: "And the shame that will come with a haircut Monday for the loser, that is one of the side bets these gentlemen have made."

The bell rings. Trudeau, laser focused, goes for the first jab. Brazeau avoids it. Brazeau punches back and Trudeau dodges. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, Brazeau charges. He punches Trudeau over and over, aiming for his face, his chest. Trudeau has difficulty staying on his feet.

Lilley: "Brazeau is getting more punches in than I thought he would. He's taking it in the face."

Levant: "Come on, shiny pony, dance! Use your ballet training!"

(Trudeau took three ballet lessons when he was four years old.)

With his long reach, Trudeau should be able to keep Brazeau away, Lilley says, as Trudeau uses his gloves to shield his face from the onslaught.

Levant: "Don't touch the face! I don't want those beautiful lips to be bleeding"

Brazeau seems to have him cornered. Trudeau ties up Brazeau with his arms. Perhaps he's hoping a reset will help him get his bearings, but Brazeau won't let him have it. He hits Trudeau again and again. We hear the loud slapping sounds of Brazeau's punches. For a moment, one wonders just how quickly Trudeau will fall.

Brazeau lands one jab after another.

Levant: "Oh my God... . This is a one-man fight, Brian."

Lilley says the fight will go on for three rounds no matter what. "You don't normally see knockouts in Olympic-style amateur bouts."

Lilley: "He's still laying way more punches and the crowd is drowning out the chants of 'Trudeau.'"

Brazeau gasps for air. He has more muscles and therefore needs more oxygen, the audience is told. As the punches land, Trudeau's knees go weak. He thinks he may actually lose. But then the punches slow.

As Trudeau regains his balance, we begin to see his strategy.

Brazeau is out of breath; Trudeau has waited him out. He looks exhausted, too. But he lets the senator keep punching

Levant: "That three-inch advantage in Trudeau's reach ain't helping him today."

Lilley: "No, not when you are being mauled."

When Trudeau lands a few punches, Levant doubts they'll "make a dent" on Brazeau. Then, just before the bell, Trudeau gets one good jab into the senator, now too weak to defend himself.

Trudeau sits back down in his corner all smiles.

"Never in a million years did I think I would be working for a Trudeau," says Bruce Young, a principal with Earncliffe Strategy Group in Vancouver and one of Trudeau's B.C. organizers.

Young, a former adviser to prime minister Paul Martin, is a party operative who worked his way up knocking on doors as a young Liberal. His "natural inclination" wasn't to align himself with someone who had just been linked to the party through something his father or grandfather had done in the past, he says. But Trudeau impressed him during a sponsored junket to Israel with the Canada-Israel Committee in February, 2008, and he has been on the Trudeau bandwagon since.

The two had been out drinking until late on that trip, and the next morning, while Young was nursing his hangover during a meeting with Israel's deputy minister of foreign affairs, Trudeau was carrying the conversation.

"He was out as late as I was, but he was on top of what had happened overnight, which was that there had been some assassination of a Hamas leader up in Syria and there was some tension as a result between the two states.

"(Justin) was, like, on top of everything and I was, like, 'Anybody that says this guy doesn't have chops, doesn't have a clue what they are talking about,' " Young recounts.

Though he's not out there every day trying to demonstrate his intellectual gravitas, Trudeau has an inner geek that would surprise many people, Young adds.

Robert Asselin, one of Trudeau's senior advisers who served as a speechwriter and adviser to several Liberal leaders, says he was pleasantly surprised when he met Trudeau. "I was relieved, honestly," he says over breakfast just before the first leadership debate.

"Trudeau is like a pretty girl that you don't think is intelligent," says Asselin, a professor at the University of Ottawa. "When people see him, they think he's really good looking for a boy and has a lot of charisma. They don't think he's smart."

Trudeau is scary smart, his friends insist. "He's a good looking guy, he dresses well and he's got that ridiculous hair and I think a lot of people don't get past that. But he's a smart guy and (to) most people who do know him, that becomes obvious pretty quickly," says his friend Smillie.

In a candid moment, shuffling between campaign events in British Columbia, Trudeau acknowledges that many Canadians probably don't think he's very intelligent. "Most people

wouldn't think that I also got 98 percentile on my LSATs," Trudeau says somewhat jokingly while staring out the window of the white SUV.

Butts, his principal adviser, wants the quote omitted. Justin would never have said that if he thought he would be quoted, Butts says. "We are not in a position where we need to prove to people through some sort of standardized test how smart he is."

Trudeau's record on standardized tests is, however, pretty stellar. A few years ago, on the CBC television show 'Test the Nation,' host George Stroumboulopoulos made a point of telling the audience that Trudeau had earned higher IQ marks than Martha Hall Findlay, after she'd boasted on the show's release form that her IQ was "five per cent higher than Justin Trudeau."

Hall Findlay is still on the attack as she contests Trudeau for the Liberal leadership. In a taped interview the evening before the first leadership debate, Trudeau tells Global BC he expects she will be the most aggressive towards him. Her campaign depicts her as the substantive candidate, leaving Liberals to draw their own conclusions. (Later during the third debate, she will suggest that, as a wealthy candidate, Trudeau cannot relate to the middle class. The next day, she apologizes for going too far.)

Meanwhile, former astronaut and now leadership contender Marc Garneau's comments bite. "Leadership is the product of your life experience," Garneau says during the first debate. "It is what you have done, it is what you have accomplished. It is having a proven track record, that is what I bring to that contest."

Garneau keeps the pressure on during the third debate in Mississauga, Ont., in February.

"Please tell us what in your résumé qualifies you to be the leader of the country?" he demands.

Trudeau fumbles, answers something about the middle class and leaves Garneau's question hanging.

Garneau asks again. Trudeau replies that his experience is winning Papineau.

"Pulling people in together is great, but also you need to have a track record, you have to have a record of making tough decisions," Garneau snaps.

Trudeau has no real response.

The Trudeau team expected their candidate would be grilled on his lack of a detailed policy platform. They had prepared, releasing op-eds and policy statements such as his democratic reform measures just before debates.

Still, during his interview with Global BC, Trudeau gets agitated when asked why he has not offered detailed policies. His shoulders bounce, he gesticulates with his hands and his voice cracks. He mumbles as he lists policy proposals. He's prepared for the question, but he's annoyed.

"First of all, I've been very, very clear on a huge range of specific issues. There seems to be some buzzing about the fact that I do not have any ideas – it is nonsense," he tells the reporter.

He rhymes off policy positions: his opposition to the Northern Gateway pipeline, support for the CNOOC-Nexen deal, legalization of marijuana.

"We will have a very detailed platform in 2015, but between now and then it is not up to, you know, a leader or leadership candidate and a tight group of people to figure out all the answers. It is about us engaging with Canadians right across the country to develop these solutions."

When Trudeau releases proposed democratic reforms including more free votes in Parliament, open Liberal nominations, a ban on partisan government advertising and changes to the electoral system toward a preferential ballot, he asks people to send in their suggestions. In a testament to his popularity and social media appeal, within 24 hours some 25,000 people visit a website set up to solicit their ideas.

The one thing that may qualify Trudeau to be leader of the Liberal party is that he is their best chance at winning the election.

When 24-year-old Russ Miller asks Trudeau about his lack of experience at a Liberal fundraiser in Vancouver's Gastown after the first debate, Trudeau tells him: "My experience is I win. I win in tough elections."

Compared with his principal leadership opponents, Trudeau has a point. Many Liberals went to bed on May 2, 2011, not knowing whether Marc Garneau had managed to hold his Westmount riding, previously considered one of the safest Liberal seats in Quebec. Hall Findlay lost her Willowdale riding in Toronto to the Conservatives in 2011. And former Chrétien-era cabinet minister Martin Cauchon also went down in defeat trying to win back his own Outremont seat. Cauchon lost to NDP Leader Thomas Mulcair by more than 12,000 votes.

When asked why he does not point out his competitors' failings, Trudeau avoids the question. His team wants to run a positive campaign.

That doesn't stop those around him from pointing out his opponents' weaknesses.

What the Liberal party needs isn't a policy wonk but someone who can connect with Canadians, his campaign team believes.

"It's not enough for us to say these are our ideas, come back to the party," Trudeau says during a speech. Liberals must earn Canadians' trust by engaging with them town by town, community by community, he says.

What "Martha" and "Marc" have provided in terms of policy is far less detailed than what the media have portrayed, Butts says over coffee in Vancouver. "I don't think any of them have put a cost on any of their policy proposals for instance." What Trudeau provides is leadership that can get people engaged and excited, he adds.

"The Liberal party needs a leader who is going to be able to articulate a vision, a positive vision of the country's future, and have the skills to rally millions of Canadians around it. That is what leadership is. It is not a five-point plan," Butts says. Trudeau will later repeat this theme, saying the Liberals have tried the five-point plan several times without success.

"The family pact did not work," Butts says flatly, referring to former leader Michael Ignatieff's campaign platform in 2011.

So far, Trudeau's vision seems vague, but that has an appeal of its own. As one Conservative strategist puts it, Trudeau is a blank canvas on which Canadians can pin their hopes and dreams. It also allows him to avoid being boxed into certain policy positions. Talking in generalities gives little ammunition to his opponents.

Trudeau says he has surrounded himself with "extremely smart, extremely wise" people. Butts, McGuinty's former principal secretary who left his post as head of the World Wildlife Fund in Canada to join Trudeau's campaign, is routinely described as brilliant. Campaign manager Katie Telford is a smart, diligent worker and Daniel Gagnier, the top adviser in Quebec, is another bright light. Trusted friends are helping out. Marc Miller, a childhood buddy, works on fundraising, and Tom Pitfield leads the digital and social media campaign.

Dominic LeBlanc says Trudeau's work ethic resembles his dad's: He is up early, goes to bed late, fills days with campaign events and makes himself available to fundraise for caucus colleagues. People didn't assume that he would be a hard worker, but he has a huge capacity for work, LeBlanc says.

"The old man had that."

Perhaps, more important, Trudeau is a natural at connecting with people, and he doesn't mind life on the road as long as he has eight hours of sleep, eats well and has time to exercise.

"People underestimate Justin Trudeau at their own peril," says Young, a former college football player who describes the MP as the best athlete on the field.

Trudeau has a "high tolerance for suffering," Young says. He can pack several back-to-back public events in one day. He's able to take a punch and keep rolling. He doesn't get flustered. He's young, physically fit, intellectually curious and he has the stamina to just keep going, says Young.

In 2008, during Trudeau's first campaign, Young recounts how the candidate flew to B.C. to boost moral and press the flesh in Surrey, where the Liberals had no hope of winning.

"For him, to leave his riding in the middle of a tough fight, come out here and just lift everyone up for 24 hours and then to disappear and then for us to be able to run on that juice for the next week, you can't underestimate it," Young says.

"I don't know of anyone in the Liberal party who has the capacity to do this for us, make volunteers want to work day and night to get their Liberal candidate elected."

Although Trudeau's experience may not read like that of a typical political leader, his friend Panos says, he has skills that others cannot match.

"We all know that his educational background isn't as golden as perhaps some of the other individuals who are running for the Liberal leadership or who are across the aisle as Conservatives, but he's got something that most of those people – if not all of them – (lack), which is sort of the ability to gather the troops ... because they want to do it," Panos says.

Trudeau never talked about wanting to be prime minister when he was in Vancouver, but Panos isn't surprised he's now gunning for the Liberals' top job. "He always talked about wanting to change the world, in his own way." If he becomes a really good orator, Trudeau will be tough to beat, Panos says.

Trudeau may also have to work on his smile, which tends to look like a smirk, his friend says.

"The kid looks smug, and he's not smug," Panos says. "That's why so many people don't give him the benefit of the doubt. (They) think that he knows more than they do, which is not true."

Trudeau is amazingly resilient, Panos adds; he beats everything life throws at him.

"I will never say that Justin couldn't do anything, because every time I've ever thought like that, he has proven me wrong."

Some of Trudeau's friends confide that they tried to discourage him from running, worried about the stresses on his young family.

But his aunt Janet believes her nephew will be all right: "His head is on his shoulders correctly."

"I think some people go into politics for their egos, and as a stepping stone to doing something different. I don't think in Justin's world that that is what it is about," she says. "It is about giving back. It's about this is a country that he loves – his grandfather loved this country, his father loved this country, and he has just been brought up knowing this country, and it is about giving back."

Joe MacInnis, a close friend of Pierre and a mentor to Justin, says Trudeau's father left his children with a heightened sense of responsibility.

"His father made it clear, at least to me and to so many Canadians that we all have a role in governing this country, we all have a responsibility for living in this blessed country called Canada, and no one feels that more strongly than Justin," MacInnis says from his home in Florida.

When Trudeau talks about his political career, you get the sense he's either full of himself or answering a higher calling.

"I am doing this because I can, because I must, because I can do it," Trudeau says. "If it is successful, great, because that means there is a lot of work ahead of me, and if it is unsuccessful it means, great, I wasn't the right fit for Canada, and that level of serenity in my approach is extremely empowering and comforting."

Open Target

Round 2. The bell rings. Trudeau, energized, lands the first punch.

Sun News host Ezra Levant: "Brazeau is taking some hits. The shiny pony is a staaaallion!"

Brazeau is surprised. His eyes are big and bright. Shock.

Levant: "I think Brazeau, I think he is taking some punches harder than he thought."

Trudeau is focused and determined. His punches are steady and forceful. He's playing the long game.

Maybe it's his long reach or maybe his endurance, the Sun News hosts suggest. The crowd erupts in cheers as Trudeau starts pounding Brazeau. The senator does not punch back. The TV hosts are stunned.

Levant: "I wouldn't have guessed it, I wouldn't have thunk it, I thought the Brazman was hitting him hard. Not hard enough to stun the pony."

Trudeau came in with low expectations and is exceeding them, Levant tells the television audience.

Brazeau is holding on to the ropes.

Lilley: "In the corner, just taking the punches! One, two, three, four, five!"

Levant: "The ref is stepping in. I can hear it already, Trudeau for leader. Bob Rae is next, Brian."

Trudeau lands a punch on Brazeau's face.

Lilley: "Wow! And a straight punch to the face."

Levant: "Brazeau's nose looking like it is starting to bleed. He's just swinging wildly."

The bell rings. Trudeau walks to his corner, all smiles. Not a hint of exhaustion.

Levant: "I wouldn't have thunk it. The pony. It's not just about jazzercise or Tae Bo; he can actually deliver a punch. I can see the blood on Trudeau's gloves."

The camera cuts to Brazeau, blood dripping from his nose, gasping for breath.

Trudeau is not only the best Liberal campaigner, he is their best fundraiser.

He is a juggernaut. No other Liberal in the leadership race has shown the ability to pad the party's coffers like him. In January, when the party's fundraising numbers were released, Trudeau had raised more than four times as much as his nearest competitor. In the last three days of 2012, a last-minute appeal raised another \$125,000. His controversial comments about Alberta, released on the eve of a by-election, were also successfully spun into a fundraising drive. His team

asked supporters for donations to help Justin fight back against the Conservative attacks. His comments may have cost Harvey Locke, the Liberal candidate in Calgary Centre, but it earned Trudeau several thousand dollars.

By mid-February, his campaign had surpassed the \$1-million mark. By late February, Trudeau had not stopped fundraising, attending private events several times a week, despite the fact that his campaign team soon won't be able to spend the money he raises.

Any extra funds will go to the party if it isn't first used to fend off Conservative attack ads that his campaign has been expecting. Butts says the Trudeau team is ready to respond within 72 hours to any possible attack. Asking if they're ready for the Tories to go negative is "like asking on launch day if we have a speech," he says.

There is ample fodder for the Conservatives. Trudeau's attendance record in the House of Commons is weak. He continued to accept payment for speaking engagements after he was elected, earning five-figure fees to address public institutions and corporate events. And he has not always spoken with the maturity one expects of a federal politician, like the time he called Environment Minister Peter Kent a piece of shit during a debate on climate change (He apologized).

Trudeau's judgment can easily be questioned.

He was lambasted for suggesting "barbaric" wasn't the appropriate word to use to describe so-called honour killings (usually of women by male relatives), saying Government of Canada publications should make an attempt at responsible neutrality. Again, he apologized.

He has flip-flopped on several key positions, including co-operating with the NDP in time for the 2015 election. Sun Media has aired tape from a 2011 Vancouver speech in which Trudeau tells students, "If by 2015, with the election approaching, and neither party has got our act together enough to shine and to be the obvious alternative, then there will be a lot of pressure for us to start looking at that. I think there is not anyone in Parliament, outside the Conservative Party of Canada, that is willing to risk seeing Stephen Harper become prime minister one more time."

But now that he has a shot at the country's top job, Trudeau says co-operation with any party is out of the question.

His comments on the campaign trail in Hawkesbury, Ont., last fall that the long-gun registry was a "failure" that should not be resuscitated caught many in his own party by surprise. He had to reverse himself in Quebec and was mocked by Conservatives who suggested that if he had been on their side all along, he should have spoken out. Some thought he was trying to please the rural audience he was addressing. For others, it seemed Trudeau suffered from foot-in-mouth disease.

NDP and Conservative operatives hope there are more flubs. They're working through transcripts and newspaper accounts of his many public appearances since 2000.

Just a few days before a Calgary by-election the Liberals were poised to win, the NDP leaked to Sun Media a French-language interview Trudeau gave in 2010 in which he suggested Canada had fared poorly because Albertans controlled the socio-democratic agenda. Trudeau went on to say he thought Quebecers would do a better job of running the country than Albertans.

His comments caused an uproar, and he was forced to apologize, saying that he hadn't meant all Albertans, just Stephen Harper's gang. The Conservatives piled on, with Immigration Minister Jason Kenney saying Trudeau's words were divisive and reminiscent of the arrogance of his father's national energy program.

For the first time, many Liberals were forced to see that Trudeau could be a liability.

Trudeau says he's learning to be more disciplined in his messaging. The leadership race has forced him to collaborate and trust others to make decisions, from scheduling to speech writing and communications.

"I am ... learning not to freelance in my answers without at least having (some) learned folks around me about the positions I was going to take," he says.

Direct attacks on Trudeau, however, can backfire. No one wants to see the favourite son, whom they watched grow up on TV, be unfairly attacked. It is a delicate line that both the Conservatives and the NDP will have to toe next election if Trudeau heads the Liberals.

LeBlanc believes the public will have a different reaction to negative attack ads than they did with those targeted at Michael Ignatieff and Stéphane Dion. "They know who (Trudeau) is, and the Canadian public has an attachment to him, they watched him be born, they watched him grow up, with the single dad and the three boys, and watched him hold up the ailing father at the brother's funeral... . They are seared in the public's mind, those things. (In) certain cultural communities, that name means something very profound. So it is not easy to shake it with some shitty ad," LeBlanc says.

Trudeau, LeBlanc adds, also will not shy away from hitting back. "He has that toughness."

As for his personal life, close friends say, his political opponents will not find anything interesting.

"He's contradicted himself in the past, that's fine. I know what type of life he has led. There is nothing," says Thomas Panos. "I can't see what they would bring up that would change people's perception of him. He has lived a much cleaner life than I have led."

There is one aspect of Trudeau's recent history that the Tories may try to exploit.

His former roommate, Christopher Ingvaldson, was charged in June, 2010, with accessing and possessing images of child pornography. He was convicted in January and sentenced to three months in jail with two years' probation.

When, in February, 2012, Public Safety Minister Vic Toews told opponents of a bill that would grant police sweeping powers to monitor online activity that they could "either stand with

us or with the child pornographers," Butts, Trudeau's principal adviser, says the connection between Trudeau and Ingvaldson immediately came to mind.

"They were probably thinking about that," he says.

Ingvaldson and Trudeau were very close. Ingvaldson even contributed a chapter to a book, *Pierre*, edited by Nancy Southam, detailing his memories of meeting the former prime minister when he was staying with Justin at their home in Montreal.

The criminal charges shocked everyone. Trudeau cut off contact.

A few weeks after Ingvaldson has been sentenced, Trudeau still does not want to talk about his former roommate. During a car ride back to his Vancouver hotel, Trudeau says that a person wants to think they will always be there for their good friends, but that is not the case. "There is a line that can't be crossed," he says, visibly disturbed.

Butts is more worried than Panos about the Conservative attacks. He believes the Tories have a constant preoccupation with his candidate. "If I was in their shoes, I would too."



The Competition

Round 3.

The pugilist from Papineau comes out swinging. Again. "Trudeau" chants hit a fever pitch.

Brazeau is being pummelled. The senator is stunned.

Lilley: "A lot of people thought that Justin Trudeau would punch like Justin and then land on the canvas like Justine. That is not happening here, so far a bit more even in this third round."

Levant: "This is like a Liberal bar mitzvah. Today he becomes a man, Brian. Oh, he is just railing"

Trudeau continues to hit Brazeau with a flurry of punches.

As Brazeau gasps for air, Trudeau plays it up for the fans, fist in the air urging them to egg him on.

Levant: "This is like his papa coming back in the 1980 election. Everyone counted him out, he lost in '79, Pierre came back in '80..."

Lilley interrupts: "...Trudeau looking strong"

Brazeau's face drips with blood. Trudeau shows no mercy. The punches keep coming

Levant: "Boom, boom, boom. The Tory's going down! He's in the corner. This is game over. The blood. The ref has got to stop it."

Brazeau, in the corner with a black eye already obvious, his glare downcast and his mouth open, looks stunned.

Lilley: "Brazeau looking disappointed."

Trudeau walks off.

Levant: "A lot of people lost a lot of money tonight. The bookies said 3:1 odds, the pollsters said 3:1 odds. The Tory's getting crushed."

With a minute left to go, the fight is called. It's a technical knockout. Trudeau's the winner.

Both arms in the air, he embraces the moment. He doesn't look the least bit surprised by his accomplishment.

Levant: "And it's done."

Lilley: "Didn't even go to the end."

Levant: "Wasn't even close."

Later, Trudeau will tell Levant that Brazeau had him seeing stars at the beginning

"But I kept going," he'll say. "I can take a hard hit, but he didn't realize that."

May 2, 2011, was a disastrous night for the Liberal Party of Canada. The Grits lost more than half their seats in the House of Commons, and their percentage of the popular vote dropped to a historic low. Fewer than one in five voters cast a ballot for them. Trudeau was spared the bloodshed. He and Guelph MP Frank Valeriote were the only Liberals to see their vote count increase in 2011 from 2008. But as the votes started coming in, it dawned on him that he might have to wait a lot longer to realize his political ambitions.

Trudeau wasn't sure he wanted to stay in the game. The downward trajectory of his party looked inexorable. He thought of going back to teaching. If he couldn't accomplish anything positive in Ottawa, at least with teaching he could make a positive difference in the lives of a few hundred kids a year.

Butts told Trudeau that the Conservative majority would get under his skin and that he should hold off making any life-altering decisions. With Michael Ignatieff out of the picture, Trudeau knew there would be pressure to run for the leadership. Was he ready? It wasn't what he had planned. He had thought he would sit in a Liberal cabinet before running for the top job, but it didn't look like he would have that luxury.

Trudeau was starting to feel like politics and the Liberal party weren't going to be his way he'd change the world. He was frustrated by Liberals who were still deluded by "magical thinking" that if they picked the right leader everything else would fall into place.

"I was so worried that so many people wouldn't take the renewal seriously if they they thought they had a draw at the leader," he said.

He didn't want the job if people weren't ready to do the work. With toddlers at home and a party on the decline, he decided to sit the race out and plot his exit.

Trudeau thought not only of leaving politics but of leaving Canada. He mused about moving to a city like New York, London, Paris or Geneva – maybe work for for an non-governmental organization or travel with his kids for a little while.

"To some extent, Justin had a history of trying things out and leaving, and I certainly did not wish it upon him that he would do the same thing with politics, because I really did feel that this was his destiny," Mathieu Walker says.

"Credit goes to him, he thought of those things, but I think he said, 'No, I'm in it for the long haul. I really believe in this and I'm going to stay.' And I'm really happy that he did."

By January, 2012, Trudeau was reconsidering a leadership run. He felt politics was becoming more polarized and thought there was a possibility he could duplicate his accomplishment in Papineau, "which was (to) have everyone in the public discount me because they didn't think that I could be able to pull it off in any real degree," he says.

Butts could tell where his friend's mind was going and began assembling a team of potential advisers, just in case. Katie Telford, Stéphane Dion's former deputy chief of staff and someone

who had worked very closely with Butts at Ontario's Queen's Park, was approached in February to run a potential campaign.

That spring, Trudeau's intentions were made known to Bob Rae, the Liberal's interim leader, who had crisscrossed the country to fundraise and rebuild the party while making sure that the Liberals were still getting airtime in the House of Commons. Rae had pledged not to run for the permanent leadership when he took the post, but he desperately wanted the job, and many Liberals were willing to let it happen. It was clear after January that if he wanted to run for the permanent leadership, the new party executive would not stand in his way.

Rae and Trudeau were friendly but not close. Rae had dropped Trudeau as immigration critic after the election and moved him to the back benches. He was now critic for youth, amateur sport and post-secondary education. He didn't even have a committee assignment. The official reason given was that Trudeau, then 39, was the party's biggest draw and would be more useful on the road meeting people than in the House of Commons. Without the airtime in the House, however, it would be tough for Trudeau to generate media coverage in Ottawa. Some Liberals thought Rae had hamstrung Trudeau to protect his own leadership ambitions.

Faced with the knowledge of Trudeau's intentions, what was Rae to do? Twice he had been passed over for the leadership. He had lost to Stéphane Dion in 2006 and then, in 2008, faced with strong caucus support for Michael Ignatieff, Rae had decided not to challenge him for the leadership so that the party would be in a better position to defeat Harper's Conservatives after prorogation.

Now it looked like Rae would be matched up against the party's favourite son and the potential of a Liberal political dynasty. It wasn't a fight he wanted to lose. In June, he told Liberal caucus members he wasn't going to run. Tears streamed down the faces of some of his closest supporters.

It was Trudeau's turn to move. If he didn't run, there might not be a party left to rebuild in 2015, many mused aloud. Trudeau and his team spent the summer planning his campaign.

"He expected the Tories and NDP to get very personal in their attacks and he wanted his family, especially his wife, to be prepared," Butts says.

In September, news began to leak out about his decision. On Oct. 2, his brother Michel's birthday, Trudeau announced he would follow in his father's footsteps. The announcement – a backbencher running for the leadership of a third-place party – garnered a huge amount of media attention.

In front of a red backdrop emblazoned with the word "Justin," Trudeau, dressed in a grey suit, white shirt and grey tie, declared, "I love this great country, I want to spend my life serving it. This is why tonight I am offering myself up for the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada."

The crowd of supporters and friends who filled the William-Hingston community centre in Papineau chanted "Trudeau! Trudeau!" before settling on "Justin! Justin!"

'Our Boy'

Trudeau knows he hasn't earned all the attention. People's curiosity about him, he says, gets them through the doors, but then it's up to him to earn their support.

Early on, he decided to focus on winning three groups of people with whom the Trudeau name offers little advantage: soft nationalists in Quebec, some of whom he would have to win over in spite of his father's record; young people, who had no connection with his father; and new Canadians, those who came after 1984 and for whom his father's immigration legacy has no real meaning.

These are also three constituencies that currently do not vote Liberal. If he wins the Liberal leadership and can pull them in, Trudeau will have expanded the Liberal tent considerably. These constituencies, coupled with the return of disenchanted Liberals who didn't vote in 2008 and 2011, could land Trudeau the country's top elected job after the next federal election in 2015.

So far, he's done a pretty good job speaking to those communities. He has played hard and soft with Quebec nationalists, at once telling them he understands why, faced with Stephen Harper's Canada, they would want to separate, but maintaining staunch support for the Clarity Act, legislation that outlines how Canada would negotiate terms of a separation and determine whether a clear majority has voted to secede. He has also declared that Quebec's signature on the Constitution is not necessary. Early polling suggests that the Liberals under Trudeau would handily surpass the NDP, the Bloc and the Conservatives in Quebec, but that without him their numbers would sink back to third place.

In Ontario, a February poll by Forum Research suggested the Liberal party under Justin Trudeau would be able to steal a third of NDP supporters aged 18 to 34.

Young people, for whom Pierre Elliott Trudeau is a name associated with history books and an airport in Montreal, have flocked to Justin and his message of generational change. He has taken a number of pro-youth policies such as the legalization of marijuana and a strong stand on the environment, including his criticism of the Northern Gateway pipeline.

"The fact that I can win over and be effective as a politician with young people, drawing them in, getting them excited about it, mobilizing thousands of young volunteers during this campaign, (that) is not because of the baggage of my father's name, and that for me is essential," Trudeau says.

Immigrants, even those who do not credit his father for their arrival in Canada, appreciate Trudeau's pro-family line on immigration, and he has courted them with speeches at events such as the controversial Reviving the Islamic Spirit conference. He has also carved out a fiscally conservative, pro-trade stance that may appeal to them.

For now, the NDP and the Conservatives are officially ignoring Trudeau. Publicly, they are not worried, but, privately, there are concerns. Trudeau, reporters are routinely told, should not be underestimated.

LeBlanc, having witnessed constituents ask their NDP MPs to take photos of themselves with Justin Trudeau in the halls of Parliament, says he has no doubt his friend will "drain the NDP swamp."

Many political watchers, including the other parties, believe that no other Liberal candidate can revive the federal Grits like Trudeau, despite his light record.

He can fill a room as easily speaking to university students at a free event as he can to members of British Columbia's Chinese community, who each paid \$1,200 for some face time and photos. People are excited to be around him.

By early March, Trudeau's team said it had signed up between 160,000 and 165,000 supporters through its website and outreach efforts. While other candidates won't say how many supporters they've registered, the Liberal party's total number of 294,002 suggests Trudeau is well ahead of his competition with potential supporters also likely choosing to register through the party's website.

Elliott Moglica is one of more than 7,000 Trudeau volunteers. For the last three months, the 41-year-old immigrant from Albania has spent four evenings a week at Trudeau's Toronto call centre phoning Canadians, urging them to sign up as supporters. By mid-February, he had signed up more than 1,000 people. "I'm excited, he's going to make it," Moglica says. "He's a Christmas gift."

The Liberal leadership race isn't over, but unless Trudeau sabotages himself or falls because of scandal, it seems all but a formality. Perhaps the greatest surprise of this leadership race is how Trudeau has once again managed to defy expectations. A member of his own team confidentially speculates that there is a 25-per-cent chance Trudeau will implode. But so far, it's been a campaign rocked by only a few incidents, such as his gun-registry and anti-Albertan comments.

Trudeau knows some are salivating at the thought of watching him fall. Those who believe he is all style and no substance would like nothing more than for Trudeau to self-destruct.

As he poses during a photo shoot for an upcoming Reader's Digest feature, Trudeau is incredibly self-aware. Under the photographer's light, he moves like a professional model, then carefully studies the photographs afterward, offering suggestions as to which image looks better. At meet-and-greets and campaign stops with live TV coverage, it is not uncommon to see him walk toward a camera then pose, arms crossed, shoulders angled, smile planted.

Despite his distrust of most reporters, he knows how to use the media to his advantage. And he knows the fawning media coverage will turn on him at the first opportunity.

His friend Smillie says people are waiting for a "misstep, waiting for him to screw up."

Unlike past leadership contests, there have been no mutterings of an "anybody-but" campaign aimed at Trudeau. No one has publicly encouraged their supporters to rank Trudeau last on the preferential ballot. If he doesn't win the leadership on April 14, it may very well be one of the biggest campaign failures in Canadian politics.

His campaign team, although very confident, is still worried. There are concerns that supporters won't register at all or in time; that people believe Justin Trudeau already has it in the bag and won't bother to vote; that the organization is green and won't be able to get the vote out, and that the Liberal party won't be able to defend its online voting system from attacks by the other political parties or third-party groups.

The Liberals' weighted vote system, where a successful candidate has to win a majority of the total points awarded across all 308 ridings, has been good for the party and forced all candidates to get out of historic "Liberal-bastion areas," says Trudeau's campaign director Katie Telford. But it does mean that winning on the first ballot will be more difficult.

Trudeau needs to win a majority of the votes in a majority of the ridings. If he doesn't win on the first round, Trudeau is toast, a senior member of his own team believes. People either love him or they hate him, the thinking goes, and few will make him their second ballot choice. But other advisers disagree, pointing to former leadership candidate George Takach's endorsement as proof that Justin can be some people's second preference.

The real challenge ahead, though, is preparation for the next federal election. Trudeau has a tendency to lower expectations and overdeliver. But 2015 will be much tougher than beating the Bloc Québécois in Papineau or beating a brazen Conservative senator.

Even those close to him aren't sure he's ready for the country's top job.

Smillie pauses after I ask him the question.

Is Trudeau ready to be prime minister?

"Tomorrow, no."

Trudeau is great at rallying people behind him, and "he's the most exciting thing to happen in Canadian politics in a long time," but he doesn't yet have the experience, his B.C. friend says.

"That is a huge position with a lot of responsibility, and there is a lot that has to happen before you can get to that point. If he is ready, personally, great, but I think there is probably a lot that he can do, experience that he needs to gather before all that happens."

Panos feels the same way.

"I don't know how many 40 year olds are ready to become prime minister of Canada," he says. "My hope is that he will learn a lot over the course of the next few years. ... I think the party needs for him to grow and I think he needs to grow with the party."

Panos isn't sure two years will be enough time for Trudeau and the Liberal party to get their act together. But his friend has surprised him before, and he might do it again, he says.

Walker says he isn't sure the next election is going to be Justin's time. "I feel that he will be at 24 (Sussex Drive). When the time is, I don't know."

Even Zlata Kosnica, the Westin coat clerk who says she goes "bananas" every time Trudeau is on TV, isn't sure he can pull it off.

"He is still young, he is still learning, but you never know, things can change."

Asked directly if he's ready to be prime minister in 2015, Trudeau replies: "Yes."

Then he hedges.

"Compared to many of the prime ministers we've had, yeah. I know there will be a tremendous amount of learning between now and then and I know I'm ready to and mindful about learning it and I also know there will be a tremendous amount of learning if I do reach that position... but yeah."

Two days after fight night. The political ring

Rodger Cuzner, with the Liberal caucus behind him in the House of Commons, is energized and smiling. The MP from Cape Breton will not let this victory go unnoticed.

He's given the floor.

Cuzner: "Mr. Speaker. Two men in a ring, 800 in the stands. One wrote a cheque with his mouth he couldn't cash with his hands."

Among members of the third party, there are grins, while Trudeau sits in the middle basking in the attention.

Cuzner: "The Tory nation was cocky, they came out in full force, but like the F-35 contract, they had backed the wrong horse."

"Liberals must be defeated. That's known Tory credo. They had nothing to hide, you could tell that by the Speedo.

"Brazeau came out hard and brought the Tories to their feet, but in less than a minute, he looked pretty well beat.

"The red onslaught of punches could not be contained. Like those Tory attack ads stinging and sustained, the bombs came from everywhere."

Cuzner turns to Trudeau

"Our boy pummelled and pounded. It looked like the senator thought he was surrounded."

A big smile spreads across Trudeau's face. His colleagues join in. MPs Scott Simms, Scott Andrews, Mark Eyking, Ted Hsu, Frank Valeriote, even Green Party Leader Elizabeth May are all enjoying this moment.

"He was dazed and confused; the ref twice stopped the fight. He was hit with so many lefts, he was begging for a right.

"In less than six minutes, it was all over and done. A TKO victory, the good guys had won."

Loud cheers and boos rain on the Commons.

As Cuzner ends his ode, Liberal MPs leap to their feet cheering, red and white boxing gloves on their hands, their arms in the air.

This is what a re-energized third-party looks like.

Trudeau quickly stands up, glove-free, and joins the ovation so he's not lost in the crowd, his beaming mug always in frame.



Epilogue

This is an edited transcript of an interview with Justin Trudeau. It has been condensed for clarity.

Question: What do you want people to know about you?

Justin Trudeau: (Long pause) That I know how lucky I am and I am planning on spending the rest of my life trying to be worthy of the luck that I have randomly gotten.

I had extraordinary loving parents. I was raised in the best country in the world. I got to travel to 50 or so countries before I turned 13 and another 36 different ones since. I've gone to great schools, I had an entire country come out and support me when we lost my little brother and again when I lost my dad. I have had an extraordinarily privileged life and I am thankful every step of the way for that and all I can do, instead of feeling guilty about it, is to try and make sure that I do right by it.

Q: Some people might feel the opposite about the public attention on private moments (after the deaths of his brother and father) ... why did you see it as support?

JT: Because it was a positive thing. Because people wished me well and people were brokenhearted with us when we lost (brother Michel) Mich and they mourned my father by the tens of thousands, it was an incredibly humbling and touching experience. I have always felt so deeply connected to this country, just by my upbringing, memories of crisscrossing the country on a train during campaigns was where I discovered the size and scope of Canada.

Q: Does it bother you that people are quick to judge you? You mentioned that people instantly like or instantly hate you.

JT: Hate is too strong a word for the vast majority of people who have negative views on me, certainly there are a few out there, but you know haters gonna hate. I think (having the Trudeau name) is something that I've always had to deal with, all my life, so it is nothing new, there have always been people who have had their mind set. I've had to learn to discount that and one of the ways I've learned to do that is by having a very strong sense of self-awareness.

Q: What do you mean by a strong sense of self-awareness?

JT: I'm more aware of the way people regard me. And it is not something that affects me. The first time that I actually got to see that in action was when I announced that I was going to run for the nomination in Papineau (his riding in Montreal). People across the board came out and said: 'He's just proven that he is not his father's son because he has made such a big bonehead mistake in seeking a nomination that he is not even going to be able to win, let alone a riding that he would never be able to win, what the hell is he thinking?' And I sort of quietly smiled to myself and said 'wow, how perfect is this, all I have to do is do what I'm going to do, which is win the

nomination and then win the election, and I don't even have to respond to the critics because my actions will respond on their own.' And that is very much the approach that I take. I don't care whether someone thinks that I am smart or dumb or whatever, I'm just going to do what I do and trust that Canadians will get to know me with all my strengths and weaknesses.

Q: It seems like the party had a weird love affair with you, they wanted you and offered you a seat, then they didn't want you and took their offer back.

JT: It's not something that I overly fretted about. I am me, I don't define myself by what other people think of me otherwise I'd be completely batty because people are polarized around me. I define myself by what I know I can do and what I know I can offer and that leaves me a level of equanimity as I approach people of differing views.

Q: The Trudeau name, the baggage that you carry.. does it bother you?

JT: It is just a fact of my life, and I wouldn't know what it is to live in a different way ... You look at children of successful parents or powerful parents or famous parents and it seems to be an awful burden for so many of them, the fact is my parents were extraordinarily good at giving their children the tools to handle the extra expectations and pressures.

Having a name and baggage like we do means that we have to work extra hard to justify retroactively the doors that automatically open for us. Because there are some that open but it makes it two or three times harder for us to walk through them with our heads held high, if we are going to do it right.

Q: What do you mean by that, it makes it harder to walk through those doors?

JT: For me in order to justify the fact that I have been given opportunities, I've had to make sure that I've worked harder than anyone else around so that, not because of what other people say, (but) because... it would terrify me to think I was somehow coasting on the name.

Q: You must know that first and foremost people are attracted to you because of the name that you carry ... maybe not at the university halls but in Surrey or Richmond, B.C., because people see you as the next generation of your father.

JT: Okay, absolutely. And that is for sure a piece of it, there is no question that that is a piece of it ... I'm incredibly proud of my father and everything that he accomplished and the legacy that he left. But the fact of the matter is, a lot of people do remember me growing up as well, and there is a connection as well.

But the other part of what you said, 'maybe not in university halls' that is not something to not just dismiss, that is something that has been absolutely essential to me, as a touchstone to my own strengths as well, which is the fact that I can win over and be effective as a politician with young people, drawing them in, getting them excited about it, mobilizing thousands of young volunteers during this campaign, is not because of the baggage of my father's name.

Q: Do you feel that you are part of a dynasty?

JT: No. I understand the sense of connectedness that people have to my family and the association to Canadian politics but dynasties are about passing on hereditary titles and there was nothing hereditary or inevitable about going into politics or even being successful in politics. The way sons of teachers often end up being teachers and daughters of doctors end up being doctors, and many children of politicians end up in politics as well ... it is because the experience you get growing up in a political household. So, no, I think that dynasty is an easy shorthand that allows people to explain what is a much more complex phenomenon which has to do with, all things being equal, you are more likely to pick someone you know for a job opening than someone you don't know for a job opening. But dynasty? Nah.

Q: How do you think you've matured politically, since 2008 (when he was first elected) and since this leadership race began?

JT: 2008, it was all about learning, being able to demonstrate my work ethic, my focus. I knew that the expectation was there that I was going to say 'Don't you know who my father was, you should treat me this way, that way.' That is why I went out of my way to be very humble and hard working and talk to and listen to all my colleagues and really demonstrate that I was there to help.

And the evolution that went from being a young kid with an awful lot to learn to a place where I realized that I had an awful lot to offer that wasn't all that common in the political world – and in that sense, there was a definite evolution for me of growing up in a very sort of compressed time frame from a simple rookie opposition backbencher to a simple leadership candidate opposition backbencher, I guess (he laughs).

Q: Why do you relish the role of the underdog?

JT: Because I don't need other people telling me that I'm going to win, that I'm great, all the things that boost a front runner, the great positive feedback, the attention, those are not things that matter in the slightest to me. I know what I'm capable of and I get busy doing it, whether it is in Papineau or whether it was in training for the boxing match or whether it is this leadership race, if people are going to choose to underestimate me, well that just makes my job easier because both the surprise factor when I actually start delivering and the fact that they chose not to properly see me coming, gives me a bit more of an advantage, so it is much easier to be the underdog and be underestimated than it is to have the expectation be high.”

Q: Do you wish that you were the underdog in this race?

JT: I'm still comfortable with the way it is happening because people seem to have decided that it is a big mistake that I am winning that I am just, it's because Canadians are foolish and they are being bamboozled by the hair and the fluff or whatever it is and that means that they are dismissing anything that I actually do have to say.

Q: Do you think your opponents fear you?

JT: I think my opponents probably fear the people that I've got responding to my campaign. What worries them is I seem to be getting traction in communities where they don't think I should be getting traction, I think that is a real concern.

Q: Were you aware of the political consequences of that [boxing] match?

JT: Of course. Of course. But I had made the calculation that I couldn't lose politically.

Q: You did not for a second think you were going to lose?

JT: No. I knew I was going to win. But it was also in the back of my mind there was a political calculation that said you never really know, he can get a lucky punch and things go poorly. During that (fight), the only moment I thought I might actually lose was during those difficult 20 seconds in the beginning of the first round when I couldn't land anything and he was landing massive swings, and for the first time in all my training even though I had trained against very very strong boxers of his build, he made my knees go weak in a way that nobody else had. I thought this is really interesting, maybe this was a bit of a mistake and as soon as I started to think that he actually stopped hitting me and my punches started landing and that is why I was grinning during the first intermission.

Q: Last thoughts?

JT: In my approach to this, in my approach to politics ... I'm very serene. I really believe in the so-called purest level of politics that says: this is me, if you think I'm going to be a good representative for you, if you think I have something to serve the community with, then please vote for me. If you don't, don't, because it doesn't serve me to try to pretend I'm something I'm not in order to be elected. I have a sense that I am doing this because I can, because I must, because I can do it, and if it is successful, great, because that means there is a lot of work ahead of me, and if it is unsuccessful, it means I wasn't the right fit for Canada and that level of serenity in my approach is extremely empowering and comforting.

About The Author

Althia Raj is The Huffington Post Canada's Ottawa Bureau Chief. Based in Ottawa, Althia was previously a national political reporter for Postmedia News. She has covered Parliament Hill on and off since 2006, writing for QMI Agency and producing for CTV and for CBC Radio's The House. She is an occasional contributor to CBC The National's At Issue panel. She can be found on Twitter under [@althiaraj](#) and on [Facebook](#)



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