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The 7th Annual First Nations Symposium is a success!

Val-d'Or, October 29, 2009 – It is with great pride that UQAT welcomed more than 130 participants to the 7th Annual Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT) First Nations Symposium, whose theme this year was ***Programs and Services Offered to Aboriginal Peoples: Towards Quality in Education***. For the first time, this annual event was held at the First Peoples Pavilion on the UQAT campus in Val-d'Or, on Wednesday, October 28, and Thursday, October 29, 2009.

Choosing Aboriginal education as a thematic focus filled a need to share the respective expertise and knowledges from educational institutions which offer services intended for Aboriginal people. As such, various institutions have developed an expertise on this subject, and 15 of them came together to give presentations, and present workshops and round tables to participants.

Among the many presenters who agreed to share their experience, highlights were the presence of Mr. Raymond Sioui, Assistant Director of the First Nations Education Council, an organization which brings together 22 First Nations communities in Quebec; of Mrs. Marti Ford, Dean of Aboriginal Education at Red River College in Manitoba; of Mrs. Paige Isaac, from the First Peoples' House at McGill University; of Mr. Normand Morin and Mrs. Johanne Lacasse of the First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec; of Mr. Pierre Lepage, anthropologist, author of a pedagogical tool entitled *Aboriginal Peoples: Fact and Fiction* and consultant for l'Institut Tshakapesh, as well as the presence of Mrs. Ginette Dion, from the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport. An equal number of institutions from the Abitibi-Témiscamingue educational community were also present at this gathering.

This year the organizers of the 7th Annual Symposium innovated again by inviting Kim Picard, a fashion designer from the Innu Nation, to present her brand new collection of more than 40 original creations and accessories. From the community of Pessamit in the Côte-Nord region of Quebec, Kim Picard is recognized for her clothing inspired by Aboriginal cultures. This cultural activity was greatly appreciated by the large number of participants who attended this unique show.

This symposium was intended to raise participant awareness of First Nations realities in order to favour co-existence and partnership between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Besides attending various presentations and workshops, participants at the symposium enjoyed visiting the 20 information booths and regional artisan kiosks on-site.

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