

Bridging year program opens doors NB TeleEducation steps onto world stage with G7



Linda Doige and students at the Micmac-Maliseet Institute Photo by J. Cummings

By Wanda Baxter
Brunswickan News

Ten years ago, a nineteen year old single mother from the St. Marys Reserve might not be hopeful about her future. Today, she is enrolled in the Bridging Year program at the Micmac-Maliseet Institute, and Krista Paul's future holds promise.

The Micmac-Maliseet Institute is located in the Marshall D'Avry building on the UNB campus. It has been in existence, from meagre beginnings to its present, impressive actuality, since 1981.

The institute is concerned primarily with bridging the gap between cultures and inequality by way of education. It contributes to the confidence and pride of its aboriginal students by offering courses in Native Studies and Micmac and Maliseet languages.

As well, the insitute acts as a kind of haven for First Nations students at UNB.

"After the Bridging Year, we go our separate ways, but we all hang out here... it's a second home," said Paul.

The Bridging Year, which is subsidized by the Department of Indian Affairs, is a one-year transition program for Aboriginal students. Its existence allows the opportunity for upgrading high school and taking introductory credit courses while on the university campus.

Robert Leavitt is Director of the Institute.

"The biggest block seems to be access to the University. Most students who complete the Bridging Year go on to successfully complete their education. Many graduates return to the aboriginal community to teach," said Leavitt.

There are approximately 39 students enrolled in Bridging Year program this year. Applicants who are accepted into the program and are successful are guaranteed acceptance into regular UNB degree

programs. In fact, many students enter the program aware of what they would like to study, and the Bridging Year acts as preparation.

Prerequisites which a student may lack are gained in the course of the Bridging Year via upgrading and intensive teaching, sometimes one-on-one. The Institute facilitates entrance for aboriginal students; it is a door to post-secondary education which might otherwise be inaccessible.

The Institute also serves First Nations schools and communities by way of research projects, publications, maintaining First Nations records, and with the creation of a Maliseet-Passamaquoddy/English dictionary. Its existence makes way for more widespread integration of aboriginal peoples into the university system.

Krista Paul is doing well in school and is entering the BEd Program offered through the Institute in the fall.

By Greg Moore
Brunswickan News

Proving that New Brunswick really is as well-positioned on the Infobahn as Premier McKenna claims, Fredericton-based TeleEducation NB, a publicly owned communications technology firm, is attending the G7 Information Society Ministerial Conference in Brussels from February 24-26.

According to a Government of Canada news release, TeleEducation NB will be taking part in a "unique event designed to demonstrate how the information society will transform the way in which people live and work," coinciding with the conference for ministers of the G7 countries, Japan, Italy, France, Germany, Canada, the United States and Great Britain.

Andy Scott, Member of Parliament for Fredericton-York-Sunbury, explained that the goal of the conference is to push the boundaries of the technological market and establish a world-wide information infrastructure. Industry Minister John Manley and Canadian Heritage Minister Michel Dupuy will be heading the Canadian delegation, hoping to ensure that Canada secures a competitive position at the forefront of the new technological market.

"TeleEducation NB will make an excellent representative in Brussels," said Scott, expressing his support for the endeavour.

The MP went on to praise the company as having "a superior technological understanding reflective of both Canada's and, more specifically, New Brunswick's leading-edge capabilities."

TeleEducation NB is jointly funded by the Province of New Brunswick and the

Government of Canada through the Co-operation Agreement as part of the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour.

"We've got a lot of resources here and it's just a matter of getting out there and showing people what we've got," Annette Albert of TeleEducation NB explained, during a break from planning the Belgium demonstration.

She says that although the trip won't be a contract drive, they will be able to establish a rapport with international experts.

"We hope to establish linkages and look at their needs to develop a solution and then export that as a product," she said.

TeleEducation NB will be linking up sites in New Brunswick and Ontario with two sites in Europe. Albert said that although they know that they have a very highly developed product, they hope to share technology and ideas with European interests represented at the conference. Their project will demonstrate the power of their specialized distance education technology and interactive access to remote locations.

Conference delegates from the major developed nations of the world will be able to experience the technology by playing such games as tic tac toe, Pictionary© and hangman, according to Mr. Scott's office.

Albert and the rest of the TeleEducation NB crew will be departing for Belgium in advance of the conference in order to work out the logistics of European voltages and phone lines and to ensure that the demonstration will be successful. She was excited about the chance to display their wares to the global market.

"We're really looking forward to it," she said.

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