

# Distance learning symposium a success

**Theresa Seraphim**  
Spotlight Staff

Northern Lakes College recently hosted a symposium on distance learning, which was a success, says the college's senior director of external relations, Brad Hestbak.

Members of Alberta-North, a consortium of seven post-secondary institutions in Alberta and the Northwest Territories formed in 1994, came together May 3 to 5 in the annual event at the college's Peace River campus to discuss distance learning through Community Access Point sites.

"(Those sites) allow an access point for somebody to come in who doesn't have the Internet at home to access learning opportunities," says Hestbak.

He says there were representatives from all the consortium partners, which include Athabasca University, Aurora College, Grande Prairie Regional College, Keyano College, NorQuest College, Northern Lakes College

and Portage College.

Hestbak says the location of the annual event – this was the fifth one – is rotated among the communities involved in the consortium.

"We chose Peace River because of the fact that it's a new community for Northern Lakes College," says Hestbak.

The focus of the symposium is to bring people together on a common theme, he says.

"We certainly have an opportunity to network and share ideas about distance learning and distance teaching."

Alberta-North board of directors chair Don Gnatiuk says the symposium is vital.

"(It) addresses the unique challenges of distance learning. It also showcases improvements and innovations that our partners have implemented to enable northern learners to participate in post-secondary education. Professional development opportunities such as this one are essential for staff involved in both the facilitation and delivery of distance learning."

kind."

Aglukark's experiences could be of assistance to others in a similar situation, he says.

"(She shared) just how she had to cope and develop mechanisms, moving from a smaller centre to a larger centre."


Chris Johnson, also known as Dr. Laugh, was another keynote speaker.

In a keynote address, singer Susan Aglukark, who has been a Distinguished Scholar in Residence at the University of Alberta, shared what it was like to move from a small rural community in the far North to larger centres such as Ottawa.

"She's had a very interesting life experience," says Hestbak. "She was a good speaker, very warm and

He is renowned for his speeches on humour in the classroom and the workplace.

"He had some unique ways of looking at learning and life," says Hestbak.



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