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News Release

For Immediate Release

Great interest in Traditional Medicine Workshops

Corner Brook, NL—Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation hosted a series of Traditional Medicine Workshops to share knowledge about natural medicines, the historic connection of Mi'kmaq to the land, and the practice of passing on knowledge from generation to generation through oral history. More than 130 individuals participated in the workshops with 70 gathering at the Corner Brook session with additional sessions in Grand Falls and Stephenville Crossing.

Following an opening smudge ceremony, participants heard from project co-facilitators Michelle Matthews and Kenny Bennett on the historic and, in some cases, present day use of traditional medicines.

“Sweet grass, cedar, sage, fungus and tobacco are the sacred medicines commonly used in a practice called smudging which takes place at ceremonies, meetings, events or even on the personal level.” Said Michelle Matthews, Cultural Researcher for Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation, “They are burned together in a smudge bowl and we can fan the smoke over us, or over special items or places, as a cleansing, prayerful act.”

Matthews and Bennett shared details on a variety of natural medicines found in Newfoundland: Bear Root, Labrador Tea, Balsam Fir, blueberry, Yarrow, mint, chaga and other medicines which they said can be used for healing in poultices, salves or teas. The medicines were passed around the circle so that participants could touch, smell and experience them.

Mitch Blanchard, Resource Coordinator for Qalipu noted that knowledge of medicines represents our connection to the environment and is a hallmark of traditional Mi'kmaq culture, something that he says he would like to see carried on for future generations.

“The sharing of knowledge through the generations is part of the traditional Mi'kmaw way.” He said, “Understanding the importance of passing on valuable information and traditions is part of the modern, Qalipu culture that is alive and still evolving.”

Grand Falls participant Toby Penney said of the event, “I just want to thank you so much for everything, it really means a lot. The support you have offered and the teaching you have provided are so important and cherished. It really energized myself, and local groups to keep learning and to pay it forward.”

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