



# News Release

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## **NMCC “Discover Aroostook” students invite public to attend semester end presentations**

**Aroostook County** - Students enrolled in the inaugural offering of the Northern Maine Community College adventure-based “Discover Aroostook” course are turning to the public for support as they present their final semester projects for the class in an open forum in NMCC’s Christie lecture hall on Tuesday, December 12, at 6:00 p.m.

The presentations, produced by the students under the guidance of lead instructor Dawn Schillinger McPherson, focus on the learning activities and hands-on exercises the class enjoyed throughout the fall season.

“I think it is safe to say that this past semester was just as much of a learning experience for the instructors as it was for the students. We have been able to introduce students to experiences they can participate in from almost anywhere, such as geocaching, long after the traditional semester ends,” said Dawn McPherson, lead course instructor. “The quality of guest speakers for the class has been phenomenal and has helped all of us realize the ‘quality’ of life and the resources available in The County.”

Working in pairs or individually, students selected one of the areas of Aroostook County recreation and culture they studied and engaged in to focus on for their report. Information from research conducted by the students, accompanied by photos of sites visited and the various activities in which the class participated, have been incorporated into each presentation.

Among the topics of the student presentations are the site of the former Loring Air Force Base, Aroostook County’s rail to trail system and the recreational opportunities that have resulted, the North Maine Woods, Aroostook State Park, and Deboullie Mountain.

The course was developed to introduce students to Northernmost Maine and enable them to better understand and appreciate the outdoor environment in, and culture of, Aroostook County. College officials also see the class as a tool to help curbing out-migration from the region.

In the fall session, field trips followed classroom lectures, assigned readings or some other introductory activities to help students gain understanding about what they experienced. In addition, students were required to keep updated entries in a reflective journal and document, through photography and videography, their experience for the final semester public presentation on their learning experience.

“We wanted to challenge the myth held by some students who attend the College, both from within and outside of Aroostook County, that there is nothing to do here,” said William Egeler, dean of students. “I think we have certainly accomplished that with the initial group of students enrolled in the course.”

In addition to supporting local initiatives to curb out-migration and grow the economy of the region, NMCC officials see the course and the spirit of engagement fostered between student, College and Aroostook community as a factor that will result in an increased graduation rate.

The unique nature of the course, its objectives and goals have attracted support from outside the College in the form of grant monies through the Maine Community Foundation, which has awarded the College nearly \$15,000 through three separate funds to support the initiative. Support from the MCF both for the course and to assist with related transportation expenses was awarded through the Gauvin Family Lighthouse Fund, the Saxifrage Fund and the Aroostook County Fund this fall.

The public is invited and encouraged to attend the December 12 presentations. For more information, call (207) 768-2809.

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