



**Press Release**  
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### **Report on the summer activities for the 475th Anniversary Celebrations**

**Gaspé, September 21, 2009** - The Corporation for the 2009 Gaspé Celebrations is pleased to present its report on an exceptional summer: the summer activities for the Celebration of the 475th Anniversary of Jacques Cartier's arrival on American soil were highly popular and a resounding success on many levels.

The 475th Anniversary celebrants feasted and celebrated their origins and showed the world the contagious joie de vivre of the Gaspesian people. Over one hundred shows were presented in Gaspé this summer, in collaboration with CD Spectacles and other organizations active in the arts – on a scale never before seen in the region! From improvisation to dance, from country to popular music, even circus and theatre arts, the summer programming provided a superb variety of entertainment. Free or at very reasonable prices, the activities succeeded in piquing everyone's interest, young and old, Anglophone and Francophone. "Among other things, it was very important for the organizers that there be something for everyone," emphasized Hélène Francoeur, General Manager of the 475th Anniversary Celebration. The shows put on at the Hydro-Québec Homecoming Place and at the Municipal Park attracted nearly 62,000 people. These celebrations were also an occasion for Gaspésie to introduce a flag bearing its symbol; a flag that had covered more than 10 million kilometres through space with astronaut Julie Payette's.

The central theme for the activities was "Rediscover your world".

The summer season was, among other things, a time to rediscover Gaspesian culture. This *rediscovery* was made possible through activities such as La Fête Gourmande: *a tribute to fishing*, *La Grande gigue simple*, *National Aboriginal Day* and *Pioneer Days*, just to name a few. Of course, July 24, 2009, the high point of the festivities, will remain in our memory for a long time. Some 17,000 spectators came to see top Quebecois singers such as Isabelle Boulay, Kevin Parent, Diane Dufresne, Zachary Richard, and Laurence Jalbert. Moreover, the improvements made to the Municipal Park will make it possible for the City of Gaspé to host other major events in the future. From the comments received, the artists who visited Gaspé over the past months were very impressed by the quality of the stage infrastructure and by the welcome they received from the Gaspesian audience. The program director for the 475th Anniversary Celebration, Mr. Alan Côté, confirmed, "we, too can host big names here!"

From the *Terre!* Show to the Jacques Cartier Race, the largest sailing regatta ever seen in Quebec, and with the impressive aerial acrobatics of the Snowbirds, the 475th Anniversary Celebration put on a great show while emphasizing the natural richness and beauty of the Gaspesian landscape.



The 2009 celebrations also received a great deal of media coverage. The quality of the programming and promotional activities attracted the attention of media from around the world. In fact, the Celebrations were broadcast throughout Quebec, Ontario, the Maritime Provinces, and even France, thanks to the support of the Quebec-France and France-Quebec associations. Visits from well-known figures such as Julie Payette, Régis Labeaume, and Guy Laliberté were a big part of the impressive media coverage of the 475th anniversary of Jacques Cartier's arrival in Gaspé.

The Gaspé 2009 festivities helped Gaspésie escape any drop in tourism numbers due to bad weather and the weak economy. In fact, many tourists visited Gaspésie this summer. We estimate a 19% increase in the number of tourists who came to the peninsula. This benefited both restaurateurs and hotel owners. Because the population of Gaspé nearly doubled the week of July 24, the Ministry of Tourism even had to take exceptional measures to be able to meet the demand for lodging.

In addition to increased tourism numbers, we should also mention the socio-economic effects of the 475th anniversary festivities, which created 100 jobs for the summer season, in addition to 40 occasional jobs for the major events. Excellent community mobilization also helped bring together a team of more than 200 volunteers, which by all accounts contributed heavily to the overall success of the 475th anniversary festivities.

The Gaspé 2009 Celebration Development Corporation also contributed to improving various activities already planned by our dynamic region. Thus, nearly \$400,000 was invested in the region in the form of sponsorships. Three special 475th vintages received financial support: La Grande gigue simple, the Festival Musique du Bout du Monde, and the Grande Traversée de la Gaspésie. Many regional sports and cultural bodies also received financing, such as the Centre d'artistes Vaste et Vague, the Club nautique Jacques Cartier, youth sports organizations such as hockey, figure skating, and competitive swimming, and the Gaspé Anglophone and Francophone schools, as well as many others, for producing memorable shows.



Lastly, the Gaspé 2009 Celebrations, from land to sea, as well as in the air, showed the pride that Gaspésians have for their roots and how happy they are to live in a cultural oasis. Long considered the poor stepchild among regions, Gaspésie definitely showed its smiling, dynamic, and joyous side. The celebrations contributed to building the pride of the Gaspésian people and showed the rest of Quebec that Gaspésie is a unique region, confident in its future and strengthened by its resources and heritage.

Coming soon:

- \* September 26-27: La Fête des couleurs in Forillon National Park of Canada
- \* November 10: The Olympic Torch passes through Gaspé
- \* November 21-22: A gathering of religious communities, sacred music concert and High Mass for the 475<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
- \* December 31: New Year's Eve party! We will end the year with a video retrospective, a grand outdoor show, fireworks and a great time!

For more information, visit [www.475gaspé.com](http://www.475gaspé.com).

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