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## [APECS Canada attends the inaugural THAW in Quebec city!](#)

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Ann & Dan

In the snowy and picturesque city of Quebec, a multidisciplinary group of international researchers came together on March 12th to 15th for the THERmokarst and Aquatic ecosystems Workshop (THAW). Thermokarst lakes, formed by thawing of permafrost, are shallow polar oases that provide important habitat for a plethora of animal and waterfowl populations. In recent years, these dynamic freshwater ecosystems have been subject to intensive hydrologic, biochemical and geomorphological investigation as researchers work to



assess their vulnerability to climatic change. This inaugural workshop took place at the Centre d'Études Nordiques (CEN) at Laval University.

Several members of APECS attended the meeting, including APECS Canada board members Ann Balasubramaniam (University of Waterloo) and Daniel Lamhonwah (Queen's University).

“It was an enriching and rewarding experience,” comments Daniel. “There were about 100 attendees at the conference. It gave us the opportunity to network and discuss research strategies in a fairly intimate setting. This really helped to bridge research gaps and form new collaborations.”

“This was a timely next step in thermokarst lake research,” says Ann while reflecting on the week's events. “The caliber and breadth of the talks and posters presented at the conference was excellent. These exchanges allowed scientists the opportunity to share knowledge across disciplines and move their own research forward in a strategic way.”

A major goal of this meeting was to provide a forum to house discussions that furthered the understanding of freshwater ecosystems in changing permafrost landscapes. Researchers from more than a dozen countries spanning the globe travelled to Quebec to share their expertise in a variety of natural and physical science disciplines – biology, chemistry, geomorphology,

geology, hydrology, and modelling. Many international universities and organizations were represented at THAW, including **ADAPT**, CliC, PAGE21 and the Alfred Wegener Institute.

“THAW has been a tremendously enjoyable success, drawing attention to the vital importance of freshwater systems on permafrost landscapes, and setting out the major priorities for research on this theme throughout the Polar Regions,” says Warwick Vincent of Laval University, and co-organizer of THAW. “Isabelle Laurion (co-organizer) and I are especially grateful to the high-energy participation by so many APECS members, and their superb networking across disciplines. In the final plenary of the workshop it was unanimously declared: Let’s keep this amazing THAW network active and ongoing!”

Warwick and Isabelle would be delighted to hear from any APECS members who work on this topic and would like to join this network to keep up to date on publications, meetings, syntheses, methods, collaborative opportunities, etc.

THAW wasn’t without its share of local traditions. The final night in Quebec City was spent visiting a cabanes à sucre, (or sugar shack) courtesy of the International Permafrost Association (IPA) and organized by Frédéric Bouchard, scientific coordinator of **ADAPT Early Career Researchers Association** (AECRA). Attendees were entertained with maple syrup demonstrations and tastings, and served a traditional French-Canadian supper.

There is already talk of THAW 2015. We can’t wait to see what organizers will have in store for attendees. Vive la science!

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