

Ktunaxa Nation Council

For Immediate Release

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Ktunaxa Nation Network Officially Launches!

East Kootenay, British Columbia – On March 22, representatives from the Ktunaxa Nation, Industry Canada, First Nations Tech Council, Columbia Basin Trust, Network BC, Kootenay Rockies Innovation Council, Fibre Net Services, Telus, local government, BC3, and CMON were on hand to make the last network connection marking the official launch of the Ktunaxa Nation Network and broadband access for rural East Kootenay residents. The Ktunaxa Nation Council owned Nation Network is one of the first open networks of its kind in Canada, and was first envisioned in 2001 as a tool for Nation Members to preserve the critically endangered Ktunaxa language through the use of high-speed video conferencing and online training.

“We knew right away, that we would have to come up with a solution to overcome the barrier of having Ktunaxa Nation communities so spread out that it made face-to-face training much more difficult”, said Don Maki, Director of Traditional Knowledge and Language for the Ktunaxa Nation. “We have been digitally archiving the Ktunaxa language for the past 5 years, but have been limited in our ability to utilize this information by our dial-up bandwidth. With no prospect of the infrastructure in our Traditional Territory improving, we took it upon ourselves to develop our own broadband network in order to make use of these important language-training resources. With broadband now in place, Nation members will be able to use online resources to help preserve the critically endangered Ktunaxa language for future generations”.

The \$7.7 million network has been constructed along with partners such as the Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK) and \$3.8 million dollars in funding from Industry Canada’s Broadband for Rural and Northern Development Pilot Program. This network consists of a series of towers to provide wireless service and fibre to the user (FTTU) in an area of 17,871 square kilometres in East Kootenay. This also opens the door for many opportunities beyond language training, as there are economic, educational, and healthcare options that either never existed, or were much more difficult to access before. These benefits also extend to many of the neighbouring non-first nation communities who will be able to access the Nation Network and have download speeds up to one-hundred times faster than dial-up.

The funding, planning, and creation of the Nation Network has been culmination of many peoples and organization’s efforts, including Industry Canada who played a crucial role. “Through the Broadband for Rural and Northern Development Pilot Program, Canada’s new government continues to help Canadians in rural, remote and Aboriginal communities benefit from all the economic, business and social opportunities that broadband access can bring,” said the Honourable Maxime Bernier, Minister of Industry.

“The Nation should be very proud of this achievement,” said Kathryn Teneese who championed the Nation Network, and sits as the CEO. “It’s been a long trek that has had many twists and turns, but when I look at the long term benefits of having broadband in each Ktunaxa Nation community, I know that it has all been worth it”.

For more information you can visit the Nation Network web site www.ktunaxa.org/network

More information about the Broadband for Rural and Northern Development Pilot Program can be accessed at www.broadband.gc.ca.

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