

KTUNAXA/KINBASKET TRIBAL COUNCIL

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Ktunaxa Nation Announced As Community Partner for the First Nations Technology Council FIT Community Project

Windermere, BC - July 20, 2005 – At this year's Annual General Meeting of the Ktunaxa Nation, the BC First Nations Technology Council (FNTC) was very pleased to announce that the Ktunaxa Nation has been selected as the Community Partner for FNTC's FIT (Fully Integrated Technologies) Community proof-of concept project. As a FIT Community Partner, the Ktunaxa Nation will have the lead role, with significant in-kind resources and other support from FNTC, in developing and implementing a wide range of information and communications technologies (ICT) capacity-building projects for the families and communities of the Ktunaxa Nation.

Commenting on the announcement of the selection of the Ktunaxa Nation as FNTC's inaugural FIT Community Partner, FNTC Co-Chair, Laara Mixon said, "ICT's are increasingly critical to personal and community economic development and success. As the digital divide continues to widen between the "have" and "have not" investing into developing ICT infrastructure that supports community development is good business." Ms. Mixon concluded "The Ktunaxa Nation is leading in many areas of social and economic development and we are excited about the Fully Integrated Technologies Community project results that will be realized, and shared, and that will benefit all Canadians."

Gwen Phillips, Governance Transition Coordinator for the Ktunaxa Nation commented: "Our communities are always looking for ways to improve efficiencies and to build more effective working relationships. ICT provides so many possibilities...some yet to be identified. The FIT Community project will assist us in realizing our vision as a Nation and help us to ensure that growth is both manageable and sustainable".

Expressing support for the FIT Community Project, Ktunaxa Chief Sophie Pierre said: "As First Nations, we have always been struggling to 'catch up' with mainstream governments. A broadband network will provide us with the means of teaching our language to community members in their homes, providing access to better health services and educational opportunities and opening the door to global economic development opportunities will allow us to join the information age on a competitive, or at least even, playing field. The FNTC FIT Community Project will connect us with a network of expertise to ensure that we are successful.

For more information, please contact Don Maki, Director of the Traditional Knowledge and Language Sector, Ktunaxa Nation at 250-421-3835 or dmaki@kktc.cbc.ca.

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BACKGROUND

The concept of the "FIT Community" has developed out of the many significant ICT capacity-building initiatives being undertaken by BC First Nations. A FIT Community employs technology to improve access to health care for all community members, to deliver educational opportunities that would normally not be available in rural or remote communities, to create jobs and participate in the global economy in whatever areas the community chooses, and to promote and share their culture as the community deems appropriate. A broadband network linking all community buildings together, along with high levels of computer literacy and Internet utilization among community members, makes this possible.

In addition to responding to the ICT capacity-building objectives of the Ktunaxa Nation, the FIT Community Project will provide important background and case study content for use by FNTC in building the BC First Nations Technology Plan. When completed, the Plan will offer how-to strategies for ICT capacity building and will discuss ways in which technology can be used to improve cultural, social and economic well being in First Nation communities. The Plan will also describe how First Nation communities can leverage broadband network connectivity to create new service-delivery relationships and enhance existing service-delivery relationships with government agencies and other public and private sector service partners.

The Ktunaxa's vision statement: "As a Nation we are striving to achieve strong, healthy Citizens and communities speaking our languages and celebrating who we are and our history in our ancestral homelands, working together managing our lands and resources within a self-sufficient, self-governing Nation" recognizes the importance of revitalizing their language. The Ktunaxa language is unique among Native linguistic groups in North America. Using technology to support and revitalize First Nations' languages is part of the mandate of the First Nations Technology Council. An important part of the FIT Community ICT capacity building will be support for the continuing revitalization of Ktunaxa language and culture.

The Ktunaxa Kinbasket Tribal Council is currently engaged in building a fiber-optic broadband network to serve all Ktunaxa communities. The broadband network project has been funded in part by Industry Canada through their BRAND (Broadband Rural and Northern Development) Program.

The First Nations Technology Council was formed in 2003 by Resolution of the First Nations Summit Chiefs in Assembly. FNTC's mandate includes developing the First Nations Technology Plan to address issues such as connectivity to all First Nation communities in B.C., ensuring technical skills are developed to support community ICT, building technical capacity to ensure that all First Nation citizens will reap the benefits technology offers, and, to promote technology as a tool to revitalize traditional culture and language.

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