

PRESS RELEASE

Internet News: Major Milestone for Northern High-Quality Broadband

Oujé-Bougoumou, Québec, Nov. 1, 2017: With its newest major telecommunications hub now in operation in Amos, Québec, Eeyou Communications Network (ECN) met with officials from federal, Québec, and Cree governments and local municipalities to line up its next steps.

“The installation of the Amos high-capacity centre as our second Internet exchange centre means ECN has achieved a secure status with complete redundancy for the network,” said ECN President Alfred Loon. “This step now allows for our Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) services to be in service by spring 2018.”

FTTH aims to reach more than 4000 homes in Radisson, Chisasibi, Wemindji, Eastmain, Waskaganish, Waswanipi, Oujé-Bougoumou, Nemaska and Mistissini with Triple-Play-Plus service. Every subscriber will be able to receive full-service (150+ channels) TV, Internet at not less than 50 Megs (up to 1 Gb), regional toll-free home telephones and a full complement of streaming channels including Netflix, Google Play, HBO Now, Roku and real-time gaming. Rates are expected to be comparable to Québec City and Montréal.

ECN Profile

A non-profit corporation founded in 2004 by the Cree Regional Authority, ECN was set up to provide modern telecommunications services at reasonable rates across the 14 communities of Eeyou Istchee and James Bay, and to benefit of the population, institutions and local businesses, including hospitals, schools and municipal administrations.

Start-Up: Phase 1

By 2007, regional social and education entities across James Bay joined with local governments in the Cree and Jamesian centres to pool their efforts to build the initial phase of ECN. This initiative connected major world-wide Internet networks by fiber optic lines to the communities of Mistissini, Chibougamau, Chapais, Ouje-Bougoumou, Waswanipi, Lebel-sur-Quévillon, Matagami, Nemaska, Radisson, Wemindji and Chisasibi. The project was supported by the *Ministère de la Communication et de la Culture du Québec* through its *Villes et villages branchés* program and *Canada Economic Development*. The first connections to high-speed unlimited Internet were the school and health boards, local Internet providers and community users.

In 2013, ECN and Telus jointly expanded tele-medicine services through the Québec *Réseau intégré de télécommunications multimedia* (RITM) network. This partnership enabled broadband services for all health facilities in the region as well as other Québec government organizations and Cree institutions, improving significantly the social services available throughout the region.

Newly Completed: Phase 2

Following the first phase, service was expanded by ECN to include Eastmain and Waskaganish. In addition to strengthening the capacity of the network throughout the ECN territory, this construction brought redundancy by ringing the entire area with secure fiber optic lines.

To connect Waskaganish and Eastmain to the ECN network, this costly initiative required a new 950 kilometre network line along the James-Bay road and the communities' access roads. The project was made possible through support of the provincial and federal governments. The finance agencies were *Société du Plan Nord of Québec* and the federal Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada and the Connecting Canadians program from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, the Cree Nation Government and *Administration régionale Baie-James*.

Fibre to the Home: The Current Phase

After years of planning, ECN has set in motion its boldest effort: Fiber-to-the-Home, a project to reach every home across the communities of Eeyou Istchee. Featuring state-of-the-art telecommunications services at reasonable rates and highest-quality, FTTH is financed by the Federal Government through the Digital Canada program, the Cree Nation Government and *Administration régionale Baie-James*. When the current construction is completed in spring 2018, FTTH will offer top-of-the-line telecommunications services to small business and residential users in Oujé-Bougoumou, Radisson, Mistissini, Waswanipi, Eastmain, Waskaganish, Nemaska, Wemindji and Chisasibi. ECN is currently working alongside Canadian telecommunications distributor Distributel to provide a comprehensive consumer and small-business package including Internet, television and telephone services.

Crossing La Grande: The Next Phase

ECN is now preparing for its next major construction. This planned expansion will connect the community of Whapmagoostui north of the La Grande River to the ECN regional grid with fiber optic service.

Acknowledgments

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Government of Québec (Société du Plan Nord, Villages branchés program of the Ministère de la Communication et de la Culture du Québec)

Government of Canada (Connecting Canadians, Digital Canada 150, Minister of Innovation Science and Economic Development Canada, Indigenous and Northern affairs)

Cree Nation Government

Administration régionale Baie-James

TELUS Québec

Distributel