

NEWS RELEASE

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CONNECTIVITY CONSTRUCTION TO BEGIN THIS SUMMER

TREATY ONE TERRITORY, BROKENHEAD OJIBWAY NATION, MANITOBA – Clear Sky Connections (CSC) announced today that following consent from three Manitoba First Nations, construction is set to begin this summer for the first of many communities who will have access to high-speed internet through the project that spans the province.

The initial construction of the fibre network is to connect three gateway communities. These communities will be leading points for connecting other communities to access high-speed internet as the network is built. They are Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (Nelson House), Norway House Cree Nation, and Pimicikamak (Cross Lake). The anticipated time for the connecting of the fibre is before the end of the calendar year with further discussions and consultations on continuing the build to connect more communities.

CSC Chair Chief David Crate of Fisher River Cree Nation announced that the Selection Committee chose the gateway communities that lead to larger clusters of First Nation communities. All three communities have agreed to partner with CSC and inject some of their capital into making the venture a reality and have the build start within weeks. The communities are looking forward to economic development opportunities for their community and citizens. The build will continue to connect the rest of the other First Nations communities. A major deciding factor in the selection process was upcoming capital projects, namely new state-of-the-art health centres, schools and other infrastructure including surrounding communities that also have given their consent to proceed.

With support from Indigenous Services Canada, the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, and a partnership with Manitoba Hydro Telecom, CSC continues its work towards connectivity for Manitoba First Nations. The planning for the infrastructure of the project has been essential to laying the groundwork for a reliable high-speed network. Most recently, CSC has worked with and gained the expertise and advice from other similar organizations, namely KatloTech from NWT, Western James Bay Telecom Network, and Eeyou Communications Network in Quebec.

Over the course of the last 10 years, the Chiefs of Manitoba gave the former Manitoba First Nations Technology Council the mandate to Build the Manitoba First Nations Network of the Future. This entity became Clear Sky Connections who continue to secure investments to bring high-speed internet to Manitoba First Nations and eventually the surrounding communities. Clear Sky Connections (CSC) has had support from Manitoba First Nations from its inception, to play the lead role in making this goal a reality. Since the announcement in June of 2018 where the newly formed Clear Sky Indigenous Network was shared with the public, the CSC has continued to build the for-profit arm of the joint venture with Broadband Communications North.

QUOTES:

"We are deeply honoured that our partners and investors have contributed funding to make this a reality. We call on Canada and the Province of Manitoba to inject more capital into the 100% First Nations owned companies that are venturing together in this initiative. Ultimately we are deemed as the fastest growing population with the highest poverty rates across this country – the time is now to change the stigma that continues to plague our communities. But today we can change the mindsets of our future - of our generations to come. To maximize the economic benefits for the communities and the way we do business going forward."

– Chief David Crate, Fisher River Cree Nation and Clear Sky Connections Vice-Chairperson

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