

First Nations Broadband Infrastructure and Operations Policy
A Policy for First Nations Innovation - <http://fn-innovation-pn.com>
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Atlantic Canada's First Nation Help Desk / Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey
<http://firstnationhelp.com>



First Nations Education Council
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This document outlines a community-based broadband infrastructure and operations policy for nation-to-nation discussions, negotiations and cooperation between First Nations and government stakeholders.

1. Broadband as a utility is an essential community and regional public infrastructure that supports and enables First Nation community services such as health, education, economic development, governance, public security and emergency services¹.
2. Broadband is a necessary condition for First Nation community and regional economic, social, and cultural development².
3. First Nation communities and their regional support organizations must have the power to decide how funds are prioritized and spent developing, operating and maintaining local and regional broadband infrastructure and services. Communities must have the choice to own and control their own infrastructure and broadband services. There is a responsibility for governments and industry to consult and collaborate with First Nations about broadband development in their territories³.
4. Broadband connectivity is more than access to the internet. Meaningful connectivity is the capacity to produce content and promote and deliver goods and services, telehealth, e-learning, water and energy monitoring and management, video and voice telephony and enterprise applications. Internet, video, voice, and data are key essential services that need to be within the framework of broadband development to eliminate the 'digital divide' across all First Nations. Effective use requires providing the means for First Nation communities to develop and use the technologies appropriately to meet community needs⁴.
5. Governments, in order to deliver services and security to citizens on reserve, have an obligation to contribute to the planning and development of local capacities, deployment and ongoing operation and maintenance of modern and evolving First Nation community connectivity⁵.
6. Governments and government agencies must recognize and support First Nation e-Community resolutions 16-2008 and 53-2011 adopted by Chiefs at the Assembly of First Nations⁶.

Evidence and references for the First Nations Broadband Infrastructure and Operations Policy

Note: To access a publication listed below, click on the link. For all FNI publications: <http://fni.firstnation.ca>

¹ There is considerable evidence that broadband is essential for enabling First Nation community services. For examples, see research from Kitigan Zibi First Nation in Quebec: [Whiteduck, G., Tenasco, A., O'Donnell, S., Whiteduck, T. & Lockhart, E. \(2012\) Broadband-Enabled Community Services in Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation: Developing an e-Community Approach. Paper for the 2012 International Rural Network Forum, Whyalla and Upper Spencer Gulf, Australia, 24-28 September](#) and Fort Severn First Nation in Ontario: [O'Donnell, S., Kakekaspan, G., Beaton, B., Walmark, B., Mason, R., Mak, M. \(2011\) A New Remote Community-Owned Wireless Communication Service: Fort Severn First Nation Builds Their Local Cellular System with Keewaytinook Mobile. Canadian Journal of Communication, 36 \(4\) 663-673](#). See also the many examples and analysis in the "First Mile" report: [McMahon, R., O'Donnell, S., Smith, R., Woodman Simmonds, J., Walmark, B. \(2010\) Putting the 'last-mile' first: Re-framing broadband development in First Nations and Inuit communities. Vancouver: Centre for Policy Research on Science and Technology \(CPROST\), Simon Fraser University, December](#).

² First Nations supported by their regional networks are using many broadband applications for community development. See, for example: [Milliken, M., O'Donnell, S., Gorman, E. \(2009\) How K-Net and Atlantic Canada's First Nation Help Desk are using videoconferencing for community development. Journal of Community Informatics 5\(2\)](#) and this evidence of how First Nation community members are using broadband for cultural development and community resilience: [Molyneux, H., O'Donnell, S., Kakekaspan, C., Walmark, B., Budka, P., Gibson, K. \(2012\) Community Resilience and Social Media: Remote and Rural First Nations Communities, Social Isolation and Cultural Preservation. Paper for the 2012 International Rural Network Forum, Whyalla and Upper Spencer Gulf, Australia, 24-28 September](#).

³ First Nations and their regional support organizations have the expertise to develop appropriate broadband infrastructure and applications, and they need ongoing government support to continue this work. For a description, see: [Whiteduck, T., Beaton, B., Burton, K. & O'Donnell, S. \(2012\) Democratic Ideals Meet Reality: Developing Locally Owned and Managed Broadband Networks and ICT Services in Rural and Remote First Nations in Quebec and Canada. Keynote paper for the Community Informatics Research Network \(CIRN\) Conference, Prato, Italy, November](#). For an example of the need for communities to control how education services are delivered using broadband, see this study from Elsipogtog First Nation in New Brunswick: [Simon, J., Burton, K., Lockhart, E. & O'Donnell, S. \(2012\) Post-Secondary Distance Education: Experiences of Elsipogtog First Nation Community Members. Paper for the Atlantic Native Teachers Education Conference \(ANTEC\), Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, May 17](#).

⁴ To address the digital divide, First Nations need to own and control their local broadband infrastructure. For an explanation of why this is the case, see: [McMahon, R., O'Donnell, S., Smith, R., Walmark, B., Beaton, B. & Simmonds, J. \(2011\). Digital Divides and the 'First Mile': Framing First Nations Broadband Development in Canada. The International Indigenous Policy Journal, 2\(2\)](#). For evidence of the need for appropriate video applications controlled by First Nations, see: [O'Donnell, S., Johnson, L., Kakepetum-Schultz, T., Burton, K., Whiteduck, T., Mason, R., Beaton, B., McMahon, R. & Gibson, K. \(2013\) Videoconferencing for First Nations Community-Controlled Education, Health and Development. The Electronic Journal of Communication, 23 \(1&2\)](#).

⁵ Governments must provide ongoing funding to support and maintain the networks used to deliver government services. For a description of the funding challenges faced by First Nations, see: [O'Donnell, S., Perley, S., and Simms, D. \(2008\). Challenges for Video Communications in Remote and Rural Communities. Proceedings of the IEEE International Symposium on Technology and Society \(IEEE ISTAS 08\). Fredericton, June](#). All community members require appropriate support to use ICT effectively, see: [Carpenter, P., Gibson, K., Kakekaspan, C., O'Donnell, S. \(2012\). How women in remote and rural First Nation communities are using information and communication technologies. Connecting the Future: Rural Broadband Technology, Policy and Impact. Queens University School of Business, Kingston, Ontario, December](#).

⁶ First introduced by Keewaytinook Okimakanak's KNET (KO-KNET) services in 2005, the e-Community ICT model was adopted by the Chiefs at the Assembly of First Nations. Click on the links to access [AFN 16-2008 "e-Community for First Nations: A National Framework"](#) adopted in July 2008 and [AFN 53-2011 "First Nations e-Community Strategy"](#) adopted in December 2011. The First Nations e-Community framework provides choices for local people to remain in their communities and contribute to the growth and positive development in these challenging environments; see: [Beaton, B., Campbell, P. \(2013\). Settler Colonialism and First Nations E-Communities in Northwestern Ontario. World Social Science Forum, Montreal, QC, Canada. October](#).