
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Citizens' Services

High-speed internet access coming to remote Gitanyow, Stewart

GITANYOW – The Province is investing as much as \$3 million toward a project to bring reliable, high-speed internet access to more than 500 households in the rural, remote and Indigenous communities of Gitanyow and Stewart in northwestern B.C.

The Algyax Anuuhlx (Talking Drums) project will be built and operated by Meziadin Junction Limited Partnership, a company owned by Gitanyow First Nation.

“Once complete, the infrastructure will provide people and businesses in Gitanyow and Stewart with better access to learning, jobs, services like telehealth and a wealth of local and global economic opportunities,” said Lisa Beare, Minister of Citizens’ Services. “We are committed to connecting every B.C. community by 2027 to provide a foundation for their growth, and to support people to be able to stay and invest in the places they call home.”

The project will build new network infrastructure serving residents in these communities. Once complete, the infrastructure will enable access to high-speed broadband internet speeds of more than 50 megabits per second (Mbps) for downloads, and 10 Mbps for uploads.

“The Gitanyow Band Council is very pleased that the Province of British Columbia has approved a grant that will bring high-speed internet to every home in our community. Our current cable internet system is very old and fails us on a regular basis. It has limited speeds and capacity,” said Leslie McLean, Deputy Chief Councillor, Gitanyow First Nation. “With the new high-speed internet, we look forward to all the benefits it has to offer. Along with this new technology, we hope to bring other services, such as TV and Wi-Fi hotspots, throughout the community.”

The Province invested as much as \$3 million alongside an investment for as much as \$872,000 by service provider Meziadin Junction Limited Partnership, for approximately \$3.9 million, the expected total cost of the project. Meziadin Junction Limited Partnership has partnered with local telecommunications company Sienna Networks to build the infrastructure to bring high-speed internet access to underserved communities in the area.

“Stewart welcomes the opportunity to have high-speed internet brought to every home in our community,” said Angela Danuser, mayor, District of Stewart. “Regardless of where we live, connectivity is essential, and thanks to the investment by Meziadin Junction Limited Partnership and the investment by the Province, this secure high-speed internet will improve the daily lives of residents and business in both Stewart and Gitanyow. Living in a remote northern community presents many challenges. Having reliable high-speed internet will help to build our community and provide that much needed link to the rest of the world.”

In March 2022, the Province partnered with the federal government to provide as much as \$830 million to expand high-speed internet services to connect all remaining rural and First

Nations households in the Province.

The plan to connect every household in B.C. to high-speed internet services by 2027 will level the playing field for British Columbians and ensure every community has better access to jobs, education, training and health care.

Quotes:

Murray Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation –

“Many rural Indigenous communities across B.C. lack access to high-speed internet, infrastructure that is essential for First Nations’ voices to be heard in today’s digital age. Our government is working to change that by investing in and partnering with these communities. Connectivity opens the door to enhanced economic opportunities for First Nations communities, like Gitanyow, who are creating community-owned internet service providers that cater to the needs of their community and surrounding areas.”

Nathan Cullen, MLA for Stikine –

“Access to reliable, high-speed internet service is increasingly crucial for people living and working in rural, remote and Indigenous communities like Gitanyow and Stewart. Investing in communities helps support our commitment to building a strong, sustainable economy that works for everyone in B.C.”

Joel Starlund, executive director, Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs –

“This opportunity aligns well with our strategy of diversifying our economic opportunities. Internet access is now an essential service and having northern communities like ours have access to this capacity allows further opportunities around education and health. We commend B.C. for working with us in making this opportunity a reality, particularly when many of these opportunities are dominated by larger corporations of the communications industry. We also thank our neighbouring Tahltan Nation and the community of Stewart for working with us and opening a pathway for this opportunity.”

Mark Starlund, general manager, Meziadin Junction Limited Partnership –

“This opportunity allows not only the delivery of high-speed internet to our home community of Gitanyow and community members in the District of Stewart with all the benefits of secure interconnectivity we haven’t had to date, but it also creates the backbone of infrastructure that has been desperately needed to support local education, health care, business and economic opportunities now and into the future. We are truly grateful that the provincial government has recognized the universal necessity of this service and stepped forward to assist us in providing reliable, high-speed internet to both Gitanyow First Nation and our isolated neighbour of Stewart.”

Joel McKay, chief executive officer, Northern Development Initiative Trust –

“The work being done by Meziadin Junction Limited Partnership to connect 500 underserved households in Stewart and Gitanyow will result in residents realizing new and improved opportunities for education, health and business. These two remote northwestern B.C. communities will also be able to develop and strengthen social connections in the digital

landscape, reducing isolation and connecting them with their neighbours and friends around the globe.”

Learn More:

For more information about B.C.’s commitment to high-speed internet connectivity across the province, visit: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/connectivity-in-bc>

For more information about the Northern Development Initiative Trust, visit: <https://www.northerndevelopment.bc.ca/funding-programs/partner-programs/connecting-british-columbia/>

Contact:

Ministry of Citizens’ Services
Media Relations
250 889-8370

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