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Taku River Tlingit First Nation Celebrates Launch of Cellular Service in Atlin BC

FOR RELEASE Thursday, December 19th 2024

The Taku River Tlingit First Nation (TRTFN) is thrilled to announce the highly anticipated arrival of cellular service in Atlin, BC. The Bell Mobility service went live on Sunday, December 15th, 2024, just in time to be a festive seasonal gift for the community. After many years of development, this service will enhance and support the health and safety of Atlinites and visitors. This groundbreaking development comes after a dedicated and collaborative effort involving TRTFN, Northwestel, Bell Mobility, Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), invaluable Nation and community support. Crucial initial project funding was provided by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC). The BC Government awarded funding directly to Northwestel for the transport fibre Atlin BC initiative, which backhauls the cellular traffic.

This project marks a significant milestone for Atlin, ensuring residents can enjoy improved connectivity and ultimately community safety. Although initial service launched with LTE, groundwork is already in place to transition to 5G in the new year. The cell tower will also support emergency VHF radio communications.

As part of the commissioning by Bell Mobility, the four emergency numbers currently in use in Atlin will undergo rigorous tests to ensure reliability and integration with the new network. Both Bell and TELUS subscribers will benefit from this service launch, with Rogers users also able to access the network via roaming agreements.

“We are proud to see this project come to life, as it represents a significant step forward in stewarding our responsibility to ensure community safety while supporting our elders and community members. Enhanced connectivity will enable better access to healthcare and communication, ensuring Atlin as a whole receives the care they deserve. This initiative not only strengthens our ties within the community but also responsibly propels Atlin into a more connected and secure future.” - **TRTFN Spokesperson Charmaine Thom**

“Access to reliable telecommunication services is vital for the safety, prosperity, and well-being of communities. The new cell tower in Atlin, developed in partnership with the Taku River Tlingit First Nation, marks a transformative step toward improving connectivity for the people who call this region home. This investment not only enhances access to critical connectivity services but also strengthens ties between families, businesses, and communities across the region. Our Government is dedicated to work side by side with partners to ensure that even the most remote areas have the infrastructure they need to thrive”— **The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Indigenous Services Canada**



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“In moments of emergencies, whether due to a fire or a medical incident, every minute can make a difference. Access to modern telecommunications will enhance emergency response and help protect lives in Atlin for many decades to come.” - **TRTFN Wolf Clan Director - Cherish Clarke**

“I am happy this was completed so quickly. We now have cell service and will be getting 911 service in the future. Speaking to our elders, I can see they are thrilled to have access to cell service. I feel a sense of security, like a warm blanket, knowing that this essential need for emergency communication has been met in our community. We are incredibly thankful to ISC, Planetworks Consulting, Northwestel, and Bell for their hard work and for everyone working together.” - **TRTFN Operations and Maintenance Manager - Elder Andy Carlick**

“This is an exciting day for Taku River Tlingit First Nation and Atlin, and shows how challenges can be overcome when we all work together, I'm proud that our government was able to provide funding to help bring this remote community online and gain access to high-speed internet and cell services.” - **George Chow, BC's Ministry of Citizens' Services**

“Congratulations to Atlin, the Taku River Tlingit First Nation, and all the partners who joined together to make this transformational technological leap happen for the community. Northwestel is proud to connect Atlin to our Northern Canadian fibre network to enable cellular services. We hope the community enjoys a holiday season full of connectivity. We look forward to the next leap for Atlin—fast, unlimited fibre-to-the-home internet. We expect fibre services to become available to residents and businesses in Atlin this summer.”
- **Curtis Shaw, President, Northwestel**

“Bell is proud to partner with Taku River Tlingit First Nation, the Governments of Canada and British Columbia, Northwestel, and Planetworks Consulting to bring world-class wireless connectivity to the Atlin community for the very first time. Expanding access to Bell Mobility's award-winning 4G LTE and 5G networks will support local businesses, enhance access to education and healthcare services, and enable residents to stay connected to family and opportunities at home and across the country. This significant partnership reflects our commitment to working with Indigenous communities to drive meaningful economic and social growth with high quality connections, supporting a strong and sustainable future for generations to come.” - **Stephen Howe, Chief Technology and Information Officer, Bell**

The transformative power of this project has ushered in a new era of communication and opportunity for Atlin, providing residents with unprecedented access to modern telecommunication services and connectivity.

A heartfelt Gunalcheesh (thank you) to everyone who contributed to making this vision a reality. The TRTFN is honored to see this project come to fruition and looks forward to the enhanced quality of life this service will deliver.

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Photos





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Additional Information

About TRTFN

The Taku River Tlingit First Nation (TRTFN) is located in Atlin, BC, a small remote community of approximately 400 people. As the custodians of our Territory, which spans over 40,000 sq/km across British Columbia, Yukon, and Alaska, we are dedicated to responsible stewardship of our land and resources. Our commitment to enhancing community safety and connectivity is reflected in initiatives like our new cellular service, which aims to improve access to healthcare and communication for our members. By fostering stronger ties within the community, we are ensuring a sustainable and secure future for the Tlingit way of life.

About Northwestel

Northwestel is the largest telecommunications provider in Canada's North, serving 97 communities across the Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, British Columbia, and Alberta. Beginning in 2020, Northwestel's Every Community project significantly improved broadband services for northern residents, governments, and businesses using the latest fibre-to-the-home (FTTH) and Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite technologies. Now, over 95% of homes in the Yukon and NWT have access to high-speed, unlimited fibre-powered internet, either fibre-to-the-home or fibre to the neighbourhood. Northwestel is proud to provide service on the traditional territories of Indigenous peoples across Canada's North. In 2024, Sixty North Unity, a consortium of Indigenous organizations, has announced its plans to purchase Northwestel and make it a wholly-owned Indigenous company, which will make it the largest Indigenous-owned telecommunications company in the world.

About Bell

Bell is Canada's largest communications company, providing advanced broadband Internet, wireless, TV, media, and business communication services. Founded in Montréal in 1880, Bell is wholly owned by BCE Inc. To learn more, please visit Bell.ca or BCE.ca.

Through Bell for Better, we are investing to create a better today and a better tomorrow by supporting the social and economic prosperity of our communities. This includes the Bell Let's Talk initiative, which promotes Canadian mental health with national awareness and anti-stigma campaigns like Bell Let's Talk Day and significant Bell funding of community care and access, research, and workplace leadership initiatives throughout the country. To learn more, please visit Bell.ca/LetsTalk.

The transportation fibre which backhauls communications from the cellular tower to Bell's network was funded by the BC government. <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2024CITZ0019-001173>



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