

WINNIPEG, MANITOBAWWW.APTN.CA

APTN: Aboriginal Peoples Television Network

A boriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) was the first national Aboriginal television network in the world. APTN provides programming by, for and about Aboriginal Peoples, and shares its content with viewers from Canada and across the globe.

As a social enterprise, APTN is a non-profit which uses a business model to achieve social, cultural, and economic objectives for Aboriginal Peoples in Canada.

The launch of APTN on September 1, 1999 represented a significant milestone for Aboriginal Canada. For the first time in broadcast history, First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples had the opportunity to share their stories with Canada through a national television network dedicated to Aboriginal programming. Through documentaries, news magazines, dramas, entertainment specials, children's series, cooking shows and education programs, APTN offers all Canadians a window into the remarkably diverse worlds of Indigenous Peoples in Canada

and throughout the world.

Headquartered in Winnipeg, Manitoba, APTN offers an unprecedented opportunity for Aboriginal producers, directors, actors, writers and media professionals to create innovative, reflective and relevant programming for Canadian viewers. More than 80% of APTN programming originates in Canada, with 56% of the programs broadcast in English, 16% in French and 28% in 15 different Aboriginal languages.

With the strong support of Aboriginal communities, producers and organizations, and the Canadian public, the CRTC announced in February 1999 that APTN would receive a national broadcast license. Through the efforts of countless Aboriginal television professionals and supporters nation-wide, APTN became a reality on September 1, 1999, and has become an important entertainment, news and educational programming choice for approximately 10 million households in Canada.

APTN had its beginnings in the Canadian North more than 20 years ago. In 1978, the federal government initiated the Anik B experiments to test communications satellites in applications such as TV broadcasting, community communications, tele-education and tele-health. Inuit organizations →

➔ in Nunavut and Northern Quebec participated in these pilot projects for several years.

In 1980, the CRTC established the Committee on the Extension of Service to Northern and Remote Communities (the Therrien Committee), which released a report that supported the development of broadcast initiatives that would assist Aboriginal Peoples to preserve their languages and foster their culture. Soon after the report was released, the CRTC licensed CANCOM to deliver a range of southern programming into northern and remote communities and, at the same time, provide development assistance to northern Aboriginal broadcasters.

A major breakthrough in the evolution of Aboriginal broadcasting took place in 1983, when the Government of Canada announced the Northern Broadcasting Policy and the Northern Native Broadcast Access Program. Public funds were allocated for the production of radio and television programs by 13 native communications societies across the north. It was evident that northern communities would benefit greatly from a co-operative broadcasting system, but it was also clear that this goal could not be fully realized without the necessary technical infrastructure. In 1985, the CRTC Northern Native Broadcasting policy statement recognized the need for a dedicated northern transponder to distribute television programming across the north. Over the next several years, the federal government and northern broadcasters established the groundwork for a northern satellite distribution system.

In 1991, the CRTC licensed Television Northern Canada (TVNC) and, within a year, the network was launched in the north. The success and growth of TVNC in the 1990s convinced the network's Board of Directors that a national Aboriginal television network would be a positive and important addition to Canadian broadcasting. By 1997, the movement towards a national Aboriginal network was under-

way, and in 1999 the dream was realized.

Aboriginal Peoples finally had a platform with which to tell their stories. The national network would also provide a foundation to focus on the positive aspects of Aboriginal communities as opposed to the negative ones that permeate current media content, while also offering context and historical perspectives that go beyond the headlines. This is profound, as articulated by APTN when musing, "If our reporters were there — our history would have been told differently."

With a strong commitment toward creating jobs and economic opportunities for Aboriginal Peoples, APTN has initiated several strategies to achieve these objectives. APTN creates training and job opportunities for youth through work experience placements and internships, hiring summer students, participating in career fairs, and hiring them for casual employment. APTN also supports broader training initiatives that include industry partnerships, continuing education through secondary institutes and professional associations, and employee mentorship programs. APTN also partners with Telefilm Canada in a program based in Winnipeg that supports Aboriginal filmmakers to develop original script material.

The result of these strategies is that Aboriginal Peoples make up 100% of the Senior Management Team at APTN, 61% of managers, and 70% of all staff. In addition, APTN now has an active pool of more than 75 Aboriginal skilled producers across the country. In recognition of the supportive and capacity building environment at APTN, they have also been recognized in 2009, 2010 and 2011 as one of Manitoba's Top 25 Employers.

The dream of a national Aboriginal television network has become a reality, and the rest, as they say, is broadcast history.

CED | in
Manitoba

CED is Community Economic Development

This profile is one of 100 stories of Manitoba communities working to build fairer and stronger local economies, reduce poverty, and revitalize neighbourhoods.

Not all of the initiatives use a fully comprehensive CED approach, but each represents an important component of a CED solution. Read all our profiles of CED at www.ccednet-rcdec.ca/CEDprofiles