



## **Cisco Canada Welcomes Saskatchewan to Connected North Virtual Education Program for Indigenous Communities**

### ***Black Lake's Father Porte Memorial Dene School becomes first in Saskatchewan to join immersive program driving student engagement***

**BLACK LAKE and SASKATOON, SASKATCHEWAN and TORONTO, ONTARIO** – April 21, 2016 - Cisco Canada, along with education program manager TakingITGlobal, and provincial service provider partner SaskTel announced today the expansion of the Connected North Program into Black Lake, Saskatchewan. The launch was also made possible through the support of the Prince Albert Grand Council, Black Lake Denesuline First Nation, Cameco, AREVA Resources, Athabasca Basin Development, and West Wind Aviation.

The Connected North program began in Iqaluit in September 2013 with a single school and has since grown to include 15 schools including the Father Porte Memorial Dene School in Black Lake - the first in Saskatchewan.

Connected North delivers immersive and interactive virtual education and mental healthcare services to remote Indigenous communities through Cisco's high-definition two-way video communication and collaboration technology. The aim of the program is to offer a fresh approach to student engagement, allowing teachers and administrators to expose their students to people, experiences and ideas that bring learning to life.

Connected North is founded on three key principles:

1. Customized content for each school - On-demand, interactive content and virtual field trips for JK-Grade 12 students. Teachers choose from a range of subject experts and virtual experiences to meet the needs of their students.
2. Two-way student exchange – the Classroom Connect program brings together students from across Canada. Classes are matched to work on group projects, allowing all students to share their knowledge, culture and values so that the learning goes both ways.
3. High quality video experience - Cisco provides a reliable, high definition, live video experience that brings video into the classroom like never before.

To show the many ways video technology is used in Connected North classrooms, the launch event will feature a live, virtual visit to the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology in Drumheller, Alberta, followed by an interactive literacy exploration between the Father Porte Memorial Dene School and West Point Grey Academy.

Cisco provided the video collaboration technology and overall ecosystem management while SaskTel donated the Internet connection and service required to power the video connection. Cameco, AREVA Resources, and Athabasca Basin Development donated the funding to cover the programming costs, and West Wind Aviation supports the air travel required for the installation of technology. This provincial partnership joins a strong network of Connected North supporters from across Canada, including: SSI Micro, the Royal Bank Foundation, TD Bank Financial Group, Scotiabank, Tech Data, Ingram Micro, The Learning Partnership, Canadian North, The Samuel Family Foundation, and The Hospital for Sick Children, among others.

TakingITGlobal (TIG) has taken on the role of education program manager for the Connected North program. TIG is a charitable organization that empowers youth to understand and act on the world's greatest challenges through their global virtual network of teachers and students. TIG is responsible for program development, fundraising, and working directly with schools to create and deliver customized, curriculum-linked programming.

In a study conducted by the Advanced Learning Technologies Lab at the University of Toronto in 2015 on the overall Connected North program, researchers found 86% of students actively participated during the virtual sessions, with students reporting that the program enhanced their cultural understanding and strengthened their feelings of citizenship.

#### **Supporting Quotes:**

"It is a priority in our community to ensure the children of Black Lake receive a well-rounded education," said Chief Rick Robillard, Black Lake Denesuline First Nation. "Connected North is a powerful way to help us achieve this goal, by both introducing students and teachers to a new world of opportunity, while also providing an outlet to share their pride in our culture, tradition and values."

"SaskTel has always maintained a strong commitment to investing in remote Northern Saskatchewan communities," said Ron Styles, SaskTel President and CEO. "The enhanced connectivity and access to technology this program brings will enrich the community of Black Lake from an educational, economic and social perspective, while providing much needed services to local youth."

"Travel is limited for the children, so video sessions like this provide a unique opportunity for students to be exposed to new people, places and ideas, and also share their culture with others to build understanding." - Steve Thatcher, Principal, Father Porte Memorial Dene School

"The launch of Connected North in Saskatchewan marks the continued growth of a program that is having a positive impact on remote Indigenous communities," said Bernadette Wightman, President of Cisco Canada. "We are proud to have founded the program, and are excited to continue to contribute

our expertise in collaboration technology to this phenomenal ecosystem of partners to drive the delivery of needed education and healthcare resources.”

“We’re thrilled to bring together so many committed partners to deliver high-quality content to engage Blake Lake students” said Jennifer Corriero, Executive Director of TakingITGlobal. “Through professional learning and virtual classroom connections, educators will also have opportunities to collaborate nationally and globally to bring the world into their classrooms.”

### **About Cisco**

Cisco (NASDAQ: CSCO) is the worldwide leader in IT that helps companies seize the opportunities of tomorrow by proving that amazing things can happen when you connect the previously unconnected. Cisco products and services are supplied in Canada by Cisco Systems Canada Co., a wholly owned subsidiary of Cisco Systems, Inc. For ongoing news, please go to <http://thenetwork.cisco.com> and <http://americas.thecisconetwork.com/>

### **Press Contact Cisco**

Karin Scott  
Cisco Canada  
416 306 7164  
[kariscot@cisco.com](mailto:kariscot@cisco.com)

### **About SaskTel**

SaskTel is the leading Information and Communications Technology (ICT) provider in Saskatchewan, with over \$1.2 billion in annual revenue and over 1.4 million customer connections including over 618,000 wireless accesses, 437,000 wireline network accesses, 258,000 Internet accesses and over 103,000 *maxTV™* subscribers. SaskTel and its wholly-owned subsidiaries offer a wide range of ICT products and services including competitive voice, data and Internet services, wireless data services, *maxTV* services, data centre services, cloud-based services, security monitoring services, advertising services, and international software and consulting services. SaskTel and its wholly-owned subsidiaries have a workforce of approximately 4,000 full-time equivalent employees (FTEs). Visit SaskTel at [www.sasktel.com](http://www.sasktel.com)

### **Press Contact SaskTel**

Michelle Englot  
SaskTel  
306-777-4476  
[michelle.englot@sasktel.com](mailto:michelle.englot@sasktel.com)



Connected North  
TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH TECHNOLOGY.

## Connected North: Black Lake, Saskatchewan

Connected North is a leading-edge program that delivers immersive and interactive education services to remote and northern Indigenous communities through Cisco's high-definition two-way video communication and collaboration technology: [www.connectednorth.org](http://www.connectednorth.org). The focus of the program is to provide a fresh approach to learning, allowing teachers and administrators to expose their students to new people, experiences and ideas.

The Connected North pilot program launched in 2013, connecting Aqsarniit Ilinniarvik School in Iqaluit. Father Porte Memorial Dene School in Black Lake, Saskatchewan, a K-12 school with 430 students is the 15th school in Canada to be provided with Cisco technology to power virtual learning through Connected North.

The program uses the latest Cisco collaboration technology to bring unique experiences like virtual field trips to life, while building teacher capacity and cross-cultural understanding between schools.

On April 21<sup>st</sup>, Father Porte Memorial Dene School will connect with the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology, and a classroom at West Point Grey Academy in Vancouver.

Initial evaluation results from York University indicate the success of this education delivery model, with 81% of students participating in 2014 reporting that they thought they learned more in a Connected North TelePresence class compared to a non-TelePresence class.

In 2015, the University of Toronto's Advanced Learning Technologies Lab reviewed 192 virtual sessions and found that 86% of students actively participated during Connected North virtual sessions, with the highest levels of engagement occurring when students were participating in cultural sharing. To date, the Connected North program has delivered over 140 video sessions during the 2015-2016 school year.

### About our partners:

Program Manager and Charity Partner: TakingITGlobal, <https://www.tigweb.org/>

Provincial expansion had been made possible by:

- SaskTel: Provided bandwidth and services required to power the video connection, as well as helped organize the ecosystem of partners to build provincial relationships
- Monetary donations were made by: Cameco, AREVA Resources, and Athabasca Basin Development to fund creation of educational content so there are no program fees for the school
- West Wind Aviation provided flights for installation and program development visits
- Cisco provided collaboration technology and overall ecosystem management (a value of over \$2M for the entire Connected North program)

**Recent Student Sessions at the Father Porte Memorial Dene School:**

<b>Session</b>	<b>Expert</b>
<b>Teen Healthy Living</b>	Saint Louis University – St Louis, Missouri
<b>International Dot Day – Literacy Program</b>	TakingITGlobal educators – Toronto, Ontario
<b>University Role Model</b>	University of Manitoba, Aboriginal Students' Representative – Winnipeg, Manitoba
<b>Puppetry</b>	Centre for Puppetry Arts – Atlanta, Georgia
<b>The Dinosaur Dance – Literacy Program</b>	TakingITGlobal educators – Toronto, Ontario
<b>Virtual Concert</b>	Bridges of Peace and Hope – Hillsdale, New York; and Bishop Strachan School – Toronto, Ontario
<b>Story writing</b>	TakingITGlobal educators – Toronto, Ontario
<b>Up Close and Paleo Junior</b>	Royal Tyrrell Museum – Drumheller, Alberta
<b>Building Basics (2 sessions – Grade 3 and Grade 7)</b>	Cleveland Museum of Art – Cleveland, Ohio
<b>Don't Feed the Bully</b>	Brad Tassell – Bowling Green, Kentucky
<b>Matter Matters</b>	LEARNnco – Tiffin, Ohio
<b>The Science Behind Weather</b>	Liberty Science Centre – Jersey City, New Jersey
<b>Polar Bears</b>	Saint Louis Zoo – St Louis, Missouri
<b>Native Studies: Indigenous Resistance, Resilience and Youth Leadership</b>	TakingITGlobal educators – Toronto, Ontario