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Internet providers network in Yellowknife

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Northern News Services

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YELLOWKNIFE - Connecting a population of 29,000 people over two million square kilometers is no easy feat, but it is one that the Nunavut Broadband Development Corp. has accomplished.

Its wireless broadband network QINIQ was launched in May 2005 and now connects each of Nunavut's 25 communities.

Last week, for the first time in two years, half of QINIQ's community service providers (CSP) were brought together in Yellowknife for a four-day information sharing conference.

"It was a great opportunity to meet the network operators," said Darrell Ohokannoak, chair of the Nunavut Broadband Development Corporation and CSP for Cambridge Bay.

The conference marked the first time members of Nunavut's Broadband Development Corporation were able to meet the CSPs, people they have been communicating with by phone for the past two years.

Ohokannoak has seen the advantages of broadband technology in some of Nunavut's more remote hamlets.

"Communities can more effectively communicate with each other, share resources, and access the Internet," he said.

A new technology Ohokannoak is working to introduce is an online training program to teach people how to drive dump trucks for mines.

The CSP from Rankin Inlet, Naanasee Onalik, said that she knows of an

NNSL Photo/graphic

Darrell Ohokannoak is Cambridge Bay's Internet community service provider. He said that last week's conference in Yellowknife was a great opportunity to network with other providers from Nunavut. - Stephanie McDonald/NNSL photo

elder in her community who is able to chat to her daughter in Winnipeg in real time and see her thanks to a Webcam.

Community members also bank and shop online.

"Some people are addicted to E-bay," Onalik joked.

The CSPs had a chance to try out new broadband technologies being introduced into their communities.

Multi-point videoconferencing, digital voice services and low-cost work stations for low income families are just some of the new services that will allow Nunavut communities to be connected to the rest of Canada and the world.

Thirteen CSPs attended the Yellowknife conference. Six came from the Kivalliq region, five from the Kitikmeot region and two from Baffin Island. The other 12 CSPs will meet next week in Iqaluit.

"It has been fantastic," said Lorraine Thomas, conference organizer.

Participants generated nine pages of problems they had experienced during the first two years of operation as part of the gathering.

Over the course of the conference, the group came up with solutions to all of them by working together and sharing their expertise, she added.

