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SUCCESS STORIES

Community Access Program
1997

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This publication is available electronically on
the World Wide Web at: <http://cap.unb.ca>

For more information: 1-800-268-6608



© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada (Industry Canada) 1997
Cat. No. C2-327/1997Rev.
ISBN 0-662-63121-8
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What is Community Access?

To help provide rural communities with affordable public access to the Internet, as well as the skills to use it effectively, a national network of community access sites will be established to help create new and exciting opportunities for growth and jobs. Through a competitive process, communities will be selected to establish and operate public access sites in low-cost public locations, such as schools and libraries, to serve as Information Highway "on ramps." The aim of the Community Access Program (CAP) is to connect up to 5000 communities across Canada by 2001. The actual number of sites will depend on the availability of resources.

For further information about CAP:

Telephone: 1 800 268-6608

E-mail: comaccess@ic.gc.ca

Web site: <http://cap.unb.ca>



Making connections in northeastern Newfoundland

Organizers of the Indian River/Springdale CAP site know how to build on their strengths.

They figured out that their isolated community is well-placed to take advantage of the information technology revolution. For example, a major fibre-optic line passes near the town, giving it easy access to the Cable Atlantic network.

The organizing team then set out to convince the town's many businesses and community organizations that the Internet was an ideal way to do low-cost promotion and research. These efforts succeeded and local businesses have eagerly embraced new technology through a series of strategic partnerships with the CAP team.

In the summer of 1996, three students set up "starter model" Web pages so individuals and organizations could easily put together Web sites on a trial basis. The students then suggested that the enthusiasts see what local Web-design businesses had to offer for more sophisticated pages.

Organizations that develop Web pages can place them on the Springdale Cybermall free of charge. Barry Jackman, the CAP site coordinator, encourages the mall's tenants to focus on unique features that they and the town can offer. One Web page, for example, follows this advice by providing information on which salmon flies work best on the local river. Another page presents details on Newfoundland tartan craft. The CAP site offers free E-mail accounts to community members through St. John's InfoNET.

To find out what has the big ones biting, visit the Indian River/Springdale site at <http://www.stomnet.nl.ca/CAP/central/Springdale>



Professional expertise puts Montague, P.E.I., on the Information Highway

The CAP team in Montague, Prince Edward Island, found an ambitious business person and technology enthusiast to run its site, and it has never looked back.

The town has three Community Access sites with a total of five computers, thanks to the efforts of CAP site coordinator David Gregori. Gregori is a strong promoter of the business applications of the Internet as he also runs an Internet marketing and Web-page design company known as Home Page Design.

Business people and residents can sign on to the Internet at the public library, Montague Consolidated School or Holland College's Montague Centre.

A substantial number of Montague residents have E-mail accounts through the terminals. New users register for an account on-line through the site's Web page. Once registered, users can check their E-mail there. Montague's Community Access Page also provides access to many popular Web browsers.

The CAP site introduces the Internet and information technology to many residents, especially families with children, which has resulted in a significant cultural and social impact on the community. Businesses have also taken an interest in Internet technology, and several local firms now promote their products and services on the Net.

Come see what Montague, Prince Edward Island, has to offer at
<http://www.pelsland.com/cap/cappgs.htm>

Cape Breton CAP site home to learning and business growth

Entrepreneurs in Glace Bay, Nova Scotia, are expanding their skills and their businesses at the town's Community Access site!

The Cape Breton YMCA Enterprise Centre sponsors and houses the CAP facility. Experienced and novice entrepreneurs follow the centre's curriculum of business courses and, through the CAP site, learn how the world of computers and information networks can benefit them.

Four CAP computers support the centre's overall training program. During the work day, site staff reserve the computers for training and for business people who started their companies with the assistance of the centre. Other users, such as students and residents, pay \$1 per half-hour to go on-line outside of training time.

John McMullin, owner of Wayne's Trains and Jay's Planes, a local hobby shop, can often be found doing research at a CAP terminal. He learned how to use computers at the centre and now regularly checks manufacturers' home pages for new products and delivery information. McMullin believes the Web page he plans to build will allow him to attract many new customers.

Graham Campbell, the owner of a local computer hardware and software business, says that CAP benefits his firm by introducing more people to computing and network technology. Many of these people get so interested that they visit his store, located near the centre.

Campbell, along with several local business people, has signed on as a member of the CAP site steering committee.

Centre staff make a point of hiring students with a combination of business, marketing and technology skills. One of these students was so successful that she now has a permanent position as the centre's Business Review Officer.

High school co-op students work at the centre during their placement program. The students benefit from work experience and CAP site users benefit from their involvement.

Diligence in the search for reliable and committed volunteers for the CAP site has paid off, and it is now open for an impressive number of hours each week — 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday, 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturdays, and 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. on Sundays.

Visit the Glace Bay CAP site at
<http://highlander.obnet.ns.ca/obnet/comucntr/cap>



Taking care of business in Paquetville, New Brunswick

The organizers of the Paquetville, New Brunswick, CAP site made sure that the community's Web page would meet the information needs of local businesses.

How? By asking questions. The organizing committee surveyed 450 companies, 90 percent of which are small businesses, from Paquetville and neighbouring St. Isidore and Inkerman to find out what electronic information they require.

An extensive database, which served as the foundation for the Paquetville Web site, contains the responses.

The site itself features links to more than 3000 sources of business information, to institutions offering distance-learning programs in business, and to rural economic development sites.

As Paquetville's billboard on the Information Highway, the Web site also showcases local products, services and manufacturers.

The groups behind the CAP site, including the municipal governments of the three communities, social groups and a chamber of commerce, see the Internet as a key component of their business development plan. They want entrepreneurs to capitalize on the new technology. Training offered by CAP lets business owners develop technical knowledge and learn how to find information that will help them enlarge their client base. Soon, the general public will be invited to training sessions.

Several valuable alliances resulted from the business consultations. The telephone company provided technical advice and six months of free Internet access. Another local business, St. Isidore Asphalt, funds the Web site.

The consultations also helped the organizing committee avoid duplicating services already offered by the private sector.

Positive results are streaming in: business owners are keen to use the Net to market their companies, and local computer vendors, Internet providers and Web-page designers all report increased sales.

Visit the Paquetville site at
<http://www.crop.nb.ca/cpnb>

Students benefiting from Gaspé CAP project

The CAP site in Saint-Elzéar, Quebec, on the Gaspé Peninsula, shows the value of the Internet to young people in outlying communities.

The CAP site features a local area network of 16 computers and 10 Internet accounts in the elementary school. Volunteer instructors work with groups of students outside regular school hours, often bringing in guest speakers to share their knowledge. Members of the general public also receive training.

“The project brings tremendous benefit to the community, particularly to our young people,” says Denis Arsenault, Saint-Elzéar’s mayor. “It also contributes to economic development by letting us promote the town far afield.”

Two very promising partnerships grew out of the CAP project. The town and the telephone company set up teleconferencing and distance-education facilities for forestry courses that will be broadcast from the local forestry school.

This initiative led to a second partnership with an employment centre in neighbouring New Richmond to use the new distance-learning facility for retraining courses for people seeking employment.

Increased awareness of the new technology in the community is a particularly visible result of the project. As well, students found summer jobs setting up the site, creating a Web page and promoting the project locally. With the partnerships, the municipality expects to create more jobs in distance learning.

Local businesses support the project and benefit from it. A fishing camp operator promotes his business over the Internet and has made a number of useful contacts. The town’s largest employer, a sawmill, is also considering using the Internet as a promotion vehicle.

Visit the Saint-Elzéar site at

<http://www.imaghe-mms.com/villes/saint-elzear/main.htm>



Libraries eager to hook up in northwestern Quebec

Library staff in northwestern Quebec will soon spread the news about the Internet courtesy of the CAP project in Rouyn-Noranda.

The Société des arts et des lettres de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue, in co-operation with the Centre régional des services aux bibliothèques de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue, will teach more than 800 members of library committees how to use computers and electronic information networks.

"These people can then relay their knowledge to others in their communities," says the society's Normand Fink. "Seniors' groups and snowmobile clubs would likely be interested in the riches the Internet has to offer."

"Libraries, long-time and stable presences in these communities, are ideal vehicles for this," adds Fink.

To make the information-sharing happen, the society hopes to connect the 75 libraries in the communities of the Abitibi, Témiscamingue and James Bay areas to the Inforoute biblio network. So far, the response has been overwhelming: 25 of the libraries have received CAP funding to create Web pages and to buy computers for public access and training. The CAP team is also encouraging the individual communities to create support organizations and to set up their own Web sites.

The society has goals that extend far beyond the region as well. Negotiations are underway with other regional library service centres in Quebec, as well as in Ontario and Nova Scotia, to share resources. Fink studied other successful national community resource networks, which feature links to information on local community events and programs. He envisions a standard way to organize this type of information so that a similar network can be set up in Canada.

So far, though, training is the main focus of the project. Looking to the future, the society promoted Inforoute biblio to the business sector at the Salon de l'information trade

Check out the progress of this ambitious project at
<http://pyrite.uqat.quebec.ca/~bibirn/>

CAP sites wire eastern Ontario county

Looking to surf the Internet in Lanark County, Ontario?

No problem. Just drop by the CAP site at Smiths Falls and District Collegiate Institute, the Pakenham Public Library or Perth's municipal offices.

There are 15 CAP sites in six communities throughout the county, just east of Ottawa, and together they make up the Lanark County Community Information Net (LCCIN). Nine more sites are on the way.

All this activity means new jobs in the county: a paid coordinator manages the sites and 30 summer students trained many of the 1500 people who signed up to learn about the Internet in 1996. In addition, 15 students worked at the sites until the end of this school year.

Local computer suppliers report sales growth of between 10 and 30 percent since the sites' launch. Computer packages that include modems have become increasingly popular as residents and business people discover the benefits of the Internet.

Users of the 15 sites range from children to seniors, and community awareness of electronic communications is growing. When the CAP project began, Lanark County could boast no ISPs. Now, two or three can be found in each town in the county outside Ottawa's direct-dialling area (which means no long-distance charges for clients connecting to the Net!).

The CAP project focuses on training and limits its Web-page design service to non-profit community organizations — approximately 150 to date. The LCCIN Web site contains a database of 800 local organizations, which is kept current by the CAP student employees. Soon, the Web site will also feature advertising, particularly for service businesses such as real estate companies.

Check out the LCCIN Web site at
<http://www.lccin.on.ca>

Find out about individual Lanark County communities (each of these is a CAP site and features a common home page):

Perth	http://www.perth.igs.net/~perth
Smiths Falls	http://www.falls.igs.net/~townhall
Pakenham	http://www.ott.igs.net/~pakenham



Manitoba communities co-operate on innovative CAP project

Two communities in southern Manitoba have joined forces for their CAP project.

Although Miami and Carman, Manitoba, each received CAP funding, they decided subsequently that they could accomplish more by working together. The neighbouring towns, located southwest of Winnipeg, formed the Community Internet Cooperative Inc. (CICI), a not-for-profit co-operative that sustains itself primarily by selling Internet accounts and is run entirely by volunteers.

Two committees administer the Miami and Carman sites: a technical committee purchases hardware and phone services and supervises the networking of the two communities' high schools; and a public relations committee promotes the initiative and associated training.

Four students and a project coordinator operated the sites for the first summer. The team offered training programs, held open houses for seniors and farmers, researched preferred Internet sites for teachers, and interviewed local business people about their information needs.

A number of local businesses make effective use of the Internet at the CAP sites. One local resident turned his hobby of crafting traditional longbows into a successful business by tapping into the world market the Internet provides.

Teachers are integrating technology into the curriculum and using the Internet's vast information resources to prepare innovative history and current affairs lessons. Students' performance on class projects has improved because they can draw from the Internet's broad range of research material. They also find the Net useful for locating career information.

The site has changed the life of one visually impaired man, opening up many new opportunities. He uses special technology at the facility that magnifies what's on the computer screen to "read" Internet versions of daily newspapers, check sports scores, read and write letters, and communicate with other visually impaired people.

CICI is now a thriving community effort. It features 140 customers and 14 modems and holds its board meetings on interactive closed-circuit television. The public can visit the sites on Wednesday nights and take training by appointment. Organizers have earmarked any extra money they have to expand the initiative.

Visit the CICI Web site at
<http://www.olol.mb.ca>

Big River, Saskatchewan, businesses get together for CAP

Local business people in Big River, Saskatchewan, were quick to recognize the value of CAP to their community.

A large group of them sponsor the Big River Network, including the local branch of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, H&J Plumbing, Midtown Service, Panter Agencies, Laurie Mitchell CGA and Earthlight Communications, along with the local chamber of commerce and the economic development agency. The Big River Internet Association Inc., a not-for-profit corporation, administers the network in the town northwest of Prince Albert.

Four-week training sessions give Internet beginners a chance to learn and practise on-line skills on the site's four computers. A student and a person on social assistance work for the network as trainers and facilitators.

Webster's General Store, the rural equivalent of an Internet mall, showcases Big River arts and crafts stores on the World Wide Web and offers business services.

The Big River Network has had particular success providing Web sites for the tourist industry. Crystal Lodge attracted enthusiastic fishermen from North Carolina to its fly-in fishing facility. Other local businesses are following Crystal Lodge's example.

Big River's Web site highlights its international reach with an opening greeting in Japanese. Casey Robb, the site's coordinator, prepared the greeting with the help of a correspondent in Japan, with whom he communicates using translation software and the Internet.

More than half of the 80 members needed to make the venture self-sustaining have already paid the \$20 monthly membership fee. Students can opt for a pay-as-you-go plan of \$1 an hour.

Drop in to see what Big River has in store at
<http://www.net.big-river.sk.ca>



Channelling water and information in southeastern Alberta

Dave Hill, the coordinator of EIDnet, jokingly calls the network an "information canal for farmers."

EID stands for Eastern Irrigation District, an organization that administers, operates and maintains an extensive network of canals, reservoirs and drains around the town of Brooks in southeastern Alberta.

EIDnet's major objective is to offer Internet access to rural clients. Currently, it has 600 paying customers, and 250 area farmers and agricultural organizations have free accounts.

Local agricultural industries, a major growth engine for the area, are experiencing a revival courtesy of the enhanced information resources available through EIDnet. The district's Web page features information on agricultural research, biological research, marketing, precision farming and meteorology, and contains links to a wide range of agricultural and related sites.

Farmers can hook up to weather stations that track storms on radar and measure temperature and humidity. They can also easily retrieve important and relevant information on commodity prices and trends from the Net.

E-mail lets users connect with government officials and agricultural researchers at convenient times and communicate with each other about a wide range of agricultural issues. Through their networking, farmers discovered that they can process much of their crop locally, allowing them to ship value-added products to their customers instead of raw materials.

A series of strategic partnerships underlies EID's ambitious program. These include agreements with Medicine Hat College to provide Internet training; with the Brooks Savings and Credit Union for financial support (in return credit union members get a discount on their EIDnet membership fee); with CNL Communications Networks Ltd. for technical support; and with Monarch Cable, which broadcasts 15-minute Internet training modules.

EIDnet has had a strong impact on the community's economy. Four Web-page businesses and three new computer stores are up and running. CNL Communications Networks Ltd. brought in five times more business than it expected in its first year of operation as a result of its involvement with EIDnet, and now works for many corporate clients in Brooks.

See how the information flows through the EID canal at <http://www.eldnet.org>

Charged-up volunteers spark Lumby, British Columbia, site

Started by a few keen volunteers, the Lumby CAP project has flourished and is now an important community resource.

The site uses the well-equipped computer lab at J.W. Inglis Elementary School, where the school principal, Harry Adam, is one of the prime movers of the CAP initiative. The facility comprises 33 networked, Internet-ready Macintoshes, along with several scanners and an assortment of multimedia equipment.

The project's steering committee built on this solid foundation by soliciting bids from service providers for E-mail and Internet connections. Through Okanagan Internet Junction, the winning firm, the committee plans to offer basic E-mail accounts to individuals for \$10 and to families for \$25. Volunteers refer those requiring more advanced connections to the firm, which returns a \$25 commission to the site for each new customer.

An enthusiastic cadre of volunteers provides Internet instruction for new and advanced users who can work on the site's computers outside school hours. To date, more than 800 people have received basic training.

The site also acts as a catalyst for other developments. For example, the Monashee Web Programmers Alliance, an informal group of 16 Internet enthusiasts, meets regularly to learn and practise Web-page production skills. Now, the local chamber of commerce and the Monashee Tourism Information Service have Web pages as a result of this group's efforts.

Several local businesses — including a gourmet food producer, a breeder of American Black Coated Giant Schnauzers and a company that sells a rare breed of horses — also have new Web pages and do a significant amount of their business through the Internet.



CAP site helps the world look in on Rankin Inlet, N.W.T.

The Rankin Inlet Community Access Centre gives virtual visitors to the community's Web page a glimpse of a place many will never see in person.

Bill Belsey, the CAP coordinator explains, "Users can post stories on our Web page about Rankin to the rest of the world, which means they are no longer just on the receiving end of information. It increases confidence in our own way of life."

The site is named Igalaaq, the Inuktitut word for window, and is located at Leo Ussak Elementary School where Belsey teaches. In its first six months, Igalaaq had 1000 visitors, representing close to half the town's population. More than 450 people signed up for free E-mail accounts.

Igalaaq attracts so much interest and curiosity because few people in Rankin Inlet, on the northwest coast of Hudson Bay, have home computers. The community is experiencing exciting changes due to the Internet access the CAP site provides: the Children's Computer Club for ages two to four meets once a week; Grade 3 students correspond with pen pals from around the world; and a Grade 6 class is learning Web-page design. Adults also use the site extensively, particularly the popular videoconferencing facility.

The site comprises 18 Apple computers equipped with English alphabet/Inuit syllabics keyboards, two scanners and a Hewlett Packard laser printer. The school library supplements the hardware with a collection of books and magazines about computers and the Internet. Experienced adult volunteers work assigned shifts with Maani Ulujuk High School senior students as co-custodians of Igalaaq.

The Rankin Inlet site, the first in the Northwest Territories, was initially funded by CAP and the territorial Department of Information Networks. Sakku Arctic Technologies, the local Internet Service Provider, sponsors the site's Web page, provides equipment and underwrites Igalaaq's connection costs.

Sakku, together with more than 50 other businesses, donated more than \$108 000 in goods, services and funds to the site in just one year. These Rankin Inlet contributors received the National Partners of Education Award from the Conference Board of Canada.

Check out the view from Rankin Inlet at
<http://www.arctic.ca/LUS/CAC.html>

Northern francophones on the Net

Yukon's small, but active, francophone community has found a tool to help its members learn about the latest information technology and to come together as a group – its CAP site.

Through its CAP project, the Association franco-yukonnaise shows northern francophones the value of the Internet as a resource and creates expertise in the related technology in the community. The association hopes to put together a training team and a group of volunteer resource people for local residents interested in the Internet.

Summer students offer basic training in computers and the Internet. To date, about 30 people have learned to use E-mail and French-language search engines to locate on-line information resources. The list for training is long and growing.

The association's office serves as the training facility. It features three computers equipped with French-language software and two dedicated lines so two people can be on the Net at once.

This basic training dovetails nicely with courses offered locally, which means more business for private sector training firms – another benefit of the CAP project!

To promote Internet use among local residents and business people, the association offers a low-cost E-mail service. An E-mail address costs \$4 a month. On-line time goes for an additional \$5 an hour.

Several francophone business people trained by CAP are now exploring the Internet as a venue for conducting business. One woman recently acquired equipment and an Internet account to establish an electronic presence for her company.

Plans are in the works to develop an organization to maintain the site. The project owes most of its success to the active support of the association, which hopes to forge alliances with other organizations in the community, including a local French school that has just set up a well-equipped computer lab.

Look into what francophones in the North are doing at
<http://francoculture.ca/afy/>

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