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## Technology 'puts Inuit in driver's seat'

*Sub: Two-way video communication systems being installed in schools*

**Miranda Scotland**

Northern News Services

Published Saturday, April 12, 2014

**IQALUIT**

Come September, students in Arviat will be just a few clicks away from scientists, engineers, and other experts.

That is when John Arnalukjuak High School is supposed to receive four two-way video communication systems.

The technology is provided through Connected North, a program focused on enhancing education and health care services in remote communities.

Cisco birthed the program in 2011. The multinational, U.S.-based information technology company, along with the Government of Nunavut, officially launched the initiative April 2 in Iqaluit.



John Arnalukjuak High School computer teacher Phil Rivoire

The program was first piloted at Aqsarniit Ilinniarvik School in Iqaluit and because of its success Cisco decided to expand it.

helps to set up TV station equipment in Arviat last November. The school is receiving a new two-way communication system through Connected North, a program focused on enhancing services for remote communities in the North. - photo courtesy Eric Anoe Jr.

Deh Gah School in Fort Providence, NWT, is also joining the program in September.

Mary Simon, chairperson for the National Committee on Inuit Education, said she is excited by the possibilities this technology brings.

"It puts Inuit in the driver's seat and helps us explore our surroundings in new and evolving ways," stated Simon in a news release. "Such innovative partnerships are essential if we are to transform Inuit education systems and prepare Inuit students to succeed in a 21st century economy."

Teachers have access to experts through Partners in Research's virtual researcher on-call platform, which is free to use.

They can also use the video technology to connect their students with other Canadian schools, including Eastview public school in Toronto and Busby School in Busby, Alta.

Nunavut schools have struggled with low attendance rates and student engagement.

Connected North is hoping the initiative will help by providing "a fresh approach to learning, allowing teachers and administrators to expose their students to new people, experiences and ideas."

Northern service provider SSi Micro is donating prioritized satellite bandwidth to ensure schools can connect quickly and smoothly with schools and experts.

Cisco is also providing funds help Partners in Research develop its programming.

### **Link to mental health services**

Connected North is also bringing tele-psychiatry to Nunavut Health Centres this September through a partnership between Cisco, RBC Foundation and SickKids, a hospital for sick children in Toronto.

Tele-link, developed in 2009, provides youth living in remote rural areas easier access to mental health services. They can connect to psychiatrists through videoconferencing and other technologies.

Cisco is providing 10 of its TelePresence high-definition video links to Nunavut Health Centres and three units to SickKids, along with backend infrastructure.

"The partnership with the Hospital for Sick Children gives us greater access to patient psychiatric care for children and youth to assist in their healing," said Health Minister Monica Ell. "Working with the Hospital for Sick Children will also help us deliver clinical training to our health-care professionals."

The service is greatly needed in Nunavut where mental health services are overburdened and suicide rates are high, the news release states.

In 2013 a record number of Nunavummiut took their own lives, prompting chief coroner Padma Suramala to call for a discretionary inquest into suicide deaths in the territory.

The video equipment and funds for programming represent a \$1.6 million investment by Cisco.

The program is not costing the Government of Nunavut or schools in the territory anything at this time.



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