

Blue Sky News



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Community leaders at BSEGC and LTAB presentation.

Blue Sky Economic Growth Corporation partners with LTAB to Host Mayor's Luncheon

On Wednesday, January 28th over 20 municipal leaders from the Blue Sky Region, congregated at the Best Western in North Bay. Two presentations; one from LTAB and one from the Blue Sky Economic Growth Corporation were part of the days agenda. During this luncheon, municipal leaders had the chance to get to know those who were in office from the neighbouring communities. Also they were able to find out more information on the possible creation of a Municipal sector for the Blue Sky Region.

With the many differences that this Region faces, both geographically and economically, being able to work collaboratively to help each other is an asset. By creating a Municipal Cluster, the BSEGC would facilitate the sharing of information between municipalities. With hopes of gathering on a semi-annual basis, the municipal members could discuss items that are of mutual concern to each other, and in addition be made

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Broadband Infrastructure project taking shape

Following the transfer of operations from Blue Sky Region Community Network to Blue Sky EGC of the broadband infrastructure project, many steps towards implementation have taken place.

Blue Sky EGC has established a Community Based Network (CBN) to direct the project called Blue Sky Net. A CBN represents communities within its boundaries to enhance the quality, availability and use of telecommunications and electronic application services. CBN's by definition are not led by, and/or governed as, a for-profit private sector organization. Blue Sky Net operates as a part of the Technology Sector with some administrative support from Blue Sky EGC.

The project has been named "Skywire" because of the wireless solution Blue Sky Net has chosen through their vendor partners W3Connex to deliver the service.

BLUE SKY TRIVIA:

1. What sport was created in North Bay, which is enjoyed worldwide today?
2. What wild animal was tamed in Burks Falls and was considered by many as a friendly tourist attraction?
3. What feline is in the Guinness book of world records for having an abnormal physical feature, that is found in the Blue Sky Region ?

Please see related story -Wireless/P3

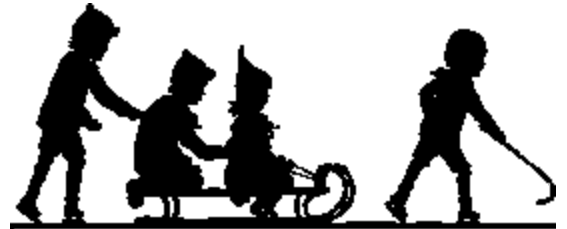
Answers on P4

Horizontal Sectors on track: Education & Quality of life

Both the Education and Training and the Quality of Life Clusters have met recently to flesh-out action plans for the upcoming months. The Blue Sky Region's "horizontal clusters" crucial role is sustaining the Region by providing, maintaining and monitoring education, health care, social, cultural and environmental necessities.

Priorities at the Quality of Life Committee meeting were: Establish a committee that not only represents the geographic Region, but also is representative of the areas that contribute to quality of life. Also, the group took steps forward in moving their vision and mission into an action plan.

The Education and Training Committee elected new co-chairs to represent the group at the BSEGC Board. In the past the committee had established a detailed work plan that is still of great value and will be incorporated in future plans. The committee was presented with the option to spearhead a project to assess human resource needs of the Region.



Blue Sky Region brings home five Provincial awards

On February 5th, 2004, The Blue Sky Region accepted five awards at the President's Dinner and EDCO Economic Development Awards of Excellence Presentations, held at Toronto's Eaton Marriott Centre. The awards received by the Blue Sky Region groups were:



Sector Profile Award-Economic Impact of Mining and Mining Supply Industry (First Place)
Economic Impact of the Forestry Industry (Second Place)

Publications – Cooperative Publication-North Bay National Post Supplement (First Place)

Advertising Campaign- North Bay Marketing and Attraction Program (First Place)

Redevelopment Initiative- The Revitalization Process: Downtown North Bay (First Place)

Mayor's Luncheon con't

(Continued from page 1)

aware first hand, of the activities the other clusters within the Region are working on.

East Ferris, Mayor Bill Vrebosch said, "The Blue Sky initiative presented was new and it's probably something that should have been done earlier. What it did was bring politicians together, but I have to admit that there was not a lot of time for interaction. The Mayor of Chisholm (Barbara Groves) and I are convening a meeting in the late spring. It began by us talking to each other at the mayor's luncheon." Although Mayor Vrebosch saw the municipal luncheon as a valuable gathering which lacked time to converse with other municipalities, he took it upon himself to spearhead this joint-seminar with Mayor Groves which will be of benefit to many of the municipalities of the Blue Sky Region.

The meeting that Mayor Vrebosch, and Mayor Groves will plan, is going to be covering subjects like Nutrient Management, Septic Disposal, Recycling and Joint purchasing. They have decided to share ideas instead of independently reinventing the wheel, which is what the Blue Sky Region Cluster Format is all about. Other municipalities that are reported to be included thus far are: East Ferris, Chisholm, Bonfield, Powassan, Calvin, Mattawan, Papineau Cameron, Nipissing and Callander.



Tourism Sector is singing from the same sheet music!!

The need for one solid voice is becoming increasingly evident to those in the tourism industry of the Blue Sky Region. With competition from heavyweights like Toronto and Ottawa there must be some consensus made regarding what makes the Region stand alone as one of the major premier destinations in Ontario.

On January 29th a group of over 50 tourism industry leaders came together at the Best Western in North Bay to discuss issues concerning the future of the industry in the Region. With the guidance of a facilitator, delegates emerged with a common vision and work plan to support the cluster that fully represents all stakeholders in the Region; who plan to work collaboratively to ensure that this Region reclaims their part of the Tourism industry pie.

The general accord was that the event was a great success; "We are ready to work together and bring people to the *Ontario's Near North, part of the Blue Sky Region*" says Dorothy Cloet, part owner of Beaverland Camp. "Communication is the key for a cooperative working environment, it's great to see that we are acting!" adds Steve Dreany, chairperson for the Tourism committee of the North Bay Chamber of Commerce. A newly created Tourism Cluster committee will meet this month for their first look at strategies that they may explore. They are prepared to create a process that will see the cluster set priorities and move forward for the benefit of the industry.



By working together in accordance with each other and BSEGC as the facilitator, the tourism cluster can benefit by working with the other clusters to enhance the experience for new visitors. In the end, if the tourism economy grows in the Blue Sky Region, our entire economy grows.

Wireless network will usher in new age

"Wireless technology is not new. Many of the first National telephone networks relied on radio to complete long distance phone calls" says Scott Mannering, Blue Sky Net's project manager. "However, it has only been in the last year or so that wireless has advanced to the point that it can be used as a reliable, cost efficient technology to deliver high-speed service to such a massive geography."

Besides wireless' ability to service such a large area, it has some added advantages too. Laptops and PDA's will not necessarily have to "plug in" to receive a signal. And with a bevy of new technologies immersing now and in the next few years that rely on portability, wireless seems to be the way of the future.

The network will deliver a 1 to 1.5 Megabit/sec. connection to over 90% of residents within the project's 77 identified communities. This speed represents a 30 to 40 times increase in speed compared to typical dial-up modem connection. With the increased bandwidth a number of applications become available, such as; real-time video and IP Telephony.

Jeff Buell, Blue Sky Net's communications director says the economic and social impact of this network will be immeasurable. "The disadvantages that Northerners face due to distance will finally be overcome" he says.

Buell also believes that there is a perception of the Internet that it is not a really useful tool in the North. "I attribute that completely to the lack of infrastructure that supports highspeed. Dial up is like looking at a beach through a window; it looks nice and you can feel the sun on your face a bit. But with highspeed you can get outside and swim! You just have to ask yourself 'What do you want to do?'"



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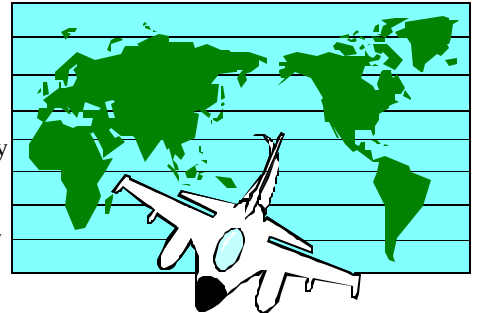
Blue Sky News
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Uyen Nguyen, Editor

Trivia Answers

1. Ringette: During the 1960's Mr. Sam Jacks was the Director of Parks and Recreation in North Bay, Ontario. He dedicated a great deal of time and enthusiasm to developing youth activities and one of his particular interests was an on-ice skating game for females. He named the fledgling game "ringette" and the first-ever Ringette game was played in the winter of 1963-64 in the Northern Ontario town of Espanola. Ringette is a fast-paced team sport on ice in which players use a straight stick to pass, carry, and shoot a rubber ring to score goals.
2. Pete the bear lived from 1948-79, probably 10 years longer than he would of in the wild. He lived at Purdie's Esso on Ontario St.
3. A five-year-old rescue cat named Jake has clawed his way into the Guinness World Record book as the moggy with most toes. Jake, an orange tabby from Bonfield, Ontario, Canada, has seven toes – complete with claws and pads – on each paw, and beats the previous record holder, Mickey the tabby cat from Deep River, New York, USA, who has 27 toes.

Board approves funding for International travel

There were many topics of discussion brought up at the BSEGC Board of Director's meeting on January 22nd. One of which was a request for funding that was brought forth that has benefit to the Blue Sky Region in many ways.



David Butti, Chair for the Air Base Property Corporation (ABPC), made a presentation to the board on behalf of ABPC & Jack Garland Airport. The groups were interested in sending the Airport Manager to Germany as a delegate for an Aerospace Test Symposium. They have sent a representative in the past but were looking to try another method, in which to best give exposure to the Region's Aerospace Facilities.

With much discussion over whether this trip would be of benefit to the Region, general consensus amongst board members was that this endeavour might act as a catalyst to revitalize the transportation sector, which has been dormant for the past several months. In addition this venture would be of benefit to the other sectors, such as education, by giving international exposure to the education facilities in the Region; tourism, by bringing international business and adventure seekers to our area and spending their dollars in our economy.

Also at the meeting, the Mattawa and Area Forestry Committee for Economic Development reported that the marketing of the New Northern Ontario 4-seasons eco-tourism activity is starting to hit the market. This venture is expanding and a project assistant has been hired with the help of HRDC. FedNor is investing \$101,520.00 into this project.



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