

Wireless Access for Eskimo Tribes

by
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Kawerak, Inc., a non-profit tribal consortium representing the twenty Inuit (Eskimo) tribes of the Bering Strait Region of Alaska, is developing **Wireless WALRUS (Web Access Links for Remote User Services)**. The project will create easy, convenient access to information about tribal services, programs, and cultural history using a wireless, digital network infrastructure.

The Inuit tribes occupy the Bering Strait Region. With no major roads leading either in or out, it is an extremely isolated region, with a land base roughly the size of West Virginia, and a population density of approximately 0.4 persons per square mile, compared to a national average of 79.6. An Internet connection will give these tribes access to outside services and provide the outside world a window into their Native Alaskan heritage.



The WALRUS project will also place high-speed Internet-connected computers in convenient locations for each of the twenty Inuit tribes in a region covering 26,000 square miles. This is a quantum leap forward in an region where, except for the school district's Internet connection, computer network resources are scarce or nonexistent. Satellite services that are available are expensive and difficult to maintain given the terrain, and slow 56K links are the norm. WALRUS also includes a special program on Eskimo Heritage that will let tribal members participate in the preservation of their traditions, culture, and three distinct language groups of the region.

