

The Tulalip Tribes' Technology Leap Initiative: Cultivating the Regional Political Climate for Growing Tribal Technology

"Preserving the Past – Building a Future"

Background:

The vision of this initiative is to fully understand and effectively deploy core technical infrastructure that support tribal needs ranging from cultural and language preservation to essential infrastructure for tribal government and business operations. Through a unique regional partnership with members of the University of Washington at Bothell, Everett Community College and the Tulalip Tribes, a comprehensive plan was developed to build a technology infrastructure designed for the future – yet sensitive to the immediate and unique needs of the tribal community. Technology education for tribal members is critical for the long-term development and maintenance of this initiative.

During the planning phase, great care was taken to ensure that the technology requirements were gathered from a wide variety of organizational and individual perspectives. Cultural, educational, business, government and communications needs were carefully explored using contemporary systems analysis techniques that provided a unique, "hands-on" learning experience for interns. These requirements were then organized and consolidated into an integrated list of twenty-three core projects essential to the Tribes.

Planning Phase Highlights:

Selected highlights of the Planning Phase of the Tulalip Technology Leap initiative include the following:

- Configured computers, printers, network and Internet server for the TTL Coordinating Center located in the Tulalip Education Center.
- Developed a system to store, manage and retrieve all technical documentation
- Completed floor plans and technology inventories for major Tulalip Tribes' facilities.
- Provided technical guidance and implementation strategy for the "Computer in Every Home" project for all tribal members.
- Evaluated a variety of networking, telecommunications, Internet and database infrastructure systems.
- Identified and inventoried over 1200 data forms used throughout the Tulalip Reservation.
- Generated detailed technical documentation /specifications (over 6000 pages) that are critical for the correct selection and implementation of effective technology systems.
- Developed key relationships with tribal members who will provide guidance and support for implementation of new technologies.
- Identified technical education programs and strategies for K-20, unemployed and/or under-employed tribal members.

Implementation Phase – Next Steps

The implementation phase of the TTL project is currently in progress with the following general goals:

- build a network and telecommunications infrastructure;
- capture and manage a variety of database and multimedia content;
- put systems into place that will enhance tribal communications;
- foster managed growth in business and economic development;
- enhance educational opportunities for tribal families;
- preserve the culture of the Tulalip Tribes;
- facilitate the social, health and economic well-being of tribal members; and finally,
- develop a technology infrastructure to be managed and owned by the Tulalip Tribes.

Meeting these goals is essential for the TTL initiative – they serve as a foundation for the Tulalip Tribes and may serve as a model for other Indian Nations facing similar challenges. The great investment of time and resources required to bring such a project to completion is only possible through the formation of community partnerships.