

**Before the  
Federal Communications Commission  
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of )  
 )  
Examination of the Future of Media and ) GN Docket No. 10-25  
Information Needs of Communities in a )  
Digital Age )

To: The Commission

**COMMENTS OF NATIVE PUBLIC MEDIA**

Native Public Media ("NPM") respectfully submits these comments in response to the Commission's request for comment on the future of media and the information needs of communities in a digital age. Access to reliable, diverse, quality information is essential in today's society. Information is the foundation upon which our nation's communities and economies are sustained, strengthened, and improved. Accordingly, the measure by which we gauge the success of our public service media must include a litmus test of whether Americans, including Native Americans, have access to relevant and credible information representing a variety of viewpoints; and whether this access is meaningful, affordable, and available to all, whether the information available fulfills the needs, promotes the values, improves the lives, and creates opportunities for the individuals and communities to which it is provided.

Accordingly, true reform of our public service media should focus on the following:

- A re-definition of what is public service media in the digital age.
- A reform of how public service media is funded.
- A national plan to reform public service media that reflects a strong, diversified civil society by reaching out to, engaging and sustaining unserved or underserved American audiences, creates opportunities for staffing and leadership within the public service media system that is more representative of the Nation, and

promotes the diversification of programming and content that is representative of the intellectual capital from different populations and sectors of American society.

- Installation of leadership at the major public service media institutions that is not politically based, but rather representative of the constituents that are served.
- The creation of a litmus test that can gauge whether the information needs of communities are met.

## **I. INFORMATION NEEDS OF NATIVE AMERICANS**

There are 564 federally-recognized tribes in the United States and more than 4 million Native Americans in the United States. Nevertheless, in Indian Country, there are still communities that go without basic telephone service or who do not have access to an emergency 911 service. Internet and media services – things that the rest of America takes for granted – are non-existent in large pockets (at times, up to 90 percent) of Native homelands. While most of America has begun the process of redefining media, embracing the convergence of media, and forging media reform policies, Native Americans are still trying, and in some cases fighting, against tremendous odds, for inclusion in the nation's media and technological revolution.

Incremental progress has been made. Thirty-four Native owned public radio stations provide critical information about education, culture, public safety, health and more to tribal members across thirteen states. On these stations, you can hear Hopi, Navajo, Sioux, Apache and a host of other rich and vibrant Native American languages.

However, the media divide is alive and well. Juxtaposed against media consolidation and the gobbling up of public spectrum, there are over 500 Native Nations that continue to face challenges and substantial barriers to media access, control and ownership. This media divide is compounded by the digital divide, which has left most Native Americans without access to the most basic communications services.

The work of Native Public Media is first and foremost about community. The mission of Native Public Media is to promote healthy, engaged, independent Native communities by strengthening and expanding Native American media capacity and empowering a strong, proud Native American voice.

Media is not just about information. It is about the maintenance of tribal identities and the basic freedom to be who we are. It is about Native-centric expressions that describe our civic participation in a democracy. Media allows Native Americans to develop and hold onto our Native beliefs and opinions, and communicate our ideas, thoughts, and opinions through stories, songs, music, art and speech. Media also creates a dialogue among and with Native Americans through which Native peoples can learn about one another and arm ourselves with information to make our lives happier, more productive, and more useful – media allows us to participate in decisions that directly impact our lives. For Native Americans to effectively participate in the decision-making processes of our democracy, we need the broadest possible exchange of ideas and information; and the technology with which to receive it.

The Native American experience is full of stories that attest to the power of information exchange. While Native Americans have long been citizens of their own Tribal Nations, it was not until June 2, 1924 that the United States Congress granted citizenship to Native Americans born in the U.S. In Arizona, a mere 60 years ago, the Native American right to vote was finally recognized on July 15, 1948. Such is the power of information to our democracy.

The struggle of Native America throughout history has been the struggle for freedom. The freedom to live as one chooses within a well-defined homeland, the freedom to pursue the vision of the future that individual tribal cultures foresaw for themselves. The guiding principle throughout the history of Native America has always been the principle of tribal sovereignty.

The freedom to remain separate and apart from the larger society evidenced by the conscious choice on the part of Native Nations across the country to maintain tribal homelands, tribal governments, tribal customs and religions.

Although the media landscape may change with advancements in technology, we must be continually reminded that the freedoms that are so important to Americans in general are, in fact, the same freedoms that are important to Native Americans. Access to media and information technology is essential to the realization of those freedoms.

## **II. INFORMATION NEEDS OF COMMUNITIES AND CITIZENS**

**1. What are the information needs of citizens and communities? Do citizens and communities have all the information they want and need? How has the situation changed during the past few years? In what ways has the situation improved? Gotten worse? (Media platforms, media formats, geographic focus, media affiliation, organizational type, types of journalism, topics).**

Of the 564 federally-recognized Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Villages, only 34 have radio stations. The National Federation of Community Broadcasters reports that of the more than 13,000 public radio stations in the U.S., Native Americans own only .3 percent. According to the 2009 Project for Excellence in Journalism annual State of the News Media report, there is little data on Native American media consumption.

Of the 34 Native stations currently on air, 11 stream over the Internet. In the 2007 FCC non-commercial educational radio license window, 51 applications were filed by tribes and of those, 35 construction permits were granted.

According to the 2007 U.S. Census, there are approximately 2.4 million American Indian or Alaska Natives making up about 1 percent of the U.S. population with the greatest population

concentrations in California, Oklahoma and Arizona. (Early estimates for the 2010 Census indicate that American Indian and Alaska Natives number over 4 million.) Native American median household income is \$35,343 compared to the national median income of \$50,740. More than 25.3 percent of all Native Americans live below the poverty line.

**2. How have the changes in the media landscape affected the delivery of critical information in times of natural disasters, extreme weather, or public health emergencies? From where do people get their information in such situations? What, if anything, should the Commission do to ensure that communities receive such often life-saving information widely and quickly?**

The safety and security of any community can be measured by its access to vital communications infrastructure. In Indian Country, terrestrial radio stations are among the first responders receiving and sending out critical information to save lives or reduce the incidence of injury to people and property. In many tribal communities, many families still do not have access to analog telephone service. Emergency 911 service and cell phone connections are non-existent. Accordingly, Native Americans are one of the most vulnerable populations, lacking access emergency services and the ability to send and receive vital information. The potential of broadband to enhance public safety in tribal communities is unrealized when anecdotally less than 10 percent of Indian Country is connected to broadband.

Terrestrial radio stations coupled with a broadband connection can significantly improve the public safety communications system in Indian Country. Broadband can make 911 services possible, emergency alert systems more capable, improve emergency medical response times, and make vital information available in many formats and tribal languages.

**3. How do young people receive educational and informational media content? How do they consider and process the news and information provided to them? How should these patterns affect government policy toward the future of the media?**

For years, terrestrial radio stations serving tribal communities have been the hallmark of community engagement. Long viewed as essential anchor institutions, Native stations have provided locally relevant information over their airwaves, including tribal elections, sports, health, national and tribal news, public safety and education. It is not unusual for Native radio stations to be the community center that brings together different sectors of the tribal community.

However, the Internet has become the primary information platform around the world. Where broadband is available, Native Americans are using the Internet to interact, communicate, share culture, and gain the skills needed in a digital world. According to Native Public Media's New Media, Technology and Internet Use in Indian Country report, "there is a strong desire to see 21<sup>st</sup> century communications infrastructures implemented throughout tribal lands and when Native Americans have access to these resources, they utilize them in substantial numbers." The respondents in the study used the Internet for news or information about politics, jobs, charities, news, banking, government, weather, stock quotes, mortgages and more. Broadband offers the potential to decrease or even close the media divide in Native America.

As Congress considers increasing funding to public media, special attention should be paid to the support of terrestrial radio stations in tribal communities, particularly in those areas where it will take time for broadband to be deployed. Some of these stations are more than 30 years old and in need of equipment refurbishment. For tribal communities that are on the broadband highway, funding for the deployment of broadband infrastructure and the creation of content with local relevance should be prioritized.

Further, new or hybrid models of journalism created to cover unserved or underserved communities hold the most potential to overcome the media divide in Native America. By consulting with Tribal Leaders and Native media experts, the FCC and Congress can ensure that information across multi-platforms that will enhance and improve the lives of Native Americans is prioritized and supported through digital literacy, journalism training, and content creation, acquisition and distribution.

Also, as Congress considers amending the Copyright Act to provide for copyright exemptions to public broadcasting organizations for online broadcast and distribution of public media, protection should be afforded to the intellectual property rights of Native Americans regarding information about tribal history, culture, and other information deemed proprietary by individual Tribal Nations. Sacred places, songs, or other cultural works that may belong to a particular Tribe should not only be respected, but protected. By consulting with Tribes, Congress could reserve certain rights for Tribes, authorize certain educational uses, and assist Tribes in archiving Tribal information.

Finally, the future of public service media will continue to include community engagement in local, state and national electoral processes. And as electoral processes become digitized, every effort must be made to make sure that the elections process, whether it be tribal, state or federal, provides an "electoral safety net" for tribal communities where broadband has yet to be deployed.

**4. Are media consumption patterns different in minority communities? How would those differences affect business models for various media platforms? What are the implications for the availability of news and information in minority communities? How should such business models and their implications affect government policy?**

In tribal communities, information is viewed less as a commodity, and more as a utility – an essential element to everyone's daily lives. As a result, it is difficult for radio stations, for example, to monetize information through traditional public radio revenue generating practices such as underwriting and pledge drives. Good, quality information is considered a public good and vital to the health and safety of tribal communities.

While Native radio's public radio counterparts measure the success of their stations, in part, on a quantitative basis, Native Public Media has developed metrics (described below in response to question 7) to quantitatively and qualitatively measure the community impact the radio station is having, based not just on how many listeners are tuning in. This paradigm shift moves the focus away from listeners to community engagement.

Since Native Public Media's metrics are in the pilot phase, their implications for a business model remain undefined and their effect on local government policies still undetermined. However, these new ways of measuring the stations' community impact provide great potential for gauging the effectiveness of public service media in an environment where information delivery has resulted in a proliferation of choices and where quantitative measures may not be able to describe how well the information is serving the public.

**5. What roles should libraries and schools play in supporting community information flow? How can communities best make use of citizens' talents and interests in the creation, analysis, curating, and sharing of information?**

Native American students are among the most vulnerable populations in the U.S. in terms of educational attainment. A 2008 American Community Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau found that only 8.7 percent of the American Indian and Alaskan Native population had attained a

bachelor's degree, compared with 17.5 percent of the total population.<sup>1</sup> Given the information-based society in which we all live, it is essential that Native American s libraries and schools be connected to information superhighways via broadband facilities. Congress should provide additional public funds to connect libraries, school, colleges and other anchor educational institutions with high-speed broadband, and should ensure that the funding is sustained to maintain that connectivity. Where funding may already exist, priority should be given to applicants who seek to deliver broadband to Tribal communities.

In 2009, NPM partnered with WGBH's American Experience We Shall Remain program, Public Broadcasting Service television stations, and libraries in its outreach to provide information about films and radio programs featuring Native American history. It is well known that Native American history is virtually non-existent in history books and is not taught in most schools. To fill voids such as this, it will become increasingly common in the future for partnerships to be forged between media and other institutions to share and distribute information and to engage community members more directly.

As a result, modifications should be made to the E-Rate program to remove barriers that stand in the way of Tribal libraries qualifying for funding. NPM fully supports the Commission's decision to allow libraries and schools to stay open during off-hours to allow the public to take advantage of E-Rate funded facilities. Such measures greatly facilitate Native Americans' access to information, particularly in those tribal communities where residential access to broadband is scarce and often non-existent.

Moreover, there is a persistent scarcity of funding, shortage of well-trained teachers on tribal homelands, and lack of uniform standards and assessments across Bureau of Indian, State,

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<sup>1</sup> [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/IPCharIterationServlet?\\_lang=en&\\_ts=291031511602](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/IPCharIterationServlet?_lang=en&_ts=291031511602).

Grant, and alternative schools serving Native communities. Exacerbating these challenges are the inability of educators to share best practices in serving Native American students, the high cost of education in a repressed economy, the annual increases in college tuitions, and in general, the inability of schools to retain Native American students.

Learning without walls is a new paradigm shift that provides great opportunity and promise for Native communities. Broadband can help educators, students and even parents improve learning by expanding the classroom beyond the confines of physical school facilities. Distance learning via broadband can help provide opportunities for learners that are high quality, low cost, and more easily accessible.

For example, in an effort to build the digital capacity of radio station personnel and local community members, Native Public Media has proposed that learners receive off-site multi-media training and that local community members be trained as trainers. An unconventional approach, the "training the trainer" approach can help to improve the flow of information to the "grassroots" level, allowing community engagement to be a core piece of this new learning environment made possible by technology. By coupling technology with local instructors, the likelihood of improving the digital capacity of the community increases significantly.

Distance learning (from elementary school to college) not only allows for vital instruction to take place across state lands, but also creates opportunities for Native Americans to take advantage of higher education across the United States and around the globe. However, online courses must provide students with course credits that may be used to complete their degree. Credit from virtual schools must also transferable and widely accepted among educational institutions. Public service media institutions, such as radio stations, could provide the vital

Internet hot spots to make this possible in tribal communities where Internet access is limited or non-existent.

Likewise, improved information flow can also strengthen existing educational institutions and establish a bridge to "information starved" communities like Indian reservations that do not have their own libraries. By making educational content available online that meets the requirements of the U.S. Department of Education, Native Americans will be able to access that information through local anchor educational institutions or through new technological platforms such as gaming boxes.

Information through the broadband highway could also result in innovative online learning solutions. For example, Tribes or Tribal members could develop applications specific to their cultural knowledge, history or language. Training Native teachers in digital literacy has the potential to harness technology to assist tribal members in linking available opportunities with local needs. For example, a Tribe wanting to address local tourism could be connected via the Internet with tourism experts from neighboring municipalities; or Tribes wanting to educate their communities in Native languages could connect with the Maori in New Zealand to discuss language immersion strategies.

**6. What are the best examples of Federal, state and local governments using new media to provide information to the public in a transparent, easy-to-use manner? When has this public information been provided directly to consumers and when has it been used as the basis for lower-cost reporting? In what formats should such data be provided? Should the laws on government provision of information to the public be changed?**

Broadband can change how Tribal governments serve their constituents. As anchor institutions and major employers in tribal communities, Tribal governments should be eligible

for high-speed, low-cost Internet access. Tribal governments must have access to, and be able to use, broadband to improve their delivery of services to tribal members living on or off the reservation or tribal homelands. Tribal members who have migrated to towns and cities across the U.S. should be able to connect with their Tribe during tribal elections, become linked to the news and public affairs of their communities, and be able to apply for Tribal scholarships and access other services.

**7. How can we measure the importance of the availability of local news and information for community health and consumers needs? Are there ways of measuring the vibrancy of local news and information flow and correlating such metrics to positive community outcomes, such as school quality, voter turnout, other forms of civic participation, improved public health, effective emergency responses, crime, reduced political corruption, or the development of social capital in general? How can efforts to map information sources be most effective?**

In 2009, Native Public Media created an impact measurement methodology entitled "New Horizons" to collect data about radio station usage, the station's impact on community services and people, and its contribution to the overall health of the community it serves. The metrics are designed to help guide not only the station managers and programmers, but also community members in how to make best use of their media assets by identifying areas where the stations is having an impact and where that impact might be improved.

Native radio serves Native audiences in tribal communities and encourages voices and ideas that are critical to the health of tribal societies, but may not typically be heard on mainstream media. By systematically measuring the impact of these stations, an understanding among community members about the important ways these stations contribute to the health of

individuals and the communities served is broadened. In addition, stations can make more informed decisions about their services and how they use their resources and capacity to improve the critical work they do. The three methodologies are summarized below:

1. Listener Polling: Called the "Annual Count," this methodology is designed to count listenership. Stations ask listeners to call a toll free number and, when they connect, listeners hear a short thank you message, and are told to hang up. This simple count allows the surveyors to calculate the ratio of listeners (at given times) to the total population served. The count is supposed to occur once per year during a two week period.

2. Public Service Announcement ("PSA") Feedback Loops: This methodology involves creating an agreement among individuals, services, organizations, and agencies that use the stations' PSA services to announce community events. In exchange for the on-air mentions, organizations provide feedback to stations regarding how many people stated that they attended the event as a result of hearing about it on the radio. This instrument is meant to be used year round, with the results compiled immediately following the Annual Count.

3. The Healthy Community Quadrant: This methodology uses storytelling to elicit qualitative information from listeners, visitors, and others who have stories to tell about how the station serves them individually and the community at large. Like the PSA Feedback Loop, data collection is meant to occur year round and is compiled immediately following the Annual Count. This instrument categorizes the impact of the radio station in the following sectors: (a) Psychological and Spiritual; (b) Culture; (c) Actions and Behaviors; and (d) Social and Natural Systems.

All three methodologies directly engage the community and create a critical sense of participation.

These methodologies will be piloted in 2010 and will correlate community outcomes and map whether the information distributed over the radio airwaves is effective. As Native stations begin migrating content to the Internet, these methodologies will also be used to measure the vibrancy of the communities' interaction and engagement with their local information highways.

**8. Compared to earlier decades, are Americans more or less likely to seek and find more specialized media (i.e. that focused on a specific topic, appealing to a specific demographic group, or promoting a similar ideology or world view?) What are the positive and negative consequences of such patterns?**

Five years ago when Native Public Media was established to assist Native Americans in media ownership, access and control, it seemed inconceivable that all 564 Native Nations might one day enjoy a healthy, engaging and robust tribal-centric media of their own. Broadband has the potential to make that possible. The Tlingit in Alaska, the Seneca in New York State, the Apache in the Southwest, and the Mandan in the Plains may one day all have their own tribal information portal. While Native Americans share common interests, each Nation is fiercely independent, rich in its own tribal governance, customs and beliefs, and conscious of preserving its own history. To have their own voice on issues that matter to a specific tribal community is powerful.

On a national level, Tribes desire and share information about Congressional and State legislative affairs, Supreme Court decisions, court cases, public safety, health, education, economy, and issues that have a direct impact on their people, resources or governmental jurisdiction. Tribes also share in inter-tribal exchanges of art, music, storytelling, ceremonies, crafts, and other cultural and historical celebrations that bind all Tribes in a union that has remained strong for generations. Increasingly, Tribes are entering into inter-tribal compacts in

economic development and participating in increasing numbers in the national electoral process. Native America cannot be left behind as the nation's information society continues to advance.

**9. How have the changes in the availability of different types of news and information consumption affected different demographic groups? Are benefits or problems concentrated by income, age, geography, educational level, race, gender, religion or other factors?**

A diversified civil society is one of the strongholds of democracy. The diversity of Native Nations, rich in their own cultural fabric, is therefore a strength to America. The information infrastructure of each Tribal Nation, while homogenous, must also consider the diversity of its own constituents in terms of income, age, geography, educational level, and gender. Examples of efforts to recognize this diversity include Native Public Media's 2008 partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau to bring financial literacy to low income Native women, using the radio and community meetings as its platforms. In addition, KUYI Hopi Radio's "Shooting Stars" program is designed specifically for elementary students and airs educational content in both the English and Hopi languages. The Tohono Od'ham Nation's KOHN radio programs provide information specifically about border issues in southern Arizona. While the benefits of local content is vital and critical, obtaining funding for such local information has been a constant challenge for Tribal communities. Priority should be given to Tribes in this area.

**11. How should other governmental entities consider the information needs of communities in the digital era? Are there changes in tax law, copyright law, non-profit law, noncommercial or commercial broadcasting laws or policies or other policies that should be considered?**

The information needs of communities in a democracy include accountable and responsive governments. Broadband can change the way tribal governments, for example, serve their tribal members. By increasing the efficiency of their internal operations, tribal governments as essential anchor institutions in tribal communities can have a real impact in the delivery of vital services, in becoming more accessible across geographic distances, and in providing real-time information that is vital to its members.

Today, Native Americans are largely unserved or underserved by their tribal governments through broadband because broadband facilities do not exist in many parts of Native America. To speed deployment into tribal communities, tribal governments along with state and federal government agencies should be prioritized for communications services at lower costs. Native Public Media urges Congress to re-examine the Privacy Act to facilitate the delivery of online government (U.S., States and Tribes) services and account for changes in technology.

The benefits to tribal members could be vast. By moving vital government services to an online system that is secure and safe, the time for individual tribal members to receive services could be shortened. Voting in Tribal elections; applying for scholarships; applying for housing, food stamps, and employment; accessing vital health information on heart disease or diabetes; and other vital services could aid families in significant, meaningful ways. By cutting down on transportation costs to reach a physical office, by allowing for services to be available beyond normal tribal government work hours, by providing one-stop services, and by freeing up tribal personnel to work on improving other aspects of the community could be transformational. A public evaluation of these online services in real time could help tribal governments, for example, to maintain a high level of service quality throughout the year and give a vital voice to their constituents about service delivery and the continual improvement of civic life. The

overarching benefit would be the creation of a Tribal digital workforce to create, maintain and repair, and continually upgrade the systems as the technology changes and as new applications become available. A new economy based on digital technology would become available to even the furthest and most remote Tribal communities in the United States.

Further, broadband would allow Tribal Governments to converse with other Tribal Governments and federal entities on important inter-tribal issues; allow electronic audio/video communication; and increase community participation by hosting these meetings at local Tribal Government sites. In the future, Tribal Government meetings could also be televised and archived much like how Congressional hearings are webcasted and archived for public access.

### **III. NON COMMERCIAL AND PUBLIC MEDIA**

#### **21. With regard to nationally-oriented noncommercial television and radio (including public broadcasting stations), what have been the trends and what is the current state of affairs regarding news staffing and coverage (international, national, and local).**

For decades, Tribal communities were considered the black hole of the modern news and information world. In Arizona, for instance, it was often said that news happened primarily in Maricopa County, or the greater Phoenix area. The communities in Flagstaff, Arizona, just two hours north, would be mentioned on occasion, but the Tribal communities surrounding Phoenix and in rural Arizona effectively did not exist. In response, many Tribal governments in Arizona and across the country instituted their own Tribal newspapers. However because of economic conditions, Tribal newspapers have been shutting down at an alarming rate. There were only about 300 tribal newspapers and newsletters in 2005,<sup>2</sup> and only 295 self-identified tribal

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reportsitem.aspx?id=100614>.

journalists.<sup>3</sup> And while more and more commercial and public service media outlets are serving Tribal communities the news and information void in Native America is still deep.

Over thirty Tribal communities are served by their non-commercial radio stations and are connected to Native Voice One, the Native satellite distribution system that delivers Native-produced programming to them. Two of these programs are produced by Koahnic Broadcasting Corporation ("KBC") located in Anchorage, Alaska with production studios located in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

National Native News is a premier national news program produced by a team of Native journalist focused specifically on news from Indian Country. It is aired daily Monday through Fridays in a five minute format and can be aired freely by local stations. It is the only radio news program specifically designed by Native Americans for Native Americans.

Native America Calling is the only national call-in program produced by a Native team and is hosted by Native host Harlan McKasato of the Sac and Fox Nation. This show airs daily Monday through Friday and focuses on current issues facing Native America. The show calls on the expertise of both Native and non-Native guests; and listeners across the country are encouraged to call in and ask questions or voice their opinions. A popular show in Native America, the show has been running consistently since 1973.

In 2002, KNAU-FM and KUYI-FM-Hopi Radio established a regional Indian County News Bureau (ICNB) to produce news reports and long form features for local, regional and national use. The idea was for Native Americans to be not just receivers of news and information, but to be the producers and distributors of news and information from Indian Country. The ICNB received several awards for covering stories from Arizona Tribes, including

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reportsitem.aspx?id=100614>.

recognition by the UNITY Journalist of Color and the National Federation of Community Broadcasters. Even with this success, the ICBN found it difficult to survive economically without considerable financial support. The ICBN was also faced with journalist capacity deficits in Tribal communities that had long been denied news coverage. Trained journalists are virtually non-existent in Tribal communities and training local people to cover news according to professional standards was difficult to do "on-the-job." The ICBN was also challenged by the absence of the necessary technology. The Navajo News anchor covering the largest Indian reservation in the United States often found herself off the analog telephone grid, in locations where cell phones had no connection, and miles from the nearest computer or fax machine. These time delays often resulted in the "news" not being timely "news."

There are success stories, however, upon which future achievements may be modeled. KUYI radio station – located in the heart of the Hopi Indian Reservation, over 100 miles from Flagstaff, Arizona – employed an on-site professional news editor. Having this type of expertise on location allowed the Tribal journalists to receive the guidance and daily interaction necessary to producing quality newsworthy pieces. Several of these stories made it onto the National Public Radio and were aired nationally.

The most significant benefit of the ICBN was the integrity the Tribal journalists brought to the stories they covered. The Tribal journalists were more accepted and able to ask questions of Tribal members than an outside journalist could not. The Tribal journalists were able to cover stories at local Tribal council meetings and understood the subtle nuances of the local communities. They were also tuned into the Tribal protocols and understood when it was appropriate to speak to certain members of the community and what topics might be taboo.

The challenges to a Tribal journalist covering his/her own community were felt on two levels. First, the journalist had to be trained that, in a homogenous community embroiled in a controversial issue, it was important to stick to the journalistic ethics of fairness, balance, and truth; or to recuse themselves if family or relatives were involved and allow another journalist to take over. To deviate otherwise from the professional ethics of journalism, would unravel the integrity of the ICBN. Second, one Native journalist was challenged on what has been termed a "cultural consideration" issue versus the First Amendment. In this particular case, one of the ICBN Native journalist was assigned to cover the repatriation of an item from the Smithsonian Museum to the Hopi Tribe. The item was a religious item representing a particular Hopi deity. In the course of covering the story, and not being Hopi herself, the journalist used a particular English word to describe the item. The word, while seemingly innocuous in the non-Native world, had a loaded meaning to the Hopi people. The word was tied to an initiation rite where, only then, was that word to be revealed to young Hopis in the context of its religious meaning. The journalist insisted on airing the story without changing the word, arguing that the First Amendment of the Constitution protected her speech. The religious leaders of the Hopi communities argued that the story would harm the longstanding religious practices of the Hopi people and that the role of the radio station and journalism was to support the community, not to destroy its 1000-year old cultural fabric. The Hopi leaders stated that, if the story was aired, the radio station would cease to exist because it would be deemed unable to serve the needs of the community in a healthy and respectful way. The story did not air. Tensions such as these, where the modern world intersects with ancient Tribal beliefs and practices, serve as valuable litmus tests on how well the media knows and is responsive to the Tribal community it is serving and whether it is sensitive to the cultural considerations of indigenous communities.

While valued on so many levels, ICBN suffered from the high costs of covering news from distant, rural and remote communities and the accompanying technological challenges that coverage entailed. The market-based model of news and public affairs programming was not compatible with Tribal communities that suffered from high rates of unemployment and joblessness. In the end, the ICBN was scaled down to coverage of only major Tribal stories.

However, with broadband deployment on the rise in Native America, and in recognition of the important information the ICBN can provide, Native Americans are realizing the potential of a new Internet-based journalism model that may be both effective and affordable. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting recently announced its new initiative called Local Journalism Centers ("LJC"). The project will place newly-hired, station-based reporters, and editors working with news directors, at the LJs. The goal is to produce high quality news that will be distributed over television, radio, mobile and online; and also added to Public Service Media's National News Programs. Currently, the LJs are geographically assigned, with the Southwest LJC, for example, focusing on Changing America (border and immigration); while the Midwest LJC is focused on Agribusiness.

The LJC Project has the potential to bring together Native owned stations and National Native News, which currently operate under Koahnic Broadcast Corporation, and may even be expanded to include Native American Public Telecommunications and the Native American Journalism Association. There are other potential online "news" partners including Reznets and Indianz.

The LJC Project has both advantages and disadvantages. For example, one of the challenges facing Native stations that may wish to join an existing LJC is consideration of the editorial focus and how to tie the Native American viewpoint to that vision. However, an

advantage of an independent LJC focused on Native American Nations would be the creation of a platform for covering sovereignty issues relating to the economy, health, and public safety.

The future of news and information is wide open in Native America. There are few templates to follow and the door to finding a solution that fits and works is only limited by our own creativity and innovation.

**22. (Part I) For local noncommercial television and radio stations, what have been the trends for staffing, the amount of local news and information aired, audience ratings for such programming and local station financial health? If there have been news staff contractions, what type of programming has been cut back or changed? What have been the trends in funding from governmental, private sources and viewer/listener donations?**

The primary source of funding for Native radio system is the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. In a letter dated January 27, 2010, Native Public Media recommended that the Corporation for Public Broadcasting establish a Tribal Media Priority. Under this Priority, Native Public Media recommends that any reservation-based or Tribally-owned station be treated as a sole source station and prioritized for funding.

However, a larger reform is needed to fund our national public service media to serve the currently unserved and underserved communities in Indian country. The CPB's Community Service Grant ("CSG") Program, which provides vital funding for public radio stations, is a start, but additional sources of funding are needed given the convergence of video, voice and Internet-delivered information streams.

Historically, Radio CSG funding was set up as "funding as last resort" or a "match" allocated after a station has been qualified and after other funding sources have been secured. For small stations such as Native stations, it is often extremely challenging to secure the

necessary funding given the heightened economic challenges on tribal homelands. As a result, the very funding that could make a difference to Native stations is the last funding to make it into their operational coffers. Additionally, new stations must be on the air for a year before they can qualify for CPB funding. To compound the situation, the funding allocation for television and radio is legislatively set and thus there is no flexibility to help Native stations respond to the technological changes they face.

Reforming the funding of our national public service media must include increased appropriations from Congress, which could be derived from a national media tax and/or revenue derived from spectrum auctions. If information is critical and vital to the healthy functioning of all communities in the U.S. including tribal communities, then there must be a national strategy to combine social investment with private enterprise in not only developing our digital media infrastructure but also in financing/funding its long term sustainability. The American people should be given the opportunity to deliberate these options.

Whatever the outcome, incentives for public service media to reach out to, engage, and sustain new unserved and underserved audiences must be a priority and include critical funding for media facilities and outlets to increase their digital capacity through staff training in digital technologies; providing news from their communities; adopting increased communications through new technologies; engaging their communities on and off air using different platforms; and producing multi-media content for local and national distribution.

For example, increasing the access of Native terrestrial radio stations to digital communications and technology, while at the same time making it possible for stations to enhance the already vital programming and services provided to their respective communities would provide an enormous opportunity to begin to bridge the historical, yet persistent, digital

and media divide. Increasingly, communications technologies are central to educational access, health care delivery, economic development, and civic participation. While terrestrial radio remains the central transmitter of information in small, rural or remote communities, and is capable of bridging gender, economic and other social gaps, the Internet has become the hub of coordination among different media platforms.

As the technologies and platforms for the delivery of information continue to evolve, it is clear that older models are no longer sufficient, or perhaps to certain audiences, no longer entirely relevant. As traditional media becomes digitized, the Internet has become the common carriage for all media platforms. Native stations, like other rural stations cannot be left behind. Native Americans must be included within, and provided access to, this dynamic and ever changing landscape.

Community-centric Native stations focus heavily on providing local programming and content that is meaningful to their audiences. Lacking the presence of a Native voice in many national programs offered today, Native stations often forego the acquisition of national programming in favor of local fare. These stations, however, often do not have the funding to adequately produce quality local programming. Evidence indicates, however, that Native-owned radio stations that broadcast in predominately mainstream formats often deliver programming in ways that strengthen cultural ties. For example, one Navajo-owned "country" station delivers news and information in both English and Navajo. If able to blend national and local programming, Native stations would be in a proactive and powerful position not only to provide content that enriches the intellectual capacity of their audiences, but also to maintain their relevance within the community by operating as an integral local, "inside" institutions rather than just passive conduits of information.

**22. (Part II) What has been the impact of competition for audience from the Internet or other information sources. How are public broadcasters using the Internet, mobile applications, their multicast channels/additional program streams, or other new technologies to provide local news and information? How are they collaborating with non-broadcasters? How have these changes affected the availability of informational and educational programming for children and other informational and educational material?**

With broadband penetration at less than 10 percent in Indian Country, the potential use of the Internet, mobile applications, and other new technologies to provide local news and information is unrealized. However, a national strategy to utilize multi-cast channels and program streams is one way to reach Native Americans who are either landless Tribes or who have migrated to urban centers for employment and educational opportunities.<sup>4</sup> In May 2010, KUYI 88.1 FM will debut its programming stream on the Internet with a potential to reach Hopi Tribal members on and off reservation; and abroad (including Hopi Tribal members serving in the U.S. armed forces). Hopi Tribal members will be able to listen to information presented by radio, and request additional information from the Hopi Tribal government, Hopi Health Care Center, and other anchor institutions for information vital to their life choices.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

NPM fully supports the Commission's efforts to examine the future of media and the information needs of communities in a digital age. In doing so, however, NPM urges the Commission to be mindful of the issues confronting, and barriers faced by, Native Americans. An appreciation of these obstacles, as well as the tremendous opportunities for media delivery

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<sup>4</sup> Approximately 60 percent of the 4.3 million people who identified themselves as American Indian or Alaskan Native in the 2000 census lived in metropolitan areas. NATIONAL URBAN INDIAN FAMILY COALITION, URBAN INDIAN AMERICA: THE STATUS OF AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TODAY 8-9, available at [http://www.nuifc.net/programs/files/NUIFC\\_PUBLICATION\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.nuifc.net/programs/files/NUIFC_PUBLICATION_FINAL.pdf).

and broadband deployment on Indian lands, will be essential if the *all* of America is to move forward and take advantage of the tremendous prospects present (and forthcoming) in the digital age.

Respectfully submitted,

**NATIVE PUBLIC MEDIA**

By: \_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_

Loris Ann Taylor  
Executive Director  
Native Public Media  
P.O. Box 3955  
Flagstaff, AZ 86003  
Telephone: (928) 853-2430

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