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Canadian educational institutions celebrate success of high-speed network project

MONTREAL – A two-year national project to make online learning more accessible and useful for educators and students is being hailed by organizers and supporters as a landmark success. Using Canada's high-speed network, CA*net 3, the project has encouraged collaboration and sharing among participants at ten post-secondary institutions across the country.

"We are extremely pleased with the quality and quantity of educational materials that have been made available through the network," says Douglas MacLeod, Director of Projects for Netera Alliance. "Through this investigation we are beginning to see the promises that the advanced Internet brings to the educational and research environments."

The \$3.4 million test bed project, called BELLE (Broadband Enabled Lifelong Learning Environment), takes advantage of Canada's high-speed network to support lifelong learning and includes ten post-secondary institutions across Canada. The participating institutions include: The Banff Centre, McGill Faculty of Medicine, Northern Alberta Institute for Technology, Seneca@York, Sheridan College, University of Alberta, University of British Columbia, University of Calgary, University of Lethbridge, and the Vancouver Film School.

The project is designed to provide high calibre learning materials to users by connecting repositories of materials to standardized client workstations at each of the participating institutions. Educational materials currently being made available by the project include medical animations and simulations from McGill University and the University of Calgary, early childhood education videos from Seneca@York and an extensive collection of microscopy and geological slides from the University of Lethbridge.

"The BELLE Project demonstrates how a comprehensive understanding of user needs is integral to the success of network-enabled education," says Jamie Rossiter, Director of CANARIE Inc.'s Learning Program. "Highly collaborative projects like this are excellent examples of how a dedicated approach can accelerate the use and the benefits of advanced technology in education."

The BELLE project is led by Netera Alliance, a not-for-profit corporation whose primary role is to develop and manage the advanced Internet in Alberta. The project is supported by a \$1.7 million repayable contribution from CANARIE Inc.'s Learning Program and matching funding by participating institutions.

For more information: BELLE project <http://belle.netera.ca>

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