

The Last 10%

By Jens Laipenieks, CEO & General Manager



The world of telecommunications is constantly evolving, more like snowballing, as technology changes at an ever-increasing pace.

As our name suggests, we are a “telephone” cooperative, but that description, the word itself, and the service it describes, POTS, or plain old telephone service, has gone mostly unchanged since its inception in the late 1800s. Technology changed, and services like toll (Long Distance), cellular telephones, and eventually voice-over IP (VoIP) changed how POTS was delivered. The service itself is otherwise the same; dial, speak, and hang up.

While POTS remained the same, the telecom evolution shifted to a new telecom service: the Internet. With the rise of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in the late 1980s, the pace of change quickened. By the mid-1990s, we saw the growth of websites like Amazon, eBay, Napster, and the first dot-com bubble. By the mid-2000s, the Internet had expanded to the far reaches of the globe and

evolved even more rapidly with the first social media sites like Twitter, Myspace, and Facebook, and in 2007 the first video streaming service, Netflix. In the past decade, broadband has become a fundamental quality of life service, and there is nothing that the internet does not touch.

After completing the Atqasuk fiber project this spring, we have connected 87% of all homes on the North Slope with fiber optic cable. Once we complete the Kaktovik project, that number will jump to 90%. All 90% will have access to quality high-speed broadband services and myriad benefits that come with it. That leaves the last 10%.

The remaining 10% comprise the roughly 200 homes and the residents of Point Lay and Anaktuvuk Pass. ASTAC has applied to the USDA’s Reconnect program that, if awarded, will fund the construction of terrestrial connections to these final two markets. (Cont.)



(Cont.)

This effort, once completed, is the culmination of our multi-year goal of transforming ASTAC into an advanced broadband provider. All members in all North Slope communities will have equal access to the same products and services, no more the “haves” and “have nots” based on location, we will be wholly connected.

At our core, we will always be a telephone company and will continue to offer both landline and mobile telephone service as long as our members require it. As our 40-year history traces the evolution of ASTAC, so does it set the course forward to new and exciting possibilities as we continue to accelerate into the future. Powered by the advanced fiber networks we have built, we ensure that ASTAC will deliver whatever comes next to 100% of our member-owners.

New CFO Joins the ASTAC Team

We are excited to announce and welcome of our new CFO Sarah Sandbak. We believe she will be instrumental in our growth in the coming years. She has been in Alaska for 13 years and looks forward to serving the ASTAC membership. Jens shared, “I am excited to have Sarah join our leadership team here at ASTAC. Her diverse experience will be invaluable as we continue to move forward as a Cooperative.”

ASTAC 2022 Scholarship Awards



The Cooperative’s mission to provide to the North Slope goes beyond our services, we also work to give back to the communities and the families we are proud to serve through donations, scholarships, and sponsorships. One of the greatest of these is to support students who are furthering their education in post-secondary education. This year the board approved four scholarships to new and one returning student. We are wishing all students a wonderful school year and the absolute best in future endeavors.

2022 Scholarship Recipients

Brooke Singson

David Custodio

Haley Sielak

Joe-Renz Nobelza

NSBSD Student Connection: A Partnership for the Future



NORTH SLOPE
BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
— Striving For Excellence —

Powered By
ASTAC

Together NSBSD and ASTAC have launched a program for all district students to have broadband connection in their home, ensuring they remain connected and have access to school needs. The Student Connection program comes at no-cost to families and brings the school's broadband into the home, and there is no requirement to be a current ASTAC customer or have ASTAC services. Both NSBSD and ASTAC believe in the power of education to develop and empower all communities on the North Slope. The program will give support and provides the opportunity to learn outside of regular school hours.

For more information or to sign up for this service, please visit the NSBSD website and view all Student Connection information. Once families have the form filled out, an ASTAC team member will reach out to activate this service. Both teams are thrilled to bring this connection to the Top of the World.

Thank You to Clover and Thomas

Please join us in wishing two our valued team members the best. We want to thank Clover McNeil and Thomas Lochner for their hard work and dedication during their time at the cooperative. They will still be a part of the broadband world, taking on new roles. Quyanapuk for everything, Clover, and Thomas.



Co-op Connect Employee Spotlight: Christian Serino



Christian was raised in Point Hope and has been with ASTAC since 2018. He started as a Village Representative but more recently has worked his way to a Combination Technician. What he enjoys most about the job is the process of fusion and mechanical splicing. His on-the-job training has excited him and being in the field he has learned so much from the team. Christian said, "I really love the fact that I get to help service my hometown of Point Hope and the people here. It's always a nice to see people get excited about getting Wi-Fi." The projects that bring him energy are those that get his energy up.

Additionally, outside of work he really enjoys building models of cars, planes, and other things with his 3-year-old son. His hobbies include fishing, hunting, exercising and occasionally playing video games. Living in his home community means he can raise his two children with his wife and enjoy their rambunctious dogs and very old cat happily. He stated, "I'm very proud to work for ASTAC because they were pioneers of servicing the North Slope. Since I grew up here in Point Hope I always wanted to help the community but also be a part of something bigger, ASTAC has allowed me to do both."

Cheif Operations Officer Brian Demarco shared, "We are excited that Christian has transitioned from Village Representative to full-time Combination Technician based in Point Hope. Christian is always willing to learn, responsive to telecommunication needs in the community, and personable with ASTAC customers."

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Opportunities at new heights

CURRENT JOB OPENINGS

Controller – Anchorage

Sr. Business Systems Analyst – Anchorage

Community Liaison – Utqiaġvik

Customer Experience Specialist (FT) – Utqiaġvik

Combination Technician – Utqiaġvik

Combination Technician – Deadhorse

Village Representative – Atqasuk

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