



Canadian Media Guild

La Guilde canadienne des médias

CWA/SCA CANADA

Building APTN to last in a changing Canada

Submission in response to
CRTC 2013-19

Re: application 2012-0993-2

February 27, 2013

Executive Summary

1. The Canadian Media Guild is a national union representing editorial and technical employees of the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network as well as thousands of media workers at other organizations across the country, including CBC/Radio-Canada, TVO, TFO, Shaw Media and ZoomerMedia. We believe a quality media system that serves all Canadians is built on healthy organizations that treat workers fairly.
2. We are pleased to have this opportunity to participate in this proceeding in support of APTN's licence renewal application and we request to appear at the hearing to provide any additional information that arises in the intervening period.
3. The Canadian Media Guild is urging the Commission to:
 - Renew APTN's broadcast licence
 - Reconfirm APTN's must-carry status under 9.1(h) of the *Broadcasting Act* in recognition of its exceptional contributions to the Canadian broadcast system
 - Approve the wholesale rate of \$0.40 per subscriber per month to support APTN's continued development as an indispensable source of programming and news by, for and about Canada's Indigenous peoples.

APTN: a rich resource for all Canadians

It was only when I reached university that I learned about the struggles, challenges and sometimes injustices that my ancestors went through. For a while I was angry that I didn't learn of these things earlier growing up in school. My mom and dad both attended residential school. I never knew this before my dad passed away in '88. Both he and my mom never spoke of this.

As a young girl, in kindergarten, I told my mom about being taunted by classmates. One afternoon at recess they surrounded me outside in the playground, repeatedly calling me "Indian." I didn't know why they were doing this or why being an "Indian" was such a bad thing. In a stern voice, my mom told me, "tell them you're Canadian." That only left me puzzled but I carried on. That memory stuck with me. I do not feel vengeful over it, but I do remember how it really made me think, even as a five-year-old girl. Why did that happen?

Jumping ahead many years, when I first learned that APTN was launching, it lifted me up and made me feel proud. It reaffirmed to me that we have a place in this country and we are a valuable part of it. Today, looking back on my years with APTN, I still feel the same way. Aboriginal peoples face many of the same challenges we have faced for decades: Low education outcomes, poorer health qualities, poverty. As the years go by I see this and know that in my work as a journalist, my challenge is how to advance the discussion on these critical issues so many people have grappled with. Asking "how are we going to deal with these things?" is a tremendous obligation for me. How do we show others that there are voices of hope and not just despair and anger?

APTN makes me feel like I've always had a place in Canada. I don't think many Canadians realize Canada is a world leader in Aboriginal broadcasting. Through my work at APTN I've had the opportunity to meet and speak with several other Indigenous

broadcasters around the world. Many are amazed, envious even, of the climate that makes APTN possible. I do not take lightly the fact that Canada has a strong and growing capability to produce not only original cultural, national television but we also enjoy a journalistic freedom that many other Aboriginal broadcasters can only dream of.

- Cheryl McKenzie, Host/Producer, member of the Canadian Media Guild

4. The Aboriginal Peoples Television Network is the only organization of its kind in the world. A national broadcaster devoted to telling stories and covering news by and for dispersed and diverse Indigenous peoples and communities, APTN was launched to fill a significant gap in Canada's broadcast system: to "serve the needs and interests, and reflect the circumstances and aspirations, of Canadian men, women and children, including...the special place of aboriginal peoples within [Canadian] society." (*Broadcasting Act*).
5. Regulatory support has always been – and will always be – essential to APTN's existence. There is no "market niche" capable of sustaining a public-service broadcaster devoted first and foremost to serving and reflecting the relatively small and politically, socially and economically marginalized populations of First Peoples living in cities, towns and remote communities from coast to coast to coast. Further, it provides a platform that reaches all Canadian viewers from which Indigenous peoples tell their stories and provide their perspectives. APTN is the only broadcaster that regularly provides national coverage of issues and stories from Canada's Northern and remote communities.

One of the things that make APTN unique is giving national coverage of news stories from the North that would not get national play otherwise. For example, with recent changes to the federal food subsidy program for people in remote communities, CBC, APTN and the local paper covered and advanced the story, but only APTN brought it to a national audience. CBC had local coverage, only the local team couldn't crack the CBC national news with it. This is a common occurrence.

- Kent Driscoll, reporter, member of the Guild

6. In 1999, the Commission approved the application by Television Northern Canada Incorporated (TVNC) to create what became APTN, stating that "Aboriginal peoples should have access to a national television service to exchange information, ideas, entertainment and cultural perspectives." (CRTC Broadcasting Decision 99-42, paragraph 10). In approving the channel, the Commission granted APTN must-carry status on basic cable as well as necessary source of revenue: 15 cents per month per BDU subscriber.
7. During APTN's first licence renewal in 2005, the Commission saw fit to increase the monthly wholesale rate devoted to the broadcaster to 25 cents. This increase allowed APTN to create regional feeds and to boost its unique news service.
8. In this second licence renewal, APTN is seeking an increase of the wholesale rate to 40 cents. The Canadian Media Guild supports this request as a measure to ensure APTN can continue to thrive and enhance its service to its primary audiences, all Canadian TV viewers, and the broadcasting system.

9. Canada's Indigenous populations are young, increasingly interconnected via digital means and looking outward. They are strengthening their presence in key public debates and discussions across Canada. In the next licence term, APTN is poised to play a greater role in reaching and engaging with young Indigenous people, fostering discussion and dialogue across diverse communities and large geographic distances, providing regular news from communities that otherwise enjoy little coverage and sharing Indigenous views on issues that affect all Canadians.

Building an Indigenous broadcast infrastructure

“If you're Aboriginal anywhere, and you are trying to break into the broadcasting industry, there may be no better place for you to do it than at APTN.”

- Derek Christianson, a broadcast technician and member of the Guild.

10. Since 1999, APTN has nurtured the development of an Indigenous broadcasting sector in Canada, thereby implementing Canada's broadcast policy in two major areas.
11. First, APTN contributes significantly to the creation and presentation of Canadian programming that would otherwise never be made or seen. It is the only national television news and current affairs service devoted to Indigenous issues in Canada.
12. Further, as the Commission noted in 2005, APTN “has nurtured the emergence of a new independent program production sector in this country, and ... many of the small, independent Aboriginal production companies would probably not exist today were it not for APTN's support.” (Broadcasting Decision CRTC 2005-445, paragraph 11). In the current application, APTN notes that it plans to increase program development, open up regional production facilities to help independent producers and commission higher-budget productions, all measures that will help to further the development of Canada's unique Indigenous independent production sector.
13. Second, APTN implements Canadian broadcast policy by employing and developing a workforce of Indigenous media workers – technicians, videographers, producers, reporters, editors, marketers, administrators – that is otherwise underrepresented in the Canadian broadcasting system.

“I was one of six interns hired at the new station, the only woman on the crew. We were pretty green when we started. We learned as we did things, and it was great because if we wanted to do more, they would let us. I started as an intern but was hired full-time by September 2000. I've done practically everything there is to do at APTN, because there was that freedom. The broadcaster was so new that employees had the ability to take on more if they wanted, there was all kinds of opportunities. We trained each other and learned from each other. I feel that the most important aspect of APTN was their willingness to bring in mentors so that employees could learn new skills.”

- Francine Compton, producer and member of the Guild

14. Canadian Media Guild members have benefited from the opportunities that APTN provides in the broadcasting system, including the ability to do rewarding work.

“I am new at APTN. I had originally trained as a videographer at CTV and then moved to CBC Regina, but when a position came up at APTN I went for it. I knew I would get to tell meaningful stories that make a difference in peoples’ lives. At APTN I’ve done things like travel to Thunder Bay to talk about that community’s relationship to the police. Anywhere else I would be doing less meaningful stories.”

- Ntawnis Piapot, reporter, member of the Guild

15. APTN has also trained media workers who have gone on to work at other media organizations, providing a key source of talent and perspectives to the entire industry.

Standing up and standing out

16. APTN contributes a set of voices to the Canadian broadcasting landscape that would otherwise be lost in the shuffle, providing irreplaceable editorial and cultural diversity to the system.
17. As APTN points out in the current application, it is facing stiffer competition for viewers from a wide array of programming options while finding fewer opportunities to partner with other Canadian broadcasters due to industry consolidation and the push among broadcasters to retain control over exhibition windows. If it is not able to produce and commission its own unique, high-quality programming for its own use on several exhibition windows, “APTN risks becoming marginalized in a broadcasting landscape dominated by a few, vertically-integrated, broadcasters.” (Appendix #2, page 7).
18. As we know, these vertically-integrated companies are also involved in the distribution of programming services and must abide by the must-carry (9.1(h)) rules and wholesale rate set by the Commission. The objective interest of these companies is to minimize cost and maximize flexibility and they are not generally great supporters of carriage requirements and wholesale rate increases.
19. As we pointed out above, however, these regulatory supports are essential to APTN’s continued existence and do not pose a significant hardship to the broadcasting distribution sector or to consumers. This sector generated \$12.8 billion in subscription revenue in 2011, or an average of \$93.80 per month per subscriber. In all, BDU revenues jumped 74% between 2006 and 2011, a period in which APTN’s revenue from the BDU wholesale rate remain unchanged at \$0.25 per month per subscriber. APTN is requesting a wholesale rate increase to \$0.40 for the next licence term, an amount that represents the same proportion – 0.4% – of BDU revenues in 2013 as the 25-cent rate represented in 2006.
20. The wholesale rate increase will help APTN keep up with developments in the rest of the industry, including the crucial need to upgrade digital platforms, such as aptn.ca, and develop the Digital Drum project to attract younger audiences to the service. The rate increase will also help APTN pay salaries and programming costs closer to those in the rest of the industry, and therefore retain staff, expertise and institutional knowledge while providing the kind of professional programming that Canadian TV viewers expect.

21. More than half of the wholesale rate increase will be devoted to improving the quantity and quality of original Canadian programming available to viewers, both commissioned and made-at-APTN programming.
22. As in the last licence term, APTN again plans improvements to the news service in the next term that will benefit all Canadians by providing more in-depth and investigative reporting, as well as more regionally-relevant news programs. Guild members are excited to be part of this important news service and look forward to contributing to an increase in the quality of APTN's news programming.
23. APTN is a truly national news service with dedicated bureaus and staff in 11 communities across the country, including three in the far North. It is important to recognize that APTN faces extraordinary costs – that other broadcasters do not – to provide relevant and quality programming to its core audiences. For example, the news organization covers many communities that, for historical reasons particular to colonization, are located in Northern and remote locations that are largely inaccessible by economical means. To take Nunavut as an example, it is necessary to fly in to any community outside of Iqaluit, which is currently impossible within APTN's budget. Sometimes an APTN reporter can get on a flight chartered by other media outlets or other non-media organizations. However, travelling with a non-media organization can lead to the sense that APTN news is embedded with that organization and that the organization may have expectations on the coverage that results from the trip. A travel budget to reach remote locations means independence for the news organization.

“Half of the Aboriginal population in Québec is Francophone. APTN gives them a voice they rarely have in other media. Some media tend to focus on sensationalism when covering Aboriginal people: drugs, prostitution, alcoholism, etc. At APTN, while remaining journalists, we go further, cultivating contacts and using our access to show different aspects of communities and to help improve understanding. APTN also brings together Aboriginal peoples across Canada. We learn what's going on in other communities – it's very interesting to see how much we have in common. I know APTN plans to offer even more news and regional programming. Everyone has a right to information.”

- Danielle Rochette – Journalist, and member of the Guild

(Original quote from French conversation: « La moitié de la population autochtone au Québec est francophone. APTN leur donne une voix qu'ils ont rarement dans d'autres médias. Quelques médias ont tendance à faire du sensationnalisme quand ils couvrent les Autochtones, insistant sur la drogue, la prostitution, l'alcoolisme, etc. Mais à APTN tout en restant journalistes, nous allons plus loin encore en cultivant des réseaux et en profitant de l'accès que nous avons pour montrer divers aspects des communautés et aider à mieux comprendre. APTN apporte aussi un côté rassembleur à la population autochtone partout au pays. On apprend ce qui se passe dans les autres communautés – c'est très intéressant de découvrir tant de points communs. Je sais que c'est dans les objectifs d'APTN d'offrir encore plus de nouvelles et de programmation régionales. Tout le monde a droit à l'information. »)

24. Like CBC/Radio-Canada, APTN offers programming in English, French and several Indigenous languages but, unlike the national public broadcaster, receives no federal funding to support this expensive and resource-intensive service. In the next licence term, APTN plans to increase French-language programming to better serve francophones. In addition, APTN plans to boost the availability of Indigenous-language programming in order to be more relevant to the needs and aspirations of its core viewers and to support a renaissance of interest in learning and using Indigenous languages after decades of decline due, in no small part, to assimilationist policies carried out by the Canadian state. (See for example Gene Barman, Yvonne Hebert, Don McCaskell Eds, *Indian Education in Canada I: the legacy*, 1986, UBC Press; on the importance of reversing this trend, see Unesco, *Language vitality and endangerment*, 2003 - <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/doc/src/00120-EN.pdf>)
25. As APTN points out in Appendix 2 of its application, “APTN’s experience with the broadcast of Olympic programming in Aboriginal languages has shown that broadcasting has an exciting impact on language use. Aboriginal-language broadcasting is not the complete answer, but for Aboriginal languages to survive and even flourish, they must be a part of everyday life: broadcasting media are as present in the everyday lives of Aboriginal Peoples as those media are for everyone else in Canada. APTN has the important responsibility to ensure that Aboriginal languages are present on television.” (Page 5).
26. APTN programming supports education, particularly in remote communities desperate for Indigenous-language material for children. This fills the policy of the *Broadcasting Act* as well as helping to meet urgent needs in the education system.

Conclusion

27. There can be no doubt that APTN makes an extraordinary contribution to Canada’s broadcast system. It is a leader in Indigenous television broadcasting and model for other countries around the world. In its 14-year history, APTN has achieved great success and will contribute even more to Canada’s broadcast sector, and public dialogue and debate, in the coming licence term.
28. We urge in the strongest possible terms that the Commission:
- Renew APTN’s broadcast licence
 - Reconfirm APTN’s must-carry status under 9.1(h) of the *Broadcasting Act* in recognition of its exceptional contributions to the Canadian broadcast system
 - Approve the wholesale rate of \$0.40 per subscriber per month to support APTN’s continued development as an indispensable source of programming and news by, for and about Canada’s Indigenous peoples.

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