

CASE STUDY



Company

SiYeh Communications

Year Founded

2020

Company Type

Full Tribal Ownership and Operations

Website

<https://www.siycom.com/>

Location

Browning, Montana

Services

Internet, Phone, TV

Subscribers

4000 Residential

THE CHALLENGE

SiYeh Communications is a tribally-owned internet service provider chartered by the SiYeh Corporation, a federally chartered corporation of the Blackfeet Tribe, located on the Blackfeet reservation in Browning, Montana, and is their first standalone telephone and broadband entity.

On the Blackfeet reservation, Oki was the tribe's original wireless internet service provider (WISP). Over time, it became apparent that the tribe needed to take broadband into their own hands and build a network they could own.

To provide broadband services, sufficient funding was required. Although grants could support a significant amount of funding, they were not a quick solution. Therefore, strong partnerships became crucial, not only to ensure the tribe would receive enough funding for their project, but also for playing pivotal roles throughout the project, especially post-build.

SiYeh Communications was aware they needed a sustainable, long-term plan with the right partners in place—and they wanted to own the network themselves, giving them the benefits from broadband and revenue from the associated business.

THE SOLUTION

The initial funding came from tribal council, and it enabled SiYeh Communications to launch the project. SiYeh Communications engaged with a neighboring telephone company to purchase the Browning Exchange, which covers the Blackfeet reservation. They partnered with Three Rivers, who helped them ensure they had enough fiber and capacity to get started. SiYeh Communications also purchased fiber assets from another company, Ronan, to have the foundation to build and expand. These purchases allowed SiYeh Communications to complete their vision of taking control of their own communications independence by fully owning their network.

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Broadband brings people together—and that's precisely what we aim to do with SiYeh Communications and our larger effort to keep bringing fiber connectivity to Montana's reservations. We're not only expanding, we're eliminating the digital divide in the entire region not only geographically but socially, removing boundaries between different cultures.



Brian DeMarco
General Manager
SiYeh Communications

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In late 2022, Siyeh Communications received a \$33 million grant award from NTIA's Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program. The funding will be used to upgrade their infrastructure to a fiber-to-the-home network to directly connect 4,500~ homes. This funding will help over the next five years to execute Siyeh Communication's vision of building a future-proof network for the community—with 10-Gigabit capacity that runs to the home. This investment is part of the future-minded approach that they're taking, looking ahead to how broadband can continue to provide benefits long into the future and for the coming generations.

Partnerships with Calix and others helped position Siyeh Communications for success. Together, everyone is invested in the project and can bring their areas of expertise to the table. Because of these trusted partners and a unified approach, getting the vote of approval was easier.

THE RESULTS

Siyeh Communications has fixed wireless, copper, and fiber networks. They serve roughly 1,500 subscribers on fiber with approximately 4,000 households connected overall—and the goal is to expand even more. Currently, four different reservations in Montana need connectivity. Because of their previous success, Siyeh Communications was able to submit a grant to build infrastructure that brings tribal connectivity together in the Montana region.

Expanding off-territory can be challenging, but everyone deserves broadband—and a leader like Siyeh Communications is in the right position to unite tribal and non-tribal groups under the umbrella of connectivity.

Likewise, broadband can unite communities by developing a local workforce. Siyeh Communications has invested in the growth of their employee knowledge, participating in Calix University courses to learn how to service equipment, provide exceptional customer service, and leverage technology the best they can. By supporting local employees, the community benefits directly from keeping people committed to the vision—and dedicated to staying in the region.

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THE BROADBAND SUCCESS
PLAYBOOK FOR TRIBES**



**4,000 subscribers covering the
Blackfeet reservation and off-
Territory in Montana**



**Purchased two broadband
companies to support full tribal
ownership of the infrastructure**



**Got successful buy-in from
tribal council and is utilizing
grant funding to upgrade to a
10-Gigabit future-proof network**

All images provided by Siyeh Communications

