

The LIAS – GBIS Relationship

The relationship between the two non-profit societies, LIAS (Lasqueti Internet Access Society) and GBIS (Gillies Bay Internet Society) is changing, and this is a good time to review the history, finances, and what is to come.

History. For those not aware of all the background, the process started in October 2006 when, having discovered that Gillies Bay was omitted from the Network BC list of eligible rural communities to receive funding for broadband, I contacted Nicholas Simons, MLA. Correspondence with various ministers and government officials continued with no progress until January 22, 2008. Then Network BC suggested that we contact both Lasqueti (through LIAS) and Twin Island Communications. At first sight, Lasqueti, with no hydropower or vehicle ferry, seemed an unlikely partner, but we were wrong. They were on the Network BC list and had received funding to set up a wireless network. An enthusiastic group of amateurs had learnt as they went along. Things developed quickly from then, and on February 25, 2008, we met a delegation with test equipment that came by zodiac to Shingle Beach. We had a full day of meetings and testing around Gillies Bay before they returned from Shingle Beach at about 4pm, see below.



The LIAS delegation leaving Shingle Beach, February 2008.

The tests proved remarkably successful to the rather naïve group of Gillies Bay volunteers hosting the LIAS group. We were delighted to soon have the first broadband link set up, connecting Lasqueti with a radio on Manfred's deck, see photo next page.

Lasqueti had a wireless system in place, connected to a transmitter in Parksville. They needed additional funding (\$4700 from Powell River Regional District) to purchase the transmitters required to start our basic system via the GBTV tower. The Gillies Bay system via Lasqueti began operating in May 2008 and has gradually built up to about 50 clients, the maximum possible on this backhaul.

Finances. The GBIS was registered as an official non-profit society in July 2008 as a precondition for applying for capital grants through Network BC. We obtained the first of two Network BC capital grants in March 2009.

While the Network BC grants covered capital costs, GBIS had no source of operating revenue. We couldn't even buy a stamp for any expenditure on a non-capital project, and we have an annual insurance bill of \$1800. The basic problem is that all of the revenue from clients goes to LIAS, leaving GBIS with no source of operating funds. Hence over the last four years our relations with LIAS have had some rocky moments, mostly due to this revenue issue. On top of this, the capital costs associated with erecting the tower were much higher than we anticipated, leaving us continually scrambling for funds. In fact at the end of 2011 GBIS is in the black only because of loans of over \$3500 to GBIS by its directors.

Going Forward. The financing will change shortly as for 2012 we have a new revenue sharing agreement with LIAS. Clients will still pay LIAS, but GBIS will receive a significant portion of the revenue. LIAS will pay the Telus invoice for the PoP at the SCHC and keep a fee for administrative services. GBIS will also have some control over the fee structure and the bandwidth at the SCHC PoP. We expect that GBIS will work with LIAS to take complete control of the Texada part of the LIAS-GBIS network over the next three years, and anticipate that as revenues return to Texada, some part-time paid positions will be needed here.



The first radio link to Lasqueti, set up on Manfred's deck, February 2008.

LIAS invoices. In anticipation of GBIS taking more control, we have had several inquiries about whether to renew subscriptions with LIAS or whether there will soon be GBIS invoices. We ask you to please renew with LIAS, knowing that a significant portion of those fees will be coming back to GBIS. When the billing is eventually taken over by GBIS we will make sure it is seamless and that LIAS credits will be acknowledged by GBIS.

Remember, we have our own web site at www.gilliesbay.ca where I will soon post this series of articles. You can check out the Texada Trekkers activities there too.

Brian and the GBIS Board.

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