

The Internet, dangerous for you and your child



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How safe is your child online?

That was one of the themes of the "Ethical Hacker Guy," otherwise known as Terry Cutler, as he put interested community members through the gauntlet of scary possibilities in cyber space Wednesday night.

His resume includes training with the FBI, CIA and Navy Seals to catch hackers, so you could say that when he stepped into the business services complex to teach the class about Internet ethics and safety, he knew what he was talking about.

It didn't start off scary, however. He talked about the joys of the Internet, such as finding lost friends from social networking sites like Facebook and Myspace.

But he quickly got into the nitty gritty details of phishing scams, spam and other ways hackers try to attack your system daily.

You must know the scam about the wealthy Nigerian who is going to inherit \$10 million, all he needs is \$1000 to help secure it because he's broke, but will soon be rich?

If you fell for it, you were royally scammed. If you didn't, then you were at least annoyed.

How about your wireless connection? Is it secure?

Barely any of the 35 people present put up their hands to say yes.

By not securing your WiFi network you are running the risk, maybe not tomorrow, but someday, of getting hacked.

Cutler also talked about the scariness of cyber bullying and the fact that at least two reported cases in the states saw kids commit suicide because of it.

Some of those in attendance were in the dark about most of the technical jargon, but a couple of people seemed to know quite a bit about websites and terminology.

A program called Safekeeper, which can be downloaded from the Internet, helps to control kids' access to the web. It features time control options so your child won't be able to go online during certain periods and you can even control it from your computer at work.

Sexual predators and ways to catch them were also discussed. If someone is chatting with a child online and they are pushy or they get sexual after the kid states their age, they should be encouraged to tell their parents right away so the police can do their job in catching those kinds of predators.

Most of all, parents were warned that webcams are never a good idea for minors. If they have to speak to a relative overseas on the computer through software like Skype, which lets you talk over long distance for free, then it should be done in the presence of an adult. Also, the webcam should not be left lying around so your child can access it easily.

Kids can be very sneaky, and in this day and age Cutler warns that if there are strange long distance charges on the phone or if your son or daughter demonstrates secretive behaviour, they might be in the process of getting lured in by a sexual predator much older than them.

Excellent programs to monitor and restrict your child include cyber nanny, net nanny and the aforementioned Safekeeper. They will go a long way towards ensuring your family stays healthy and wise online.

So next time you go online and chat or browse various web sites, beware, you might not be as safe as you think.

If you missed the presentation, you can learn more about Internet and computer safety by visiting www.ethical-hackerguy.ca.

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NATIVE NEWS EXCHANGE

Indian housing act finally signed into law

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It took a lot of hard work but a bill to reauthorize the Native American Housing and Self-Determination Act was finally signed into law on Tuesday.

Prospects seemed shaky earlier this year when an unrelated controversy threatened to derail H.R.2786. A compromise on the issue led to passage of the bill in the final days of the 110th Congress.

The update now gives Tribes more flexibility to address housing issues throughout Indian Country. Tribal advocates said the bill gives real meaning to the words "self-determination" in NAHASDA, which was originally enacted in 1996.

"Dilapidated houses and over-crowded living conditions lead to weak school performance, poor health, and contribute to a hopelessness that few Americans witness as part of their daily lives," said Marty Shuravloff, the chairman of the National American Indian Housing Council.

"By reauthorizing NAHASDA, Congress has demonstrated incredible dedication to improve the dire housing conditions that too many Native Americans face."

According to NAIHC, 14.7 percent of homes on reservations and in Alaska Native villages suffer from overcrowding, compared to 5.7 percent nationally. Nearly 12 percent of reservation and village homes lack complete plumbing, 14 percent lack electricity and 11 percent lack kitchen facilities, rates far higher than the national average.

"This bill is more than just a housing act - it will give Tribes more authority over their own land and truly help build stronger communities in Indian Country," said Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-North Dakota), the chairman of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee.

"Given the great need for improvements in housing stocks for Alaska Natives and Indian Tribes nationwide, these changes offer the hope of substantially increasing the availability of quality housing to Native people in the near future," added Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), the committee's vice chair.

The bill, which extends NAHASDA through 2013, marks one of the few substantive achievements for Indian Country in the 110th Congress. A number of Tribal-specific bills made it through but the big ticket items - most notably the reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act - failed to pass.

Some of the inaction can be traced to a controversy involving the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and its removal of the Freedmen, who are the descendants of former slaves, from tribal rolls. NAIHC earlier this year warned that a failure to resolve the issue could hurt NAHASDA.

But Tribal advocates also noted it would be hard to get any major legislation through Congress due to the presidential election. As other issues like the national economic crisis dominated the agenda in the last few weeks, there was a big push to ensure NAHASDA made the cut.

"NAIHC is grateful for the outpouring of support from a broad coalition of Tribal leaders nationally and the many Tribal housing partners that helped in the final push to get this bill passed before the end of the 110th Congress," said Paul Lumley, the group's executive director.

"We couldn't have accomplished this without their support."

Beyond extending the Indian Housing Block Grant program and the Title VI Loan Guarantee Program, the reauthorization makes significant changes so Tribes are better able to use federal housing dollars as they see fit.

A new subtitle called "Self-Determined Housing Activities for Tribal Communities" recognizes the need for flexibility.

"Tribes need adequate flexibility and autonomy to use Indian Housing Block Grant dollars effectively, efficiently and in a manner that makes the most sense for Tribal members' specific needs," said Rep. Steve Pearce (R-New Mexico), who introduced the subtitle.

Another amendment seeks to improve data collection at the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Tribes want more accurate figures to show they are using funds appropriated by Congress wisely.

The bill also seeks to resolve an issue that prompted HUD to withhold \$300 million in funds to Tribes after a Montana Tribe's housing authority won a court case in 2006.

The amendment changes the formula at issue in the case but allows Tribes to file new lawsuits within 45 days of NAHASDA's enactment into law.



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