

## Tri-State Appalachian Region Ultra-High-Speed Fiber Optic Network

- BalsamWest FiberNet was formed in 2003 by Drake Enterprises Ltd. and The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Drake and the Tribe invested **\$14 million** in BalsamWest FiberNET.
- Phase I connectivity of the Western North Carolina Education Network (WNC-EdNET) is the first rollout of the network to bring next-generation, ultra-high capacity communication capabilities (e.g. voice, video and data) to more than **70** school sites in the isolated Appalachian region, including rural K-12 schools, community colleges and a regional university.
- The underground fiber-optic ring deployed by BalsamWest spans approximately **300 miles** in the Appalachian region.
- BalsamWest's unique **business model** allows for projects such as WNC-EdNET to enhance quality of life in the mountain communities in its network footprint.
- The WNC-EdNET pipeline originates in Sylva, N.C., and currently serves **45** school sites in the counties of Clay, Cherokee, Graham, Jackson, Macon and Swain, and the Qualla Boundary of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. The schools own and control this fiber optic network.
- By forming strategic local alliances called "ASAP Partners," BalsamWest was able to save the schools more than **\$60 million** of the prevailing market cost of advanced infrastructure.
- The network delivers bandwidth of one gigabit per second in Phase I – equivalent to nearly **13,000** simultaneous phone calls.

*BalsamWest's backbone ring fiber forms the Western North Carolina Education Network (WNC-EdNET)*

