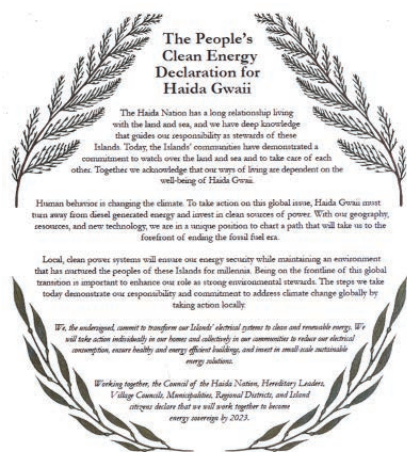


SUPPORTING A CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE IN CFN COMMUNITIES



Coastal First Nation's Climate Action Network brings together CFN communities to help advance climate action initiatives. Since 2019, eight Climate Action Coordinators have coordinated clean energy projects with the support of a peer network that meets to share experiences and resources.

The Network got its start informally in 2011 when Coastal First Nations signed a Clean Energy Action Plan (CEAP) with BC Hydro and the Province, aimed at improving energy efficiency and paving the way for a transition to clean energy. Since then, hundreds of homes have had energy upgrades in Old Massett, Skidegate and Klemtu. Work is also underway with the Gitga'at and Nuxalk Nations.

The action plan set out to reduce diesel dependency and improve community electricity systems. In 2019, CFN secured funds to develop a peer network-based capacity development program and hire community-based staff.

Climate Action Coordinators have helped a wide range of successful projects get off the ground – Community Energy Plans, clean heat and energy systems, and initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Projects also include home updates for energy efficiency and climate action discussions with communities.

The Climate Action Network also supports capacity-building through coaching, mentoring, training opportunities and monthly peer-network calls.



Darin Swanson from Old Massett presents at the Indigenous Clean Energy Conference in Ottawa, November 2019.



Members of Coastal First Nations' Climate Action Network team.

INDIGENOUS-LED RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS EMPOWER COMMUNITIES



A new 1.7-megawatt upgrade to the Kitasoo/Xai'xais hydropower facility, planned to start this summer, will increase power security for the Nation and support the creation of new homes and much-needed infrastructure, such as a wastewater treatment plant, a larger water treatment facility and a new community hall.

"It's like a breath of fresh air for us to have a project that will have so many positive impacts for our community while a pandemic is happening," says Chief Councillor Roxanne Robinson. "It's been very hard to move forward when we're at full capacity with our hydro."

"It's like a breath of fresh air for us to have a project that will have so many positive impacts for our community while a pandemic is happening."

The new upgrade will support the buildings Klemtu has dreamt of, she says, providing gathering places such as a new community hall. "Our people have always been social people and with older buildings torn down, we didn't have a place to be social anymore. Now we have hope that we can build these spaces and have celebrations and a place to gather and be united again."

A \$4.6 million contribution from BC's Renewable Energy for Remote Communities program is funding the upgrade that will reduce carbon emissions by an estimated 11,160 tonnes over the facility's operating life. The Kitasoo hydroelectric facility – 100 per cent owned by the Nation – has supplied clean power to Klemtu for 40 years, helping it transition from a dependency on dirty diesel fuel. The planned upgrade is the latest step in

the Kitasoo/Xai'xais efforts over the past four decades to build energy sovereignty and support community growth.

"The hydro expansion will provide us with the chance to add new homes and more buildings to house all the new community programs coming in every year."

"We have roughly 320 members in Klemtu and about 200 others spread across Prince Rupert and the Vancouver region," says Barry Edgar, Band Councillor and Climate Action Coordinator for the Kitasoo/Xai'xais. "The hydro expansion will provide us with the chance to add new homes and more buildings to house all the new community programs coming in every year."

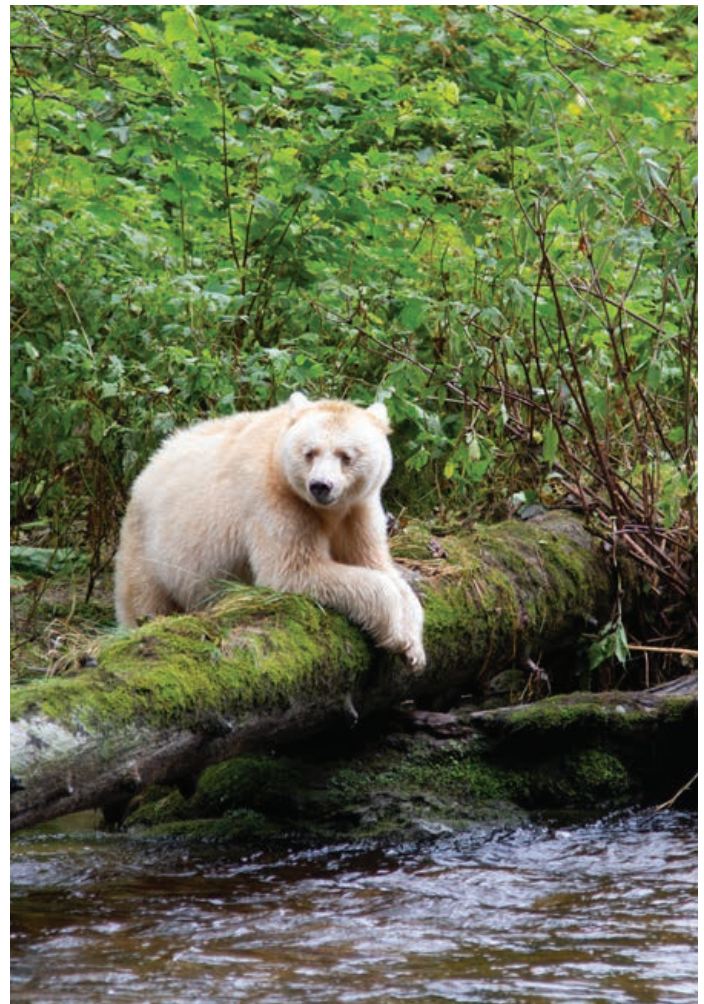


Photo Credit: Doug Neasloss

INDIGENOUS-LED RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS EMPOWER COMMUNITIES (cont'd)

Klemtu's hydroelectric facility is a gravity-fed system that funnels water from nearby Baron Lake down the mountain where it gathers speed as it falls, eventually entering and spinning a turbine to generate power. It's a low maintenance system that pays for itself in the long run and allows the Nation to keep rates manageable. "It's so beautiful living on this part of the coast but it's costly," Edgar explains. "We want to keep the cost of living at a reasonable rate so people can afford it."

Greater energy sovereignty will also make it possible for families to move back to Klemtu and help build community resiliency, Edgar says. "We've come a long way with our cultural revitalization project in the past five years. It would mean a lot to see these children and even adults reconnect with their culture."

"Living in the city, you lose track of those stories you hear from your grandmother when you go to visit her."

He believes the return of members to the community would "mean a lot for our culture surviving the next 25 years." At 27 years old, Edgar says he's had his fill of city life. "Living in the city, you lose track of those stories you hear from your grandmother when you go to visit her. You lose track of your language."

"Our elders are starting to pass away and when they go, the stories go with them," Edgar explains. He points to a large database of cultural stories and videos the Nation has built to help preserve its culture. "People moving home from the city can immerse themselves in that all over again for the first time – or the first in a long time."



Kitasoo/Xai'xais Chief Councillor Roxanne Robinson with Band Councillor Isaiah Robinson.

WORKING TOWARD A 100 PER CENT RENEWABLE FUTURE



Energy efficient technologies, alternative energy sources and community partnerships are guiding the vision toward 100 per cent renewable power on Haida Gwaii.

An energy partnership between Skidegate and Old Massett Village Council – Tii Yahda Energy (TYE) – aims to expand and build clean energy projects on Haida Gwaii. With \$10.4 million in funding from Natural Resources Canada, TYE will also give the two communities ownership in the Island's hydroelectric generating station, with partners Atlantic Power and NRCan.

An expansion of the power facility at Mitchell Inlet, expected to be completed by fall 2021, will help reduce diesel dependency and allow the partners to sell hydroelectricity back to BC Hydro, according to Devin Rachar, Climate Action Coordinator for the Skidegate Band Council.

"We're trying to tackle the diesel problem together. As part of the ownership group, the communities will have some influence over the operations and the relationship with BC Hydro," says Rachar. "It's important for both communities to have a role in energy production – where it comes from, how it's produced – to help guide the energy direction on Haida Gwaii."

"It's important for both communities to have a role in energy production – where it comes from, how it's produced – to help guide the energy direction on Haida Gwaii."



Photo Credit: Hedgehog Technologies Inc.

WORKING TOWARD A 100 PER CENT RENEWABLE FUTURE *(cont'd)*

The goal of reaching 100 per cent renewable energy by 2023 was set in the “People’s Clean Energy Declaration for Haida Gwaii” signed by the Haida Nation, Village Councils, Hereditary Leaders and municipal and regional governments in 2018.

Kevin Brown, Climate Action Coordinator for Old Massett, says climate change impacts, spurred on by carbon emissions, are evident on local food systems and weather. “There’s lots of erosion – the sea is definitely rising. We haven’t been able to get food fish from our primary rivers, or only very limited returns, so that’s disconcerting for sure,” he says. “The weather patterns and winds are changing, making it difficult for small boats to fish in Old Massett. It’s also getting dryer.”

TII Yahda Energy has also secured funding and selected a site for construction of a two-megawatt solar farm on the north end of Haida Gwaii – enough to supply the equivalent of roughly 200 households.

“The solar farm is getting the northern grid off diesel, something we’ve been trying to do since 2006,” explains Brown. “It’s really cool to be a part of something that addresses the problem. Usually you dream all these dreams and there’s no money.”



“It’s really cool to be a part of something that addresses the problem. Usually you dream all these dreams and there’s no money.”

Along with the dam expansion and solar farm, he says, planning for wind and biomass projects will round out the energy requirements of the Island. “These four sources will make up for what diesel currently does.”

“Most everyone on Haida Gwaii is of the same mind regarding climate change and fossil fuel use and greenhouse gasses,” says Rachar. “We’re all working toward a clean energy future.” When it comes to usage and shipping to a remote island, he says, “Diesel is expensive, it’s dangerous, it’s dirty.”

“Diesel is expensive, it’s dangerous, it’s dirty.”

An Island-wide energy plan, currently in development, will provide the roadmap to 100 per cent renewable energy use on Haida Gwaii. According to the Climate Action Coordinators for both communities, the Skidegate Band Council has already completed a project to install heat pumps in almost every home, and Old Massett is working toward the installation of 200 new heat pumps in the community.

Rachar says a study, underway in Skidegate, will also help determine future climate effects and find ways to protect shorelines from erosion and other sea rise impacts.



Photo Credit: Hedgehog Technologies Inc.

TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES DURING COVID-19



The COVID-19 virus has triggered a global economic downturn and regional hardships, but Haítzaqv Climate Action Coordinator Leona Humchitt believes the world pandemic may also provide an opportunity to transform the future of her community.

“It was a global call for everyone to be still and even though people were locked down, it really amplified household bonding with our families and afforded opportunities for reconnection to one another and our environment,” says Humchitt. “It was, in part, a spiritual cleansing.”

“Now more than ever would be the perfect time for our people to pivot and look at creating green economies,” Humchitt believes. “And who better than First Nations people to do that – given that the cornerstone of our culture is based on sustainability.”

“Now more than ever would be the perfect time for our people to pivot and look at creating green economies.”

In 2019, the Haítzaqv were one of 15 out of 60 remote Indigenous nations across Canada to apply and be accepted for the Indigenous Off-diesel Initiative (IODI). The IODI program – developed by Indigenous Clean Energy with Natural Resources Canada funding – provides monies and support for communities to reduce their diesel reliance. In Phase 1 of the program, Humchitt participated in the 20/20 Catalyst Program, designed to help build capacity in the clean energy sector. She was appointed Heiltsuk Energy Champion and led a community-driven energy plan, and clean energy project.

To encourage energy literacy, Humchitt also helped organize a three-day Heiltsuk Clean Energy Fair – unfortunately canceled due to COVID-19 – with community engagement activities, stakeholder meetings, school workshops and feasts.

“Creating energy literacy was our goal,” Humchitt explains. “The objectives we set included plans to take the Creator’s gifts – sun for solar, wind for wind farms, land and trees for biofuel and water for hydro – to generate a green and sustainable economy.”

Humchitt says Coastal First Nations complements IODI monies and capacity-building by funding her role in the CFN Climate Action Network. It also helped the Heiltsuk to commission a baseline energy study to inform community members how much money was being spent to heat homes and buildings, and power boats and vehicles – and the amount of greenhouse gas emissions that produced.

“It’s really important for us to know where we are, in order to make plans for where we want to go,” Humchitt points out. “That means ensuring community members share the same



TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES DURING COVID-19 (cont'd)

mindset about what clean and regenerative energy is, and how it aligns with the traditional values of our ancestors.”

“That means ensuring community members share the same mindset about what clean and regenerative energy is, and how it aligns with the traditional values of our ancestors.”

Clean energy opportunities in Heiltsuk territory include a potential hydro upgrade to the power facility that feeds electricity from Ocean Falls via submarine cables. A local stakeholder group has already retrofitted 40 homes with mini-split heat pumps and are set to install another 39 heat pumps with enhanced energy efficient technology.

Humchitt is also leading a feasibility study of “co-generative” power that would utilize biofuel of leftover sawdust or woodchips from a proposed new sawmill. The wood chip boiler would provide cleaner and cheaper energy to power a new mill and heat nearby homes or other buildings – and support local jobs.

Energy efficiency also means an expanded sawmill could supply local lumber needed for housing improvements and capital projects over the next five years – a step toward building a stronger community. Humchitt refers to the words of Heiltsuk Hereditary Chief Frank Brown, “Our homes are like lenses to the outside world. If we are looking through broken homes, it limits our hope for a healthy future.”

With a second wave of COVID-19 predicted, Humchitt says it’s also important to seize opportunities to implement sustainable economic diversification. “Our right to harvest and sell herring roe on kelp was suspended due to COVID-19. It’s our Nation’s main economic driver, and the losses we’ve felt this year already translate to \$7-9 million in our local economy.”

“The most important steps we need to undertake is to heal from intergenerational trauma and to build capacity with our people.”

“The most important steps we need to undertake is to heal from intergenerational trauma and to build capacity with our people,” she says. “We need to pivot to our forestry, and sustainable fishing/aquaculture and tourism sectors, to create jobs and build capacity.”

“Building local capacity will support a giant step toward Heiltsuk sovereignty and our incremental approach to self-governance for our children’s tomorrows.”



Leona Humchitt, Haí zaqv (Heiltsuk) Climate Action Coordinator

CLIMATE IMPACTS ARE FAR-REACHING ON THE CENTRAL COAST



Barry Edgar, Kitasoo/Xai'xais
Climate Action Coordinator

Two summers ago, the community of Klemtu on the Central Coast experienced 90 days straight of blistering 35-degree days. The Kitasoo/Xai'xais Nation ordered in outside water supplies and was on the verge of announcing a state of emergency after the community's local water source began receding.

"For the first time in my life a drought notice was issued for Klemtu," says Barry Edgar, Climate Action Coordinator and Kitasoo/Xai'xais Band Councillor. "Thankfully the rain finally showed up and replenished our lake enough to repair the water intake line – and water started flowing again."

"Climate change affects all levels of a community. Klemtu is literally this tiny dot between the sea and the rainforest."

The intensive drought was a case of extreme climate change that local infrastructure was not built to handle. "Climate change affects all levels of a community. Klemtu is literally this tiny dot between the sea and the rainforest so we're prone to more forest fires if our forests dry up."

When Edgar started as Climate Action Coordinator with the Coastal First Nations Climate Action Network, the Kitasoo/Xai'xais Nation tasked him with developing a weather manager. After working through years of daily, monthly and yearly weather tracking – dating back to 1970 – he discovered alarming results.

Between 1980 and the mid-2000s, Klemtu temperatures would be cold until June, warming from July through September with a peak

of 25 degrees Celsius. "From 2010 to today" Edgar says, "I found temperatures started soaring into the 30's, as high as 35 degrees."

Impacts from warming temperatures have been growing since the drought, he says. Last year, smoke from surrounding fires in Alberta and interior BC blanketed the community. "The smoke actually cooled our temperatures because it blocked out the sun," he notes. "The health centre had to issue a health warning for respiratory problems."

"We have people who were doing things in our communities before it was even known as climate action."

"With climate change, one thing leads to another," Edgar points out. "It will affect our fish, our forest, our culture. Summer is the time for people to gather cedar for weaving, but the trees are dying long before they get a chance to harvest the cedar off them."

Edgar appreciates that the Climate Action Network brings together people with diverse backgrounds, ages, stories and experience. "We have people who were doing things in our communities before it was even known as climate action," he says. "And now young people, like me, who are just coming into it and learning from those who have gone before."

It's a collaboration he believes has benefited from years of working together on so many fronts as Coastal First Nations. "Whether it's fisheries, the crab file, or opposing Enbridge back in the day – we've collaborated so much in the last 20 years, it's a walk in the park for us now."

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