

Remote Community Energy Strategy (RCES) Engagement Report

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Introduction

An abstract graphic in the top right corner consisting of several overlapping, curved, light green lines that form a complex, organic shape, resembling a stylized leaf or a modern logo element.

Project origins

CleanBC Remote Community Energy Strategy (RCES)

RCES aims to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions from diesel electricity generation by 80% by 2030.

- Capacity Building
- Efficient and Low Carbon Buildings
- Clean Energy Generation



RCES Engagement beginnings

- In February 2020 Pinna was hired by Fraser Basin Council in collaboration with the Ministry for Energy, Petroleum and Mines to help plan and facilitate an in-person gathering.
- The in-person gathering was canceled due to COVID-19 health restrictions in March 2020.
- Engagement then shifted to focus online and to include:
 - Interviews with each community over the phone
 - An online report back webinar
- Goals of the engagement were to:
 - Strengthen relationships between the Province and remote communities
 - Facilitate knowledge sharing between remote communities
 - Collect information on what communities are currently working on, where they might be struggling, and what they viewed as appropriate support from the Province



Summer Engagement: Process



The following sections outlines the process for RCES summer engagement sessions

RCES 2020 Summer Engagement – Interview Process

- Individual emails sent by Provincial representative to invite each remote community to participate in one-on-one conversations.
- 7 one-on-one conversations were held between June and August of 2020.
 - 1-2 hours in length
 - 12 representatives from remote communities
 - Notes and follow-up



RCES 2020 Summer Engagement – Guiding Questions

The questions that guided the one-on-one conversations were as follows:

1. What projects are you working on?
2. What are your clean energy goals?
3. Where are you experiencing challenges?
4. What would it look like for your priorities to be reflected in Provincial actions?



Summer engagement: What we heard



The following describes the themes that were heard from summer engagement sessions

RCES 2020 Summer Engagement – What we Heard

What projects are you working on?

- Hiring and training dedicated staff
- Home energy audits, upgrades, and heat pumps
- Variety of clean energy projects at different stages of development
- New business ventures and initiatives beyond renewable electricity but related to energy



RCES 2020 Summer Engagement – What we Heard

What are your clean energy goals?

- Displace diesel fuel with renewable energy, partially or entirely
- Increase reliability and resilience of power supply
- Offer culturally-appropriate, high-performance housing
- Strengthen economies based on local talent and resources
- Re-establish presence on territory
- Generate / Offer affordable electricity



RCES 2020 Summer Engagement – What we Heard

Where are you experiencing challenges?

1. Capacity
2. Funding
3. Relationships



RCES 2020 Summer Engagement – What we Heard

Capacity Challenges

Staff time and resources are scarce, as are skilled workers and contractors. Threat of burnout from working on clean energy for years.

- Need additional staff members and/or staff time
- Need training for staff and community members (e.g. project management, business development)
- Need to hear success stories and learn from others



RCES 2020 Summer Engagement – What we Heard

Funding Challenges

Overall difficulty in obtaining funding and bringing together different sources of funding. Challenges exist from A to Z.



RCES 2020 Summer Engagement – What we Heard

Funding Challenges

- Identifying the right funding source among many programs
- Program eligibility does not align with community needs
- Onerous applications with tight deadlines
- Long, impractical application processing time
- Lack of input and transparency in decision-making
- Stacking restrictions
- Reporting burden starts before money flows



RCES 2020 Summer Engagement – What we Heard

Relationship Challenges

Historic and present-day relationship with the Province and BC Hydro is marked by power imbalance.

- Lack of communication from all levels of government
- Unilateral decision-making
- Lack of understanding around each community context



RCES 2020 Summer Engagement – What we Heard

What would it look like for your priorities to be reflected in Provincial actions moving forward?

- **Capacity** : Increase support, including training for staff and community
- **Funding** : Make funding more cohesive, better aligned with needs, and easier to access
- **Relationships** : Increase collaboration and joint decision-making



RCES 2020 Summer Engagement – What we Heard Summary

What We Heard		Potential Provincial Role
Capacity	Increase support, including training for staff and community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide funding for staff positions in communities• Provide funding for training and networking
Funding	Make funding more cohesive, better aligned with needs, and easier to access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaborate with other funders• Streamline project funding• Create more awareness around existing funding opportunities
Relationships	Increase collaboration and joint decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Involve remote communities in program design and funding decisions



RCES Check-in Webinar: Process

The following section outlines the details of the RCES Check-in Webinar

Purpose of Webinar Gathering

The Remote Communities Energy Strategy (RCES) Winter gathering was created to bring together remote communities as part of the Province's ongoing engagement work on the Strategy.

Intentions:

- Promote connections between remote communities
- Share what the Province heard during one-on-one conversations over the Summer
- Invite additional feedback on priorities, and to share next steps around engagement.



RCES Check-in Webinar – Process

- Held on December 3, 2020 from 10AM – 12:30PM
- Hosted online, over Zoom
- 14 participants representing Indigenous communities, and 5 participants representing civic communities



RCES Check-In Webinar – Agenda

- Introduction
- Summary of Summer Engagement Themes Presentation by Province, Q&A
- Community-led Discussion
 - Indigenous space
 - Civic government space
 - Hallway
- Next Steps and Closing
- (Optional) Debrief and Connect



RCES Check-in Webinar – Activities

- Introductions
 - The Webinar began with a sharing circle of gratitude
- Summary of summer engagement themes presentation from the Province
 - Explained the summer engagement process
 - Presented ‘What we heard so far’ in terms of what communities are focusing on, challenges they are facing, and actions they’d like to see moving forward
 - Space for questions and comments were provided throughout



RCES Check-in Webinar – Activities

- Community led-discussions - each participant was assigned one of the following break-out rooms:
 - **Indigenous space:** A space for remote indigenous communities to discuss the province's presentation and engagement process moving forward.
 - **Civic government space:** A space for civic government to do the same.
 - **Hallway:** A space for any participant to enter and have discussion with government representatives.
- Each break-out room answered the following questions:
 - In your community's experience, did 'what we heard' from the summer engagement sessions resonate with you?
 - What next steps would you like to see for engagement?
 - Do you have any topic ideas for future focused conversations?
- Participants returned to the plenary to report back on discussions as appropriate



RCES Check-in Webinar – Activities

- Next Steps and Closing
 - Province presented the next steps for RCES engagement process, including:
 - Engagement in 2021: Capacity Building Support and Project Lifecycle Funding
 - BCICEI January 2021 Intake
 - Remote community working group call for members
 - Integrated CleanBC engagement
- (Optional) Debrief and Connect
 - Participants were given the option to stay on the call to talk and connect
 - Two participants stayed on to share reflections with government representatives
- Following the Webinar, notes and PowerPoint presentation were shared with each participant



RCES Check-in Webinar: What we heard



The next section outlines notes from what we heard during the webinar

RCES Check-in Webinar: What we heard

Plenary Notes on Capacity Development

- Build technical capacity within local communities
 - Such as training local technicians to work with minor repairs with heat pumps
- Create links from ministry to other provincial departments
- Think of capacity in a regional sense, not just local sense
 - Limited capacity from surrounding communities in rural locations
 - E.g. limited capacity of barge companies to bring materials



RCES Check-in Webinar: What we heard

Plenary Notes on Funding

- Would like to see more alignment in providing sufficient funding programs to achieve GHG reduction targets.
- Diesel dependent communities still seem to be an afterthought.
- LNG works against GHG reduction targets.
- More pressure on government to prioritize diesel dependent communities.
 - Costs government and BC Hydro a lot of money to subsidize our power (70% subsidized).
 - Win for everyone when we get off of diesel production.



RCES Check-in Webinar: What we heard

Plenary Notes on Relationships

- BC Hydro doesn't come to the table to buy clean power from First Nations
- Dozen clean energy projects ready - no structure in place for BC Hydro to go to the table and buy electricity
- Policy work needed between province and BC Hydro and coming to First Nations and put agreements in place



RCES Check-in Webinar: What we heard

Civic Space Notes

- Generally speaking messages from What we Heard resonated with civic communities
 - Little bit different in term of capacity development
- Request for evening meetings - hard to find time during the day
- Regional working tables
 - Work together on broadband fibre and energy between civic and First Nations
 - Bring everyone together to problem solve
 - Regional approach
- Asking Province to push BC Hydro more
 - Through CleanBC business case
 - Collaborating and investing with communities



RCES Check-in Webinar: What we heard

Indigenous Space Notes - Engagement

- Engagement should not just be a checklist
 - Greater effort to reach out to communities - go beyond email
 - Try phone calls- personal outreach to communities
 - Higher benchmark for participation
- Ensure engagement is meaningful
 - Need frank conversations about what is needed
 - Need to do more to engage to bring people along
 - Webinar overall should be for Indigenous only



RCES Check-in Webinar: What we heard

Indigenous Space notes - Funding

- Create funding around Indigenous community needs
 - Currently have small pots of funding that do not work together
 - Maintain cash flow with no interruptions to release funds
- Programs must work together
 - Province should know each other and collaborate closely cross ministry
 - Need cohesive communication from government
- Have cohesive funding opportunities
- Universal fund—one pot
- Rules and requirements are unclear
 - Not created to be user friendly for Indigenous communities - feel at a disadvantage



RCES Check-in Webinar: What we heard

Indigenous Space Notes - Website

- Request for a website
- One place to access information and resources (not 20 or 30 websites)
- Indigenous-focused

- Service desk model that is holistic
 - Able to access different community stories
 - Learn from what others are doing and connect to people/communities
 - Forum space (to connect/engage in dialogue)
 - Include research (informative, relevant, resources)
 - Include key word searches- a place to investigate different topics
 - Place to send new staff – with high staff turnover this can support capacity development



Recommendations and Next Steps



The following section provides recommendations and next steps for RCES engagement process and content moving forward

Acknowledging Strengths

Prior to addressing recommendations, we'd like to lift up the strength of this engagement process.

- We received helpful feedback from the sessions and through the one-on-one calls.
- Relationships are being built and fostered.
- We did our best as a team to make the process accessible and meaningful for remote communities. There is good foundation of strength to grow, expand and build momentum.
- We were able to be flexible with COVID-19 constraints, and connect with communities in multiple formats, including phone conversations, and webinars.
- Communities noted they appreciate gathering and conversing. There was enthusiasm to continue and to bring others along.



Recommendations – Engagement Process

Outreach and Communications

- Use visual graphics / create a simple poster for invitations to peak interest in future sessions.
- Invite input from participants on interests during registration process.
 - E.g.: Is there a topic / issue you think is important to address during the session?
- Send invites to two contacts from the community, including an admin person when possible, and confirm who is the appropriate point person for this conversation.
- Consider follow-up calls to confirm invitation (as recommended by Indigenous participants).



Recommendations – Engagement Process

Participants noted interest in continued discussions of strategies and concrete actions

- Explore details of potential provincial actions with participants (as recommended by Indigenous participants).
- Build on this phase of engagement by developing Strategy content with participants in the working group.
- Link this engagement with ongoing Clean BC engagement where possible to reduce fatigue.

Build on success of Indigenous space practices

- Determine if an Indigenous space is needed (or a variation) for future meetings.
- Create more room for storytelling and consider a storytelling approach for the Indigenous space.
- Create a formal summary document at an appropriate point in process. A document can be useful to share/publish on a website. One option could be to create a 1 or 2 page graphic summary. This can provide something for participants to reference and feel their input is reflected.



Recommendation – Engagement Process

Ensure clarity and transparency

- Develop a process with the the working group, and create an infographic depicting the process to share at future events.
- Be intentional and clear with participants during webinars when discussions relate to strategic conversations vs information sharing.
- Link this work with other ongoing climate work happening at the Province, using visuals where possible.
- Share process, working group details, and notes from sessions on a website, as recommended by participants.



Recommendations – General

General recommendations

- Invest in Cultural agility training for all EMPR staff.
- Conduct multiple types of conversations: action oriented, slower thoughtful, traditional, etc. (participant recommendation).
- Create more time for discussion and conversation, with the province acting as listeners.
- Explicitly invite Youth to join the conversation as full participants (with honoraria).
- Create a meaningful website to share information about this work with participants (participants recommendation).



Recommended Next Steps – Engagement Content

Ideas for Future Webinar Topics

Based on comments heard throughout the engagement process, the following topics are suggested as potential starting points for future webinars during the next phase of engagement:

- **Funding:** Upcoming opportunities; Facilitated discussions to support and hear feedback about funding application processes.
- **Heat pumps:** Providing details of funding opportunities, incentives and how to successfully install within communities.
- **Bio energy:** An information session on opportunities.
- **Non Integrated Areas:** Discussions on a collaborative approach between Nations, the Province and BC Hydro.
- **Capacity- training:** A discussion on what is desired and appropriate in communities.
- **Community capacity building:** Sharing best practices.
- **Data sharing and collaboration**



Recommended Next Steps – What we Heard Summary

Theme	What we heard: Summer Engagement	What we heard: Webinar	Recommended Next Steps
Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide funding for staff positions in communities • Provide funding for training and networking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an accessible website with all resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host relevant training sessions • Providing long-term funding for staff in community
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with other funders • Streamline project funding • Create more awareness around existing funding opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create funding around Indigenous community needs • Rules and requirements are unclear • Programs must work together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the funding application process • Consider creating a website with accessible resources
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve remote communities in program design and funding decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure engagement is meaningful and beyond a check-list 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a working group of remote community representatives • Integrate engagement with CleanBC



Closing

In closing, we would like to honour Indigenous participants for all that they contributed in this process. It can be challenging for Indigenous communities to find time and energy to contribute to planning processes.

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider this report.

