

# *Aboriginal Group Communication Plan 2023-2024 Annual Report*

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*Site C Clean Energy Project  
Reporting period: April 2023 to March 2024*

*March 28, 2024*

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## Table of Acronyms

<b>BRFN</b>	Blueberry River First Nations
<b>DFN</b>	Duncan's First Nation
<b>DRFN</b>	Doig River First Nation
<b>DTFN</b>	Dene Tha' First Nation
<b>FNFN</b>	Fort Nelson First Nation
<b>HLFN</b>	Horse Lake First Nation
<b>HRFN</b>	Halfway River First Nation
<b>KLMSS</b>	Kelly Lake Métis Settlement Society
<b>MLIB</b>	McLeod Lake Indian Band
<b>MNBC</b>	Métis Nation British Columbia
<b>PRFN</b>	Prophet River First Nation
<b>SFN</b>	Saulteau First Nations
<b>WMFN</b>	West Moberly First Nations

# 1 Background

## 1.1 The Site C Clean Energy Project

The Site C Clean Energy Project (the Project) will be the third dam and generating station on the Peace River in northeast B.C. The Project will provide 1,100 megawatts of capacity and about 5,100 gigawatt hours of energy each year to the province's integrated electricity system. The Project will be a source of clean, reliable electricity for BC Hydro's customers for more than 100 years.

The key components of the Project are:

- an earthfill dam, approximately 1,050 metres long and 60 metres high above the riverbed;
- an 83 kilometre long reservoir that will be, on average, two to three times the width of the current river;
- a generating station with six 183 MW generating units;
- two new 500 kilovolt AC transmission lines that will connect the Project facilities to the Peace Canyon Substation, along an existing right-of-way;
- realignment of six segments of Highway 29 over a total distance of approximately 30 kilometers; and,
- construction of a berm at Hudson's Hope

The Project also includes the construction of temporary access roads, a temporary bridge across the Peace River, and worker accommodation at the dam site.

## 1.2 Construction Activities during the Reporting Period

Considerable progress was made and significant milestones were reached both on and off the dam site in 2023. BC Hydro remains on track to achieve the approved in-service date of December 2025.

With the completion of tunnel conversion in September 2023, there was the possibility that reservoir filling could start in late fall 2023, one year earlier than the approved schedule. However, as of early November 2023, some critical work areas still needed to be completed before reservoir filling could begin, including the approach channel, spillway gates and powerhouse intake gates. With winter weather and colder conditions setting in, the window to safely begin reservoir filling was coming to close. As a result, in mid-November 2023, BC Hydro decided to stay on track with

the approved Project schedule. Work on the Site C Project continues to advance on schedule with reservoir filling planned to begin in fall 2024.

Key activities during 2023 included:

- Completion of the earthfill dam to the elevation required to enable reservoir filling. The earthfill dam is approximately 60 metres tall, stretches more than one kilometre across the Peace River and is about 500 metres wide at its base. As of December 31, 2023, the capping of the earthfill and the construction of the dam crest road and the dam face road were both completed. The conveyor system that transported glacial till material used in the construction of the core of the earthfill dam ceased operations and its decommissioning is in progress.
- Completion of the Highway 29 Realignment, improving safety and travel times for those travelling along the corridor. This work involved the realignment of six highway segments and five new bridges. The new alignment reduces curves along the road and improve sightlines. Additionally, wider vehicle travel lanes and paved shoulders improve safety for cyclists, pedestrians, and all roadway users.
- Completion of tailrace filling in October 2023. This process used pumps to move water from the Peace River into the tailrace area, to equalize the water level on both sides of the cofferdam in advance of breaching the right bank cofferdam. Once the filling was completed, the cofferdam was removed and completed in December 2023.
- Substantial completion of concrete placement. Concrete placements for the generating station and spillways are essentially complete. A small amount of concrete will be placed behind generating units 5 and 6 in spring 2024 for access to the flexible couplings (penstock sections that allow the penstocks to expand and contract). All of the concrete placements for the spillways were complete as of December 31, 2023.
- Redesign of the penstock flexible couplings fully meet BC Hydro's specifications. The installation of the redesigned flexible couplings began in February 2024. The coatings for the penstocks are forecast to be complete in summer 2024 to optimize the interfaces with the installation of the upper and lower flexible couplings.
- Substantial completion of right bank foundation enhancements, addressing the geotechnical issues that were identified in the bedrock foundation on the Project's right bank. As of December 31, 2023, enhancements to the approach channel were substantially complete, including the excavation and cleaning of the bedrock surface, the installation of waterproofing lining materials, grouting, and the placement of reinforced concrete and granular fill. Earlier in 2023, 96 concrete-filled, vertical steel piles were installed beneath the right bank structures to further extend the foundation deeper into the bedrock. Ongoing reviews by the Technical Advisory Board and the two independent, world-leading dam experts continue to confirm that the design of the foundation enhancements meets the highest safety standards and international best practices.

In addition, “balance of plant” construction activities continued within the powerhouse, including mechanical and electrical work, architecture installation/construction, and installation of heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, and installation of fire protection systems. Construction also continued on the permanent upstream fishway, which is on schedule for completion in spring 2024.

## **2 Objective and Scope**

### **2.1 Objective of the Aboriginal Group Communication Plan**

The objective of the June 5, 2015 Aboriginal Group Communication Plan (AGCP) is to fulfill the requirements of Environmental Assessment Certificate (EAC) conditions 27 and 72, and federal Decision Statement (FDS) condition 14.2.

The AGCP establishes a communications program for informing Indigenous Nations and harvesters about construction activities related to the Project that may affect their harvesting opportunities for plants, fish and game, as well as access to those opportunities.

### **2.2 Scope and Reporting Period**

This annual report describes BC Hydro’s communications and engagement activities with Indigenous Nations through the implementation of the AGCP from April 2023 through March 2024. In some cases, communication and engagement with Indigenous Nations on measures described in the AGCP that took place prior to this reporting period are also summarized here for context. This is the ninth annual report of the AGCP.

## **3 Implementation of the Plan – April 2023 through March 2024**

This report summarizes the implementation of the communication and consultation initiatives specific to Indigenous Nations that are described in [section 5.0 of the AGCP](#).

The bulleted list of communication activities shown at the beginning of section 5.0 is not specific to Indigenous Nations, but these materials are publicly available and it is expected that they are utilized by members of Indigenous communities. These activities are described in [section 3.2 of the Construction Communication Plan](#) (CCP) with more information available in the annual reports for the CCP, found on the Project website in the Site C Project Reports section of the [Environmental Management document library](#).

Communications specific to Indigenous Nations that were undertaken in the reporting period are described below.

Unless otherwise indicated, the communications summarized below were sent out to all Indigenous Nations named in the EAC and FDS: Saúlteau First Nations, West Moberly First Nations, Prophet River First Nation, Blueberry River First Nations, Doig River First Nation, McLeod Lake Indian Band, Halfway River First Nation, Fort Nelson First Nation, Horse Lake First Nation, Métis Nation British Columbia, Kelly Lake Métis Settlement Society, Duncan's First Nation, and Dene Tha' First Nation. For purposes of brevity, acronyms for the above Indigenous Nations are used in this annual report. A list of acronyms is provided at the beginning of this report.

### 3.1 Notices of Construction Activities

These quarterly notices to Indigenous Nations address EAC condition 27 and FDS condition 14.2 requiring BC Hydro to provide information to Indigenous harvesters about construction activities that may affect their harvesting opportunities; they serve as the "Indigenous Harvesters Information Sheet" described in the AGCP.

The notices are in the form of a letter describing construction-related activities that are expected to commence, continue or be completed in the three-month period covered by the letter and are accompanied by a map (or maps) showing the location of the activities described in the letter. The notices also include information about other ways to find out more information about Project construction.

The current schedule seeks to send out the construction notices roughly 15-30 days prior to the start of the notification period. As required, updates to the notices are sent out to provide more information on construction works that are of particular interest to Indigenous communities or within closer proximity to Indigenous communities.

- On **March 01, 2023**, BC Hydro sent out the Notice of Construction Activities for the period of April through June, 2023.
- On **June 01, 2023**, BC Hydro sent out the Notice of Construction Activities for the period of July through September, 2023.
- On **August 31, 2023**, BC Hydro sent out the Notice of Construction Activities for the period of October through December, 2023.
- On **December 01, 2023**, BC Hydro sent out the Notice of Construction Activities for the period of January through March, 2024.

The Notices of Construction Activities are sent to Indigenous Nations by email and are also posted for Indigenous Nations on the *Site C Information for Indigenous Nations* SharePoint site (see section 3.6). A public version of the notice with confidential information removed (such as SharePoint log-in information or other sensitive material) is posted along with construction bulletins on the Project's public website at the following address: <https://www.sitecproject.com/construction-activities/construction-bulletins>



## 3.2 Information Updates to Indigenous Nations

Information updates are distributed by email to provide regular updates on construction activities and field work. Beginning in January 2024, we shifted from a bi-weekly to a monthly format for Information Updates. With the Site C project more than 80 per cent complete and the process to start reservoir filling scheduled to begin in August 2024, we changed the format and frequency of communications with Indigenous communities to ensure that important project information continues to be shared with Indigenous Nations while reducing the volume of Site C project emails.

The Site C Indigenous Relations Monthly Information Update will be distributed at the start of each month until the completion of the project in early 2025.

The updates provide information on the following topics as they become available:

- news updates;
- regulatory and permitting updates;
- environmental management information;
- safety advisories;
- reminders of upcoming consultation and engagement activities;
- employment and training information; and
- procurement updates.

The emails also provide notice of new documents uploaded to the *Site C Information for Indigenous Nations* SharePoint site such as Environmental Protection Plans and Environmental Completion Reports, monthly monitoring summary reports, interim and annual reports from the Project's Heritage Program, and other Project mitigation and monitoring programs.

The emails are sent directly to members of each Indigenous Nation's distribution list which often includes Chief and Council as well as other contacts requested by the Indigenous Nation. A copy of each monthly information update is saved on the *Site C Information for Indigenous Nations* SharePoint site.

A summary of the notifications or information shared in these updates is listed below. Recurring updates such as new Construction Bulletins, reminders of upcoming meetings, Indigenous employment statistics, new documents added to SharePoint, etc. are not described below to avoid repetition.

Summary of Notifications and Information Shared	
April 12, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informed the readers that a milestone was achieved with the opening of the new Halfway River bridge. All realigned segments of Highway 29 between Fort St. John and Hudson's Hope were open to traffic.</li> <li>• Latest jobs report showed there were 4,856 total workers on the Site C project in February, including 3,330 from B.C.</li> <li>• Provided the latest Construction Bulletin; April 8-21</li> </ul>
April 24, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Site C project's Generate Opportunities (GO) Fund had provided \$70,000 to eight Peace Region non-profits.</li> <li>• Provided notice that Halfway River boat launch remained open for most of the 2023 boating season. All area boat launches would be closed during reservoir filling.</li> <li>• Residents of Peace River were invited to information sessions on filling the Site C reservoir. Meetings were held on May 2, 3, and 9.</li> <li>• Provided the latest Construction Bulletin; April 22- May 5</li> <li>• Informed people that the Cultural Centre Working Group Meeting #10 took place on May 4, 2023.</li> <li>• BC Hydro hosted the following public information sessions on Site C reservoir filling. Fort St. John (drop-in) tuesday, May 2.. Hudson's Hope (drop-in) wednesday, May 3 Hudson's Hope. Virtual presentation tuesday, May 9.</li> </ul>
May 8, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latest jobs report showed 5,233 total workers on the Site C project in March, including 3,597 from B.C</li> <li>• Reminder that the boat launch at Lynx Creek was closed. The Halfway River boat launch would be open this boating season until September.</li> <li>• Announced that the third information session on filling the Site C reservoir will be held on May 9.</li> <li>• Provided the latest Construction Bulletin; May 6-19</li> <li>• Site C Annual Reports were made available on Project website: Aboriginal Group Communications Plan 2022-2023 Annual Report Aboriginal Plant Use Mitigation Plan 2022-2023 Annual Report Aboriginal Training and Inclusion Plan 2022-2023 Annual Report Cultural Resources Mitigation Plan 2022-2023 Annual Report</li> <li>• Shared a video which looked at a new gathering space in the District of Hudson's Hope, built by Métis Nation BC with funding from BC Hydro's Indigenous Traditional Use Fund.</li> </ul>

## Summary of Notifications and Information Shared

<p>May 24, 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Twelve projects in the Peace region received \$3873,000 through the BC Hydro Peace Agricultural Compensation Fund to support agricultural production and related economic activity.</li> <li>• Treaty 8 First Nations, the B.C. Conservation Officer Service and BC Hydro have partnered to create a new conservation officer position to protect wildlife and the land around the Site C dam.</li> <li>• Provided the latest Construction Bulletin; May 20-June 2</li> <li>• Shared a video of progress we made on various parts of the Site C projects during the winter months.</li> </ul>
<p>June 6, 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latest jobs report showed a record 5,705 people working on the Site C project in April 2023, including more than 460 Indigenous people.</li> <li>• Informed readers that starting June through the end of October, we would be building the new D.A. Thomas recreation site in Hudson's Hope and upgrading the D.A. Thomas Road.</li> <li>• Provided the latest Construction Bulletin; June 3-16</li> <li>• Announced that BC Hydro shared a draft Area A Reclamation Plan on May 31, 2023 located within the damsite area. Currently, BC Hydro holds a Land Act Licence of Occupation (LOO) for "Area A".</li> <li>• Update on how Condition 50 of <i>Canadian Navigable Waters Act Approval 2008-500822-001</i> are being met, and will continue to be met, through ongoing engagement with Indigenous Nations.</li> <li>• Shared Information on total volumes of water withdrawn from the Peace River and tributaries during construction of the Project for the period of January 1 to December 31, 2022</li> <li>• Federal permit applications were recently sent out to Indigenous Nations for information; Decommissioning HWY 29 Bridge at Lynx Creek - <i>Canadian Navigable Waters Act</i>.</li> </ul>
<p>June 20, 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Announced that before filling the Site C reservoir begins, one of the Peace River diversion tunnels will be converted and four large rings installed.</li> <li>• Informed readers that with summer driving season underway, motorists on Highway 29 could expect occasional delays and some single lane alternating traffic.</li> <li>• Shared the WLRS Referral: <i>Wildlife Act</i> – Fish Collection for Permanent Fish Passage Facility (Sent June 13, 2023; Closes June 28, 2023).</li> <li>• Provided the latest Construction Bulletin; June 17-30</li> </ul>

Summary of Notifications and Information Shared	
July 3, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reminder that the next Environmental Forum field tour would take place on July 18, 2023 at 9am in Fort St John.</li> <li>• Provided the latest Construction Bulletin; July 1-14</li> <li>• Four Peace Region non-profits received a total of \$37,500. In total, the GO Fund has distributed \$766,151 to 87 projects.</li> <li>• Provided an update to readers that the process of converting one of the diversion tunnels to prepare for reservoir filling would begin as early as this fall.</li> <li>• Notified readers that four large rings will be installed inside Tunnel 2 to slowly restrict the flow of water.</li> </ul>
July 17, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reminder that Site C Environmental Forum in-person meeting/Field tour to be held on July 18, 2023</li> <li>• Informed readers that the realignment of Highway 29 between Fort St. John and Hudson's Hope had been completed.</li> <li>• Informed readers that we hit two Site C project records in May: the highest number of total workers of 5,985, and 496 Indigenous employees - the largest representation to date.</li> <li>• A record-breaking 3,800 fish count was achieved at our temporary fishway.</li> <li>• Provided the latest Construction Bulletin; July 15-28</li> </ul>
July 31, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided the latest construction bulleting; July 29- August 11</li> <li>• Provided update that the Site C earthfill dam has reached the elevation required for reservoir filling and is now complete.</li> <li>• Informed readers that Site C reservoir filling was set to begin as early as the fall</li> <li>• Announcement that boaters could use the Halfway River boat launch until September 2023 when it will be permanently closed prior to Site C reservoir filling.</li> <li>• Announced that three new boat launches between Fort St John and Hudson's Hope will be built.</li> </ul>
August 17, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Announced that a new shallow water fish habitat is being built in the future Site C reservoir at Wilder Creek.</li> <li>• Provided the latest construction bulletin; August 12-25</li> <li>• Informed that crews have started road upgrades and vegetation removal required to access the site. Workers will access the worksite via Bennett Road.</li> </ul>

Summary of Notifications and Information Shared	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shared an article detailing how the area will be restored for agricultural use.</li> </ul>
August 30, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provided an update to readers that the work on the intersection of Highway 29 and the future Halfway River Boat launch had begun.</li> <li>Announced that Crews started road upgrades and required vegetation removal to access Wilder Creek to be able to start building new shallow water fish habitats.</li> <li>Provided the latest construction bulletin; August 26- September 8</li> <li>Notified readers that Upper Peace Fish Entrainment Strategy Technical Committee (FESTC) virtual meeting took place on Thursday September 14<sup>th</sup></li> <li>Activities started for the transition the Project from construction into operation. BC Hydro initiated consultation on the draft Operations Environmental Management Plan (OEMP) and the draft Operations Safety Management Plan (OSMP) for the Project.</li> <li>Details concerning OSMP and OEMP were shared with Indigenous Nations for review and comment on Aug 15 and 22.</li> </ul>
September 13, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notified readers that work on the intersection of Highway 29 and the future Halfway River Boat launch was underway.</li> <li>Shared a video on boat safety as filling of the Site C reservoir begins, there will be new hazards on the water. Boaters are strongly encouraged to stay off the water during filling and for at least one year after</li> <li>Provided the latest construction bulletin; September 9-22</li> <li>Latest employment statistics showed that there were 5,986 workers on the Site C project in July 2023.</li> <li>Reminder that the next Environmental Forum was being held in-person on September 12<sup>th</sup>.</li> </ul>
September 25, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A video was shared concerning how monitoring slope stability before, during, and after reservoir filling is completed.</li> <li>Provided the latest construction bulletin; September 23-October 6</li> <li>Informed readers four large rings were installed inside of the two diversion tunnels. Once reservoir filling begins, the rings will restrict water flow through the tunnel, causing the reservoir water level to rise.</li> <li>Announced that starting September 23, the Halfway River boat launch would be closed</li> </ul>

Summary of Notifications and Information Shared	
October 10, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Announced that the Peace River between Fort St. John and Hudson's Hope is closed to boater traffic and will remain closed for at least one year after reservoir filling.</li> <li>Shared the latest employment statistics that indicated there were more than 5,800 people working on the project in August, two-thirds were from B.C.</li> <li>Provided the latest construction bulletin; October 7-20</li> <li>Updated readers that Phase 2 of the Lynx Creek boat launch was completed. Final touches including picnic tables, grass-seeding, and a walkway will be added after reservoir filling.</li> </ul>
October 31, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informed readers that transmission towers on the dam intake are being installed. Transmission lines will connect these towers to the Site C substation.</li> <li>BC Hydro shared with Indigenous Nations a draft provincial permit application, Wildlife Act – Bear Relocation</li> <li>Provided the latest construction bulletin; October 21- November 3</li> <li>Announced that the D.A. Thomas recreation site and road upgrade in Hudson's Hope will shut down for the winter season.</li> <li>Provided a link for the Acid Rock Drainage / Metal Leachate Management Plan for the Site C Project.</li> </ul>
January 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informed readers of the shift to a monthly format (from a bi-weekly format) to ensure that important project information continues to be shared with Indigenous Nations while reducing the volume of Site C project emails.</li> <li>The Monthly will be distributed at the start of each month until the completion of the project in early 2025.</li> <li>Shared a video of a virtual tour of construction progress at Site C, from summer until fall 2023.</li> <li>Announced that the existing boat launch at Halfway River is closed but will re-open at the start of boating season in spring 2024.</li> <li>Video shared of a virtual tour of construction progress at Site C, from summer until fall 2023.</li> <li>Reminder that the Site C Methylmercury Sub-committee Meeting (Virtual) will take place on January 11<sup>th</sup>.</li> <li>Informed readers that burning may take place until March 2024 at Portage Mountain and West Pine Quarry and along the north and south banks of the Peace River.</li> </ul>

Summary of Notifications and Information Shared	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BC Hydro Upper Peace Fish Entrainment Strategy Technical Committee meeting (virtual) will take place on January 18<sup>th</sup>.</li> </ul>
February 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reminder that the next Environmental Forum will be virtual on March 6, 2024.</li> <li>Shared a video showing eleven transmission towers and three new transmission lines that will send electricity generated inside the Site C powerhouse to the nearby substation.</li> <li>The Site C project's GO Fund, supporting food security and families in the Peace Region has contributed more than \$47,000 to five non-profit groups. 94 projects have received a total of \$827,231.</li> <li>Reminder that BC Hydro was hosting open houses in Hudson's Hope (Feb 7) and Mackenzie (Feb 8) to discuss Williston Reservoir operations. Members of the public were invited to attend.</li> <li>Updated that due to low inflows from on-going drought, below average water levels are forecast for Williston Reservoir this spring.</li> </ul>
March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shared a video showing how BC Hydro monitors bull trout in the Halfway River</li> <li>Reminder that the next Environmental Forum will be virtual on March 6, 2024.</li> <li>Reminder that the Cultural Centre Working Group Meeting #12 would be held virtually on Tuesday, March 12, 2024</li> <li>Details concerning the MMP (Methylmercury Monitoring Plan and the TOR (Terms of Reference) Revision was shared with the Nations on February 7<sup>th</sup> and would be discussed at the Environmental Forum.</li> </ul>

**3.3 Consultation Meetings**

**3.3.1 Permitting Forums**

These meetings allow for sharing and reviewing upcoming permit applications with Treaty 8 First Nations. Representatives from First Nations, the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS)<sup>1</sup>, federal agencies (Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Transport

<sup>1</sup> In 2023, the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD) changed to two ministries: Ministry of Forests (MOF) and Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS). BC Hydro is primarily working with WLRS on permitting matters.

Canada) and BC Hydro meet to discuss draft permit applications and to address potential questions and requests for clarification before permit applications are finalized and referred to First Nations by permitting agencies for consultation and review.

BC Hydro initiated this process in 2016 in response to requests from First Nations for additional opportunities to consult on Project permits. BC Hydro held seven Permitting Forums between July 2016 and January 2018. In late January 2018, the Province and BC Hydro implemented an updated coordinated consultation process in an effort to enhance Project permit consultation opportunities, find efficiencies, reduce the overall workload for First Nations, and better manage the consultation schedule.

Permitting Forums were incorporated into the coordinated consultation process and are a central component of the “pre-application” consultation on draft permit applications before they are finalized and submitted to WLRS. The First Nations invited to attend the Permitting Forum are the same First Nations that the WLRS consults with on provincial permit applications.

An overall reduction in the number of new permits requiring consultation, and looking for efficiencies, BC Hydro has incorporated the Permitting Forum into the Environmental Forum when required. As a standing agenda item at each Environmental Forum, the Permitting Discussion continues to provide a venue to meet and discuss permitting and regulatory items.

Summary of Permitting Forums, and Permitting Discussions at Environment Forums, held during the reporting period are described below.

- Permitting discussion on *Canadian Navigable Waters Act* Lynx Creek Bridge Piers, Fish Habitat Enhancement Sites & Works for structures permits were held during Environment Forum #30 (May 24, 2023) and was attended by representatives from DFN, FNFN, HLFN, MNBC & MLIB.
- Permitting discussion on *Wildlife Act* Bear Relocation permits was held during Environment Forum #33 (October 19, 2023) and was attended by representatives from DRFN, DFN, HLFN, KLMSS, MNBC, MLIB & SFN and BC Hydro discussed Wildlife Act Fish Collection Permit for the Permanent Fish Passage Facility

BC Hydro uses the *Site C Information for Indigenous Nations* SharePoint site described in section 3.6 to share meeting presentations, permit applications and spatial data, and summaries of discussion and requests for follow-up from the meetings.

### **3.3.2 Environmental Forums**

The Environmental Forum enables BC Hydro and Indigenous Nations to collaborate, share information, and seek input and participation opportunities related to key interests identified by Indigenous Nations related to the Project’s environmental mitigation plans and monitoring programs. Topics addressed by the Environmental Forum relate to fish and fish habitat, wildlife, vegetation and heritage, and may be linked to conditions of the EAC, FDS, and permits or



authorizations. A key initiative for the Environmental Forum membership is the rollout of the Indigenous Traditional Use Fund (ITUF), an \$13M fund to mitigate the impacts of the Project on the current use of land and resources for traditional purposes by Indigenous Nations.

Environmental Forums held during the reporting period are described below.

- Environmental Forum #30 was held on May 24, 2023. During the virtual meeting the following topics were discussed: Reservoir Beaver Harvest update; Reservoir filling information and update; Acid Rock Drainage / Metal Leachate Plan overview; Round table ITUF project updates; Site C Conservation Officer program annual update; Eagle nest platform and reclamation updates.
- Environmental Forum #31 was held on July 18, 2023 in Fort St. John. During the field tour the following sites were visited via bus or boat and discussed: Overview of Highway 29 upgrades; Overview of reservoir filling plans; Halfway River Lookout; and Halfway River Boat Launch.
- Environmental Forum #32 was held on September 12, 2023 in Fort St. John. During the meeting the following topics were discussed: Reservoir filling information and update; Wildlife mitigation and monitoring; Temporary Fish Passage Facility updates and Fisheries program updates. During the field tour the same day the following sites were visited and/or discussed: Northbank Viewpoint; Area 11 Reclamation; Fisheries enhancement channels and sites; Permanent Fishway and the Intake Channel.
- Environmental Forum #33 was held on October 19, 2023. During the virtual meeting the following topics were discussed: Reservoir filling information and update; Bear Mitigation in reservoir area.
- Environmental Forum #34 was held on November 22, 2023. During the virtual meeting the following topics were discussed: Site C Project update; Reservoir Slope & Shoreline Monitoring program; Williston Reservoir operations 2023/24.
- Environmental Forum #35 was held on March 6, 2024. During the virtual meeting the following topics were discussed: Site C Project updates, Fisheries Act Authorization: offsetting update; Methylmercury program update; Indigenous Traditional Use Fund; and Environmental Forum Plan for 2024/2025.

### **3.3.3 Environmental Forum Sub-Committees**

To support key initiatives of the Environmental Forum, four sub-committees / working groups have been formed. This includes the Indigenous Traditional Use Fund (ITUF) Working Group, the Methylmercury Sub-committee, the Reclamation Sub-committee, and the Site C Conservation Officer Working Group. The ITUF Working Group did not meet over the reporting period, while the Methylmercury Sub-Committee held one meeting over the same period. The Reclamation Sub-committee held three meetings, including one field tour over the reporting period.

### 3.3.4 Culture and Heritage Resources Committee

The Culture and Heritage Resources Committee (Committee) has been established with Indigenous Nations to advise BC Hydro on the management of Project effects on cultural resources. The Committee initially met on July 30, 2015 and meets as determined by the Committee members. The Committee provides opportunities for discussion and information exchange, as well as the development of mitigation measures related to cultural and heritage resources.

- As the Committee nears completion of remaining initiatives underway, the Committee is scheduled to gather in person on May 15, 2024 for a final meeting and overview of their accomplishments. The Committee shifted to annual meetings in 2022; the last annual meeting will be held in May 2024 and ongoing discussions on cultural and heritage resources will occur through the Cultural Centre Working Group.

In 2022, the Committee continued discussions on the potential development of a cultural centre. The Site C Cultural Centre Development Project (the “**Development Project**”) is a proposed facility to commemorate, educate and celebrate the culture and heritage of the Indigenous Nations impacted by the Project. The Development Project includes the formation of several committees, including the Cultural Centre Working Group, and decision-making processes to support the site selection, design, content and construction through to the opening of the Cultural Centre. The timeframe for this process is anticipated to be from Spring of 2021 to 2027.

Below is a summary of the meetings held by the Cultural Centre Working Group within the reporting period of this annual report:

- May 4, 2023 (Meeting #10) the project team provided an overview and project update; review conceptual design; site selection evaluation review. There was a site visit to Site C Office, Area 11 and Site C North Bank viewpoint. The Cultural Centre Working Group meeting was attended by BC Hydro and representatives from the Cultural Centre project team (Colliers Project Leaders, WSP Global Inc., Architecture 49, Engineer), and representatives from Blueberry River First Nations, Doig River First Nation, Duncan’s First Nation, Halfway River First Nation, Horse Lake First Nation, Kelly Lake Métis Settlement Society, McLeod Lake Indian Band, Prophet River First Nation, and Sauteau First Nations.
- January 23, 2024 (Meeting #11) the project team provided an overview and project update and exhibit design plan. GreenCoast Media provided an update on 3 exhibit prototypes they had been working on. The Cultural Centre Working Group meeting was attended by BC Hydro and representatives from the Cultural Centre project team (Colliers Project Leaders, GreenCoast Media, WSP Global Inc., Architecture 49), and representatives from Blueberry River First Nations, Doig River First Nation, Duncan’s First Nation, Dene Tha’ First Nation, Fort Nelson First Nation, Halfway River First Nation, Horse Lake First Nation, Kelly Lake Métis Settlement Society, McLeod Lake Indian Band, and Sauteau First Nations.

### 3.4 Saulneau First Nations Registered Trapline Holders

BC Hydro remains engaged with SFN registered trapline holders whose tenure areas are affected by project construction and operations. BC Hydro contacts registered trapline holders in advance of any project investigations or construction activities planned to take place within their respective trapline areas.

### 3.5 Ground Truthing and other Field Activities

BC Hydro maintains a standing invitation to Indigenous Nations to meet and discuss issues or concerns regarding the Project as construction proceeds. This may include other field activities like site visits in the project activity zone with interested groups and boat tours of the Peace River.

Ground truthing did not occur during this reporting period. As the Project nears completion, there are few unimpacted areas remaining within the project footprint. There has also been limited interest in ground truthing and harvesting in areas that have already been impacted by the Project. BC Hydro will continue to be responsive to any ground truthing requests and continue to work with interested Indigenous Nations to plan and coordinate ground truthing, harvesting and other field activities.

During this reporting period, BC Hydro followed up with interested Indigenous Nations to coordinate and host other field activities in the dam site area and within the future reservoir.

The [Aboriginal Plant Use Mitigation Plan](#) (APUMP) and the [CRMP](#) describe ground truthing as it pertains to plants of traditional Indigenous value and cultural resources, respectively. Ground truthing and other field activities conducted by or with Indigenous Nations are described in annual reports for these plans that are available on the Project website in the Site C Project Reports section of the [Document Library](#) and the Site C Information for Indigenous Nations SharePoint Site.

### 3.6 Site C Information for Indigenous Nations SharePoint Site

The *Site C Information for Indigenous Nations* SharePoint site is a central repository for documents and information shared with Indigenous Nations. It is password protected and not accessible to the public.

On February 22, 2019 BC Hydro launched a new and improved SharePoint site based on Indigenous Nations' feedback. The new and improved layout is designed to make it easier to find information on the Project. Project page categories include:

- *Project Construction* information such as Biweekly Updates and the quarterly Notices of Construction Activities;
- *Spatial files* related to project designs, archaeological sites, cadastral data, maps and environmental features;

- *Environment* documents such as Environmental Protection Plans, Environmental Completion Reports, and Monthly Environmental Monitoring Summary Reports, Geotechnical Investigations and Fish, aquatics, vegetation and wildlife;
- *Heritage Reports* such as interim and annual reports from the heritage program;
- *Regulatory and Compliance* information such as draft mitigation and monitoring plans and select annual reports, federal approval applications, Water Licence Leaves to Commence Construction, and environmental assessment documents; and,
- *Meeting materials* from forums and other meetings.
- Information about the SharePoint site along with sign-in information is provided to Indigenous Nations in communications described above in sections 3.1 through 3.3 of this report.

### **3.7 External Project Website**

The Site C Clean Energy Project website ([sitecproject.com](http://sitecproject.com)) provides additional information including:

- Mitigation and Monitoring Plans and Annual Reports
- Employment and business opportunities
- Federal authorizations and provincial permits
- Construction activities
- Indigenous relations
- Environmental Management Plans and Reports
- Permits and Authorizations
- Environmental Assessment Reports
- Project Planning and Evaluation Reports
- Consultation and Engagement Reports
- Environment and Socio-Economic Reports
- Engineering and Technical Reports
- Historical Site C Reports

- Quarterly Progress Reports to the BCUC
- Employment Statistics
- Construction Contracts
- Reservoir Filling
- Project Videos and Photos

### **3.8 Environment Programs**

BC Hydro has several environmental programs as a part of Site C. The programs focus on monitoring to see what effects (if any) the project has on wildlife, fish, vegetation, air, water, the aquatic environment, as well as heritage and archaeology and how well our mitigation is working to protect these features. For each program, results are shared through the Site C Project website in the [Document Library](#). Annual reports are made available on the project website as they are finalized. A brief overview of the programs can be found on project website, [Site C Environmental Programs](#).