

NON-INTEGRATED AREAS (NIA) STRATEGY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY REPORT



A Summary of NIA First Nations' Engagement Input & Comments
in the development of the NIA Strategy

June 8, 2026

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Statement of Recognition and Appreciation

BC Hydro recognizes and appreciates the clean energy leaders from across NIA First Nations for their passion, wisdom, and unique perspectives in advancing clean energy and diesel reduction within their territories.

Their tireless commitment to, and focus on, truth and reconciliation has brought light to their unique lived experiences in these standalone microgrids and has demonstrated the importance of clean, reliable, and affordable electricity in support of the principles outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

NIA First Nation representatives have generously offered their depth of knowledge and passion into the personal relationships, discussions, and engagements with BC Hydro staff over the years which has served to deeply inform the NIA Strategy.

These experiences and perspectives have been built and leveraged through partnerships within their own communities, across BC Hydro, with federal, provincial, and municipal governments, and with other First Nations to advance their vision of 100% clean, reliable, and affordable electricity.

We are grateful to be a part of this journey.

1.0 Purpose

BC Hydro engaged with the Non-Integrated Areas (NIA) First Nations on the NIA Strategy from March 2023 to May 2026. The purpose of this Engagement Summary Report (the Report) is to outline the feedback and perspectives shared during the three-phase engagement process. The document outlines the purpose of the NIA Strategy, early engagement with NIA First Nations, and the subsequent structured, Indigenous-led facilitation process that captured input on the NIA Strategy. This document serves as a summary of input from NIA First Nations who reside in 12 of the 14 remote, standalone microgrids that make up BC Hydro's NIAs.



2.0 Executive Summary

In March 2023, BC Hydro initiated early engagement on the NIA Strategy with representatives from the NIA First Nations in a series of sessions co-hosted with the Ministry of Energy and

Climate Solutions (MECS¹). Following requests from some NIA First Nations for more and deeper engagement on the NIA Strategy (including co-development), BC Hydro initiated a series of monthly engagement sessions to provide opportunities for collaboration on the development of the NIA Strategy.

After continued discussions between June and December 2023 on the purpose, scope, focus and principles of collaboration on the NIA Strategy, a three-phase engagement process was outlined beginning with Phase 1 held between January and March 2024, Phase 2 held during the summer of 2024, and Phase 3 planned to start in the fall/winter of 2024. Due to a provincial election and independent review of CleanBC, Phase 3 restarted in the winter of 2025/2026.



NIA First Nations' input provided in sub-committee sessions were used to draft an initial Report which included a summary of the comments and input provided during Phase 1 engagement separated into core themes. Feedback on the initial draft Report was sought in Phase 2 through individual 1:1 engagement sessions between BC Hydro and NIA First Nations during the summer of 2024². BC Hydro incorporated feedback from Phase 2 and the additional input captured during Phase 3 to produce this Final Report.

This Report was used as one of the inputs to inform BC Hydro's development of an updated NIA Strategy which was shared with NIA First Nations in the spring of 2026.

This Report provides a summary of the comments and input provided during Phase 1, which was confirmed with Nations after sharing an interim Report in the summer of 2024. The document provides a **background** overview of the engagement process and NIA Strategy

¹ During the engagement process, the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low-Carbon Innovation (EMLI) was renamed to the Ministry of Energy and Climate Solutions (MECS).

² Written comments on the draft Report were welcomed from June 8 until July 5th for incorporation into the Final Report. Additional comments were welcomed after July 5th however the remaining comments will be reflected on during the development of the Draft NIA Strategy released in Fall 2024.

context in **Section 3**, including an overview of the sessions' development and intentions of all phases of engagement.

Section 4 describes **how we engaged** and the scope and structure of each sub-committee within Phase 1 engagement based on the four (4) sub-committees to guide the areas of focus for the NIA Strategy.

Section 5 then summarizes **what we heard** through comments and input provided by some NIA First Nations captured during engagement sessions in 2024 and is separated into themes. Participant quotes are included to provide examples of ideas and suggestions raised during discussions. These quotes are not provided with the full context in which they were spoken but are included to ground the themes in participants' comments.

Section 6 then summarizes **what we heard** from NIA First Nations on the broader relationship with BC Hydro highlighting key themes, interests and improvements required to successfully implement the NIA Strategy and support strong working relationships between BC Hydro and NIA First Nations.

Finally, **Section 7** provides a summary of the **third and final phase** of engagement – delayed due to a provincial election and an independent review of CleanBC – including First Nations' review of the final draft NIA Strategy which concluded on May 1, 2026.

3.0 Background

After the release of the Government's CleanBC Plan in 2018, BC Hydro began working with multiple NIA First Nations to explore clean energy projects to reduce reliance on diesel generation and implement energy conservation programs. This early work began when the Province initiated the Remote Communities Energy Strategy (RCES) Working Group which collaborated to develop a Recommendations Report (2022) for how the Province, BC Hydro and remote communities (including remote communities not served by BC Hydro) could progress diesel reduction work.

Since this time, BC Hydro has been working towards solutions to reduce diesel use in the NIAs as part of its [Five Year Strategy](#). This included work on the development of a Diesel Reduction Strategy to guide the coordinated advancement of diesel reduction work across the NIAs. The initial draft of the Diesel Reduction Strategy was informed by learnings from our ongoing work with NIA First Nations and governments on clean energy projects.

In October 2022, based on feedback received from NIA First Nations regarding issues with reliability and affordability, BC Hydro decided to expand the scope of the Diesel Reduction Strategy beyond the previous exclusive diesel reduction focus. This expanded scope included objectives to improve the reliability and affordability of electricity in the NIAs and reflected on the learnings produced from the RCES Working Group's 2022 Recommendations Report. These additions resulted in a renaming of the Diesel Reduction Strategy to the NIA Strategy to reflect this expanded scope.

In March of 2023, BC Hydro and the Ministry of Energy and Climate Solutions (MECS) initiated engagements with NIA First Nation clean energy leaders to seek feedback on several topics, including BC Hydro's draft NIA Strategy. At that time, NIA First Nations representatives

requested deeper engagement and co-development of this document. In response, BC Hydro established monthly engagements starting in June 2023.

In July 2023, BC Hydro shared an initial draft of the NIA Strategy with representatives from NIA First Nations, and – as part of the monthly engagement series – invited BC Hydro subject matter experts to present on core elements of the draft NIA Strategy. During these discussions, NIA First Nations reiterated feedback that the engagement process and development of the NIA Strategy needed to be Indigenous led to be meaningful, should be facilitated by an independent Indigenous facilitator, and repeated the request to co-develop the NIA Strategy.

In response to the feedback from NIA First Nations, BC Hydro adjusted the engagement process. An independent Indigenous facilitator chosen by the NIA First Nations and their representatives was hired to facilitate ongoing and future meetings. Additionally, planning began for an UNDRIP-focused session (with a keynote speech from Merle Alexander, an Indigenous lawyer and member of the team that co-developed the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA) in British Columbia) to understand what deeper collaboration could look like. Altered engagement efforts also included the co-development of a Terms of Reference (ToR) to establish expectations of all parties on roles and responsibilities, engagement processes, and to facilitate productive collaboration towards the shared goals. Though the draft ToR was never finalized, many of the principles and considerations outlined in the draft ToR were included in the remaining engagement sessions, including an independent note taker, information sharing principles, an Indigenous facilitator, co-chair opportunities and capacity funding.

For additional description of engagement activities during the period March to December 2023, please refer to the Appendix A of Exhibit B-1 as well as Exhibit B-2 (which provides the agendas, materials, and meetings minutes of monthly engagement sessions) in the BC Hydro Non-Integrated Areas Planning Regulatory Framework³ proceeding.

In December 2023 and January 2024, two facilitated meetings were held to define the scope and focus of collaboration on the NIA Strategy. In January 2024, NIA First Nations reiterated their call for an external note-taker, who joined the process in January 2024.

From these scoping discussions, BC Hydro drafted an approach that outlined how feedback and input would be incorporated into the NIA Strategy and actively sought input on the proposed approach. This proposal included an offer for the NIA First Nations to author specific call outs and experiences living within these communities and in advancing diesel reduction work. Proposed areas for joint work included identifying barriers and opportunities, articulating why this work is important, and potential vision, goals, and measures of success. With significant input from NIA First Nations, BC Hydro stated it would determine the final vision for the NIA Strategy, goals, metrics, and actions based on feedback, other learnings and available budget and resources. The following section outlines the three-phase engagement approach, including a description of the structure and objectives of the sub-committee's work during Phase 1.

³ [BC Hydro Non-Integrated Areas Planning Regulatory Framework - BCUC](#)

4.0 How We Engaged: Phases 1, 2 and 3

The collaborative approach, finalized in late January 2024, outlined a three-phase process for engagement and collaboration on the NIA Strategy:

- Phase 1 (*Multi-Nation Collaboration*) ran from January to March 2024 and included discussions in the monthly engagement forum with specific sub-committee sessions on topics identified by participant interest within the scope of the NIA Strategy. Phase 1 concluded on April 8, 2024, following opportunities for final written comments. [*Note: No additional written comments were provided*];
- Phase 2 (*Verification and Prioritization*) ran from June to August 2024. In this phase, BC Hydro produced a draft Report based on what was heard in Phase 1. BC Hydro verified the contents of the Report through written comments and one-on-one meetings with NIA First Nations and updated the draft Report including additional feedback.
- Phase 3 (*Finalization*) occurred through the winter of 2025/2026 where BC Hydro re-engaged NIA First Nations following a hiatus in response to a provincial election and the CleanBC independent review process. This included a full-day in-person meeting with NIA First Nations, stakeholders and BC Hydro to share lessons learned on clean renewable project advancements followed by the sharing of a draft NIA Strategy for review and comment in April 2026⁴. BC Hydro then produced a final version of the NIA Strategy and posted it on the [public website](#). BC Hydro intends to submit the NIA Strategy to the BCUC with the next Revenue Requirements Application in 2026.

Beginning on January 26, 2024, seven (7) sub-committee meetings and three (3) monthly meetings were held over the next six weeks to discuss the topics identified in the December 2023 and January 2024 monthly meetings. Each session was facilitated by an independent Indigenous Facilitator with meeting notes captured by a third party note-taker.

In these sessions, NIA First Nation representatives proposed content, asked questions, and offered suggestions on key areas of focus for the draft NIA Strategy. Representatives also identified potential barriers to the successful implementation of the NIA Strategy and diesel reduction targets and proposed possible performance metrics to track progress toward identified goals.

All NIA First Nation representatives were invited to attend all sub-committee meetings, but not all were available to attend. Meeting notes were shared with NIA First Nations representatives following the sessions, and summary updates were provided at the February and March 2024 Monthly Engagement sessions.

4.1 Sub-Committee Scope and Objectives

The sub-committees were established as follows:

⁴ In parallel with Phase 2, BC Hydro began to develop an updated version of the NIA Strategy incorporating the learnings from Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the engagement (and, indeed all other engagements BC Hydro has had with NIA First Nations since 2018), along with other considerations and developments since the initial draft of the NIA Strategy was prepared

Sub-committee 1: Visions, Principles and Community Voices

This sub-committee was intended to focus on foundational elements of the strategy, including context for the need, vision and principles. This included identifying barriers, opportunities, examples of success and challenges and the direct voices of NIA First Nations on why diesel reduction is important to their community.

This sub-committee never formally met due to time constraints. However, many components of the vision, principles and community voices were identified in other sub-committee meetings and are reflected in the summary below.

Sub-committee 2: Diesel Reduction Activities

This sub-committee was intended to focus was on diesel reduction activities to be undertaken, including Demand Side Management (DSM), renewable fuels, and others. Given the high importance of Community Renewable Energy Projects this topic was addressed in a separate sub-committee at the request of the NIA First Nations. These sessions provided an opportunity to develop the strategic direction for diesel reduction activities and providing input on goals and targets.

Sub-committee 3: Grid Modernization, Reliability and Technical Interconnections

This sub-committee was intended to focus on batteries, microgrid controllers, reliability of microgrids and interconnection of new renewable energy. These sessions identified potential issues, opportunities, and actions in the short, medium and long-term to enable diesel reduction while improving the reliability of the micro-grids.

Sub-committee 4: Community Renewable Energy Projects (CREPs)

This sub-committee was intended to focus on describing the importance of Community Renewable Energy Projects [CREPs] to the Nations, seeking feedback on the broad principles used in the Community Renewable Energy Offer (CREO)⁵, discussing access to and availability of government funding grants to support CREPs and how BC Hydro can support applications, and sharing feedback on the collaborative First Nation – BC Hydro technical working group approach and general process for advancing projects.

5.0 NIA Strategy

This section provides a summary of NIA First Nations' interests focused on the content of what the NIA Strategy will deliver.

5.1 Vision, Principles and Voices

As noted above, the original proposal for the sub-committees included one sub-committee focused on the overall vision and principles for the NIA Strategy. Due to timing and scheduling constraints, the parties were unable to schedule a meeting for this sub-committee. However, throughout several meetings, NIA First Nations identified several themes related to vision, principles, barriers, and performance metrics. This section summarizes those themes.

⁵ [Non-integrated area community renewable energy projects \(bchydro.com\)](https://www.bchydro.com)

5.1.1 Vision

Throughout our engagement, NIA First Nations articulated a clear vision for microgrids that are served by 100% clean and renewable resources. We heard that this ambitious vision arises from their values of environmental stewardship of the land, a desire to leave the environment in better condition for future generations and to support growing and thriving communities with clean energy. Some participants acknowledged the current technical limitations of some methods of eliminating diesel generation (e.g. the fact that current renewable options do not provide firm energy and batteries only cost-effectively provide a few hours of storage), while still ensuring that there is a reliable electricity supply for the community. Some participants shared that microgrids supplied by 100% clean and renewable energy can be a guiding longer-term vision as we work together to reduce reliance on diesel generation. Generally, most NIA First Nations said that 80% by 2030 should be viewed as an interim target against this longer-term vision of 100% of electricity produced through clean, renewable resources – like the vision articulated in the RCES Working Group Recommendations Report.

- “...*The hope is having clean air, hoping sea levels won't rise*’... *mothers and children affected by diesel fumes.*” – **Sub-Committee 4, meeting 1**
- “...*A tool for economic reconciliation in growing communities.*” –**NIA Monthly Meeting (February 2024)**

5.1.2 Principles

Throughout the discussions, several key principles emerged that NIA First Nations believe should or could inform the overall development and implementation of the NIA strategy.

Transparency and Information Sharing

There was a strong desire for increased transparency and information sharing. We heard that this is foundational for establishing trust. There were calls for BC Hydro to share more background, analysis, and data as it relates to aspects of the Strategy like costs, pricing of community electricity purchase agreements, operations and decision making. There were many calls for clarity on targets and a desire for clear reporting and communication on how BC Hydro is progressing against those targets. There was also a strong desire for Nations to learn from one another and share lessons from their individual diesel reduction efforts. Additionally, there was also a desire for BC Hydro to establish a framework to share learning on projects. A specific opportunity for this included BC Hydro and First Nations experiences in implementing emerging technologies and integrating Battery Energy Storage Systems on microgrids. One participant expressed a hope that commercial sensitivity in discussions should not become a blanket for lack of transparency.

- *“...we should be able to share the work in all our Nations/ We are rooting for one another to have clean air for our future generations.” – NIA Monthly Meeting (February 2024)*
- *“...need to know more about the examples other communities have done to reduce diesel. Want to see and hear more about what the communities are doing, not just where Hydro is investing in diesel reduction.” –Sub-Committee 2, meeting 2*

Participation and Involvement across the NIAs

While the CleanBC diesel reduction target is articulated as an 80% province wide target, we heard from some NIA First Nations that the goal shouldn't only be about meeting the province wide target. Given the local impacts and benefits of GHG reduction, each NIA needs to see reduced reliance on diesel generation. Participants emphasized that each NIA needs to have a defined path to meeting the 80% diesel reduction target.

Uniqueness and Flexibility

Most NIA First Nations shared that while they share a collective experience as NIA communities and as First Nations, each community has unique experiences, values, and interests. These will drive their desired interest in pursuing diesel reduction activities. Each NIA is also geographically unique with different opportunities for diesel reduction. Some Nations expressed that the NIA Strategy needs to have enough flexibility to allow for different technologies and different project offers or ownership models in the pursuit of diesel reduction opportunities and targets.

“...should consider technology differentiation – different offers associated with different technology.” – Sub-Committee 4, meeting 1

Leveraging Diesel Reduction for Broader Benefits

While diesel reduction is an important shared goal, we heard that it is not only about reducing reliance on diesel generation as an end in itself. NIA First Nations stated that the NIA Strategy

- *“...certain communities are different but seeing all communities to 80% is great...[we] don't want to see any nation getting left out in the cold.” – Sub-Committee 2, meeting 3*
- *“...100% should be our [diesel reduction] target, maximizing diesel reduction target should be the priority. But the nitty gritty of each of the community will be required.” –Sub-Committee 2, meeting 3*

needs to recognize that NIA First Nations believe that diesel reduction activities should be structured to provide broader benefits to the community – such as economic development, Indigenous business opportunities and reconciliation. Specifically, NIA First Nations note that advancing Community Renewable Energy Projects provides the NIA communities with an opportunity for job creation and revenue that can be reinvested into the community. As a result, pursuing community renewable energy projects as *the key strategy* for achieving diesel reduction is the preference for NIA First Nations.

5.1.3 Barriers

NIA First Nations shared that they face many barriers to diesel reduction and that there should be a focus within the NIA Strategy to support overcoming these challenges.

Funding

We heard that access to funding is a top barrier faced by NIA First Nations when advancing their Community Renewable Energy Projects. They believe more work is needed to streamline the government processes to access funding. Some NIA First Nations shared that they believe BC Hydro can provide support by working with levels of government to increase efficiency and provide greater certainty on funding applications. Additionally, some NIA First Nations shared that they believe BC Hydro can help in coordinating and supporting funding applications.

“... definite barriers in funding these projects... Don't know where we land with funding that won't even fully displace diesel.” – Sub-Committee 2, meeting 2

Organizational Alignment

We heard that there appears to be lack of alignment on diesel reduction within BC Hydro. Some participants shared that they believe not all departments within BC Hydro are committed to diesel reduction objectives. Participants pointed out that the NIA Strategy needs to set a common vision for all parts of BC Hydro if we are going to achieve its objectives. We also heard that it can be frustrating that the Province, BC Hydro and the BCUC don't always appear to be working together and that there isn't a forum for NIA First Nations to speak with all these groups at the same time. There was a strong desire expressed from the NIA First Nations to have all parties in the room when engaging to ensure that there is coordination between all.

“...We want collaboration with BCUC, BCH and the Nations. We want the barriers removed, Regulatory needs to pivot towards relational. A human family.” – NIA Monthly Meeting (February 2024)

“...BC Hydro needs a global direction to coordinate work between their teams.” – Sub-Committee 2, meeting 1

Capacity

Many NIA Nations noted that capacity within their communities is a challenge. Individuals participating in the engagement sessions are fulfilling several roles within their community to support clean energy and diesel reduction activities. More funding and training are needed to support the development and use of required existing and new expertise in the communities.

“...Capacity of multiple hats is a challenge, need to align and coordinate.” – Sub-Committee 2, meeting 3

5.1.4 Performance Measures and Targets

We heard that we need to ensure that the goals of the NIA Strategy are concrete and measurable. While tracking progress against the CleanBC target of 80% reduction is important, we heard from NIA First Nations that they believe BC Hydro should include broader performance metrics such as measuring economic benefits to the community, revenue for development, jobs created, etc. There were also suggestions that BC Hydro should be tracking progress not only at the provincial level, but NIA by NIA and year by year. There was also acknowledgement that we may need to revise targets over time depending on how we are progressing. Some participants were interested in understanding the BCUC’s role in providing accountability for BC Hydro to meet targets.

- *“...would love to see community by community targets for diesel reduction and reflect the reality for each of these communities (bottom up as opposed to top-down targets).” – Sub-Committee 2, meeting 2*
- *“Would like to see what we will do to eliminate diesel year to year.” –Sub-Committee 2, meeting 1*
- *“...tie performance metrics to job performance and compensation - let’s put skin in the game.”– Sub-Committee 2, meeting 2*
- *“...nice to have a tracker for each of these projects...to give us a current idea of diesel reduction across the province.” – Sub-Committee 2, meeting 3*

- *“...what number of jobs brought into the communities? The number of jobs from the communities themselves.” – Sub-Committee 2, meeting 3*
- *“...revenue of renewable projects reinvested into energy efficiency projects or other renewable projects.” – Sub-Committee 2, meeting 3*

5.2 Diesel Reduction Activities

Most NIA Nations were clear that Community Renewable Energy Projects are a top priority in diesel reduction efforts. This section describes the feedback we received on diesel reduction activities broadly, while Section 4.4 below focuses on what we heard specifically about advancing Community Renewable Energy Projects.

5.2.1 Energy Planning and Management

We heard from some NIA First Nations that growth and economic development within the community is a priority. Some NIAs have prepared Community Energy Plans which provide a vision for the community's future energy needs and objectives. Communities want to grow and to build new housing and commercial developments which will increase the overall demand for electricity. We heard a desire for renewable energy resources to supply this increased energy demand. To support this, we heard that there is a need for a methodology for preparing load forecasts that factors community development plans into the expectations for future electricity demand. Participants believe this will ensure that renewable energy projects are sized appropriately and that there is sufficient electricity capacity within the community to support growth.

One participant noted that in their NIA micro-grid the diesel generator is not sized appropriately to co-generate with a renewable energy project, and there is a desire to understand how BC Hydro will be investing in the diesel generator fleet to ensure that we are maximizing the penetration of renewables. Several participants also asked about what opportunity there is to make use of excess renewable energy to support community growth as part of the NIA Strategy.

- *"...Nations have created Energy Resource Plans - these are our long-term resource plans. How do we work together using these documents (and other autonomous documents)? We've done all the heavy lifting and we continue to grapple with the funding and the work we're doing to get off diesel."* – **Sub-Committee 2, meeting 2**
- *"...there needs to be a good methodology for conducting load forecasts; this will impact diesel generator backup options and their modernization."* – **Sub-Committee 2, meeting 1**
- *"...Excess renewable energy – is there way to use extra energy, or use the storage in the batteries? Can it be used for heating? Can you shape the load or can the load follow the supply? Greater utilization of renewable energy. This can lead to diesel reduction."* – **NIA Monthly Meeting (March 2024)**

5.2.2 Demand Side Management (DSM)

We heard that DSM programs are important but also that the opportunity for diesel reduction through DSM is relatively small compared to Community Renewable Energy Projects. Most NIA First Nations want to focus on moving to renewable energy sources as a top priority while also having some focus on DSM because of the other benefits it brings to the community.

- *“...DSM is important and part of diesel reduction...”* – **NIA Monthly Meeting (March 2024)**
- *“...we’ve done what we can at this point and now we need a renewable energy system.”* – **Sub-Committee 2, meeting 1**

5.2.3 Other Activities - Rooftop Solar & Renewable Diesel

We heard varying viewpoints of rooftop solar. Generally, Nations showed relatively little interest in rooftop solar installations with a preference for centralized energy generation instead. At least one First Nation, however, noted a deeper interest in having rooftop solar in their community.

- *“...in our community we don’t have the rooftop space, there are operations and maintenance for rooftops but it’s difficult to maintain and can be complicated. We prefer a centralized location without relying on this in people’s homes...”* – **NIA Monthly Meeting (March 2024)**

There was interest from some participants on understanding the role that renewable diesel could play in reducing GHG emissions from the NIA diesel generators along with some additional local environmental improvements. Some NIA First Nations saw this as an interim step towards the longer-term goal of serving the NIAs with 100% clean energy, while others noted that renewable diesel has benefits but it doesn’t provide the same benefits (such as mitigating the risk of fuel spills and providing economic benefits) as renewable energy projects.

One participant noted that BC Hydro may be too conservative when it comes to emerging technologies to displace diesel generation citing opportunities in hydrogen and fuel cells.

5.3 Grid Modernization, Interconnections and Reliability

NIA First Nations expressed that there is a need for grid modernization, interconnections, and reliability to be considered as these aspects are foundational to achieving diesel reduction objectives.

5.3.1 Grid Modernization

We heard from many participants that it is vital for BC Hydro to have plans in place within the NIA Strategy to modernize the microgrids through the adoption of battery energy storage solutions and more sophisticated protection and control. There is a recognition that the incorporation of renewable energy sources will increase the complexity of the micro-grids. Some participants further noted that grid modernization is required to optimize the penetration of the

renewables and increase the diesel displacement in the NIAs, including investing in battery storage and microgrid control systems. They noted that battery energy storage solutions are a key aspect of diesel reduction and grid modernization, and that there is a need for BC Hydro to develop a plan for deploying batteries across the NIAs considering the size and technologies of Community Renewable Energy Projects. NIA First Nations also want a better understanding of how these upgrades will be funded and what it means to their renewable energy projects.

- *“...the control technology and operational parameters will have a large impact on diesel displacement.”*
– **Sub-Committee 2, meeting 3**
- *“...changing paradigms in micro-grids; sending and receiving power is more complex to track; need to understand system boundaries between storage, measure and charging customers, generators, etc.”*
– **Sub-Committee 3, meeting 1**

5.3.2 Interconnections

We heard that it can be frustrating to navigate BC Hydro’s interconnections process. Some NIA First Nations noted that there is a high degree of uncertainty in terms of time and money to complete interconnections studies. Participants asked if there is a way to shorten durations and move through the studies more quickly by creating a streamlined interconnection process specific to NIAs. There was also a request for better documentation and communication on what to expect through the various phases of the interconnection process to increase transparency and clarity.

Elsewhere, one participant asked whether there was opportunity for BC Hydro to explore taking ownership of the electricity produced closer to the generation source (e.g. move the point of interconnection as close as possible to the generation source) if it could lower costs for NIA First Nation in their Community Renewable Energy Projects and reduce uncertainty in the interconnection process.

- *“...One thing that's particularly pressing for me, is the uncertainty. I think the description of the interconnection process is good. It's just the uncertainty in the budgets and timelines associated with each piece makes the project planning very difficult, when we're looking at system impact study, and we have anywhere from three to twelve months, and \$30 to \$120,000. And with the facilities impact study, we have a range of like \$50 to \$200,000.”* – **Sub-Committee 4, meeting 2**

5.3.3 Reliability

NIA First Nations shared that reliable power is critical not only for the social and economic support this provides communities, but also in the pursuit of diesel reduction goals. Reliability also has importance for NIA First Nations food sovereignty because of the high cost of food in remote areas and the high use of traditional cultural food sources (e.g. caribou, fish etc.) means there is both practical and cultural importance for food storage reliability. One also noted that the means of ensuring reliable energy should apply a cultural lens as well – including

appropriate capping of transformers to deter bird nesting. Some participants noted that power quality is a particular concern in the NIAs, including concerns about major appliances like freezers and heat pumps.

There was interest in understanding what steps BC Hydro is taking to improve the reliability of the micro-grids and mitigate potential future reliability risks associated with the integration of renewables. It was noted that BC Hydro should be aiming for reliable micro-grids that are also clean. Some participants expressed a desire to understand what studies and reports BC Hydro has prepared on NIA reliability. They emphasized these should be shared with communities to make decisions on future actions together.

- *“...Power quality affects business on Haida Gwaii. We’ve been approached on smart micro grids before, and the more info we (NIA and BCH) can provide, we can work on things like smart electrification like batteries that can tell us what’s wrong.” – Sub-Committee 2, meeting 3*

- *“...every nation deserves to know what our designated priorities are for stabilization and timelines. Not just vegetation management, options for reliability.” – Sub-Committee 3, meeting 1*

5.4 Community Renewable Energy Projects

5.4.1 Importance of Community Renewable Energy Projects

When asked to rank where BC Hydro should focus diesel reduction efforts, supporting the advancement of Community Renewable Energy Projects was consistently a top priority. NIA First Nations said that not only do these projects offer the opportunity to achieve environmental objectives like diesel reduction, they also serve their economic objectives. NIA First Nations discussed that they view these projects as a form of economic reconciliation in their growing communities and support a desire for energy sovereignty. NIA First Nations also want to be included as part of the development of pricing principles to ensure that the benefits and well being of their Nations are worth the resource investment needed to make these projects happen.

“...It’s not [the ratepayers] wellbeing above ours. We have been working for years to get off diesel. We are going to take that money and invest more to get (the NIAs) off diesel. We need to get legislation moving and quickly.”
– Sub-Committee 3, meeting 2

5.4.2 Pricing Principles

NIA First Nations shared that they want a fair price for the energy created from these new renewable energy projects. In the view of some participants, a fair price is a price where all three of the following criteria are achieved: 1) annual revenue covers the ongoing cost of maintenance and operation, 2) the price is at or near the price of diesel offset, and 3) the projects offer a return on investment that would pay off in relation to other types of opportunities. Some NIA First Nations have also shared the importance of the price recognizing their “sweat equity” – the time and effort put into driving these projects from conception to completion. Several participants also emphasized that Community Renewable Energy Projects offer broader benefits (including GHG reduction, mitigation of fuel spill risks and improved local air quality) which should be included in the pricing.

There were also multiple requests at the sessions for BC Hydro to be open and transparent about the financial assumptions used to develop the fixed solar price under the Community Renewable Energy Offer, including sharing the overall cost of diesel in the NIAs. In part, we heard that this stemmed from concerns that NIA First Nations could put substantial time and effort into advancing a Community Renewable Energy Project and then be ‘blindsided’ by a price that may not provide an adequate return on the investment.

“...we are bearing the sweat equity and feel we are not receiving a fair return on our investments.”

– **NIA Monthly Meeting (February 2024)**

“What economic benefit is there for the NIA, is it worth our resources? We have scarce resources to put forward for so many things.”

– **NIA Monthly Meeting (February 2024)**

5.4.3 Resource & Project Ownership

When asked about whether BC Hydro should be considering ownership models such as utility-built projects or joint ownership, we heard that this needs to be considered through direct discussions with individual NIA First Nations. Some participants articulated that partnership with a utility can be a difficult process to navigate and that 100% Indigenous ownership is the preference. For other communities, there is a lower desire to own and operate Community Renewable Energy Projects and, in those cases, BC Hydro should consider alternative project ownership models to meet diesel reduction targets. One participant asked if BC Hydro would be open to building the Community Renewable Energy Projects and transferring the ownership to NIA First Nations and/or operating the renewable energy projects once built by the First Nations.

- *“... We want to own everything 100%.”*
– **NIA Monthly Meeting (February 2024)**
- *“...this corporation has no business [deciding] whether or not any Nation owns a project 100%.”* – **Sub-Committee 4, meeting 2**

5.4.4 Need for clarity of process

NIA First Nations shared that it can be difficult to work with BC Hydro while advancing Community Renewable Energy Projects because there aren't always clear expectations on what is required to navigate the process including the type of analysis and data required to support decisions. Some also noted the need to develop separate approaches for different resource project types (i.e. solar, run-of-river, wind etc).

One NIA First Nation representative expressed a desire for others to benefit from the work they had done in working with BC Hydro and hoped it would make it easier for those coming behind with their own projects. There was a recognition that we are learning as we go on what are new processes for all of us.

- *"...I want to share what we experienced in that it wasn't the best environment. But we talked it out, we worked it out. And there was a significant improvement. So for whatever it's worth, I think it's all about sharing and learning from each other." ?*
– Sub-Committee 4, meeting 2
- *"...I was looking for, what the whole clear process would be for First Nations to get a project online, because it seems like, it's a really hard process to navigate, and you don't find out things till it's too late, or an offer to be made for a renewable energy project."*
– Sub-Committee 4, meeting 2
- *"...And that takes time, that's not something that should be rushed. That takes human resources, it takes reviewing data. And if we're rushing it, then we're not doing the best that we can. And that's not fair to the ratepayers, or the nations who are doing everything that they can to decrease diesel."*

6.0 How We Work Together

Throughout our engagements on the NIA Strategy, NIA First Nations provided significant feedback about how BC Hydro and the NIA First Nations can improve relationships and build trust through our work together. These comments provided principles, themes, and areas of focus on how to work together to support the NIA Strategy.

6.1 Reconciliation

NIA First Nations shared that reconciliation is central to the work of diesel reduction; not only to ensure prosperous, empowered, and sustainable futures, but also to rectify ongoing and historical injustices arising from systematic racism within BC and Canada. There were several discussions around the additional discrimination, systemic racism, and challenges that the NIA communities have endured by not being connected to the integrated system. Examples of these issues included food insecurity related to the reliability of diesel microgrids, and the health, safety and environmental risks of using diesel as a main source of energy in their communities. Some Nations stated that UNDRIP and DRIPA should be used as frameworks for how to work together in the future.

NIA First Nations expressed that work in the NIA needs to be Indigenous-led. They want BC Hydro to hear from NIA First Nations on how BC Hydro should support the development of

resources in NIA First Nation communities. There is also a desire for NIA First Nations to work together as the traditional stewards with the longest living knowledge of the lands.

- "...We continue to state our unwavering position, about the UNDRIP and the Declaration Act... we continue to build our own capacity and you can rest assured that, respectively and autonomously." – **Sub-Committee 4, meeting 2**

6.2 Engagement

NIA First Nations shared feedback on how they would like to be engaged on the NIA Strategy. There was feedback on the clarity of communications, that generally it is trending upwards and improving but needs to continue. There was the desire for better tracking of deliverables and action items during meetings, and to have clearer defined agendas for each meeting.

Nations also wanted the opportunity to survey their own community (both Indigenous and civic members) on the NIA Strategy providing feedback back to BC Hydro that is more reflective of the whole community.

There was discussion around what consultation looks like with each NIA First Nation, and views that this is something that needs to be defined by each NIA First Nation and their protocols, not by BC Hydro or the BCUC. However, some First Nations expressed a desire for BCUC to enforce consultation and decision-making protocols.

6.3 Collaboration and Better Coordination

We heard from NIA First Nations that better overall collaboration between organisations and groups working across the NIA is required. Underpinning increased coordination across all parties, they stated that a lens of understanding of systemic racism towards NIA First Nations and implementing UNDRIP needed to be overlaid all types of conversations.

To improve collaboration with various energy related bodies, there were requests to jointly collaborate with BC Hydro, BCUC, the Province on regulatory matters. Beyond regulatory matters, there was discussion that other groups such as New Relationship Trust could be brought into conversations on topics such as Demand Side Management.

NIA First Nations also shared that although NIA communities are different, they are rooting for one another in the clean energy transition and wish to share information between themselves for additional collaboration opportunities. Some stated that they feel when individual NIA First Nations sign Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) – as requested by BC Hydro – they feel that they become siloed, and they are interested in exploring other approaches (e.g. group NDA's) that support information sharing between Nations.

"The NDA[s] is the glaring policy that says to me, it continues to stomach racism, and divide and conquer, holding up projects, regulatory permitting, those types of things." – Sub-Committee 4, meeting 2

7.0 Phase 3 Feedback

7.1 Re-Starting Phase 3 Engagement

At the conclusion of Phase 2 in September 2024, BC Hydro planned to re-engage the NIA First Nations on a final draft of the NIA Strategy. Phase 3, however, was paused due to the provincial election interregnum period in fall 2024 and independent review of CleanBC in 2025.

In December 2025, BC Hydro re-initiated the third and final phase of engagement on the NIA Strategy. Phase 3 consisted of three key parts and was shared with NIA First Nations. It began with an opportunity to recalibrate with one-on-one meetings offered to each First Nation in January 2026. Following individual meetings, and at the request of the NIA First Nations, BC Hydro hosted an all day in-person meeting on February 5, 2026. Finally in April 2026, BC Hydro shared a draft of the NIA Strategy and provided the opportunity to receive feedback from Nations through one-on-one meetings or written submissions.

BC Hydro also shared the plan to finalize the NIA Strategy and file the document with the British Columbia Utilities Commission during its 2026 RRA application and publish the document on the public website.

Feedback from each of these phases of engagement was used to update the draft NIA Strategy to reflect current state before finalizing the NIA Strategy in June 2026.

7.2 Engagement Session on February 5, 2026

On February 5, 2026, participating NIA First Nations gathered with BC Hydro and invited guest speakers to discuss progress being made to reduce diesel use and integrate renewable energy in the NIAs. The session focused on two key objectives:

1. Bring everyone together to openly share the successes and challenges of integrating renewable energy sources into the communities.
2. Discuss how we can continue to work together on providing clean, reliable, and affordable electricity in the NIAs.

BC Hydro also invited guest speakers from industry to present on the current emerging state of integrating renewable energy into standalone microgrids across Canada – there are only five other projects in Canada that are somewhat comparable to the projects that BC Hydro and First Nations are implementing in the NIAs. Additionally, BC Hydro shared how it has strengthened and evolved its organizational capacity – including people, budget, processes, and technology to implement and sustain more joint planning and operations with the NIA First Nations.

NIA First Nations, BC Hydro and representatives from industry then shared their experiences and lessons learned in implementing renewable energy projects from planning, construction and operations. All parties provided feedback and insights into how BC Hydro and NIA First Nations can continue to work together to achieve our collective goals and aspirations for the NIAs.

7.3 Draft NIA Strategy Feedback

BC Hydro shared the final draft of the NIA Strategy with NIA First Nations on April 1, 2026, and offered opportunities to deliver verbal or written feedback throughout April. Feedback from NIA Nations was captured by May 1, 2026, with four Nation representatives providing verbal or written feedback on the final draft.

7.3.1 What We Heard: Summary of Feedback

NIA First Nations shared feedback on the draft NIA Strategy through both verbal and written feedback. Feedback included edits on wording and tone, description of goals and actions, and suggestions on existing or additional goals and objectives.

Feedback was provided on the importance of truth and reconciliation in the NIA Strategy. This feedback included suggestions on wording and images and stories to reflect the First Nation cultural and community perspectives within the document. Additional comments noted the importance of acknowledging BC Hydro's historical impacts on NIA First Nations and affirming the NIA Strategy's linkages to themes in BC Hydro's [UNDRIP Implementation Plan](#).

Nations' specific feedback around wording included suggestions to further emphasize and clarify the focus areas of the NIA Strategy, including highlighting areas where BC Hydro should be more ambitious in their efforts within the NIA Strategy. One example of this type of feedback included a suggestion that BC Hydro should look beyond the current scope of the NIA Strategy to include a technology vision to help influence market dynamics (i.e. battery market).

Comments were also shared on the importance of collaboration and transparency across all of BC Hydro's work in the NIAs. This included requests to share information on fuel delivery schedules to support community planning during storms and outages and to share performance metrics on the implementation of energy projects to support project planning by other NIA First Nations. Collaboration was also emphasized as being essential during station upgrades through both the project delivery and construction stages.

Additional feedback also emphasized the importance of economic participation and revenue certainty. Comments emphasized the need to provide contracts and terms that encourage Nations to develop the projects and to provide long-term revenue certainty for both solar and non-solar projects.

Nations' review also highlighted the environment as an important focus within the NIA Strategy. Comments highlighted the importance of diesel reduction within the document, spill risk mitigation during diesel transportation, and the pursuit of a diesel reduction as an environmental pollutant itself.

Finally, the feedback also included "kudos" for inclusions or positive comments indicating the level of advancement in work already completed within the scope of the NIA Strategy. This included sections highlighting collaboration and transparency, partnership, the focus on UNDRIP and reconciliation, and the broad components of progress outlined in the NIA Strategy.

BC Hydro incorporated suggestions and comments where applicable into the NIA Strategy, while other comments were not included due to document flow and content sequencing (i.e. suggestions for the executive summary that were covered in more detail in later sections).

Some feedback was technical in nature and not appropriate to include in a high-level strategic document. BC Hydro intends to have follow-up conversations with these NIA First Nations to discuss these topics, explain why these suggested edits were not included and how we can continue to work together on technical details through our collaborative implementation of the NIA Strategy.