

## Island First Nation Prepares for BC Hydro Service

A small First Nations community on central Vancouver Island is receiving a new diesel/battery hybrid generating station and a new distribution system as it prepares to transfer ownership of its electricity service to BC Hydro this spring.

The Uchucklesaht Tribe's community of Elhlateese – accessible only by floatplane or an hour-long boat trip from Port Alberni along the Alberni inlet – is undergoing upgrades as part of BC Hydro's Remote Community Electrification Program, which facilitates to provide reliable and affordable electricity to off-grid communities.

*Right: Elhlateese from the community dock.*



"The Uchucklesaht Tribe Government is extremely pleased to finally have a reliable power base to rely on to provide the stability for any future economic development projects. With the reliable power source within the village the list of possible projects becomes endless," said Chief Charlie Cootes, Chief Councilor of the Uchucklesaht Tribe.

Cost, reliability, safety and convenience were identified by the community as important factors in making the decision to transfer ownership of the electrical system to BC Hydro prior to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in 2010.

"Elhlateese is the first community to be electrified using a diesel battery hybrid station, through the RCE program" said BC Hydro project manager, John Crompton. "This project exemplifies great cooperation between BC Hydro, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, manufacturer EA Energy Alternatives Ltd. and the Uchucklesaht Tribe."



Elhlateese is currently served solely by an old diesel generator and a single phase distribution line. The Uchucklesaht Tribe currently owns the system and provides electricity service to the community, funded in part by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

"BC Hydro is pleased to be working with the Uchucklesaht Tribe to improve its electricity system and play a small role in helping the community achieve its economic goals," said BC Hydro Aboriginal Relations Coordinator, Alison Erven.

*Above: Roc Star Enterprises beginning site clearing for new Diesel/Battery Hybrid System.*



*Above: Barge bringing in equipment for construction.*

The Uchucklesaht Tribe is a member of the Maa-nulth Treaty Society. When the Maa-nulth Treaty took effect on April 1, 2011, it brought certainty to the First Nations' rights to use, own and manage lands and resources throughout its claimed traditional territory.

Following environmental and archaeology assessments last fall, work began to: upgrade the distribution system to a three phase line; rebuild the road from the beach landing to the new site for the generating station; clear and level the site for the station; and, upgrade house wiring. The new hybrid generating system, designed and built by EA Energy Alternatives, a Victoria based company which specializes in alternative energy supply, will have two 100kW diesel generators, a battery bank and inverters, which will allow the generators to run more efficiently and be turned off during low loads to reduce fuel consumption, emissions and noise. This system also allows integration of renewable energy sources such as a micro hydro system. BC Hydro is working with Uchucklesaht Tribe on a possible micro hydro location that could be developed by the First Nation in the future.

Once the transition is complete, BC Hydro's Non Integrated Area Operations will be responsible for operation, maintenance, repairs and outage response and BC Hydro Customer Care will be responsible for billing and customer service.