



WATERPOWER  
CANADA

# Paths Forward

Indigenous Partnership Pathways  
in Canadian Hydropower

2020

## Paths Forward

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in Canadian Hydropower

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# Foreword: James Jenkins, Executive Director, and Chris Henderson, Founding Executive Director, Indigenous Clean Energy

Long before power was harnessed from Canada's lakes and rivers to provide electricity, waterways were essential to the culture, livelihoods, and worldview of the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities that have existed here since time immemorial. Freshwater systems were at the heart of food systems and traditional medicines. They connected communities by providing trading routes that spanned the continent, and that were later utilized by early European navigators.

The past one hundred years have seen incredible development of projects that have powered the country's economy. Yet the story from the perspective of Indigenous communities has often been one of loss, dispossession, and profound impacts, with relatively few benefits. From environmental contamination to relocation of long-established communities, Indigenous communities have borne significant costs while receiving only a small share of the benefits that helped to power Canada's industrial growth.

Thankfully, this narrative has begun to change. Indigenous-led waterpower development and ownership are helping advance the process of reconciliation. The path forward must include respect for Indigenous rights and treaties. The onus is on the hydropower industry to advance proactive and sustained practices as embodied in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Our recent National Survey, [Regenerative Energy](#), shows that 41 per cent of operating medium- to large-scale Indigenous renewable energy projects with Indigenous participation or ownership are waterpower developments. As many legacy projects are being considered for refurbishment or expansion, the time is now to accelerate the growing participation of Indigenous communities in the clean energy sector.

The projects profiled in this Paths Forward report reflect four core "best practice principles" for waterpower development and operations.



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## Recognition

In each of the projects described, Indigenous participation occurred at an early stage of project development. Such upfront engagement adheres to consultation requirements and, more importantly, builds trust. Strong and positive relationships between Indigenous communities, utilities, project proponents, governments, and other parties, support waterpower projects that are truly sustainable – environmental, economically, and socially. Such a commitment should include transparent sharing of project plans and information, ongoing community engagement, and project-funded Indigenous capacity building.

## Relationship

Waterpower developments going forward must reflect a new way of working, based on affirmative relationships. This involves structuring partnerships with governance that embeds joint decision-making at all stages of projects – from concept and design through construction and operations. Such relationships require partners and Indigenous organizations to be actively engaged in project processes. This sometimes involves grappling with difficult issues and resolving them with due regard for all interests and project goals.

## Restorative

Waterpower projects must “go beyond” electricity generation. Implicitly and explicitly, they should be restorative – protecting hydrology, habitat, and species while supporting community well-being. Paths Forward illustrates how projects can be both economically sound and environmentally positive.

## Results

For Indigenous communities, waterpower projects must produce tangible outcomes. These could include local Indigenous jobs, procurement opportunities for First Nations, Inuit and Métis companies, and skills training and trades qualifications for members and citizens. Indigenous communities are eager to participate in economic development through skills development, jobs, and business opportunities. These should be considered alongside Indigenous project equity ownership that generates financial returns to support community needs, infrastructure, and economic development.

Indigenous Clean Energy (ICE) extends our appreciation to Waterpower Canada for helping showcase the partnerships, innovations, and leadership highlighted in this report. The examples highlighted here demonstrate how more equitable and ecologically positive waterpower will be a major and substantive contributor to Canada's clean energy future.



**James Jenkins**  
Executive Director



**Chris Henderson**  
Founding Executive Director

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## INTRODUCTION

# Letter from the President & CEO: Lorena Patterson, WaterPower Canada

Canada is entering a defining era for clean electricity. Across the country, governments, utilities, Indigenous Nations, industries, and communities are preparing for an unprecedented transformation of our energy systems. Electrification, economic growth, climate resilience, energy security, and industrial competitiveness are driving a new generation of investments in electricity infrastructure — from generation and storage to transmission and grid modernization.

Waterpower will continue to play a foundational role in that future, and the future of energy development in Canada will not be shaped by infrastructure alone. It will also be shaped by relationships.

Across the country, Indigenous Nations and communities have long participated in the development and operation of energy projects on their territories. Today, that involvement is increasingly taking the form of leadership, ownership, governance, construction, operations, and stewardship roles. What we are witnessing is not simply a change in project structures, but a broader evolution in how partnership itself is understood within Canada's energy sector.

The stories in this edition of *Paths Forward* reflect that evolution. Some highlight Indigenous equity ownership and long-term economic participation. Others focus on workforce development, environmental stewardship, procurement partnerships, cultural revitalization, or collaborative governance. Together, they demonstrate that Indigenous partnership is increasingly central to Canada's clean energy future.

These partnerships are also helping reshape what reconciliation can look like in practice. Reconciliation is not a single agreement, milestone, or destination. It is ongoing work that requires trust, accountability, humility, and long-term commitment. While challenges and barriers remain, many partnerships across the hydroelectricity sector are continuing to deepen in meaningful and encouraging ways.

This report reflects that momentum. Developed collaboratively with WaterPower Canada members and Indigenous partners across the country, these stories represent different regional realities, histories, and approaches to partnership. Yet all point toward a common understanding: Canada's energy future will be stronger when it is built together.

**As an industry association, WaterPower Canada remains committed to supporting respectful dialogue, shared learning, and relationship-building across the sector. We recognize that reconciliation is ongoing work, and we are committed to continuing that journey alongside Indigenous partners, communities, and member companies.**

I hope the stories in this report are informative, thought-provoking, and encouraging. More importantly, I hope they help advance conversations about what responsible partnership, long-term stewardship, and shared prosperity can look like as Canada moves toward a cleaner energy future.

The pathways ahead will continue to evolve. We look forward to continuing that work together.

Sincerely,



**Lorena Patterson**  
President & CEO  
WaterPower Canada

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## Partnership Pathways

# Equity & Ownership

Increasingly, Indigenous Nations and communities are seeking opportunities to participate in energy projects not only as stakeholders, but as owners, decision-makers, and long-term beneficiaries.

The story in this section reflects how equity ownership can support long-term economic participation, local energy resilience, and greater community involvement in shaping energy infrastructure on Indigenous territories. It also highlights how partnership models are evolving as communities pursue a more active role in Canada's clean energy transition.



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## EQUITY & OWNERSHIP

# Pituvik Landholding Corporation and Innergex: Powering Inukjuak's Energy Transition

In the fall of 2023, Inukjuak entered a new phase in its energy transition. After decades of relying on imported diesel for electricity and heating, the community began drawing power from the Innavik Hydro project, a 7.5 MW Inuit-led run-of-river hydroelectric facility developed in partnership with Innergex.

Located on the eastern shore of Hudson Bay in Nunavik, Inukjuak (ᐃᓄᓅᓴᓴᓄᓴ in Inuktitut, meaning "The Giant") is home to approximately 1,800 residents and has no permanent road access.


For generations, diesel shipped north during the brief summer sealift season powered daily life in the community. The transition to hydroelectricity marks a significant shift not only in how energy is produced locally, but also in how the community is thinking about long-term energy security, economic development, and environmental sustainability.

Developed through a 50-50 partnership between the Pituvik Landholding Corporation and Innergex, the project represents more than new infrastructure. It reflects a model of Indigenous equity ownership and community-led development in Canada's clean energy transition, one designed to ensure that long-term economic participation and decision-making authority remain rooted within the community itself.

Unlike large hydroelectric developments that require extensive reservoirs, Innavik Hydro uses run-of-river technology to generate electricity using the river's natural flow, minimizing environmental disturbance while providing reliable renewable power to the community.

Since becoming operational, the project has significantly reduced Inukjuak's reliance on diesel while supporting long-term energy security, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and local economic development.

**According to project partners, the facility has reduced diesel consumption by approximately 80 per cent, with residential electricity needs, including home heating, now largely powered by hydroelectricity. The transition extended beyond electricity generation alone.**



**7.5 MW**  
Run of river hydroelectric-facility



**50/50**  
Owned by Pituvik Landholding Corporation and Innergex



**Reducing Diesel**  
Lower emissions.  
Stronger energy security



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**As part of the broader initiative, approximately 500 housing units were converted to dual-energy heating systems designed to prioritize hydroelectricity while maintaining fuel-based backup systems for reliability during outages and extreme winter conditions.**

Delivering the project required adapting conventional engineering and operational approaches to the realities of the North. Inukjuak's remote location, harsh climate, and limited shipping windows created significant logistical challenges for project partners and contractors.

At temperatures below  $-50^{\circ}\text{C}$ , even short service interruptions can create serious risks for residents and infrastructure. Project teams therefore worked to minimize outages during installation and develop solutions tailored specifically to local operating conditions.

The work involved close collaboration between Innalik Hydro, Hydro-Québec, the Office municipal d'habitation du Nunavik, BPA, local workers, and community representatives. Customized control systems, modified electrical configurations, and revised tariff structures were developed to support the integration of hydroelectric heating systems at the community scale while maintaining operational reliability and resident safety.

Community engagement and relationship-building were central throughout the project's development and implementation. Project partners worked closely with residents and local organizations during planning, construction, and commissioning, including ongoing communication around environmental monitoring, operational impacts, and infrastructure changes.

Local radio, community outreach, and on-the-ground engagement all played important roles in ensuring residents remained informed throughout the process. Training and knowledge-sharing initiatives were also integrated into the project to support long-term local operational capacity and community participation in the transition.

Community engagement and relationship-building were central throughout the project's development.

The environmental benefits of the project are substantial. According to project partners, converting approximately 75 per cent of residences to hydro-based heating systems has reduced diesel consumption by roughly 1.375 million litres annually, corresponding to an estimated reduction of more than 4,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions each year.



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The project also reduces the transportation, handling, and storage of fossil fuels in a remote northern environment while improving local air quality and supporting longer-term energy resilience. Reducing reliance on diesel also lowers risks associated with fuel transportation and storage in environmentally sensitive northern regions. Beyond environmental benefits, the project is expected to generate significant long-term economic value for the community through local ownership and revenue generation. Under a long-term power purchase agreement with Hydro-Québec, revenues generated through the project are expected to support future community priorities and investments over the coming decades.

Community leaders have identified opportunities to reinvest future revenues into infrastructure, training, cultural initiatives, youth programming, language preservation, and broader community development priorities. The project is also helping create local capacity and experience in energy governance, operations, and infrastructure management.

For many involved, the significance of the project extends beyond infrastructure alone. Innavik Hydro reflects a broader shift toward Indigenous equity participation and leadership in Canada's clean energy transition — one where communities are not simply project stakeholders, but owners, decision-makers, and long-term beneficiaries.

As communities across Canada continue exploring pathways toward cleaner and more resilient energy systems, Inukjuak's experience offers an important example of how Indigenous ownership, long-term partnership, and community-driven development can support both energy transition and economic reconciliation in practice.



Beyond environmental benefits, the project is expected to generate significant long-term economic value for the community

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# Equity Ownership in Practice

BC Hydro has announced the outcome of its 2025 Call for Power, and the Crown utility has awarded EPAs to four winning proposals, all of which have majority ownership positions from BC First Nations.

The selected projects represent more than \$2 billion in Indigenous equity participation, supported in part by financing from the Canada Infrastructure Bank. The results of the 2025 Call build on similar results from BC Hydro's 2024 Call for Power, where 10 winning projects were selected, and all of them had at least 49 per cent First Nations ownership. The BC Hydro First Nations economic participation model is increasingly being viewed as an example of how Indigenous Nations can participate as owners and long-term partners in utility-scale generation projects.



**\$2B**  
in Indigenous  
equity  
participation



**4**  
winning proposals  
in the 2025 Call  
for Power



**49%+**  
First Nations  
ownership

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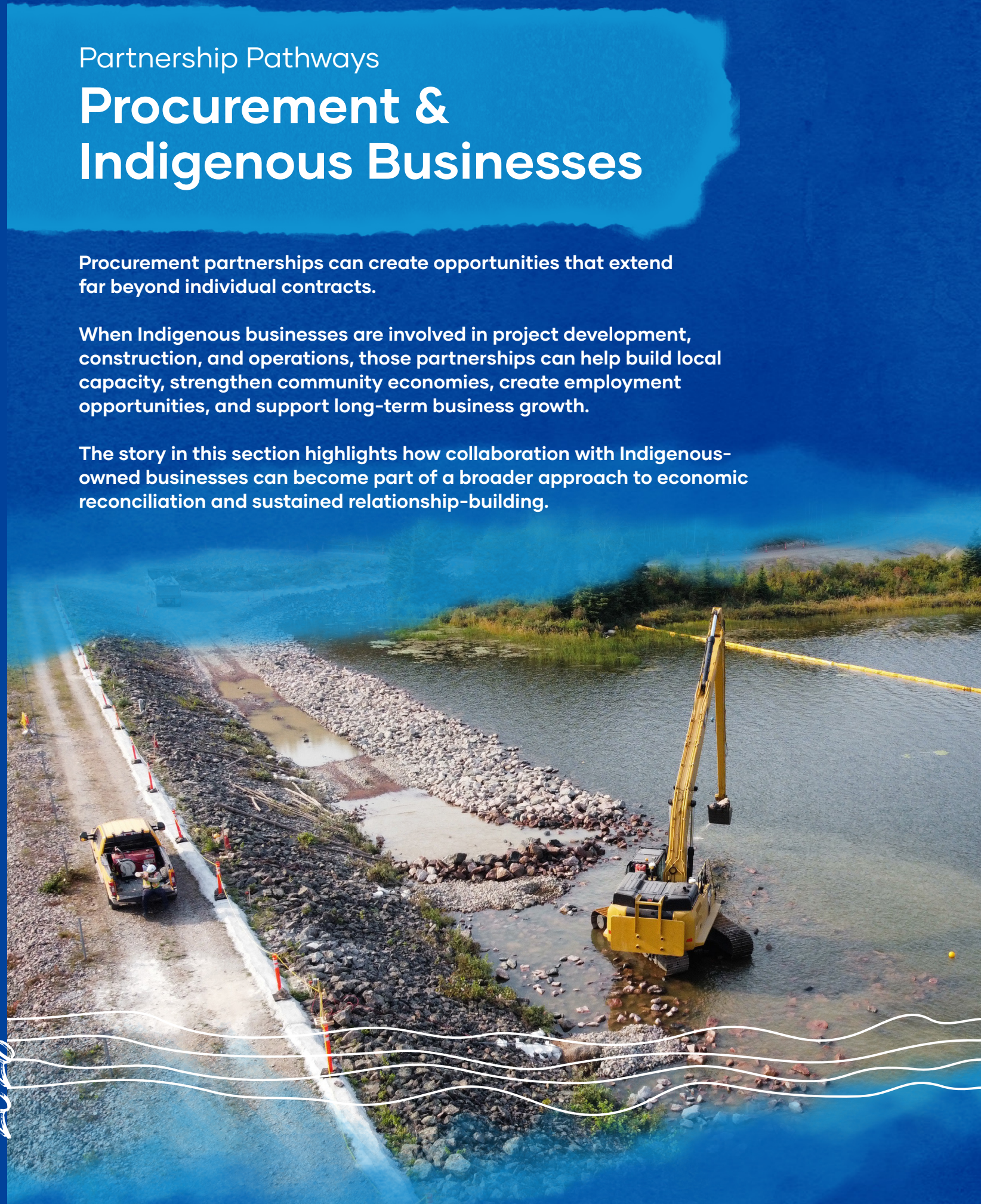
# Procurement & Indigenous Businesses

Procurement partnerships can create opportunities that extend far beyond individual contracts.

When Indigenous businesses are involved in project development, construction, and operations, those partnerships can help build local capacity, strengthen community economies, create employment opportunities, and support long-term business growth.

The story in this section highlights how collaboration with Indigenous-owned businesses can become part of a broader approach to economic reconciliation and sustained relationship-building.

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## PROCUREMENT & INDIGENOUS BUSINESSES

# Wabaseemoong Independent Nations and Kiewit: On the English River

Along the English River in Whitedog, Ontario, there is a 20,000 square metre public area that did not exist before this project began. It has a pavilion for community gatherings, two water-access docks and a boat launch, a fishing hut, and a playground. It was not in the original scope of a dam rehabilitation project. It exists because Kiewit Corporation chose to see the work as something larger than the work itself.

Ontario Power Generation operates the Caribou and Whitedog Generating Stations on Wabaseemoong territory, and the aging infrastructure that supports them requires ongoing maintenance and rehabilitation to remain safe and reliable. When Kiewit arrived in the region in 2019, it inherited not just a set of technical requirements but a community relationship that OPG had been building for years. What Kiewit chose to do with that context shaped everything that followed. The partnership grew through sustained presence, ongoing engagement, and a shared understanding that successful delivery means more than meeting schedule and budget targets. Over several years in the region, Kiewit built a strong relationship with the Wabaseemoong community by showing up consistently, listening carefully, and taking the time to understand local priorities and culture.



This hands-on, community-focused approach helped build trust, strengthen communication, and create a foundation for lasting partnership throughout the project. Rather than approaching the work as a conventional construction assignment, the team focused on building a partnership that reflected community values and local needs, investing time both on and off the jobsite to learn from community members and build stronger personal connections.

The collaboration evolved through practical action. Kiewit did not limit its role to delivering technical project scope. The team also looked for ways to support the broader community, whether through sponsorships, community improvements, or responsive help following local weather-related damage.

Each partner brought something essential to the relationship. Kiewit contributed project delivery expertise, long-term regional experience, and a commitment to creating tangible local benefits. Wabaseemoong Independent Nations brought local knowledge, community priorities, and the perspective needed to ensure the work reflected what mattered most to residents. That combination helped shape a project approach that balanced technical performance with cultural awareness, employment opportunity, and lasting community value.



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From a construction standpoint, the English River Dam Rehabilitation Project successfully completed three complex dam rehabilitations ahead of schedule and under budget, while prioritizing safety, environmental protection, and minimal disruption to the surrounding area. The work exceeded quality expectations and demonstrated that strong collaboration can improve both project performance and community outcomes.

**The relationship also evolved through direct economic participation. The project created meaningful employment opportunities for Indigenous workers, who completed 36 per cent of total self-performed hours. This level of participation reflects a deliberate commitment to building local capability and ensuring that community members were active participants in the work taking place on their lands.**

The project also supported individual growth, helping people progress from apprentices to journeypersons and strengthening long-term workforce capacity within the region.

Kiewit awarded 50 per cent of the project scope to a local Indigenous contractor, helping create direct economic opportunity and supporting local business growth. These were not side initiatives. They were central elements of the way the project was delivered. By embedding workforce participation and Indigenous procurement into project execution from the outset, the partnership reinforced the value of procurement as a pathway to partnership, demonstrating how infrastructure projects can contribute to community economic development when local businesses are positioned to play a meaningful role.



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“The pavilion will become a central gathering place for Wabaseemoong families, providing opportunities for cultural learning, outdoor recreation, fishing activities, family celebrations, community events, youth engagement, elder teachings, and health & wellness activities. The pavilion will help strengthen community connections, preserve cultural traditions, and create a welcoming space for future generations”

**Roanna Carpenter Jourdain,**  
Council Member, Wabaseemoong  
Independent Nations

The gathering space along the river is the most visible expression of that philosophy. Beyond the public area itself, Kiewit supported local traditions and recreation by sponsoring the annual fishing derby and the Wabaseemoong slow-pitch team, the Neechie's — investments in community life that sit well outside a contractor's typical scope. When severe weather damaged the area, the team contributed to road repairs and ditch brushing to help the community recover.



‘Wabaseemoong pavilion was visioned by our leaders so Wabaseemoong members can come together, doing life together and passing down teachings to our future generation. Our traditional ways of life will continue to go stronger for years to come’

**Colleen Paishk,**  
Community Member,  
Wabaseemoong Independent Nations



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## PROCUREMENT & INDIGENOUS BUSINESSES



"We're proud that this project created meaningful opportunities for Indigenous workers and businesses while also delivering lasting community improvements. That combination reflects what is possible when partnership, respect and shared benefit are treated as essential to project delivery."

**Julien Laplante**  
Project Manager, Kiewit

These outcomes show a partnership that delivered more than a completed project. It helped strengthen local relationships, support economic participation, improve community infrastructure, and create a positive legacy grounded in trust and shared benefit. Looking ahead, this work points to future opportunities to deepen Indigenous workforce participation, expand the role of Indigenous businesses in project delivery, and continue developing infrastructure in ways that reflect community priorities and long-term benefit.

The long-term opportunity is not only to repeat this model on future projects, but to keep strengthening how partnerships are built from the outset — so that integrating local employment, Indigenous procurement, community investment, and relationship-building into project execution becomes standard practice, not the exception.



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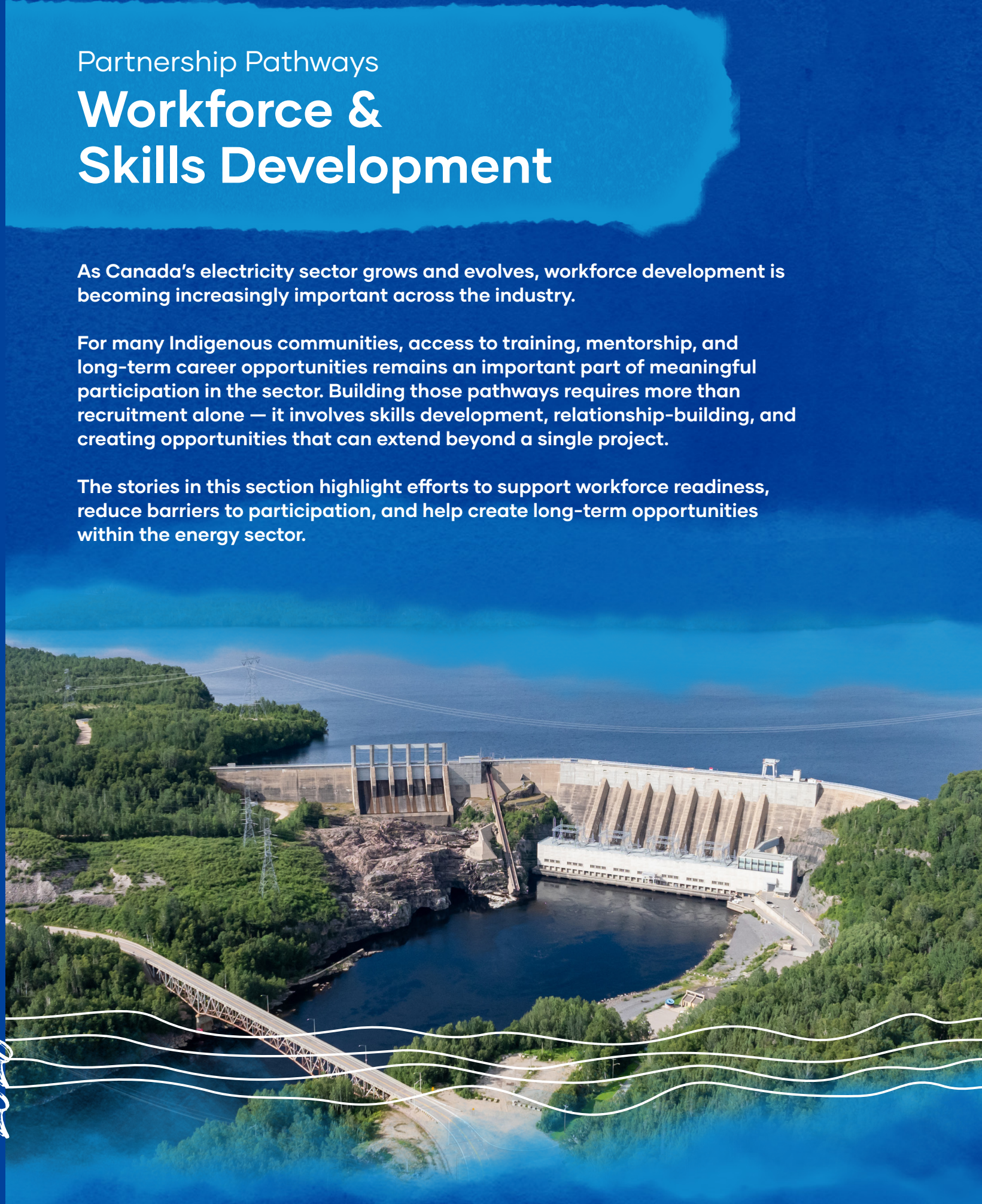
## Partnership Pathways

# Workforce & Skills Development

As Canada's electricity sector grows and evolves, workforce development is becoming increasingly important across the industry.

For many Indigenous communities, access to training, mentorship, and long-term career opportunities remains an important part of meaningful participation in the sector. Building those pathways requires more than recruitment alone — it involves skills development, relationship-building, and creating opportunities that can extend beyond a single project.

The stories in this section highlight efforts to support workforce readiness, reduce barriers to participation, and help create long-term opportunities within the energy sector.



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## Hydro-Québec: Entering a New Era

In December 2025, a group of children in the village of Kitcisakik lit a Christmas tree. It was a simple act, and in most communities it would go unremarked. In Kitcisakik, it marked the beginning of a new era for this Anicinape community located in Abitibi-Témiscamingue.

For decades, the residents of Kitcisakik did not have access to public electricity service. Thanks to the construction of a distribution line between the village and Hydro-Québec's grid, and the conversion of the electrical systems of their buildings, community members can now count on a reliable supply of electricity from a renewable source. The celebration brought together the Anicinapek Council, some 500 community members, and representatives from Hydro-Québec, the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit, the Société d'habitation du Québec, and Indigenous Services Canada — a gathering that reflected just how many years of work, and how many partners, it took to make this moment possible.

Forged over three years of work by three levels of government, the Animiki Ickote project — the Anishinaabe word for “electricity” — culminated in that symbolic and moving moment on the village square.

“This day marks a historic moment in Kitcisakik's history: our community is entering a new era with great enthusiasm. The arrival of electricity will make daily life easier for the members of Kitcisakik,” says Édouard Brazeau, Chief of the Conseil des Anicinapek de Kitcisakik.

For the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador, the moment carried weight beyond the village itself.

“Connecting the Anicinapek community of Kitcisakik to Hydro-Québec's electricity grid in 2025 paves the way for sustainable opportunities, the right to live free from discrimination, and a future based on autonomy and dignity,” says Francis Verreault-Paul, Chief of the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador.



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## WORKFORCE & SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The Kitcisakik connection is one of the tangible outcomes of a broader shift in how Hydro-Québec is approaching its relationships with Indigenous communities. In December 2024, the company published its [Strategy for Economic Reconciliation and to Strengthen Relations with First Nations and Inuit](#), developed in a spirit of cooperation and dialogue and guided by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Hydro-Québec's vision of reconciliation rests on two primary pillars: addressing the repercussions of the past, and building partnerships based on mutual trust and respect, with a view to ensuring a successful energy transition in Québec.

The strategy's initiatives are organized around four themes: participation and economic benefits; environment, land and resources; labour and employment; and ongoing relations and customer services. While a primary goal is to implement concrete actions that promote the economic, social and cultural development of Indigenous communities, the strategy also aims to make Hydro-Québec a more open and inclusive organization for its Indigenous employees, customers, suppliers and partners. Among its key initiatives, some of its efforts focused on reliable electricity supply and Indigenous workforce development and employment, stand out in particular.



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Hydro-Québec seeks to develop its Indigenous workforce and support the acquisition of key skills that will enable employees to advance at every organizational level, including in management and governance positions. As part of its efforts to make workplace practices more culturally sensitive and reduce barriers to employment, the company created a cohort of Indigenous employees in its customer relations centre — an initiative grounded in cultural safety. Specific training and employment agreements have also been reached with the Atikamekw Council of Wemotaci and with the Nutashkuan Innu First Nation.

Hydro-Québec is committed to implementing various measures and initiatives to facilitate access to training for members of Indigenous communities, as well as for its Indigenous employees. The goal is to enable Indigenous employees to hold meaningful jobs, which means having access to the required training and knowledge. To support this, a team of eight people offers individualized support to Indigenous colleagues throughout their professional careers, from hiring to retirement, so that they can achieve their full potential and feel comfortable within the Hydro-Québec team.

Sophie Mathers, a First Nations and Inuit Workforce Advisor who has lived in Nunavik for many years, is active in raising awareness of the diverse job opportunities at Hydro-Québec and in promoting training, teaching and academic perseverance among Indigenous youth.



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"We participate in various training forums and job fairs. Indigenous youth have a strong interest in science and technology. They also like the idea of combining technologies, expertise and employment in the region. We try to inspire them, create relationships and encourage them to train for these jobs," she says.

As part of her work, Sophie has more and more opportunities to provide awareness training to non-Indigenous employees.

"Recently, I was giving a training to workers from the Québec City region who will be going to work in Nunavik. I was joined by an Inuit operator to provide this training. It's a great opportunity to discuss our perceptions and specific workplace situations. It's a mutual learning experience, and by having these conversations in the workplace, we're making reconciliation tangible," she says.



"I had set a goal of working at Hydro-Québec, and my internships only strengthened that ambition. My role allows me to combine my interests while contributing to the energy transition and Québec's energy development, as well as creating opportunities for collaboration with Indigenous communities."

**Sara-Jane Hunt**  
Hydro Quebec

In 2025, Hydro-Québec offered 16 internships to Indigenous college and university students, boosting the number of Indigenous interns hosted since the program's launch in 2022 to a total of 43. Support is offered to these students to enhance their experience and facilitate their integration, through an affinity group created by and for Indigenous employees.

Through this program, two trainees went on to join Hydro-Québec as professionals in 2025.

During her undergraduate studies in chemical engineering, Sara-Jane Hunt developed a particular interest in renewable energy, especially hydrogen production. A member of the Mi'gmaq community of Gespeg in Gaspésie, she now works within the unit responsible for wind energy project development, which occasionally leads her to work with her home community.

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Anne Michaud, whose family comes from the Mashteuiatsh community in the Lac-Saint-Jean region, completed two internships at Hydro-Québec during her university studies. She now works as part of the First Nations and Inuit Workforce team, a role that allows her to work closely every day with Indigenous employees across the organization.

In September 2024, Hydro-Québec proudly welcomed Victoria LaBillois from the Mi'gmaq community of Listuguj onto its Board of Directors, making her the first Indigenous person to serve in that role.



"During my internships, I enthusiastically contributed to several initiatives, including helping establish the company's AutoQtone affinity group. This discussion space offers Indigenous employees a voluntary support network and gathering space led by and for Indigenous employees."

**Anne Michaud**  
Hydro-Québec

One of the best ways to achieve reconciliation is to work together, on a day-to-day basis, as Indigenous and non-Indigenous colleagues. Cultivating open and respectful conversations and getting to know each other better are key to making these commitments a reality and having a real impact within the organization and in the communities it serves.

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# Manitoba Hydro: Building skills, creating opportunity

On a cold morning at a training site in Manitoba, a group of participants gathers around a transmission tower structure, learning how to assemble the components that will one day carry electricity across the province. For some, it is their first time on a construction site. For others, it is the next step in a growing career. For all of them, it is a pathway into an industry that is rapidly evolving and actively working to be more inclusive.

**Working together with Indigenous Nations, Manitoba Hydro is helping connect interested community members to employment opportunities associated with major transmission construction projects. Pre-project Tower Assembly workshops support workforce readiness and help promote long-term project benefits by building local capacity and strengthening the pool of skilled workers available to transmission line contractors.**

The initiative grew out of early engagement with Indigenous Nations in proximity to upcoming Manitoba Hydro transmission line projects. The message was consistent: members wanted to be directly involved in the work. That interest shaped the program. Manitoba Hydro brings extensive experience in the construction of transmission towers and recognizes that skills development is essential to supporting safe, effective, and sustained Indigenous participation in the sector.

Training opportunities like the Tower Assembly workshops are designed to be a starting point on a longer career journey — an entry point that opens doors to further employment and allows workers to carry their skills and experience forward as their careers develop.



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## WORKFORCE & SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

In 2024, Manitoba Hydro delivered Tower Assembly training workshops with members from Black River First Nation, Brokenhead Ojibway Nation, Fox Lake Cree Nation, Peguis First Nation, Sagkeeng Anicinabe Nation, and Tataskweyak Cree Nation. Delivered primarily over two days, the workshops provided both classroom and hands-on training that prepared participants for tower assembly work on transmission projects, while strengthening relationships with Indigenous Nations. As part of the classroom portion participants received a safety orientation, gained knowledge about safety processes on transmission line projects, and gained basic understanding of the tower assembly process such as common tools used, rigging processes and reading tower drawings.

Through the hands-on training participants gained practical experience with transmission tower assembly, including implementation of safe work procedures, interpretation of tower drawings, use of tools and rigging, and hands-on assembly of key components.

Participants who successfully completed the workshop and evaluation received certificates of completion, recognizing their foundational skills and experience in transmission tower assembly. Across the six participating communities, 75 participants took part in the workshops. 74 successfully completed the training. Tower assembly work is typically carried out by external contractors.

"Manitoba Hydro has a strong record working with our contractors to promote Indigenous opportunities on transmission construction projects," says Duane Hatley, Construction Community Liaison.

With Indigenous hires making up 42 to 47 per cent of the workforce on recent transmission projects, this initiative is helping translate training into real employment outcomes and lasting community connections. Manitoba Hydro continues to engage with Indigenous Nations in relation to its transmission projects, fostering ongoing dialogue and strengthening relationships throughout project development and delivery.



"Before we come outside and start assembling a tower, we go through the blueprints. If you haven't dealt with design drawings before, it can seem a little bit intimidating. But once we get the students rolling and have them come out and actually see how that drawing corresponds with the pieces they are putting together, you can build that understanding."

### Wade Duncan

Construction Engineering Technician



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## Partnership Pathways

# Long-Term Operations & Stewardship

Hydroelectric infrastructure shapes landscapes and communities for generations. As a result, relationships between utilities and Indigenous communities continue long after construction is complete.

The story in this section reflects how stewardship can take many forms — from environmental programming and cultural education to community collaboration and long-term relationship-building. It also highlights how shared spaces, local knowledge, and ongoing engagement can help strengthen connections between people, place, and infrastructure over time.



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## LONG-TERM OPERATIONS & STEWARDSHIP

# What the Garden Teaches: Honouring First Nations Knowledge Through Partnership

On the Cornwall Waterfront Trail, just outside Ontario Power Generation's (OPG) Saunders Hydro Dam Visitor Centre, there is a garden that asks visitors to slow down and connect with local ecology and Indigenous traditional knowledge. It has a medicine garden and a butterfly garden, a drying shed where traditional plant processing is demonstrated, an overlook shelter designed to showcase elements of a Haudenosaunee longhouse, and a feature honouring the Haudenosaunee creation story. It is tended, in part, by school children from the Akwesasne and Cornwall communities and supported by interpretative plaques in Mohawk, English and French.

This did not begin as a garden. It began as a question about reconciliation - about what reconciliation might look like in a place where a hydroelectric station has shaped the landscape for generations. From that question grew a community space that honours local Indigenous culture by thoughtfully integrating culturally significant elements and educational features. The result is an outdoor learning environment with interpretive features designed to encourage reflection, deepen understanding and spark curiosity.

OPG developed the Saunders Hydro Dam Visitor Centre garden in two phases: The first completed in summer 2022 and the second in summer 2024 through a partnership with the Iroquois Sullivan Joint Venture - a collaboration between Iroquois Consulting Group, an Akwesasne-based business and M. Sullivan & Son Limited. A significant portion of the work was completed by local Indigenous subcontractors. Plant selection was developed in close collaboration with representatives from the Akwesasne community to ensure the chosen species were appropriate for the local landscape and meaningful to Indigenous cultural teachings.

"In planning this project, we consulted with the Akwesasne community on different plant species and how they were traditionally used to ensure the garden is representative of Indigenous culture and practices," said Codie Lonsberry, Senior Manager Projects at R.H. Saunders.

The aim from the outset was a garden capable of sharing the history of the land, being part of the present, and supporting the transfer of cultural teachings into the future. The garden enables OPG to host knowledge sharing about traditional medicines, including processing in the drying shed. The overlook shelter hosts teachings about the traditional longhouse system. A favourite among school groups has been the Mother Earth / Great Tree of Peace feature, which has hosted retellings of the Haudenosaunee creation story from Akwesasne community members. The planting of a Three Sisters garden is another example of the interactive learning opportunities the space creates for school-aged children.



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## LONG-TERM OPERATIONS & STEWARDSHIP

"Projects like this demonstrate how meaningful partnerships can create spaces that honour First Nations knowledge, language, and culture while providing opportunities for education and understanding for future generations. This garden helps share our stories and knowledge in a way that is accessible to both our community and visitors alike," noted Mohawk Council of Akwesasne Tsi Snaihne District Chief Sarah Diabo.

The decision to include Mohawk on each interpretive plaque was a central element to the partnership. It honours the deep cultural ties to the land and underscores the importance of local Indigenous language in sharing these stories. A digital guided interpretation tool, PlantSoon, is also being developed to further enrich the visitor experience by helping people explore the garden and learn about the flora found within them, serving as a launchpad for discovery. The garden also contributes to local biodiversity, creating habitats that attract pollinating insects and birds.

The project created tangible economic benefits for the Akwesasne community through a contracting strategy that supported subcontracting to Indigenous-owned businesses and Indigenous employment. Economic impact plays a meaningful role in the reconciliation journey, but as OPG describes it, it is not the only thing. Supporting cultural visibility, education, and community engagement matters as much as the economic outcomes. By working with the Iroquois Sullivan Joint Venture, the project has created a living classroom and community space shaped by the contributions of many partners.

"This project has only expanded our belief in the importance of showcasing the traditional knowledge and natural resources that have been a vital part of the Akwesasne and Cornwall communities for centuries," said Kelly Mitchell, CEO of the Iroquois Sullivan Joint Venture.

OPG works regularly with the Native North American Traveling College and the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne (MCA) Environment Program, as well as local schools from both Akwesasne and Cornwall to bring together history, culture, and environmental knowledge in the accessible setting of the garden, right on the Cornwall Waterfront Trail.

The gardens have created an opportunity to continue building new partnerships, particularly with local schools in both Akwesasne and Cornwall, enabling cross-cultural conversations that cannot be replicated in a typical classroom setting. The gardens offer something different: a visible, accessible way to showcase environmental initiatives and foster impactful connections between OPG's environmental programming staff and Indigenous communities.



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"It has been rewarding and encouraging to see the Elders, traditional knowledge experts, OPG staff, local sub-trades, consultants, and the joint venture collaborate on this project that is very important to the communities of Akwesasne and Cornwall," said Jeremiah Point of Point Engineering, an Akwesasne company that oversaw subcontracting on the project.

Building on the Saunders experience, the Iroquois Sullivan Joint Venture has continued to support OPG on other projects. This continues to be a key avenue for supporting meaningful employment from the Akwesasne community and is one way of helping reduce barriers to participation in the energy sector.

As the garden matures, the opportunities they create for deeper environmental programming, expanded cross-cultural education, and stronger community connections will grow with them.

Hydroelectric generating stations are long-lived assets that shape the landscape for generations. OPG embraces its role as a responsible environmental steward, and the garden project stands as a visible expression of that commitment. This long-term responsibility guides the company's decisions and actions, helping it earn the trust of the people it serves and maintain the privilege to operate in communities across Ontario.

At the Saunders Hydro Dam Visitor Centre, the gardens extend this commitment into a space that invites learning, dialogue and connection. They create meaningful conversations about why environmental stewardship is essential to OPG's operations and inspire the next generation to carry that legacy forward. They also remind us that stewardship is not only about protecting the world around us – it's also about understanding our place within a much larger ecological story.



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# Reflections & Shared Insights

The partnerships in this report are different from each other in almost every way — different communities, different regions, different histories, different approaches. That variety is the point. There is no single model for what meaningful partnership looks like.

Across all of them, certain themes hold.



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## REFLECTIONS & SHARED INSIGHTS

Relationships take time. None of these partnerships happened quickly. Trust is not established through a single agreement or project milestone — it is earned through sustained effort and continued presence within communities, often over many years. In many cases, the partnerships featured in this report were built through ongoing dialogue, repeated collaboration, and a willingness to adapt as priorities evolved. The result is a reminder that strong relationships are not a prerequisite to the work; they are often one of its most important outcomes.

Indigenous participation in the energy sector is also expanding in meaningful ways. Indigenous Nations and communities are shaping projects through ownership, business development, workforce participation, stewardship, and collaborative governance — not through a single pathway, but through many, often working together. What each community pursued was shaped by its own priorities, circumstances, and vision for the future. These stories suggest that meaningful participation is becoming increasingly diverse, reflecting a broader shift toward partnership models that create opportunities for communities to influence, benefit from, and help guide energy development over the long term.

Another theme is the growing recognition that partnership extends beyond project delivery. While infrastructure may be the catalyst, many of the outcomes highlighted in this report reach far beyond the asset itself; supporting skills development, local business growth, cultural revitalization, environmental stewardship, and community capacity-building. In this sense, energy projects increasingly serve as platforms for broader community priorities rather than ends in themselves.

Long-term thinking runs through all of it. Hydroelectric facilities operate for generations, and the relationships surrounding them often do as well.

Many of the partnerships featured here were built with future generations in mind through training opportunities, revenue generation, environmental stewardship, cultural revitalization, and community capacity-building. The infrastructure may be the occasion, but the relationships are the work.

Reconciliation is not something that gets completed. Progress is rarely linear, and meaningful partnership requires humility, accountability, and continued learning from all sides. Challenges remain. At the same time, the examples in this report reflect a broader evolution in how partnership is being approached across the sector — one increasingly grounded in collaboration, shared benefit, and long-term relationship-building. While each path forward will look different, the direction is clear: toward partnerships that are more collaborative, more community-driven, and built to last.



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Canada's energy future will require new infrastructure, expanded transmission systems, long-term investment, and strong partnerships capable of adapting to changing environmental, economic, and community priorities.

Indigenous Nations and communities will continue to play a central role in shaping that future.



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## LOOKING AHEAD

Across the country, Indigenous partners are increasingly advancing their own priorities through ownership, stewardship, workforce participation, business development, and leadership within the energy sector. At the same time, utilities, developers, governments, and industry organizations are continuing to adapt their approaches as expectations around partnership evolve.

The work ahead will not always be simple. Building and sustaining meaningful relationships requires time, trust, accountability, and ongoing dialogue. But the stories in this report also demonstrate what becomes possible when partnerships are approached with long-term commitment and mutual respect.

Supporting this work means continuing to create space for dialogue, shared learning, and relationship-building across the sector. It also means recognizing that Indigenous partnership is not separate from Canada's clean energy future — it is fundamental to it.

The work ahead will look different from one community to the next. What remains constant is the importance of relationships built on trust, respect, and a commitment to shared success. As Canada's clean energy future continues to take shape, those relationships will remain fundamental to the path forward.



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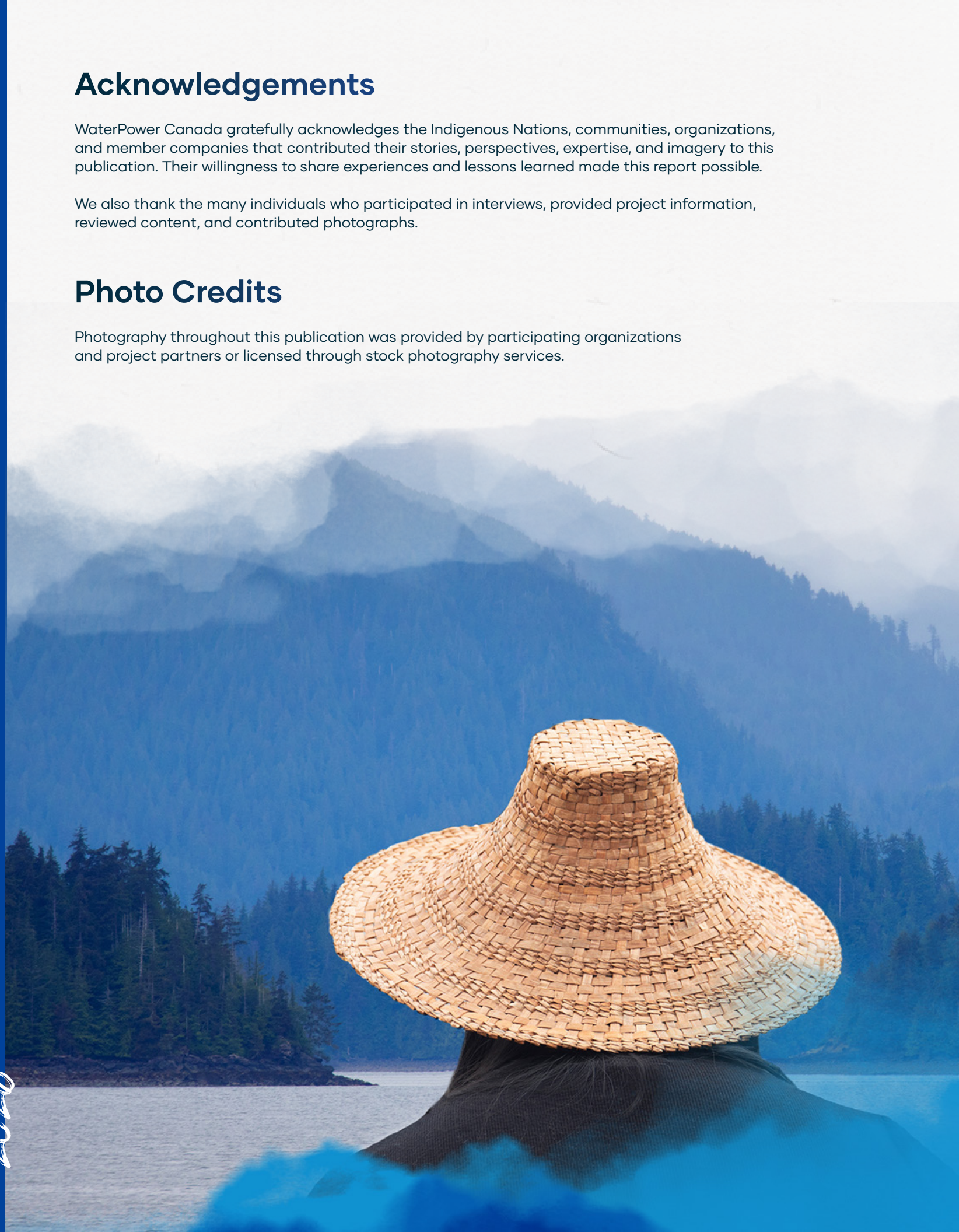
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