

## NET METERING PROGRAM HELPS CUSTOMERS OFFSET ELECTRICAL LOAD

*December 17, 2012  
Business; Environment*

BC Hydro's Net Metering customers are some of the most creative and committed when it comes to developing innovative projects to offset their electrical load.

"BC Hydro strives to make the interconnection process as simple as possible to enable our Net Metering customers to take control of their energy use," said [Alevtina Akbulatova](#), Net Metering Specialist. "We do this by providing an opportunity for one-on-one discussions with customers so that we better understand their expectations to achieve self-generation."

The Net Metering program has been in place since 2004 and currently has 200 participating customers. The residential and small commercial customers offset their electrical load first and, then sell any excess energy back to BC Hydro.

Below are three stories depicting how some of BC Hydro's Net Metering customers take advantage of this program in order to live sustainably.

### [Ann and Gord Baird: Living a sustainable lifestyle on Vancouver Island](#)

About eight years ago, Gord and Ann Baird, embarked on a new journey with Gord's two young children, and Ann's parents. Their goal was to build a sustainable home for their new multigenerational family. They wanted to demonstrate that a low carbon home and lifestyle was not only possible, but highly desirable.

"Using solar energy to power our sustainable home and lifestyle fit our values of living within the local limits of what nature provides," said Ann.

Eco-Sense, as they call their home, is an award winning home featuring solar Photovoltaic (PV), solar thermal hot water, energy and water conservation, composting toilets, rainwater harvesting, grey-water re-use, living roof, earthen floors, food gardens and chickens, all integrated into their exceptionally beautiful and affordable example of earthen architecture.



*Above: The Baird's home.*

It was important to the Bairds to fuel their home and lifestyle with renewable sustainable energy from the sun. Going with a grid tie system allowed for fewer solar panels and they could sell their extra electricity to BC Hydro in the summer, and then buy back some electricity in the winter. However, the Baird's produce more electricity than they consume on an annual basis.

The couple consults on system design and gives regular tours of their home to groups including building officials, politicians, schools groups, bankers, social activists, engineers and architects.



*Above: The Baird family at Eco-Sense.*

### [Community Greenhouse: Sustainable living in Invermere](#)

Bill Swan has been working in the renewable energy sector for eight years from his base in Invermere. Bill, a project leader with Groundswell Network Society, partnered with the David Thompson Secondary School (DTSS) to realize a common objective: to encourage greater food security in their community while maintaining a low carbon footprint.

A community garden concept was an obvious choice, however, with a school's schedule, leaving the garden untended all summer long was not an option. The two parties combined their efforts to develop a community greenhouse to create awareness around the environmental and cost issues associated with food production and transportation, and the value of growing food close to its end customer.

The greenhouse itself is a sustainable structure that utilizes a rain water catchment and water recycling system, as well as harnessing solar energy through various processes. The greenhouse is a 2.5 kW solar PV project that continues to expand. This community of motivated students and individuals continue to fundraise to increase the size of the

project. Bill believes that this type of investment changes the way that people relate to their own energy consumption and results in improved energy management.

This model provides students, teachers and the community with an understanding of the value of growing food locally and sustainably. The facility has had over 6,000 visitors.



*Above: Invermere's community greenhouse.*

### [T'Sou-ke First Nation solar projects demonstrate solar options for the community](#)

The T'Sou-ke First Nation on Vancouver Island wanted to use solar energy to power three large structures on reserve. With sponsorship from B.C.'s Innovative Clean Energy fund and Day4Energy, the 75 kW project became a reality.

"Using solar energy is consistent with First Nations traditions and values. This project demonstrates that First Nations can take a prominent role in leading the way back to living sustainably," said Chief Gordon Planes.

Ed Knaggs, with Home Energy Solutions (HES) PV, took a unique approach to the project that included a three-month training program offered to interested T'sou-ke First Nation members, who then worked side-by-side with the contractor to install solar on the three buildings.

These four separate projects demonstrate a variety of systems: the Canoe Shed, a 40 kW project with a straight grid-tie; the Band Administration office, a 22 kW ground mounted PV

with an additional 7 kW on the roof utilizes a grid tie with a back-up battery for storing unused solar energy; and, the Fisheries building, a 6 kW call to grid net metering project.

“This project was more than a typical PV installation because we were welcomed into a society that cares about their future,” explained Ed. “The people from T’Sou-ke nation were some of the best I’ve ever worked with and we remain friends to this day.”

The project has been so successful that the T’sou-ke First Nation offers tours to schools and governments from across Canada, as well as in Europe.



*Above: A T’Sou-ke First Nation solar project.*

Learn more about the Net Metering program, please visit [bchydro.com/netmetering](http://bchydro.com/netmetering).