



Bridge River Newsletter

Capital Projects Update—Fall 2023

The Casper Creek wildfire burning in the background of the Bridge 2 powerhouse on Seton Lake (July 2023).

Cooperation and coordination on Casper Creek wildfire

I wanted to take a moment to acknowledge the incredible effort in response to the Casper Creek and Downton wildfires performed by BC Wildfire Services, Tsal'alh Nation, the Squamish Lillooet Regional District's protective services, BC Hydro's emergency management team as well as operations and transmission crews on the ground, elected officials and residents.

Thank you to everyone and our thoughts are with you during this time of recovery,
Whitney Deane, BC Hydro Community Relations/Stakeholder Engagement BC Hydro.

We came, you talked, we listened: Bridge River brings enthusiasm to engage in Access & Accommodation studies

A warm welcome from Lillooet and the Upper Bridge River Valley as residents turned out to our open houses in June for the Bridge River Capital projects and the Access & Accommodations studies for the area.

The studies are looking at transportation, access to site, worker accommodation, and socio-economic impacts including business opportunities. It's an important opportunity to better understand how we operate in the region and find collaborative solutions.

The person who spotted the need for these studies was LaJoie Dam Improvement project manager Zeljko Cecic, who brought on the area's Indigenous Relations lead, Robyn Spencer to help with getting this off the ground.

The following Q&A is edited for brevity.

Whitney Deane: Where did the idea for an access and accommodation study come from?

Zeljko Cecic: LaJoie is in a unique location in that it's very remote. We realized there were going to be challenges with accessing the site given the size of the project. We wanted to have a holistic view of the trade-offs of access versus accommodation. It is important to get a full picture view of what is possible to support the project.

WD: When was the moment you knew we needed a study?

ZC: I think it evolved over time. I recognized this was a major challenge and that it was different than most, if not all BC Hydro projects. Having Robyn take over, she's brought in a different aspect to the role where we are really engaging with St'át'imc and stakeholders more wholesomely. I think that's been positive.

What does access and accommodation mean for these studies?

Access: Transporting materials, equipment and people to and from work sites.

Accommodation: Accommodation for workers as well as services and supplies (e.g., site services, food, amenities, etc)

Robyn Spencer: I think we understand that you can't know what this is going to feel like for these communities unless you talk to the people that live there. We know there's a lot of different voices in these communities and you just need to get in there and start talking to people to figure out what people think about these projects, how it's going to feel for them in their everyday lives while we have this work happening.

WD: The study wraps up in 2024. What does it look like in the end?

ZC: We're looking for clarity on our path forward, and openness about how we got there. We want to be able to communicate openly to everybody on how people will get to site, and where they will stay. Based on some of the mixed feedback we've gotten from stakeholders, there might be decisions that all people are in agreement with, but we do want to be able to describe why we made decisions and how we are trying to mitigate some of the concerns that were expressed.

WD: Any conversations that stuck out at the open houses for you or gave you new insight into the area and people's concerns?

ZC: For me it was just the surprising interest, it was just amazing. It was nice to see people coming out and wanting to engage with us and wanting to share their thoughts. That was the big takeaway for me.

RS: It was interesting to hear how much misinformation was out in the community. I heard a couple people talk about a 5–6,000–person camp, which is far from the actual numbers. It emphasized the importance of us being out there, with the right information, and making sure we are giving people the facts we know at the time, even though it's early and many things could change. It was amazing to see people come out and the passion that was there for making sure we do this in the right way. It's reinvigorated the project team and their approach to the work. Once you start meeting all the people, you appreciate more what's going on in these communities. It's what motivates you in the work you are doing.

The first Access & Accommodation studies survey closed July 14. Another survey is planned regarding on the emerging recommendations for the studies.

Note: In July, it was announced LaJoie Dam Improvement Project Manager Zeljko Cecic has accepted a new role within BC Hydro as a Manager, Indigenous Procurement and Business Development. Chris Garand is the Interim Project Manager.

Update on workforce forecast

BC Hydro's workforce in the Bridge River region can vary depending on project status.

- Last summer we been averaged approximately 40 workers in the area.
- We expect to maintain approximately 40 workers for the remainder of the year with most of the work completed mid–November
- Workers have been staying at existing facilities in Tsal'ah/Seton Portage.
- No additional accommodations are required for 2023 or 2024.

Our long–term workforce forecasts for the Bridge River Capital projects were released during our June open houses and will be updated annually. You can find that information in our open house materials and more at bchydro.com/bridgeriver.



Bridge River Capital Projects update and Access & Accommodation Studies open house, Gold Bridge (June, 2023)

Missed the open houses?

Find our storyboards here:

[Bridge River—LaJoie Access & Accomodation studies \(June 2023\)](#)

[Bridge River Capital Projects updates \(June 2023\)](#)

Site investigations this fall at Seton

Site investigations for the Seton Bypass project were completed this fall and included geo-technical drilling and geophysics work along the bypass route.

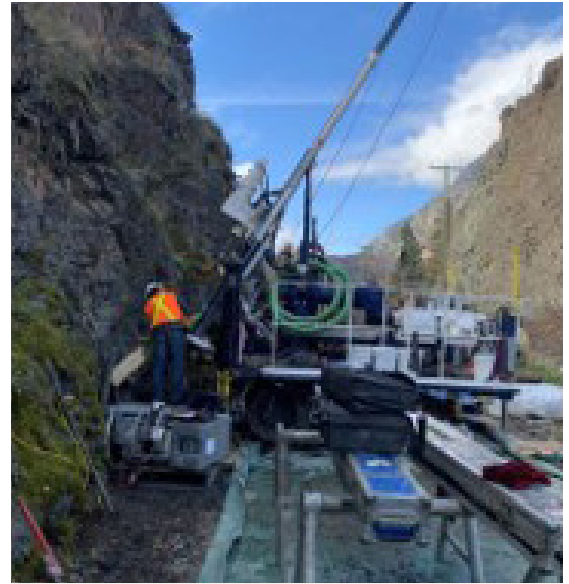
Senior Engineer for the project Kit Wellburn says they drilled six holes, “We drilled down in the lower area, right next to the powerhouse on the lower bench and and completed some drilling along Roshard Road.”

“The geophysics involves, essentially hitting a hammer against the ground and then measuring waves to get an idea how deep the bedrock is below ground.”

Environmental and archaeological field assessments are taking place this fall, within the proposed lay-down, staging and work areas.

The Seton bypass is expected to provide long-term benefits for water conveyance in the Bridge River system. The earliest construction would begin in the fall of 2025, with an in-service date anticipated for spring 2028.

For more information visit bchydro.com/seton



Crews drilling near the tie-in of the Seton bypass and canal (Sept. 2021).

Focus on skills: Based out of Beautiful Bridge

“I brought my family out for a tour and my oldest daughter said, ‘geez dad, you sure are lucky to work out here.’

Being based out of beautiful Bridge River was a goal ever since BC Hydro General Tradesperson Justin Radmacker started working for BC Hydro’s Vernon based Construction Services team in 2014.

“I worked all over the Southern Interior getting a lot of valuable experience while making some good memories and meeting lots of people. Bridge became one of my favourite areas to work in so when I saw the job posting come up for General Trades, I applied immediately.”

Radmacker received his Red Seal as a carpenter through the BC Trades apprenticeship program after some encouragement from a manager while framing houses in the Lower Mainland.

“I would say completing a trade is valuable. It seemed like I was doing the same job at the time in 2010, but once I had that Red Seal certification the job opportunities and wages increased dramatically.”

As General Tradesperson based out of Bridge, no day is typical, “The more constant jobs we have are civil dam inspections which happen on a weekly basis. There’s also a lot of reservoir level reading in our area as well as inspecting rock slopes and falling debris.”



BC Hydro General Tradesperson Justin Radmacker with his wife and three daughters (2023)

Community and connection in Bridge and beyond

Home for Radmacker is in Kamloops, “I have a wife and three daughters, 10, eight and six. It’s exciting and infuriating all at the same time but the rewards always outweigh the challenges.”

And with his shifts running four days on, three days off, staying connected to his family while in Bridge is important, “We recently got Starlink, so now I facetime them but before it was the good old landline and phone conversations. I ask them how they’re day is and listen to what they say.”

Bridge has a townsite that houses approximately 40 BC Hydro workers. Radmacker and his colleagues have worked to make the living space feel like home, “I can leave my food in the fridge, my clothes in the dresser. We have a tennis court, a playground, bicycles, gym, arcade, and a social house where we get together and have dinners, play board games, play pool and watch sports.”

And he’s been working on his green thumb, “My garden? It’s just outside the patio door. There was an old wooden box that was going to go in the garbage. I just grabbed it and filled it full of dirt and put some herbs and tomatoes and peppers in there and it’s doing well.”

The sense of community extends beyond their living quarters. We’d managed to catch Radmacker in the midst of preparing for a barbeque.

“This afternoon there’s a BC Hydro operations sponsored BBQ for the local school to celebrate National Indigenous People’s Day so we’re going to be up at the school. We’ll have some presentations, some lunch and some speeches. I really enjoy getting the opportunity to help with events like that.”

His message to others looking at getting into the business, “Get a red seal, join a union and start working with BC Hydro construction where you can get jobs all around the province.”

For more information visit [Careers \(bchydro.com\)](https://www.bchydro.com/careers)



Radmacker’s vegetable garden at the Bridge 1 townsite (June 2023)



Radmacker with Ravi Patel (top) and Wendi Simpson (bottom) at the National Indigenous Peoples Day barbeque at Sk’il Mountain School in Tasl’alh (June 2021)

For more information on Bridge River projects visit [bchydro.com/bridgeriver](https://www.bchydro.com/bridgeriver)

If you have questions, please contact us at projects@bchydro.com or 604 623 4472 or toll-free at 1 866 647 3334.

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