



Solar Panels Installed at Bowen Island Community School

Sept. 16, 2016 | BOWEN ISLAND, B.C. — Anyone driving past the Bowen Island Community School (BICS) recently may have noticed workers and equipment on the roof of the school. It's not just routine maintenance before students get back to school — the workers have been installing solar panels on the school's roof, to give BICS students and members of the Bowen Island community the chance to learn first-hand about renewable energy and electricity use.

In total, thirty solar panels make up the 7.95 kilowatt rack-mounted array being installed on the school's roof. This solar array is connected to the electricity grid, and similar in size to one that would be installed to power an average Bowen Island home. An accompanying software program will allow students to take real-time readings off the Internet to see how much power is being produced by their panels at any given time, and determine greenhouse gas emissions and energy savings. Learnings can be tied to a broad range of curricula, including science, technology, math, economics, biology, ecological literacy and sustainable communities.

There are only five other schools in the Vancouver area (including neighboring Rockridge Secondary School) and just one other elementary school (Admiral Seymour Elementary) that have installed solar panels. The system will belong to BICS and the energy produced will offset a small portion of the school's energy use. Other B.C. schools that have installed solar panels have anecdotally reported about a three-to-five per cent reduction in energy costs.

The BICS installation is part of a new program called [Solar Now](#), which aims to raise awareness about the viability of renewable energy by putting solar panels on prominent public infrastructure in and around Vancouver. Clean Energy Canada, a program of the Centre for Dialogue at Simon Fraser University, is leading the project from its Bowen Island office. The North Growth Foundation, under the direction of long-time Bowen Island homeowner Rudy North, launched the project with a generous matching challenge grant. The Bowen Island Community Foundation jumped on board with the first matching contribution of \$12,500 and the Knick Knack Nook has contributed \$6,500 from their environmental fund. The Great Climate Race, which is held annually in Vancouver in October, is another partner, as is the Community Energy Association. Altogether, these generous partners are contributing a total of \$44,000 to make this project possible.

QUOTES

"We are thrilled to be able to offer our students the chance to learn about and experience solar power first hand. The solar installation makes electricity visible to students in the forms of the panels themselves as well as the data that will be collected and displayed. The project is a strong statement to our students and community members that sustainability matters and that opportunities to live more sustainably must be seized."

— **Scott Slater, Principal, Bowen Island Community School**

"A lot of us have to see something to believe it — and the same goes for renewable energy. Our hope is that, as more people see solar panels close up, the more familiar they'll become with how renewable power works and how it could benefit them. Solar Now is about showcasing how the clean energy solutions we have available today can help solve the energy and climate challenges we face."

— **Merran Smith, Executive Director, Clean Energy Canada**

MEDIA RELEASE

“Solar Now is leading by example with practical ideas to tackle climate change. It has become evident that we can be independent of fossil fuels by 2050, by transitioning to solar, wind, smart grids and new storage technologies. The solar panel installation at BICS demonstrates that we have the technology, and encourages people to adopt it.”

— **Rudy North, Philanthropist, North Growth Foundation**

“Solar power keeps getting more affordable, and once you install the technology, the fuel — sunlight — is free. As homeowners and businesses invest in renewable energy, they start to pay more attention to how much electricity they use and produce — this often leads to greater ‘energy literacy’ and less energy being wasted in the long-run. Renewable energy is a sustainable and cost-effective way to meet our electricity needs, and it can help us combat climate change.”

— **Bill Swan, Project Director, Solar Now**

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Clean Energy Canada, a climate and energy think-tank based at Simon Fraser University's Centre for Dialogue, is partnering with Solar Now to provide communications, administrative and fundraising support. To learn more about Clean Energy Canada, go to cleanenergycanada.org or [visit the project web page](#).