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Living off the grid....

low utility costs for one homeowner

Determined not to have to face rising utility costs in the future, living off the grid for one homeowner is costing just 62.88 a month for heat and electricity.

Although setup costs have been high for landowner Shane Johnson and his wife out near Wabaman, the couple were facing \$27,000 just to have electricity hookup from a local power company on their acreage. That's when the couple decided to look at alternatives for electricity and gas hookups. Today they have spent \$29,200 to be living comfortably off the grid.

Not an electrician, but an oilfield accountant, Johnson has educated himself from reading and talking to hundreds of people about being independent from the utility companies. He admits to not being a power guru and doesn't know everything but says if he can do it, anyone can.

Set up in his shop are the three crucial elements required to supply Johnson's power needs – a generator, converter and batteries.

"But one also has to be aware of your power consumption. Anything that heats with electricity is inefficient," he says. His stove, hot water tank, dryer and furnace are fueled by propane. He runs his generator two hours every two days with his main goal now to reduce that generator time. To accomplish this his next step will be windmills and solar panels.

"When a person gets enough power from windmills and solar panels then the generator becomes just a backup."

As he points to the 7,200 hundred pound battery stack and the converter system on the wall in his large shop located next to his mobile home, (the couple are building a log cabin on site) he tells an audience of eight that, "With this setup I am the power company but I have to know everything to make power. If power went out in this province I'd be good here for 10 months."

"With this equipment I could be on top of a mountain, I can take it with me wherever I go, just plug it in when I get there." On Saturdays he explains to others who want to learn about living off the grid, Johnson puts on seminars for anyone interested in what he has learned so far for more information call 892-0132.

Highlights:

- When going off the grid power consumption has to be reduced.
- Having a switch to shut down all plugs that power the VCR, television and microwave that use power for clocks, timers, etc. Helps reduce power usage.
- Power is much purer and Johnson notices lights are much brighter.
- Johnson says a person has to do their research. He continually looks at different components to add to reduce costs.