

Watt's Happening? #116

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Energy Pioneers



Miep Burgerjon and Rudy Heistad have recently joined the ranks of Peace Country energy pioneers by going 100% solar with their new 10.2 kW ground mounted solar array near Charlie Lake, B.C.

Around the world there is a growing movement of energy leadership at both the home and city level. These energy pioneers are paving the way towards a clean, renewable energy destiny, and sending a clear message to utilities: it's time go renewable.

So far in the U.S., 27 cities and towns have committed to a 100% renewable goal. Four have achieved it: Aspen, Colorado;

Burlington, Vermont; Georgetown, Texas; and Greensburg, Kansas.

Atlanta, Georgia (pop. 5.7 million) has made the commitment too. Stage one is to power all their municipal facilities with renewables by 2025. This includes their water treatment plants, libraries, all their city buildings, and the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, the busiest in the world. By 2035, Atlanta wants all their homes, businesses,

universities and churches on renewable energy.

Locally, our very own Hudson's Hope will soon be well past the half-way mark in powering all it's municipal facilities with solar energy. Once installed, solar costs very little to run, and self-generated solar electricity provides a shelter from the inevitable rate hikes for power from the grid.

HOMEOWNERS TOO

Peace Country homeowners are going 100% solar too. Some see it as a good long-term financial investment (roughly a 3-5% return), others as a way to reduce their carbon footprint, and still others as their personal contribution to a sustainable future for their kids.

Miep Burgerjon and Rudy Heistad have recently joined the ranks of local solar pioneers at their rural home in the Charlie Lake area, near Fort St. John. They have just fired up their 10.2 kW (kilowatt) ground-mount grid-tied solar array, which is designed to supply all of their electrical needs for decades to come.

“We felt compelled to consider an energy option that is, immediately and over the long term, kinder to our world,” explains Miep. “Living beneath the sun-filled skies of the Peace River area, harnessing this light to best advantage seems a more enlightened alternative.”

They hired Peace Energy Cooperative (Dawson Creek) to design and build their solar system. Often the roof of a home or shop will provide an ideal place to mount the solar array, but in their case an open field just south of the house promised the best return on their solar investment.

Peace Energy Co-op looked carefully at their normal use of electricity over the last few years, and sized the solar power system to get their electrical bills down to zero.

Thirty solar modules were rack-mounted on screw-piles. Electricity from the array was trenched over to their electrical service panel to power their

home and feed excess power into the grid – they are “grid-tied.”

Miep and Rudy plan some energy efficiency upgrades that will improve the return on their investment. They also believe in supporting local business.

“One of our considered choices is being a supporting member of Peace Energy Cooperative. Through this relationship, we have become more informed about sustainable energy at the local level. We also have access to expertise and a team who can design and install a solar array for our home.”

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CATCHING THE SOLAR WAVE

And Peace Energy Co-op has been busy, both catching the solar wave and making the solar wave. Making it with solar seminars across the region, and catching it with some 16 grid-tied solarized homes plus the very large (500 kW) Hudson’s Hope District solar project.

They have trained local electricians with solar courses at Northern Lights College and partnered with Moch Electric Ltd. in Dawson Creek

and Haab Homes in Fort St. John to help meet the growing demand for solar installations.

The interesting thing about this shift to 100% renewable energy is that it would have been unthinkable just ten years ago. The technology was not widely available and too expensive. Now it makes both economic and environmental sense. Ten years from now, it will practically be a requirement.