



Building a *Dream Log Home*

An industrious couple sold everything to move into the woods of Nova Scotia and pursue their dream of building an off-grid, solar-powered log home.

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Do you have a bucket list? We don't, exactly, but we do have a lot of ideas that we just go for when the timing feels right—and sometimes our desires surprise us. We used to have everything one could ask for: great jobs, steady income, a nice home, a little vacation log cabin. We moved to Sweden in 2015, and we were in the middle of renovating the 100-year-old farm that we'd purchased—but something was missing. We found ourselves wanting a different living situation, and we knew we had to go after it if we didn't want to have regrets.

Having lived in and seen a lot of places,

we knew Nova Scotia was where we wanted to settle. We found our dream property online. My husband, Frank, flew to Nova Scotia for a weekend to see it, and when he called me, he said the property was just a woodlot in the middle of nowhere, but that the lake looked nice, and no other people were out there. In short, this was the perfect place for what we were planning—to build our own log home from start to finish. So, we bought the property, sold our farm in Sweden, and packed a container, and then the three of us (me, Frank, and our Bullmastiff, Emmy) started off on a new adventure.

Now, we're sitting here in the middle of the woods on a beautiful little lake almost 2 miles from the next official gravel road,

all by ourselves and taking on the challenge of building our dream home and living off the grid.

Living off-grid wasn't our original intention, but when we got a quote from the local power company, which told us it would charge us at least \$180,000 to hook us up, we knew going solar was a no-brainer. (Sometimes when you start a project like this, it's good not to know everything you're getting yourself into.)

We arrived in Nova Scotia at the end of August 2016, and the first thing we had to do was find a temporary place to live. We ended up with a camper that we parked on the road until someone cut in a driveway.

We also needed to determine where to clear the land for building and where to



The Muellers' off-grid log cabin is powered by ground-mounted solar and is nestled up against a remote lake.



site our solar system—not an easy decision when you don’t have a clue how things will look before you take down trees. We knew we wanted to be close to the water, and, because of all the rocks and boulders, we decided to place the solar ground-mount system higher up, on a platform we created while excavating.

One thing we had to acquire right away were trees for building our log home. We needed them before winter so we could de-bark them before the bugs came out in spring and burrowed into the bark of the freshly cut trees. Removing bark in winter is tough, but we found a chainsaw de-barker, which made the task a lot easier.

We decided to take red pine, but we had to search long and hard before we found trees with the necessary length of 50 feet. Frank spent five days cutting and de-branching 46 trees, and then friends of ours with logging trucks and equipment pitched in to help us get them to the property. This was also difficult; while we do have a right of way to get to our property, that “road” is a dirt path only accessible with a pickup truck. Anything bigger than that has to come up over an old, steep gravel road through a quarry. But it worked out.

In the meantime, we built a shed from scratch for our wood, and we also constructed a 50-foot shed for all our belongings. We were in a bit of a rush to get as much done as possible before winter came: getting in a septic system, drilling the well, and building the foundation for



the house. To prepare for cold weather, we started winterizing the camper. This didn’t work out as planned, and, despite heating cables, all the camper’s tanks and pipes froze up during the first winter storm in mid-December. So, we had to switch to Plan B, shut down the camper, and move our necessities into the unfinished house. We’re now living in the house and have made it as comfortable as we can, and

Frank (left) and Manuela (bottom) wanted to build their own home from start to finish without going into debt. Now, they advise others on how to do the same.

while the move didn’t go the way we planned, that seems to be our standard, and we always make do with the ups and downs of living off-grid.

Doing almost everything ourselves and working with old equipment was challenging, especially because we were on a tight budget and wanted to build a debt-free home, but we wouldn’t have done anything differently. We didn’t want to get a mortgage or borrow money, so some things we still want will have to wait.

People have asked a lot about our project and what to consider when going off-grid, so we started a blog to document the progress (and pitfalls) of pursuing our dream. It’s prompted other people to step out of the box and go for it too, so now we try to help those individuals find properties, assist with immigration, and consult on questions about building. We also still pursue our hobbies—building log furniture and creating wooden crafts that I sell at local craft fairs. And above all, we try to live true to our motto: Enjoy life. It’s too short to waste a minute. 🌲

Follow Manuela and Frank Mueller online at www.Restless-Roots.com and [www.Facebook.com/RestlessRootsNovaScotiaCanada](https://www.facebook.com/RestlessRootsNovaScotiaCanada).

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