



SUCCESS STORY

Bow Island's Jade Homes

BIG SKY. ENDLESS OPPORTUNITIES.

You don't have to move to, or live in, Bow Island to enjoy a home built there. For 12 years, customers have been having houses trucked to farms, acreages and town lots around southern Alberta and Saskatchewan built by Jade Homes Inc., the Bow Island & District Chamber of Commerce Business of the Year for 2009.

"It feels good to have Jade Homes recognized by the chamber and the community as a success," says Daryl Esau, Jade's owner.

"Custom built; ready to move," is Esau's stock-in-trade, and since 1998, Jade Homes has sent 123 homes into the countryside, complete from the floor joists up and awaiting only appliances.

Esau started as a journeyman carpenter and became intrigued by friends in Manitoba and Saskatchewan who were selling and moving pre-built homes in those provinces. The laws of the day prohibited the industry in Alberta by restricting the size of buildings that could be moved. In the mid-1990s, the law changed to allow homes wider than 16 feet to be transported on Alberta roads. Esau saw his chance.

Jade Homes has created a comfortable business from a client-friendly process. Each project begins by the customer choosing or modifying one of Jade Homes' floor plans or starting fresh with a custom plan. As the home is being delivered to a predetermined site, Esau will arrange for a visit to the location, if requested, to advise on matters such as preservation of trees and access to the site.

Plans and details are finalized and the contract signed. The rest is simply a matter of superb carpentry and attention to excellence. If a basement is desired, the customer ensures it's completed in time. The entire process can be completed in five months.

Jade's homes have seen a lot of asphalt in the last 12 years. They travel an average distance of 70 to 100 miles from Bow Island, but some have gone as far as 400 miles from the plant.

Jade Homes regularly uses Wade's House Moving from Taber to move the structures, a process that can take from five hours to 1½ days, depending on the size of the home and the distance. The task may seem herculean, but provided Jade Homes stays within Fortis height requirements, the deliveries go off without incident.

Jade Homes builds its products in an exterior yard on Highway 3, close to the crossroads of Highway 879 (north to Brooks and south to Foremost). Here, it has strong visibility from passing traffic.

The firm is comprised of Esau, an administrator, production manager/designer, and finishing carpenter. Jade uses a roster of 10 subcontractors from Bow Island, Medicine Hat and Taber who complete the production force. Sales are generally slower in the summer months, but once the wheat is in the bin, action soon picks up.

Jade Homes grew steadily in its first nine years. Since 2007, Esau has felt comfortable with the size of the company and is managing growth carefully. Greater output would require a whole

new set of subcontractors and, likely, a larger yard. So, Esau has made a decision to grow slowly to avoid the inherent pitfalls. He's able to enjoy the balance that comes from running a stable business and enjoying the fruits of his labour.

Bow Island is a perfect location for the company, a place where it doesn't have to compete with a slew of big-city contractors. Jade's target audience includes farmers and ranchers living away from established communities who want a fast, worry-free home-building experience. Most have heard about Jade Homes through word of mouth.

"Ready-to-move, custom-built homes are a simple way to get a house completed without hassles and in an economical way," says Esau. "We pay attention to detail and we're serious about customer service: we believe they're always right and we try to please them as much as we can."

To ensure the above statement rings true, Esau deals with every customer at some point in the process. He enjoys the interaction, and credits Bow Island (population: 1,868 as of 2007; 2,500 in the trading area) as a solid place to do business. And when the work day is done, he can head home into the country to his wife, Janalee and five children.

Bow Island isn't, of course, an island. History suggests it is named for the island created at the confluence of the Bow and Oldman rivers, which join to create the South Saskatchewan River.

The town, which celebrates its centennial in 2012, was one of the first in the province to have natural gas wells. While the community took its share of hits during the Depression, irrigation in the 1950s brought prosperity. The first pivot sprinkler system in Canada was erected near Bow Island in 1961; the town now sits amid 110,000 highly productive acres.



Home on the go: A Jade Home awaits its family.