

Frequently Asked Questions

1. HOW DO YOU STAY WARM IN A CONESTOGA HUT?

The preferred way to heat a Hut is using an electric oil-filled radiator heater. These convection heaters are efficient and inexpensive, don't have any sort of open flame, and produce a nice dry heat (as opposed to wet heat, like a propane heater produces). We use the smallest model we can find, which is around 700 watts. The only downside to this type of heater is that you do need a solid AC electric source (heaters cannot be run on a battery system). A hookup for 120-volt AC electricity is not available in every location we place a Hut.

We've experimented with other kinds of heat, such as Buddy propane heaters, candle heaters, and heated rocks, with varying degrees of success, as well as some learning experiences. We've also designed, but never actually implemented, rocket stoves that would be fired from the outside and have a chimney that travels into the interior and then outside to exhaust. People have different degrees of capacity to manage heating options, and we've found to best meet the needs of our diverse clientele, we need something that is easy to operate and safe.

The other best option for people who are experiencing homelessness is simply a good sleeping bag. In the Pacific Northwest, temperatures are fairly mild. This means that for most of the year one won't freeze his or her butt off, like

in other parts of the country that are much more unforgiving. Still, one rare time, when the temperature dropped to minus-7 degrees Fahrenheit, I slept in a Hut, alone, with a sleeping bag and wool blanket. I was easily warm enough all night while in the sleeping gear. When I got up the next morning, the temperature was 11 degrees F outside of the Hut, and the inside was 33 degrees F just from my own radiant body heat.

2. HOW DO YOU PROVIDE ELECTRICITY TO THE HUTS?

When we explored the possibility of hard-wiring electricity into Huts we hit some roadblocks, so we found the easiest alternative, which is to run an outdoor electrical cord from a nearby power source into the interior of a Hut. There are some basic rules that you want to follow to make sure your operation is safe. Discuss the electrical load you are planning to run in the Hut with an experienced electrician so you can choose the right length and size of cord. Our general practice is to limit the amount of electricity consumed within a Hut by allowing the basics: light, an efficient oil-filled radiator heater, cell phone and laptop chargers, and maybe a one-burner electric cooker only to be used on the front porch, not inside the Hut. We typically discourage use