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VANCOUVER ISLAND - The Central Group of Companies, headquartered in Duncan, has been operating on Vancouver Island since 1995. The company is a Preferred Contractor for BC Hydro, Telus and Shaw, performing installation, repairs and maintenance of distribution systems and communications networks, both overhead and underground.

Heading this 50-plus member team is founder Dan Johnston, who came to the island in 1991 with a freshly minted power line-man ticket from Ontario and a job offer at a Nanaimo based company. His original plan was to stay for three months and see the West Coast.

"It's been a long three months," he laughs - 26 years later - from The Central Group head office in Duncan. The Central Group is now composed of three principle companies: Central Island Powerline Ltd. (Central Power), Central Tel Ltd. and Central Wrench. This strategic combination is one of the company's chief strengths but it took time to develop.

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to Dan and the team
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Owner Dan Johnston in the driver's seat of a vintage truck with some of Central Power's administrative team (left to right) Myles Johnston, Elizabeth Groenewold, Dan Johnston, Dan Scott, and Susan Lucas

"I came here with a Ford pick-up, cowboy boots, and a mullet." Photographic proof of his arrival 26 years earlier is displayed in his eclectic office - which includes a mix of vintage signs and furniture plus a corner filled with trophies won at linemen safety competitions.

He arrived in February and quickly appreciated the milder west coast climate. "I realized this was a pretty good place to live." After the initial three-month job, he found a position with a Victoria power line company. Two years later, he decided he wanted to strike out on his own with his own company.

He noticed there was no contractor doing utility work in Duncan, so he set up his company in that community, equipped with one bucket truck, one digger, a pick-up, and two employees. His timing - he admits - was



Safety comes first with a barrier placed between traffic and crew during a night time repair of power lines bordering a highway

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Proud supporter of Dan Johnston and the team at Central Power, congratulations on all your success!

~ from the team at



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Central Power Group's crew and part of the company's extensive fleet of vehicles



Post-storm clean-up by Central Power. The company responds to trouble calls 24-hours-a-day, 365 days a year

questionable. "I started during the second worst year ever for contracting work. The following year was even worse."

Somehow, the new company survived those two years. "Then

it started to get busy." The work was varied: repairing downed lines, new installations, replacing utility poles. In order to effectively serve the island, Johnston needed to have equipment



A row of Central Power Group vehicles heading home via BC Ferries after helping with repairs following an ice storm in the lower mainland last winter

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and crews at more than one base. A base in Victoria was the next step and Central started bidding on work in Victoria and Nanaimo.

Johnston continued to invest in his growing company, purchasing additional equipment. He was also open to new ideas so when his associate **Vic Scott** – a 25-year veteran of Telus – suggested

expanding to service telephone lines, Johnston listened.

He formed a new division, Central Tel, in 2005. Vic Scott took the lead on the new two-person venture, training the crew as the division expanded. "Vic trained a bunch of really good guys," Johnston said. Within a few years the division had doubled in size. Then the work exploded as advancing technology and the demands for cell phone coverage

and evolving Internet hit the Telus network.

"We got into fibre optic, copper splicing, placing lines overhead and underground and micro-cells," Johnston explains. Soon the crew members trained by Vic Scott were training their own crews as the division steadily grew. Scott stayed with the company until his retirement two years ago – but passed leadership of Central Tel to his son **Dan**, who had joined the company 11 years ago.

"He passed the torch but first

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~ from Tracy, Ken, Kevin, Chris & John.

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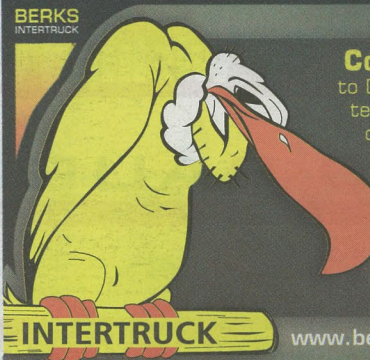
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he put Dan through the wringer to make sure he could handle it."

The combination of Central Power and Central Tel gives utilities like BC Hydro, Telus, and Shaw an option that saves both time and money. When a joint use pole with both electrical and telephone lines needs to be replaced, The Central Group can handle the job with one call.

"We are a one-stop shop for any power and telecommunications work," Johnston said. His company is one of the select few in the province able to field specialized crews for high voltage work as well as fibre installations and copper and fibre splicing in a single response team.

One example of cost efficiencies occurred on a project performed by Central Power to replace aging hydro poles in Ahousaht. All resources and equipment had to be barged in for the work.

At the planning stage, Dan recognized the opportunity for huge savings for Telus if Central Tel were to complete identified fibre optic upgrading and pole transfers by sharing the Central Power resources already being deployed for the Hydro project. This kind of creative thinking sets Central apart in its ability to maximize resources so all parties achieve optimum results.

"In a remote community, when one company can do it all, it saves a lot of money for everyone,"



Central Power Group took on pole replacement/upgrades for the entire island which took almost two years. Although it initially seemed like a daunting responsibility, the company has developed systems to efficiently maximize use of trucks and manpower

Johnston describes. "The utility company – and ultimately the taxpayers and end users – share in the savings."

Another example: in the event

of a storm or motor vehicle accident, damage is often done to joint use assets (BC Hydro/Shaw/Telus). Coordinating resources from one source leads to a quicker resolution, resulting in significant savings, restored services, and getting crews moving onto the next job.

Central Group responds to trouble calls 24-hours-a-day, 365 days of the year, supplementing the work done by Hydro, Telus, and Shaw's in-house crews. Johnston now finds that many people are more worried about losing their Internet access.

"People would probably go without water before going without Internet."

At any time, the company can field up to seven power crews and nine communication repair crews at locations throughout the island. This is especially useful during storm season, when



The view from above as a crew work on a line. A head for heights is mandatory

trouble calls are common. This wide reach also saves time when a new call comes in.

There is often a Central Group team member within easy reach of the trouble call who is able to snap a photo and send it to head office. Using the photo, the responding crew can make sure they are bringing exactly what they need in equipment and expertise to handle the job.

Johnston notes that his company has installed many of the microcells that handle data delivery throughout the island. "We ourselves are able to streamline operations with these advancements in technology."

Central Group's expertise has also been exported off-island. As

recently as last year's ice storms in the Fraser Valley, the company responded to the call for help. In the past, the company lent a helping hand to neighbours to the south in Washington State.

Johnston gives full credit to his teams, who do the hard work of climbing poles and untangling lines in driving rain, howling wind, snowstorms, or in the middle of the night. It takes dedication and a commitment to service to leave a warm bed at 2 a.m. and go out into the storm to restore a power line.

"It's not fun being out in the middle of the night in pouring rain, snow, and ice. I have spent

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Proud supporter of the Central Power Group of Companies, wishing you continued growth and success!

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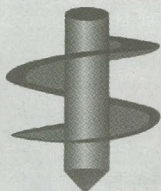
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The newest division is Central Wrench, which provides heavy duty mechanical services for commercial vehicles and is also a Licensed Commercial Vehicle Inspection station. Shown are (left to right) Ryan Peterson, Tristan Moyses, Stu Ronningen and Dan Johnston. In the background is the hood from a racing car sponsored by the company. 'Hookin' is industry lingo for climbing a pole using the embedded hooks

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a lot of nights out working with my crews and I appreciate what it takes," Dan reflects.

"We've trained some good guys and now via word-of-mouth we have attracted a lot more" he says. "Without all these guys I'd just have a bunch of trucks." The crew is tight-knit; many of the employees socialize and their families spend time together like a big family. "I feel lucky to be in it."

Further evidence of the professionalism of the teams is their safety records. Central Power and Central Tel have had NO lost time accidents – ever. Central Power holds a Certificate of Recognition issued by WorkSafeBC and the

**In a remote community,
when one company can
do it all, it saves a lot of
money for everyone**

BC Construction Safety Alliance in recognition of the company's best practices in safety.

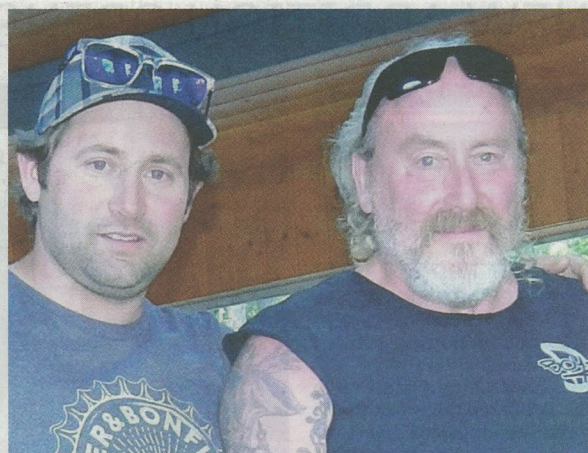
Safety is their number one value: doing it safe, doing it right, being efficient and cost-effective. This applies to all jobs, regardless

of size. "That is what every customer wants," says Johnston.

Central Wrench is the newest division of the company. To head it, Johnston waited until he could hire Stu Ronningen, who he knew to be an outstanding heavy duty mechanic. With more than 50 vehicles on the road, he recognized he needed his own in-house shop to keep the company equipment in peak operating condition. That division now has three heavy-duty mechanics and one apprentice.

Central Wrench also draws repair business from other commercial contractors, from Forestry and Construction companies, and from local farmers. The shop is also a Licensed Commercial Vehicle Inspection facility.

Growing from one bucket truck



Vic Scott, right, encouraged Dan Johnston to establish Central Tel and headed the division until his retirement. His son Dan, left, now oversees Central Tel.

**People would probably
go without water before
going without Internet**

Dan realizes the importance of giving back to the community, supporting local initiatives such as the food bank, sponsoring several amateur sports teams, community events and has provided ongoing support to the annual Cobble Hill Fair for many years.

From a financial perspective he looks like he could retire. When asked, Dan smiles, "I only look old."

"I love this job and the team of hard-working, dedicated people I have the privilege of doing it with. I am a very lucky man and my three month stint in BC is a long way from over."

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