

STORY **WALTER FRANCZYK** | PHOTOGRAPHY **SEBASTIAN PETRESCU**

Island MAKEOVER

AFTER MANY YEARS OF ENJOYING A SHARED FAMILY COTTAGE ON LAKE TEMAGAMI, WENDY AND MIKE MITCHELL DREAMED OF A QUIET LAKESIDE RETREAT OF THEIR OWN.

“It’s something we’ve wanted for years and years,” says Wendy. “We were ready to have our own place and lay down some roots for the future of our family and kids,” says Mike.

Three years ago, the Vancouver couple bought eight acres of wooded land with a three-bedroom cottage on Chief’s Island in Lake Joseph. Although they had looked at places on Lake Temagami, they found Muskoka a better fit. “Temagami is spectacularly beautiful, but it’s very quiet,” says Mike. Muskoka is livelier, a place with more friends and family they can spend time with. Just a two-hour drive to the airport in Toronto, rather than five hours from Temagami, it’s more convenient for Mike who still works and needs to be closer to the airport.

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LEFT: Light wicker and striped cushions contrast nicely with the dark walls of the Muskoka room in this Lake Joseph cottage. **BELOW:** Muskoka Window and Door Centre supplied new windows throughout the renovation. **BOTTOM:** Coulson Bros. Scow Service built the large stone patio in the front yard.





LEFT: The stone fireplace is a warm gathering spot on cool evenings. **BELOW:** Moving the staircase to the back of the cottage created more living space. **OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT:** A three-blade ceiling fan keeps air flowing. **TOP RIGHT:** The family added two new bathrooms to the cottage. **BOTTOM:** A custom-made live-edge dinner table seats eight people. Flying Star Antiques supplied the vintage cabinet.



They bought their waterfront property because of its isolated location. Chief's Island, once entirely family-owned, had been thoughtfully subdivided so the Mitchells don't have many neighbours. "When you drive up, it seems like there's nobody around," says Mike. "We also wanted a property large enough that we could expand as the family needed to, as the kids grew older."

With two adult sons and a teenage daughter, they created more space for their family by renovating the original cottage. "We took it right down to the studs and did a complete renovation," says Mike. They planned the cottage makeover with **Lena Patten**, owner of **HillTop Interiors** in Rosseau. "Lena did a great job and was a very good partner in this whole thing," says Mike. "It was a great partnership."

They chose **Trevor Murray** of **T. McMurray & Sons Construction Inc.** to rebuild the place. He had been highly recommended, had his own barge and the time to do the work when they wanted. They added two bathrooms, another bedroom and converted the wide front porch into a master bedroom with a wall of windows overlooking the lake. The cottage got a new roof, new septic, plumbing and electrical systems. An interior staircase was moved from the middle of the living room to the back of the house. They kept the original hardwood flooring in the main living areas and replicated the wooden porch floor in what is now the master bedroom. "It's definitely been a labour of love," says Wendy. "We enjoyed doing it and now we're very happy with it." *Continued on page 62*





Caesarstone quartz by Stoneway Marble and Granite Inc. covers the kitchen island and counters. **OPPOSITE:** The rich brown wood of the island contrasts with white perimeter cabinets.



Glass doors showcase colourful dinnerware.



The cottage was solidly rebuilt to last and to withstand the island climate, winter and summer. “Trevor did a great job quality-wise, absolutely,” says Mike.

HillTop Interiors furnished the lake house with new beds, living room furniture, mirrors and accessories. Lena and **Jessica Harris** worked closely with the client and

created the kitchen, bathroom and built-in cabinet designs for the entire house. In the screened Muskoka room at the front of the cottage, HillTop supplied cushioned wicker chairs.

New facets were fused with the old, giving the cottage a farmhouse twist. An accordion coat rack and a black wooden bench from the

original cottage were repurposed in the bright new front entrance. Illuminated with a glass transom door and an overhead lantern, the tiled entry has open shelving for beach towels, sandals and flip-flops, hooks for raincoats and jackets, and a cushioned bench, all designed by HillTop. In one of the bedrooms, the previous owners had made a headboard out

of a door. “We spruced it up, painted it and used it,” says Lena. While at Lake Temagami, Mike salvaged wooden drill core boxes from the crumbling ruins of the core shacks at an abandoned copper mine. Shaped as channelled trays, the boxes were made into the frame of a large mirror, a reminder of the time they spent up north. *Continued on page 64*



Barn board covers the back wall of the large master bedroom. **BELOW:** A sliding barn-style door saves space in the master en suite.

Wendy collaborated with Lena to design the clean, modern kitchen with Caesarstone quartz countertops, glass cabinet doors and an adjacent dining space with a custom-built, live-edge dinner table. “I am big into cooking and baking,” says Wendy. “For us it’s all about a practical layout in a way that allows people to be with us as we’re cooking and enjoying being at the cottage.” **Brown’s Appliances** equipped the new kitchen with KitchenAid appliances and an induction cooktop. **Stoneway Marble & Granite Inc.** supplied stone countertops.

A panoramic lake view from the master bedroom was one thing the owners insisted on. **Muskoka Window and Door Centre** supplied the windows to frame the vista. A small gym with a treadmill, spin bike and tiny workout area was a must-have for Wendy. “That was one thing I really did want to have so we could keep active,” she says. “I swim almost every day in the lake. There’s a bay out front that I’ll swim across and I’ll run.”

Lena imbued the lake house with an underlying nautical theme, using HillTop’s signature paddle pulls on cabinets and anchor-shaped clothes hooks in the bathrooms and foyer. “It was a lovely experience for me because the client valued my input and was willing to meet and go over everything,” Lena says of the design process. The cottage interior was freshened with paint by **Benjamin Moore**. The main living areas are painted White Dove, bedroom walls are Gray Timber Wolf and Wickham Gray, and trim is finished in Cloud White.

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Anchor clothes hooks echo a nautical theme.



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feature

A dormer creates a snug second-floor bedroom. **BELOW:** Nautical lamps with blue shades on simple nightstands flank this bed. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Drill core boxes from an old copper mine frame this large bathroom mirror. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Every room in this cottage has a view.



Outside, **Coulson Bros. Scow Service** landscaped the property. “**Arnie Coulson** and his team did an amazing job on the stone patio at the front of the cottage,” says Mike. “That is really the focal point of the cottage exterior.” Although their first summer at the property was “a bit more like camping,” due to the condition of the old cottage, their first summer at their newly renovated cottage was all they’d hoped for. They enjoyed the lake, entertaining and visiting friends.

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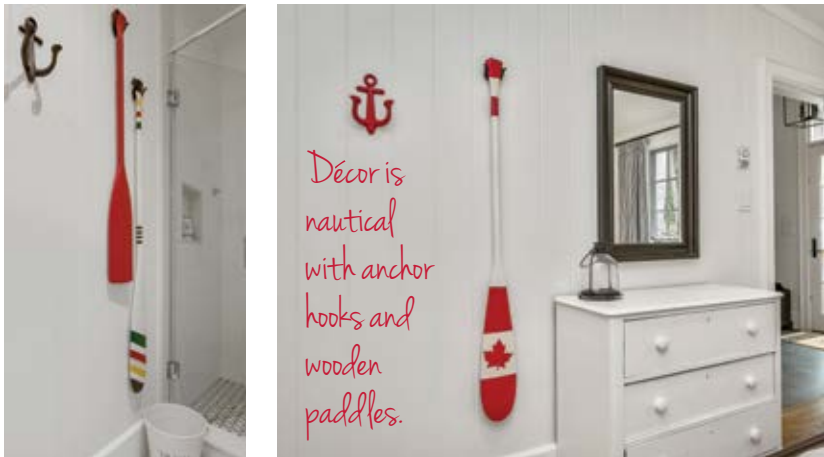
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Hudson's Bay Company beach towels await swimmers at the entrance. **TOP LEFT:** HillTop Interiors furnished beds, bedding and décor throughout the lake house. **TOP RIGHT:** A wooden ladder serves as a bath towel rack.

Mike says sundown is probably his favourite time of day at the cottage. The porch and front stairs face west. "You can sit out there, have a drink and watch the sunset." But he and Wendy also like mornings when they can take in the beauty of the place atop a rocky perch at the front of the lake house. "We've set up a couple of Muskoka chairs we can sit out there and have a coffee, surrounded by the water," Mike says. "It's just very quiet – a lovely place to have a cup of coffee in the morning."

"That's probably my favourite time," says Wendy. It's very special to have their own place, she says. "We have absolutely fallen in love with it. I love everything about it. Our kids really enjoy it. It's going to be a place to make lots of special family memories." **OH**

SOURCE GUIDE

- Brown's Appliances • Coulson Bros. Scow Service • Flying Star Antiques • HillTop Interiors • Muskoka Window and Door Centre • Stoneway Marble & Granite Inc. • T. McMurray & Sons Construction Inc.



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