

# Muskoka Lifestyles



## Roots are important



For this family of four, having roots in the familiar landscape of Muskoka was very important. Their love of the area is reflected with warmth and charm in the rustic decor and natural color combinations, all throughout their Lake Rosseau cottage.

Article by Maria Duncalf-Barber  
Photographs by Heather Douglas

“To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul.”

— Simone Weil,  
French philosopher

Having roots means a lot to the owner of this cottage. His grandfather, one of 15 children, arrived in Canada from Ireland many years ago and became Minister of Labour. He learned about his new life as he went along his journey, carrying a dictionary around with him every day, which helped him to learn new things. After spending childhood summers on Lake Joseph with his parents and extended family, which included 20 children, the owner knew he wanted his own cottage.

After owning a cottage on Lake Joseph for 15 years, he has put down new roots in the familiar landscape with a cottage on beautiful Lake Rosseau. He says he learned from his grandfather that “quality, quality, quality” was important, and that’s what he has now made the standard for his new endeavor; it’s



*Creating a warm, cozy atmosphere – Inglenook cottage*



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also what he puts into his life every day.

He and his wife, who were both born in Toronto, and their two children – a daughter who is attending the University of Colorado in Boulder and a son who attends a private school in Toronto – call Muskoka a perfect place to be. And, the whole family adores their new cottage. “It is cosy, friendly and a great place to just throw off your shoes and relax,” says the owner.

The property, which is south of Cleveland’s House, was purchased one year ago. “After we sold our cottage on Lake Joseph, we were renting just down the road, and this place came up for sale. After a few years of seeing the prices go crazy, finally the price was right with this one, so we bought it. We love the location, and the privacy.”

Working long and hard at his automobile business in the city, he says it’s good to get to Muskoka to rest. “It is great to gear down from a hectic financial world. Even though I do love my work and I get up every day with a smile on my face, still, it is good to arrive back in Muskoka.”

His wife picks up the tone: “We wanted our cottage to resemble a Colorado mountain home. Our daughter is attending university in Colorado, at Boulder, and our friends have a home in Vail, so we have spent a lot of time there. My girlfriend had taken me to a number of home decor stores in Vail and they made me feel so cozy and homey. We started with an elk-horn chandelier, which I loved, and the cottage took shape with that piece alone.”

She is happy she decided on this motif, even though it takes time to put everything together properly. “Once you commit to this kind of piece, everything else falls into place. Lena Patten, at Hilltop Interiors in the village of Rosseau, guided us along the way in our search for this cozy cabin feel. She has wonderful rugs, couches, leather chairs and they all seemed to fit into what our vacation home should be. The colors – red, black, orange – are very warm and cabin-like as well.”

Enthusiastically, she continues: “We spent a lot of time browsing through cabin books for interesting ideas that resembled a log cabin. One of the things that we saw in the books, and we used, was the log overhang on the outside of the building. Not only does it provide shelter, it also gives the feel of a log cabin. We are in the process of hanging – from a rafter in the Muskoka Room – a beautifully constructed ‘Dippy’ that Butsons of Muskoka had made

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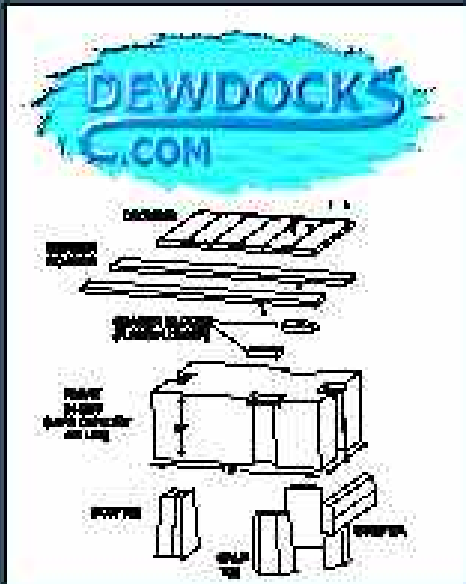
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*Hunting Down Muskoka Dreams*



many years ago. This is an idea we got from the books as well."

Spectacular light reflects into the home from Lake Rosseau, she adds, which gives a great interior effect. "We are in the process of constructing an indoor/outdoor room, which will house a free-standing fireplace, reminiscent of a log cabin in the 1800s. We were concerned that our cabin would feel too dark on a beautiful sunny

summer day, however, that is not the case. With the addition of the outside room, which is surrounded by windows, and the open deck where there is a whirlpool, this makes our cabin feel very bright and sunny."

The entire family is happy with the place, she adds. "Our teenaged children are also very *cozy-minded* and when we arrive, whether it is winter or summer, our children always com-



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ment on how cozy and homey it feels. That's all we wanted to create – a place for our family to be together and to share with our friends in a homey, warm and cozy atmosphere.”

Her husband picks up from there, commenting: “We have called our wonderful cottage ‘Inglenook.’ In the old vast Adirondack hotels that were built large but were very cold, they built little areas in the corners of the hotel and placed fireplaces there for warmth – they called them *Inglenooks* and we liked the name so much, we called our cottage that. It is cozy and warm, just the way we like it. With the

massive antler chandeliers over the dining room table, which look great, the whole Adirondack style works and appeals to us; that is why we have included that in our design. That is the essence of the cottage and being in Muskoka. We have the best of both worlds.”

A deck, leading into the living room, connects the magnificent outdoor setting with the warm and cozy indoor atmosphere of the cottage. A Muskoka stone fireplace is a focal point in the main room, where the natural colors of the stone, wood, and green-toned plaid fabric of the furni-



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ture blend to create a very comfortable ambiance, enhanced by the warm red of Oriental rugs. The cottage decor is accented with lots of interesting items, such as Muskoka folk-art lamps, a wooden Indian carving and other wonderful pieces.

The “cozy cabin” theme is continued throughout the home. The downstairs guest bedroom, for instance, with its well-chosen fabrics sporting bears and canoes, has an inviting lodge feel.

Moving outside, the main porch leads to a long lawn, providing plenty of space for relaxing in the great outdoors. All in all, it’s a perfect, rustic setting for a family that loves Muskoka. With their passion for this place, the owners say they plan to spend winter weekends here – even the worst weekends – as well as spending time during all the other wonderful seasons.

“There is never a bad day in Muskoka – if it rains, it’s a good day; if it snows, it’s a good day; if it sleets, it’s a good day. I just light the fire pick up a good book and contemplate life. I feel like I have died and gone to heaven.


“I designed the cottage myself; I am

a visual guy and I was influenced by what I wanted to see. The theme was *cozy*; it is like being in the womb, warm, safe and secure. We have added new decking, a new basement, in fact, new everything.

“My wife was very involved with the interiors and the colors and we like to call our cottage ‘casually elegant.’ We ripped out the old kitchen and a friend of ours designed the new kitchen, which is black, topping it off by covering it with a marble (counter) top. It is so different, we love it.”

He pauses to reflect, then says: “I love the tranquility of Muskoka. The water is wonderful; with the fires and the water, I feel close to God. Muskoka evokes spirituality in a natural way. All humankind should live here.”

Regarding his own philosophy, he adds: “The older you get, the need for relaxing becomes greater. We become more vulnerable, more spiritual. You begin to realize you don’t know it all, you are not infinite. My philosophy on life is to enjoy it with your family.”

The new roots this family has put down at their wonderful Lake Rosseau cottage are likely to grow and flourish for many years to come. 



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