

Muskoka Lifestyles



The ceiling and floors in the Muskoka Room, which features a table that seats 12, are made of reclaimed hemlock (above). The powder room is accentuated with antiques (below). The washstand came from a farm in the United States.



(Clockwise from top left) The front doors were custom built by the Cutting Brothers in Port Carling. Kody, Wendel, Kylie (back row), Denise and Kassie and family dog Toby enjoy the cottage. The dining room seats 10. The master bedroom features double sinks, a soaker tub and a granite shower.

A hockey star's haven

Article and photographs
by Heather Douglas

When decorating her Lake Rosseau cottage, Denise Clark wanted to keep away from a floral or blue and white theme, noting that her husband is “just not that type.” Her husband is the legendary NHL player Wendel Clark.

“We are both from out west in the rural communities and we wanted a bit of the western feel to it,” she says of the cottage. “So we brought in the rustic as well as the western feel.”

With wagon wheels, cowhides and a reclaimed wood and copper bed, Denise achieved her goal, but also created a vacation home filled with architectural details, a blend of antiques and comfortable furniture.

The Clark family, which includes three growing kids and a dog, has been vacationing in Muskoka for four years. They spent many years cottaging on Loughborough Lake in Kingston





A large island in the kitchen (above) was a must for the busy family . A sample of Wendel Clark's line of wine (left).

with a group of guys, including Doug Gilmour, Kirk Muller and Dave Ellett.

"We loved our time in Kingston," Denise says, "but each time we would visit Muskoka we knew it was more suited to us."

While the family may have moved away from the Kingston area, Denise notes they made many lifelong friends who are not part of their hockey world and continue to

be part of their lives, spending time with them in Muskoka.

When the decision to move to Muskoka was made, the next challenge was to find the perfect location. Their wish list included a level waterfront lot and close proximity to the Lake Joseph Club, as Wendel is associated with ClubLink.

"We knew we wanted a lot of tableland to enjoy, not a steep property or many stairs to and from the

water. We also wanted a large area for the kids to play catch or soccer, chip and putt and a lot of gardens as well," Denise says.

With their close friends Drew and Gloria Tilson helping them look, the Clarks found the perfect location known as the Cherokee property.

Not only did it meet their wish list, the property also boasts some Muskoka history.

"Peninsula Road was part of the old Cherokee Trail," Denise says. "Thus the name of the property, which we wanted to keep."

Cherokee was run as a bed and breakfast by the Turley family for 60 or 70 years and included six guests cabins.

While the Clarks built the main cottage, they retained four of the six cabins, living in one for two summers during the construction. The

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Kody lines up a shot against his dad in the games room. Behind the table is a wine cellar made of reclaimed hemlock.

cottages are original, but each has had the interior redone.

With the resort property, the kids have a ton of space to do their own thing, Denise says.

"We can have four families stay at a time and all have their own accommodation and privacy," she says. "It's a lot of fun. The kids love to have their friends stay as well and chose a different cabin to hang out in for the weekend."

"We knew exactly what we wanted and we worked with Carl Hermann (windermere Custom Homes) to achieve it," Denise says of the cottage design. "We wanted a very rustic and comfy feel with a lot of reclaimed old wood on the walls, ceilings, floors, large barn beams and a massive Muskoka room with an awesome fireplace. We wanted all the rooms to have a view of the lake and a large area for the kids to hang out in."

Both Wendel and Denise played an integral role in the building process.

"He is very hands on and after being involved in the building process so often, you really learn your likes and dislikes," Denise says of Wendel.

She adds he was at the site every day during the building process, driving up in the morning and home in the evening.

"Once the interior started, I was up and back as well," Denise says. "We would drop the kids at school early and pick them up late. The girls picked their colour themes and bedding and Kody really didn't care, although he ended up with the

nicest log cabin room anyway."

Denise also called upon Lena Patten of Hilltop Interiors for some interior collaboration. One piece Lena and Denise worked together on was a wagon wheel light.

Denise sent Patten a photo of one she really liked. The staff at Hilltop did some research and finally located one in Brazil. The antique wheels and lanterns were made into a light in Brazil and Patten had them shipped to Canada and the piece was electrified in the cottage. Bringing pieces into Canada from all over the world at a reasonable cost is one of the unique set of skills Hilltop Interiors has perfected.

One outstanding feature of the cottage is the amount of reclaimed barn board used throughout the interior. Many cottages have some reclaimed barn board, Patten says, but Denise went the extra mile using it on the majority of the interior.

With an interior measuring 5,500 square feet, there are many areas to relax in the cottage, but Denise says her favourite is the Muskoka room.

"With open air on three sides, the massive granite fireplace, dining for 12 and the comfy sectional from Mulrooney's (Fine Furniture in Port Carling) we never want to leave," she says. And with a built-in beer tap for the guys, it is the perfect place to relax.

And relaxing is exactly the intention of the cottage. Denise and their children are in Muskoka from the time school is out, until the time school resumes.

"Our home life is crazy," Denise



Kody Clark's bedroom at the cottage is reminiscent of a rustic log cabin.

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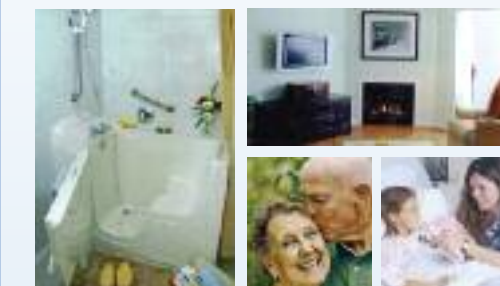
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The living room is a great place for the kids to hang out. Ten-year-old Kody, Kylie, 14, and Cassie, 13, reconnect there.

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says, noting that while Wendel retired from the Toronto Maple Leafs in 2000 after 15 seasons of playing hockey, he is still involved with the team. Despite his busy schedule, he is part of his children's lives, helping as the assistant coach to Kody's hockey team. "We love it," Denise says of having Wendel at home more. "He's home and he's part of the kids' everyday lives."

She adds, "However, during the school year the kids have both of us living in our trucks seven days a week with their sports and extracurricular activities. At the cottage, it is relax mode."

Cruising on the Muskoka lakes in their boat is something the Clarks never tire of.

"Wendel could spend days on the boat touring around the lakes and

islands," she says. "We love admiring all the different cottages and boathouses – there is something for everyone."

She adds the family goes everywhere by water, to visit friends, out for lunch or dinner.

"It's great to do everything by boat, we didn't have that before," Denise says.

While this is only the second summer the family has been living in the cottage, Denise jokes it may be time to do it again.

"We both love doing it," Denise says of her and Wendel's desire to build and design. "You get more ideas as time goes by and it's great to see the finished product."

But for now, the Clarks are happy to relax and enjoy the oasis they have created at Cherokee. **M**



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