



MODERN COMFORT

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

When Leslie White and her husband Ed Cass began searching for a Muskoka cottage, they knew where to look.



FAR LEFT: Robert Borne Building Construction Ltd. rebuilt and landscaped this Lake Rosseau cottage.

LEFT: Like many of the cottage walls, the main entry allows ample light into the lake house.

BELOW: The stone patio and firepit overlook a tiny secluded bay.



NORTH ROSSEAU is where Leslie's father bought a cottage property when he moved his family from Manitoba to Toronto. Leslie, who was 10 years old at the time, grew up at Lake Rosseau. "We all loved the cottage," she recalls. As she and her siblings matured and had children of their own, the family outgrew the original cottage. Ed and Leslie began looking for a place of their own near her parents' summer home. "Because I had been up there so long, I knew exactly where I wanted to be," Leslie says. "I knew I wanted to be north of Windermere so we looked at everything that was on the market for several years."

After multiple visits to a property that had been on the market for some time, they bought a unique summer home, nestled amid the pines and tucked into a private little bay on Lake Rosseau.

Although the cottage needed a lot of work, it was near the water. Its nearly 2,000 sq. ft. boathouse had been grandfathered and it was just a five-minute boat ride from her parents' cottage. They redecorated the large boathouse with new floors, furniture and ceilings. "We actually lived in the boathouse for three summers before we could wrap our minds around what to do with the main cottage." *Continued on page 59*



Custom-built by Chervin Kitchen & Bath, the cottage kitchen has Caesarstone counters and backsplash and an island sided with reclaimed barn board.

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Leslie knew the cottage renovation would be a challenge. The original structure had been built almost like a duplex for two families. Each half of the building mirrored the other, with its own kitchen, bath, living space and bedrooms. Several architects who looked at the house suggested tearing it down and starting again. But Leslie had a vision for the lake house. “I needed to find someone who would work with that vision and try to pull together something,” she says. “It took us a long time to find our team and people who would honour what was there and make it better.”

She knew she wanted to work with designer **Lena Patten**, owner of **HillTop Interiors**. “Lena and I connected,” says Leslie. “She understood my sense of style.” Leslie and Ed were working full time and had only a little experience renovating their Toronto home, so they needed the help of a strong, local team. She wanted a builder she felt comfortable with, a team player who would listen to her and not impose a vision of something else on the project.

“Through the whole process, I was her sounding board,” says Lena, who suggested the couple interview **Robert Borne** of **Robert Borne Building Construction Ltd.** to renovate the cottage. “I liked him immediately,” Leslie says. “I just knew he would be good.” *Continued on page 60*

TOP RIGHT: The custom-made live-edge dinner table seats large gatherings comfortably. **CENTRE:** Soft lighting illuminates an inviting place to read or relax. **RIGHT:** A sliding barn-style door separates the mudroom from the living room.



HillTop Interiors’ signature anchor hooks are mounted on a weathered plank. **RIGHT:** A rope-framed mirror and nautical-style lights augment the coastal look of this bathroom.





High lakeside windows infuse the living room with natural light. **BELOW LEFT:** This quiet sitting area overlooks a view of the lake. **BELOW RIGHT:** A wet bar with beverage coolers and plenty of cabinets by Chervin lines one side of the living room.

cottage, allowing large floor-to-ceiling windows that showcase the lake and shed lots of natural light on the living space. “We rebuilt the whole structure so we could have huge windows. That was really important to us,” says Leslie.

Chervin Kitchen & Bath built the kitchen with Caesarstone countertops and backsplash, a stainless steel farmer-style sink and an island sided with reclaimed barn board. A nook, furnished with an oval table and four armchairs at one end of the kitchen, is a great place to sip coffee in the morning sunlight. **Brown’s Appliances** supplied built-in culinary cooling and cooking equipment.

A Canadian-made, live-edge dinner table with seating for 10 flanks one side of the stone fireplace. On the other side, an arrangement of comfortable sofas and an armchair faces the fire. The main floor living space includes a large carpeted games and TV room with remote-controlled blinds, leather ottomans, a sectional sofa and lounging chairs. Barn board sheaths one wall of this room. On the west side of the upper floor is another space with a large sectional sofa and chaise and a wet bar with built-in coolers and cabinets by Chervin. *Continued on page 64*



In the middle of the cottage was a large stone fireplace. With fireboxes, front and back, on each floor, it couldn’t be replicated. Ed and Leslie wanted to keep that feature and work around it. Lena was integral to planning the renovation. She reviewed the architectural drawings and made suggestions for flooring, placement of walls and electrical outlets, and the general flow of the place. “One of the most important things is to have a relationship with your designer, builder and architect, so that you have a cohesive team,” Lena explains. “We all

worked together and it made the job so much easier.” The renovation created four bedrooms, including a suite with twin beds, bunk beds and a bathroom, all on the ground floor. The master bedroom on this lower level has a private seating area by the fire and its own en suite. Sliding doors in a lake-facing bedroom open to a large covered deck. HillTop Interiors furnished the entire cottage. On the upper floor, Robert’s crew removed the original exterior walls. They rebuilt the sloping roof so it ascends at the front of the



The cottage’s original, two-storey, double-sided fireplace was preserved as a traditional gathering spot in the renovated lake house. **ABOVE:** A ground-floor bench seat has hooks for beach towels and outerwear as well as baskets and cubby shelves to help keep things tidy.




feature



No need to get out of bed to enjoy the lake view from this bedroom. It opens to a deck that spans the cottage front. **BELOW LEFT:** A blue vanity with matching overhead lamps has tiny paddles that serve as drawer pulls and cupboard handles. **BELOW RIGHT:** Furnishings and décor blend rustic and modern elements.




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Equipped with a large-screen television, the main floor games room is an ideal spot in which to while away rainy days. **BELOW LEFT:** Wood sheaths the walls and ceiling of the master bedroom's en suite. **BELOW RIGHT:** Laundry is deemed a self-service sport in this well-equipped room. **BOTTOM:** Twin beds make sweet dreams in this ground floor suite.



Comfort was paramount in the interior design. "We put in a lot of seating pods," says Leslie. "We wanted places to go read a book, to be quiet, to play a game of cards or whatever." She wanted a modern vibe for the cottage. "But I wanted to soften that by having really comfortable furniture to just sit down and enjoy the view and the people around you. It was really important that it was really comfortable."

Life at the cottage is their family time, says Leslie. "It's where we go to decompress from busy lives, where we welcome all our kids and their friends, and just enjoy the peace and quite of being up in lake country. It's a family gathering place. We love the water and we love being in what I would say is a less frenetic part of the lake."

Their cottage lifestyle, much like the one Leslie grew up with, is all about entertaining themselves and hosting friends and family. "The community is nice up there. We have made some very good friends." **OH**

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