



Retractable glass walls open to the shaded front porch where a fireplace from The Fireplace Stop can quickly heat the space on cool evenings. **OPPOSITE:** Flanked by thriving gardens, stone stairs ascend to the main entrance of this new cottage. Builder Anthony Dion and the cottage owner enjoy a view of Moon River Bay from the front porch.

GEORGIAN BAY *makeover*

STORY **CHARLENE PECK**
PHOTOGRAPHY **SANDY MACKAY**

Woods Bay builder Anthony Dion loves a challenge.

So transforming the aging residence of Sunset Point Cottages on the Moon River basin into a modern family cottage was an exciting project. Built in the 1980s to house operators of the cabin rental business, the house was purchased for private use. With the home set on the Georgian Bay shoreline at the end of a winding trail, west of MacTier, Anthony knew immediately access would be a big part of his challenge. “For the scope of this project, we needed to get loaded concrete pump trucks, cranes and other massive equipment back in there for the miles of building material needed,” he says. “And we did it right through the winter.”

One quick walk-through of the original house with his brother **Chris**, co-owner of **Dion Construction Ltd.**, and the pair began to grasp the scope of the project they were tackling. “It was all cut up and had multiple levels of floors,” Anthony recalls. Yet, architectural drawings called for one level on the main floor. “What we had and what we were bringing it to was a tough one to visualize, and this wasn’t a tear-down, really.”

He describes the new 3,800 sq. ft. four-bedroom, two-bathroom cottage, with its 1,000 sq. ft. covered porch, 1,000 square feet of stone patio and large garage as a step-up. “The building was large in size

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A sleek modern kitchen with granite countertops and shaker-style lower cabinetry by Colgan Oak Ltd. offers comfortable seating alongside the wide dining bar. **RIGHT:** Antler chandeliers hang from Douglas fir beams intersecting the cathedral ceiling in the living room. **BOTTOM CENTRE:** A walk-in pantry provides ample storage space for kitchen supplies. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Multiple windows overlooking the bay suffuse the living room with natural light.



for this area,” he explains. “The challenge in this township (The Archipelago) is that there’s a square footage cap and we were way inside of that because we were building off an existing building so we were grandfathered into our square footage.”

Home designer Jane Cameron of Life Home Design worked with the homeowner to fit modern living space into the footprint of the original residence. “To come up with a design for a building like this based on an existing footprint, to be able to draw that and make it all fit, I think she did a phenomenal job,” says Anthony.

Her plans also included 36-inch doorways, 48-inch halls, a universally accessible bathroom configuration and barrier-free shower to accommodate wheelchair mobility.

Contrasting with the project’s challenges, the homeowner’s mandate was pleasantly simple. With two of her grown children living in Manhattan, the owner wanted a gathering place for family that embraced the natural beauty of the site.

The stage was set for that embrace using cut granite, Muskoka-blend, tile flooring from **Muskoka Rock Company Ltd.** throughout the main floor. Random-cut granite of that same blend spills out onto a spacious patio that gently melds into the Georgian Bay landscape,

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ABOVE: A live-edge, cherry dinner table and white oak benches centre the dining room. **RIGHT:** Day lilies and ferns picked from the property lend a splash of colour.

where the owner’s five grandchildren explore and pick blueberries. An abundance of windows invites nature’s four-season paintbrush to create a dynamic backdrop for indoor activity.

Construction on the 15-month project began late in 2013, when the cottage was razed to the unfinished basement. No-longer-trendy sunken rooms disappeared and some of the foundation was removed to bring the main floor to one level. The already-large kitchen in the footprint was expanded slightly for family gatherings around a large centre island and the 10-foot American cherry table, with white oak benches, made by **John Leenders** of Erin.

The original smoky, two-sided brick fireplace in the living room was rebuilt with Muskoka-blend granite by **Robin** and **Shane Watkinson** from **Georgian Bay Rock Company Ltd.** to surround an airtight Rumford insert installed by **The Fireplace Stop**. The two MacTier area stonemasons also added a second granite fireplace in the sunroom, where even on the warmest evenings, the atmosphere around the hearth draws family together.

Here, Lumon retractable glass walls convert the covered porch into a three-season living space; enclosing the sunroom on a chilly evening and sliding away to usher in refreshing bay breezes on a pleasant summer or fall day.

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Windswept pines and the rocky Canadian Shield, visible through the living room windows, surround the cottage with a natural vista.

In the master bedroom and throughout the entire cottage, painted Douglas fir clads the walls. A custom-made cutting tool gave the shiplap panelling its distinctive profile. A high ceiling allows plenty of room for the distress-finished four poster bed. **OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT:** Granite for the stone flooring was sourced from several different quarries. **TOP RIGHT:** The exterior of the small claw foot tub was painted to match the vanity and the legs were chromed. **BOTTOM:** Industrial-style lights give the bathroom a nautical flair.



British Columbia Douglas fir wallboards from **Georgian Bay Timber Company** are painted in popular Benjamin Moore warm whites to play background roles to décor, natural views, and family activity. “All the ceilings are either vaulted, cathedral, or coffered,” Anthony explains. “No two ceilings in this building are the same. They have similarities, but have different elevation and pitch, all changed up by different timber in the roof and ceiling areas.”

Joe Ball from Georgian Bay Timber Company engineered the outdoor living space in the porch and supplied all cladding materials, from interior walls to exterior soffit, some ceiling material, and all of the timber.

Bay Area Electrical installed wiring and electrical services throughout the cottage while **Northwind Mechanical Heating & Air Conditioning** provided the home heating and air conditioning systems.

Anthony describes the construction as a mix of timber frame and a lot of conventional framing. “What we’ve done is added all of the accents and the finish,” he explains. “Behind a lot of the timber you see here are the structural members. Their faces are clad to look like actual beams and they’re not. They’re façade pieces to give you that ‘wow’ effect.”

By the spring of 2015, the 15-month makeover was complete and gratifying for the local contractors. “When you start winning the battles and it starts to take shape, it’s always an amazing feeling,” Anthony says. *Continued on page 42*

RIGHT: Orange day lilies sway in the breeze between the home and the shoreline. **BOTTOM,** **LEFT:** Splashes of red spice up this guest room. **MIDDLE:** The West Elm bed in this guest room is made of wood from repurposed skids. **RIGHT:** Custom-made stairs, built by Cutting Bros. Inc., ascend to the cottage storage loft.

LOCAL
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• Bay Area Electrical Co. Ltd.
• Cutting Brothers Inc. • Dion
Construction Ltd. • Georgian Bay
Rock Company Ltd • Georgian
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Leenders • McNabb Home
Building Centre • McPherson Well
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Ltd. • Northwind Mechanical
• Peter Nikolic • Proline Rentals
• The Fireplace Stop



With all building challenges met, weekends at the Georgian Bay cottage are packed with family fun: home-cooked meals around the dinner table, feisty matches of crokinole in the games room, catching-up-on-life chats in the living room and golden marshmallows toasted in the sunroom fireplace.

Little ones scamper home, happily exclaiming: “I can hardly wait to go back to the cottage.” And windows are smudged with miniature palm prints and a nose-print or two, happy face reminders evoking a grandmother’s smile. The cottage is serving its purpose. **OH**



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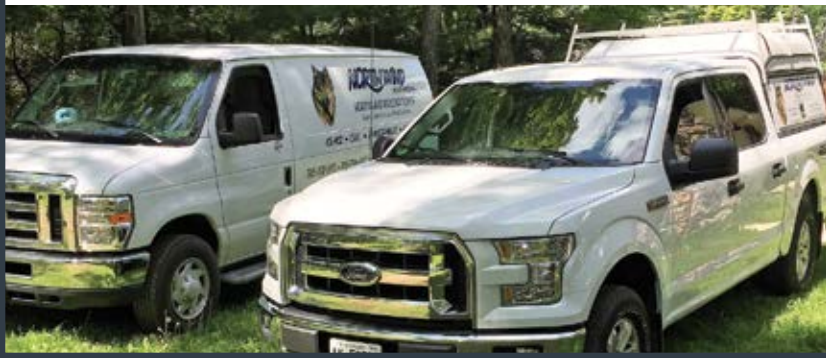
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