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VOLUME TWO

ISSUE TWO

SUMMER 2024

FREE

Summer dining

AT THE
Haliburton Post House



Embedded in Nature

An airy cottage takes design cues from traditional long barns

Cool on the Hill

A modern A-frame bunkie serves as a perfect retreat for a busy family

Refining Luxury

The Rosseau Muskoka Resort combines indulgence and relaxation

HALIBURTON + KAWARTHA LAKES + MUSKOKA



Cool on the hill

by **Gale Beeby** | photography by **Riley Snelling**

The bunkie exudes a warm glow in the evening as seen from the lake.



In search of a respite from the activity around their busy family compound, brothers Daniel and Robert decided they needed a place to retreat when the going got tough. As members of a three-generational tight-knit family that can, by all accounts, be a raucous bunch, a bunkie seemed the logical answer. For the brothers, however, it wouldn't just be *any* bunkie, rather a 1,000-square-foot beauty atop a hill overlooking beautiful Lake Muskoka.

Situated high above a collection of multi-generational cottages, the Bunkie on the Hill serves as a quiet haven for family members to reconnect with nature.

The smallest in a collection of large cabins scattered across four family properties, the Bunkie on the Hill, as they have named it, serves as a quiet haven, tucked into the trees at the top of a steep slope. It's a contemporary interpretation of the traditional A-frame shape, says Heather Dubbeldam of Dubbeldam Architecture + Design, who has worked with the family on several projects over the years. (Due to privacy concerns, the family asked that their full names not be used.)

When the family has lots of visitors, parents with small children are afforded priority use of the bunkie so grownups can continue to play while the children sleep. For those who express a need for quiet time, the bunkie – which comfortably sleeps four – is available. "It's nicely nestled into a wooded area and you feel immersed in nature when you're there," Dubbeldam explains, adding that there's also a kitchen garden and a greenhouse just beyond the small cabin. Boasting an office space overlooking the lake, the brothers and their guests can quietly work, far from the maddening crowd.

One important consideration for Daniel and Robert was that the cabin be built with minimal disruption to the natural landscape. They were adamant in their "Bunkie Mission" that there would be no blasting of rock to lay a foundation, that the materials be natural, and the heating and cooling systems as passive as possible. These reasons – and the building site location in a natural clearing on the Canadian Shield – made for a difficult build, Dubbeldam recalls.

To start with, there were site access difficulties because large vehicles couldn't make it up the steep hill. "Blackwell Engineering were very innovative and managed to come up with inventive solutions to many of the problems we faced," relates Dubbeldam. "For instance, we used Insulated Concrete Forms (ICF) to pour the foundation, which needed to be contoured to the shape of the rocks." ICFs, for reference, are foam blocks formed with spaces into which concrete is poured, which makes them durable, well-sealed and well-insulated. Consequently, a large concrete truck wasn't required.



Being unable to haul large steel beams up the hill – the loft required steel beam reinforcement – the builder opted to use Fitch beams, smaller steel spans encased in wood, that are bolted together on site. As a bonus, the wood acts as an insulator to the steel, which can get cold in winter and hot in summer.

The bunkie is built with thick walls, insulation on the outside and triple glazing, which itself presented an interesting problem. “The large windows were much heavier than their double glazed counterparts, so getting them up the hill was problematic. But Blackwell managed to figure that out too,” she says. Additionally, the windows are angled, so the cabin is warmed by the sun in winter and cooled by lake breezes pulled in during summer.

As Dumbledam notes, the bunkie is based on the traditional A-frame cottage and evokes the spirit of the quintessential cabin in the woods. The difference is the shifted roof volumes – reminiscent of the overlapping layers of rock in the surrounding landscape – that feature two intersecting gables which create space for window openings. This allows for spectacular views of the treetops on one side of the cabin, and the lake on the other, while inviting natural light to flood the interior.



Far left: A built-in desk features views down to the living space on the first level and the lake beyond. The split roof design features two intersecting gables that create opportunities for window openings.

Above: The upper loft incorporates a pull-out bed, providing extra space for sleeping.

Left: Located at the rear for a more peaceful environment, the bedroom offers immersive views of the forest through a large picture window.





From the exterior, the roofline serves distinct elevations on either side – a tall, narrow, glazed façade facing the lake, and a wider, more opaque, elevation facing the forest. The cabin’s entrance features a walkway with a slatted cedar screen on one side, echoing the tree trunks seen through the views at each end of the walkway.

Natural materials, specified by the brothers, were chosen to complement the rustic landscape. Greyed wood siding contrasts the natural cedar soffits that frame the entrance, sitting atop the board-formed concrete base. Interior materials include oak flooring, maple plywood and cedar cladding, grounded by dark charcoal window frames, grey stone counters and furniture that offers occasional colour detail. A variety of wood species was used to differentiate the various planes – white wallboard defines the interior perimeter walls, internal partitions are maple clad, and the ceiling is delineated by Western red cedar slats. With the use of sustainable materials and construction methods, the structure sits lightly on the landscape.

“The bedroom has a big picture window that envelops you in nature,” notes Dubbeldam. “It’s so peaceful. It really provides an opportunity to reconnect with nature.” It’s this very connection with nature that delivers such a feeling of sanctuary, both outside and within. The effortlessly chic abode bears testament to the vision of the brothers, and indeed the architectural team by whom they have been so expertly served.



Above: The lofted ceiling features Western red cedar boards.

Above, right: Tucked beneath the upper loft area, an open kitchen offers the basics for cooking. Grey limestone counters ground the space in contrast to the surrounding light wood tones and vaulted wood ceiling.

Right: The open living area features triple glazing and a view of the lake.

