

## TINY IS CHIC!

But challenges remain: how to make such a tiny space—often only 400 sq. ft.—functional for even a small family. Yet, they often succeed with stunning results.

# BUNKIE ON THE HILL

Story provided by  
Dubbeldam Architecture + Design

The smallest in a collection of cabins scattered across four family properties in Muskoka, a Bunkie on the Hill serves as a quiet haven in the trees for family members to retreat and re-connect with nature. Designed by Dubbeldam Architecture + Design, the Bunkie is tucked into the trees at the top of a steep slope, providing a quiet space away from the action of the multi-generational family cottages below.

A contemporary interpretation of the traditional A-frame shape evokes the quintessential cabin in the woods, differentiated by shifted roof volumes. The split roof design features two intersecting gables that create opportunities for window openings where the roof volumes separate. These geometric windows allow for curated views of the treetops on one side and lake below on the other and invite natural light to flood the interior of the cabin, reflecting off the sharp roof angles and creating dramatic lines and shadows. The cabin's split roof design also generates distinct elevations on either side – a tall, narrow, glazed facade facing the lake, and a wider, more opaque elevation facing the forest, with a cut out for a covered entrance on the west side. Located midway along the side façade, the cabin's entrance features a walkway with a slatted cedar screen on one side which echoes the tree trunks seen through framed views at each end.

The Bunkie's interior is functional despite its compact size. Small nooks throughout contain storage shelves or built-in benches. Each interior space is designed to offer framed views of the surrounding forest or the lake below. The upper loft area includes a built-in desk with a view down to the living space on

*Natural materials were chosen to complement the rustic context. Greyed wood siding contrasts the natural cedar soffits and screen framing the entrance, sitting atop the raw, board-formed concrete base.*

*(Top) The vaulted roof maximizes space within the Bunkie's small footprint, creating a spacious feel with a lofty ceiling that connects both levels.*

*Image credit: Riley Snelling c/o Dubbeldam Architecture + Design.*





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

Image credit: Riley Snelling c/o Dubbeldam Architecture + Design.

the first level and the vast lake beyond, as well as an extra space for sleeping. The bedroom is located at the rear and features a large window that offers immersive views of the forest.

Natural materials were chosen to complement the rustic landscape that surrounds the Bunkie. Interior materials include oak flooring, maple plywood, and cedar cladding, grounded by dark charcoal window frames, grey stone counters, and furniture that offers moments of colour. A variety of wood species differentiate the various planes in the space – white wallboard defines the interior perimeter walls, internal partitions are clad in maple plywood, and the ceiling is delineated by Western red cedar slats.

Sustainable materials and construction methods were important to the client. The exterior walls have been thickened to serve as a passive insulator and include triple-glazed windows, making it possible to use a minimal heating system in the crawl space below. Fitch beams were utilized to eliminate any thermal bridges. To avoid the need for blasting, the Bunkie was raised above grade and its foundation constructed on top of the natural rock contours, allowing the structure to sit lightly on the landscape. Wood products used are FSC-rated and the few plumbing and light fixtures are low flow and low energy. Any patina of materials over time is intentional: as time passes the Bunkie blends back into its forested hill setting. 🌿

# THE TINY HOME TREND

## and Why it is so Compelling

By GC Cabana-Coldwell

*The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak.*

– Hans Hofmann (1880-1966)

**A**h, the simple life, where less really is more and ‘stuff’ doesn’t rule supreme. Today it’s often called ‘tiny living’, a lifestyle that’s easy to envision but tough to implement. By definition, living ‘tiny’ means calling a space of 400 square feet or less ‘home.’ Imagine having your bedroom, kitchen, living area and biffy stuffed into a standard two-car garage. You get the picture.

Tiny homes offer far less space than we’re accustomed to. In 2022, the average home varied in size

from 484 square feet (Hong Kong) to 1,948 square feet in Canada. Historically, the size of any residence - and the related trappings throughout it - have always been the yardstick of personal success. Our love affair with the ‘Supersize me!’ mindset has only bolstered that notion over the years.

But today, there’s a growing faction of people, many middle-aged and older, who have taken the new minimalistic tiny living ideology to the max. These aren’t folks living off-grid with hand-pumped water, sackcloth, and outhouses. These are people who have simply kissed the sprawling, suburban two-storey ‘goodbye’, purged unnecessary ‘stuff’ and embraced a new life in 255 square feet of customized space. Their territory may be tiny, they say, but their lives have never been fuller or happier.