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# SECOND NATURE

Distinguishing design details incorporate the best of cottage living in a primary residence for a retired couple

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY LISA PETROLE



**O**akville residents Bob and Diane decided to take the leap and retire in Muskoka. Cottagers still make up a significant portion of the population here but there are a rising number of retirees too. The latter are incredibly comfortable building a primary residence in a cottage environment.

## DOUBLE DUTY

These homeowners had a vision of cottage life that is unique to their demographic. It is the ultimate in home—where family meets, unwinds, and enjoys the best of cottage living year-round. Bob and Diane are of the mindset that this will be the last time they build, and they have the experience and the means to get it right. It is a specific and well thought-out approach to building and design. The choices of furniture, fixtures, and finishes are detailed, and carefully considered.

This type of cottage is a game-changer because it is a forever, full-time residence for the retirees and there is also a cottage component designed for the rest of the family to relax and enjoy when they visit, yet there remains a consistent feel to the overall design.

## THE CANADIAN SHIELD

Make no mistake, Bob and Diane may fit the retiree mold but they are far from standard or predictable, and the same is true of their new Muskoka home. The family and its unique personality are represented in every corner of the house. You see their exquisite taste in each piece of art, furniture, and finish, and yet you might just as easily envision yourself living there. Why? Because that type of attention to detail, comfort and organization appeals to almost everyone.

It's as they say 'the best of both worlds.' It's not trendy, beachy, or lodge-like in its appearance. It's classically refined with every possible amenity for long-term comfort. This type of home is all about class, durability and has a more relaxed appearance than its city counterpart.

**THE DESIGN**

It was important the open plan worked for them. Their tired furniture that owed them nothing, was divvied up and dispersed among family and friends. Their dining table, some beautiful rugs and a bed or two, had to fit seamlessly with all things new. The kitchen is custom in every way. It has the latest appliances. It is sharp and on trend, and then softened by warm cream-glazed custom cabinetry. The kitchen and opposite living space were designed to be the hub of the home. This popular floor plan requires much thought. Bob and Diane maximized its size and function, and yet still the space feels intimate. The seating takes full advantage of the spectacular view outside.

The large island opposite the coveted dining table has ample space for buffet-style family feasts and multiple cooks. Hemlock wood flooring, stone, and slightly rustic elements help to balance the weight of the immense granite fireplace.

The decor and furnishings are timeless and comfortable. Even the pets have free reign here. Antique pieces, mixed with new furnishings and art, pull together an interior that reflects Bob and Diane's personality. It's friendly, comfortable, stress-free and prompts a smile. ♦



*Tips for designing a* **CLASSIC OPEN-CONCEPT COTTAGE**

**DETERMINE THE FOCAL POINTS**

The most common focal points at a cottage are view, TV and fireplace. Consider what yours are and plan around them. The view is moot in the evening, when TV watching is high, and the fireplace is seasonal.

**TRAFFIC FLOW**

Allow for ample space between areas. In an open-cottage kitchen, allow for at least three feet between cabinets and four feet around an island. Heavy traffic areas are the fridge and stove.

**DURABLE FURNISHINGS**

Both the cottage and an open plan promote eating and drinking in the living areas. Choose treated fabrics and quality-made pieces that even the dog is welcome on.

**SEPARATING AREAS**

Throw rugs and light fixtures are a great way to delineate areas, without chopping up the space. Use them to centre the dining table, coffee table, and heavy kitchen traffic areas.

**GROUND THE SPACE**

Repeat textures and materials by replicating wood tones, granite, and warm metals to help make a bold statement of warmth, durability and timelessness.

Toronto and Muskoka-based designer Kris Brigden is principal of North Muskoka House Ltd. The full-service residential design firm works on small- and full-scale design projects throughout Northern Ontario and the GTA.

