

Hilltop WATERVIEW Dream

A couple from Ontario enjoyed several homes through the years, then they “right-sized” to a log-and-timber frame home.

BY MIKE HASKEW

PHOTOS COURTESY OF TRUE NORTH LOG HOMES

Discovering just the right log-and-timber frame home for a downsizing destination proved a most enjoyable journey for Tracy and Brenda Evans.

Like any great ride, it took a little time, but when the couple determined that it was right, their partnership with True North Log Homes and marketing manager Mark Wrightman brought the idea and the reality together in tremendous fashion. The finished project has created an 1,845-square-foot downsizing hilltop dream home on nearly an acre of land overlooking Calabogie Lake in northeastern Ontario.



ABOVE: STAINLESS STEEL APPLIANCES AND CONTRASTING CABINETRY PROVIDE UPSCALE ACCENTS TO THE EVANSES' LOG-AND-TIMBER HOME.

RIGHT: A LARGE KITCHEN ISLAND PROVIDES AMPLE COUNTER SPACE AND AN ALTERNATIVE EATING AREA IN THE EVANSES' HOME.

OPPOSITE: THE HIGH CEILINGS IN THE EVANSES' HOME MAKE THE HOME FEEL BIGGER THAN IT IS. THE PANORAMIC VISTA FROM THE GREAT ROOM IS RELAXING AND CALMING ALL YEAR ROUND.

"We have lived in a variety of homes, from a townhouse to a bungalow to a 150-year-old farmhouse, from the suburbs to the country," related Brenda, who retired from NavCanada (operator of Canada's civil air navigation system) after 11 years and a 20-year career with the federal government. "We realized how we preferred a larger lot in the country with more privacy. We renovated all our homes and lived in them anywhere from five to 10 years. We wanted the country property without too much maintenance, so a lot of the property we left natural."

According to Wrightman, the downsizing phenomenon is common among homeowners for a variety of reasons, such as grown children moving out, a desire for a change of scenery, and simply too much house. More than that, though, the choice of a log or timber home is a matter of planning for the future.

"Typically, our clients come to us to build their forever home and choose log because of its longevity and beauty," Mark reasoned. "A lot of the time,



FOR TRACY AND BRENDA EVANS, THE DOWNSIZING JOURNEY LED TO THE CHALET STYLE OF THE TRUE NORTH ASPEN XI FLOORPLAN. ITS FULL WINDOWS AND SHIP'S-PROW CONSTRUCTION AT THE FRONT OF THE HOME ALLOW AMBIENT LIGHT AND MAJESTIC VIEWS TO BRIGHTEN THE LIVING SPACE.



"I love my log-and-timber home because everything is new, including the smell of the wood when you walk in from the outdoors, the warmth of the wood, the natural, earthy feeling the wood brings. I love the huge fir beams that show the natural markings in the wood. The pre-stained log exterior saves a lot of work post-build. It has a beautiful curb appeal and is in the perfect setting."

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ABOVE: OPTIMAL SPACE UTILIZATION CHARACTERIZES THE ENTRY TO THE EVANS' HOME.

TOP: AN ATTRACTIVE LOFT ALLOWS FULL ADVANTAGE OF OPEN SPACE WITH VIEWS OF THE DOWNSTAIRS STONE FIREPLACE AND GREAT ROOM, AND THE BEAUTY OF THE OUTDOORS.

it starts as a cottage and becomes the primary residence in retirement, downsizing from a house in the city. The main reason they choose us is because we can offer the log home lifestyle without the maintenance."

Tracy and Brenda actually came to True North through a related business that sells split-rail snowmobile skis. "Tracy had purchased a set of skis back in 2012 and loved the product," said Mark. "He then found out that we owned a log home manufacturing business and mentioned they had dreamed of owning a log home in retirement."

After attending a factory tour and construction seminar, the Evans took the plunge, choosing the True North Aspen XI chalet-style floorplan. "We had been looking at house plans for at least 15 years," explained Brenda. "Anytime we drove by a log home or saw one in a magazine, we would agree how it would be our dream to build and own one. Building our own log home gave us the opportunity to have exactly the amount of space we would need as we aged. Our plan was for a three-bedroom home, but we opted for no basement and now use the third bedroom as our utility and laundry room."

The process of downsizing included a worthwhile exercise in removing clutter and unneeded "stuff." Tracy, a carpenter with a residential construction company, commented, "I just told Brenda, 'Don't tell me what you're getting rid of, and I won't be able to say no.'"

Brenda actually found the process of sorting through belongings to be satisfying. "I have to say it was easier for me to purge a lot of items to get down to the bare necessities," she smiled. "We didn't need 25



coffee mugs or excessive quantities of towels and linens, and since we moved often, we were able to keep only what we needed. This was the first time we did not have a basement, so we had to be mindful of all our off-season items. We are building a garage so we will have storage room for lawn furniture, winter tires, and other things.”

The result of the partnership between the Evanses and True North is a beautiful, functional log-and-timber home with white pine exterior, knotty pine siding on the upper level, and knotty pine tongue-and-groove ceiling in the great room. The home includes two bedrooms, two full baths, a loft overlooking the great room, and a galley kitchen with a large island and granite countertops that takes the shape of the prow at the front of the house, which includes floor-to-ceiling windows. The home earned a National Association of Home Builders Design Excellence award.

The log package was milled from full-thickness 8X12-inch eastern white pine logs, while the timber-frame second floor and balcony were fashioned

from Douglas fir. Brenda adds that one of the most striking features of the home is the stone veneer installed on the outward-facing wall of the kitchen island, fireplace, chimney, and the bottom of the posts in the entry. The cantilevered deck is just off the main bedroom on the second floor, highlighted with large posts and glass inserts.

The Evanses have enjoyed the downsizing experience. They knew the time was right, and they recall the experience with True North as quite positive, complimenting the company’s service “after the sale” and its interest in keeping in touch.

After many years and many residences, the downsizing has led Tracy and Brenda to conclude that there really is no place like home.

Log Home Producer: True North Log Homes, Ontario, Canada
Two-story home 🏠 **Square footage: 1,846**
Bedrooms: 2 Baths: 2



ABOVE: THE UTILITARIAN LAYOUT OF THE MASTER BEDROOM AND ADJOINING MASTER BATH MAKE LIVING EASY AND CONVENIENT FOR TRACY AND BRENDA EVANS WHEN THE DAY IS DONE.

RIGHT TOP: GLASS PANELS PROVIDE AN UNOBSTRUCTED VIEW FROM THE CANTILEVERED DECK JUST OFF THE MASTER BEDROOM.

RIGHT MIDDLE: DOORS OPEN FROM THE MASTER BEDROOM OF THE EVANS HOME DIRECTLY ONTO AN INVITING DECK, EXPANDING THE LIVING SPACE OF THE DOWNSIZED BEDROOM.

RIGHT: STYLISH ACCENTS HIGHLIGHT THE WELCOMING MASTER BATH IN THE EVANS’ HOME. THE COUPLE CHOSE TO UTILIZE THE CONTRAST OF LIGHT FIXTURES AND DARK FLOORING.