



mixing needs and wants
AT THE LAKE

by **ALEXANDRA ASSAF** | PHOTOGRAPHY by **STEPHANI BUCHMAN**

HAVING JUST FINISHED A RECENT COTTAGE RENOVATION, I WAS

faced with the challenge of satisfying the needs and wants of three different generations who would continue to use the space together. Many cottages bought by young families a few decades ago are now being used by older parents, adult children and grandchildren. Children who grew up going to the cottage may now, as adults, have some ideas for modernizing the space, making it easier for their aging parents to enjoy, more conducive to a modern lifestyle, and safer for the little ones. Some simple

updating can create a much more comfortable space for all. Fall and winter are the perfect time to dig into a cottage renovation.

Get your designer and contractor in. If you do it now, you'll find the professionals available and you'll be enjoying your beautiful new space, instead of losing precious weeks of an already too-short cottage season while the work is being completed.

The Challenges

This lakefront property was stuck in the 90s, and posed safety challenges for the babies and toddlers. The existing floorplan was completely dysfunctional. The family did not want a large-scale renovation and was adamant about keeping the pickled pine kitchen cabinets and hallway closets. The cabinets were pink and had clunky gold and silver hardware. The existing oil heater desperately needed to be replaced. The dining area was far away from the kitchen (grandma had been begging for years to figure out better space planning). The cottage's oversized furniture dwarfed the space. Finally, the entrance was dark, dismal and uninviting.

The Solutions

I focused on sourcing stunning products that were Canadian-made, eco-friendly and ahead of the trends. We gave the cottage a fresh coat of paint in Benjamin Moore AF 670 Nightingale and installed gorgeous laminate floors with cork backing, ideal for the drastic temperature changes up north.

The Kitchen

The once-tight kitchen was transformed. We painted the pickled pine cabinetry using Benjamin Moore AF 15 Steam and changed all the hardware. We removed the upper cabinets and installed new butcher block countertops. I love the gorgeous counter-to-ceiling backsplash. We used Ceramica bevelled tiles in Perla Matte that Metro Source (metro.ca) imported from Spain. We installed a new vent fan. The pièce de résistance in this kitchen is the deep stainless steel Adano U2 farmhouse sink and Rita faucet from Blanco (blancocanada.com). I included a pop of colour by painting a feature wall Tranquil Blue in Benjamin Moore 2051-50 Matte. The kitchen is tied together with a beautiful Roman shade from Maxxmar.

The Dining Area

The upper cabinets that we took down were repurposed into a buffet. It's a great DIY and upcycling project! We incorporated the natural setting by using key accessories such as the Twig Mirror and fun Paper Maché Deer Head from West Elm. I absolutely love supporting Canadian companies, so we sourced the perfect dining room set from LH Imports (lhimports.com) out of Vancouver. The Manhattan large dining room table which now seats the whole extended family is made of 100 per cent reclaimed Acacia. I also chose a bench from the same collection and fabulous Belmont Light Java leather chairs. We anchored the space with a modern ceiling fan.

The Living Area

The focal point of the living/dining space is definitely the fireplace (style #P38DF) sourced from another great innovative Canadian company called Montigo (montigo.com). We built the stone surround for it using Interlocking Pave Mat (style #ILPM 14/24) from ErthCoverings (erthcoverings.com). These multicoloured stones provide depth and warmth to the fireplace. I





found a gorgeous full-scale grey sectional (style #0619) from Dynasty Furniture (dynastyf.com), a family-run business based out of Calgary. The sectional serves to define the space, as well as provide adequate seating for the entire family. The family absolutely fell in love with the Sweater Weather carpet tiles in grey and chalk from FLOR (flor.com). These tiles are easy to move around, reconfigure and wash.

The Reading Area

Prior to the renovation, the cottage had dead space beside the washroom. I decided to create a reading/play area for the family. The sunburst pattern chair from Dynasty Furniture provides a great spot for grandma to read stories to her grandchildren. Accessories from HomeSense were used throughout the cottage, but I especially adore the beautiful turquoise lamp and the vibrant piece of artwork which provides pops of colour for this spot.

The Hallway

The entrance to the cottage was so dark and dismal. We decided to get a custom door made from Royal Door Ltd. (royaldoor.ca), a Canadian eco-friendly company that manufactures spectacular, quality products. The door is made from cedar and includes a pane of frosted thermo glass in it, so that the light flows through. We painted the cabinets the same colour as those in the kitchen and placed some hooks on the opposite wall for things like life jackets and coats. Finally, the bright Classic Quilt Runner Set FLOR tiles placed in the entry give a cheery and welcoming feeling for the family and their guests. This transformed multigenerational lakefront property is now vibrant, inviting and, most importantly, functional in its space and design.

My favourite part – and the one thing that will never need changing – is the glorious view.



ALEXANDRA ASSAF

Alexandra Assaf, principal of Design by AA, brings a cultivated and creative aesthetic to residential renovation. Having studied both in Canada and the US and worked internationally, her extensive background in art and architecture are matched by her technical skill and exacting attention to detail. Alexandra now offers an e-design service, an online experience that allows clients to work with her to create decor options under her guidance. The company services clients in remote locations or those who want access to affordable and functional design. designbyaa.com.