



THE MODERN LOG HOME: ECO-FRIENDLY MEETS RUSTIC-CHIC

For many British Columbians it's the ultimate retirement dream: a rustic retreat nestled against a sparkling lake or a stone's throw from the ocean. The traditional log home in particular has a permanent place in both the northern wilderness and the Canadian heart. However, even traditions can change.

A new style of log home has emerged on the Canadian landscape: a blend of old-fashioned rustic and modern day chic. Traditional looking at first glance, these residences actually feature a wide range of high-end features including such modern amenities as radiant heating, home elevators, built-in security systems, yoga studios and wine cellars. While it's a break with tradition, it suits the sophisticated tastes for many of today's luxury log home buyers.

Take Sherri Cargoe and Paul Copeland, owners of a new 2,000 sq. ft., three-bedroom log house in Squamish. Their personal dream home has long been a modern take on the customary log cabin. They're not the only ones.

"Most of our clients are successful entrepreneurs who have worked years to earn their money," explains Robert Wrightman, Chief Executive Officer of True North Log Homes, an Ontario-based company that's tapped into this niche market. "Their reward is a log home."

While the Canadian housing market may be sputtering, new log home construction

continues to rise. And while the modern day bells and whistles make it all sound extravagant, much of the demand for made-to-order log and timber homes has come from eco-conscious consumers. Some are attracted by reports indicating that log homes leave a smaller carbon footprint than other types of home. There is the sustainability aspect, too: the majority of today's log home producers source logs from tree farms, where cut trees are continuously replanted. There is also a trend toward smaller abodes and other "greener" choices throughout the design and construction process. Says Wrightman, "I always say that log homes are earth friendly – they really have very little impact on the environment to build."

For True North, the eco-friendly philosophy begins with the production process. The custom homes are manufactured at an in-house production facility for optimal efficiency and accuracy. State-of-the-art milling processes mean less waste. Modern technology has significantly improved the traditional design process, and a straight-forward assembly procedure that requires little in the way of heavy machinery



means less pollution and a reduced environmental impact.

The green possibilities for modern log homes don't necessarily end there. At True North, water-based finishes and stains are used exclusively. "We try to eliminate all the toxins that we possibly can throughout the home building process," offers Wrightman. "This creates a healthy living environment for each client."

Environmental considerations were front and centre for Cargoe and Copeland. "For us it was a priority to make it as sustainable as possible," says Copeland. "I've been thinking green for a long time. I used to live in a home where I produced my own hydro for many years." With that in mind, they opted for a geo-thermal heating system, energy-efficient appliances and air flow, and the capacity for adding solar panels or wind generation system in the future. They also made the conscious, and conscientious, choice of sourcing materials from British Columbia.

With all the new-fangled features at one's disposal, creating a log home is no longer a do-it-yourself job. It requires the talents of a knowledgeable, savvy architect to pull it all together. In some instances, the supplier utilizes an in-house architect throughout design and building process. True North, for example, has a design team that includes an architect, an engineer and two designers who work closely with clients to turn their ideas into reality. Others choose to hire their own architect.

For the architect who does take on such a project, there is much to consider. Today's luxury log homes incorporate different log styles and profiles (square, round, milled, handcrafted and hand hewn dove tail). They also feature stonework, large expanses of glass, cedar siding, board and batten, and a variety of other materials. As for the raw material, modern milling allows for the elimination of sap wood, resulting in a level of precision that is much appreciated among the architectural and design communities.

Cargoe and Copeland worked closely with an architect to design their house from scratch. It allowed them to integrate features such as polished concrete floors and a foundation made from styrofoam-insulated concrete forms, saving on both material costs and monthly heating bills.



All Squamish House photos courtesy of Paul Copeland.

The Squamish couple may be at the forefront of a global trend. The market for eco-chic log homes has quickly moved beyond Canada and the United States to include Europe and, increasingly, Asia. It's a growth market that, like the domiciles themselves, is expected to last. As Wrightman summarizes, "Most people that build a traditional house are simply building shelter. Log home living

is incomparable. The ambiance is totally different, as is the lifestyle."

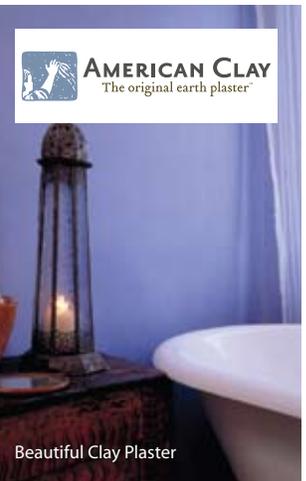
For Copeland, his Squamish home represents his personal dream of having a high-end, sustainable habitat that also maintains a rustic charm. That said, it may not be his last. "I foresee building another green home in the future, too," he explains. "I am fascinated by them."



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