



CHANGING *course*

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Living amongst the forest, rock and lakes of Muskoka was David and Joanne McLean's long-held dream. It was a dream well planned, with great care taken to secure the perfect location and to craft the ideal home. It would be a gathering place for friends and family. It was to be their forever home. That was, until faced with a new and greater challenge: a life-changing diagnosis.

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TOP: Pinnacle Property Maintenance nurtures the well-treed, five-acre property where Marshall Well Drilling tapped an ample water supply. **LEFT:** Flanked by cushioned wicker chairs, the sunny main entrance beckons. **OPPOSITE:** A stone footpath meanders to Joanne and David McLean's Fairy Lake home.



As executive coaches in leadership, helping others navigate change, they faced a sudden diagnosis of cancer, forcing upon them the greatest change of their lives, compelling them to consider the advice they had offered so many before. Coaching themselves, they saw the virtues of changing course and, as a result, are letting go of their dream home and focusing on a new dream.

“About 15 years ago we envisioned wanting to live in a community where you could have an active lifestyle and we narrowed in on Huntsville,” recalls David. “Ten years ago we found a property we fell in love with.” They purchased the five-acre property with 204 feet of private natural frontage on Fairy Lake and, for the first four years, summered in what was originally the cottage of Margaret Young, granddaughter of a founding settler. By 2011, David and Joanne were ready to build their new home. “We designed it and I was the general contractor,” explains David, who has long had a passion for architecture and design.

Jim McCaffery of **JD McCaffery Construction** built the 5,200 sq. ft. hybrid timber frame while local craftsman **Dave McKenzie** expertly carved exterior and interior trusses.

The four-bedroom, four-bathroom bungalow features a sunny four-season Muskoka room and a chef’s kitchen with granite countertops from Ciot. The space was designed for entertaining, boasting a 10-by-five-foot island in the open-concept living and dining area. Downstairs the recreation room offers a billiard table, wet bar, wine cellar, theatre room and infrared sauna. A gym and office complete the sunny walkout level. Outdoors is a hot tub and a waterfront fire pit with several levels of patio and a 30-by-32-foot steel dock with a single slip.

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TOP LEFT: Dave McKenzie carved the pine trusses that stretch over the dining space. **LEFT:** The four-year-old home sits near the end of a long quiet, tree-lined laneway. **OPPOSITE TOP LEFT:** A fireplace anchors one end of the open concept living space. **TOP RIGHT:** Entertaining is made easy around the large, granite-topped kitchen island. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Homeowners and entrepreneurs Joanne and David McLean. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Muskoka chairs encircle the front yard fire pit and populate the stone patio. Dwight Garden Centre helps keep the landscape natural and thriving.





The craftsmanship of **Kim Benedetti** of **Tile & Marble Man** is evident in the tile flooring, the honed marble kitchen backsplash and Italian porcelain bathrooms and showers.

The property's original two-bedroom cottage has recently been transformed into a guesthouse with details that harmonize with the main house. The McLeans affectionately call their property *Haverland*, in recognition of its historic connection to an inn, built on an adjacent parcel at the turn of the last century. Given the home was designed by the couple as a gathering place for friends and family, the name is fitting. Once the new house was built and the grounds landscaped, the dream was realized. Life was good.

"Then, three-and-a-half years ago, shortly after we moved up here, we were dealt a surprise in our life," David says with gentle candour. "My beautiful bride was diagnosed with cancer." A year later, in January 2015, Joanne was re-diagnosed with stage IV breast cancer. A period of recalibrating followed, of figuring out what the diagnosis meant, and how it would impact them. "Business-wise we had a lot of conversations about our lifestyle – it was a lot of travel and we just decided we don't want to do that anymore. We wanted to spend our time together," explains Joanne.

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LEFT: A two-bedroom cottage on the property has been renovated as a guest house designed to complement the look of the main house. **ABOVE:** A 17-foot vaulted ceiling gives the cottage spacious headroom while board and batten walls and a stone fireplace lend a modern rustic appeal. **OPPOSITE:** With plenty of windows and a door that leads to the exterior deck, the sunroom boasts an enticing view of Fairy Lake. Muskoka Lumber Building Supplies Centre supplied the home's window and door trim.



Wanting to continue their leadership work, in the fall of 2016, they bought **Soapstones Natural Skincare**, a Muskoka-based company that manufactures and sells natural skincare products. “Our business has a strong focus on social responsibility, which we see as a vehicle for us to continue our work in the area of leadership,” Joanne explains. “So we have dedicated five per cent of our profits to support youth leadership initiatives, not only in our own communities, but across communities.”

The business also honours **Enliven Muskoka**, a holistic self-care centre for people living with a cancer diagnosis, a not-for-profit that Joanne started with **Allie Chisholm-Smith**, owner of **Ahimsa Yoga Studio** in Huntsville. One Soapstones scent is branded Enliven and half the proceeds from the line go to Enliven Muskoka.

“Given this new journey in our lives, we have found ourselves in the place where we’re going to sell the *Haverland* property,” explains Joanne. When the McLeans first sat down with **Megan McLeod**, a broker with **Sotheby’s International Realty Canada**, to discuss selling, they felt a bond. “Joanne and I both felt that connection with Megan,” says David. “It was as if she were a kindred spirit. So in terms of being empathetic to our situation, knowing that Jo is living with cancer and that we wanted this to be easy – as easy as possible – the way Megan responded to that clearly suggested she was the right person.”



LEFT: Italian porcelain, installed by Kim Benedetti of Tile & Marble Man, covers the floor in the master en suite. **BELOW:** A walk-in closet offers lots of storage space, just off the en suite. **OPPOSITE:** Urban Rustic Living supplied bedding for sleeping quarters, including the master bedroom with its pine bed, vaulted ceiling and walkout to the front deck.

“I’m going to be helping them see this through,” says Megan. “It’s not just about selling a house. It’s about helping them transition into the next phase of their lives together and finding the right buyer for this home.”

Megan describes the floor plan as perfect from a living and entertaining perspective. “The room sizes are large but still comfortable and intimate. Lots of windows, high ceilings, with some beautiful timber frame accents.” Touches of Canadiana furnishings and décor by **Urban Rustic Living** owner **Tary Roossien** divide the living,

dining room and kitchen into intimate alcoves, while maintaining the room’s open concept.

Megan describes the main-floor master bedroom with en suite as essential in today’s market, where a greater number of buyers are not fond of climbing stairs. Northwest exposure on the lakeside is also appealing: “You have sun all day at the front of the property and a sunset,” explains Megan. “Sunsets here are really majestic.”

“It’s a sanctuary really,” says Joanne. “It’s like a getaway. There’s a very long laneway to get into the property so it’s peaceful and private.”

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LOCAL SOURCE GUIDE

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 • JD McCaffery Construction • Marshall
 Well Drilling • Dave McKenzie • Muskoka
 Audio Video • Muskoka Comfort Systems
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 Centre • Muskoka Stonescape • Pinnacle
 Property Maintenance • Sandhill Nursery
 • Sotheby's International Realty Canada
 • Tile & Marble Man • Urban Rustic Living



When asked to sum up their experience living here, David and Joanne smile. “We love the space, the light, the natural habitat and the peace of the house. You have a 180-degree view of the lake from the windows across the front, which always serves to remind us how fortunate we have been to have been in this place.” **OH**

TOP LEFT: Movie posters adorn the luxurious home theatre. **ABOVE:** In the ground floor family room an antique wooden cabinet serves double duty as a bar. **FAR LEFT:** Ample elbow room around the billiard table helps make play a pleasure. **LEFT:** A wine cellar inhabits a room behind the wet bar.