

# Port Cunnington Lodge Plays the Green Card

## Eco-friendly design and construction key to resort project

By Bryan Dearsley

Lake of Bays has seen countless hotels, lodges and resorts come and go over the decades. Vacationers first began visiting the area close to 150 years ago, preferring the area's simple accommodations to other more popular parts of Muskoka. These first vacationers, drawn from the sweltering cities thought little of having to spend a day or more travelling by train and boat just to get here.

Constructing these early summer residences was no small feat, either. Without the luxury of power tools or electricity, everything had to be done the hard way, using good old-fashioned brute force and horsepower of the four-legged variety. But the results of all this hard work left a lasting legacy on Lake of Bays, with some of these original hotels still standing today and operating as vital components of Muskoka's tourism industry.

One of the most notable surviving hotels is Port Cunnington Lodge, a family-owned and operated resort, which celebrates its 120th anniversary this year. Port Cunnington has always been family run; present day hosts, Cam and Kim Loader, are direct descendents of Boyce Henry Cunnington, one of the first hoteliers in the area, and founder of the lodge the Loader's call home. Today, the original Victorian lodge remains the centerpiece of the resort.

Over the past several years, Port Cunnington Lodge has seen further expansion with the addition of several new custom-built family chalets and an extended waterfront that now

measures 1,800 feet. Situated on 22 scenic acres in a sheltered bay across from historic Bigwin Island, the new construction has attracted considerable attention.

Port Cunnington Lodge's most recent building project has marked a turning point for the resort that will serve as an example of enlightened design throughout Muskoka. For it, the resort decided to "go green," and embrace state-of-the-art, eco-friendly technology. As a result, Port Cunnington Lodge is now the only family-owned resort in Canada to have a platinum LEED designation, the highest "green" certification available. Developed by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), the LEED program (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) provides a stringent set of standards for environmentally sustainable construction that has spread worldwide since its launch in 1998. It's becoming an increasingly popular concept in Canada, and is actively promoted by the Canada Green Building Council ([www.cagbc.org](http://www.cagbc.org)), a group offering workshops and training seminars.

A third-party certification program and the accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high performance green buildings, the LEED program promotes a unique whole-building approach to sustainability by recognizing performance in five key areas of human and environmental health. These are: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality.

Deciding to move into green construction was a logical move for

Port Cunnington Lodge, which had been looking to expand in an environmentally friendly way. Built by Greystone Construction and overseen by project manager Neil Cambray, the project, consisting of two new luxury cottages, was also the builder's first foray into LEED certification. The two timber frame cottages, each with four bedrooms and four and-a-half bathrooms, plus a single bedroom guesthouse attached by a deck, accommodate approximately 20 of the lodge's 134 guests. The buildings are extremely energy efficient, and also boast geothermal heating and cooling systems.

Another key element of the new cottages is the interior design package chosen to complement the Chris Schmitt-designed architectural package. Not only was it deemed important that Canada's First Nations be recognized for their ability to live in harmony with the nature, but wherever possible, environmentally friendly materials were used for interior finishings. In addition, local businesses were used to provide furnishings for the new buildings whenever possible, a key component of the project, to help ensure dollars spent were pumped into the local economy.

Despite this latest addition, Port Cunnington Lodge has managed to maintain its small resort feel. Today, 120 years after welcoming its first guests, it remains as popular as ever. And, thanks to the forward looking nature of its owners and management, it looks set to be welcoming many future generations of visitors to Lake of Bays.