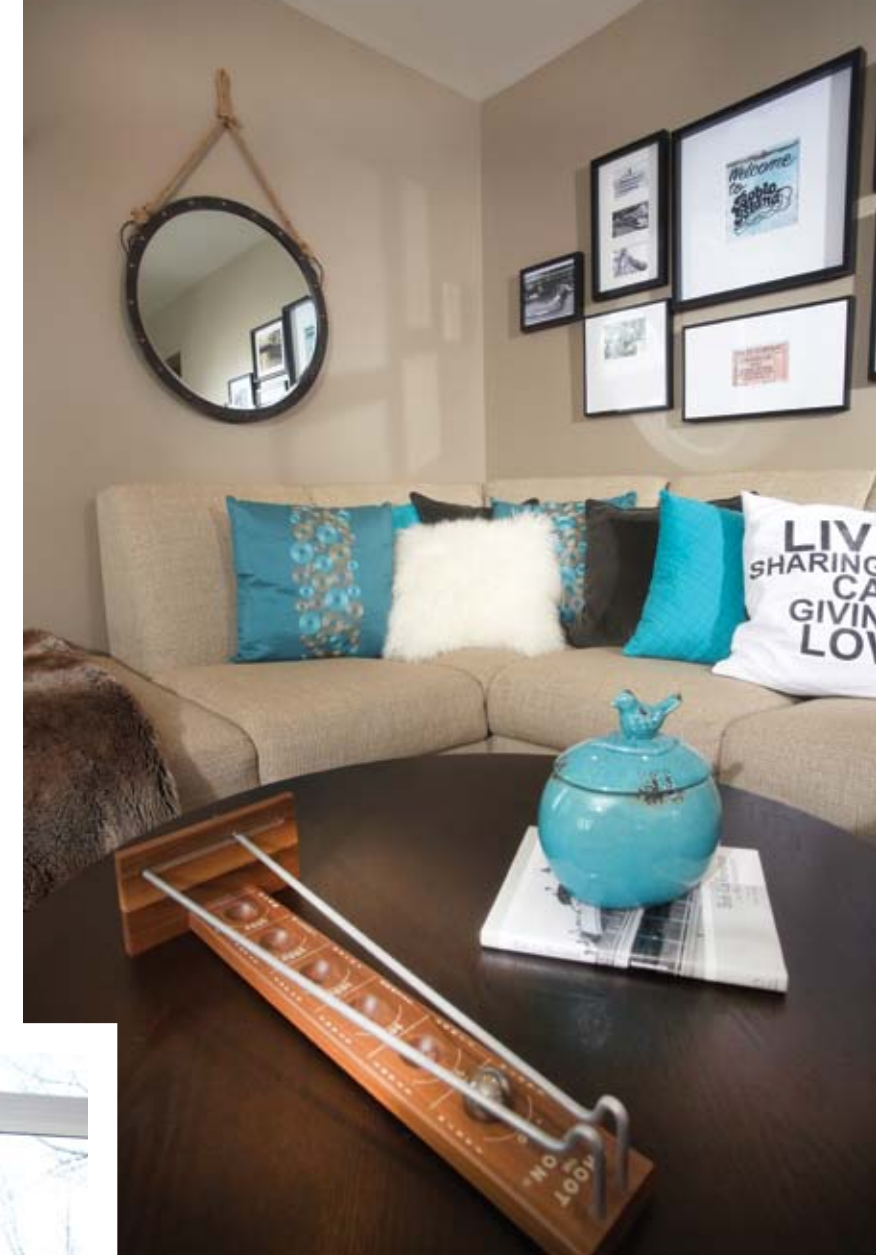


A BOB-LO WINTER

BY NANCY BELGUE // PHOTOGRAPHY BY MAX WEDGE



The view from the window encompasses a private beach, dock and ring-side seats to the thrice-yearly fireworks that the Town of Amherstburg sets off from the private island that is part of the property. The homeowners transformed the old, closed-in sun porch into a sunlit eat-in kitchen.



Winter days have a special rhythm on Bob-Lo Island. While summer is special with its fireworks, marine traffic and swimming off the dock, winter is magical. Things slow down. Life moves indoors but there is also skating on the river, bonfires on the beach and hikes around the island's 272 acres.

For the homeowners and their three children, ages 15, 13 and 11, living on Bob-Lo has proven to be a welcome change from the busyness of their life in the city. In 2011, having made the decision to purchase and renovate one of the island's original homes, the family said good-bye to the urban distractions of shopping malls and the pressure of traffic and hello to simpler pleasures of family football games, hiking and quiet nights in front of the fire.

"We were always a close family," says the homeowner, "but we've become even tighter since moving here. There just aren't the pulls on our family time. Once we're on the island, we all tend to stay here. We make our fun in old-fashioned ways. We have baseball games on the front lawn

and go for family bike rides and most mornings we can see deer from the window. It felt like home the minute we moved in and I haven't regretted it for a second. It's an all-year-round retreat, and only 30 minutes from my office."

The view and property may be spectacular but the 7,500 sq. ft. home required substantial renovations to suit the homeowners' tastes and their family's busy lifestyle. With the help of **Jodi Mason of Urban Home**, the couple renovated all the bedrooms and bathrooms and replaced the flooring throughout the main level. One of the most transforming parts of the process was opening what was a sunroom along the rear of the house to create an eat-in kitchen. The imaginative floor plan gives the space a beautiful

OPPOSITE: Designer Jodi Mason worked with the homeowner to design a kitchen that combines a contemporary style with rustic finishes. The unusual backsplash is made from floor tile. **ABOVE LEFT:** Home-made cookies are tempting on a cold winter day. **ABOVE:** The corner sectional is from Essex Home Furnishings. The turquoise accessories, throw and oval mirror are from Urban Home. **LEFT:** Jodi Mason worked with the homeowner to plan the renovation and choose finishings. The homeowner was "very motivated," Mason says, "and very clear about what she wants and doesn't want. My job was to help make her vision come to life without breaking any design rules!"

contemporary feel and it maximizes the kitchen's outstanding river view.

The kitchen cabinetry, in an espresso rift cut-oak, was selected to reflect the homeowner's preference for modern, sleek lines (**Windmill Cabinet Shop Ltd.**) and functional design. The expansive granite island (**Stone Centre Inc.**) provides ample seating for homework or quick snacks. Stainless steel appliances from **Essex Appliance Centre Ltd.** and a wood-grained backsplash complete the rustic/contemporary look.

The kitchen also includes a cosy nook where family members can sit, watch the water or read a good book. Furnished with a comfortable sectional in natural colours accentuated with punches of turquoise, the nook has become a family gathering place. *Continued on page 42*

feature



ABOVE AND RIGHT: Two charming children's bedrooms. **TOP RIGHT:** There is no wasted space. The upstairs hallway is used as a home office.

Nowhere is the homeowner's personal style more evident than in the living room where reclaimed barn board dominates an entire wall. "I wanted a home that had an earthy feel on the water," laughs the homeowner. She found the 125-year-old barn board in Kingsville. "It gives the wall the perfect touch of nature," she says.

The water side of the living room is defined by a wood burning fireplace (Dekko-Mantels of Stone), two love seats and a rustic coffee table from Urban Home. "Jodi is amazing," says the homeowner. "We've known her for years. She helped us with our first house and with my husband's office. She has a great edge and she's really easy to work with." Indeed, with Mason's help and the homeowner's touch, the home has come together in a truly distinctive style – combining rustic elements with contemporary accessories and modern art. *Continued on page 44*

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ABOVE: With its cowhide accents and western art, the front foyer provides a dramatic entrance to the home. The chandelier is from the Lighting Boutique and Appliance Shoppe. **TOP LEFT:** The bedroom is a private oasis. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Soaking in the tub is extra-special when snow is falling.

The front foyer, with its animal art and cowhide throw rugs, conveys a western sensibility. It leads to the main floor master bedroom and en suite bathroom. The en suite is situated with a fantastic water view. "There's nothing better than soaking in the tub and watching the snow come down," says the homeowner. "It's like a private oasis."

In fact, the entire Bob-Lo lifestyle is like living in a private oasis. "Moving here was one of the best decisions of our life," says the homeowner. "I get off the ferry and sigh. It's instant stress relief."

His wife agrees. "I can't say enough about how friendly everyone is. You can always be sure to find neighbours gathering in someone's backyard."

In the colder weather, the family gets together in front of the fire to make popcorn, watch a movie or enjoy the winter views. They're hoping for a colder winter this year – so that they can get out on the river and enjoy some outdoor skating. Next year they plan to finish the basement recreation room.

While the home may be a work in progress, the family has clearly found its ideal niche. Summer or winter, the island magic makes the Bob-Lo experience unforgettable. **OH**

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