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ANDRÉ AND WENDY CHEVIGNY'S LOG HOME

The private home of Pioneer Log Homes co-owner reveals a spectacular fusion of logs, timber, stone and copper

By Peter A. Robson

WHEN YOUR company has built thousands of log homes, the home you craft for yourself and your family is going to be pretty special. Such is the case with the home of André Chevigny, co-owner of Pioneer Log Homes. "I wanted something very one-of-a-kind-special for my wife Wendy and our four children, who at the time were various ages from eight to nineteen years old. I also wanted a really special unique piece of property, with southeast exposures for glass and logs to take advantage of views and natural light." The Chevignys' special place turned out to be on the shores of Williams Lake in British Columbia's Cariboo Chilcotin region.

The story of the Chevigny home stretches back to 1929 when mechanical contractor and entrepreneur Barney Boe acquired a large parcel of land on Williams Lake from the PGE railway. The choice piece of his land holdings was a 3.75-acre lot featuring a peninsula with 555 feet of waterfront jutting out into the lake surrounded by a gravel beach perfect for swimming and float plane flying (André is a pilot). The site had the advantage of being the first place to get the sun in the morning and the last to get the sun at night. Boe built a cedar log cabin on the peninsula in the early 1940s. Over the years he sold off most of his original holdings, but held on to the peninsula property and lived in his log home until he was an amazing 101 years old.

The Chevignys acquired the land when Boe passed on, but when it came time to build their own dream home on the property, they wanted to bring part of Boe's home into theirs. To this end, when taking down Boe's home, they took all the Douglas fir rafters and related lumber and recycled them into doors for their new home.

Before building, the Chevignys spent a great deal of time planning the location and design to maximize the views and the light. They wanted the home to blend in with the property with a low profile, like a rancher, yet they required two storeys for their family. Part of that involved spending time in a boat on the lake (or ice in the winter months) to make sure the new home would



Top

The master bedroom is designed around the upper level of the rotunda and includes a fireplace and master bath with a curved stone shower that overlooks Williams Lake.

Bottom Left

The home has wide-plank Douglas fir flooring throughout. The kitchen includes a comfy island and custom cabinetry by André's brother, Keith Reid.

Bottom Right

André crafted the impressive great room fireplace by himself.



fit in well with the surroundings.

Pioneer's senior designers, Roy Keats and Donna Fitzel, worked closely with André and Wendy to determine the final elevation and many of the design features were the result of taking advantage of the characteristics of the building site.

The concept behind the design was to give the feeling of being on a ship. To accomplish this, the home was designed so that upon entering the great room and gazing out through the windows and doors, all you would see is water. Today, whether in the living room, dining room, nook or kitchen—all the views on the main floor are of water.

To take advantage of the long hours of sunlight on the site, the 5,200 square-foot home

was designed with a feature rotunda so when André and Wendy wake up in the morning, the sun is streaming in their second-floor master bedroom. The breakfast nook, located under the master bedroom, is also oriented to take advantage of the morning sun. The rotunda brings in natural light through to mid-morning. The mid-afternoon sun comes straight into the great room. The evening sun hits the exterior fireplace area, which is in the leeward side of the lake's prevailing winds.

Four-foot-high stone walls form the base for the log structure. There is a covered porch area outside of the great room and large roof overhangs provide shade and make it possible to walk around the home without getting wet in the rain.

Chevigny started crafting the logs at the nearby Pioneer Log Homes yard in 2006 and did most of the log work himself after hours and weekends with help from his son Mathew. Western red cedar logs were used throughout, with the emphasis on size. The lateral logs have a mean diameter of 22 to 24 inches, but some butt ends are as large as 48 inches. The roof system is also big, with massive log beams topped by 7" x 10" Douglas fir timber rafters. The largest logs in the home are two purlins that stretch over the great room. One weighed in at 9,700 pounds and the other at 10,400 pounds. Their butts measure 54 inches in diameter. Throughout the home, every bit of the log work is structural; nothing is there simply for looks.

The Chevigny home is entered via what is known as a “Chilcotin Entry.” Between the two sets of doors is a closet for removing boots and hanging coats. The second door opens up to the great room with a bathroom right by the front door. The main floor is broken down into kitchen, breakfast nook, dining room, great room, two bedrooms for their two older sons, Mathew and Corey, with their own bathroom, and a laundry room.

The massive dining room table can seat 12 and was built from recycled bridge timbers. The wooden portion weighs 650 pounds while the glass top weighs in at 550 pounds. Each of the 125-pound dining room chairs was made one Christmas by Chevigny’s talented nephew Derek Else.

Stained glass feature windows were designed personally by Wendy and built by a local artisan. The tall and impressive fireplace was built by André. Central to the great room is a bronze statue of an elk being chased by a pack of wolves, mounted on an inverted cedar stump, a treasured birthday present from André’s brother Bryan Reid.

The second floor is built using Pioneer’s version of log post and beam, in which the larger butt ends of cedar logs become the tops of the vertical structural posts. For infill, 2 x 8 framing was used. Outside the gable ends are covered with a combination of recycled shingle shakes and wavy-edge cedar board and batten siding. There are two bedrooms for siblings, Breanne and Tévis, with a shared bathroom and computer area. A balcony overlooks the great room. The very spacious master suite is designed around the upper level of the rotunda and includes a fireplace and an impressive master bath with curved stone shower that looks out on the lake. A feature full walk-in closet combined with a laundry room and Wendy’s dressing room and makeup area complete the unique master suite. The rotunda is impressive in itself with massive cedar posts and combined log roof system, one post measuring 41 inches on the butt and the other one 51 inches.

Chevigny’s brother Keith Reid, who owned MasterCraft Windows and Doors until 2008, was responsible for the impressive copper-clad windows, the doors and all the interior millwork. [The new entity, Century MasterCraft, continues to provide top quality windows and doors to Pioneer clients.] He also provided the 1” x 12” ponderosa pine and Douglas fir flooring, sourced from a grain barn in Chase, B.C. built in 1870. Slate and natural stone were also used as flooring in different areas of the home. Stair and balcony railings were built using a combination of Douglas fir, juniper (which has great colour) and wrought iron.

The Chevignys wanted to build as green a home as possible and to this end, used R50 insulation in the roof, 2 x 8 framing throughout, installed geothermal heating, and used recycled materials wherever possible.

Although Chevigny did most of the work on their family home himself, he also credits Pioneer’s master craftsmen Peter Arnold, Joel Roorda, Beat Schwaller, Sam Peterson, Shawn Oviatt, Martin Kalin and Danielle Haynes as being integral to the log work portion of the project. André also credits his son Mathew, as well as a dozen other Pioneer staff, both men and women who helped on the log work through Saturdays and Sundays prior to the final log delivery stage.

The home was completed four years ago, so Chevigny has had time to reflect on the design and evaluate the integrity of its construction. Chevigny says that if he were to start over, neither he nor Wendy would change a single thing. This is probably not surprising considering the lessons learned from building a thousand or more log homes around the globe.

Not only does Chevigny build log homes, he loves them. “There’s something unmistakably natural and romantic about living in a log and timber home, especially the feeling of the warmth of the wood, the incredible aromas and the visual tones. They are masculine and yet comfortable, I have never ever wanted anything else.”

A balcony on the second floor overlooks the great room. Overhead, the two massive log purlins weigh approximately 10,000 pounds each and measure 54 inches at their butts.



PIONEER LOG HOMES



LAUREN CARRUTHERS PHOTOGRAPHY X3



Bottom Left
Carefully chosen and artful character logs were used for the stairways.

Bottom Middle
The massive dining room table can seat 12 and was built from recycled bridge timbers. Each of the 125-pound dining room chairs was made by Derek Else, the Chevignys' nephew.

Bottom Right
The main entrance door was hand carved with images of the Chevigny children.