

A traditional facade doesn't hint at the modern addition that houses the contemporary primary bedroom in the Bondar home. The 54-acre property features a rolling field and mature trees.

PERSONAL *project*

STORY **M. CAROLYN BLACK**
PHOTOGRAPHY **SANDY MACKAY**

As popular wisdom goes, you're supposed to make lemonade with sour lemons. Chris and Candice Bondar embraced this advice last year during the worldwide pandemic that shuttered many construction projects. Chris, owner of **Gilkon Construction Limited**, says, "When COVID hit, some of the bigger projects were put on hold." The company continued doing some pretty cool renovations though, and it inspired the couple to finally start renovating the 1916 farmhouse they purchased in 2017. Continued on page 76



CHRIS TOOK A BIT OF A ZIGZAG path into the fine home building industry. His family moved to the Midland area when he was 15, but while attending Queen's University in 1997 his mother was diagnosed with cancer. He returned home to be with her and took an environmental engineering program at nearby Georgian College. From there, he worked for a Barrie-based geotechnical engineering firm as a site inspector for commercial and institutional buildings and completed the requirements to become a Certified Technologist. While in his second year at college he met his wife, the daughter and niece of the original owners of Gilkon Construction, founded in 1976.

"I was always intrigued with the complexity of fine home building and wanted to get involved," Chris says. "While working for the engineering company I took it upon myself to learn the residential building code, receive my Building Code Identification Number (BCIN) and start drafting homes and additions." His love for homebuilding took off from there. *Continued on page 78*

"I WAS ALWAYS INTRIGUED WITH THE COMPLEXITY OF FINE HOME BUILDING AND WANTED TO GET INVOLVED." – Chris



The dining room features custom cabinetry with a built-in wine fridge. Daughter Addison's art is front and centre.



TOP LEFT: The modern addition has massive windows that flood the room with light. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Two of the couple's three daughters, Ruby and Poppy, enjoy running around on the lawn with the family dog, Rubble. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** A fire pit and play set make the most of the backyard.



LEFT: Details in the living room include french doors and vintage details. **TOP RIGHT:** A Jøtul propane fireplace is a standout in the primary bedroom. **OPPOSITE TOP:** The entryway gives way to a large mudroom on one side and the living room on the other. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Five-year old Poppy's room is the perfect spot to play. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Daughter Addison's easel is flooded with morning light upstairs.

The farmhouse was originally owned by Antero and his wife, Shirley. "It is perfect for us," says Chris. "A gorgeous renovated farmhouse, our shop and office and 54 acres on the Wye River to explore and play." Although ideal in many ways, Chris says the existing one-and-a-half bathrooms were not enough for the couple and their three daughters and they wanted more space and privacy. They decided to build an addition in a clean, spare Scandinavian style. When Candice saw the completed floor plans by **Adrian Worton** of **Daymark Design**, Chris says, "She was beyond happy. Adrian was able to take our ideas and masterfully incorporate everything together in just a short time without revisions. We were very happy and excited with the finished plans."

With the pandemic restricting travel, the couple wanted a way to escape the office without having to leave home. Chris says, "When we walk through our new bedroom door, we are instantly transported into a very calming and consolatory space." The bedroom and bathroom are one large room with a private water closet behind a frosted glass door. They installed large-format tiles on the heated floors to ensure warm feet. The generous tub is big enough for two and the tub tray, crafted from some of the old floor joists, accommodates two glasses of wine.

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"Getting to understand the craft better, moving away from all-steel-and-concrete construction I was used to and moving into wood, I was impressed with the many layers required to produce beautiful and functional fine homes." By the time Chris met his wife, her father had sold his partnership in Gilkon and it was solely owned by her uncle, Antero Kontkanen. Antero was ready to retire by 2005 and Chris was eager to take the reins. "Antero stayed on for a few more years, mentoring and guiding me through with the help of Richard Maltby, my financial guru and guide, until I was able to handle the day-to-day on my own," Chris says. "I was fortunate to have the opportunity I did in 2005 to become a part of something so wonderful and well-respected in the community."



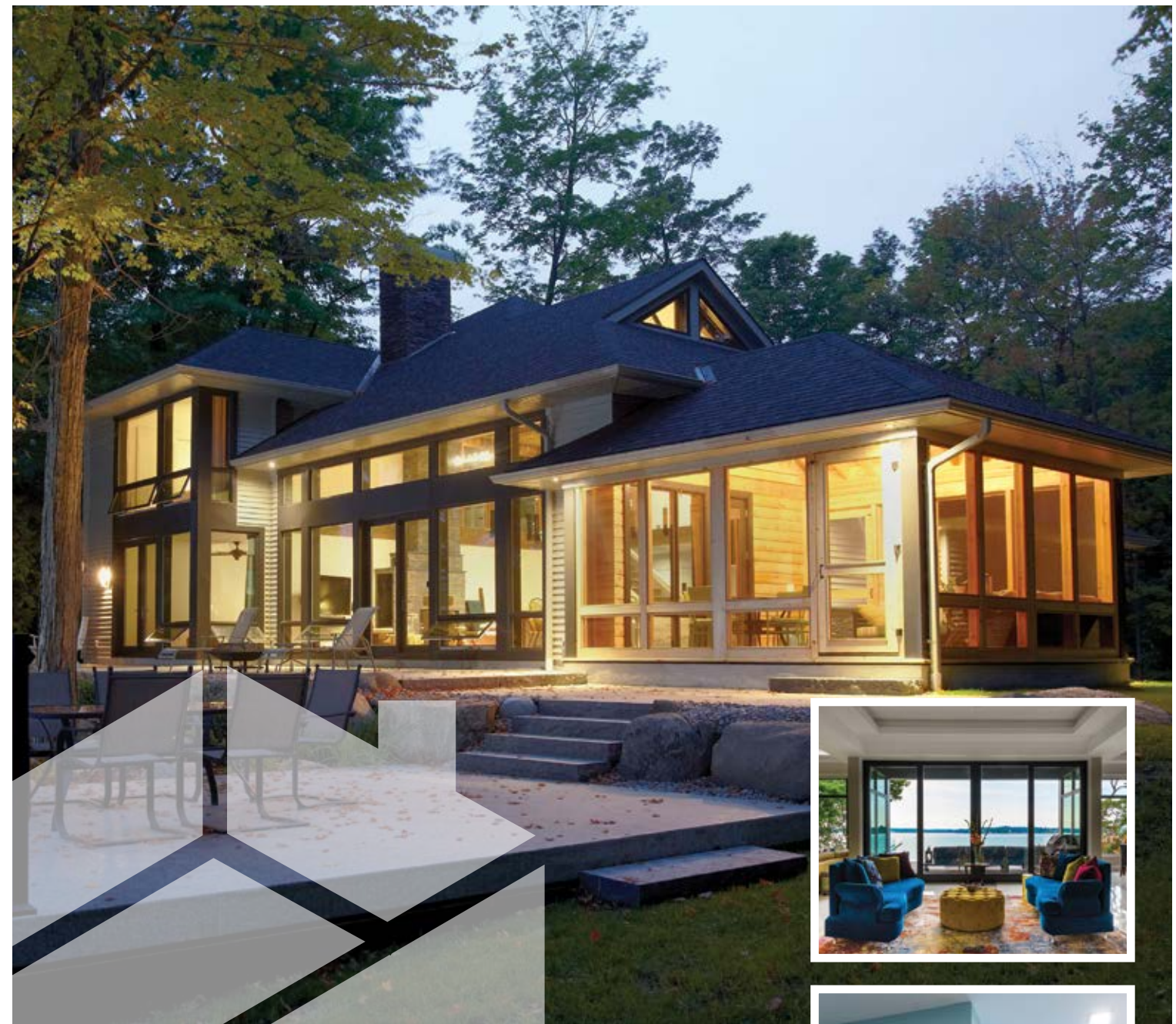
Traditional balusters are an elegant detail on the stairway.



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The Scandinavian-style primary bathroom is an oasis for Chris and Candice. A standalone tub overlooks the property, with a large open shower on the opposite side.



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TOP LEFT: A double vanity with matte black hardware has plenty of space and storage for the family. **TOP RIGHT:** A water closet is tucked away in the primary bathroom. **BOTTOM LEFT:** The ceiling is prefinished maple plywood, as are the doors to the closet along the far wall.

The mirrors are backlit and the large six-foot vanity top was moulded with a trough sink and single drain. “The cabinets and ceiling were constructed with prefinished maple plywood and the ceiling panels were installed without mechanical fasteners, so there are no penetrations through the face, a trade secret,” he says. The Jotul propane fireplace fits neatly into the angled window corner where they can see into the field beyond. A steel roof, horizontal brushed siding on the new addition and fresh white paint on the existing stucco updates the exterior.

The renovation wrapped up in December 2020 and Chris has some good advice for homeowners wanting to create their own ideal escape: “Find a builder and a designer or architect you trust and who shares your vision. I suggest having all three parties working together during the design process – the homeowner, builder and designer. This will help with budgets, structures, cost savings, integrations of ideas and create a symbiotic relationship during a build or renovation. If everyone is on the same page and has a firm understanding of the project at hand, it is amazing to see how smoothly a job can go.”

He adds that it’s important to be realistic about budgets and expectations. “A good builder will be honest and upfront regarding costs, budget challenges and alternative material selections. As a homeowner, you have to be the same. Be diligent, do your homework and educate yourself. This is usually the largest investment for people; it is always good practice to have some prior background into the process. Over the last 16 years I have been able to ensure we deliver the quality that our clients have come to expect and I hope to carry this fine homebuilding tradition for many more years.” **OH**



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