

## COTTAGE MAKEOVER

colin  
&  
justinstory **Laurie Wallace-Lynch**photography **Brandon Barre**

Most relationships can barely survive one home reno, but two? The dynamic design duo of Colin McAllister and Justin Ryan recently completed two cottage renovations for their TV show *Cabin Pressure* on *Cottage Life Network*. After renovating a co-owned cottage for season one, the couple purchased their own waterfront property and did an extreme makeover as the premise for season two.

"Renovating in cottage country outside of your comfort zone, you have to be a bit sharper on your delivery and a bit savvy about shopping to be able to tie the whole thing together," says Justin. "And we had a TV crew filming the highs and lows, so that added to the pressure."

Some tips to help take the pressure out of the renovating process: Have a game plan. "If you can choose someone as your life partner, you can choose a roll of wallpaper!" laughs Justin. "It's really important that both parties listen to each other and you have a singular outlook, and a game plan."

Colin and Justin worked with a Haliburton contractor to raise the cottage, add a basement,

a new roof, a 360 degree deck, gut the interior, and build a Bunkie.

"When we first got in there, it was like the creepiest cottage in Canada," laughs Justin. "It was leaning a bit, so we nicknamed it 'The Shabbiest Slanty Shanty,' but it was the location we loved. It faces southwest for beautiful sunsets over the bay, access to a great lake, nice people who look after the road, plus close proximity to Haliburton and the liquor store!"

Spoiler alert! In season two, the design duo hit a major snag which has one of the hosts (and likely a few audience members) heaving their lunch. "There was a tiny stain on the ceiling in the bathroom and we poked it and discovered a giant wasp's nest and dead things and more poop than you can imagine – shovel loads, and the most disgusting smell you've ever smelled," states Justin. "We had to cut out loads of the wood and supportive timbers and reinstate them."

Making the most of that million-dollar view was the goal for Colin and Justin's interior design. Walls were removed and new windows ➤









➤ were added to create a sun-filled Great Room, encompassing the living, dining and kitchen area. "The room connects us to the great outdoors, the trees, the lake and the sky," says Colin. "We wanted a monochrome, mixed century feel, slightly Scandinavian, a little bit Danish here and there, so that it felt modern, but still felt like it had a cottage heritage."

Colin calls the Master Suite "Eagle on high." The cozy nest is "barn-doored to the hilt," says Colin. "We used this company called *Rebarn* in Toronto

to source the barn doors. This century-old barn fell down near Highway 11 and now it is in our bedroom! You slide back the three barn doors on one side is a wardrobe, the other is a media cupboard and the centre is the access to the shower room."

The new Bunkie sleeps four comfortably. Says Justin, "We built our own vanity in the bathroom using a Singer sewing machine table topped with a piece of live edge cherry and capped it off with a beautiful stone bowl."

**ABOVE (L to R)**  
Walls were removed and new windows were added to create a sun-filled Great Room. The shower room is behind the barn doors that are the entrance to the bedroom.







The Haliburton Room screened sunroom is a welcome addition for pest-free dining. And speaking of bugs, or “moskies” as the lads call mosquitoes, the new cottage owners are now the spokespeople for *Off!* Clip-on Mosquito Repellent.

“We are Scottish, so the bugs see us as something pale and exotic and whisky-flavoured and really go for us!” laughs Justin. “We wear the Clip-ons and they work to keep the bugs away!”

Buying and renovating their cottage was one of the best decisions the designers have made,

according to Justin. “We are both so fired up by the heart of cottage country. We love Haliburton. You can escape the city and be aware of nature and the seasons. Honestly it does something to your whole outlook.”

So would they recommend cottage renovation to others? “Yes, absolutely!” says Colin. “Go buy a cottage and make it your own. There is a lot of derelict inventory out there and a lot of dated cottages which need someone to give them a new lease on life.” **GL**



#### BELOW

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