



The geometric window arrangement at the back of the home creates a lantern-like beacon for incoming hikers and skiers.

# Sanctuary of Spirit

**Tucked into the lush greenery** on a quiet road in Whistler, B.C., is a contemporary mountainside retreat complete with heavy timber, fir accents and clean, modern lines. It is easily mistaken for a new build, because all evidence of the condemned building that stood there three years ago is gone.

Prior to going up for judicial sale in 2009, the property was widely known in town as a brothel and was rumoured to house 70 people. When the Filipchuk family — Calgarians Connie and Neil and their daughter, Amanda, who resides in Whistler — bought it, all municipal services had been cut. It was overbuilt and unsafe.

“We actually ended up getting it as a family project,” says Amanda. “Our vision was to run creative retreats.”

**A family home renovation unearths a storied past**



The 18-inch fir beams in the great room were sandblasted to their original state using walnut shells. The concert grand piano and steel-plate fireplace had to be crane-lifted in.



A witty nod to the home's mountainous surroundings, the kitchen's paint colour is "Whistler White" by C2 and the quartz countertop is "blizzard."

Connie struggles to describe their feelings at the first showing. "You could smell it down the street," she says, admitting she was unnerved by the silence in the house and her inability to locate a kitchen.

Regardless, the family purchased the property, largely for its rainforest setting and views. "We just couldn't get it out of our heads," says Amanda. "We had no idea the magnitude of what we were getting into."

Even though the family is still unsure of how they will use the finished home, they never had any question about who would work on it with them. Connie says one of their first calls was to Calgary-based architect Robert Pashuk, who they first hired about 20 years ago to design a vacation home.

"I pulled up and said, 'You know, we should just tear this down,'" says Pashuk, describing his reaction to the extensive structural damage. However, the family didn't want to flatten it. "For them, it was more like they saw this as a way of taking all the negative out of the property."

The first step was to safely remove more than 1,800 square feet of illegal and poorly constructed additions from the 3,000-square-foot residence. That process took three months and was aided by a set of original drawings the owners located.



The dramatic chandelier above the dining room table is suspended from the vaulted ceiling.



Windows on three sides of the dining room give the room the feeling of being enclosed by forest.

"It was really important that the place was almost a place of contemplation."

—Robert Pashuk, architect, Robert Pashuk Architecture



Top The master bedroom's neutral palette is punched up with a colourful, pixelated pillow by Zuzunaga.

Above A sculptural pendant in the master bath creates visual interest.



The landings were designed to be large enough to accommodate a crowd at a party or to take in the view.

Today, the four-bedroom home is a sanctuary for the spirit, bathed in a neutral palette of grey and white and accented with warm wood tones. Pashuk replaced the existing metal roof and used Hardie-Plank siding and locally quarried stone on the exteriors. The spa-like interior includes tigerwood floors and oversized 18-by-36-inch grey porcelain tiles. The entire space is wrapped in a warm white paint coincidentally named Whistler White.

"It was really important that this place was a place of contemplation," says Pashuk. He says one of the really important ideas in the renovation was the creation of a lantern effect at the back of the house. This was achieved with an 18-foot-high window bank that runs up the home's top two floors and creates a welcoming beacon of light to those returning from the ski trails.

Another defining feature is the fir-clad covered walk dubbed the "woof" by the project team. Pashuk designed the combination wall and roof after Amanda balked at shovelling off six flights of stairs and the connecting decks (the alpine community experiences an average annual snowfall of more than nine metres).



Most rooms in the home have access to the skylit outdoor hall, providing a snow-free passage around the property.



Left The front entry features an outdoor living space above the garage. From bottom to top, the house rises 27 metres.

Below The house provides a neutral environment to view the stunning surroundings.



The Filipchuks say the project taught them about one another. "There were three of us making 'opinions,'" says Connie.

When the family couldn't agree, they defaulted to Pashuk, even if they didn't like his solution. Amanda says this was the case with the two nine-foot-diameter chandeliers — one in the upper room and one in the dining room — that no one liked at first. "He was right," she says. "They are perfect."

While Connie and Amanda agree the scope of the renovation was far more complex than they ever imagined, they say the experience of doing it together was wonderful. "I would never trade what we've got, the moments we've had as a family," says Amanda. ☺