

Honourable Mention: Architecturally Innovative Design
Sunset Cabin, Lake Simcoe, Ont.
Taylor Smyth Architects, Toronto

Design team: Michael Taylor (partner-in-charge), Michael Lafreniere



“This is a beautiful example of a well-sited, elegant, prefabricated cottage structure. Prefabrication as a method of achieving precise construction quality in a remote location represents an excellent example of outside the box thinking on a relatively small scale. It would be interesting to use this approach on a larger project.”

The clients have a family cottage on Lake Simcoe, Ont., where they can entertain up to 15 overnight visitors. What they wanted was a private retreat, a sleeping cabin where they could lie in bed and watch the sunset.

The Sunset Cabin is a 275-sq.-ft. single room, with a bed and wall storage cabinets on either side. The floor extends towards the lake to become a deck with access to an outdoor shower.

The cabin was first constructed over four weeks time in a Toronto parking lot, allowing details to be worked out and all components to be prefabricated. They were then numbered, disassembled and moved to the site, where everything was reconstructed in only 10 days. Prefabrication reduced costs by an estimated 30 per cent.

The cabin is supported on two steel beams resting on four

concrete caissons, with minimal disruption to the vegetation. The window frames, doors, and cladding are made from untreated clear cedar, which will gradually fade to silver, blending into the landscape. All interior surfaces, including floors, back wall, ceiling and storage, are of birch veneer plywood panels.

Three walls of the cabin are floor to ceiling glass, wrapped on two sides by an exterior horizontal cedar screen for privacy and shading from the sun. The arbitrary gaps in the screens filter light into the cabin during the daytime, creating random light patterns on the surfaces. At night, the light effect is reversed and the cabin glows from the inside. The doors at each end of the cabin, with the help of lake breezes, provide cross ventilation.

The roof is planted with sedums and herbs, which blend into the landscape and increase R-value.