

# local outlook

On a peaceful coastline in Prince Edward Island, near the town of Malpeque, is an impressive sight. Designed by architect David Sisam of the Toronto-based eco-minded firm Montgomery Sisam Architects, the summer house he created for himself, his wife, Elizabeth, and their three children is a truly modern take on the Canadian cottage. Built to be environmentally sustainable – with local materials and natural ventilation as opposed to air conditioning – it's also a prime example of modern thinking. Written by **Trisse Loxley** / Photography by **Yvonne Duivenvoorden**

## big impact, small footprint

A stunning sight in the middle of a field, the Sisams' summer home "is made up of two pavilions around a garden," David says. "What joins the pavilions is the dining space." The 15 acres surrounding the strip of lawn are used rent-free by a farmer. "It's a model of coastline development," says David. "It's good for the community to preserve the farmland." And it adds to the view – "sometimes it's wheat, sometimes clover." →





Sliding doors and open windows – not air conditioners – keep rooms comfortable.

### the simple life

When asked how much time they spend here, David laughs and answers, “Not enough.” He and his wife, Elizabeth, fill their days with “reading and lots of walks,” he says. “One of the great things about this area is that you can go for a country walk through the fields, then have a beach stroll back along the shore.”

### leisure time

David and Elizabeth’s son, Max, relaxes before dinner in the company of “Kenny,” a gift from the Sisams’ contractor (of the same name). The great blue heron was carved by Islander Ernie Biggar.

### summer studio

In the guest pavilion, the Sisams included space to work, furnished with IKEA shelves and a desk built by David. Spending some time working here “means we can stay a bit longer,” David says.

*“What I like about this place is the wide open, vast landscape”*

DAVID SISAM, ARCHITECT AND HOMEOWNER



### shop local

The Sisams’ summer house is a showcase of local talent. In the living area, the antique cupboard, milking stool and carved shorebird were all made in P.E.I. →

### table of content

The dining area is a true gathering space – or, as David says, “the heart of the home.” Designed as a transparent bridge between the pavilions, it has a view in all directions. “The idea was to have the living area and master bedroom in one section and the guests in the other,” he says. “That way, we all have a sense of privacy and can meet up in the dining area.” The space is furnished with homegrown pieces – the table, chairs and hutch were collected through the years from P.E.I. antique stores. The IKEA chandelier uses candlelight, not electricity.

### reduce & reuse

Inside, explains David, “We wanted to leave the structure exposed as opposed to putting drywall over it.” Reducing the amount of building materials requires more forethought: “You have to plan where each stud will go,” he says. Elizabeth, who is also an architect and works as assistant vice-president of campus and facilities planning at the University of Toronto, did all the interior decorating. In the open-plan living space, she gave antiques – including a hockey boardgame (on the wall) and butter churn (foreground) – new life as art and accessories.

### ideal setting

At this family retreat, meals are a major event. “When we’re here, they become more leisurely,” David says, “and we spend much more time around the table.”

### soft glow

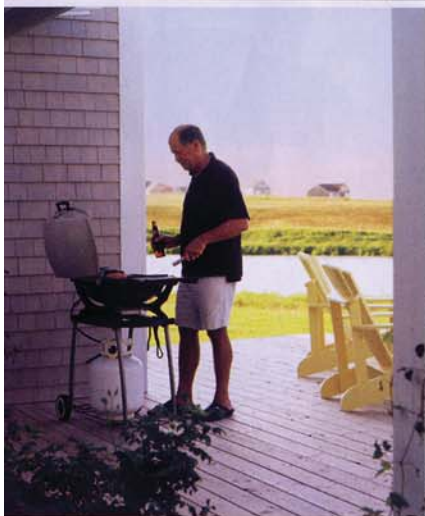
In the evening, the Sisams light lanterns to cast a warm glow and conserve energy. →



The Sisams use a pellet stove – a more efficient and less expensive clean-burning heat source.



*“The house is designed to frame the view in all directions – the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the pond or farmland”* DAVID



Considered green building products, most metal roofs are made of recycled content and reduce energy costs by reflecting heat. David also cites an aesthetic reason for his choice: "It seems to disappear against the sky," he says.

### au naturel

It's every cottager's ideal – an outdoor shower. Although a previous experiment included a garden hose, "this one has a real showerhead and handle," David says.

### nature lovers

Another natural element of this home is the colour palette. The traditional Maritime cedar shingles are naturally greyed. David put together the Adirondack chairs – from President's Choice Home Collection kits – and the family painted them yellow to add a splash of colour. The unpainted metal roof was made in a nearby town, and the windows were built by a firm across the Northumberland Strait.

### holding court

Sheltered from the prevailing wind, this courtyard between the pavilions overlooks a private garden where honeysuckle, lilies and wild roses grow protected from the elements. It's also the perfect spot to barbecue.

*"If you're building a cottage, source local materials and recycled content, make use of daylight and natural ventilation, and employ local labour"*

DAVID



### rest assured

Elizabeth is fond of relics from a simpler era. In the master bedroom, she showcases an antique quilt and spinning wheel above the modern clean-lined IKEA bed.

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