



**GREAT ROOM**  
Given a full wall of south-facing windows, Allison Willson chose a limestone treatment and neutral colors to echo the waterfront view.  
**Table:** *Accents For Living*.  
**Stools:** custom, *Atelier Arking*, in *Nile & York fabric*.  
**Rug:** *Lulu and Georgia*.

**MUDROOM**  
“We opted for a moody, dark wood paint that helps to hide knicks, dings, and dirt,” Willson says of the custom cabinets and wraparound bench in *Black Panther* by Benjamin Moore. **Basket:** vintage.  
**Pillows:** *Putti Fine Furnishings*.

# The Art of



# Relaxation

A family’s lakeside retreat is filled with natural materials that blend beautifully with its rural surroundings.

*interior designer Allison Willson Design*  
*writer Meghan Shouse / photographer Patrick Biller*





**ENTRYWAY**  
The 3/4-inch thick porcelain tiles from [Creekside Tile](#) “wear like iron,” says Willson, who paired them with oak tongue-and-groove paneling on walls. **Table:** [RH](#). **Stool:** vintage. **Sconce:** [Wil & Co.](#) **Console:** [Light House Co.](#)

## About three hours north of Toronto is an area called “cottage country.”

The moniker describes the Kawartha Lakes municipality in Ontario, Canada, where city dwellers escape to second homes for weekends and holidays to swim in summer and ski in winter. In this bucolic setting, a family of five posed a challenge to designer Allison Willson. Charging her with turning their new-build cottage into a warm, cozy retreat, the parents asked, “How can we enjoy ourselves the most and have it be beautiful, but not be worried about [delicate] finishes or yelling at the kids to keep their feet off something?” The answer: neutral hues and durable natural materials. Over the course of 15 months, Willson transformed the nine-bedroom, six-bath-room home into a serene lakeside retreat. Having “tons of fun with layers,” she says she “tried to finish every room with something other than dry-wall,” whether that was textured wallcoverings, board-and-batten, or the shiplap-covered bunk-room any and all kids can pile into. Everything is eye-pleasing, and nothing is too precious.

Besides durability, Willson identified one more requirement: Since this is a year-round property, the color palette needed to harmonize with the scenic views. **“We really wanted our finishes to not only help ground the space, but also add a feeling of warmth,”** she says. In the kitchen, limestone walls and marble countertops complement the pastoral surroundings. Open white oak shelves lend the room a comfortable yet collected feel, while wood paneling visually lowers the ceiling—which reaches 26 feet at its peak—making the room feel a bit more intimate. The only detail the clients changed from Willson’s original design for the kitchen was the amount of seating needed to accommodate all the guests they envisaged sidling up to the counter. “We likely would not have presented a plan with seven stools wrapping around both sides of the island,” she says, laughing. “They requested that.”

In the end, functionality and beauty share equal emphasis in this home built for hosting. “The interiors are a testament to relaxed living amongst family and friends,” Willson says. “Every room has its own direction, but it’s very organic and tonal and calming—everything you’re going to a cottage to feel.” ■



### DINING ROOM

This is just one of the options for entertaining; beyond the windows is an outdoor living and dining area with a lake view. **Wallcovering:** [Kravet](#). **Dining chairs:** [Cocoon Furnishings](#), in [C.C. Leathers](#) leather. **Sideboard:** [Light House Co.](#)





THE FRIDGE IS  
CAMOUFLAGED  
AS A CABINET.

*“It’s designed for family life and practical living through every season.”*

**DIRTY KITCHEN**  
Just off the main kitchen, this hardworking secondary space has its own fridge, sink, extra storage, and even a coffee station tucked inside an appliance garage cabinet.  
**Pendants:** [Etsy](#). **Hutch:** custom.



**KITCHEN**  
Indiana limestone wraps around the kitchen, softening the grand space and linking it to the great room and the home’s stone exterior. **Pendants:** [Victorian Revival](#). **Counter stools:** custom, [Doorman Designs](#), in [C.C. Leathers](#) leather. **Refrigerator:** [Sub-Zero](#).



## LIBRARY

What was once “an odd little nook” is now a library and game area. “It’s a great place to be a part of the action,”

Willson says. **Chairs:** [Silva Custom Furniture](#), in [Maxwell Fabrics](#) fabric. **Table:** [Accents For Living](#). **Pendant:** [Union Lighting](#).



## DAUGHTERS' BEDROOM

Board-and-batten wall paneling and pink **grasscloth** by [Christopher Farr](#) on the ceiling bring visual interest to this shared bedroom where floor space is limited. **Beds:** [Windsor House](#), in [Kravet](#) fabric. **Dresser:** [Pottery Barn](#). **Mirror:** vintage.



## POWDER ROOM

The space “feels like its own magical little retreat” says Willson, thanks to the mural-like **wallcovering** by [Moth Paper](#)—perfect for the home’s nature-inspired theme. **Vanity:** custom. **Sink:** [Taps Bath](#). **Mirror:** [Elgin Picture & Frame](#).

## BUNKROOM

“We painted everything in the same tone so it didn’t feel too busy with all the different depths and details,” Willson says of this space that sleeps eight.

**Paint:** Piedmont Gray, [Benjamin Moore](#). **Rug:** [Etsy](#). **Stool:** [HomeSense](#). **Flooring:** [Unik Parquet](#).

