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Construction competition finalist lives up to hopes

West Vancouver— Owners wanted their next home to be completely different

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Photos by Glenn Baglo

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When Keenan and Tammey Dom began their search for their next home they had two renovations behind them and wanted their next home to be something completely different.

A surprising discovery, of an empty lot in West Vancouver's highly desirable Caulfield neighbourhood, tidewater below and mountains above, provided them with the opportunity to fulfil their ambitions.

In fact, they and their architect, Frits de Vries, did something different enough to survive the first cut in the annual "Georgies"

competition organized by the B.C. chapter of the Canadian Home Builders' Association.

With four other residences around the province, the Dom home is a finalist in the best single-family-detached category priced between \$1 million and \$5 million. The winner will be announced Feb. 10.

Architect de Vries says when he saw the property he was as amazed as the Doms that it was empty. The site was challenging, but it is located in a neighbourhood of cliff-hanging engineering marvels.

"It looked more difficult to build than the reality," de Vries says.

Contributing to the confidence of architect and client that they could put a house on the site was Keenan Dom's occupation: He's the owner of a construction company.



“What struck me about the lot was the two views – the front and back of the cove. It was hard to decide what view was more important,” de Vries says.

Keenan Dom championed the mountain and water views from the rear of the property; Tammey, the views of ocean sunsets and Vancouver Island from the front of the property.

In the end their architect gave equal prominence to both views. The home has 22-foot-high wall windows in the front, where the second floor, open concept living/dining area is situated.

The window walls are so vast it caused their structural engineer a moment of pause. As de Vries recalls “he said how can I put the roof on? It’s all windows. You have to give me some walls.”

Walls are more noticeable at the back of the house but they too incorporate wall windows. Keenan’s favourite mountain and cove view can be seen from the 500-square-foot kitchen and his adjoining office.

One of the home’s four decks is located in the corner of the office/kitchen. From this particular deck, the couple can look down into the cove where their sons, Cuyler, eight, and 10-year-old Colten, like to spend much of their free time. No major blasting work was required to get access to this private playground. Keenan’s company simply followed the natural rock line and built steps down to the oceanfront where another deck is located with a fire pit, creating yet another favourite place for family get-togethers.

“The kids love this property. When the tide goes out the kids can play there and with wet suits go swimming in the ocean,” says Tammey.

The family has a telescope facing out to the protected cove, where they have frequently watched as seals and otter catch salmon. The front view has a large tree nearby that is a favourite perch to a couple of bald eagles.

The 4,800-square-foot home fits well with its landscape, blending seamlessly into the environment and incorporating nature directly into the architecture. From the entrance visitors are greeted by a zen-like pond and soothing sounds of an elegant and understated waterfall.

Keenan and Tammey brought many unique touches to their home. A big feature in the home is Keenan’s office, with cherry wood



Special lot inspired architect

Architect Frits de Vries, bottom, and clients Keenan and Tammey Dome, above, turned an unexpected discovery in West Vancouver into a finalist in an annual home builders’ competition. ‘It looked more difficult to build than the reality,’ de Vries says of the empty lot the Doms found in West Vancouver’s Caulfield neighbourhood.

double doors he built himself. The glass inside the doors allows Keenan to feel close to the family even while working at home.

While the couple have clearly left their mark on this home they are already planning their next housing project. They recently put the house on the market and plan to build again if they are able to find the right property in Caulfield.

“The first month I moved in I was already compiling ideas for the next home,” says Tammey.



Cliffside scenery suits master suite

All the views homeowners could want in a home sited on a seacoast cliff are available in Keenan and Tammy Dom's master suite. Seals and otters forage in the waters below the home. Bald eagles frequent the property's trees.





Less is more in cliff-hanger in West Vancouver

The steps done in Brazilian hardwood, the floating staircase in the Dom residence in West Vancouver links entrance and living levels.

Niches in the steel-and-concrete wall that supports the staircase showcase the family's Martha Sturdy bowls, day and, thanks to artful lighting, night.

The home took a year to construct and is one of five finalists in the annual 'Georgies' competition sponsored by the B.C. branch of the Canadian Home Builders' Association.

The staircase took six months to build and could not be installed until all the appliances were in the house for fear of damaging the steps.

'Most things that look simple are difficult to build,' architect Frits de Vries comments of the Dom commission generally and the less-is-more entrance treatment.

Keenan Dom says that while the front entrance is 'pretty spectacular,' he appreciates another entrance as much or more – the garage door. The general contractor clad the door in fir flooring, a

decision that resulted in a muscling up of door springs and motor to support the additional 600 pounds (270 kilograms). Tammey Dom says her favourite room is the 'excessive' kitchen with its walnut cabinets and melon green mosaic tile backsplash.

