

# Call of the WILD

**Town Hall** When construction was complete, Regehr threw a party for the whole town. From dog-mushers to bush-pilots to horticulturists, Atlin's close-knit community came and danced all hours with a country-and-western band, The Northerners, playing in the living room.

*Clothing designer Catherine Regehr fashions a home away from home that reflects her true northern spirit.*

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**C**OCKTAIL NAPKINS serve a variety of uses, from dabbing a spill to a late-night exchange of digits, but for fashion designer Catherine Regehr one served as a canvas for a lifetime of good times. It was on a paper napkin that the fashion designer, whose couture creations are sold at Saks, Barneys New York in Japan and high-end specialty stores across the U.S. and Canada, sketched out the plans for a log home in the remote community of Atlin, two hours south of Whitehorse, Yukon.

Atlin, in the northwest corner of B.C., once boasted 10,000 residents at the height of the gold rush, but now only about 500 hardy souls remain. They include a small coterie of artists and authors who are attracted to the dense pines, crisp temperatures and spectacular sunsets. Vancouver-based Regehr regularly travels between Paris and New York for her fashion shows, but her roots are in Whitehorse. "I spent my childhood in the Yukon outdoors and I wanted my own three children to have that same experience," she says. She also wanted a northern summer retreat to congregate with friends and family.

While land in the North is plentiful, acquiring waterfront property isn't easy since most of it is Crown-owned land. But when word came of five acres for sale on an undeveloped, wide wedge



**Wild Open Spaces** Neutral tones throughout are played up with texture and natural objects, like the leather pillows from Catherine Regehr's home collection and driftwood lamps. Right, Catherine Regehr. Opposite, the Rumford fireplace is tall and shallow, allowing it to reflect more heat, thus its popularity in 18th-century England—and Northern B.C.





**Kitchen Party** Regehr found these great chairs and dining table—so in sync with the woody, northern design—at an auction house in Vancouver, while the stools are from Ikea.

set on the massive, glacier-fed Atlin Lake, the largest natural lake in B.C., Regehr had to act fast. The property had no access road, so she bushwhacked a path straight to the middle and climbed a pine tree to see if it had a long view of the lake and glacier at the south end. Looking out over the Juneau Icefield she marvelled, “This is the most beautiful place on earth.”

Eventually, it was Nick Milkovich—friend, architect and long-time associate of architect Arthur Erickson—who realized Regehr’s napkin sketch in blueprint format. It turns out that, like couture clothing, today’s log houses require skilled craftsmanship (like perma-chinking to join the logs) and innovative details (like floor-length windows on a second storey). “I always loved the simplicity of old turn-of-the-century log houses, with their dove-

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tail corners that no one builds anymore,” explains Regehr. She turned to Dennis Odian of Atlin Log Home Construction, who has experience in crafting bespoke log homes.

But without access to usual building conveniences like thawed ground, skilled tradespeople and handy access to hardware stores, Odian and Regehr had to demonstrate the steadfast patience of Klondikers panning for gold. It took a year to build a road in; a year to lay the foundation and for the log home to be built, settle and dry out; and a year for the interior. Other signature details include a grey steel roof (the material was inspired by the roof of the Hotel Vancouver) and a generous 40 linear feet of windows on the main and second floors that satisfied Regehr’s desire to bring the outdoors in.

Regehr maintained a monochromatic colour palette throughout the interior: “Keep tone consistent and play with texture,” is her ethos. So pine floors blend with similarly hued granite counters, which are accented by the tan leather couches. Other highlights include the massive stone Rumford fireplace that “can heat the whole house if the furnace goes out,” says Regehr. The three-metre-long antique table makes large-scale entertaining with friends and family easy: it seats 14, but it’s not uncommon for 20 people to come for potluck.

This year saw the launch of a new Catherine Regehr home decor collection, and there’s a reason why the pieces so perfectly suit this space; much of the line’s design and materials hail from the Yukon. From mauve suede pillows adorned with local First Nations hand-beading to fox-fur blankets with leather fringe, Regehr’s passion for the north is the inspiration. “This is where my heart is,” she says, deftly arranging a soft moose-hide fringed pillow on a Queen Anne chair with the modern traditional flair that is her trademark. *w/See SOURCES.*

## NORTHERN LIGHTS

Catherine Regehr’s favourite spots in Atlin, B.C.

**Atlin Arts & Music Festival** “They play everything from jazz to Quebecois folk. Of the three popular music festivals in the North, this one has the most ‘buzz’ about it.” *July 10 to 12, atlinfestival.ca*

**Atlin Museum** “There are artifacts here left from the Gold Rush. Katherine McCarthy, who works there, can suggest the best places to hike and mountain bike and most other local activities. She’s a wealth of local knowledge.” *Mid-May to early September, 3rd St. and Tainor Ave., 250-651-7522,*

**Klondike Heliskiing** “It’s the best heliskiing in the world!” *250-651-2200, atlinheliski.com*

**Brewery Bay Chalet** “A simple motel, but it’s located downtown and across the road from the lake.” *McBride Blvd., 250-651-0040*

**Atlin Courthouse Gallery** “They showcase local artists like Maureen Morris and Don Weir.” *June to Sept., 2nd St., 250-651-7522*



**Design Gone Wild** Regehr’s pillows, throws and linens from her home collection combine lush textures and fabrics like small “porcupine” loop silk cushions and beaver-fur blankets fringed in suede.