

Built to Last

CX CONTRACTING & CONSTRUCTION
IS AT THE FOREFRONT OF SUSTAINABLE
BUILDING PRACTICES

This page: Beach House, Thormanby
Island, off-grid prefab.

Right, clockwise from top left:
Winfield house, Halfmoon Bay;
Laneway House, Point Grey;
Winfield house, Halfmoon Bay;
Laneway House, Point Grey.





**STORY BY JUDI LEES
PHOTOS COURTESY OF CX CONTRACTING**

WHEN Julien Winfield of CX Contracting & Construction says he wants to build energy efficient homes to last 100 years, you pay attention. When he elaborates that he constructs prefabricated buildings in his workshop and “assembles them on site with a sledge hammer and Allen key” you are intrigued. Then you view some of these homes located from Shaughnessy and West Vancouver to far-flung island sites and you are keen for details.

“Sustainable construction” or “green building” are now well-worn phrases that depict everything from bamboo counters to an outside deck of reformatted tires. Winfield, with 25 years of experience in residential building, refers to his custom,

prefabricated designs as Modernism.

“We are after longevity,” he says. “The life span of most houses is about 20 years then things need replacing. There is far too much waste in the residential construction industry. We need to build homes that far exceed code standards. My M.O. is to come up with systems that are foolproof for the site.”

He did this with his own home. When he and wife, Cecilia Garcia, found their property tucked down a gravel lane on the way to Smuggler Cove, it had a 50-foot trailer with a workshop attached and, he says, the whole four acres required major cleanup. This was 2008 and he renovated around what existed. Today it is an eye-catching home of concrete and wood set in a large clearing, while uphill is a huge quonset workshop.

Sunlight streams through generous windows as Cosa, one of their two ➤



PHOTO: JUDI LEES

Top: Exterior of a CX Contracting home.

Above: Builder Julien Winfield.

overly friendly black Labradors, settles onto a comfy chair. Winfield points to the concrete wall enclosing a bookshelf and describes it as a heat sink that absorbs warmth during the day and releases it at night. Clearly, he loves his forest-surrounded space, although the journey here was all about hard work.

By the mid 1990s his diverse education/work resume included degrees from Concordia and Manitoba Universities, a stint in software programming in California and finally, deciding that he had always been happiest working with tools, he was cabinet making in Vancouver. From his small workshop, he says he had a variety of appealing projects and realized that he wasn't interested in traditional building.

It was 1996 when he met an architect, Clinton Cuddington — “he designed, I built.” One such house on Wolfe Street in Vancouver garnered a 2008 Designer of the Year award from *Western Living* magazine and was described in *The Globe and Mail* as a “paradigm of in-your-face Modernism.” Winfield describes it as “iconic” and it convinced him that this design was his genre. In the meantime, the London-born Winfield had discovered the Sunshine Coast when he was hired to build a home on Thormanby Island. (He has now built five homes there.)

“It was an insane time building the Wolfe

house in Vancouver and working here on weekends or whenever I had spare time. But that’s what I had to do to eventually move here,” says Winfield, whose commendations include other awards such as The Rough House listed on Vancouver’s 2016 Top EnerGuide Laneway Homes.

The majority of his clients are empty nesters who wish to downsize, have no maintenance and have low heating costs. A nature-friendly builder, he asks about their lifestyle and often suggests a smaller footprint. He describes a prototype: 1,800 square feet, solar power, rainwater collectors, super insulation and superior glazing products. His goal is to adhere to Zero Net Energy specifications which means the energy used by the building roughly equals the renewable energy created on the site. He may be on the vanguard of a trend — expect to see more buildings in the future that produce as much energy as they use.

He says people are excited when they hear his concepts, especially regarding solar power. “You build to capture the maximum sunlight. Done properly, the solar panels produce energy for the home and BC Hydro buys back the excess. It’s a win-win situation.” Winfield says building codes are changing and he points to Germany where solar power is now mandatory.

The heart of his building world is the 3,000 square foot workshop — a tool junkie’s dream with every variety of building apparatus including huge saws, sanders, planes and jointers plus two ATVS to reach remote building sites. From here he designed and prefabricated a fully insulated, 3,200-square-foot timber-frame home, then transported it via two trucks and two trailers on a barge to Thormanby. He works with a minimum crew believing that the fewer people on a site, the less room for error. He makes it sound like fun, saying the assembly “is like a giant Ikea project.”

He describes this latest Thormanby home as “extremely organized and innovative,” which sounds just like Winfield when it comes to building homes for the modern day. **CL**