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# Not just hammers and nails

Commitment and trust is what drives the success of Larsen Whelan Enterprises Ltd

by Kris Dickeson



A solid partnership reinforced by commitment and trust is what drives the success of Larsen Whelan Enterprises Ltd (LWE). The Fernie-based, multi-faceted construction company has been building and renovating homes and commercial properties for over 13 years.

Owners Ian Larsen and Stephen Whelan met in carpentry school in Kelowna in the late 1990s and made plans to work together down the road. Fast forward to 2013 and LWE is an award winning company.

Larsen and Whelan strive to run their business with honesty and integrity, a decision that continues to boost their reputation for an exceptional level of creativity and standard of service. Each bringing their own strength to LWE, the pair seamlessly complement each other in their respective roles.

“The most rewarding part of my job is the end result,” said Larsen. “Seeing the finished product after weeks or months working on a project.”

Whelan favors the creative side.

“I take the clients’ conceptual plans and work with (the client) and pull out a vision,” he said. “It’s an ongoing process and usually about 95 per cent of the original plans change until we agree on a final design.”

Seeing a demand for high-end homes and recreational properties in the Fernie area in the late 1990s, Larsen and Whelan focused on this niche in the industry. LWE built a number of unique and distinctive homes that showcase designs, materials and construction techniques that suit the mountainous terrain of the Fernie area.

Over the past few months, Larsen and Whelan have been working at rebranding and expanding to include the everyday demographic. Their years of experience with clients in the specialized market will serve to benefit their new direction.

“I’ve learned how I want to work with customers, subtrades and employees,” Larsen said. “It’s about collaborating with the client, being flexible and focusing on their goals, not ours.”

Laughing, Whelan points out he also gained valuable knowledge.

“Running a construction company had nothing to do with construction,” he said. “I started as a tradesman, became an entrepreneur and it evolved from there. Now I run a business.”

Larsen is married with one child and spends his time outside of work skiing and mountain biking. He’s also a coach for the Fernie Alpine Ski Team. Whelan also takes advantage of the outdoors in the Fernie area biking and skiing. He’s married, with two daughters.

“We like to create a work-life balance,” said Larsen. “We profile potential employees and like to hire skiers, hikers, mountain bikers and climbers, because that helps keep them here. It’s important to enjoy where you work and live.”

Last November, LWE won a Canadian Home Builders Association Rocky Mountain Award for Best New Home over \$500,000. The awards were for members in good standing with the association and the homes had to be built in the Elk Valley. The 8000-square-foot log construction post-and-beam house has a wine cellar, a gymnasium and a tall bookcase with a rolling ladder.

“It’s the largest single family home we’ve ever built,” said Whelan. “It raised the bar for us and it was a challenge because of the high level of organization it took to pull it together. We faced a number of challenges making it environmentally friendly. It’s an interesting design from the floor up. We were surprised to win the award; it was unexpected. We have to thank our team as well as our clients for their support and hard work, all of which has contributed to our success.”

### **Larsen Whelan Enterprises Ltd.**

For over 13 years, LWE has been building and renovating homes and commercial properties in and around the town of Fernie. A full service builder, LWE provides all aspects of the building process required, including design, planning, management and construction. LWE has representation on the board of directors of the Canadian Home Builders Association’s Rocky Mountain Chapter, is a Licensed Residential Builder with the Home Owner Protection Office of British Columbia and is certified with the Built Green Society of Canada. It employs a skilled team of 20-plus carpenters,

labourers, project managers and support staff.

## Contact Information