

# Living Green in the Great White North

As their baby daughter coos in the background, Jen Elnekave explains why she and her husband Tzach decided to try their hand at the Northern Ontario hospitality and tourism industry. Drawn by a mutual concern for the environment and the desire to live a 'green' life, the couple are the proud owners of Nature's Harmony, an eco-friendly bed and breakfast resort in Mattawa.

"We wanted to do something we're passionate about. We wanted to create something. We felt a need to make a difference," said Jen.

This off-the-grid resort aims to appeal not only to environmentally and socially conscious ecotourists, but also to those simply looking for a temporary escape from the daily grind of urban living. And thanks to support from two Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC) programs, this well-travelled couple is now able to play host to travellers of their own.

## Building a Business

After buying the property in June 2007, Jen and Tzach started looking for ways to manage the considerable costs

### At a Glance:

#### WHERE

Mattawa, Ontario

#### WHO

Jen and Tzach Elnekave, owners of Nature's Harmony

#### HOW NOHFC HELPED

*Young Entrepreneur Program:* Helped renovate site facilities and buy the essentials needed to start their resort business.

*Northern Energy Program:* Funding helped upgrade the resort's solar power system and provide the off-grid energy needed to turn the property into a year-round business.



"It's a great feeling to have the money there to establish a business...the funding really meant a lot to us, and I don't know where we would be without it."

involved in

renovating and equipping the resort. They applied to the NOHFC and received a total of \$42,250 through two of its programs: the Young Entrepreneur Program, which funds young northerners' business start-up costs; and the Northern Energy Program, which helps northern businesses adopt renewable energy systems.

"It's hard to find the words," says Tzach. "The [NOHFC] funding helped us from every angle; from buying sheets and towels, to renovating the cabins and building a deck...everything that you would need to maintain this type of business. I look all over [the resort] and say 'This is because of the funding.' It's just amazing. I don't know where we would be without it."

But running a tourist resort wasn't enough for this ambitious couple. Their dream included a strong dedication to the 'green' lifestyle. The NOHFC funding has helped them to achieve that as well.

When Jen and Tzach first took ownership of the property, only two solar panels powered the cabin. While that may have been adequate at the time, Jen and Tzach knew they would need to increase energy capacity if they wanted to expand their home into a year-round lodging business.

With support from the NOHFC's Northern Energy Program, they were able to upgrade their system, adding six solar panels to help accommodate the increased



# Ontario

Northern Ontario Heritage  
Fund Corporation

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du patrimoine du Nord  
de l'Ontario

demand the business would have on their power supply. Enhancing the solar voltaic system also reduces fuel consumption and has the potential to cut carbon dioxide emissions by half. By using both solar technology and a wind turbine, Nature's Harmony now operates without drawing any wattage from Ontario's power grid. Tzach says this unique feature has been a key selling point for the business.

"That's the drawing card. That's why over 200 people came to the grand opening. They were curious about the lifestyle. I think the "green" market is growing pretty rapidly."

Of course, Nature's Harmony has a lot more to offer than a lesson in environmentally-friendly living. With 485 acres of undisturbed land and a view of the Laurentian Mountains, this resort offers the simple pleasures that travellers of all stripes can enjoy. Guests are invited to curl up and relax in one of the cozy cabins, or enjoy all the activities the North has to offer - hike on the many trails, canoe or kayak on the shores of Bang's Bay, or enjoy a game of bocce ball, croquet or horseshoes. In the winter, they can cross-country ski and snowshoe through miles of virgin snow.

## A Shared Passion

A chartered accountant born in North Bay, Jen first met Tzach, who was born in Israel, while backpacking on the other side of the world. After sharing several adventures, including the construction of an adobe mud hut in Laos, these world travellers chose to return to Jen's home of Northern Ontario and build their dream.

Since its grand opening in March 2008, the response to Nature's Harmony has been incredible. Guests have come from all across Canada, the United States, and even from England. Today, these entrepreneurs encourage others to transform their ideas into a career, and to seek out funding programs offered from organizations like the NOHFC.

"The whole application process really helped us. It forced us to sit down, do research, focus our ideas on paper, and go through a business plan...it was a phenomenal exercise for us," said Jen. "Getting approved for the funding was a big confidence boost for us. Now, not only did we think it would work, but somebody else thought it would work and would financially back us."

It is with a growing business and a clear 'green' conscience that Jen and Tzach encourage other young northerners not to lose sight of their dreams. If two people can travel the world and come together, right here in the North, to build a business and raise a family, then a prosperous future is available to anyone with the motivation to succeed - and the business plan to get there.

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For more information on the NOHFC Northern Energy and Young Entrepreneur Programs call 1-800-461-8329 or visit our website at [www.nohfc.com](http://www.nohfc.com)