

Pods corner ?glamping? market



The Algonquin Pod Company, in Barry's Bay, has found success by marketing innovative new overnight sensations that are taking the camping industry by storm. Photo compliments of Algonquin Pod Company

By Sarah Vance

Camping has been becoming more popular in the local area in recent years. Now, more of these campers are looking to make their trips more luxurious. Some are taking more camping gear like a 12v cool box so they can take better food, others are upgrading their RVs and a few are looking into the new glamping pods.

The Algonquin Pod Company is increasingly becoming the first choice for adventurers seeking a new take on camping. Based on Parcher Road in Barry's Bay, the trademark Pod has come to define what is referred to as "glamping," or glamorous camping. People have different needs nowadays, they still love to be out in nature but they like their home comforts to come with them just in a small camping size. That is why websites like Techie Camper are looked at so people can gather what they want to enjoy themselves on their glamping adventure.

It's not unusual to hear neighbours comment, as another nine-foot, three-inch by 15 foot, seven inch fully assembled pine Pod is hauled down Hwy. 41 atop an 18-wheeler flatbed, for destinations now expanding across the continent. But this is all in a day's work for Craig Kelly, who established the growing Barry's Bay company in 2012 (Kelly is also the Chief Administrative Officer for Madawaska Valley Township).

Kelly's Pod structure is a hybrid of a tent and a yurt. It is available in a range of models, and is custom built in Barry's Bay, using locally sourced Ottawa Valley pine and cedar. This design has become a favorite of the Ontario Southwest Tourism Corporation, where customers such as Long-Point Eco Adventures and the Friday the 13th Port Dover Bike Rally make them a focal point in their tourism packages.

The Pod is also an eco-friendly choice for cottagers looking to add additional living space to their property, along with campgrounds seeking to provide an in-house VIP suite for special guests. Using a four seasons fully insulated structure, Pods can also be equipped with heating, light fixtures and electrical devices. They are both permanent and moveable, designed to sit on three pre-treated bearers so that they do not require a permanent foundation.

A Pod's low initial investment of approximately \$10,000 has made them worth the price for people who consider their ecological footprint, when seeking to step outside the machinery of an RV.

In an interview with GreenHome.ca magazine Kelly acknowledged the origins of this product in the European market ? a market which continues to grow. "The European camping sensation can now be experienced in North America," said Kelly. "The Pod is a comfortable, secure and surprisingly affordable pre-fabricated method for creating unique getaways for your guests."

Pods are also expanding into the American market. "We are extremely excited to announce that our pods will now be available in the United States, through a new partnership with Glamping Pods of America," said Kelly. Local markets are also critical to the success of this product, with Madawaska Valley's Chippawa Cottage and Camping Resort also buying in.

"Pods will be almost 100 per cent bug free, thanks to the installation of a Blue Sky Screen Systems and Mirage Retractable Screen Systems; now standard on most of our pods," said Kelly. "They are complimented by custom French doors from the Calabogie Rustic Furniture Company ? not to mention the awesome new DECRA Roofing Systems." Screen doors are becoming a popular option for camping pods and the home. By installing [screen doors](#), the home/pod can be kept cool during the warmer weather without allowing bugs into the living space.

Part of the Algonquin Pod Company's success might be attributed to the fact that Renfrew Valley's small enterprise lumber industries and products are marketed on a shared regional website called www.ottawavalleywood.com. This promotional database spreads industry news and connects consumers with manufacturers and their industry partners.

The County of Renfrew is also a licensee of the Ontario Wood program, an educational and consumer promotion initiative of the Ministry of Natural Resources to encourage consumers to buy locally sourced wood products.