

Former shelter director to build micro homes

BY MIKE STRAUS

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If there's one thing that Tara Tschritter learned from her six years as the executive director of Inn From the Cold, it's that the Okanagan is in dire need of affordable housing, for both own-

ers and renters.

"I wanted to start a business that aligned with my values, something that benefits the community," Tschritter says. "I also wanted to start a business that was good for the environment."

When she discovered the micro-home industry, she was sold. As an emerging trend in Europe,

Tschritter recognized that micro-homes are becoming popular in larger centers in North America, and will soon catch on in smaller cities like Kelowna — both as a means of stopping urban sprawl and helping first-time buyers enter the real estate market.

"It's no longer economically viable for a lot of people to get into mainstream housing," she says. "These big family homes are great if you have a few kids, but what about students? What about seniors? What about couples without children? Sure, you've got the townhouses and the condos, but even those aren't necessarily affordable for everyone in Kelowna."

These factors led Tschritter and her business partner Allison Ramchuk to create Little House Contracting, which provides the community with beautiful, luxurious micro-homes ranging from 320 to 625 square feet. But make no mistake — Tschritter's home designs may be small, but they're by no means low quality.

"We maximize the space. We have an intentional patio with indoor-outdoor fireplaces. We have five home schemes and three interior designs to choose from, all inspired by European styles and themes."

Tschritter says that when she first started, she didn't know what to expect upon entering a traditionally male-dominated industry.

"I wasn't sure what it would look like, being a woman in the contracting industry. But everyone has been incredibly supportive and helpful. From the subtrades to the designers to the suppliers to other builders."



Allison Ramchuk, left, and Tara Tschritter

Tschritter takes this positive response as evidence being a woman in business — even in a traditionally masculine industry — is now normal. It also provides her with a form of validation that she wants other women entrepreneurs to share: "Believe in yourself and you can do anything you want to do. If you have a dream, go for it."

Little House Contracting's launch party is on March 11 at Laurel Packinghouse. The sold-out event will feature free wine and cheese provided by The View Winery, exhibition booths for vendors like Sticks + Stones and Mullins Design, and a walkthrough tour of a micro-home.

Tschritter and Ramchuk are also planning two open houses for the near future. Details will be at Little House Contracting's Facebook page.