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**INTERACTIVE  
CONSTRUCTION INC.**

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**REDEFINING  
WHAT IT  
MEANS TO  
LIVE IN A  
HOME**



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# INTERACTIVE CONSTRUCTION INC.

**The Canadian Construction Journal would like to congratulate Interactive Construction on their 10th anniversary in business.**

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## AN INTERVIEW WITH RUSS BARRY OF INTERACTIVE CONSTRUCTION

### History

Founded in 2013 during a lean time in the construction industry by lifelong carpenter, Russ Barry, Interactive Construction is a custom home builder in Victoria, B.C. The company specializes in high-end custom homes, complex and unique builds, energy efficient construction, and traditional builds and renovations – all with an emphasis on quality. With recent advances in environmentally friendly home building techniques, they have been at the forefront of building certified passive houses regularly since 2016. They also build to a variety of other high-performance standards, such as Step 5, Living Building, and Net Zero.



Since a lot of very talented people were out of work during the 2008 slump, Russ decided to capitalize on the opportunity and put a team together: a core group of skilled individuals who have known each other for decades. Russ explains: "Interactive is now a decade old – June 2023 is our ten-year anniversary. We were founded after that 2008 market crash when the industry was still recovering. I knew a lot of really talented people who were looking for work – very different from the situation we all find ourselves in today. But we all go way back; we had spent years working together prior to founding the company."

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## Passive Homes



It was in 2015 when an old friend approached Russ to say he was about to build himself a house and had been reading about passive homebuilding. At the time, Russ was only vaguely familiar with the passive home concept. His friend filled Russ in on the concept and asked if he would be interested in taking on the project. Russ agreed and thus began Interactive Construction's journey to becoming a leader in building custom homes that meet or exceed step code certification requirements, or passive house certification requirements.

The team at Interactive has undergone the training in order to provide these certified builds. Russ explains: "We sent our project manager for special training on a ten-day course. I took a number of these courses as well. We were working with architects who took passive house training too. Looking back, I would say we probably overprepared. Realistically, the energy advisors and building-envelop consultants and architects really have the complicated calculations to do. And then realistically, they're doing a lot of that heavy lifting and figuring out how it needs to come together. So, we really need to focus on the team and how to make sure everything is coming together in a very controlled process. You can't skip steps or assume things are good enough. They have to go to a very high level of precision."

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## Georgie Winning Project

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Interactive Construction is a Georgie Award winning company. They were awarded a Georgie in 2022 for the Gonzales project for Best Multi-Family Townhouse Development (Infill). Russ recalls the unique circumstances of the project:

“Our client on the Gonzales project had been planning things for years prior to our involvement. Hitting that passive house target was part of their dream, along with reusing as much of the existing old house that was on the site as they could in the new build. So, we actually de-constructed that building and used as much of the wood as we could in the new building. They had spoken with several excellent local builders before us – so we’re really honored they went with us. They came to us with the passive house target; this was really important to them. So, our involvement began at the preliminary design stage. There was some planning already in place and we were working collaboratively with architects, structural engineering, consulting and advisory and helping to bring all that detail together into a buildable strategy.”

Reflecting further on the Gonzales project, and passive housework in general, Russ states: “We found it takes a really close-knit team to build passive houses especially. That’s kind of the secret to it: you can’t work in single compartments on your own. With these more complicated, energy efficient builds, you really have to bring everything together, and make sure your structural requirements aren’t conflicting with your energy requirements and vice versa. Then all of it can kind of go together in a logical way.”



## The Future: Living Buildings



Interactive have been keeping busy with a wide array of projects. Russ shares the details of some of his current and future work: "We've successfully taken on some pretty unique challenges that showcase our team's versatility, such as the Brewery Malting plant and recently a mass timber building. We're both proud and excited for the opportunity to work on such interesting and amazing projects." Interactive has also been working on targeting the Living Building House "petal" certification, which, as Russ explains, is "possibly one of the highest and most comprehensive building targets we've ever seen."



## The Future: Living Buildings Cont'd

Russ adds: "Living Buildings try to encompass not only energy efficiency standards, but also the types of materials that are going into the building. You have to avoid environmentally damaging products. But there is much more to consider: there's water conservation elements. There are energy efficiency elements. There's connectivity from the inside to the outside. There are design aspects that have to be hidden as well. So, it's a really broad, sprawling target."

"The clients also wanted a house that would sustain a serious earthquake. We used seismic structuring at a level just below hospital buildings. The level of structural steel and concrete is astounding. Doubling up on structure is particularly complex because of the special requirements of Living Buildings; giant steel beams shooting through the house are very much in conflict with the energy efficiency. And we've got the Living Building Challenge that requires we don't put toxic foam in the house. It becomes very interesting to figure out how you're going to get all those details to come together and head off those targets. So certainly, it's been an enjoyable challenge."



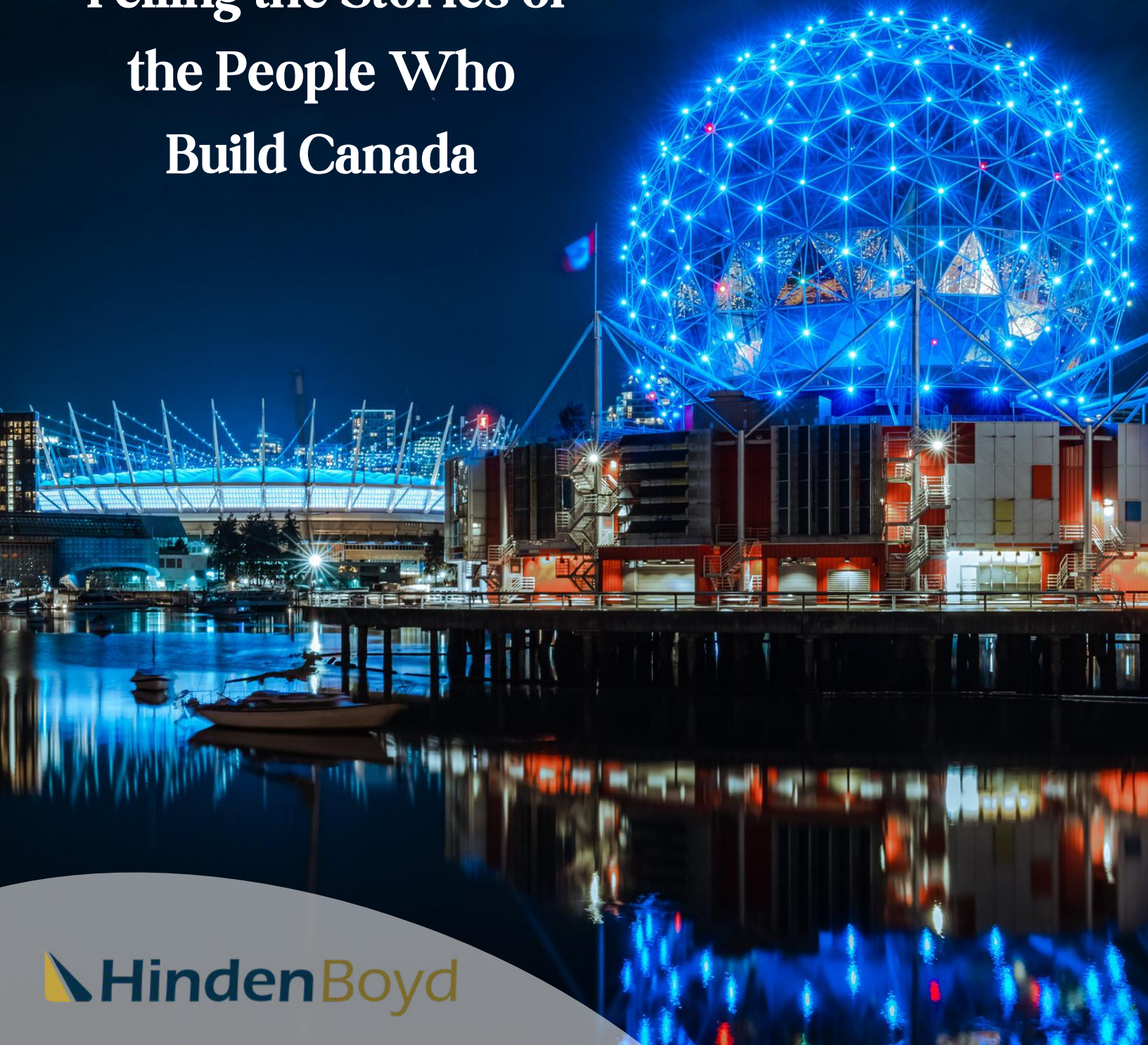
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