



Lucas Pudsey and his fiancé Brooke Rintoul

**LUCAS PUDSEY,  
OWNER,  
IMATREE  
CACABINETS**

- **I see that the younger generations care more and more about the environment and social causes. With that in mind they will soon be the ones buying homes and the ones who we are trying to attract as potential buyers.**
- **It would be wise to get on the train early and start figuring out ways to be known for environmental stewardship.**

# Next generation has arrived

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PROFESSIONALISM  
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## Stewardship, passion and perseverance

Imatree Cabinets & Woodworking LTD started in 2018. The idea of founding the company came when Lucas Pudsey's father was undergoing a renovation of their family



home in Burlington, ON. When it came time to renovate the kitchen, Lucas's father had a very particular plan for what he wanted his dream kitchen to be. He reviewed various quotes from several companies, but was either unsatisfied or it went over his budget. Lucas proposed jokingly that he could build a better kitchen for a better price given his prior renovation experience and his father took him up on the offer and they struck a deal to build the kitchen out of the family home two-car garage. Sawing, sanding & assembling in a space no larger than 220 sq ft.! After completion Lucas decided to start Imatree Cabinets & Woodworking LTD. They have since grown to 12 employees and recently moved into a new 5,000 sq ft. shop in the centre of their city. They have one 4x8 Auto Tool Changer CNC purchased in early 2021. They now do custom cabinetry, bathrooms,

custom built-ins and other general renovations.. Early on they didn't have enough custom cabinetry work to sustain the business so they took on more of the project, flooring, wall removal, tile, painting, trim work etc. Lucas says their clients like working with one company and they help customers make selections and design choices as they move through their project. It allows his company to build the space or make adjustments a lot easier when fabricating the cabinetry. All of the projects usually start with or have many elements of cabinetry, whether it be kitchens, built-ins, or vanities. They do about 5 kitchens a month and really a lot of other smaller projects that are thrown into the mix.

### Supply shortages led to expansion

Lucas and his brother James were teamed up in 2020 to move to a 1,200 sq ft. shop, but when the pandemic hit they started to grow and their space became too small very quickly. In addition, material ordering and shortages created difficulty and as the company adapted they realized they needed a larger inventory of commonly used sheets, hardware and other materials. They couldn't stop production to find things as they moved through projects. The call was made and a move to a larger

shop happened which has allowed them more opportunity with processes that otherwise were difficult to uphold in a small shop, more space meant properly segregated work stations to give employees more room to operate.

### Learning, innovating and growing

Imatree is a young company that has plans to grow. The pandemic created acute challenges, but Lucas has learned and responded. He revitalized the company's operating proce-



dures realizing they were being reactive to the changing market and labour force which caused them to make many small adjustments. What Lucas realized is he needed to be proactive and avoid certain complications, minimizing chances of making errors that would affect his customers overall experience. Imatree talks to their clients from the beginning given current market conditions. They plan and allow for more time to secure materials. They have organized themselves better, prepared

Cont'd/...2

# Appealing to the next generation of woodworkers...

for longer lead times on appliances, kitchen accessories etc. and keep the homeowners updated. They are finding their customers like the honesty because they feel more confident in their decisions, what they can expect and also trust that Imatree is using their knowledge to make sure the customer doesn't have to compromise on too many elements of their project. As a result Imatree is planning on furthering this hands-on approach by bringing customers through the showroom and the facility so they can see the kinds of products they can expect, improving the overall experience.

## Getting the next generation involved!

Imatree is taking steps to interact with their community and have begun a Co-op placement at their new facility for young people interested in woodworking by reaching out to local high school programs. Their goal is to bring new, young eyes into the world of trade jobs and show them how rewarding it can be. Lucas wants to inspire the same passion in these students that he had when he got into the industry by encouraging new creative ideas and advancements for the industry.

Imatree also believes in environmental restoration and has a passion to have industry recognize sustainable practices. This is why Imatree has plans to coordinate with local organizations, such as the [Burlington Green Network](#) to revitalize green spaces in their community with funding and participation in tree planting and invasive species removal events.

## Projects on the go

Imatree is busy completing a full townhouse renovation project including kitchen, bathroom, main floor and several custom millwork



built-ins throughout the entire home. Some of their upcoming jobs were referrals from recent kitchens they built for their local Home Hardware where they will soon be featured in-store. Imatree is very excited about upcoming projects with a popular pizza restaurant chain and a cosmetic clinic all planned for 2022.



## Leads online

Lucas positions the company advertising as highest quality, with custom cabinetry being first and foremost while still remaining affordable for homeowners looking to add some luxury features to their homes. The company acquires most of their leads through online advertising, networking groups or word of mouth from previous clients. A particular business networking group they contribute to allows them to acquire commercial customers who are seeking work for retail spaces or handmade inventory, real estate investors who flip homes and general contractors looking to outsource cabinet making. Imatree finds these leads are less customizable so they can be more economical in order to fit customers' particular interests. The company knows the importance of having steady work and to build relationships with potential partners in the industry.

## Environmental Stewardship

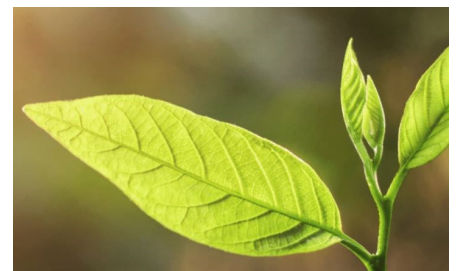
Imatree is passionate about the environment and weaves this into his business too. Lucas believes it's important for the industry to consider its impact on the environment. With dependence on a steady supply of materials to maintain business, it's easy to operate unsustainably, but Lucas believes that practice will not pay off in the future. Noting the recent shortages in some materials, he believes that the shortage is not necessarily indicative of unsustainable practices, but proof that

even renewal resources have a limit if not properly acquired. Lucas also believes that sustainable practices are beneficial to everyone including the planet and that industry needs to use processes less wasteful and destructive to the environment, but allow materials to be replenished properly while still being affordable and available to customers. Lucas says "it's about being mindful and respectful to this planet which provides for us."

## A very symbolic company logo

Lucas notes that Imatree's logo is "symbolic of the products we sell which come from trees, as well as the growth and accomplishments we are all achieving." Lucas believes that "we face a lot of harsh wind in business and life, but if we have our roots, or core values, firmly embedded in the ground and we work together to persevere, we will grow as strong as an Oak Tree". That's why Imatree's logo is an oak tree.

Lucas added "trees are also a vital resource not only to our industry, but to our planet, creating oxygen and trapping carbon dioxide from our atmosphere. I believe we have very strong ties to the natural world, when



you look at your fingertip it's identical to the growth rings of a tree! We are all drawn to nature, whether it be a beautiful piece of wood furniture or going for a hike through the woods. Imatree is just recognizing that instinctive link to it."

The company sources sustainable wood from their sheet good suppliers and locally sourced wood for their wood products. They buy from suppliers that also provide recovered materials like barn wood which is highly sought after by some customers.

Cont'd.../3

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# Aligned values that take responsibility...

Lucas says that “even though our industry is predicated on cutting down trees, we can still do this in a way to cause less impact on the environment around where we source our wood. We use water-based finishes with low VOC or all natural wood oils for some of our smaller projects.”

As Imatree grows (no pun intended!) they plan to invest in tree planting initiatives and hope to take the entire team to BC or Northern Ontario in the future. In the mean time, they have found one interesting local program called the Burlington Honour Role of Trees, which started 60 years ago. Imatree plans to sponsor this program by taking over the legacy of a previous volunteer who for 20 years catalogued and installed plaques on trees of historical significance. A purely volunteer run initiative, Imatree is excited about the idea of taking responsibility from the previous sponsor, the Burlington Horticultural Society in revitalizing the program.

## **Walking the talk with water-based**

Imatree firmly believes that water-based finishes are a better environmental approach, but have heard that some believe it is an inferior finish. Solvent based products require solvent based solutions for cleaning which adds to the problem. Imatree uses two layers



of primer, sanding between coats, and two layers of top coat, again sanding between coats. Lucas says “we get a phenomenal finish and I have never experienced the layers not sticking. I’ve dragged a key across a finished door to test it and it dented the door without removing the paint.”

## **Reconciling with the environment**

Lucas believes our industry could argue that even though you have to cut down trees and use machinery to do so which is exhausting carbon, it can still be carbon neutral or even

carbon negative proposition. Why? Because in Lucas’s opinion that wood is trapping carbon that would otherwise be released if burned or decayed. If wood is sourced in a sustainable way, which Lucas believes can be done in multiple ways, selective cutting is bad and takes tremendous amounts of gas powered machinery to extract logs. But it’s also good because if you allow a forest to become too dense then it could trigger a wildfire that would otherwise release more carbon than the machinery releases in the harvesting process. This is an interesting way of looking at things! Lucas also believes that if industry is mindful in practice and chooses to support companies that sell sustainably sourced wood, combined with working in local communities to support environment efforts to plant trees, it could lead to moving in the right direction and be sustainable for the future. As Lucas says “we work with a renewal resource, with a little thoughtfulness and planning, we could go on forever, trapping carbon and making beautiful products for our homes.”

## **Buy Canadian built kitchen cabinets**

We asked Imatree what they thought of CKCA’s efforts to promote the Canadian industry and the environmental benefits of doing so.

Lucas responded “I think that the pandemic and people seeing the supply chains from other countries being so overwhelmed that people are definitely concerning themselves more with Canadian made products. I have had multiple conversations with clients about the importance of being self-sufficient as a country and not having to rely on others for essential products we need. I don’t think people are out of the mindset to find a product though. It’s very hard for businesses to compete with products that are made overseas at labour rates that are far less than ours. But I really do think that people are understanding the importance of Canadian products or just supporting local businesses in general and the benefits in doing so.”

While Imatree gets positive responses from clients about their consciousness of the environment, and their clients feel they have

made a “smart choice” and supported Imatree, Lucas is realistic about it all. But he also says “customers just haven’t got enough information about the pros and cons of imported cabinets” and while there will always be customers wanting economical solutions, Lucas believes that his company’s job is to “provide service to our clients to help them make informed decisions.” He further added that “if our customer is hesitant on the price of Canadian made cabinets, then we have not provided them with enough information to help them make that informed decision.”

## **Appealing to younger generations**

Lucas sees that younger generations care more and more about the environment and social causes and he knows they will be the next ones buying homes and are Imatree’s future clients. Lucas says “It would be wise to get on the train early and start figuring out ways to be known for environmental stewardship. This will be so important to upcoming generations that it could be the difference between them buying your product or not. Everyone wants to feel as though they are contributing to something good and this mindset will only grow stronger with time.”

Lucas also knows that attracting staff to his company is important and the labour shortage a big concern. While he knows that environment is important to the younger generation attracting talent to his shop is about fostering a good culture within his company and says “the cherry on top could be the company’s values around environment.”

## **The future is right here**

It was so interesting speaking with Lucas and seeing his passion for the industry and the values embraced within his company. Lucas knows that the future means more automation and attracting young tradespeople is an ongoing concern. Imatree also had the foresight to join CKCA and be part of something bigger. Imatree is doing their part to respect their clients, their environment, their community and add their voice to our industry. We can’t wait to see where this young company goes!

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