

# Art challenge revisits the past

By Sandy Lockhart

Six Degrees Muskoka will be focusing on the history of its location at the Queen's Hotel in Bracebridge, which dates back to 1885, for a gallery show in July.

*If These Walls Could Talk* opens June 24 – in time for the G8 Summit – and will be on display for the month of July. The exhibit features art created from salvaged building materials of the old Queen's Hotel.

"Canadian-built history is very short when compared to Europe or Asia. To us, it seems within our disposable North American culture, we tend to overlook opportunities to celebrate and highlight our great history because we tend to think of that history as being short," says Don Skinner who owns the building with his wife Jen and is renovating and restoring the building.

"As we work on its adaptive renewal, we have often wished the walls could tell us their history," he says of the Queen's Hotel. "The 2010 summer art challenge will help our community have one moment to celebrate such history and colour."

Local artists were invited to take part in the show by picking up pieces from the reconstruction project, including old hand-forged nails, tin ceiling panels from the dining room and Muskoka hemlock studs.

At press time, many artists had picked up materials but the finished work is not due until June 18. Jen anticipates a variety of projects, perhaps jewelry made from the nails, furniture from the wood or even artistic calligraphy on a tin ceiling panel.



**Don and Jen Skinner say materials salvaged from the Queen's Hotel will be transformed into art.**

Since last fall, the Skinners have been working on the continued renovation of the 125-year-old building originally built as the Queen's Hotel and now home to Six Degrees Muskoka. They are known for honouring the past in their construction projects, while giving the building a contemporary edge and technological advantages.