

## **Eco-contractor to 'evolve' under new name**

The only full service alternative housing building company in Ontario is expanding under a new name – The Evolve Builders Group – to more accurately reflect the full range of eco-contracting services it offers.

The builders group, formerly-titled Harvest Homes, specializes in building straw bale homes and cabins, but also offers eco-renovations, including “grey water systems,” “living roofs,” woodworking and flooring.

“With the success of Harvest Homes we kind of pigeonholed ourselves [as solely straw bale],” says Ben Polley, founder.

The Evolve Builders Group will match not only growing numbers – sales have nearly doubled every year – but growing expectations, says Polley.

“What has happened is that straw bale houses have a lot of mass appeal, and a wide range of acceptance, and people call on us for that first,” says Polley.

Polley first became entranced with eco-friendly housing when he heard a workshop by Mike Elrick, a teacher, on straw bale houses at the Hillside Folk Festival in 1998.

Although he has been interested in building design and architecture as a young boy, this presentation captivated him.

“I talked about it endlessly after that,” says Polley, who has a background in business management and geography.

Polley decided it was his mission to learn to build straw bale homes. What he found was an existing demand for an ecologically-minded contractor, with no one available to meet it.

Harvest Homes was thus born as a straw bale home construction company in 1999. In recent years the company's services have steadily expanded. Correspondingly, the attractiveness of the company to construction workers disgruntled with mainstream construction has increased.

Polley explains that various specialists, for example, will charge less to work with Harvest Homes because the company's ethics, and aesthetics, match their own.

Evolve will hold a formal launch early fall, coupled with the establishment of a new web-site. For more information, see [www.harvesthomes.ca](http://www.harvesthomes.ca).