Prize home showcases new radiant system

VANCOUVER, BC — A new hydronic heating system is featuring big this August at one of Canada's largest annual agricultural and amusement exhibitions. The Ultra-Fin radiant floor system, manufactured in Canada, has been chosen as the heating system for the 2001 Prize Home at the Pacific National Exhibition in Vancouver, British Columbia.

The Pacific National Exhibition (PNE) is an agricultural, commercial and amusement fair that has run every summer since 1912, featuring hundreds of attractions, daily live entertainment, exhibits, and a huge amusement park. In recent years, a special attraction has been the PNE Prize Home - a lottery-awarded dream home displayed each year in the homes and gardens area, featuring the latest innovations in home design, technology and accessories.

Rod Woosnam of Vancouver-based Stevenson Design Works, the designer-builder of the 2001 PNE Prize Home, says they chose MacDuffco's Ultra-Fin radiant floor system for the 2001 house because of its unique design and effectiveness.

"In our design and planning, we looked for strategic suppliers with revolutionary products that could be used in a state-of-the-art display home," explains Woosnam.

"We especially liked the Ultra-Fin radiant system because it didn't limit the choice of floor coverings we used, particularly wood flooring. The Prize Home features 8-inch wide plank flooring, so we needed a radiant system that would be compatible with it."

The 2001 Prize Home is built in a grand West Coast style, combining conventional wood framing with dramatic handcrafted cedar logs and beams that transect vaulted ceilings over the front porch and pass over the entry into the Great room. There's wood everywhere, and over 3000 square feet of living space to be heated.

The Ultra-Fin radiant system will heat it using an electric boiler because the house will eventually be moved from the PNE fairgrounds to a location not serviced by natural gas. To offset electricity costs, the builders are supplementing the boiler with a solar hot water system—a design element used to improve energy efficiency and healthy housing.

The Ultra-Fin system was chosen for the 1996 PNE Prize Home as well. Five years down the road, the 1996 home winner has only good things to say about it.

"The system's been great," says Paul Vanvliet of Sechelt, British Columbia. "We have a 12 zone system, and it heats up the house in no time at all.

Most of our floors are hardwood, with some tile in the kitchen and bathrooms, and it works well with all of them. We just set the thermostat for 70 degrees during the winter and forget about it."

Ultra-Fin's compatibility with hardwood floors is one of its most popular features. "It's a revolutionary product, because it's not limited by the choice of flooring material," says Woosnam.

The 'revolutionary' aspect of the Ultra-Fin system comes from its use of louvered aluminum 'fins' that attach to the hot water tubing beneath the floor. The tubing runs through the floor joists about three inches below the floor sheathing, and the fins distribute the heat through the joist spaces to warm the floor above. The system doesn't require a concrete slab.

Installed in the Pacific National Exhibition's prize home, the Ultra-Fin radiant floor system uses unique aluminum fins that warm the air between the joists, a design that's perfect for all flooring materials.

As in 1996, the Ultra-Fin system should enjoy some popular exposure this summer, and likely more than a few inquiries regarding its operation and design.

For more information on the PNE Prize Home or the Ultra-Fin radiant system, visit www.pne.bc.ca and www.ultra-fin.com. Or call MacDuffco at (250) 361-HEAT (4328).