

Chapter One - People, Place...

Ocean Sound Kayaking was founded in 1989 by Colin MacNeil. Originally from Alberta, Colin was the cowboy on the BC coast at the time. He settled in Vancouver, and became a guidance counselor at a local high school, but his passion for kayaking and Haida Gwaii continued to be infectious during the summer months.

In the early 80's Haida Gwaii was at the forefront of International News with the Lyell Island Blockade. It was not until 1987, when the Haida Nation, in conjunction with the Canadian Government, that the *South Moresby Memorandum of Understanding* was signed, paving the way to Canada's designation of the area as a National Park Reserve.

In 1989, Colin was granted a business license from Parks Canada and the Haida Nation, making him one of the few kayakers to receive such an allocation. Well-liked amongst the Haida Elders, Colins ability to tell stories, roll a cigarette while paddling, and oh could he cook, sushi, and crumbling chocolate chip cookies, were just some of the attributes that made him stand out.

I arrived on Haida Gwaii in 1995, to guide for a local Sandspit zodiac company – Moresby Explorers, founded by Doug Gould. Over the next eight seasons, I would guide for this outfit, and get to know Gwaii Haanas intimately. Driving that zodiac to a new place every time I got behind the helm, *“OH the places you’ll will go...”*

After a few years of zodiacing, I would put my craft of kayaking to work and started managing a fleet of kayaks in Gwaii Haanas for the founder of Gabriola Cycle and Kayak, - Peter Marcus. Peter a giant of a man in stature and personality, would unfortunately pass in 2000. Gabriola Cycle and Kayaking would take on a new brand through my long-time friend, and co-guide - Joanne Hagger. Known by locals as JoJo, she would transform the GCK in Gabriola Cycle and Kayak into Green Coast Kayaking, which presently offers tours on Haida Gwaii through Bryce Klye.

In 1999, I had plans of my own, and started the Moresby Explorers Kayaking Company, with Doug (silent partner), Darren Bowman (my college roommate), Bill Rieger (my longest friend on the Gwaii), and Heron Wier (Susan Weir's son from Rose Harbor). They say, business partners only last a few years, and in 2002, Doug was selling Moresby Explorers to my friends and co-guides Heron, and Lo.

With our first child on the way, my wife and I were presented with an uncertain world ahead of ourselves, either reinvent myself, and my passions, and pursue a new career in Canmore, Alberta where I would reside in the winter months. So, I decided to put my best paddle stroke into the vast ocean and embark on a new adventure.

In 2003, I purchased Ocean Sound Kayaking from Colin MacNeil. At this time, Ocean Sound Kayaking was the smallest company operating in Gwaii Haanas, while Colin provided trips to a transient group of friends annually, creating little to no revenue other than self-enjoyment.

From one cowboy to another, Ocean Sound Kayaking continues to be fueled by a passion for the many cultural treasures and natural wonders that Haida Gwaii has to offer.

Chapter Two - ... and Community

Today I pride myself that OSK has become a leader in the industry and has stayed true to its roots as a niche product, exclusively found on Haida Gwaii. In the early years, I guided every tour that Ocean Sound Kayaking offered. While the company has grown over the years and so have my responsibilities at home, I am blessed to have such an invested team of guides that I have worked hand in hand with over the recent years. As they say, you are only as good as the people you surround yourself with, and I believe this is the advantage that Ocean Sound Kayaking has to offer to its guests and team.

Over the past 15 years, I have continued to hold an active role as a Director for the Gwaii Haanas Tour Operators Association, an organization that represents and advocates for licensed operators in Gwaii Haanas, while

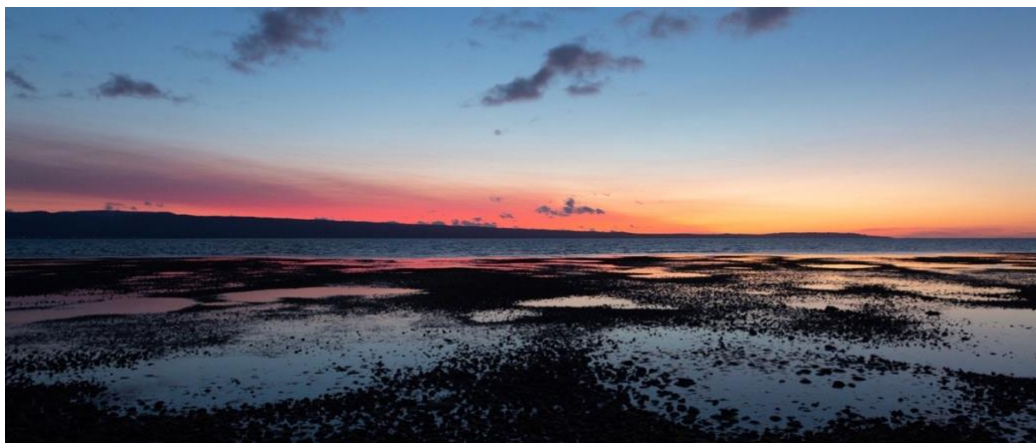
corresponding with Parks Canada, and the Gwaii Haanas Archipelago Management Board regarding policies for the many user groups within the park. This is a role I take seriously, as it allows me to express my values for the natural world.

It would go without saying that the Haida Watchmen program has played a profound role in influencing my passion for Haida Gwaii, and the Haida culture. Kinjuuaas (Charlie Wesley) - hereditary chief of Hlkinul (Cumshewa Village) at the time, known to me as Chief Charley, would be the first Haida I would meet. Instantly he filled my ears with stories of the creator – the Raven, and its companion - the Eagle, while his wife, Carolyn would bake huckleberry pies with the countless berries I would gather when visiting the village of K'uuna Linagaay (Skedans). I remember the day, as it was yesterday, when Haida Elder and Master weaver, Jiixaa (Gladys) would present me with a dozen weaved cedar roses at Hlk'yah GawGa (Windy Bay), stating "These will last you a lifetime", but it was her gentle soul that would leave a lasting impression on me. Friends who stop by my Canmore home, often see me strutting my Haida weaved hat that my friend, and Manager of the Haida Watchmen Program, Kaahling.nga Jaad (Upsy) would present to me while attending my wedding, a symbol of friendship – a bond I will never disappoint. My Haida heart however goes to Xaahlgiiinganguu (Joan Moody), Upsy's sister, who has shared her incredible family with me on countless occasions and gave me the much-needed haircut one day at Gandll K'in Gwaay.yaay (Hot Springs Island) with the scissors on my Swiss army knife...

Since my arrival on Haida Gwaii, I have learned that age is only a number, and it is a person's spirit to explore wild places that I desire. While guests have taught me to laugh plenty and often, it is the Spirit of Haida Gwaii that fills my soul annually.

Though our lives have changed in so many ways, I am blessed that the majority of my relationships are still weaved together, and I am also grateful that my family and I are welcomed into the Haida Gwaii community with open arms.

This evening, like most evenings in Sandspit, I find myself sitting on the beach watching the sunset amongst friends, around the warmth of a beach fire, reminiscing with Doug about the early zodiac years. Bill places another log on our fire, while Heron and Lo's little one shuffles about the beach. The fire presents JoJo warmth as she exits the ocean from her nightly swim, all while my children laugh and share the beach with us - my Haida Gwaii community. ***"Oh, the places you will go"***



I look forward to sharing the many cultural treasures and natural wonders of Haida Gwaii with you and yours.

Cheers

Steve Konik - Owner/ Operator