

Press Release 2008

Family business celebrating over 35 years of bringing whitewater excitement to Canadians!

It has been an exciting road starting Canada's first whitewater paddling school in 1972. Carving out a unique program, that combines structured learning in a resort environment with a twist of European flare; entrepreneurs and national whitewater champions Hermann and Christa Kerckhoff learned that they were pioneers in their field. Years later they discovered they had started a phenomenon - the first whitewater school in the world.

Their next legacy to the whitewater world was the discovery of a whitewater paradise - the Rocher Fondue rapids of the Ottawa River by Renfrew, Ontario. Having heard about rapids on the Ottawa River through fellow wilderness entrepreneurs at the Canadian Sportsman show in Toronto, Hermann and his daughter Claudia (14 at the time) made the trek to Calumet island on the Quebec shores of the Ottawa River in the spring of 1974. They logged the first ever kayak descent down the now infamous Rocher Fondue rapids.

OWL Rafting, started in 1981 became a natural progression for the Kerckhoff family – introducing non-experienced paddlers to the world of whitewater through rafting.

The two whitewater businesses remain in the family, having passed on to their daughter, Claudia and husband Dirk van Wijk, who embrace the same passion for the sport of whitewater. Today both MKC on the Madawaska River and OWL Rafting on the Ottawa River remain industry leaders and are renown world-wide.

MKC and OWL Rafting are known for their high quality experience – on and off the river through friendly, experienced staff, hearty and healthy cuisine, a wonderful atmosphere in stunning settings on the Madawaska River and Ottawa Rivers.

Claudia and Dirk, with their daughters, Katrina and Stefani Van Wijk continue the family tradition and hope whitewater enthusiasts will join them by “*Taking the Plunge*” with them well into the next decade.

Sidebar information for 2008:

Madawaska Kanu Centre can be reached at 613-594-KANU (5268) or by email at paddle@owl-mkc.ca. For details on programs, please look at the website: www.mkc.ca.

MKC opens May 5th for instructor certification courses – Canoeing, then Wilderness First Aid and Swiftwater Rescue and finishing off with Whitewater Kayaking. Regular courses for whitewater canoeing and kayaking start mid-May. MKC offers weekend clinics every Saturday and Sunday of the summer starting May 10th and the more popular five-day Whitewater Vacations run every Monday to Friday starting on May 21st. Five straight days on the water allow a paddler to master the skills. Note: Our first five-day course is Wednesday-Sunday. From our second week on, the courses are Monday-Friday.

New at MKC is **Kayak Touring** – a sea kayak instructional program based on the beautiful, pristine waters of Bark Lake. This program is perfect for the paddling enthusiast who would like to kayak but not venture into the whitewater world. The two-day clinics introduce the fundamentals of Sea Kayaking and lead up to Paddle Canada's Level I certification.

OWL Rafting on the Ottawa River opens its doors on the May Long Weekend with a Spring High Water Special.

1-Day and 2-Day Whitewater Rafting Trips, as well as Family Rafting trips run 7 days a week until mid-September.

To contact OWL Rafting please call 1 800 461-7238 raft@owl-mkc.ca or have a look at the website for excursion details: www.owlrafting.com