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HISTORY LESSON:

For hundreds of years, Malcolm Island was uninhabited. Considered evil by the Kwakiutl Indians, only a few solitary souls ever dared to carve out a living on our big, beautiful island. Legend has it, the Native people watched it rise out of the water and someday it would return to its watery grave. However, the Kwakiutl Indians were often found in the forests of Malcolm cutting cedar for their intricate masks and totem poles.

The town on Malcolm Island, Sointula began in 1903 as a Finnish commune. How did a bunch of Finns come to settle this remote island in British Columbia? It started with a book by Finnish writer Matti Kurikka. Himself a Finn, Kurikka proposed beginning a Finnish utopia, but persecution in Finland for his liberal ideas sent him to Australia. Many Finns had already migrated to Canada looking for new opportunities and many began work in the mines of Vancouver Island. At this time, working conditions in the mines of Nanaimo, BC were terrible. Many Finnish immigrants in Nanaimo picked up on this utopian idea and wrote to Kurikka to convince him to attempt his master plan for communal living in western Canada. They also wrote the government looking for a piece of land to settle. Looking for anyone brave enough to settle an island that had been mostly uninhabited throughout history, the government gave Malcolm Island to the Finns and Kurikka came to western Canada.

The vision was to create a society where property was communal; everyone shared, everyone participated, and everyone was equal. The energetic community developed a foundry, a brickyard, a sawmill, and a blacksmith shop. They published the first Finnish newspaper in Canada, using it to encourage the immigrants to come to Sointula. They believed in “Sound Body”, “Sound Mind”, so there were regular exercise sessions, gymnastic programs, music instructions, concerts and drama productions.

After 4 years of hardships and disappointments, rains and fires, overwhelmed by fickle markets, hostile creditors, bad planning and worse luck, the members of the Kalevan Kansa Colonization Company sold the assets to the bank and returned the island to the Government of British Columbia. But Sointula - as it now exists - was just beginning. The people who remained purchased the land and turned to commercial fishing for their livelihood. They dug their roots deeply into the island and built their community with their own visions.

Now begins the history of Sund’s Lodge, which looked much like the Finnish commune in the early 19000’s. Dick Geisrider (the son of the mayor of Sacramento, CA at this time) came to Malcolm Island in the early 1960’s with a few goats, a couple dogs, and two step-sons. He bought eighty acres at the south end of the island, the location of the old Finnish potato farm (interesting note: the sauna house located behind the main lodge was the tool shed for the potato farm back in the early 1900’s). Dick’s step-son Bill (who still lives on Malcolm Island) explained his experiences here at the Lodge: “at one time, we had pictures of twenty long-haired hippies, smoking dope, hanging from the rafters and building this place.” We learned that the lodge in its beginning was a place of refuge for outcast, misplaced cowboys, hippies and Vietnam draft-dodgers—a real commune.

The building itself is a masterpiece in every detail as Bill explained, “We had no place to go and all the time in the world.” There is not one nail in the dining room area, but it is instead “dalled”, which utilizes mallet and wood-peg construction. The bedroom was the loft, which we call the Crow’s Nest. The living area was upstairs, which is now the dining room. And downstairs, back in the 60’s, lived all their animals. Based on European





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thought, the dung from the barn downstairs provided the heat for the rest of the building. According to Bill, it took them six months to find the piece of driftwood for the staircase leading to the “Crow’s Nest.” The metal work on the door and in other places around the building was also done during this period by local artists.

Unfortunately, like the early Finnish commune, this commune also broke up. And after 20 years, Mike Hicks bought the house and turned it into a fishing lodge. He built two small cabins that have been remodeled to comprise the boardwalk. He owned it for four years and in 1983 the Sund family bought the lodge from Mike. Since then, the property has continued to evolve in structure and story.

The lodge has grown from 1983 (when we hosted a maximum of 8 guests) to the present day, where 10 buildings and a fleet of 7 boats allows up to 24 guests to have the same intimate and service-oriented hospitality as the original Sund’s Lodge guests. Through all our additions, we have sought to never lose sight of the dedication to service that first led my parents to buy the lodge in 1983. At the end of every single season, we sit back and ask: what can we do better next season that will improve our guests’ experience?

Through all the investment of years of labor and love, we are proud to be part of such a history- a history of an island feared by natives, embraced by a few wild eyed Finns, and a building constructed by outcasts of society. The spice and color of our history, with the utopian ideals of harmony and shared abundance, are the flavors of the Sund’s Lodge story. You are now a piece of that history and it is our hope that as you recreate the flavors you experienced on your vacation with us, you will be reminded of a place and a time when your presence was a gift.

Bon Appetit!

Scott and Heather Sund

INTERESTING FACT:

On the 40 acres of Sund’s Lodge, only 6 of the current structures exist as they were when we bought the Lodge in 1983: the main lodge, the A-frame, the chef’s cabin, the old tool shed, the sauna house, and the barn. Of these buildings, both the A-frame and the chef’s cabin were actually float houses that were built on floats and spent many years in the fjords of northern BC before Mike Hicks brought them to Malcolm Island.

