

LOVE OF BOATING BECOMES BUSINESS DREAM

SPOTLIGHT

Selka Boat Centre: Created to serve the local boating community

KELOWNA – A Kelowna husband and wife teams' lifelong love of all things boats and boating has played a major role in the success of their city-based marine business. "I'm a certified boat mechanic as I've always loved boats. I got started with boats when I was 16 years old and for me that's been it ever since," explained **Dirk Selka**, co-owner of **Selka Boat Centre Ltd.**

Opened originally as a boat dealership the company has evolved and adapted to changing tastes and local market conditions to develop a flourishing niche in the Okanagan marine sector. "From 2005 until 2009 we also sold boats. But when the local economy dipped we got out of new boat sales and focused on providing service and after-market products. Right now we're a sub dealer with another firm for aluminum boats which we sell. We

"I got started with boats when I was 16 years old and for me that's been it ever since"

DIRK SELKA
OWNER, SELKA BOAT CENTRE



Crystal Selka is co-owner of the marine service and supply outlet, and looks after the company's front end operations



A certified marine mechanic, Dirk Selka operates an authorized Volvo Penta service centre

sell the small **Catfish Marine** 10' and 12' catamaran boats and other small craft," Selka said.

"With the economy shifting in 2009 we got out of selling new boats and refocused on being strictly a service centre. We now have a full service facility. We work with a lot of dealers in BC and Alberta who, if they do sell a boat in our region, will present us as their approved service centre.

There were already 10 boat dealers in Kelowna; it made no sense to have a yard full of boats sitting here."

"It's the sunny Okanagan and we have this big beautiful lake right here so it's a good industry to be in. I'm a local, I grew up in Kelowna. I began my career working in the hospitality industry, working at fishing lodges. I worked in the tourism / hospitality industry for about 10 years right out of high school," described **Crystal Selka**, company co-owner.

"There's a sense that the economy is starting to pick up. Hopefully with the low Canadian dollar we'll see more Americans coming up here to spend their money this year. We have this great location, why wouldn't they want to come?"

While some boat sales still do occur, Selka Boat Centre's main focus is on providing repairs, servicing and after-market modifications to existing vessels. "There are actually a number of services we currently provide, we do customizing, all levels of engine work both inboard and outboard, we install exhaust systems, stereo systems, GPS

and autopilot systems and more. We provide aftermarket rigging for the wakeboard world including the installation of ballast tanks and ballast pumps," Dirk said.

"We also do things like installing wakeboard towers, stereo and lighting systems on towers, underwater lighting for boats and we do shrinkwrapping which is wrapping a boat for winter storage. We do custom decaling. Basically if it involves a boat we can do it. We get new ideas all of the time."

One key element of the Selka product mix is the sale of boat motors, both inboard and outboard. The company is an authorized **MerCruiser**, **Suzuki** and **Volvo Penta** sales and service dealership. Boat repairs of all types are another of the company's primary business focuses. "We have a good sized shop to do repairs. We're actually in the process of modifying our old space to create an upgraded showroom and outboard shop where we work on motors, **Seadoos** and other personal watercraft. We have nearly 4,000 sq ft of shop space," he said.

Long term boat storage, both indoors and around the Boat Centre's one acre property is

another of its many marine based services. "Long term boat storage is an important part of the business. Typically the customer brings the boat in September or October to winterize it," Crystal explained.

"We'll shrinkwrap it for them and put it into the outdoor storage space. Usually the May long weekend is the kick off of boating season. There are some early birds who try to get out there for April 15, but most wait until the May long weekend."

Selka Boat Centre (which is located at 1890 Byland Road in West Kelowna) has grown in large part through the consistently high level of customer service it provides. "Our business is built on trust. We have customers, but often they're more like a part of our family, they're more like friends than clients. We have guys who've brought their boats to us from Vancouver for the last seven years for us to store and work on. Basically our business is built on relationships," Dirk said.

"It's really a family business for us. The kids are even involved, not working as they're little but they're getting exposed to it and are helping us set up boat shows and things like that."

Looking toward the future, the firm is toying with the idea of returning to the business of selling new boats, but only when the right opportunity presents itself. "We are looking for a boat brand that suits our business. We could be in the market if the right one comes along. But we wouldn't get into that without a lot of thought," he said.

"There's no sense selling blue ice cream if there are 20 other people selling blue ice cream. There's no point in being yet another number."

To learn more visit the company's website at: www.selka-boatcentre.com/



The Selka Boat Centre service and sales operation is jointly owned by the husband and wife team of Dirk and Crystal Selka

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