

**CONTACT US**  
Erick Bengel | Weekend Editor  
ebengel@dailyastorian.com

# WEEKEND BREAK

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## EXPERIENCING 'ALONE'

TWO CONTESTANTS ON HISTORY'S HIT SHOW DISCUSS  
NATURE, SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND COMMUNITY

By **AARON BRENNIMAN**  
For EO Media Group

**Y**ou learn many things about yourself when you're alone.

And for Alan Kay and Nicole Apelian, two former contestants on History's hit show "Alone," their experiences of being alone have changed their lives.

The show features 10 contestants in a who-can-stay-the-longest survival situation after being dropped in the remote ruggedness of Vancouver Island, British Columbia. Contestants on the show film themselves and bring limited survival gear.



**Aaron Breniman**

Kay, who filmed his experience in fall 2014, won the show's first season, outlasting the other contestants by staying in the wilderness 56 days. Apelian filmed hers in fall 2015 and competed on Season No. 2, finishing fourth when she chose to leave after 57 days.

Apelian, 47, was born in Massachusetts and now splits her time between her home in Portland and her property in the foothills of the Oregon Coast Range when not traveling, teaching and guiding. She is a mother, biologist, expedition leader, wellness coach, herbalist and wilderness skills instructor, as well as CEO and founder of Eco Tours International. She was a game warden in Africa with the U.S. Peace Corps and later lived among the Bushmen while completing her doctorate.

Instead of focused on to-do lists, she advocates for a life of nature and connectivity, fully realizing its healing abilities after being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1999.

"That restorative power of nature is superbly strong. We all need nature connection,"



Photos by Aaron Breniman

Apelian (foreground) and Kay collect mussels and discuss food sources in the intertidal zone at Hug Point during a recent Experience Alone Wilderness Skills workshop held near Nehalem.

### COMING NEXT WEEK

Aaron Breniman will cover the 'Experience Alone' workshop skills, practical applications and takeaways to be better prepared to survive in the wilderness and everyday life.

Apelian said. "I think that's one of the biggest problems we have in our society: We've lost that connection with nature and with community."

Kay, 42, owns and operates Wildland Studies Group, which offers instruction and consulting in wilderness survival, self-defense and preparedness. Kay worked as a corrections officer in Georgia, where he grew up and currently resides.

"I remember, as a kid, I would look at our lives and I would think, 'This is out of balance,'" he said. "Even as a kid, it was obvious to me ... I just sought out people that could teach me that, and I learned little by little how to reconnect with older ways of doing things."

### In recovery

The two connected after Apelian's season on the show aired, a time when she was struggling to recover from her experience and transition back to normal life.

"It was really good," she said, "because here was someone all of a sudden who understood exactly what I had been through and knew what it was like to transition home."

When they first met last fall in the lobby of the UN hotel in downtown New York City, the noisy, urban location was just about the last place either of them would choose to be.

Then they went and compared knife collections, Apelian said, laughing.

They both acknowledge challenges reintegrating into everyday life following their stints on the show.

"I'm still adjusting to being back in society," Kay said. "I don't think I'll ever fully recover. It's an experience that changes you."

The exposure from the show now allows them new opportunities and audiences, and to do what

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**LEFT:** Apelian, right, and Kay review their 'everyday carry' kits with participants at a recent Experience Alone Wilderness Skills workshop, held on Apelian's property near Nehalem. **RIGHT:** Apelian (far left) and participants (from left) Sara Crawford of Wyoming, Shane Connors of Portland, and Tom Weathers of South Carolina, in front of Soapstone Creek at a recent Experience Alone wilderness workshop.