



Episode 3: Kane Motswana, Okavango Bushman and Safari Guide

Transcription

www.africanfamilysafaris.com/podcast

Released 13 May 2016

This podcast is brought to you by [African Family Safaris](http://www.africanfamilysafaris.com). Richard Field has been a safari guide for 20 years, and in the Life on Safari podcast he talks with safari guides and conservationists about their day-to-day life in the bush. The hope is that through these remarkable conversations, wild Africa will creep under your skin.

[00:04:00] **Richard:** So Kane, thanks for joining me mate. Thank you. I know, sometimes it can be hard to find a place to make contact when you're living out in the wilds. Are you in Maun at the moment?

[00:04:14] **Kane:** Yes, at the moment, I'm in Maun. At least the contacts are a little bit better. I'm in Maun even though I'm going up and down to the villages, I've been to Gudigwa twice but in three days' time, I'm going back to Selinda to attend the chief's camp there.

[00:04:30] **Richard:** Brilliant. Excellent, mate. So I wanted to start chatting today and try and find out a bit about what your life was like growing up. You mentioned Gudigwa Village. Is that where you were born?

[00:04:47] **Kane:** Yes, I'm born in Gudigwa. It's a settlement called Xhamoxhwii. It's 10 kilometers away from Gudigwa. That's where I was born. But because the government wanted us to move a little bit closer to a newer spot where we had like five settlements, all the bushmen, natives around. So we moved, all of the five settlements we moved to Gudigwa. That's where we are at the moment, but I grew up in a village called Xhamoxhwii.

[00:05:21] **Richard:** Okay, I won't even try repeating that. *(Laughs)* So were you born in a hospital? Where exactly where you born?

[00:05:36] **Kane:** I was born under a tree.

[00:05:39] **Richard:** No way! Under a tree... *(Laughs)*

[00:05:42] **Kane:** *(Laughs)* I was born under a tree. I recently went there to see the tree where I was born. It's still there. It's an old tree now and that tells me that I'm also growing.

[00:05:55] **Richard:** That's amazing. Is that a normal thing for bushmen? Do they still do that these days? I mean you're a bushman from the Okavango, as opposed to a Kalahari bushman. For the people that are listening, is there much difference an Okavango and a Kalahari bushman?

[00:06:20] **Kane:** It's still the same. The lifestyle is more the same. The languages are more different. We have like five different Bushmen dialects and languages, but the lifestyle is more the same. I mean we grew up together. We are both hunter-gatherers and even the ones in central Kalahari, they were hunter-gatherers. Even us, we're hunters-gatherers. We were a little bit different from them because we were closer to the Okavango Delta. We can fish. We can go to the delta and do fish. We also hunt big game and we can also do some *subsistence* farming during the rainy season, while the Kalahari bushmen were all hunter-gatherers throughout.

[00:07:05] **Richard:** Brilliant. What was your life like as a child? Did you go to a school?

[00:07:13] **Kane:** When I was growing up, there was no school. I was not going to school. I started school in 1986.

[00:07:23] **Richard:** How old were you then?

[00:07:26] **Kane:** I was close to 7 years.

[00:07:29] **Richard:** You were 7. And what did you think when you first went to school?

[00:07:34] **Kane:** It was interesting. You know the government took our brothers. In 1982, that's when they took the first kids, students from our village, which were, they were our brothers and cousins. So when we were growing up, we were missing our brothers and we always wanted to go to school because it sounded like that's where more fun was. When we were younger, the younger kids and the parents were left in the village. The grownups were going to school. So we were really keen to go to school.

[00:08:10] **Richard:** And how far was the school from your village?

[00:08:13] **Kane:** It was 26 kilometers away. It was 26 kilometers away from our village and it was wild. Throughout from the village, to the school was wild. But in the weekends, like Friday and Saturdays, we walk home from school, we used to go, we used to run back home and stay with our parents Saturday and come back on Sunday.

[00:08:37] **Richard:** So you'd run the 26 kilometers?

[00:08:39] **Kane:** Yeah easily, usually like in a couple of hours. We saw some elephants and we could see lion tracks on the way. But we used to go in small groups, like maybe six or seven traveling together and maybe the eldest among the group will be like maybe eleven years or ten years old.

[00:09:01] **Richard:** And for us, for me to send my - my daughter's eight - and for me to try and imagine her running 26 kilometers through the bush to come back from school on a weekend, it

would scare the living... She definitely wouldn't make it. There's no way she'd make it. Either it would be the distance or an animal would get her somewhere along the line. But where you worried at all when you would set off from the school heading back to the village?

[00:09:34] **Kane:** We would not worry. A little bit. We were a little bit aware that we might encounter some animals and even the other kids who are going there, they would tell you the kind of tracks they've seen or the kind of animals they've seen. So yeah, we're always aware that we will see some animals and if we see some animals, what do we have to do? We were not going almost every weekend. Twice in a month, you go back to the village to see your parents. But no, we know that we would encounter animals, yeah.

[00:10:11] **Richard:** And so it was a boarding school that you went to.

[00:10:16] **Kane:** Yeah, it was a boarding school. At the moment, I would say, the standard of it is far better than when we started. It was the beginning of the government program, thinking of bringing the kids from our village to school, but they were not thinking about building the proper hostel to keep them. We were living on an open hostel where there's no fence around. There were a couple houses that boys and girls were sharing the same hostel. The girls are staying in some rooms not even locked. There was an incident that happened about my cousin, where one of my cousins was attacked by a lion while he was sleeping outside. Yeah, he was attacked by a lion. There were two boys. I would say that time was like ten or twelve years old. Yeah, ten and fifteen years. A few guys were sleeping outside and the lion came and he took the youngest boy, the 10 year old boy. His brother woke up and he was able to save his brother.

[00:11:27] **Richard:** Seriously, so they made it? The twelve year old managed chased off the lion?

[00:11:31] **Kane:** Yeah, he did. He woke up. He saw the lion pulling his brother; he took him with a blanket. They were actually wearing the same blanket. The lion took him with the blanket and then the younger brother started screaming and that woke his older brother and he saw the lion pulling his brother out the other side and he went straight and he grabbed his brother the other side. So the lion was pulling the brother the other side. He's also pulling the brother the other side and fighting, screaming, kicking the lion until he was able to take his brother out of the lion.

[00:12:04] **Richard:** That is unbelievable. That's an astonishing story. Were you at school when that happened?

[00:12:12] **Kane:** Just before I was going to school. Like one more year for me to go to school when that happened. But my brother was there. I had two brothers who were at school when it happened.

[00:12:23] **Richard:** And so Kane, before you went to school, I'm just trying to compare your upbringing as a young child to my own upbringing. I left South Africa when I was five, moved to Australia. My upbringing in Australia, when we went to school, there was very little time spent in nature. Maybe on the weekends we might go for a bushwalk or something like that, but I'd say that we were pretty disconnected from nature. So I'm just curious, how did nature influence your daily life as a child, both before school and when you were in the boarding school?

[00:13:10] **Kane:** When I was at home, when I was a small child, I grew up as a nomadic child. My parents, when we were growing up they were still nomadic. We had a settlement and in NG16 (a concession area) by Selinda Reserve close to Motswiri Camp. We used to have a village called Gorokom and we also had a village close to Kwando concession. We had a settlement there called Mokombe and then we had Xhamoxhwi. So when I was growing up, we used to move every season; we used to move to one settlement. Every season, we used to move one settlement. So I grew up as a nomadic child. It's only 1986 when we had that village, Gudigwa. That it became permanently home. But I experienced a very, I would say I still miss the lifestyle, my childish lifestyle. I still miss the days. I think it is the best time of my life.

[00:14:15] **Richard:** Really? So tell me, what was your life like as a young child? Like what would happen when you'd wake up in the morning?

[00:14:23] **Kane:** You know, we'd wake up knowing there's no food. That's one thing. We'd wake up knowing there's no food in the home. You have to... both the parents and the kids have to find the food. Your parents will either tell you, that my father will say he's going to hunt and my mother, she will say she's going to collect the wild fruit. It was the child's choice as to whether you are joining the father. But we were too young we'd rather go for soft hunt. Like maybe go with the mothers. Sometimes my mother will go and join my father on a hunt and or we go and set up traps. We go and hunt small things. Like maybe spring hares, scrub hares and we'll go and collect wild food, the jackalberries and wild bird plum, some fruits foods while our parents have gone for big game hunting, we'll go and hunt or we'll collect wild fruit or we'd set some traps, like bird traps to get things like guinea fowls. So the excitement that you're going up, you're waking up knowing there's no food but at least you know that somehow you could produce food, either our parents or someone could produce food.

[00:15:35] **Richard:** And then did you ever go hungry?

[00:15:36] **Kane:** Yeah, there's some stage where we can spend days without food. There's like maybe 2 or 3 days without the proper food but we would get lots of things, we had options of food, not only big game hunting. There was opportunity. We're happy with bow and arrow so we're not hunting with a gun where you just go and shoot something. My parents or father, he has to stop very close, I mean he must get very close to kill something and most of the time he might have two days of no success at all. So during that time, we had to get some fruits to produce food. We had to get some wild food or we had to get the wild honey. Yeah, there's lot of that. We'll always have something to eat, you know. We'll always have something to eat.

[00:16:33] **Richard:** That's amazing. So would there be a number of young kids heading out together or you'd head out with your father or your mother?

[00:16:45] **Kane:** Yeah, a couple of the kids and cousins. I think some of my cousins and my brother had a big role in training us, because they will do something which our parents will say no, you're not allowed to do. Sometimes we'd sneak out and go for a big game hunting which is very dangerous. (Laughs) You know, spear game hunting which is really, really dangerous. We could kill each other through spears or the animals we are hunting will end up killing us, but our parents will say no, but going as a boy, we will kill to kind of go in for that kind of a hunt. Or they'll go for hunt where they're chasing animals. I had a cousin who was very good at running down an

animal but those kinds of hunts means you have to chase an animal in the middle of the day so you have to wait until 10 or like 11 o'clock when you start hunting which is really, really hot. So you're chasing the animal in the middle of the day, barefoot, so it's just like a serious mission but we enjoy it. We enjoy that kind of a hunt, yes.

[00:18:03] **Richard:** Can you remember one specific hunt that you went on as a young child?

[00:18:11] **Kane:** We had one big hunt of some warthogs. I enjoy it. My favourite was hunting warthogs. You know we'd chase them into a burrow. You chase them into a burrow which was more easy with dogs. Or you hunt thing like reedbucks.

[00:18:34] **Richard:** And how would you hunt a reedbuck?

[00:18:42] **Kane:** You have to just rundown a reedbuck.

[00:18:44] **Richard:** You run it down. Do you try and stalk close and then you start chasing or almost like a pack of wild dogs?

[00:18:53] **Kane:** Yeah, you do it very like a wild dog. You just try to track, and stop, and by surprise, you start chasing a reedbuck. But when you start chasing, you have to go shout and scream and make sure the animals run and then you start jogging you don't go full speed. You have to jog, jog, jog and still tracking and tracking, so you lose the sight of the reedbuck completely for awhile, you pick the tracks, follow it, it could be lying down, you have to wake the reedbuck again, chase it, scream and shout, it will go full speed and you have to continue your jogging, you either raise up your speed a little bit, then the third time when you walk the reedbuck, it will be a little but exhausted. You'll be seeing the sight, all the work. You lose the sight for maybe a hundred meters but after 200 meters, you'll find it again, you wake it up and you just chase it. So it's the combination of running, tracking and you're also keeping your speed.

[00:20:02] **Richard:** I mean if a reedbuck is running through long grass and thick reeds, I would imagine that the tracking must be pretty difficult. What is it tricky to track or was it such an instinctive thing for you?

[00:20:19] **Kane:** The tracking is easy. It's sometimes very difficult to track but what they do is they look at the directions where the animals go. You don't look at every track. You look at the directions and you pick, so the second point is where you look for the tracks. You run, you stop, you look tracks for a certain distance. You don't follow every single track, otherwise you're not going to move anywhere.

[00:20:48] **Richard:** I guess that makes sense. If you're trying to follow every single track, you'll never get anywhere. And I think for me, when I started safaris, I thought of tracking as just following every single track but as I've learned along the way from people like yourself, you're tuning in to the environment as well and looking at all aspects.

[00:21:15] **Kane:** Yes and also driving the animal towards the area where you want the animal to run. If you want it to run through the bush where you know that it's more sandy and you're tracking you push it towards that direction so it becomes more easy to you. Or you have guides

who come in behind and their main purpose is just to look for tracks and the main runner who will run and chase down the animal. You could use that technique but most of the times, the guys, they want to do both – the tracking and running. It's more quicker.

[00:21:52] **Richard:** So there's a lot of teamwork involved.

[00:21:55] **Kane:** Yeah, there's a lot of teamwork involved. But a lot of guys will do it by themselves. My father, he said he used to chase down this giraffe and he won't even tell you, the giraffe has only 3 speeds. The first speed and second speed and the third speed and you know he's going to get a giraffe. So he will tell us, only we have never tried that far. We have only tried as far as the smaller antelopes.

[00:22:23] **Richard:** I would imagine there would be huge celebrations in the village if someone came home with a giraffe.

[00:22:32] **Kane:** Yeah seriously, seriously. There's a big celebration. There's dancing involved and there's also approach. The person who has made a kill - there's a way of telling people that you were successful. You don't just pop in, in the village. You have to stop somewhere and there's kind of a body posture to show the people that you were successful. You either come with the tail of the giraffe. Then there's a big celebration and dancing going on.

[00:23:02] **Richard:** What was the, like the spiritual side? Was there a strong spiritual connection as you were growing up?

[00:23:18] **Kane:** Yes, there is. We believe on ancestors. We believe that your forefathers, your grandparents, whoever, or close friend who passed away and if that person was a person and you had a close connection with them, it could be your ancestors. So whenever they go in a big hunt or a small hunt, or a long journey, you'll go somewhere, even if you're not hunting but sometimes maybe you'll go to visit your relatives and it is about maybe 30 or 40 kilometres away, you still need to call your ancestors because you want a safe journey. Not most of the time to be a successful hunt, you want a safe journey to get to where you're going without no problems. So whenever we do this, we have to call our ancestors to get them involved.

[00:24:15] **Richard:** So when you were back at school at the boarding house, did you get much time in the bush when you were at the school?

[00:24:27] **Kane:** Yeah, we were very lucky. We had to get there for 26 kilometers, like if there's a long weekend, or the Easter holiday, we could go for hunting. And in school breaks, in school holidays, when we go home, sometimes we'll find the whole village is gone and your parents are not there. But sometimes, before they go for big hunts, they'll come and tell us at school that when we get back home, they are not going to be there, but they will tell us where they're going to go. So when we get there, we'll start tracking them until we find them. So we used to go hunt on school holidays, in the big Easter holidays, we used to go and hunt but the further we went away, like secondary schools we moved far out from our parents, we went like 100 kilometers, 200 kilometers, 800 kilometers - we kept moving away from our parents, so we couldn't have this opportunity of using [the bush] it becomes difficult to us.

[00:25:26] **Richard:** You finished your schooling in Maun, is that correct?

[00:25:30] **Kane:** Yes, I finished my school in Maun and I went even a little bit further to do some courses, tourism related courses. I went as far as close to Gaborone is where I went.

[00:25:42] **Richard:** Can you remember the first time that you went to Maun? Maun, for those people that don't know Botswana, Maun is a very busy tourist hub and it's always been one of the bigger villages in Northern Botswana. I would imagine coming from Gudigwa to Maun, was it quite a shock to see a big place like that?

[00:26:08] **Kane:** Yeah. I was talking to one child, asking some of the kids a couple of days ago, telling them our experience and how smart we were at school. We were very bright students at the primary level and the junior level because we didn't see any development and we focused at school. But as soon as we arrived in Maun and we started to see disco lights and we see some nice cars and nice buildings, it was a big shock to us. We spent some days without even going to school. It was the biggest thing that happened to our lives. I think we leave classes many times but somehow we were able to pass because we were smart students. But if like we went to school like the other kids who did, we used to called them the bookworms, the guys who used to read every day, if we did do it like them, we could have had distinctions.

[00:27:09] **Richard:** And would a distinction have made any difference to your life?

[00:27:14] **Kane:** I don't know, maybe. I could not be maybe a guide at the moment, I think.

[00:27:21] **Richard:** You think you might be doing computer science?

[00:27:25] **Kane:** (*Laughs*) I could maybe design a computer or maybe an airplane or something. But anyway, you know, I'm not regretting the changes from where you're coming from and seeing these new things and developments, it was a big shock to us. If you watched the movie, 'The Gods Must Be Crazy', that's exactly what happened to us. If you watched the movie, 'The Gods Must Be Crazy', that's exactly what happened. Everything was new to us and even the disco lights, we spent hours and hours, every Friday, we were at the bar just watching disco lights.

[00:28:03] **Richard:** Really, just watching them? (*Laughs*) You know I've lived and spent a long time in Africa and I still find it hard to comprehend the life that you've lived. So I would imagine that there's probably a few people listening to this who would probably struggle to comprehend, but if you do watch 'The Gods Must be Crazy,' if you've never seen it, you'll get a sense of the life that Kane is talking about. So Kane, when did you first find out about the safari industry?

[00:28:45] **Kane:** When I left school, I went back to the village. I finished school, I went back to the village and when I got there, the government has just introduced this program, of a community based project and they've given the communities a concession to run which became the Vumbura concession Vumbura and Duba. So this community tourism, it was a new thing to our people and they were not educated. You know, they're working with white people, they're working with the business people, I mean educated enough to know how much they should charge for a concession, if they want to make some rules or regulations, what would they need to put? So somehow, we are very fortunate, even our parents were very fortunate, they have kids

who are not really that educated, we were just temporary students but to be elected to be on the board of trustees, at least we can draw some agreements with the tour operators like Wilderness Safaris. So that's when I started to go into lodges at that time we were looking after concessions, but that's the first time I went to the lodge to see what a lodge looks like and how it operates and also see game drives, people taking guests to see animals. That's when I started developing some interest.

[00:30:11] **Richard:** And what did you think when you first saw it?

[00:30:14] **Kane:** I thought it was a wonderful lifestyle. I think it's a cool thing to do.

[00:30:18] **Richard:** Did you see straight away that it was something that potentially could fit well in your life?

[00:30:26] **Kane:** Yes, I immediately knew that I had to do something. I wanted to get to know exactly what are the requirements that we need to work in the camps and I really liked the part of showing people animals because that part, I knew animals. I know all the trees in my own language, the birds in my own language, everything; even the insects. So it was a matter of learning a little bit more so I can translate the names of those animals into English. Like what's the name of a buffalo in English. What is a buffalo and those kinds of things, you explain to them in English because I knew them in my own language.

[00:31:07] **Richard:** Was it just a matter of applying for a job? I guess being part of the community that owned the concession, that would have been a fairly straightforward thing for someone with your skills to get a job there?

[00:31:22] **Kane:** Yeah, someone like me, I knew I could get a job there because I was kind of a community (member) and also the concession belonged to the community. I sat as a board member for two years just helping the community making the agreement between Wilderness Safaris and how to look after the concession. We did a very good job, you know. During that time, other parts of the Vumbura (*wildlife concession*) were still a hunting concession. You know the Kaporota/Vundum Tiki area was still a hunting concession. We used to measure between the photographic side and we used to see what is better for a long term and we proposed to the community that why don't we stop hunting because you know it hires less people for first of all hunting concession and it's seasonal. It only operates six months and there are people who are waiting for hunting camp, they have been jobless six month at the village. While the guys on the photographic, they're working yearly, even though they are paid a little bit but at least they have a full time job. So we did a very good job. We brought this to the community, they accepted it and we stopped hunting completely, that's when we closed Vumbura, Vundum Tiki and Kaporota and we asked those guys, the hunting companies to leave and we also raised our rental fees to the communities. We did really a good job and so we decided that you know what, it wasn't a job for us. When you're a board member, you are like an elected member so it wasn't a job, I wanted to work. I wanted to earn money. I wasn't wanting to live out of an allowance [like] while I was a young boy. That's when I left them and because there was a program with the community, they can train some students who want to work in the tourism industry as managers and guides, so I took the opportunity and I learned and applied and I got called at Wilderness Safaris to train as a manager.

[00:33:40] **Richard:** I remember meeting you at Kaparota Camp in the Vumbura concession in the north of the Okavango Delta and I think that was about 2002 and was that when you were training to be a camp manager?

[00:33:55] **Kane:** Yes, that's when I was training as a camp manager. Yes, I started training then as a camp manager, yes.

[00:34:04] **Richard:** And so at that stage, you hadn't taken game drives before?

[00:34:07] **Kane:** At that stage, no I haven't. But I've approached animals in vehicles, but that time, no, I wasn't a guide at all. I was going into management and getting understanding how the tourism industry works fully. That's what I wanted to do first. And when I was fully qualified, my first job was relief manager between Duba Plains, Old Vumbura and Little Vumbura. That was my first job, as a relief manager and eventually I started thinking, this is not good for me. I'm not enjoying this job. I want to be in the bush. Because I'm seeing and I'm hearing good things when the guests come back from the game drive, they'll go oh we've seen lions, we've seen leopards... And I thought, no, no, no. I'm not sitting here counting cans of beer and Coke. I need to be in the bush. *(Laughs)* This is for people who come from the cities. No, I can't come from the village and start counting cans of Coke here, no.

[00:35:11] **Richard:** That's brilliant. So can you remember your first ever game drive as a guide, leading guests?

[00:35:21] **Kane:** Yes, I do. My first game drive, it was a miracle. To start with, I was very lucky because you know what happened, when I was at the training camp, we had all these courses. All the guides who were trained at different levels, level 1, all the shooting courses, all the walking courses. So because I was the camp manager, so I was having these courses more freely. All the time I was trained in every single course, in was trained in. So when I left there and I joined the guiding course, I was a good guide already from Day 1. But to answer your question my first game ride was magic. I was little bit nervous of, I would say more kind of location. This was territory I was familiar with but I was worried a little bit of the names of the road as I. But I did. I didn't go... I was very brave. I was very brave. I did not even try to follow the decent guide, where they were going. I took my own road. I wanted to go on this road. I went towards Old Vumbura side, to airstrip side and towards Old Duba Road. And you know what I I found a leopard. I found a leopard on a kill and when I found the leopard, my radio wasn't working so I couldn't call this guide and tell them that I found a leopard but my guests were happy. We enjoyed the leopard. We went back to camp and I told the guides that I found a leopard unfortunately my radio wasn't working. Because I was a new guide, they didn't give me a good vehicle.

[00:37:07] **Richard:** You got the clapped out one. The old skorokoro. *(A skorokoro is an old vehicle generally used for collecting firewood).*

[00:37:16] **Kane:** Yeah, right. I had the skorokoro. So at least they have they have to understand me that I didn't call them through the radio. But I enjoyed the leopard and my guests are happy.

[00:37:27] **Richard:** Wonderful, wonderful. So from that period, how has your guiding changed?

[00:37:37] **Kane:** From there to now, I'll tell you that I still have the same passion of enjoying the bush. I like the bush and when I'm in the bush, I really want to impress my guests and make them happy and be able to teach them, to be able to elaborate or explain what the bush is showing us to them. So I think I'll tell you that as I've gained more experience, from that time to now, I have lots of experience now. I've encountered animals in different situations. I've encountered animals on walks. I've encountered animals on canoes, on mokoros (*canoe used in the Okavango Delta that is moved by someone standing in the stern and pushing with a pole*), on boats, on game drives. I've seen lots of different animals charging me so I'm very confident at the moment. I've made so many people happy, so I'm really happy about my job. And still, I haven't changed. I still have this strong passion in the bush. I love the bush like I used to from Day 1.

[00:38:42] **Richard:** You know Kane, I find it interesting because your whole life has been the bush. You've grown up and it's been a part of your life since, I mean you were born under a tree. For me, when I used to get into the bush, I used to love it and I used to count the days from the time that I was away from the bush. But I had exposure to city and I had exposure to traffic and I had exposure to city noise and all these things which I don't really enjoy. I get the contrast of when I move from the city and I come to the bush, it feels like paradise. How did you know that you loved the place so much if that's all that you'd ever known? Do you know what I'm talking about? I guess you had experiences, growing up in Maun and at school and that kind of thing. Was that something that helped, made you long for the bush because you missed it?

[00:39:53] **Kane:** Yeah, definitely. I think moving out of the bush from when I was still a young child, even experiencing some problems, you know seeing how people, they behave in the bush, I mean in the towns like Maun and they hear different stories about the big cities and what things happen in there there's like robbery and hijacking and all kinds of things which I've never heard about when I was growing up. So I think that I was living the best kind of life, that's why I'm still missing that kind of life. If someone is to go back to that kind of life, I want to go back because it was an easy life and we didn't have problems. Today, just to tell you, when we were growing up, we didn't have anything with AIDS. No one had any problems with AIDS and any problems like obesity or all kinds of these. But now we have mixed marriages with people who know lots of people and we started having these kinds of diseases in our village, which we grew up not having them. But we're still very fortunate that there's no such thing like robbery and theft at our village. I can leave for 6 months without locking my house and there's nothing will happen. I have a small shop there at the village and I've never had a problem. Sometimes we even keep money there, but I've never had the problem of people trying to break in, so that's how safe it is.

[00:41:28] **Richard:** That's amazing. So Kane, the last few years, you've been working up in the Selinda area, which is, it links the Okavango and the Linyanti area. I'll have some maps on the show notes. But I wanted to just get a sense of what your day to day life is (like), when you've been working at this little camp on the edge of the Selinda spillway. What does your day look like from the time that you wake up? What time would you wake up in the morning?

[00:42:02] **Kane:** I have a very busy schedule. I have no break. You work Sunday to Sunday, long hours. I would say I work 15 to 16 hours a day. You wake up at like, maybe some days 4 o'clock, 4:30, sometimes 5, but mostly 4:30 I would say is the most standard time and you end up going to bed at like 11 or 12 o'clock at night. When I started, I was the only guide so which means I have to host every night. I have to guide the whole day. I had to come and host every night and

wake up guest in the morning. It was really a busy day. Long hours. This wasn't a problem to me. I enjoyed my work.

[00:42:58] **Richard:** So you'd wake up at 4:30 and you were sleeping in the tent?

[00:43:02] **Kane:** Yes. I sleep on the tent. They look after us and they'll wash our clothes. They know that we won't have time to wash our clothes. They'll cook food for you. You'll eat the same food as the guests you know. That kind of thing, the good food and those laundry. We are well looked after, but we sleep in the tent.

[00:43:22] **Richard:** And so you'd wake up at 4:30, what would be the first thing that you do? Like even before you'd go and wake up the guests, what are the things that you need to get done in the morning? What's your role?

[00:43:39] **Kane:** I'm going to wake up and have a bath, like a shower and dress up. After, go to the kitchen and make sure that the waiters, the team that I'm working with are up. If they're not up, sometimes you know they can get tired, if they're not up, I'd have to go and wake them up. And they'd light a fire, for a kettle of water and while it's boiling, go and wake the guests up while these guys are busy preparing things. And light a fire also in the front. I come back before the guests wake up and I'd check my vehicle, the game drive vehicle for the game drive, or if we'll walk, I'll make sure that the rifles and ammunitions is well checked. I'd pack enough water on the cooler box if I'm going on a game drive. The drinks, the tea basket because we'll stop and have some tea. In my game drives, you'd never know when we will come back so you have to be prepared all the time. *(Laughs)* So I make sure I have like a biscuit and a few fruits on the tea basket so that when we're out in the game drive, we can stop and have that. Then when the guests come, at the front, everything's ready, they can have their continental breakfast before we can head out on our morning game drive.

[00:45:02] **Richard:** What time would you be waking up the guests?

[00:45:07] **Kane:** Sometimes, 5 o'clock. Sometimes, 4:30. But with me, I always have very active guests. I have people who love the bush and I also love the bush as well, so I always throw my opinions and ideas to guests on what's happening. For example if I think there was some wild dog hunting and also if it's summer it's going to get very hot very quickly so if we wake up at 5 o'clock, we'll have breakfast at 5:30 and you'll leave the camp at 6 so it's going to be hot. By the time you leave, the hunt is over. So sometimes I'd wake up the guests very early, like sometimes 4:30, 5:30 or even quarter to 5 and they can have a quick breakfast and we're out. So if they are photographers, they want the early morning light, they want to get up and if there are lions somewhere feeding, we want to get there early, just before the sunrise so we can get the golden light, so we have to get up very early. Recently I was waking up at like 4:30. There was a stage where I was even waking up the guests at 4 o'clock so which means I'm getting up at 3:30 (am).

[00:46:25] **Richard:** That's a long day. I know that your ancestors are still a very important part of your life working as a guide. How do they fit into your life? How does that spiritual connection fit in?

[00:46:45] **Kane:** You know what, the secret that I can tell you, Rich; there are things I see (that the other guides don't see and I try to ask myself questions, "Why are all these things happening to me?" And that's how I started understanding that this is a gift from my ancestors because I'm always pushing myself into better sightings or when things are happening, it will happen at my side all the time. For example, if somebody seen a kill or a lion and just before the hunt, I'm maybe 5 minutes away from them. As soon as the guide calls on the radio and says, "Oh this lion's about to jump on a buffalo". 5 minutes, I'm already there, you see! Things always favour (me) – they work at my side. And sometimes I spotted the animals all the time. And recently you know what happened, I had a dream. I had a dream and I was given a message that, you know what, all the animals you are seeing, actually we are giving you. I had been told like that on a dream. All the animals you are seeing is a gift from us.

[00:47:55] **Richard:** From your ancestors?

[00:47:58] **Kane:** Yes. So everywhere I go. I (have) recently done a mobile safari and I went to the Savute Marsh and the last day I was leaving Savute Marsh, I could feel my body tell me to get up, go, go, go and I ask my guests "Let's jump on the vehicle" and we drove out. In 10 minutes I can hear a male lion calling. I went there and found the male lion. While I was still there listening to the lion roaring, I heard distress call for a buffalo, from a far distance and I told the guests, "I think there's an attack happening somewhere." I heard it even before the lion. Just imagine - I heard the call, the distress call before the male lion even heard. After I told the guests, the second time when I heard, it was when the male lion heard it, but as soon he heard it, he got up and he started standing and I say, "You see, even he was hearing". And he started walking in that direction, and I told them, "Let's leave him". And we drove fast in that direction and we found like 8 lions on top of a buffalo and I was the only vehicle there.

[00:49:12] **Richard:** So sometimes your ancestors will come to you in dreams. Is there a part of your day where you spend time trying to connect with your ancestors or is it done just pretty quickly because your days are so busy, or is that constant thing? Are you constantly in tune with your ancestors?

[00:49:30] **Kane:** Yes, I'm constantly with them. Everywhere I am, I'm with them. Even in Maun, when I'm here, I'm with them. I go in the bush, I'm with them. So everytime wherever am I, I'm protected and they'll look after me. Even if I can fly here to Australia, they are with me. They'll make sure that nothing bad happens to me and if anything bad happens, they will take that thing out of my path. So I have to inform them, and they'll look after me. Recently, I took my two daughters and my wife to Kasane and as soon as I come back safari I told you about the lion killing. The guests flew out and my family was there for two days and I wanted to take them on a game drive. And my daughters, the youngest has never seen a lion and I wanted to take them on a safari.

[00:50:32] **Richard:** How old are they Kane?

[00:50:35] **Kane:** They are 2 years and 12.

[00:50:38] **Richard:** 2 and 12. So the 2 year old hadn't seen a lion but the 12 year old...

[00:50:44] **Kane:** Yeah, she has seen lions and leopards. When I entered the park, I was talking to my ancestors just to give a report that I'm with my wife and we'd do a short drive, can they be with us? So we took a drive along the Chobe River road, until I found someone who was watching a lion from, I would say 200 meters. You know in that park you can't off road so everyone was using binoculars and they told me "there's the lion". I stopped and I can see from my binoculars. As soon as he told me there's a lion, and I stopped and I picked up the binoculars and I looked for the lion, I saw the lions getting up and this lions walk straight towards our vehicle. And I can tell my two daughters, "There's the lions coming." The older one was saying, "They're coming, they're coming!" and they got up from the car and watching and the lions came straight to the vehicle and they're all around the vehicle and went past and went in the bush. I say to them that that was their gift. That was a gift. All of these lions were sleeping, these people were watching these lions for hours and hours with binoculars. All these things happened immediately as we stopped. This is a gift to them. I can even see that, straight from the point that it was a gift to my daughters.

[00:52:14] **Richard:** That's amazing and I totally believe it. I've had enough experiences with you in the bush to know that amazing things happen. I think my favorite moments in the bush are when I'm on a safari with you, mate.

[00:52:31] **Kane:** I once tried that with, you know I had Dereck Joubert this filmmaker. I was helping him when he was trying to make this elephant movie, the recent one. They wanted shots on the canoe with them, they had a photographer. And we were leaving Explorers (*Kane is talking about Selinda Explorers - the small camp where he was based between 2012 & 2015*) going more east from Explorers, along the spillway. Just a couple of metres from Explorers, the bird, the kingfisher, called the woodpecker, the cardinal woodpecker called behind us. We have already gone past. And I stopped them and I said, "Ah ah, we have to turn back. We're not going to go [on with the canoe] when this bird is saying, "No." We're not going there. It's calling back to us. It's asking us to go back. We should go back. We should go back."

[00:53:26] **Richard:** Sorry just to interrupt you there Kane. So the cardinal woodpecker, is that a special bird for you?

[00:53:31] **Kane:** Yeah, it's the top bird. It's the main bird. We call it the *Gangwa*. It's the main bird in our ancestors. When it calls it guides you almost everywhere. It guides you where, if you are doing a tracking, where you should go. If you're going to the bush where things are, it's always guiding you around. You are closely connected.

[00:53:49] **Richard:** And so you listen for the call?

[00:53:55] **Kane:** Yes. You always listen for the calls. If you are connected with your ancestors, the cardinal woodpecker have to guide you. You hear the sounds of a cardinal woodpecker. That's how you know that your ancestors are with you.

[00:54:09] **Richard:** So that day you were on the canoes and you drifted past and then you heard the sound of the woodpecker behind you.

[00:54:17] **Kane:** Yes. You know, there's two sounds. There's a usual sound, a sharp sound (*makes bird sounds*) They make that sound, and there's one which (*makes bird sounds*) ... it's that (*makes bird sounds*). So the second one, that's the one that stops you, like, "No, no, no, no, not that way." If you hear the (second) one and you keep going it says that you will blame yourself. It's a great sound that you have been told not to take that path. If you hear both sounds calling at the same time, if you hear the long one and the stopping one, and the one that says go, if it calls behind you, it tells you go back. And I told them, "Let's go back." When we turned back... We were looking for elephants on a canoe. And when we turned back, I'll tell you just about 10 minutes (after) we turned back, there was a huge herd of elephants that came through. A huge herd of elephants came through. The whole herd surrounded our canoes. Our canoes were in the middle of the elephant. We had a buffalo herd also there. These animals were acting like goats, they were so tame that we could almost touch them. We were like between them and they wouldn't do anything. So I told them "This is a gift. This is really a gift!"

[00:55:46] **Richard:** That's a special thing. I think sometimes people just think that they get lucky but I agree, it's a very special feeling when things like that happen to you in the bush and it's a real gift. I think that's where a safari teaches us to be grateful.

[00:56:08] **Kane:** Yeah, definitely. That's why I like my job. I can change, I can change the camp which is if there is no animals, there are animals. If I'm in the right order, the first thing I have to be correct. I have to be correct. I'm in the right form to call my ancestors. I have to be in a good mood to call on my ancestors. If I'm doing the right thing, so it's like a training. If you're going to play football and you've done all your exercises, you've reviewed all your training, your performance will be very well. So there's a way that my ancestors want me to be, before I can ask them. Just a small clip: I recently have been on this big safari. These guys, they've been on safari but they've never seen a leopard and this guy was an English guest, a close friend of mine. They're always "Leopard, leopard". His main joke when he was meeting me, and on emails was a leopard. When he met me at the airport he said "Leopard". There was a stage where it was like I was told to tell him (by his ancestors), and you know we don't guarantee things on the bush, but I was told to tell him that I should guarantee from three leopards to ten leopards.

[00:57:38] **Richard:** Really, so your ancestors told you?

[00:57:41] **Kane:** Yes, I have to give them a guarantee from three to three. Not three down to zero. So because he was becoming more annoying. He's asking too much. Before the trip, and I'm telling you with the camps where I'm going, there's no way I can walk away without seeing a leopard. So I ended up guaranteeing three leopards. You know I saw three leopards in one camp in one game drive. Immediately when we arrived in DumaTau (*camp*) and in one game drive, I showed him three leopards and then he was finished. When we left the camp, we saw eleven leopards when we finished the trip. Yes, eleven leopards. One was just extra. So the ten which was promised and one extra.

[00:58:29] **Richard:** That's amazing.

[00:58:32] **Kane:** So I trust them. I still trust them and I'll always be with them, wherever I go. I mean you know me very well Richard. You have that. This thing is just a connection. Not only me - a person like you, who trusts and believes on your ancestors and believes on nature, that nature

should give you (provide). If you go in the bush, it's not only me, any person who believes on this will be given. Will perform same as me, if you go and work in the bush, you will be exactly be guided this way.

[00:59:05] **Richard:** Absolutely and I'm sure there will probably be a few safari guides listening. Without a doubt, since I've been exposed to your understandings of ancestors and connection, I guess it's also intention. You're thinking first about the guests and trying to give them the best experience, whatever that looks like for them and whenever I've done that, whenever I've sort of felt connected on safaris and I've been connecting with my ancestors on a daily basis and it's often just been my grandmother or someone who I've been connected to, the results have been incredible. And similar to your story on the Chobe River, there have been safaris where people would sit there waiting for leopards to mate and they'll sit there for an hour and a half and then we'll turn up and within two minutes, the leopards have started mating and then they'll lie down again for an hour and a half when we go. The things that happen, it seems strange and you'll think, well geez, I'm getting good luck at the moment, but it's actually not. There's more than that going on.

[01:00:21] **Kane:** Definitely Richard, you have that. Wherever you go, I can see that you have that gift with you. You can change - even your company can be successful. There's no way it can't be successful. Whenever we do anything, whatever I come here to do, I ask them to guide me. Though the bushman ancestors have never done a business, you know? The Bushman ancestors have never done a business, but whatever I'm doing should be in the right way. I make sure that no one is injured through my trips, that everyone is looked after, who works with me, and wherever we go, we should be welcomed. No one should stop us. I've had serious encounters where some of my guests could have died or I could have lost my life, but I easily escaped as if you know, it's a small thing. Without harming the animal or harming me. So I'm always guided around.

[01:01:31] **Richard:** I'm conscious of your time mate. I know that you've got things that you probably need to do and it's pretty late here in Sydney as well. But I wanted to find out from you, what are the conservation issues that you're most concerned about in Africa and in terms of African wildlife?

[01:01:55] **Kane:** I would say it's rhino poaching, the number 1 thing. Rhino poaching is the bigger thing which other countries are not doing much to protect these animals. You see how many we are losing almost every day and in the year, the number of animals we have already lost is shocking and we can't do anything to protect them. And secondly, it's elephant poaching and it's gone as far as even lion, the lion poaching – the lion bone thing which the Chinese and all these other Asian countries are wanting to use. You know, we are not protecting our animals very well is the the other thing. And secondly is population growth. My biggest challenge is Botswana is one of the countries which has a very remote kind of quality, kind of safari conservation and we have more reserves. Like 38%, 39% let me say 40% of the land is for conservation but remember, the population has grown here. Our population is growing and our neighboring countries, all these people in Northern Botswana, they know that Botswana is a safe place to live. People are coming here to live and we need land. So the conservation land is shrinking, even in Botswana. It's shrinking. It's like we used to have 1 to 1 ratio and now it's 2 to 2 and a half per [person per] kilometer square. The land even in Botswana is shrinking. So we have to be very

focused and be very careful on how we conserve nature. All the countries have to work together to look after conservation. They've done these cross boundary parks for free animal movement but they never made out laws how they can protect the animals when they go across the other countries. So it's still not working. There's still poaching happening. They opened up some parks but there's still poaching happening. So that is my biggest fear at the moment. The poaching is number one at the moment.

[01:04:33] **Richard:** Yes. Even in Botswana where you have a very active anti-poaching force, in the Botswana Defense Force, the army.

[01:04:42] **Kane:** You know, Botswana at the moment, we don't have that much problem about poaching, but next is going to be us. Yeah, next is going to be us. If these countries which have the resources which can't able to protect them, where you have concessions which are much smaller than Botswana, for example I've been to Sabi Sands (*reserve in South Africa adjacent to the Kruger National Park*), and Sabi Sands is like 60,000 hectares and some of our concessions is like 150,000 hectares and this area, the Sabi Sands and these concessions are fenced (*note: the Sabi Sands is fenced on three sides, but open to the Kruger National Park*) if the poachers are able to get into the fenced areas and poach, what about these open concessions, huge concessions which we don't even operate on half of it. How are we going to know? That's the challenge. It's a big challenge for us.

[01:05:38] **Richard:** And for the people who are listening to this, if they wanted to try and help in some way, is there anywhere that we could direct them? Any websites or organizations that are doing good work that you would like people to support?

[01:05:55] **Kane:** Yes, of course. There are lots of other companies which support and bringing things like rhinos from South Africa, like Rhinos Without Borders, the one that Great Plains is running and also Wilderness also has the same program. Wilderness Safaris also bring some rhinos and they've got the biggest number of rhinos I think in Botswana. Yeah, just the companies which are bringing animals here and protecting them and in conjunction with the government of Botswana. They work together with the government of Botswana to protect the wildlife and also some organizations here.

Children in the Wilderness, that's one organization that educates kids about conservation. And also Conservation Camp which Great Plains also runs. And my long term plan, I'm also going to run and I'm going to create an organization about the conservation. The challenge here, I'm looking at all the organizations that are teaching younger kids, primary level kids and what else, what happens afterwards? When they go to secondary school what happens? All the programs stop. I want to teach those kids from secondary school who can go further and study conservation. I want to bring them in. I want to do this conservation camp about secondary kids who can take a role to become doctors, wildlife doctors or conservationists or something like that, to teach them about conservation.

[01:07:47] **Richard:** Wonderful. I'll put information on those organizations in the show notes. Before we finish up, if you have 3 tips for people who are wanting to do safari, what would be your 3 top tips that would give people the best experience?

[01:08:11] **Kane:** Select the right agent. To start, you have to select the right travel agent or operator who will plan your safari, who will let you know and who can negotiate your ideas to find exactly what you want. Where do you want to go. That's the number one part. Where exactly do you want to go. You want to select your local agent or whoever is nearby or you can research and find that person, people like you Richard who have been in the bush, you can give them the right information. And second, because you have selected the camp and I trust your selection. You know, you select the right camp, and second, you advise them with a guide. The guide is the one who is going to run your safari. He's going to give you the best experience. He's the one who's going to break your safari. If you trust that you want to spend lots of money to go on a safari without a guide, and you want to (make use of a) camp guide (*the resident guides in camps, rather than a guide like Kane who can accompany you throughout your safari*), you know you are gambling. You never know who you're going to get. But if you get the right person, the qualities, you're going to pay for, and you'll get the best experience. But even for the guides who perform well, the camp selections have to be great. If you want to see leopards and you want to take me to... Just as an example, you want me to go to Jack's Camp to go see a leopard, then it's the wrong place because Jack's Camp is not for leopards. (*Jack's Camp is in the Magkadigkadi Pans area of the Kalahari Desert in Botswana. It is a beautiful area and a wonderful safari destination, but you are unlikely to see lots of big game & predators*). But if you have the right agent who knows exactly where the guests can go and you can negotiate a deal with the guests, looking on the guests budget, then second is a guide you can select. The private guide you can have with you.

[01:10:09] **Richard:** So you recommend a good travel agent and a private guide. Yeah, it does make a huge difference. What about if once people are on safari, is there something that you would recommend for them that they can do? Even if it's like an attitude or a way of thinking when they get on safari from your perspective that would help them the best time?

[01:10:34] **Kane:** OK definitely. The main thing I would say, the best tip you can have in the bush, *the best*, trust on the people and be nice to the people you're going to meet. Entrust yourself to the guide who is going to guide you and he will give you the best experience. We African people, we love people. We love people and if you are a pushy someone, who is very demanding, you are breaking that connection. You can tell me what you want from the start. You can tell me that you want to see a giraffe, but you don't want to tell me every second that you want to see a giraffe because you've told me before. I know it. I'm working on it. I know it that you want to see a giraffe. If you tell me 20 times you want to see a giraffe, what will make a difference? There's nothing that will make a difference. It's just going to annoy me. So you just need to be a nice person. If you are a chief executive of your company or where you're working, you're not the chief executive in the bush. For that person to work well, you have to work together with that person. That's when you get the best results. You just need to be nice. We want to be nice. We want to also know about you. We want to be friends. On safaris, we want to be friends, we want to be relatives, we want to be close friends forever. You can trust me, you can like me, we can communicate so you just need to be a humble person and you'll have the best experience in life.

[01:12:17] **Richard:** Brilliant. That sounds great. And if you could sum up what safari means to you in one sentence, what would it be?

[01:12:26] **Kane:** You know for me, safari is a game. It's a game. You are going out to play. You are going out to have fun. It's a game. You're going out to enjoy, to play. You don't know exactly what you're going to do but you are going out to play, to enjoy, to have fun on safari. To experience, to explore, that's what safari is to me. It's beautiful. There's beauty there. There's fun there. There's laughs there. Everything is out there. It's a game we're going to play.

[01:13:07] **Richard:** Wonderful. Wonderful. Thanks Kane. And how can people find you or follow you? Are you on Facebook?

[01:13:15] **Kane:** Yes, I'm on Facebook. Kane Motswana, that's my Facebook name or Kane the Bushman.

[01:13:21] **Richard:** Kane the Bushman, that's where you have a lot of your photos? That's your page.

[01:13:27] **Kane:** Yes.

[01:13:30] **Richard:** We'll put that in the show notes so that people can find you and they can learn more about what you're doing because I know that over the next 12 to 18 months, there's going to be a lot of exciting things happening in your direction. So if you're interested in safari and you want to follow Kane, I think Kane the Bushman at Facebook would probably be the way to go.

[01:13:56] **Kane:** Yes, Kane the Bushman or through you Richard, you know me very well and the companies like the African Family Safaris, if you want to book me through, you can do that through me. Or my email, you can contact me through email but the best is Facebook at the moment.

[01:14:19] **Richard:** Wonderful Thanks Kane and thanks so much for your time today. It's been a real privilege chatting to you and I've really, really enjoyed it.