

*Neighbours Of*

# LAWRENCE PARK

AN EXCLUSIVE VOICE FOR THE RESIDENTS OF LAWRENCE PARK, LYTTON PARK & SHERWOOD PARK

*South*

*Outward Bound  
Canada:*  
Building Youth  
Resilience &  
Leadership



SEAN HUME, REGIONAL MANAGER  
OF URBAN WILD PROGRAMS

POWERED BY



COVER PHOTO BY  
DAVID BENJAMIN PHOTOGRAPHY

## *Outward Bound Canada:* Building Youth Resilience and Leadership



By Richard Todd | Photos by David Benjamin Photography

Outward Bound Canada is a national non-profit organization whose goal is to get youth to partake in adventurous outdoor journeys and help them discover new and essential skills, build leadership abilities, and build a community rooted in nature.

Sean Hume, Outward Bound Canada's Regional Manager of Urban Wild Programs, hopes to encourage kids from all walks of life to enjoy their outdoor adventures and reap the benefits while having fun.

"These experiences that connect youth to nature are critical to building self-resilience," he says. "Our programs give kids a sense that they can move through this world under their own power and learn to adapt to challenging situations. These outdoor adventures also help heal the social and emotional disconnect many young people experienced during pandemic lockdowns."

Sean's interest in the outdoors started at a very early age as a Cub Scout when

troop camping trips imbued his love for building a communal approach to nature. His experiences as he graduated to Venturer Scouts and Rover Scouts, earning Chief Scout award and Queen Scout Awards along the way, led him into a teaching career after graduating from the University of Toronto. He also enjoyed a stint with Project DARE, overseeing Algonquin wilderness trips for youth to divert them from custodial facilities.

"Seeing those kids learn, grow, and collaborate struck a chord in me," he says. "I knew these programs were making a positive impact not just in those kids' lives but also in those of the families and community."

Upon retiring early from teaching, Sean joined Outward Bound to help grow program accessibility to Toronto youth.

"I'd heard about Outward Bound as a child and remembered the possibilities it offered young people," he says. "I joined the organization to help expand opportunities in the outdoors for youth

in the Greater Toronto Area. Traditionally, we've offered trips to wonderful locations such as James Bay, Vancouver Island, and the Rocky Mountains, but these places are out of reach for many Toronto kids. We've since added a focus on wild urban opportunities, such as canoeing across Toronto Harbor to the islands or the Leslie Spit and hiking from the Don Valley to Rouge National Urban Park, so local youth can camp and have adventures without having to travel too far."

Outward Bound also aims to break down barriers that have held kids back from accessing the programs, such as a lack of the proper equipment to enjoy their adventures safely.

"As a charity, we turn no one away," Sean says. "If a participant doesn't have a sleeping bag or the proper boots or socks for their experience, we'll provide them. Our team ensures that everyone is well-outfitted and equipped so the kids can focus on safely enjoying their experience."

Financial challenges can also hold a child back from outdoor adventures, but Sean and his colleagues are working on a solution for that as well.

"We rely heavily on private and corporate donations and some government funding to keep these programs accessible," Sean says. "Thanks to their generosity, we can fund experiences for at least 80 percent of our participants. Our goal is to get that to 100 percent so any child can participate, regardless of their financial situation."

Sean is quick to praise the dedicated instructors who help instill confidence and leadership abilities in the kids during their adventures.

"Our instructors are phenomenal folks," he says. "They are patient, caring, and highly skilled people who have been involved in the outdoor industry for a long time. Outward Bound instructors have years of experience in nature and can do things like build canoes and pack a bag so it weighs next to nothing. Most importantly, however, they lead from the back, allowing the kids to take charge and encouraging them to learn from their mistakes. Their approach results in group and individual success as the kids develop confidence in their leadership and teamwork abilities."

One of the most unique aspects of Outward Bound is that participation in specific programs earns the youngster a high school physical education credit. This feature drew Sean's daughter into the program.

"At first, she wasn't sure she wanted to enroll in the experience," Sean says. "There wasn't a lot of talking amongst the group during the first day or two, but by the end, everyone was exchanging emails and phone numbers to preserve the community they built. We always see a positive change in kids, whether they're enrolled in a single day experience or a multi-week course."

Sean advises parents, teachers, and other youth professionals who want more information about Outward Bound's programs to call their Toronto office and arrange an information session.

"I regularly visit schools and other facilities to present our programs and involve the children in a day of outdoor activities," he says. "Families are welcome to visit our office and see what our programs offer."

The success stories at the end of every Outward Bound journey give Sean and his team ongoing testimony of the importance of their work and provide them with the drive to keep moving forward with youth who can benefit from this unique mentorship opportunity.

"The most rewarding aspect of this work is that it has tangible and visible outcomes," Sean says. "There are leaps and bounds that happen when you're out on the trail, and it's innately satisfying to see that they're growing as an individual and that their confidence is increasing in their ability to speak up for themselves and the group, and have some positive impact on the journey they're taking together, both in a figurative and literal sense."

"It's also fantastic when, after enjoying an Outward Bound experience, they want to give back by volunteering with us. This happens quite often, and it's gratifying to know that they desire to build a foundation of giving for future participants. I think it's the best feeling in the world!"

*For information on supporting Outward Bound Canada, please visit their website at [www.outwardbound.ca](http://www.outwardbound.ca)*

**Do you know a neighbour who has a story to share? Nominate your neighbour to be featured in one of our upcoming issues! Contact us at [rtodd@bestversionmedia.com](mailto:rtodd@bestversionmedia.com).**

