



# 2023 IMPACT REPORT

The Outward Bound Canada Training Academy for Outdoor Professionals



# Contents

## The Training Academy For Outdoor Professionals

[A Letter From Our Director](#)

[A Brief Overview](#)

[Diversity At Our Core](#)

[Our Mission](#)

[Our Vision](#)

[Our Values](#)





## 2023 Year In Review

[Program Highlights](#)

[Participant Highlights](#)

[Participants' Future Goals](#)

[Thought Leadership](#)

[Outdoor Sector Resources](#)

[Reflections](#)

## Looking Ahead

[Looking Ahead At 2024](#)

## What Participants Are Saying

[Testimonials](#)

Thank You!



OUTWARD BOUND  
CANADA



The Training Academy for Outdoor Professionals

# A Letter From Our Director



OUTWARD BOUND CANADA  
TRAINING ACADEMY

*"Welcome to the Training Academy's 2023 Year in Review. The purpose of this publication is to share foundational information about Outward Bound Canada's Training Academy for Outdoor Professionals and to highlight the developments over the last year.*

*As I reflect on the past year, I am filled with gratitude for the collective journey we have embarked upon—a journey marked by curiosity, innovation, and an unwavering commitment to our outdoor community.*

*Together, we have launched multiple opportunities for growth and learning. Our endeavours, from launching fully funded technical certifications, Nipissing University micro-credentials, a Truth and Reconciliation panel and the massive*

*expansion of our training program for both new and experienced outdoor professionals, has strengthened our connection and impact within the outdoor sector. Our 2023 plan, shaped by your feedback and collaborative efforts, aimed to address the immediate needs of our sector while laying the groundwork for long-term sustainability.*

*As we enter our final year under our current funding model, the 2024 plan reflects our dedication to affordable training, advocacy, and the vital task of knowledge sharing—each element a cornerstone to empower the outdoor community we serve.*

*I warmly invite you to delve into the impact stories we've prepared in this report, each narrative a testament to the*

*strength and resilience of our sector. These stories not only highlight the remarkable achievements of the past year, but also illuminate the path forward; showcasing the profound difference we can make together. Thank you to the Government of Canada for funding this program, and to our partners, volunteers, and staff for their hard work, passion and diligence. The work that we do is work that we do together."*



*In gratitude and community,  
Josephine Baran*

# About The Training Academy

## A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Launched in 2022 as an initiative of Outward Bound Canada, the Training Academy was created to address the representation gap within the outdoor sector while also providing technical skill development and growing social and emotional competencies so that Canada's next generation of Outdoor Leaders can respond to the evolving needs of Canada's diverse population.

Our program is funded in part by the *Government of Canada's Sectoral Initiatives Program* as an investment in the outdoor sector's economic recovery.





## DIVERSITY AT OUR CORE

At the heart of all our programs is a foundation of equity, diversity and inclusion. We strive to create accessibility for equity-seeking groups and create programming that is inclusive.

## OUR MISSION

*HOW WE CREATE THE FUTURE*

We deliver comprehensive, inclusive and equitable training, nationally, through an innovative combination of experiential workshops, outdoor journeys and virtual training that aims to address the skill gaps in the outdoor sector.

## OUR VISION

### WHAT THE FUTURE LOOKS LIKE

We envision a diverse and vibrant outdoor industry that offers exciting opportunities for Canada's next generation of outdoor leaders.

## OUR VALUES

### HOW WE WORK

A small but mighty team, the Training Academy team is built on the following principles:

- **We are all adventurers.** We embrace the unknown and challenges in our work and lives. We dare to learn and to try something new.

- **Diversity is at the heart of what we do.** Diversity is not only the right thing to do, but it's how we grow. Whether through a diversity of backgrounds, experiences, opinions or views, diversity is how we will build a thriving organization and outdoor sector.
- **Be curious and seek to understand.** We consider and actively explore diverse perspectives. Only from a place of shared understanding can we care for each other and the world around us.
- **Channel courage in all we do.** We think big, speak up and are empowered to act. Whether it's the courage to share a new idea or to have a difficult conversation, we embrace our vulnerability and cultivate everyday bravery.
- **Trust is built everyday.** We consistently build trust through every interaction; conducting ourselves in an open, professional and honest manner. We accept responsibility and quickly correct mistakes because trust is built through both our successes and our failures.





2023 Year In Review

# Our Impact In 2023

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



**787**  
**PARTICIPANTS**  
TOOK PART IN THE  
TRAINING ACADEMY  
SINCE LAUNCHING IN 2022



**60%**  
OF OUR PARTICIPANTS  
CAME FROM EQUITY  
DESERVING GROUPS  
THIS YEAR



**66%**  
OF PARTICIPANTS  
SELF-IDENTIFIED AS BEING  
FEMALE



**39%**  
OF OUR PARTICIPANTS  
SELF-IDENTIFIED AS  
BEING BIPOC



**23%**  
OF PARTICIPANTS  
SELF-IDENTIFIED AS  
BEING A PART OF THE  
2SLGBTQ+ COMMUNITY



**5%**  
OF PARTICIPANTS  
SELF-IDENTIFIED AS  
HAVING A DISABILITY



**3%**  
OF PARTICIPANTS  
SELF-IDENTIFIED AS BEING  
A NEWCOMER TO  
CANADA



**1520**  
**CERTIFICATES**  
HAVE BEEN AWARDED  
SINCE LAUNCHING IN 2022

## PARTICIPANT HIGHLIGHTS

- 59% of participants are age 15-30
- 34% of participants are age 31-54
- 61% of participants were employed prior to the start of the program
- 18% of our participants were employed in the outdoor sector prior to the start of the program
- 90% of our participants report they are employed after completing the Training Academy

## PARTICIPANTS' FUTURE GOALS

- *“Becoming a change agent.”*
- *“Helping underprivileged youth experience the outdoors.”*
- *“Becoming an inclusive instructor/guide.”*
- *“Taking what was learned and applying it to other jobs/industries.”*



# Thought Leadership

In 2023, we hosted a series of events, shared our expertise and presented our findings to a diverse audience in support of increasing capacity within the outdoor sector. A few examples included:

## Truth and Decolonization: Discussion Panel



This panel featured various Indigenous and Metis knowledge keepers speaking on the topic Truth and Decolonization; highlighting their experiences and perspectives as it relates to Truth and Reconciliation.

## Breaking Down Barriers: The Adventures of Mario Rigby



The Training Academy hosted eco-explorer and outdoor adventure pioneer, Mario Ribgy, as he shared his experience in pushing boundaries and promoting social and environmental justice through the power of exploration and storytelling.

## Outdoor Sector Conferences



Training Academy staff presented findings and best practices at various conferences, including: the Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario's "Make Peace with Winter" conference, the Association for Experiential Education 51st International Conference, BC Camps Association Conference and Power to Be Summit.

# Outdoor Sector Resources

To help further enrich the educational experience of both our participants and the wider outdoor sector as a whole, as well as establish deeper relationships within the sector, the Training Academy developed the following:

## Ask the Experts Webinar Series

### 3 PHONE APPS TO LEVEL UP YOUR GAME IN THE OUTDOORS

with Béa Beaudoin-Masse



Exploring various industry relevant topics, learn tips and best practices from our Training Academy experts. The full series can be viewed by clicking [HERE](#).

## Career Pathways in the Outdoors Video Series

CAREER PATHWAYS IN THE OUTDOORS

### BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL CAREER IN THE OUTDOOR SECTOR



ADVICE FROM

**ADAM  
MERTENS**

Director of Recruitment  
and Risk Management  
The Howl Experience

To help guide the way for future outdoor leaders, we compiled a series of videos exploring various Career Pathways that one might take in the outdoors. Watch the full video series by clicking [HERE](#).





## How-To Video Series

HOW-TO VIDEO SERIES  
**5 ESSENTIAL  
GROUPS OF  
ITEMS FOR  
OUTDOOR  
EDUCATION**



OUTWARD BOUND CANADA  
TRAINING ACADEMY

WITH  
**MILTON  
HILL**  
ACADEMY TRAINER

A collection of video tutorials to help support individuals who are new to the outdoor sector. The list of topics range from what items to pack, to technical skills (knot tying and tarp set up), to the various layering materials for appropriately dressing while out on your own adventure. Watch the full video series by clicking [HERE](#).

## Certifications Fully Funded



The Training Academy has partnered with various organizations to deliver and develop industry relevant certifications to support individuals with their career development. This includes Outdoor Council of Canada, Paddle Canada, Interpretive Guides Association, Sea Kayak Guide Alliance of BC, Wilderness First Responder, Wilderness Mental Health First Aid, Nipissing University micro-credentials and National Outdoor Leadership School Risk Management Training. View our certification offerings by clicking [HERE](#).



## Partnerships:

Building Connection In Community



If outdoor education has taught us one thing, it's that we are always stronger when we work together. What's more, when we work together in nature, we are able to discover our best selves. In 2023 we partnered with organizations at a national and grassroots level to learn from each other's experiences, respond with strength and agility to the sector's needs, and leverage resources to achieve our shared goal: increasing accessibility within and strengthening the outdoor sector as a whole. A rising the tide to help lift all ships. In 2024, we will continue to focus on deepening and growing our partnerships and collaborate on projects such as accessible training for diverse needs, climate resilience labs, specialty training and much more!

# Reflections



We bring the lessons of the past year into the new as we affirm our commitment to accessible training to create a vibrant and diverse outdoor sector. 2023 was a year of exponential growth for the Training Academy. We saw nearly seven times the number of unique participants take part in some aspect of our programming compared to 2022. We're proud of the steps we've taken so far to operationalize our values, and we recognize that there is much more discovery and work to be done. We strive for transparency and a deep sense of responsibility in all we do.

2023 was a challenging year for many Canadians; rising costs caused financial strain for many households, increased demand for social support delivered through charities, global unrest and devastating wildfires. Climate impacts are

in everyone's backyard; whether it's extreme weather events, impacts to wildlife, drought, or wildfire, Outward Bound Canada is seeing these impacts in every region we live and recreate. The crises are immense and interconnected.

*"2023 was a year of exponential growth for the Training Academy."*

As we move into 2024, Outward Bound Canada will deliver a series of Climate Social Innovation Labs to address how do we proactively build resilience in advance of the existential threat that climate change is posing for the outdoor sector. We are increasing the number of certifications and delivering programming in collaboration with communities to build

equitable access. We are also centring voices that are not traditionally represented within the outdoor narrative and publishing *“Diverse Voices in the Outdoors: An Anthology.”* We will also deliver programming to over 400 participants, with the intent to strengthen Canada’s outdoor and tourism sector.

*“Climate impacts are in everyone’s backyard; whether it’s extreme weather events, impacts to wildlife, drought, or wildfire, Outward Bound Canada is seeing these impacts in every region we live and recreate.”*





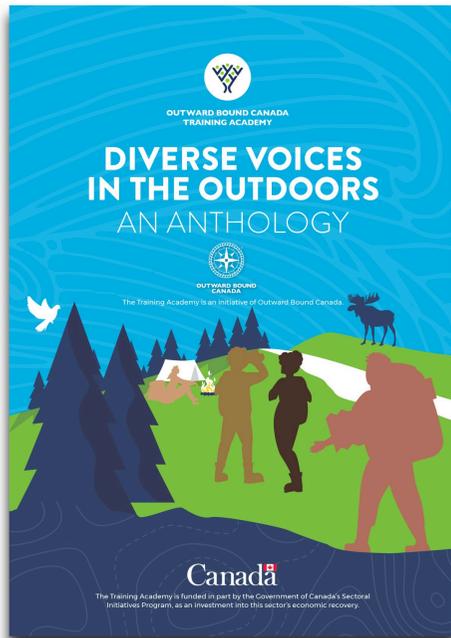
OUTWARD BOUND  
CANADA



Looking Ahead

# Looking Ahead At 2024

Officially our last funded program year for the Training Academy, we are planning a host of events and deliverables on top of our programming that participants and the outdoor sector as a whole can look forward to. This will include:



## **Diverse Voices In The Outdoors: An Anthology**

In 2024, we will be releasing for digital download along with a few select printed copies an anthology featuring voices not typically heard from within the outdoor sector.

The purpose and importance of this work is to give underrepresented communities a platform to share the stories; showcasing the an outdoor sector that is more representative of Canada's populous.





## Climate Social Innovation Labs

In May of 2024, we will be hosting three Climate Social Innovation Labs in the following cities: Vancouver (May 9), Halifax (May 13), Toronto (May 15). These labs will be asking the question: *“How can the outdoor sector manage and mitigate the effects and impacts of climate change for an adaptable and more resilient industry?”*



## Guest Speaker: James Edward Mills

On October 9, 2024, we will be hosting National Geographic Explorer, alpinist, journalist, author, outdoor guide and independent media producer, James Edward Mills for a guest speaking event. During this event, James will share a bit about his experiences and provide some insights regarding that outdoor industry as a whole.



## Micro-credentials & Certifications

We are proud to announce our micro-credentials that were created alongside and will be distributed in partnership with Nipissing University. Additionally, we will be offering a series of professional certification opportunities including, but not limited to: NOLS Risk Management, Assistant Overnight Guide (AOG), and Paddle Canada Sea Kayak certifications. Learn more [HERE](#).





What Participants Are Saying

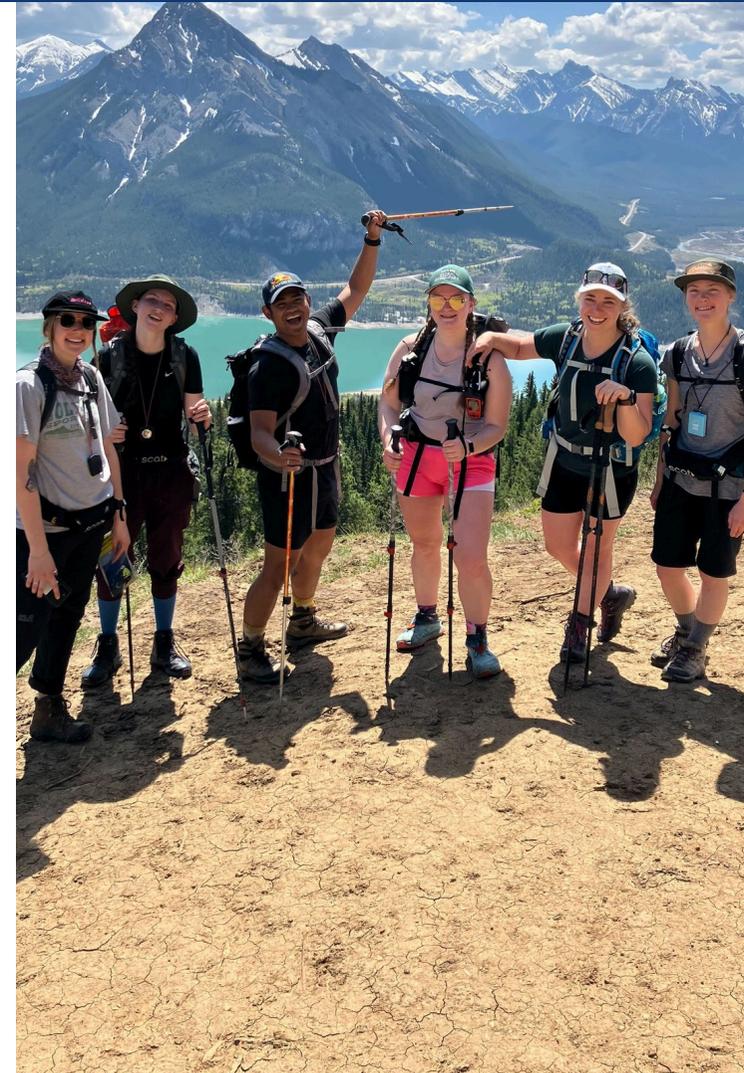
# Testimonials

“  
*The training academy is one of the best experiences I've ever had! Which sounds so cliché, but it honestly was! I learned so much about guiding and what happens behind the scenes while on trip. I also learned about myself. The instructors really knew when and how to challenge me, and I left feeling more confident in myself and my abilities! I will forever cherish my time as part of the academy. If you haven't applied yet, do it! You won't regret it!*

- Leksy Walsh

“  
*The Outward Bound Training for Outdoor Professionals was such an incredible, memorable, and educational experience run by the most kind, knowledgeable & encouraging instructors, I cannot recommend it enough!! The outdoors is something that everyone should get to experience, no matter their race, age, or income status. With outward bounds efforts, I can see the Outdoor sector transforming & opening up, allowing more individuals to learn, grow, and play in the Outdoors, and I think that's something really special.*

- Laura Ferreira



“

*I feel so grateful to be part of this program - it provides a stellar outdoor opportunity that blends place-based learning, self-discovery, and challenge in a supportive environment. Huge kudos to the knowledgeable and compassionate instructors that enabled this wonderful experience!*

- Caleb Wesley

Hear about Shams Ben Temessek's Training Academy experience by clicking the video below.



Hear about Mikjail Vera and Herbert Fong's Training Academy experience by clicking the video below.



“

*Outward Bound Training Academy was everything and more. A truly formative and enriching experience surrounded by experts in the field and passionate people alike.*

- Valerie Bertucci

“

*I feel so grateful to be part of this program - it provides a stellar outdoor opportunity that blends place-based learning, self-discovery, and challenge in a supportive environment. Huge kudos to the knowledgeable and compassionate instructors that enabled this wonderful experience!*

- Serena Chao

Hear about Marie-Pier Langlois's Training Academy experience by clicking the video below.



“

I had the privilege of being a part of the OBC Training Academy Centred-Based Atlantic Program in the Fall in 2023, and I can confidently say that it has been a transformative experience. The initiative is a beacon of hope addressing the representation gap within the outdoor sector.

The program went beyond my expectations providing me with tools to better manage social and emotional competencies. One aspect that truly sets the Training Academy apart is its commitment to addressing the representation gap. The outdoor sector, like many others, has historically lacked diversity, and the Academy aims to change this narrative. Being part of a community that values inclusivity and actively works towards bridging these gaps has been inspiring.

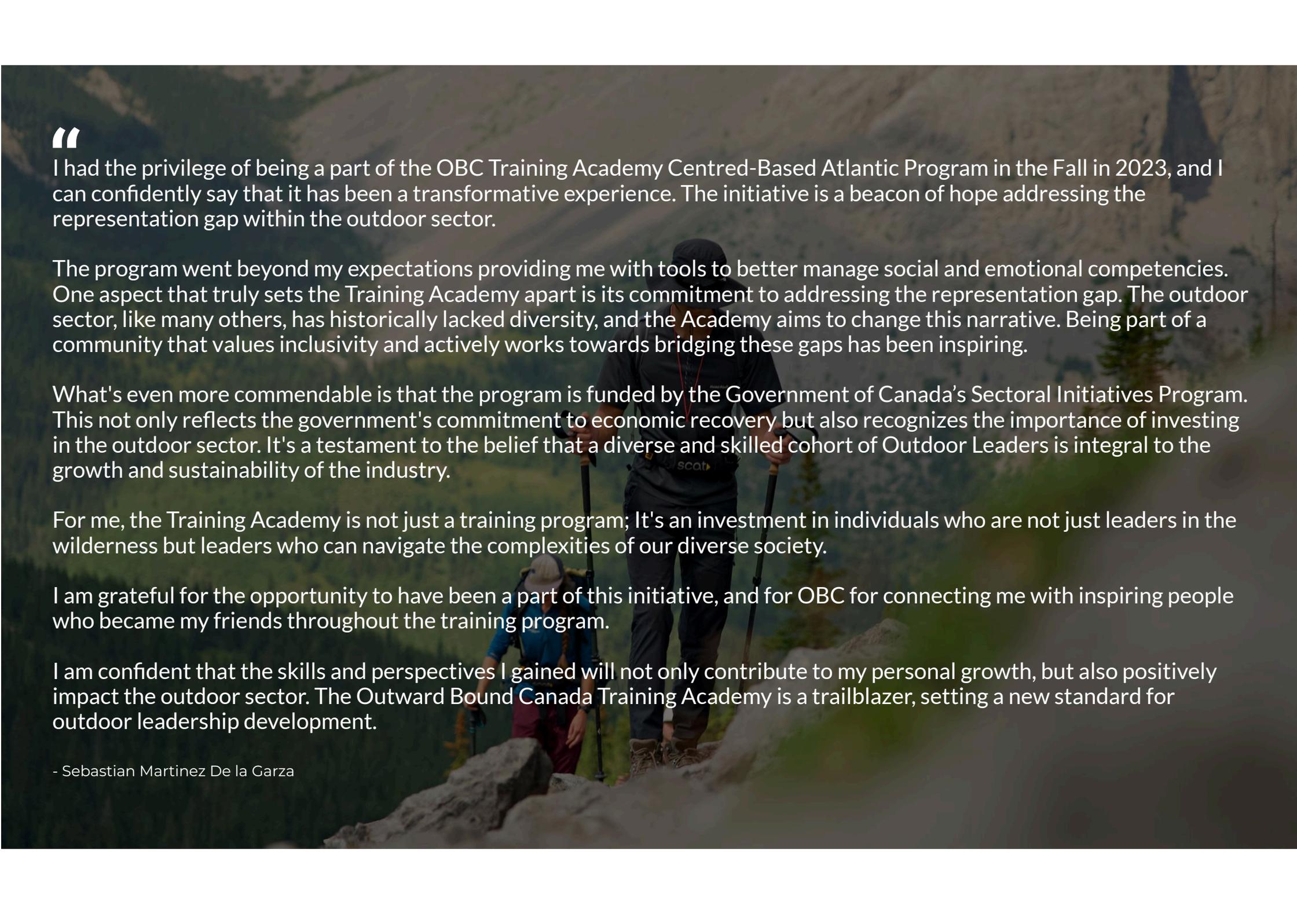
What's even more commendable is that the program is funded by the Government of Canada's Sectoral Initiatives Program. This not only reflects the government's commitment to economic recovery but also recognizes the importance of investing in the outdoor sector. It's a testament to the belief that a diverse and skilled cohort of Outdoor Leaders is integral to the growth and sustainability of the industry.

For me, the Training Academy is not just a training program; It's an investment in individuals who are not just leaders in the wilderness but leaders who can navigate the complexities of our diverse society.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have been a part of this initiative, and for OBC for connecting me with inspiring people who became my friends throughout the training program.

I am confident that the skills and perspectives I gained will not only contribute to my personal growth, but also positively impact the outdoor sector. The Outward Bound Canada Training Academy is a trailblazer, setting a new standard for outdoor leadership development.

- Sebastian Martinez De la Garza





“

It was an amazing learning experience. The trainers put their heart in the training. [I'm] inspired to explore opportunities in outdoors.

- Vaibbhav Jadhav

“

I am ever grateful for having been given the opportunity to learn and grow with the Outward Bound Canada Training Academy. The experiences, that were both curated and emergent, have felt deeply transformative and have shaped how I choose to be in relation in the world. These profound experiences were only made possible by the support of an amazing team of instructors, coordinators, and administrators, who are incredibly knowledgeable, but even more so just wonderful human beings. With the guidance of the Training Academy team, our group was able to create a caring, safe, and curious learning environment. Through this program, I have made connections with a diverse group of people who I look forward to continuing to adventure and grow with. As a mental health worker, I can't wait to put what I've learned into practice and support people on their healing journeys outdoors!

Thank you Outward Bound Canada Training Academy, may you continue to provide much needed access to meaningful outdoors programming!

- Kurt So



Thank You!

Canada 

The Training Academy is funded in part by the Government of Canada's Sectoral Initiatives Program, as an investment into this sector's economic recovery.

