

OUTWARD BOUND CANADA

# OBC 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

A registered charity operating in Canada since 1969, Outward Bound Canada (OBC) empowers youth for the future through experiential adventures in nature.



OUTWARD BOUND  
CANADA



# A LETTER FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Dear Supporters of Outward Bound Canada,

Thank you for being an essential part of our work in 2025. Because of your support, young people across the country had the chance to take on challenges that pushed them, required real teamwork, and ultimately showed them just how much they're capable of.

Your generosity keeps these programs accessible. By removing financial barriers, you've ensured that a young person's spot on a course is determined by their readiness to grow rather than their ability to pay. That kind of access has a ripple effect, as the confidence a student finds in the wilderness doesn't stay in the woods. They bring it home to their schools, families, and futures.

Over the year, we've seen students return home more confident, more resilient, and better at working alongside others. Many also described a deeper connection to nature and a real desire to care for it. These changes may seem simple, but together they reflect the kind of growth that stays with a person for life.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, staff, and the young people who participated in Outward Bound Canada (OBC) programs, thank you. Your belief in the potential of youth is the foundation of everything in this report, and we're grateful to share the results with you.

With thanks,

*Josephine Baran*

**JOSEPHINE BARAN**

Executive Director  
Outward Bound Canada



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# PREPARING YOUTH FOR A CHANGING WORLD

At Outward Bound Canada, we believe education doesn't end at the classroom. Our mission is to lead young people beyond the familiar and into the wilderness, where they discover their potential through real-world challenges and shared experience.

In the quiet of nature, away from the predictable world of algorithms and screens, progress depends on paying attention, adapting to changing conditions, and working together. These wilderness journeys offer something increasingly rare: sustained focus, face-to-face collaboration, and resilience built through experience. Whether paddling across open water or navigating by map and compass, participants develop the maturity and social-emotional strength that academic learning alone cannot provide.

These experiences shape how young people move forward in their lives. They leave with the confidence to navigate an increasingly complex world and the perspective to care for the environment and the communities around them.



## SEE THE RESULTS

Your support makes this work possible. Because of you, young people across Canada are stepping into the outdoors to discover who they are and what they can contribute. The numbers below show what your support made possible.

TOTAL PROGRAMS

**182**

STUDENTS SERVED

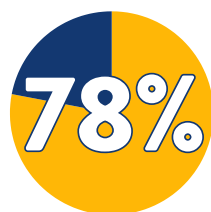
**3,502**

PROGRAM DAYS

**12,182**



THAT'S **292,368** HOURS  
IN NATURE & AWAY FROM SCREENS



**78%**  
OF PARTICIPANTS  
RECEIVED FUNDING  
TO HELP ELIMINATE  
BARRIERS



**71%**

OF STUDENTS REPORT INCREASED  
**RESILIENCE**



**63%**

OF STUDENTS REPORT INCREASED  
**SELF-CONFIDENCE**



**68%**

OF STUDENTS REPORT INCREASED  
**SOCIAL COMPETENCE**



**60%**

OF STUDENTS REPORT INCREASED  
**COMPASSION**



**79%**

OF STUDENTS REPORT A BOOST IN  
**CONFIDENCE & PERSEVERANCE**



**87%**

OF STUDENTS REPORT NOW  
**TREATING NATURE WITH RESPECT**



**79%**

OF STUDENTS NOW REPORT THAT  
**SPENDING TIME IN NATURE IS IMPORTANT TO THEM**



**78%**

OF STUDENTS REPORT THEY NOW  
**FEEL A CONNECTION TO NATURE**



**79%**

OF STUDENTS REPORT FEELING  
**MORE PREPARED FOR THE WORKFORCE**

# 2025 AT A GLANCE: YOUR SUPPORT IN ACTION

In 2025, your generosity helped thousands of youth build a foundation of confidence that lasts a lifetime.

## THE REACH: BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

Before the journey begins, your support ensures that young people from all backgrounds have a chance to participate:

**\$1,852,594**

**RAISED** to deliver life-changing programs across the country.

**3,502** YOUNG PEOPLE SERVED  
NATIONWIDE

**1,640** age 14 and under

**1,504** age 14-18

**358** age 18+

**78%** OF PARTICIPANTS RECEIVED  
FINANCIAL SUPPORT,  
ensuring that adventure belongs to  
everyone regardless of their circumstances.

## ON THE TRAIL: THE HARD WORK OF GROWTH

**292,368** HOURS IN NATURE & OFF SCREENS  
Every second of our programs was 100% screen-free, resulting in a collective 33 years of reclaimed youth attention.

**121,610** KILOMETERS TRAVELLED  
A distance equal to 3 times around the Earth, powered entirely by boot, paddle, and perseverance.

**12,182** PROGRAM DAYS  
Immersive, hands-on learning in Canada's most powerful classrooms.

**182** WILDERNESS PROGRAMS  
Journeys delivered from urban wilds to remote mountain peaks and rugged ocean coasts.

**36,483** SHARED MEALS  
Fueling the teamwork and storytelling that only happens around a campfire.

**470** NIGHTS UNDER THE STARS  
(and the occasional rain)



## RESILIENCE IN ACTION

*"As a recipient of the scholarship for BIPOC Youth Leaders, I joined a 32-day Leadership expedition. It was physically demanding and mentally tough, but every stroke and step pushed me to grow. I discovered a deeper sense of resilience, patience, and strength within myself while building strong friendships with peers who shared in both the struggle and the joy."*

— RBC-BIPOC Scholarship Recipient

## THE LASTING CHANGE: A LIFETIME OF CONFIDENCE

These numbers represent the internal change that lasts long after the journey ends:



Every number here represents a young person who was given the chance to see themselves differently.

### REDEFINING WHAT'S POSSIBLE ”

*"I'm reaching out to extend my gratitude for the overall attitude of inclusion I felt throughout my experience. Heading into the journey, I definitely had my reservations, but I was blown away by the hospitality the team showed. I hope I was able to set a good precedent so that other individuals with physical disabilities can follow in my footsteps and partake in this amazing experience. Thank you for pushing us outside our limits and ensuring that we evolved as humans." — Group Program Participant*

# ONE MISSION, MANY PATHS

All of our programs are rooted in the wilderness and designed to meet young people at different stages of life. In 2025, we reached youth through five key pillars of impact:

## TRANSFORMATIONAL WILDERNESS EXPERIENCES

Multi-day backcountry journeys that push boundaries and build lifelong resilience, confidence, and independence.

## SCHOOL CREDIT & EDUCATION

Programs that complement academic goals, allowing students to earn high school credits through active learning while strengthening social-emotional skills and teamwork.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Customized programs created in collaboration with newcomer groups, youth-serving organizations, and other community groups seeking meaningful shared experiences in nature.

## INDIGENOUS PARTNERSHIPS

Collaborative, community-driven programs that respect traditional ways of knowing and support connections to land, culture, and leadership.

## CAREER & SKILL TRAINING

Professional pathways designed to prepare youth for work, leadership, and green career pathways.

The following pages offer a closer look at each area of work and the impact made possible by your support.



# TRANSFORMATIONAL WILDERNESS EXPERIENCES

Since 1969, more than 175,000 people have stepped into the Canadian wilderness with Outward Bound Canada to discover their potential.

Away from familiar routines, participants face real-world situations that require immediate teamwork and self-reliance. Whether traveling through dense forests or managing the logistics of a campsite, they learn they can handle challenges with confidence and that they are stronger when they work as a team.

## SCHOOL CREDIT & EDUCATION

Designed to complement and enhance traditional academics, our school credit and education programs extend learning beyond the school walls. Through day programs and multi-day journeys, students step into environments that demand collaboration, reflection, and responsibility.

In the wilderness, lessons are lived. Students practice problem-solving in real time, support one another through shared challenges, and return to school with stronger peer connections. By applying subjects like leadership, environmental science, and physical education to real-world scenarios, they see the immediate relevance of their studies. Whether navigating by map and compass or collaborating on group decisions, they gain a deeper understanding of the curriculum through direct action.

In 2025, we delivered 139 school and group programs, partnering with educators nationwide to bring meaningful, hands-on learning to thousands of students. 87% of these programs received funding to help eliminate financial barriers.

### A JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME ”

*“My Favourite Journey of Life! If there is a moment that I could relive, it would be the backpacking trip with OBC. It's been more than a year and I haven't forgotten what an amazing experience it was — the friends I made, the resilience I learned, and understanding what nature really looks like. Waking up every day with a view of the mountains and fresh air without my phone in sight made me feel peaceful. The late-night card games were better than any sleep I ever needed, and even the soggy boots became part of the story. I'm truly thankful to OBC for giving me this opportunity to step into something special. I will forever cherish it.” — 14-Day Backpacking Participant*



# THE POWER OF EXPERIENCE

**Academic Credit:** Students can earn credits recognized by provincial education ministries, making wilderness learning a legitimate extension of their academic path.

**Beyond the Grade:** 68% of students reported increased curiosity and interest in learning after completing their course.

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT: THE FUTURE OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Our Principal and Regional Manager, Sean Hume, was featured on the Let's Move Canada podcast to discuss why school-based outdoor programs matter now more than ever. In the episode, he shares how these experiences strengthen student confidence, well-being, and long-term engagement in learning.



## OUR 2025 PARTNERS

We are deeply grateful to the schools and community groups who partnered with us this year to bring outdoor learning to their students. Their trust and collaboration make this work possible.



# 139

SCHOOL & GROUP PARTNERS NATIONWIDE

# 87%

RECEIVED FUNDING TO HELP ELIMINATE FINANCIAL BARRIERS

## TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

*"The program OBC designed for our day program in 2024 was arguably one of the most exciting experiences for both students and staff. I had never experienced that level of engagement from the kids, and the work you do is truly unique and very well-designed. Your impact really makes your students become the biggest advocates of the program; thanks again for everything!"*

— Ontario teacher who rebooked a school program in 2025

*"Thank you so much for organizing this wonderful experience for our students. There were so many highlights and the feedback has been amazing. I was a little worried the cooking would be a chore but it was a highlight for many. Also, many students mentioned how much they enjoyed just spending time with each other. As a reminder, many of them didn't even know each other's names before the trip. Some strong connections and happy memories were made!"*

— Secondary teacher whose class of 23 ESL students took winter adventuring for three days/two nights in 2025

# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Nature belongs to everyone, yet significant barriers often prevent young people from accessing it. We partner with newcomer organizations, urban youth centers, and local community agencies to bridge this gap, ensuring the benefits of the natural world are available to all, regardless of background or circumstance.

These collaborations allow us to design programs that respond to specific community needs while maintaining our foundation of challenge, teamwork, and growth. For many, the impact extends beyond technical skills; it is about belonging, trust, and discovering their place in environments where they may have once felt excluded. Through shared responsibility on the journey, young people build confidence in their abilities and their role within a community.

In 2025, 71 programs run with 28 community organizations expanded access for youth who might not otherwise have had the opportunity to experience the wilderness.

## REDEFINING WHAT'S POSSIBLE ”

*"I'm reaching out to extend my gratitude for all of the preparation, commitment, and the overall attitude of inclusion that I felt over the course of my Outward Bound experience. I truly appreciate all of the hard work that you put into making this possible, and I can confidently walk away saying that this was one of the coolest experiences I've ever been a part of.*

*Heading into this, I definitely had my reservations, but I was blown away by the hospitality the entire team showed. Thank you again for taking a chance on me. Hopefully, I was able to set a good precedent, and other individuals with physical disabilities like mine can follow me and partake in this amazing experience. Thank you for pushing all of us outside our limits and ensuring that we evolved as humans."*

**— Group Program Participant**

# INDIGENOUS PARTNERSHIPS

For over 25 years, we've collaborated with Indigenous communities and organizations to deliver programs that are culturally grounded and community-driven. These partnerships are built on a foundation of mutual respect, ensuring that the specific goals of the community are at the heart of every journey.

We recognize that the land is the teacher, and we work under the guidance of Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers to ensure our programs honor local protocols and traditional ways of knowing. Following their lead, we ensure that our work is respectful and supportive of the community's vision for its youth.

By weaving together land-based learning with Indigenous values, these programs provide a space for youth to connect with the land and their peers. Our role is to support the strengthening of cultural identity, providing the tools for young people to thrive within their communities. These journeys honor the specific strengths of each group, fostering a deep sense of pride and responsibility.



## A PARTICIPANT REFLECTION ”

*“Through this journey, I was able to reconnect with both land and culture. Being on the water, paddling with others, and learning in that setting helped me feel more grounded in who I am. It strengthened my confidence and reminded me that my identity and my connection to the land are inseparable.”*

— Kana, program participant



READ KANA'S STORY

# LEADERSHIP & SKILL TRAINING

The world is changing rapidly, and young people need to be prepared for the realities of today's workforce. Traditional education often focuses on technical knowledge, but success also depends on resilience, adaptability, and the confidence to lead when things don't go as planned.

Through initiatives like the **Youth Career Catalyst** and **Forest Pathways Academy**, we provide young adults with a professional bridge from the classroom to their careers. Using the wilderness as a training ground, participants face real-world challenges that develop essential durable skills such as adaptability, teamwork, and communication. These programs build the confidence and durable skills young adults need to move forward.

In 2025, **181 participants aged 18-30 completed fully funded training** to prepare for the challenges of early adulthood. By removing financial barriers, we ensure that cost never limits a young person's potential to access high-quality, life-changing learning.

## PREPARING FOR WHAT'S NEXT

### The Skills Gap

92% of talent professionals value durable skills like adaptability and problem-solving as much as technical ability.\* Our programs focus on building these strengths.

### Access matters

Cost is the primary reason young people miss out on growth opportunities.\*\* Fully-funded training helps ensure cost doesn't limit potential.

### The RESULT

64% of OBC participants feel more prepared for the workforce. Real-world challenges build the teamwork and confidence employers look for.

\*Source: LinkedIn Global Talent Trends

\*\*Source: Statistics Canada

## PARTICIPANT SPOTLIGHTS

After leaving her marketing career, **Lizzy** joined the Forest Pathways Academy seeking direction. A 14-day canoe journey helped her reconnect with nature and start a new path in the green jobs sector.

  
**READ LIZZY'S STORY**

  
**READ EVA'S STORY**

From unemployment to paid placement, **Eva's** time in Youth Career Catalyst rebuilt her confidence and jumpstarted her career.

# PARTICIPANT STORY: FINDING BELONGING IN A NEW HOME

For many young newcomers, the transition to life in Canada is as much about finding community as it is about finding a job. Here, a recent Youth Career Catalyst participant shares with their mentor how participating in the program changed their perspective and helped them feel welcome in their new country:

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*"I feel safe and comfortable sharing any part of my life with you; sometimes I have no one else to share with. I got a new apartment and didn't share my excitement with anyone but you. You've become like family. Despite everything I was told when I first came to this country—such as my academic background not being accepted—I've gone against the odds. I give myself a 5 out of 5 on adaptability. It hasn't been easy, but I've learned that I need to give myself more credit. I didn't just sit and wait for things to work or dwell on negativity. I was able to go through camping, being without my phone for two weeks, and navigating new situations while staying open to exploring and taking chances.*

*I was worried about whether I'd be accepted for who I was, or if I would be made fun of for my accent or my educational background, but everyone was open. I was able to share a part of my life with people, even though I had expected to stay pretty quiet. I'm more confident now and less worried about my accent. Through OBC, I even learned more about certain expressions and communication skills.*

*I used to be very reserved with you and focused only on directly answering your questions. Since the program, I've interviewed for four jobs and was offered three of them. I notice a big difference in the resume I'm using now compared to the one I used before. I don't know if I can ever properly express it, but I feel welcome to this country because of Outward Bound. I experienced something I wouldn't have otherwise: learning to trust people and build connections.*

*The program has really changed how I look at life and people; I see their sincerity. It has opened a part of me that I had closed out. I made good friendships and shared my experience, and that has taught me to give back more. I'm glad I had this experience because it changed my generalization of people all over the world."*

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# THANK YOU FOR BELIEVING IN YOUTH

Outward Bound Canada's work happens because of a community of donors, partners, and friends like you who believe in the potential of young people. Your generosity creates the access, opportunity, and space for youth to discover their strengths and step into their futures with confidence.

As we look toward 2026, we're focused on expanding our community partnerships and deepening our leadership training programs, ensuring that more young people can access the life-changing power of the wilderness. We're excited to build on the momentum of 2025 and continue evolving to meet the needs of youth in an ever-changing world.

We're deeply grateful for your continued commitment and for the role you play in shaping brighter futures for young people across Canada. Thank you for standing with us!

A photograph of three young men in outdoor gear standing in a forest. The man in the center is wearing a blue cap with 'Gench.' on it and a red jacket, holding a map. The man on the left is wearing sunglasses and a blue jacket with a yellow life vest. The man on the right is wearing a blue headband, glasses, and a blue jacket with a yellow life vest. They are all smiling and looking at the map.

## A PARENT REFLECTION



*"My son hasn't stopped talking since I picked him up, sharing big plans for changes in his life. He's become more self aware of his actions and words, offering to help, and reaching out to friends to share what an amazing experience he had. He's excited to start making more friends at school, as his OBC journey gave him more confidence in his social interactions. He has even asked to spend another electronics-free week in nature.*

*I cannot thank the team enough for your patience and outpouring of wisdom and guidance, it has truly made a difference. He came back a changed young man, and once the balloon has been blown up and stretched, it never goes back to the same small size."*

**— Parent of a participant**

# WITH GRATITUDE TO OUR COMMUNITY OF SUPPORTERS

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Outward Bound Canada extends our heartfelt thanks to the 365 donors who supported our programs in 2025. Your commitment ensures that a young person's potential is never limited by their circumstances. By removing financial barriers, you provide a catalyst for lifelong growth.

Whether on a remote river or a mountain peak, participants discover they are capable of things they never imagined. These journeys foster a resilient mindset that students carry back to their classrooms, families, and future careers. You are investing in the leaders and stewards of tomorrow.

Thank you for ensuring the wilderness remains a place of discovery and belonging for all youth.



**CANADIAN TIRE  
JUMPSTART  
CHARITIES**



**HAMILTON  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION**

**KROGSETH  
FOUNDATION**



**Foundation**

**THE MAJA  
FOUNDATION  
AT CALGARY  
FOUNDATION**

**THE PETER  
CUNDILL  
FOUNDATION**

**THE TORONTO  
STAR FRESH  
AIR FUND**

**TOTEM  
CHARITABLE  
FOUNDATION**

If you would like to be publicly recognized in future reports, please contact us at [giving@outwardbound.ca](mailto:giving@outwardbound.ca). We will also reach out to confirm recognition preferences for upcoming publications.

# THE HEART OF OUR MISSION

Behind every scholarship is a story of a family whose world was opened up by the generosity of our community. This letter from the mother of a 2025 participant reminds us why making the outdoors accessible is so vital:

*"My family immigrated to Canada nearly ten years ago with hopes for a better future. But as many immigrant families experience, reality was not easy. Life became a constant struggle to make ends meet, and family trips or wilderness adventures were things we could only imagine.*

*The moment I learned about Outward Bound Canada, I knew it could be a truly meaningful experience for my son to connect with nature and discover himself. But when I saw the registration cost, my heart sank. Without a subsidy, it was simply beyond what our family could afford. My son wanted to go so badly, but he never begged. He understood our situation, and that understanding hurt even more.*

*Then I spoke with the OBC team, and they encouraged me and said they'd try to get us support. Their kindness and genuine care deeply touched me. A few weeks later, just before the program began, we received incredible news: my son had been granted a sponsorship!*

*As a mother, I worried endlessly. What should he pack? How would he manage? Would he be okay away from home? But three weeks later, when I saw him again, he ran into my arms, smiling brighter than ever before.*

*He said, 'Mom, thank you so much. I learned so much! The camp was amazing. I met great friends, and the instructors always encouraged me. I learned to read a map, to move faster, and to live in the rain and under the sun. I built fires and learned to pack my tent!'*

*We're endlessly thankful to OBC for giving him such a life-changing opportunity, and to the donors who made it possible through their generosity. Your support didn't just send one child to camp, it gave him courage, hope, and the belief that he can overcome any obstacle.*

*My son now says that one day, he wants to be the kind of person who helps other kids like him, to give back, just as someone once believed in him.*

*To everyone who supports Outward Bound, please know: your help truly changes lives. It gives children not only the joy of adventure, but also the strength to believe in themselves and to dream again."*





**OUTWARD BOUND  
CANADA**

# SUPPORT THE JOURNEY

Your contribution helps more young people access life-changing outdoor experiences and career-readiness training. Whether you give, reach out, or follow our story, you're helping youth across Canada grow and thrive.







Donate to OBC



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**Have questions or want to learn more?** Reach out at [info@outwardbound.ca](mailto:info@outwardbound.ca) or call us at 1.888.OUTWARD (688.9273). We'd love to hear from you.