



OUTWARD BOUND
CANADA

IMPACT REPORT 2021 PROGRAM YEAR





MESSAGE FROM ANDREW YOUNG EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Outward Bound Canada Community,

I want to thank you for your ongoing support of Outward Bound Canada (OBC). The past two years have presented many challenges for OBC as an organization due to COVID-19, but more importantly, the pandemic has had a serious impact on how young people live their lives in this country. With schools often closed to in-person learning, and with sports and extracurricular activities disrupted, it's no surprise that mental health issues are on the rise. Sadly, many experts are predicting that mental health services and support programs for youth will be required for years to come, long after the immediacy of the pandemic is over. When you layer on the issues of climate change and the future of work, it's clear that this generation of youth is facing challenges that most of us have never had to deal with.

Within this context, OBC stands ready to serve. Although public health restrictions prevented us from operating until June 2021, we managed to resume courses in the field as soon as these restrictions were lifted. We also prioritized the delivery of our courses to many underserved groups. Nearly 50 percent of our students in 2021 received some sort of financial assistance, such as a bursary or subsidy. We also managed to launch some new and innovative programs, including two courses for 2SLGBTQ+ participants in Alberta and Ontario. In total, we served 429 youth with programs in B.C., Alberta and Ontario.

The young people who participated in our programs benefited greatly:

"The lightning storm was really scary. . . you could hear the sound of it. I had to overcome myself, and my anxiety, and to be more calm in the moment. If it wasn't for my instructors - they were really strong at helping us know what to do in the storm and I couldn't have done that without them. That was a big thing I learned, to be calm in the middle of a storm. And in general I've learned, in stressful situations, the ability to centre myself and be calm . . ." - Andre (2021 alumni)

2022 will be an important year for us. We have moved out of crisis mode into more stable ground. From that stable ground we will need to take advantage of new opportunities which are arising. I am very excited about the opportunities to expand our impact. Thank you for your continued and generous support of OBC.

Sincerely,

Andrew Young
Executive Director

Life-Changing Adventures in Nature

Outward Bound Canada (OBC) is a national youth-serving charity that offers social-emotional education through experiential adventures in the outdoors to contribute to a better, more compassionate, and resilient society. With nature as our classroom, our programming fosters resilience, social competence and environmental awareness—skills often missed in the traditional classroom—and contributes to physical and mental well-being. We also offer select programs for adults, including for women survivors of violence or abuse.

OBC partners with Indigenous Nations, schools, universities, community groups, government agencies, corporate groups, learning institutes and families across Canada to provide a wide range of programs so that youth from diverse backgrounds can explore nature. Highly skilled instructors ensure that these authentic adventures happen in an empowering, safe and supportive manner. Since 1969, we have served over 150,000 participants, with a particular emphasis on providing greater access to those facing socioeconomic barriers.

"Before this trip, when I looked around me, all I could see was darkness. Now, I can see the stars."

– Youth Participant

Resilient Youth Amidst a Global Pandemic

Youth Equipped to Succeed

This year's OBC participants gained self-confidence, leadership skills, and resilience. They are more likely to push themselves outside their comfort zones to seize new opportunities.

- 65% of struggling youth are more likely to complete school after participating in an OBC course.
- OBC youth participants are 30% more likely to hold a managerial position in the future.

Physical & Mental Health

Our participants are equipped to overcome physical and mental health challenges, including learning to adapt and cope to the stresses of the pandemic.

- OBC youth participants are 80% likely to meet or exceed the 150-minute recommended level of weekly activity, compared to only 15% of Canadians.
- 40% of OBC participants are better prepared to manage stress, anxiety, and depression. This is substantial given that only a subset of participants suffer from these mental health issues.

Environmental Leadership

OBC participants emerge from courses more invested in the natural world.

- 90% of OBC youth feel more connected to nature after participating in a course.
- 70% of OBC youth report making more environmentally conscious choices.

Paying it Forward

A pro bono study by Bain & Company shows that every one participant goes on to impact the lives of 30 other individuals by sharing the skills and lessons learned on course. Youth go on to become better friends, family members, colleagues, and community members – leading by example.

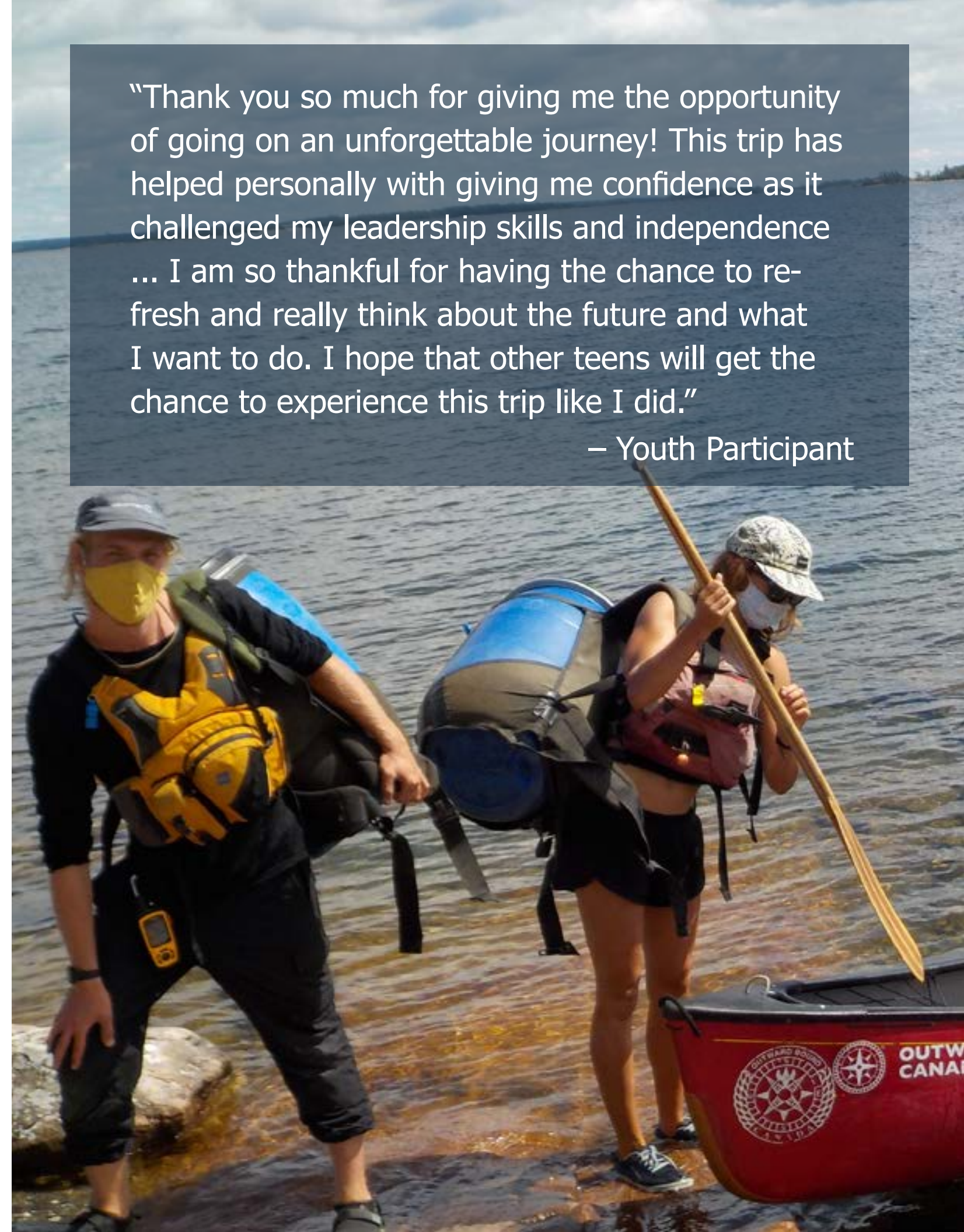
2022: A Promising Year Ahead

Many school boards and community groups had planned programs in 2021 but ended up cancelling due to challenging pandemic restrictions. We're in the midst of rescheduling all of these programs, and are expecting a very busy and promising 2022.

In 2022, our programs will be in high demand. Underserved youth need our programs now more than ever. Your ongoing support will give more youth the opportunity to experience these life-changing expeditions.

"Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity of going on an unforgettable journey! This trip has helped personally with giving me confidence as it challenged my leadership skills and independence ... I am so thankful for having the chance to refresh and really think about the future and what I want to do. I hope that other teens will get the chance to experience this trip like I did."

– Youth Participant





Diversity and Inclusion

Funded programs ensure diversity, inclusion in Canada's wilderness. Engaging racialized, marginalized, and underserved youth through our funded programming has always been a priority for OBC. Minority populations and BIPOC groups have often been underrepresented in Canada's outdoors sector. And although that is a trend that is starting to change, there is still a long way to go – and important reasons for OBC to focus on promoting greater inclusion.

Our focus is sharpening: Countless studies have shown that time spent in nature is integral and beneficial to youth mental health and wellbeing, especially amidst this global pandemic. But we also know that children from less affluent households had far less exposure to outdoor experiences than their affluent counterparts, which was exacerbated during pandemic lockdowns.

This disparity is unfair. OBC's funded programming for underserved youth removes barriers to participation and ensures diverse access to these life-changing opportunities. This is what OBC delivers – and does so exceptionally well.

To guide our efforts around extending opportunities to donor-funded programs, we work strategically with schools who operate in underserved communities, recognizing that there are many factors and variables that can negatively affect educational achievement, such as low-income, poverty and limited family education.

In 2021, of the total 429 youth we served, more than 250 participated thanks to donor funding.



New Programs for 2SLGBTQ+ Youth

In August 2021, we ran our first-ever expeditions for 2SLGBTQ+ youth in Ontario (flat-water canoeing) and Alberta (hiking in the Rockies).

OBC's wilderness and urban programming is inclusive by nature and has long served many youth who identify as 2SLGBTQ+. But 2021 was a hallmark year in that OBC created a positive space where the team facilitating the course represented the participants and content was focused around the needs of the group.

2SLGBTQ+ youth face many challenges in their day-to-day life, including being themselves at home, school and work, and the heightened mental health challenges that often accompany that process.

"As a queer Regional Director, it's important to me to offer a course that can provide a space for youth to connect with others, including the staff, to explore the outdoors with those who have had a similar life experience," said Marika Chandler.

With very positive feedback from both participants and parents, we are already planning more of these expeditions for 2022.



Measurable Impact: 2021 Program Outcomes

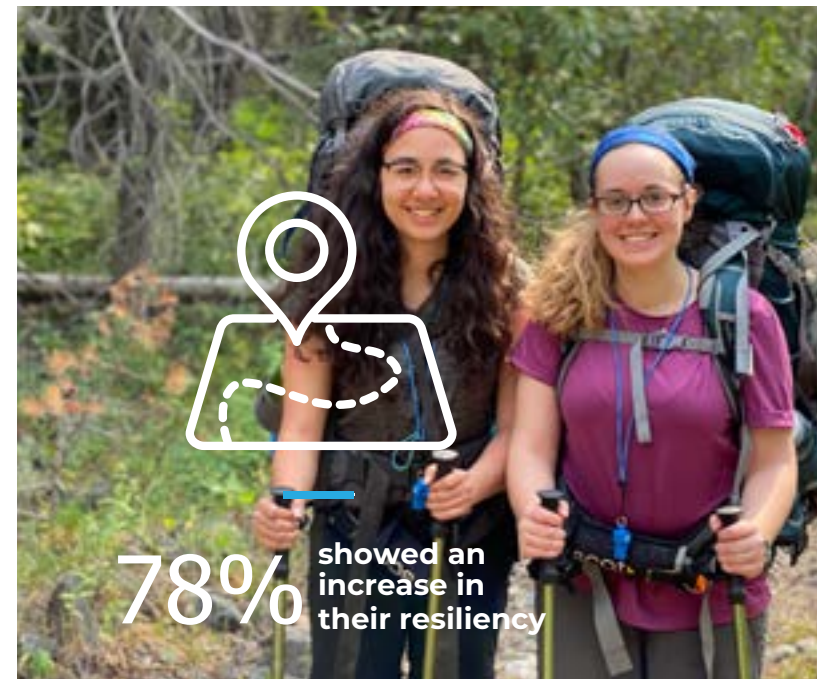
To assess the impact of our programs, we collected data from participants through an on-line survey at the end of their program. The survey included statements that align with five of OBC's key outcomes—resilience, self-confidence, social competence, compassion and environmental awareness. The survey results show that 100% of respondents indicated an increase in at least one of the identified skills.

Partnerships with Indigenous Communities

2021 was truly a year of listening and learning at OBC, particularly when it came to our relationships with our Indigenous partners and stakeholders. OBC acknowledges it is a settler organization, and that our expeditions occur on Treaty Lands. We hold deep respect for Canada's Indigenous communities in terms of the relationships they hold with their natural world and the resilience they have shown in the face of true adversity.

2021 was a moment for us to review our meaningful engagement of these communities. This has led us to explore more partnerships with key organizations and individuals to help guide us in our activity. In this vein, we welcomed Jeff Horvath (member of the Ojibways of Onigaming and Principal of Morely Community School in Alberta) back to our Board of Directors in 2021. Jeff (also a former instructor) will lead an Indigenous Advisory Committee tasked with increasing and expanding programming for Indigenous youth. He will also establish an Indigenous Youth Council to speak into OBC's leadership and programs.

Jeff says, "Awareness is most important to promoting truth and fostering reconciliation. For our OBC groups to be aware of the land that they travel on and whose traditional territory we visit. It would be wonderful to develop relationships with the communities that have their traditional territory as places we go, and to one day set up protocols with these nations to give blessings to our groups."



Thank you for your ongoing commitment to Outward Bound Canada and the youth we are able to serve because of your support.



**OUTWARD BOUND
CANADA**

WHERE YOU CAN FIND US	 OUTWARDBOUND.CA info@outwardbound.ca	 PHONE 1 888 OUTWARD (688-9273)
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>> 2200 Yonge St., Suite 910, Toronto, ON M4S 2C6 <<

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