

Outdoor Council of Canada
Final Report
for the
David Elton Outdoor Fund
June 21, 2011

In November 2009 the David Elton Outdoor Fund granted the Outdoor Council of Canada (OCC) \$5,000 to assist the Council in the development of its education initiative for outdoor leadership. This report accounts for the disbursement of that money and the ways in which that expenditure has helped the OCC to build capacity.

The OCC Board has recognized that the provision of entry level certification for new leaders is the most effective way of both supporting the delivery of outdoor programming and building the membership base that is required to ensure a strong, relevant and enduring organization. The OCC has now launched two of the foundational courses required for the 'Outdoor Leadership Certification Initiative', and we believe that we are poised for significant growth as a result.

The Leadership Level 1 (Hiking) course and certification provides a comprehensive entry level training and certification for new leaders. As of June 1 this course has been delivered to 58 people residing in 4 provinces. The experience level of these individuals ranged from 18 years of age and no leadership experience (the target audience) to Association of Canadian Alpine Guides Hiking Guides and the principals of two medium sized organizations offering outdoor programs to youth. The participants agreed that the course was of high quality and met the needs of the entry level leader.

The first delivery of the **Leadership Level 1 Instructor** course and certification was delivered in May 2011. The eight candidates all passed the course and came from a wide range of backgrounds including the camping sector (Easter Seals and Tim Horton's, Bennies), a community college (Lakeland), K-12 education, and the Interpretive Guides Association. Student feedback was very positive and we have expressions of interest for two courses in BC, and one each in Alberta, Ontario, and Nova Scotia. These courses will be delivered in the fall of 2011.

The development of these courses has involved a great deal of volunteer effort from the members of our Board and from the subject matter experts that form our Curriculum Development Committee. This contribution for capacity building has been greatly facilitated by the grant made by the David Elton Outdoor Fund. Without this critical funding, much of that volunteer effort would have been directed at fund raising

We are very conscious that we are still just beginning to make a difference, but the indications are that we are on the right track and that we are about to grow significantly. Web traffic to our site has increased 250% over the last 12 months and our membership by 300%. With the delivery of the instructor courses in the fall we can expect even larger increases over the next year. The inclusion of our program into credit courses at Lakeland College is another very positive step since this will validate the certification as a key element of outdoor leadership training. We anticipate that the Canadian Camping Association will endorse our certification at their next Board meeting in the fall. The value of the certification will increase significantly with the release of the water-based version in September 2011, and a module to extend the certification to winter environments in October 2011.

Considerable challenges remain if the OCC is to become a truly effective force for lowering the barriers that prevent Canadians from having improved access to outdoor education and recreation. The OCC will have become that force when a number of criteria have been met. These include: OCC certifications being recognized as the national standard for outdoor leadership; when outdoor practitioners and organizations believing that the OCC is a powerful ally in their quest to provide quality outdoor programming, and when decision makers in organizations of all kinds recognize the OCC as the authoritative and trusted voice of outdoor activity and education.

While those goals are still somewhat distant, the steps we have made in the last year have brought them closer. In the fall of 2009 the OCC was little more than an idea that could easily be extinguished. We now believe that we have some real momentum and that success in becoming the sort of effective organization we wish to be is now about when, not if. That progress would not have been possible without the financial support of the David Elton Outdoor Fund.

Prepared by: Albi Sole (Executive Director)