

## University of Minnesota Pathways Canoe Expedition 2020



*“Expeditions can greatly contribute towards building strength of character...it is necessary for youth to experience events which reveal the inner worth of the man--the edge of his temper, the fiber of his stuff, the quality of his resistance, the secret truth of his pretenses--not only to himself but others.”*

*--Kurt Hahn, founder of Outward Bound*

Pathways Expedition students paddle, portage, navigate, cook, camp and climb *together* to learn and grow. The “crew” strives to become an effective and compassionate team; individuals strive to identify and develop personal skills -- all in the context of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, one of the most unique biomes on earth. Voyageur Outward Bound Instructors facilitate group experiences in nature to develop skills and explore competencies through challenge, adventure and reflection. Experiential education is the heart of our mission and informs the design of the Expedition. Instructors serve students through core Outward Bound values:

### **Compassion Integrity Excellence Inclusion**

Wilderness is an excellent teacher, and some of its best lessons are learned on a longer journey. This extended trip, or “Expedition,” is designed to provide valuable time and a unique space for Pathways students to learn about themselves and others through shared experiences and goals. On this 7-day Expedition, technical skill building is paired with social-emotional skill practice to prepare students for school, life and career. Learning is catalyzed by wilderness travel and group process. Through a diverse peer group and diverse challenges, students discover personal and peer strengths. The Expedition is structured for the practice of key skills and reflection on personal competency in order to prepare Pathways students for health career inquiry and pursuit. Key skills include:

- **Empathy**
- **Compassion**
- **Inclusion**
- **Responsibility**
- **Communication**
- **Collaboration**
- **Conflict Resolution**
- **Problem Solving**
- **Goal Setting**
- **Resilience**
- **Service & Selflessness**





Canoeing, rock climbing or high ropes work and service provide opportunities to embrace challenge, expand individual comfort zones, learn from failure, practice persistence, serve others above self and build confidence through application. Students work together to meet the demands of wilderness travel and they “unpack” successes, failures and strategies as they go—reflecting on and preparing to apply learning to post course goals in their Pathways journey. The practice of hard and soft skills over time, in a variety of contexts, leads to confidence and competence. Students learn to adapt, be flexible and adopt a growth mindset. Through shared adventure and daily reflection, students articulate their needs,

provide and receive feedback, enjoy diverse perspectives, develop curiosity and grow the stamina to explore and pursue a variety of goals. The course is structured to activate potential by giving students an opportunity to practice collaboration and self-determination.

## **EXPEDITION DESIGN & IMPACT**

### **Outward Bound Theory of Change**

On course, students learn and practice technical as well as social-emotional skills as they move through Outward Bound’s “Theory of Change.” This logic model is a carefully designed progression of skill acquisition, application, leadership and transference. We identify 3 key phases of this transformational progression: Learning, Leading and Responsibility:

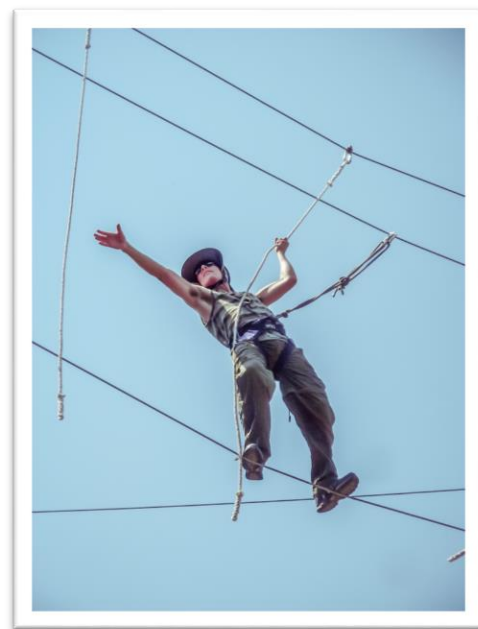
#### **Learning Phase**

During the Learning Phase, it’s all new; students work closely with Instructors to share their own experiences, acquire new skills, identify personal strengths and form a supportive group culture.

Who am I? Who are you? Who are we *together*? These are the questions that arise as group culture develops. Through discussion, journaling, reflection, initiatives and wilderness travel, the crew explores what it takes to build a supportive community and a responsive, resilient team. Students learn to cope with and thrive in new and unfamiliar territory. Learning new skills, sharing responsibilities and working together to attain a common goal, students lay the groundwork for the Learning Phase of the Expedition.

#### **\*A Note On Learning Through Adversity:**

Students will likely experience stress as they face new challenges and move into a simpler mode of existence, unplugged from modern technology in the wilderness. This discomfort and adversity is an important opportunity to learn about the self and others. Transition to life with the group in the wilderness begins to illuminate who the individual is, what they are capable of becoming in new contexts and where they can find support in peers and the world. This transition informs group growth as well, as the crew begins to identify group strengths and capacities.



#### **Leadership Phase**

During the Leadership Phase, students practice new skills-- trying, failing and learning from mistakes. As confidence grows, the student is ready for greater challenges and more responsibility. Each student plays a key role in the daily

operation of the Expedition; roles shift daily, affording opportunities to practice new skills and discover more strengths. Working and travelling together in pursuit of shared goals gives students a chance to build critical skills in empathy, communication, conflict management and decision making. Students explore the role of feedback in successful teams, incorporating both positive and constructive feedback in daily routines. The unpredictable nature of a wilderness Expedition, from weather to group dynamics, affords opportunities to hone situational decision making, collaboration and leadership skills throughout the course.



### **Responsibility Phase**

In the Responsibility or “Final” Phase of the Expedition, students and their peers lead the Expedition, making critical decisions for the group and carrying out all tasks for travel and survival. Students bring their collective leadership abilities to bear on group goals. This challenge through autonomy tests technical, team and leadership skills. Instructors support physical and emotional safety needs, while creating significant opportunities for autonomy.

Together, students access greater potential and confidence, preparing them to meet future challenges with energy, ingenuity and skill. Students will likely find this Final phase of the Expedition most rewarding.

### **Graduation & Transference**

As the Expedition comes to a close, with the help of Instructors and a wealth of shared experience, students begin to set goals and prepare for the transference of new skills to life, school and career. Expedition end is a time for introspection, transition...and celebration!

Transference is woven into the fabric of the Expedition from day one. Daily reflection, debrief and discussion of learning ensure that the lessons of the present are carried forward into the future. Experiences in the wilderness teach students how to approach the challenges of school, family and work with confidence, grit, resilience and the courage to serve our communities.

## **EXPEDITION OVERVIEW**

### **The Rigor of Wilderness Travel**

Wilderness travel is demanding. Canoeing the BWCA includes challenges like paddling into headwinds, portaging heavy packs and “lining” your canoe through tricky rapids. Moving through the wilderness as a group is physically and emotionally rigorous. Alumni and Instructors agree that arriving physically fit prepares students for challenges, helping them cope with adversity and letting them take full advantage of Expedition opportunities.

### **No Experience Necessary**

The Expedition begins as soon as students arrive at Homeplace or meet their Instructors in Duluth. Before students leave our basecamp and head into the wilderness, they learn basic safety skills, prepare for their Expedition and get to know their crew. Instructors teach all necessary skills to support student learning and development. Students will





learn how to pack, pitch tarps and tents, tie knots, portage canoes, cook over an open fire and navigate by map and compass.

### **Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness**

Established in 1964, this labyrinth of lake and rock is a protected gem of the American wilderness. With no roads, power lines or motorized craft, the BWCA has changed little since its unveiling 10,000 years ago when the glaciers receded to reveal a unique world of water.

Lakes, islands, forests, crags-- within these protected borders you can canoe, portage and camp in the spirit of First Nations People and French Canadian Voyageurs. Over 1 million acres in size, the BWCA extends nearly 150 miles along the Canadian border. With over 1,200 miles of canoe routes, nearly 2,200 designated campsites and more than 1,000 lakes and streams, this is an amazing place to connect with the power of nature.

### **EXPEDITION ACTIVITIES**

#### **Canoeing**

The canoe is an excellent mode of transportation in the backcountry and it serves as a catalyst for individual and group learning. As students travel, they will practice “hard” or technical skills like paddling and navigation and also explore “soft” skill work with peers. Travel in the BWCA limits group size, creating an intimate context for positive community building and team work.



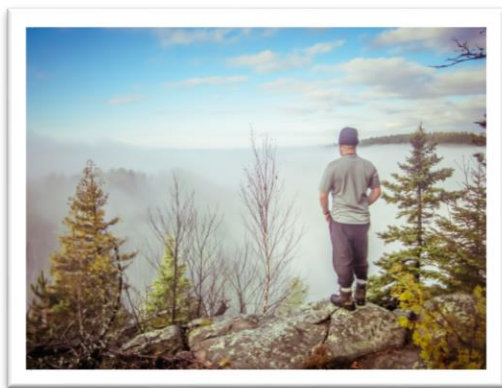
Together, students work to meet daily goals in wilderness travel. Technical skill work requires students to share responsibilities and lead tasks. Every member of the crew will have a key role to play in daily planning, packing, paddling, cooking, camping and decision making.

Myriad structured and unstructured opportunities for collaboration and communication on the Expedition constitute a rich curriculum for learning through the group. Individual effort and growth impact group culture and community.



#### **Portaging**

Students work together as a team to carry packs and canoes over trails to travel between lakes or around challenging rapids—this dry land gear toting is called “portaging.” Portage trails are rugged and often rocky or hilly. The group works to safely and effectively share loads and duties. Pack weights vary, depending on the amount and type of gear that crews bring on course. Personal packs weigh at least 40lbs, and sometimes considerably more. Canoes weigh 75lbs.



### Solo

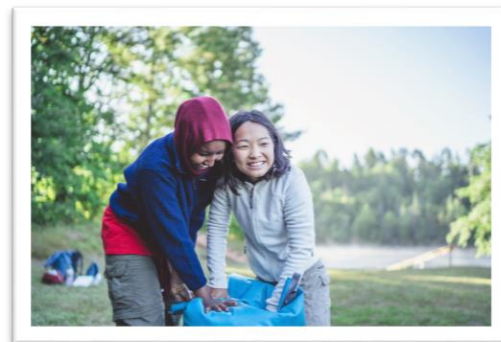
Solo provides an important break from the rigors of the Expedition. With sufficient food and equipment, students spend time alone at an assigned campsite to rest, reflect and practice the camp craft skills they've acquired so far. This time in solitude affords students a valuable chance to recognize what they've learned and to re-imagine their life and goals post course. Students do not travel during solo and Instructors check on them only occasionally. Nature plays an important role here, underscoring the individual's relationship to the world at large and giving the student a chance to appreciate the benefits, beauty and wonder of the wilderness.

### Final Expedition

An appropriate amount of independence is a powerful educational tool. Outward Bound purposefully and gradually transfers leadership responsibilities to students, culminating in a "Final Expedition." Near course end, if the crew has demonstrated necessary leadership, team problem solving and wilderness living skills, students will have the opportunity to travel independently. Instructors will fall back or become one of the crew, letting students take over the-- intervening only when absolutely necessary. Students will navigate, call rests, cook hearty meals and generally enjoy the freedom and responsibility of travelling autonomously in the wilderness.

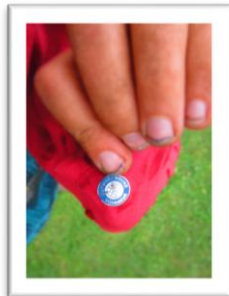
### Personal Challenge Event

We typically begin or end the Expedition with a rock climbing or high ropes experience. Either experience is challenge by choice, with students determining how and to what extent they engage in the activity. Comfort zones are investigated along with the role of risk in life and routine decisions. Each student calibrates risk and determines what is right for their personal goals. Ultimately, these activities demonstrate that competence and mindset are not fixed, but rather fluid, situational and evolving. These experiences are also a wonderful opportunity for students to support and celebrate one another and to learn via vulnerability.



### Service

Service is an integral part of Outward Bound curriculum. Students practice ethical leadership as they strive to meet the needs of peers with empathy and compassion. They serve the environment as they practice Leave No Trace® ethics on course.



### Graduation

By design, Graduation is an activity that celebrates success, provides closure and launches the student into the future. At Graduation, students publicly appreciate one another's accomplishments and reflect on individual and shared learning. The Outward Bound Pin serves as an emblem of personal growth and a powerful reminder of experience. Students elect to accept this pin as a rite of passage and preparation for life post course, when they will truly be Outward Bound.



## **SAMPLE ITINERARY (courses can be designed for 6-10 or more days)**

### **Day 1-2: Learning Phase (Arrival & Tone Set)**

Pick up and transport to/meet at Homeplace. Introduction to crew, instructors and Outward Bound. Expedition pack out and safety training. Sleeping in tent cabins.

### **Day 2-5: Learning-Leading Phase (Wilderness Travel)**

Canoeing is the traditional and preferred mode of travel in the BWCA. Students start with capsize training and paddle instruction, then learn to navigate, pack and portage. Day by day, students take on greater responsibility in all aspects of the expedition, moving through Learning and entering the Leading Phase of the Outward Bound progression. Students strive, fail and succeed; individually, and as a group. As students apply new skills and practice accountability, they learn to lead.

### **Days 5-6: Leading-Responsibility Phase (Solo Time, Final Expedition)**

Students rest, reflect and evaluate goals alone at their own primitive campsite. When they reunite with their crew, they begin the Final Expedition, taking on all aspects of wilderness travel and group care.

### **Days 6-7: Final, PCE & Course End**

Final destination: Homeplace! High ropes/rock climbing, service and graduation compliment and complete field learning. Students embrace final physical and emotional challenges and strive to serve through basecamp chores and peer service. Graduation invites students to recognize personal and peer learning, to see their expedition experience in the greater context of life goals and to prepare to transfer new skills to the challenges and opportunities of leadership in life, service, school and career.



***We strive to serve with compassion, excellence, integrity, inclusion and safety***

***“There is more in us than we know if we could be made to see it;  
perhaps, for the rest of our lives we will be unwilling to settle for less.”  
Kurt Hahn***