

Nootka Island OSP DOE Youth Expedition – August 30th to Sept 4th, 2026



September 9, 2026

Nootka Expedition Reflections From OSP Expedition Lead – Bill Casher

First when looking back at the experience and reviewing the general comments provided by others an overall trend emerges identifying how amazing the kids were on this trip. These comments represent an accurate assessment of the kids performance but fail to recognize the background efforts to achieve these results. To ensure future trips achieve similar results the trip planning details need to be recognized and acknowledged. I summarize this planning into three components

- 1) Quality equipment combined with the knowledge and 1st hand experience in using the equipment. Note definite fundraising point to make, these trips are not possible for kids without the gear and quality gear is essential to exposing the kids to meaningful situations and environments while being prepared to deal with unexpected weather and trail conditions.
- 2) The preparation requirements of day hikes, overnight hikes, checklists, inspection of gear and weigh ins need to continue.
- 3) This was a trip that kids were selected for and needed to complete preparatory journeys. Trips with this level of challenge need to be culmination experiences that recognize the long-term investment the kids have made, much like the philosophy of the DOE program. Qualifying should not be a one and done endeavour. Requiring attending judo practices regularly, volunteering, participation in other odd squad youth events and finally attendance on all training hikes specifically for the trip. Observations of how the kids perform and interact on all of these is essential in final selection. The character of

the participants was outstanding, consideration to personalities in the team and how they will respond under tough and uncomfortable conditions can only be made through extensive time spent with the kids prior to a trip of this nature.

When the above is done correctly, which this trip exemplified, the actual trip seems to “magically” fall into place and go off without a hitch even when presented with the challenges we faced. As someone who showed up at the end I cannot say enough about all the preparation undertaken prior to my arrival. It was those hours in planning and preparing were the most important factor in making this trip successful.

As a side note I must also reference the detailed planning going into the trip logistics. The planning details (i.e. booking boats, ferry reservations, transportation, accommodations, timing etc.) do not just happen. These went seamlessly, one slip up in these logistics can lead to minor issues such as an unexpected wait or forcing a change in plans that can be that first step on a slippery slope towards a major problem. Logistical planning is often underrated – not on this trip.

On the trail.

This was a large group and large groups always present a challenge. Some actions to consider with larger groups include;

- 1) Either just before or at the start of the hike the supervisors could have undertaken an inspection of all the first aid kits. Familiarization of a first aid kit is helpful to reduce the rummaging when dealing with an actual first aid event. This review session could also encompass a brainstorming session of the most likely first aid issues we might face and strategies for dealing with them.
- 2) I know each of us would have ideas for dealing with a more serious issue but a printout of emergency phone numbers and discussion of the outside resources available to us (friends, Shorebird, Coast Guard, 911 etc.) along with a review of how we would establish contact would be beneficial. This would get everyone's headspace orientated to potential hazards and brainstorming ideas or thinking about emergency procedures while hiking.
- 3) We were getting spread out on the trail. While I suspect for the kids this was somewhat empowering and they likely enjoyed this aspect of the trip. On this issue I think the supervisors could have had a more formal procedure for meeting each day and to discuss observations of how each kid is performing along with planning any adjustments to deal with weather, trail observations or the radio communications not being reliable once groups were separated by a rocky headland.

- 4) On the hike leaving Calvin Falls. The rain event presented challenging conditions at numerous creek crossings that would not have been all that notable without the significant rain event we experienced. In this section being spread resulted in not having as many supervisors at critical crossing as we could have. I noted that at times some participants were crossing on logs near the forest while others crossed closer to the ocean creating the rare but possible scenario where we have an injury from slipping off a log at the same time as someone is swept off their feet while crossing. The point about unbuckling the pack is valid and I remember doing this once on the logs when looking at a deep pool of water below. So, part of me thinks we should have slowed the group down so we stayed together during these crossing while another part of me thinks that one of the most rewarding part of the trip for the students was independently figuring out the best way to make these crossings.
- 5) Last full hiking day was less than ideal. Had 6 people hiking in the dark under challenging conditions. There were factors that made this the correct decision – end of the hike and we were familiar with trail conditions and it was very comforting to get the group back together as well as this push allowed us to complete the hike as planned. Even with a less than ideal map I think we were a bit slow to recognize the issue as it was developing and could have taken steps earlier to prevent the after dark hiking (earlier weight distribution and earlier contact with youth group for help). Most of these preventative steps come under the broad category of better communication between the groups. And here is the catch while the night hiking does fall into the less than desirable category it will also likely be one of the most enduring and satisfying memories of the hike for some.

After mentioning the above points, it does need to be stressed what a fantastic hike it was and that I never had a concern about the safety of any of the youth. They demonstrated that the conditions that they faced were well within their mental, physical and technical capabilities. With that said I would not want to push them much further as those adventures should be left to them as individuals and not under an Odd Squad sanctioned event.

Bill Casher



The Odd Squad Nootka Island Expedition Team – Setting Out August 30th, 2026
 OSP Youth: Jonathon S, Sowa, Michael, Nicholas, Aidan, Tobin,
 Senior Coaches: Jonathon K, Tony
 OSP Leads: Toby, Bill, Chris, Mark, Al, Ryu



First Campsite Before Expedition – Tahsis August 30th



Team Meeting on Hiking Plans!



Water Taxi headed out to the Start of the Expedition – Aug 31, 2026



The Start of the Expedition – Mud Flats of Louie Bay



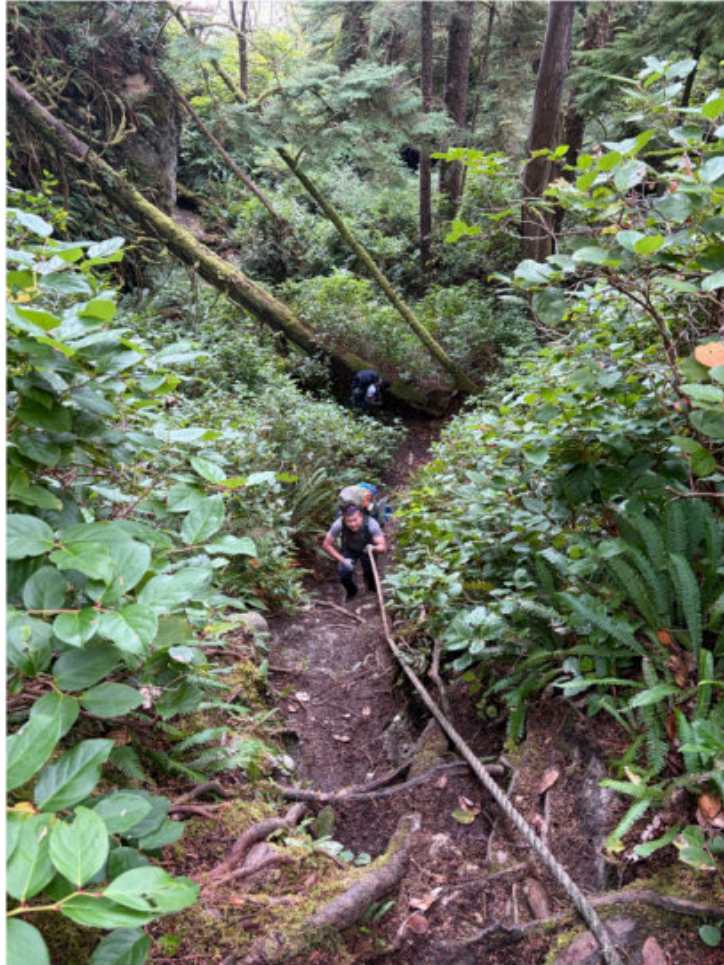
Shipwreck at the Start of the Hike



Wolf Under the Log Watching Closely!



Getting Real Now.



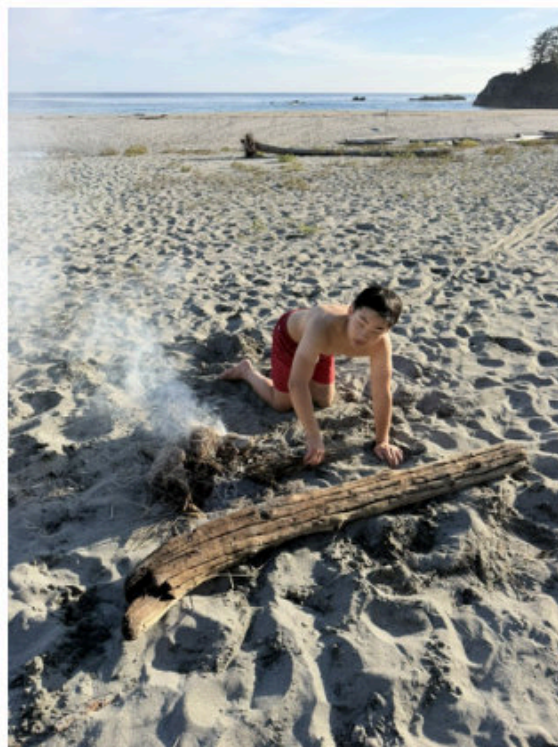
Rope Assist Climbing



Beach Hiking Day 1



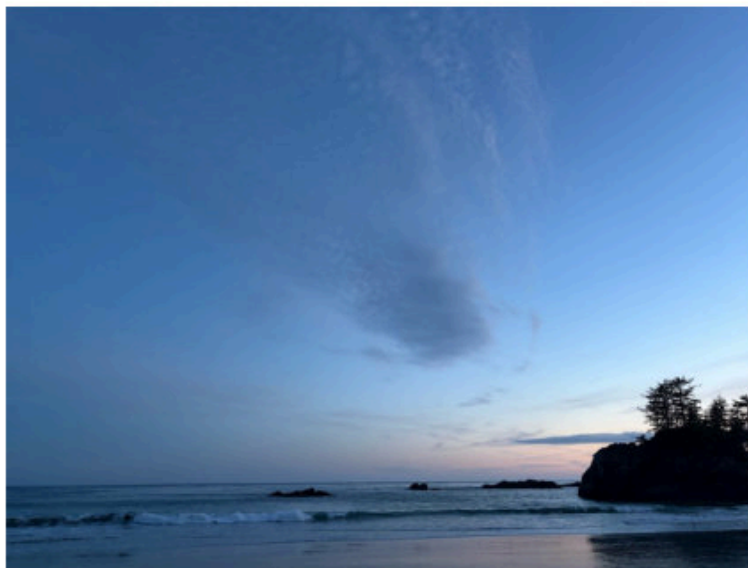
Break Time Day 1



Getting Campfire Started



Beach Camp Day 1



West Coast Sunset Day 1



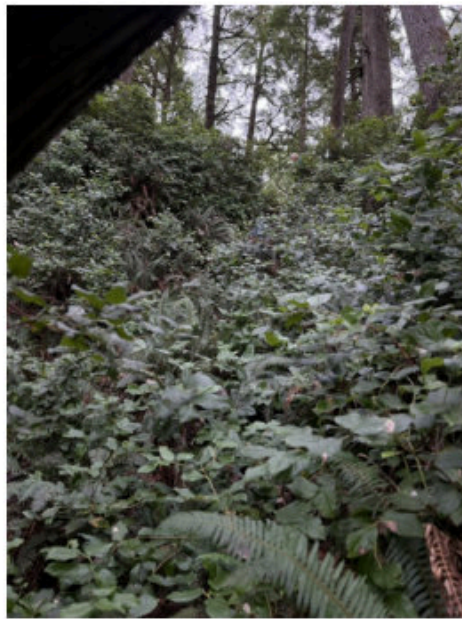
OSP Youth Planning Route for Day 2



OSP Youth Team Starting Day 2



Off the Beach and Into the Cliff Trails



Yes - that's a Trail!



Waiting for Tide to Cross



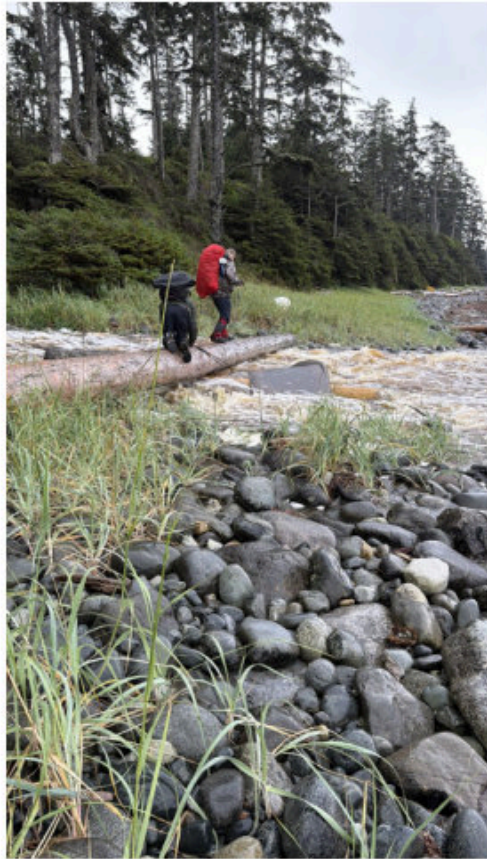
Heading to Calvin Falls for Day 2 Camp



Warming up at Calvin Falls – Rain Coming Our Way



Calvin Falls in the Morning – Rain Creating Huge Creek Flow



Challenging Crossings Throughout Day 3



Flooded Tributaries – 100mm of Rain in 10 hours!



Wet boots!



Snapped Pole!



More Cliff Trails



Happy Times – 30kmh Wind with Sideways Rain!



Made it to Camp for Day 3 – Warming Up and Drying Out



Using Paddle Board to Move Packs Across Flooded Inlet on Trail Day 4



Thanking the Cabin Residents for the Paddle Board and Hot Chocolate!



Start of the Long Day – Day 4



Catching a Break



Comparing Footprints



West Coast Cliff Trail Day 4



For Some, an Early Arrival at Camp 4



For Others, a Long Night



Setting Up Last Camp



Leaving Last Camp for Friendly Cove



Destination – Friendly Cove!



Heading Home!



Finito – Painter's Lodge – Campbell River