

Neil Mackenzie Adventure Grant Application Form 2026

Neil Mackenzie, known to his close friends as "Bell", had a true passion for the outdoors and always had an eye out for adventure, whether it was skiing, surfing or climbing. The more obscure an alpine objective was, the greater it tickled his enthusiasm. From his youth's stomping grounds in the Scottish Highlands, he expanded outwards exploring the alpine regions of Europe, North America and Japan. On all of these trips he brought with him his infectious enthusiasm and friendly attitude. When the going got tough, Neil invariably took up the sharp end of the rope and found a passage through difficulties. He dreamt of exploring the endless wilderness of BC's Coast Ranges, and he inspired adventure and companionship wherever he went.

"We, his parents, want to keep Neil's memory alive in the VOC by awarding a grant to suitable applicants or teams who can demonstrate a wish to seek adventure in physical outdoor activities, preferably in Scotland, and help them to achieve their objectives. The funding for an adventure will be divided - part funded by VOC fundraising, part by The Neil Mackenzie Trust, and part by the applicants themselves. We are delighted that we are able to help young people achieve their goals and we have enjoyed meeting recipients of The Neil Mackenzie Adventure Grant both here in Scotland and in Vancouver. Since The Neil Mackenzie Trust was set up in 2015 it has also funded expeditions throughout the world and given outdoor skills training grants in Scotland."

Margaret and Angus Mackenzie

Adventure Grant

This award is founded in the memory of our past VOC member Neil Mackenzie. One award of up to \$2,500 will be awarded to an individual or members of a party to pursue an outdoor adventure of their choice.

Applications are open to all members of the VOC. Applications will be judged based on:

- Spirit of adventure
- Quality and originality of trip plan
- Feasibility (financial & logistic).
- Self-propelled travel is encouraged
- Active contribution in the VOC community
- Applicants must demonstrate sufficient technical experience and background to safely complete their proposed adventure (i.e. AST / Glacier School).
- Preference for adventures held in Scotland
- **Adventures in any other location will be considered**

It is important to note that an adventure in another country may be chosen over an adventure in Scotland if it expresses a stronger sense of adventure, self-propelledness and/or quality and originality.

Applicants who choose to go to Scotland are encouraged to consider a variety of trip possibilities, including paying a visit to the Camasunary Bothy (also referred to as "[Bell's Bothy](#)", in honour of Neil), which has been renovated in Neil's memory. The Scottish Highlands and Sea offer a variety of exciting and challenging opportunities for outdoor pursuits, including kayaking, surfing, climbing, mountain biking, cycle-touring, trail running and bikepacking. Do some research and go explore!

The award deadline is **January 31, 2026**. Application forms should be emailed to VOC.mackenziegrant@gmail.com. Applications will be reviewed by the Neil Mackenzie Trust in cooperation with the VOC Neil Mackenzie Adventure Grant Committee in February. Award recipients will be notified in March, 2026. The applicants are responsible for their own insurance; the Trust and the VOC can take no responsibility for any claims or incidents arising out of the project.

Criteria & Conditions, 2026

Eligibility

- Open to honorary, associate and student VOC members.
- Individual or small groups may apply.
- Adventures should be executed in the upcoming year *03/2026 – 03/2027*
- Applications due by 11:59 pm, Pacific Standard Time, January 31, 2026.
- Award winners are **expected to complete a trip report and submit a version to the VOC Journal, and to the Neil Mackenzie Trust** (theneilmackenzietrust@dr.com). A **VOC slideshow presentation** following the trip is also expected.

Funding

- One grant awarded up to \$2,500
- Grant will cover up to 65% of the total project cost. You need to pitch in or secure secondary funding. In exceptional circumstances it may be possible to apply directly to The Neil Mackenzie Trust for help with the secondary funding.
- The Trust does not contribute towards the purchase of equipment or clothing (e.g. rock or ice climbing gear, backpacks, puffy jackets or winter clothing, backpacks, paniers, etc.)

Special Applications

Other applications may be considered, out of the main timescale, if money is available and the applicant is travelling to an academic course, conference or other activity. For example, if you have a research conference in Edinburgh, you may with shorter notice apply for supporting funds to combine an outdoor trip alongside your conference.

Neil Mackenzie Adventure Grant Application

Name(s): Noah Wyse, *Gitxsan*; Cal Smith, *Grand Ronde, Lower-Cowlitz, Yakama*; Sage Nicolai, *Salish Kootenai*; Owen Oliver, *Chinook, Isletta Pueblo*

Email of all applicants: noah663021@gmail.com (Noah will handle all NMAG related info)

Please give a brief outline of your adventure, including where, when and with whom.

This project will commence in the Lummi Territory along the Salish Sea. From here the core team of Noah, Cal, Sage, and Owen will bike to each respective volcano throughout WA (Tahoma/Mount Rainier, Lawetlat'la/Mount St. Helens, Kulshan/Mount Baker, Dakobed/Glacier Peak, and Pahto/Mount Adams), climb a route, and continue forward. After certain legs the team will bike out to the Salish Sea to meet up with a canoe family and continue their adventure participating in Canoe Journey. The host this year, Nisqually Nation, is one of the six treaty tribes whose territory outlines Tahoma (aka Mt. Rainier). A small support crew will transport miscellaneous gear the team will not be using at any given leg (mountaineering gear, food, etc.). Upon gaining each summit the team will gather a nalgene of snow which upon arrival at Nisqually will be gifted to the host to reciprocate the ceremonial potlatch of canoe journey at large.

What inspired you to pursue this particular adventure/destination?

Since time immemorial the waterways throughout the Salish Sea region have served as the veins between tribal nations. Canoes were the primary vessel. It is without a doubt ancestors gazed up to the volcano deities while pulling on the Salish Sea either in fear, awe, or perhaps a mix of both. The connectedness of the Salish Sea to the volcanoes is ubiquitous - the watersheds birthed of each volcano spirit are unequivocally a part of each and every Indigenous culture, just as the waterways are. In 1989, Emmett Oliver (Isletta Pueblo/ Chinook; Owen's grandfather), organized the first canoe journey as part of the 100th anniversary of WA State. Since the inaugural "Paddle to Seattle", each year of journey is steeped in cultural resurgence, revitalization, and celebration. Marrying a mountain journey component is naturally complimentary, as the waterways have enabled culture to flow, other parts of it (culture) were birthed from the mountains. Upon colonization, the bifurcation of Indigenous cultures and the land was one primary weapon of genocide. Canoe Journey and mountain journey, may serve as touchstones to these stolen practices in a contemporary style.

Adventure can be defined as the "exploration of the unknown". Describe how your proposal embodies a spirit of adventure, and what you hope to accomplish.

"Adventure" has been sensationalized and hyperbolized time and time again, as it should. Getting lost in the action and process is what it is all about in the end. Getting the privilege, timing, and luck to go through that with your best mates is profound. When these mates happen to also be Indigenous, of the land you are traveling on, through, up and around, is something else. It is not "better", simply different. We have time predictions of legs that will surely equate to immeasurable suffering in some twisted joy; however, what we cannot predict will be the cultural similarities and stories to be shared over these distances and heights scaled. To talk story with your relatives who are also of the land is always an

adventure, for us to mix this into a greater event larger than ourselves while exercising how we connect with the land, maybe we just might make new stories for future ancestors to talk about.

Indicate any specific skills required for the completion of your objective (e.g. knowledge of avalanche terrain, technical climbing, kayaking, navigation, etc.), and how your past experiences have prepared you for the challenges of this adventure.

There is a whole bag of tools required for this one. Each member has an array of mountain experience under their belt. In fact, Cal Smith, spent 6-years as a mountain guide sporting a collective 1-year of time on Tahoma alone. Owen Oliver grew up in canoe journeys, eventually becoming a pronounced skipper for the Chinook Nation at just 15; where, they paddled out of the mouth of the Columbia River to meet the tides of the Salish Sea head on. Noah Wyse weighs in with an eclectic tenure of mountain craft molded by the “hills” of the Chilliwack Valley, a tough place as anywhere. Finally, Sage Nicolai grew up on the Salish Kootenai reserve as a white-water guide. Collectively we have the skills and experience to be capable as individuals and excel as a team, able to pull on unique expertise in building towards a shared adventure.

For Group Applications Only: Explain how your group came together and list some past adventures you have had together (if possible). What is your group's vision for the trip?

The primary planners of the group are Noah W. and Cal S. They met via Climbers of Color, a non-profit in Seattle, WA who promote leadership via mountain craft and adventures throughout the PNW. Since meeting in January 2025, Noah and Cal have transcended the colonial borders and connected on an array of mountain adventures their ancestors dreamt of. Upon their first meeting, the duo spent several days ice-climbing in Lillooet. In August of 2025, the team climbed the NEB of Slesse, and most recently, the duo traveled to Pahto (Mt. Adams), the centerpiece of Cal’s homelands for a winter ski-descent. Furthermore, Cal and Owen have had 8 years of mountain adventures throughout WA, down to San Diego, and Santa Fe. Finally, Cal and Sage met during an ice-climbing clinic in Bozeman, MT. There, the team spent several days furthering Sage’s mountain sense and craft, Sage is now expanding on these skills in college at Fort Lewis College Colorado - the heart of the San Juan Mountain range.

Please provide a detailed budget for the project including sources of funding and the amount of grant you are applying for. Note that grants are awarded based on financial need for consumable costs (such as travel costs or equipment rental). Purchase of activity-specific gear should not constitute the dominant expense for which you are requesting funding.

Primary funding source(s):

- Personal funding

Expense estimates:

- Transportation of Gear and Members: \$1050 (~1,250 miles)
- Food: \$700

We may request further details regarding this application, including financial ones to reach a decision. The Neil Mackenzie Trust is a charity registered in Scotland, Charity number SCO46080

- Primary Gear Acquisition: between \$500-1500 (Noah needs a reliable bike)
- Emergency Fund (Bike Repairs, gear failure, first aid): \$35
- Community Support and Inclusion (rental gear for community members we may be able to encourage to join): \$250

Briefly summarize some of your past contributions to the local outdoor community. This can include the VOC and other organizations. How do you hope to continue to give back to the outdoor community in the next year?

Noah is the group's connection to the VOC. He has been a member of exec for the past four years, working first as the VOCene Editor, and then the past two years as head QM. Noah is a major advocate for an inclusive, excited, empowered, and competent club culture, and has connected these goals with wider decolonization work in the Outdoor Recreation Community. He has written two essays published in the VOC Journal connecting decolonization with sustainable outdoor recreation. Cal has been a mentor to Noah, and Noah has in turn taken many of the lessons learned in how he shares and teaches within the environment of the VOC. Cal has moreover served within the Climbers of Colour community as the Director of Winter Programming, where his Winter Backcountry Leaders program set students up for success in expanding their knowledge bases and pursuing outdoor recreation professionally as educators and guides. We hope that by engaging in this adventure we can engage positively in representing our people as continuously intertwined with the land, and offer other members of the Indigenous community our joy as inspiration. We hope that this can continue to connect and reconnect people with the land, and grow voices for advocacy within and beyond outdoor recreation spaces. Widely we hope to link these noteworthy peaks in good style, self powered with minimal support, offering our commentary on extraction and outdoor recreation, and the role of Indigenous culture in combatting this ethos.

Member Name(s): Noah Wyse, Cal Smith, Sage Nicolai, Owen Oliver

Signature(s) : *N. Wyse, C. Smith, S. Nicolai, O. Oliver*

Date : January 31st, 2026