

AUGUST – THE KODIAK CHALLENGE

Music Full then under

LEE: The music has started, so that means one of two things. It's time to dance or it's time for the August ScoutCast. I'm Lee Shaw, Team Lead of National Alliances.

BRYAN: And I'm *Bryan on Scouting* blogger, Bryan Wendell. Lee, I can't dance, so we'd better just get rolling with this ScoutCast. This month's topic actually came from the mailbox, courtesy of Michael O'Donnell who contacted ScoutCast with a suggestion that we have an in-depth discussion on the Kodiak Challenge.

LEE: We asked our resident Kodiak Challenge expert to join us.

Music Fades

LEE So here in the studio is the past national staff advisor to the Kodiak syllabus, Peter Self. Peter has been the professional staff advisor to multiple Kodiak treks in the Western Region as well as staff member and guide on three separate Kodiak treks. He is currently the Member Experience Team Leader. Thanks for joining us on ScoutCast, Peter.

PETER: Thanks, Lee. Thanks, Bryan. Good to be here.

LEE: So, Peter, what is the Kodiak Challenge?

PETER: The Kodiak Challenge is a training course for young men and young women which kind of goes beyond the basic leader training, the leadership training we offer our Scouts. It originally was part of the Venturing curriculum which has now been open to all Scouts through the Boy Scouts, Varsity, and Venturing. It's a great hands-on, experiential learning opportunity.

BRYAN: So, it was for Venturing only at some point, Peter?

PETER: Originally, yes. We had the Nature of Leadership curriculum which went through Venturing and it had a series of four different courses and Kodiak was the third in those courses with Kodiak X being the fourth. So, it was originally written specifically to the Venturing audience but, about five years ago now, it was opened up to all Scouts.

BRYAN: So, you don't have to be a Venturer?

PETER: You don't have to be a Venturer to participate in Kodiak trek. In fact, it's a great opportunity and I would encourage any Scout that has the opportunity to attend a Kodiak Challenge course.

LEE: Peter, how does it differ from other BSA leadership training?

PETER: That's a great question because it has kind of a reverse format for it. In most of our trainings, they take place in a classroom setting and we learn some theory and then we go experience it, or it takes place in a camp where we have a lot of structured time in the training. In the Kodiak Challenge, it actually is designed to be an outdoor experience with some training thrown in which makes it a lot more fun and much more not only enjoyable but it's a deeper learning experience for most kids that go through that program.

BRYAN: So, who conducts this training? Is this a national thing, councils or who is responsible for that?

PETER: Kodiak Challenge can be done on a unit level, a district level, (or) council level. Many times you see multiple councils get together or an area course. You just need your area training director's approval.

LEE: Well, what is the process for getting it approved or started? How does one go about that?

PETER: You make (an) application to your council training chair. It's pretty simple, (be)cause there's no formal form. You go to your council training chair and say, "We'd like to put on a Kodiak Challenge course," and they approve it. The only reason it goes through the area training chair is simply because many times a course needs some more mass to fill it and you want to get youth from other areas. So by going to your area training chair you can gather Scouts from all over the place and have a richer experience.

BRYAN: So help me picture this since I've never actually taken the Kodiak Challenge myself, but I want to. Is this a weekend course, is it a week-long thing and what are some of the activities that the participants might be able to enjoy?

PETER: Let me just share with you one of the Kodiak Courses that we have that I was on and that'll give you a bigger picture of what they look like. This particular Kodiak course was up in the San Juan Islands in Washington State, and we spent six days. Kodiak Challenge is a week-long course and you cover what are called commissions. There are seven different commissions and each commission is a leadership opportunity or a leadership skill that you develop in the course. In our particular Kodiak course, we spent six days in the San Juan Islands, two days you spent sailing, two days you spent sea kayaking, and two days you spent biking within the island.

BRYAN: And this is training, right?

PETER: This is training.

BRYAN: That's awesome.

PETER: Isn't that great? We actually had three different crews and every two days you would rendezvous and your crew would switch venues. So we actually had 21 kids on the course. During that time, doing kayaking and sailing and biking, you're spending most of your time doing that and you only spend about an hour and a half, maybe a day in actual training. The fun part about that is, almost in every case, the training that you experience on this course is used on the course.

For example, we had one situation where we were kayaking one particular day and we had to cross a shipping lane. Up there in the shipping lanes you have some of these supertankers coming up from Alaska full of oil. And in spite of what they tell you, the smallest craft doesn't always have the right of way when you're facing a tanker. (Laughter) So, we had come up along the shipping lane and there's a buoy line and so we pulled all of our kayaks up along this line and looked for an opening. As we got our opening we all started paddling across the shipping lane to the other side. Well, about halfway across, one of our young ladies said, "You know what? I am just too tired to make it. I'm done." And as you looked down the shipping lane, here was a tanker coming towards us. And we said, "Well, you don't really have a choice. We all have to go and it's all or nothing. We don't leave anybody behind."

And so we had the opportunity to tie her boat up to ours and tow her across and help her get across as a group. And that night our training happened to be on working as teams and what that means to be a team, and how teams help each other get through these things. So, in a Kodiak Course you not only learn this skill, but you live it.

BRYAN: That's awesome.

LEE: That is awesome. You talk about learn by doing and you better do it fast, huh? So, is there anything else about the Kodiak Challenge that you think should be shared with our listeners?

PETER: Many people don't put on a Kodiak Challenge because they think it's too difficult. The key is just to have a fun experience, a fun adventure. Get outside your comfort zone. The Kodiak courses that I've been on have all

been in the outdoors. It doesn't have to be that way necessarily, but it should be in an environment that stretches you or takes you out of your comfort zone.

So, for example, if you're used to being in the outdoors, maybe a trip to New York City is out of your comfort zone, and maybe the skills that you learn there as far as leadership will be better learned in that environment than they would be in the outdoors. The key is, expand your thought process and don't be afraid to take it on. Remember, a unit can do it as easily as a council or a district.

The syllabus is actually located online. If you go to [Scouting.org/training](https://www.scouting.org/training) you can find the Kodiak Challenge syllabus there.

BRYAN: So, it really could just take one dedicated volunteer to get a brand new Kodiak Challenge course started really anywhere in the country.

PETER: Exactly. And it may not even take extra work. If your crew or your troop has a backpacking trip planned for this summer, just incorporate the Kodiak Syllabus into it.

LEE: That's excellent. Well, Peter, as you know, leadership training is such an important part of our program so, we want to thank you for coming to ScoutCast to help clear up any misconceptions there may be about the Kodiak Challenge. I've learned quite a bit myself here and I'm going to go to the website to learn a little bit more that may allow me to help others participate in this great challenge.

PETER: I hope you do. It'll be fun.

BRYAN: Yeah, I'm right there with you, Lee. I think we should take Kodiak Challenge together, how about that?

LEE: How about it?

BRYAN: San Juan Islands, here we come. And as for you, don't go anywhere. We'll be back in less than a minute with Reminders and Tips.

(August ExploringCast – Program Planning)

BRYAN: Okay, here we go with Reminders and Tips for August. Now that you're back from summer camp, it's the perfect time to plan for training. Every boy deserves a trained leader. And without training, it's hard for you to implement a good program.

LEE: And as we just discussed, training is also important for your junior leaders, so make sure they all attend them when available.

BRYAN: Now, this is ScoutCast, but I want you to think about Cub Scouts for a second. This is the time to begin cultivating a relationship with your local Cub Scout pack. A good way to start that is to provide the pack with a Den Chief from your troop. Not only will the pack appreciate the help, but the Den Chief will be a great asset for the Webelos-to-Scout transition in the spring.

LEE: It's time for the Summer Olympics, and *Boy's Life* magazine gets us ready with tips on what to be on the look-out for in these summer games.

BRYAN: I can hear the national anthem now. If you haven't already done so, be sure to subscribe to *Bryan on Scouting*. That's my daily blog for Cub Scout, Boy Scout, and Venturing Leaders. You just go to blog.scoutingmagazine.org and scroll to "get email updates." That's where you'll enter your email and you'll get a new post every weekday.

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BRYAN: And that's a wrap for the August ScoutCast. I want to say thanks to our guest, Peter Self, for joining us today and thanks to you for listening. Now, is there any other topic that you think we should be talking about on ScoutCast? Michael O'Donnell thought so and that gave you this episode today.

LEE: And if you have one, just send us an email to ScoutCast@scouting.org, or a tweet to [@BSAScoutCast](https://twitter.com/BSAScoutCast). We'd love to hear from you. I'm Lee Shaw.

BRYAN: And I'm Bryan Wendell asking a question: are you up for the Kodiak Challenge?

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