

International Canoe Federation (ICF) Report ICF Canoe Sprint Coach Development Course – Level 1 (Solomon Islands)

International Canoe Federation (ICF) Report

Honiara, Solomon Islands | 19–24 March 2026 (5 days)

Delivered in partnership with IOC Solidarity, International Canoe Federation (ICF) and Oceania Canoe Association (OCA)

Course Facilitator / Expert: Nathan Luce (Head of Coaching – High Performance Sport New Zealand)



Executive Summary

This report summarises delivery of a five-day ICF Canoe Sprint Coach Development Course (Level 1) in Honiara, Solomon Islands. The programme was designed to bridge Solomon Islands' strong paddling culture (traditional canoes and Va'a) into ICF Olympic canoe sprint disciplines, with an emphasis on safe, confident beginner coaching rather than high-performance specialisation. Delivery combined short classroom modules with practical land-based drills and progressive on-water sessions using the limited craft and available paddling environment. The Solomon Islands National Institute of Sport (SINIS) provided world-class gym facilities and high-quality classroom spaces

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(Wi-Fi and screen connectivity), while on-water infrastructure and equipment constraints required adaptations including small-group rotations, simplified drills, and curated learning resources (including paddler.nz and selected technique/safety videos). Participants completed basic practical and group planning tasks, and the course concluded with a mini-regatta, reflection, and agreed next steps to support sustainable coach and paddler development.

1. Project Identification

- **Programme:** Olympic Solidarity Plan 2025–2028 – Technical Courses for Coaches
- **National Olympic Committee (NOC):** National Olympic Committee of Solomon Islands (NOCSI)
- **Host Federation:** Solomon Islands Outrigger and Canoe Federation (SIOCF)
- **Sport / discipline:** Canoe Sprint (introductory coach development with ocean ski / marathon pathway awareness)
- **Course level:** ICF Coach Course – Level 1 (foundation / beginner coach)
- **Course location:** Honiara, Solomon Islands
- **Course dates:** 19–24 March 2026 (5 days)
- **Expert stay:** 18–25 March 2026 (8 days)
- **ICF Expert / facilitator:** Nathan Luce
- **Delivery partners:** IOC Solidarity, International Canoe Federation (ICF), Oceania Canoe Association (OCA)

2. Objectives of the Coach Course (Level 1)

- **Foundational coaching capability:** Develop safe, competent beginner kayak coaches able to deliver introductory sessions for youth and adults.
- **Safety and session delivery:** Establish clear safety principles for local paddling environments (weather, currents/tides, clothing, buddy systems, communication).
- **Technique fundamentals:** Build a shared language for basic kayak stroke mechanics (catch, pull, exit, recovery), posture and rotation.
- **Coaching observation:** Improve coaches’ ability to “watch first” and give one simple cue aligned to the learner’s needs.

- **Training theory (foundation):** Introduce simple training concepts (aerobic base, speed work, recovery) and basic programme design appropriate to developing paddlers.
- **Strength training basics:** Introduce key movement patterns that support paddling and practical options with and without gym access.
- **Sustainable pathway:** Connect traditional paddling/Va'a participation to ICF disciplines and realistic local pathways (including ocean ski opportunities).

3. Introduction and Local Context

The Solomon Islands has a strong water and paddling culture through traditional canoes and Va'a (outrigger) paddling. This course was designed to respect and build on that foundation while introducing the core principles of ICF canoe sprint and its related kayak disciplines. The course philosophy prioritised learning by doing (on-water and movement-based learning), visual learning (demonstrations, photos and videos), and sustainability—focusing on what coaches can realistically deliver with limited craft and on-water facilities. The intent of a Level 1 course in this setting was not to produce expert canoe sprint coaches in five days, but to build confidence, shared understanding, and practical coaching tools that can grow participation and create an ongoing pathway for future development.

4. Participant Profile and Statistics

Participant category	Total	Women	Men
Coaches	17	7	10
Total	17	7	10

Learner profile (observed / assumed for course design): Participants were predominantly adult coaches with strong local paddling exposure (lagoon/ocean and Va'a/traditional canoes) and limited prior experience in Olympic canoe sprint kayaking. This informed a delivery approach that normalised the beginner stage in sprint kayak, used short theory blocks (approximately 20–30 minutes), and maximised repeated practical exposure through small-group rotations.



5. Delivery Summary (5-Day Schedule)

Day 1 – Connection, Culture and Context

- Welcome and course framing; participant introductions (province, paddling background, reasons for coaching).
- Group discussion and activities linking traditional canoeing and Va'a culture to modern ICF disciplines (“different boats – same paddling DNA”).
- Introduction to ICF disciplines and the Olympic pathway (sprint, marathon and ocean ski) supported with visual examples.



Day 2 – Kayak Foundations

- Foundational technique: paddle handling, posture and rotation; four phases of the stroke (catch, pull, exit, recovery).
- Land-based drills and partner practice to support kinaesthetic learning.
- First on-water session: safe entry/exit, balance, forward paddling, stopping and steering (delivered with small-group rotations due to limited craft availability).



Day 3 – Skills Development and the Coaching Eye

- Expanding understanding of disciplines and environments (ocean ski and marathon awareness) and how technique adapts to conditions.
- Video-supported learning and discussion to identify key technical cues (posture, timing, rotation).
- On-water progression: improved posture, paddling in groups, simple starts; coaching focus on observation before instruction and delivering “one cue only”.



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Day 4 – Coaching and Training Design

- Coaching beginners and youth using a simple session structure (warm-up → one skill focus → game/challenge → cool-down) and the Try–Learn–Explore approach.
- Group work: design and share a beginner session plan suitable for local delivery constraints.
- Training principles introduced in simple terms: aerobic base, speed work, recovery, and basic weekly/seasonal planning (“consistency beats intensity”).

Day 5 – Strength, On-Water Application and Celebration

- Strength and conditioning fundamentals for paddlers: key movement patterns (pull, push, rotation, legs) and options both in the gym and with minimal equipment.
- On-water application and informal assessment through a mini-regatta / mixed-team activities aligned to available craft and conditions.

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- Course wrap-up: reflection, certificates and discussion of next steps for Solomon Islands coaching and participation growth.



6. Pedagogical Approach and Adaptations

Delivery was adapted to the Level 1 stage of the coaches and the Solomon Islands training environment. Key methods included: (1) short theory blocks supported by demonstrations; (2) repeated practical exposure through rotations and small groups; (3) frequent reflection questions to build shared language; and (4) consistent links between Va'a/traditional canoe experience and kayak sprint fundamentals. Where content needed to be improvised to support learning outcomes (particularly around training theory and training programme design), additional resources were used from www.paddler.nz and selected technique and safety videos. These resources supported visual learning and enabled participants to revisit key concepts outside formal sessions.

7. Assessment and Course Outcomes

As a Level 1 course, assessment focused on practical competency and application rather than a formal written examination. Participants completed small-group tasks to design simple weekly and seasonal training programmes suitable for developing paddlers, and shared core coaching philosophy ideas via brief oral presentations. Practical competency was observed through land drills and on-water sessions, with emphasis on safety behaviours, basic boat control, and the ability to identify one priority technical cue (posture, timing, rotation) to support a paddler's improvement. Overall, participants were highly engaged throughout and demonstrated strong transfer of existing paddling skills into the beginner kayak environment.

8. Infrastructure, Facilities and Logistics

- **Classroom and AV:** The first four days of classroom learning took place at the Solomon Islands Women in Business Association (SIWIBA) Development Centre. The final day of learning took place at the Solomon Islands National Institute of Sport (SINIS). Both classroom facilities provided high-quality classroom/conference spaces with Wi-Fi and screen connectivity, enabling effective use of presentations and video-supported learning.
- **Gym facilities:** The primary strength and conditioning session benefited from world-class gym facilities at SINIS, which enabled clear demonstration of key paddling-related movements and safe training practices (see photos below).
- **On-water facilities and equipment:** Craft availability and on-water infrastructure were limited, although a coach boat was provided to observe and take part in on-water training sessions. 8 x Nelo 510 Ocean K1's and 3 Nelo Ocean K2's and Braca paddles were used to teach basic Kayak stroke and technique. The equipment used was a result of the legacy of the Solomon Islands hosting the 2023 Pacific Games. Practical delivery therefore relied on small-group rotations, simplified progressions, and a strong focus on safety and control in the available paddling environment.
- **Local support:** The host federation provided strong organisational support and daily coordination, enabling consistent start times and smooth transitions between classroom and practical sessions.

9. Challenges, Constraints and Mitigations

- **Limited craft / on-water infrastructure:** Managed through rotations, tight session structure, and prioritising safety and basic control outcomes over high-volume paddling.
- **Mixed experience with sprint kayak:** Normalised the beginner stage and used shared language (posture, rotation, timing) linked to Va'a/traditional paddling.
- **Need to strengthen training theory understanding:** Added improvised examples and planning exercises to ensure participants left with simple tools to design weekly and seasonal programmes.
- **Learning resource access:** Used downloadable/accessible external resources (www.paddler.nz and selected video content) to reinforce technique and safety topics. The facilitator would also like to acknowledge the use of printed resources from Canoe Racing New Zealand which included technique, safety and coaching manuals for participants to use for future planning purposes.

10. Conclusions and Recommendations

- **Consolidate Level 1 coaching practice:** Support participants to run regular beginner sessions in Honiara and provinces using a consistent safety framework and simple session templates.
- **Provincial growth (Western and Malaita Provinces):** There is strong potential to expand participation beyond Honiara, particularly in Western Province and Malaita Province. Doing so will require additional resources (durable boats and paddles, PFDs and basic safety equipment) and fit-for-purpose infrastructure (secure storage, safe launch access, and a simple local training/competition plan). Malaita presents a promising opportunity because an engaged course participant is based there and has existing connections with local government and business that could support coordination, resourcing and community mobilisation.
- **Equipment strategy:** Prioritise access to durable beginner craft and core safety equipment (PFDs, leashes where appropriate, basic rescue resources). As the next equipment investment step, the **Nelo Viper** is recommended as a practical development boat: it has a similar skill requirement to a K1 but is designed for ocean and lagoon paddling, which better matches typical Solomon Islands conditions. It is recommended that SIOCF (with ICF/Oceania support) engage directly with Nelo to explore a **lower-cost, hard-plastic construction option**

that is more durable than carbon fibre for high-use community coaching programmes. Where appropriate infrastructure and athlete readiness exists, encourage Paddle Australia and Canoe Racing New Zealand to donate used canoe sprint boats to provinces/clubs so developing paddlers can access canoe sprint regattas within the Oceania region.

- **Develop local coach leaders (criteria-based):** Support the SIOCF to identify 2–4 emerging coaches for ongoing mentoring using transparent selection criteria (e.g., reliability, safety focus, communication, willingness to run regular sessions, and commitment to learning). Any specific candidate names can be provided separately to the NOC/IF if required, rather than listed in this report.
- **Progression pathway:** Establish a simple annual plan linking participation events (local regattas/festivals) to skills progression and, over time, canoe sprint performance opportunities.
- **Future education:** Recommend a follow-up Level 1 refresher / practical clinic within 6–12 months, then a staged pathway toward Level 2 once craft numbers and on-water access allow more advanced technical work.
- **Regional collaboration:** Encourage continued collaboration with Oceania partners to access coaching resources, training opportunities, and appropriate regional racing exposure.
- **Targeted athlete exposure and Oceania racing pathway:** Recommend that Solomon Islands identify and support a small group of developing athletes (e.g., **4 athletes: 2 women and 2 men**) to train in New Zealand and/or Australia to accelerate learning and mastery of K1 and K2, and to prepare for future Oceania racing opportunities. Several course participants also demonstrate athlete potential and, with appropriate long-term support, could progress toward international competitiveness and potentially Olympic qualification objectives for 2028. A longer-term participation/performance goal could be for Solomon Islands to enter **two K4 crews** at future Oceania Championships. Achieving this will require coordinated resourcing and support across key partners (IOC Solidarity, ICF, OCA, Paddle Australia, and Canoe Racing New Zealand), including coaching support, equipment access, travel, and a staged training and competition plan.

11. Acknowledgements

Thank you to IOC Solidarity, the International Canoe Federation (ICF) and Oceania Canoe Association (OCA) for enabling this coach development opportunity. Thank you

to the National Olympic Committee of Solomon Islands (NOCSI) and the Solomon Islands Outrigger and Canoe Federation (SIOCF) for hosting the course and providing daily logistical support, and to the Solomon Islands National Institute of Sport (SINIS) for access to excellent classroom and gym facilities on our final day. Appreciation is also extended to local federation leadership and organisers (including Eric Chow) and to all participants for their commitment, curiosity and contribution throughout the five days.

Appendix A. Photo Highlights (course delivery)

Selected photos are included below as highlights from the five-day course (classroom, gym and on-water activities).



Photo 1: Course group / opening session highlight (Honiara, Solomon Islands).

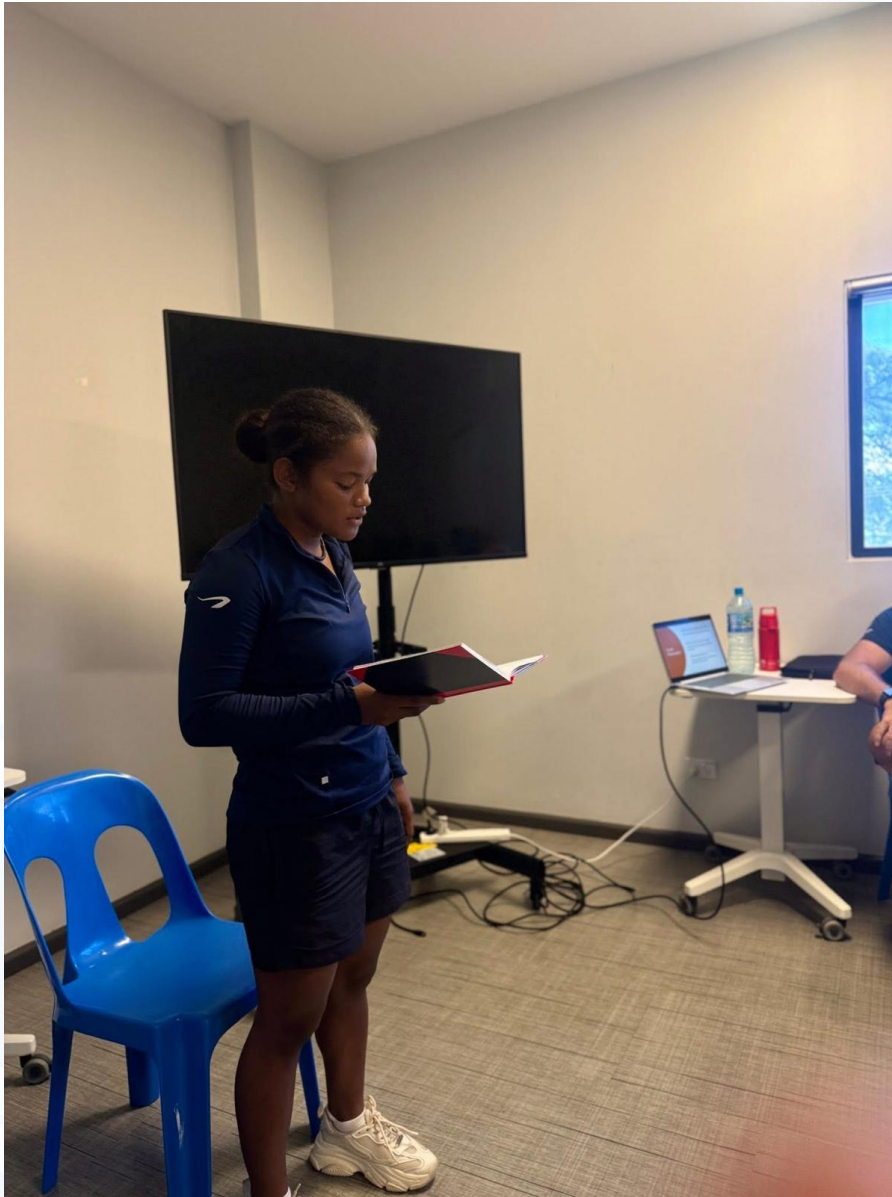


Photo 2: Classroom learning – course presentation and discussion.



Photo 3: Participant activity – group work and course collaboration.



Photo 4: CRNZ coaching materials provided for participant use (technique, safety and coaching manuals).



Photo 5: Left to right (Eric Chow – President of SIOCF, Martin Ba’ai Rara – President of NOCSI, Nathan Luce – Head of HP Coaching, HPSNZ).



Photo 6: On-water practical session – foundational boat control and safety.



Photo 7: On-water coaching – technique focus (posture/rotation/timing).



Photo 8: Small-group rotation – practical learning with limited craft availability.



Photo 9: On-water session – applying drills and feedback in local conditions.

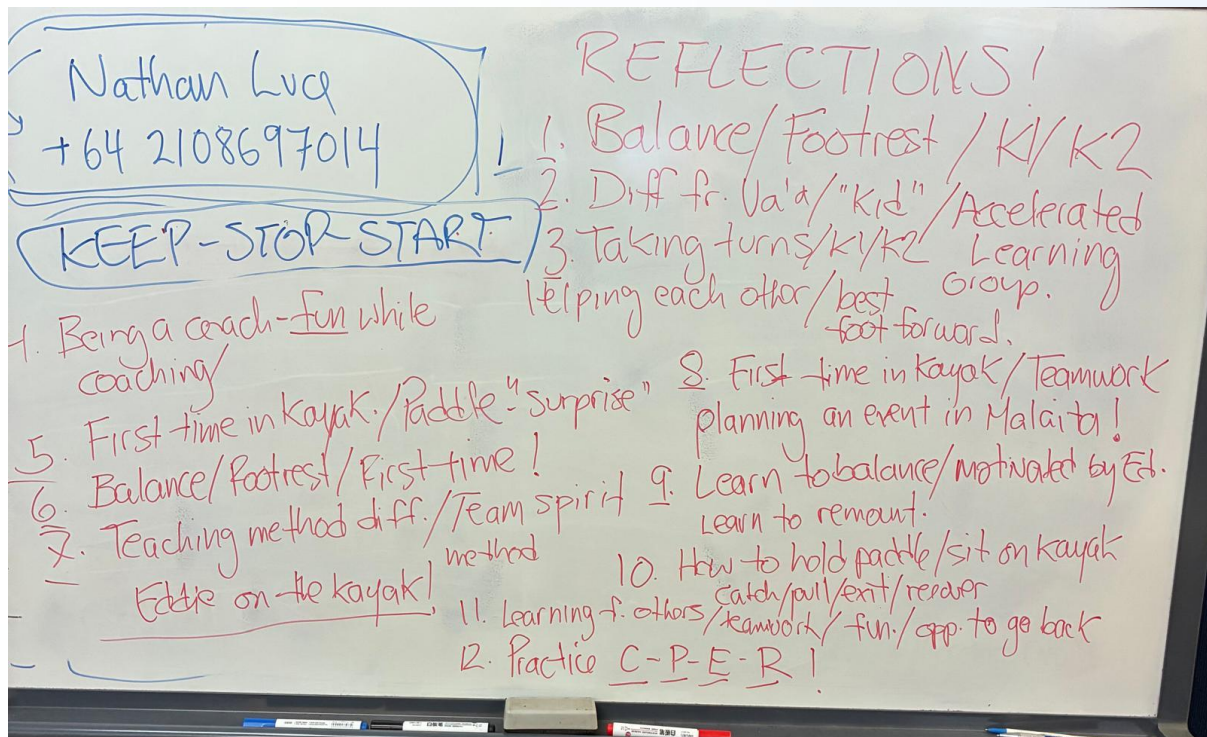


Photo 10: Land-based technique drill – reinforcing key movement patterns.

Photos (gallery): Additional course highlights are included below (classroom learning at SIWIBA, gym session at SINIS, on-water coaching sessions, and end-of-course activities).









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