



CPRA ACPL

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

# Success Story

## Engaging with Indigenous communities in the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration

**B**REANNA MORIN'S WORK WITH THE Alberta Recreation and Parks Association (ARPA) has been full of rewarding experiences that have supported her professional and personal growth, she says. What stands out for her has been playing a role in engagement with Indigenous communities across the province, as part of ARPA's central commitment to reconciliation.

The highlight of that work, she says, was participating in the inaugural Treaty 7 Elder Capacity Camp and Cultural Celebration hosted by ARPA over five days in the Kananaskis area in August 2021.



ALBERTA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION, EDMONTON, ALBERTA

Canada

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*“Recreation and parks is leading the way in terms of how Alberta communities come together in reconciliation”*

Janet Naclia, Director of People and Programs with ARPA

She also developed a new resource on reconciliation for ARPA members, the “Indigenous Awareness & Engagement Toolkit,” which was launched on September 30, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation across Canada.

The association works with Elders as partners and guides in development reconciliation activities. Key advisors, Dr. Reg and Rose Crowshoe, Blackfoot Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers, guided ARPA in the hosting of the Elders camp in Kananaskis. Goals included to address the challenges for Elders surrounding COVID-19 and to increase Elder capacity – providing opportunities for more experienced Elders to share knowledge and ceremonial protocols with others who can carry on that knowledge.

Twenty-five multi-Nation Elders attended the camp, along with ARPA staff, who attended as helpers.

Breanna had a number of roles related to the camp, including writing a successful application for a grant to fund rapid testing for COVID-19 during the event. She also helped organize a cultural celebration, in which the Elders performed traditional songs and dances, told stories and jokes, and otherwise displayed their broad range of talents.

“Many of the Elders told us these performances were the highlight,” says Janet. “After the difficulty of COVID, with many of them feeling fragile and exhausted, they said this was the first time they had connected with community and been able to laugh in a year and a half. This illustrates the way recreation supports mental health, social inclusion and community building.”

“It was amazing for me to have the chance to interact with the Elders on a more personal level,” says Breanna. “Being more directly immersed in Indigenous culture was special and a true privilege.”

Meanwhile, after the CPRA grant supported Breanna’s job until year’s end, ARPA had the time to secure funding to hire her in a permanent job starting in 2022.

“Whatever direction I go in, I know this sector is where I want to be,” Breanna says. “I want to continue building skills to support a long-term career in the parks and recreation sector.” 🍁

Breanna is part Indigenous, with family ties to the Enoch Cree Nation in Treaty 6 territory. “It’s a chance for me to work with an organization that is dedicated to reconciliation and for me to continue my own learning journey because I grew up mostly away from Indigenous culture.”

“Recreation and parks is leading the way in terms of how Alberta communities come together in reconciliation,” says Janet Naclia, Director of People and Programs with ARPA, who leads the association’s “Walking with Indigenous Communities” initiatives and was Breanna’s prime mentor.

Breanna first came to ARPA as a practicum student while completing her Bachelor of Arts degree in Recreation, Sport and Tourism at the University of Alberta.

The association was able to hire Breanna as Special Events & Programs Officer after her graduation in June 2021, thanks to funding from CPRA’s Youth Employment Experience program. The program is designed to support employment opportunities and skills development for young people in the parks and recreation sector, while also building capacity for organizations who hire them.

The CPRA program funding filled a critical need, says Janet. “With COVID-19 and interruptions in many recreation programs, we lost so many people to other sectors – really, we have been decimated. This CPRA grant has been very important for us.

“Being able to bring Breanna into the fold, a bright young professional with Indigenous ties, has allowed us to elevate our reconciliation work and to move forward with other programming as well.”

The projects that Breanna has worked on include organizing and hosting virtual meetings of Indigenous champions of the Communities ChooseWell program, a provincial program that fosters healthy eating and active living in Alberta communities.