



YOUTH EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

Success Story



Developing a rewarding career and engaging Indigenous youth in sports and active living

HANNAH SOMERS KNEW AT AN EARLY age that she wanted to channel her passion for sports into a career. Now, at age 21, she is preparing to graduate with a Bachelor of Recreation and Sport Studies from the Faculty of Kinesiology at the University of New Brunswick (UNB) – and she is working as a Program Coordinator with Aboriginal Sport and Recreation New Brunswick (ASRNB).

“Growing up in Miramichi, I always played sports and I wanted to study in that area,” says Hannah. “I knew I wanted to inspire people to develop a love for sport, the way I had. I enjoy helping people to explore different sport opportunities and my job at ASRNB allows me to do that for Indigenous youth.”



ABORIGINAL SPORT AND RECREATION, NEW BRUNSWICK

Canada

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As part of her studies, Hannah had an internship with ASRNB. “I hoped to continue working with the organization. My experience as an intern was so enjoyable, and it didn’t feel like work at all,” she says.

Hannah was able to stay on with ASRNB thanks to support from the CPRA Youth Employment Experience program. The program provides funding to municipalities and non-profit organizations to employ young people in parks and recreation positions.

With offices in Fredericton and Metepenagiag First Nations, ASRNB has a mission to guide and engage Indigenous youth in sports and recreational activities that promote a healthy, active lifestyle and foster development of leadership skills. It serves a number of communities in the Mi’kmaq and Maliseet First Nations.

“For all our programs, Indigenous culture is the centrepiece, with activities that stress connection to nature and using the resources at hand. We have elders involved from different communities, sharing knowledge with the youth to keep traditions alive,” says Cherie Campbell, Program Director for ASRNB and Hannah’s mentor.

Through partnerships with provincial sport organizations and Coach NB (which provides certification and professional development for coaches), ASRNB engages communities in a broad range of sporting activities through the seasons. They include the Paddles Up canoeing and kayaking program, team sports like hockey, badminton and volleyball, and competitive games that bring together multiple communities – including the New Brunswick Indigenous Summer Games and the Atlantic Indigenous Game Championships.



Hannah Somers, Program Support Assistant

Restrictions and lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic have made it challenging to deliver regular programming over the past couple of years, Cherie says.

“We’ve been working to keep our youth engaged through virtual activities and events including outdoor adventures. And in the summer of 2021, things opened up somewhat, and we were able to do a scaled-down version of the competitive games, as well as offer Paddles Up programs and sports clinics in some of our communities.”

“Before the second wave of the pandemic hit, I was fortunate to be able to work in one hockey program that involved boys and girls, aged seven to eighteen,” says Hannah. “Hockey was my sport when I was younger, so having that experience was a real highlight for me.”

During periods of reduced in-person programming, Cherie guided Hannah to learn about other aspects of working in a non-profit sport organization, including applying for and reporting on funding grants and writing ASRNB’s 2021 annual report.

“Hannah has a great work ethic and is dependable – always ready to step up when needed,” Cherie says, who adds that Hannah’s knowledge gained in her university program and her facility with social media have added a lot of value to the team.

Both Hannah and Cherie says they looking forward to the time when communities open up and ASRNB can bring more sports and recreation opportunities to New Brunswick’s Indigenous youth. 🍁