



## Participation in CPRA employment program helps young man launch career in recreation

**I**N THE SPRING OF 2021, KYLE CHARKO HAD just graduated with a Bachelor of Sport Management degree from Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario. Keen to secure employment in his chosen field, he applied for a job as Sports and Recreation Coordinator for the Town of Ingersoll.

“I really hoped I would get an interview because this was the perfect opportunity for me,” says Kyle, age 22. Kyle knew the area well; he had grown up in Woodstock, a town close to Ingersoll in Oxford County. The position blended administrative responsibilities with direct, hands-on programming and instruction – allowing him to apply the knowledge and skills he had acquired through his degree.



TOWN OF INGERSOLL,  
ONTARIO

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Sporting in summer day camps

“I was trying to get into recreation, but it was tough. Many positions required applicants to have years of experience, and I didn’t have any experience other than my schooling,” he says.

The Town of Ingersoll position had no experience requirements and offered mentorship for a person just starting out in their career. “It was great because it was something that I could learn from,” Kyle says.

The position was funded by the CPRA Youth Employment Experience program, which is designed to provide opportunities for young people to gain work experience in sports and recreation.

“We recognized that the funding provided a great opportunity because it was focused on hiring youth who might otherwise face barriers to employment,” says Michelle Powers, Ingersoll’s Recreation and Programming Coordinator. “Lack of previous experience can often be a barrier, of course. But the CPRA program allowed us to bring an entirely different perspective to the hiring process – and by bringing Kyle into our organization, we could help him launch his sport and recreation career.”

The CPRA program is also designed to give organizations additional resources to serve their communities. The Town of Ingersoll was looking for someone who could promote cycling initiatives and programs, and when Kyle was hired for a three-month term, that became one of his responsibilities.

Kyle sat on the Ingersoll Safe Cycling Committee and supported community efforts to enhance the safety and viability of cycling and to advocate for the growth of cycling as a form of recreation and transportation.

“Part of my role was to help promote and advertise the opportunities for cycling in Ingersoll. I put together a bike map for the town showing trails and stretches of road safe for cyclists,” he says.

“I also created promotional boxes that contained the map and information on where to find bike racks and water stations around town, and I worked with local businesses and organizations who not only displayed the boxes but also donated coupons and gift cards to add to them.”

*“The experience of working with Kyle through the CPRA program was valuable in many ways. That includes the mentorship guidance that CPRA provided. We are going to use those mentorship principles as we hire new staff moving forward”*

Michelle Powers, Ingersoll’s Recreation and Programming Coordinator

Kyle says the experience of coordinating the cycling campaign was extremely valuable, helping him to learn more about organizing recreational promotion and about networking with other stakeholders to make a promotional campaign a success. He also worked in coordination with Ontario By Bike – a provincial network that strives to inspire visitors and residents to explore more of Ontario on bikes.

“Other members of the committee and town councillors all recognized the significant contributions Kyle made to our cycling initiative,” Michelle says. “Everything went so well that we were able to secure funding to allow us to continue this cycling promotion for another year. Kyle helped make that possible.”

Kyle took on responsibility for sports and recreation advertising through social media and also developed fitness programs, including a Youth Ready for Sports program aimed at fostering movement and coordination skills for two and three year olds.

Michelle says this program will continue and plans are in the works to develop a version of it for older children in the five- to seven-year-old age group.

“The experience of working with Kyle through the CPRA program was valuable in many ways,” says Michelle. “That includes the mentorship guidance that CPRA provided. We are going to use those mentorship principles as we hire new staff moving forward.”

And for Kyle, the experience led to a full-time job in the recreational field. He is now the Recreation & Facilities Coordinator for the Township of Tyendinaga in Hastings County, near Belleville, Ontario.

“I learned so much from the Ingersoll team,” he says. “Working in that position gave me skills and experience to add to my CV, and in particular, it gave me the confidence to apply for and get hired in my new job.” 🍁