



Green Jobs Student Helps Bridge Isolated Communities and Manitoba Uske

FOR BENJAMIN NATTAWAY, TRYING TO find work in an isolated, Northern Manitoba community hasn't been an easy task.

But his ability to create contacts from within his community, Island Lake region, as well as his fresh ideas and willingness to learn made him the perfect addition to the Manitoba Uske Land Managers Association.

“He was at a disadvantage when he joined our team — coming from an isolated community and being an Indigenous youth trying to access really meaningful employment,” says Patricia Mitchell, executive director of Manitoba Uske who was also Benjamin’s manager. “I’d like to think it opened up some doors for him. He was just a good asset to the team.”



ISLAND LAKE,
MANITOBA

Canada

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Benjamin introducing and describing how USKE works. The purpose is for First Nation peoples to be able to uphold their traditions, culture, and values through land management and the wisdom of the elders.



Benjamin Nattaway, Land Environment Intern

“It means a lot to me as an Indigenous person looking to create change for our people and our lands — to promote decolonization, enhance Indigenous culture, and build a better community.”

Benjamin Nattaway

Manitoba Uske is a technical land management body that helps the province’s First Nations train people who can help manage land development — including resource development like mines, fishing lodges, shopping malls and office complexes.

Benjamin says he wanted to apply for the job to gain new skills and experience.

“Learning about land management and Indigenous culture at the same time is definitely something that piqued my interest,” he says.

Manitoba Uske was able to hire Benjamin as a Land Environment Intern through the CPRA Green Jobs Initiative, which is funded in part by the Government of Canada’s Youth Employment Skills Strategy program.

As a Land Environment Intern, Benjamin played a critical role in creating connections between the organization and isolated communities in the Island Lake region.

“There are four communities around his home community that are all under the same tribal council, and the only way you can access his community is via air or winter road,” Patricia explains. “It’s quite far, and he was really helpful in getting those contacts for that area. So now we have representatives coming in from that region.”

Benjamin also assisted with planning the organization’s annual general meeting in the summer of 2021 — which was a huge success and saw 42 First Nations in attendance. He

provided a youth perspective that Manitoba Uske wouldn’t have otherwise had, and his ideas helped Manitoba Uske look at land management through a fresh lens.

“His role showed the importance of us involving the younger generation in the work that we do, and showed that we need to put more emphasis and focus on that.”

Benjamin’s direct supervisor, Shawn Peters, adds that Benjamin was also eager to learn many of the organization’s behind-the-scenes tasks.

“He was great at formatting and proofreading documents,” he says. “He was very, very proficient.”

Benjamin brought much-needed help and resources to the small Indigenous organization, and the funding made a very positive impact on the work they do.

“Just having him there, and being able to rely on him and his own experience and skills, was really beneficial to us.”

Benjamin adds that the role also meant very much to him — both personally and professionally.

“Looking at our lands and government, I was able to understand the cultural factors that are at play when dealing with the government and Indigenous peoples. It means a lot to me as an Indigenous person looking to create change for our people and our lands — to promote decolonization, enhance Indigenous culture, and build a better community.” 🍁