



CPRA ACPL

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

Success Story

Building on academic knowledge with community experience to achieve progress in diversity and inclusion

IN HER STUDIES AT TORONTO

Metropolitan University, Yasmin Shafi has gained knowledge about the impacts of society's institutions, systems and attitudes on the individual. She had the opportunity to translate theory into real-world practice as a Community Development Assistant for the Municipality of Clarington in Ontario. In that role, she became immersed in municipal initiatives around inclusion and diversity.

Yasmin is studying to earn a bachelor of arts degree in psychology. "In addition to learning about individuals, we also focus on their roles in society and how society impacts them. A lot of what I have learned has to do with diversity, and the effects of racism, ableism and other types of systemic discrimination on individuals and on generations," she says.



MUNICIPALITY OF CLARINGTON,
ONTARIO

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“The more I’ve learned, the more passionate I have become about diversity. As somebody of colour, whose parents immigrated to Canada from Pakistan, it is very personal to me, as well.”

The municipality hired Yasmin, 22, for a five-month term from November 2022 to the end of March 2023. The position was funded by CPRA’s Youth Employment Experience program, which supports municipalities and other organizations to provide young people with experience and skills development in the parks and recreation sector.

Yasmin received mentorship from two municipal staff members: Erica Mittag, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Anti-Racism Officer, Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and Laura Knox, Community Development Coordinator, Community Services Department.

“Having mentors like Erica and Laura taught me a lot and helped me grow as a person,” Yasmin says. “Working alongside them and receiving their support has motivated me even more to help make a difference in the community.”

Yasmin conducted research and developed resources to support Clarington’s development of an anti-racism strategy and policies, as recommended by the municipality’s Diversity Advisory Committee. She was also made a member of the Truth and Reconciliation Staff Committee to support implementing the “calls to action” from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

This included creation of tools to guide community use of Clarington’s “land acknowledgement statement.”

“Land acknowledgement was a recommendation from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and our municipality developed a statement after consulting Indigenous communities,” says Erica. “We’re trying to give it real meaning for people, helping them connect with the language and urging them to think about they can contribute to reconciliation, including in their personal lives.”



“I created a reference sheet that includes information on the importance of recognizing the original owners of the land and the impact of doing for Indigenous community members,” Yasmin explains. “The goal is to make that information more accessible to not only administration and staff but to members of the public.”

Yasmin’s responsibilities included providing support for the planning and delivery of diversity-related special events to mark milestones such as Black History Month, International Women’s Day and Indigenous History Month. She also gathered information from local businesses to create a database of diverse suppliers to provide services for community events.

She appreciated the opportunity throughout all her work to engage with members of the public, community groups, event organizers and others. “I was able to deal with directly with people from different groups to understand not only their struggles, but also their accomplishments, and to find ways of celebrating them.”

Yasmin added considerable value to the municipal teams, says Laura. “We appreciated her passion and her commitment to accomplish something important. And her cultural background and youth gave us key perspectives.”

As a mentor, Erica says her goal for Yasmin was to “expose her to as many networks and different opportunities as possible. I hope that giving her a wide variety of experiences will help her make choices in the future about what she ultimately wants to do.”

Yasmin hasn’t finalized her professional plans, but remains attracted to the idea of working on systemic issues. “Another area that interests me is judicial and prison systems, their effects on people and how to improve rehabilitation of individuals after incarceration. Whatever I choose for my career, I want to continue to promote diversity and inclusion.” 🍁