



## Parks Play Leader learns key skills for future teaching career

**K**YLIE PAYNE SPENT THE SUMMER OF 2023 working closely with children across the City of Swift Current, Saskatchewan. Each day, she planned recreational activities that kept them busy and moving, leading them through those activities, and providing support when they needed it.

It was just the experience she needed to pursue an eventual career in teaching.



CITY OF SWIFT CURRENT,  
SASKATCHEWAN

**Canada**

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Kylie with participants, at a drum circle, with or special guest.



Staff photo of Kylie.

“This was a great experience working one-on-one with kids, leading large groups of children, and working on my planning skills,” she says. “It was a super fun summer job, and just very valuable to my career.”

Payne was given the incredible opportunity to work as a Parks Play Leader for the city’s Summer Parks Play program, thanks to funding from the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association’s Youth Employment Experience (YEE) program. This program, funded by the Government of Canada, is designed to build skills and remove barriers to employment for youth. The program further builds capacity in the parks and recreation sector by providing mentorship support to each youth throughout their work experience.

As the Parks Play Leader, Payne was responsible for planning activities for the program’s different themes each week and coordinating with other leaders. She also set up outdoor activities for the campers to enjoy, and lead them through these activities during their day at the program.

She says one of the most valuable skills she learned was planning the program’s weekly activities.

“Since I really want to become a teacher, it was extremely valuable to collaborate with others and lead large groups,” Payne says. “I didn’t have a lot of experience with that and when I started. I wasn’t the most confident, but this gave me the opportunity to take on a more leadership role. Now I feel more confident that I can do that in a classroom setting.”

Krista Caswell, the community recreation coordinator for the City of Swift Current, oversees the community’s summer

programs including the Summer Parks Play program — which is offered free-of-charge to Swift Current residents.

She says that the funding was “huge” because the free summer program is important to many families in the community.

“For a lot of family members, this is a way for them to make sure their kids are safe in the summer,” Caswell says. “If we don’t have funding to cover the costs of staff or even just the program itself, we would have to start charging participants, and we don’t want to do that.”

She adds that the funding meant that the municipality could hire enthusiastic and bright employees, like Payne, who could deliver its recreational programming successfully.

“Kylie was a great member of our team,” Caswell says, adding that the program had a wonderful group of leaders. “Everyone got along great this summer and they all kind of fed off each other. It was great seeing them in the parks and excelling at different skill sets. When you needed someone to calm the kids down, that was definitely Kylie’s talent — she was able to de-escalate situations when things would get heated with the kids.”

Caswell says she also saw incredible growth in Payne — including gaining more confidence as the summer progressed.

“This funding was absolutely fantastic. It allowed us to have great staff and offer mentorship to youth like Kylie,” she says. 🍁