



Summer job gives PEI youth “unforgettable” experience

SHANE BERNABE DESCRIBES HIS SUMMER job as an unforgettable experience.

As Recreation PEI’s go!PEI Experience Officer, he had the opportunity to explore the province’s free recreational activities — including hiking, kayaking and CrossFit — and record these experiences for locals and visitors alike.



RECREATION PEI,
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Canada

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Shane hanging out in the office.



Shane trying rock climbing at Red Rock Climbing wall.

“It meant a lot to me that I was the one chosen for this job,” says Bernabe. “This experience helped me explore not only other places in PEI — but also myself, and what I’m capable of doing.”

The University of Prince Edward Island student was given this opportunity during the summer of 2023 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.

When he started his job as Recreation PEI’s go!PEI Experience Officer, Bernabe was tasked with researching different activities available across PEI that promote active living for no or little cost. He emailed organizations and team coaches to schedule a time to try their activities, and documented the experience on video which was used on go!PEI’s social media accounts, including the new TikTok account that he created for the organization.

“From June until August, I went out once or twice a week to do some activities and on other days that I wasn’t outside, I was at the office editing videos,” Bernabe says.

He adds that this work taught him many different concrete skills, such as how to edit videos and use technology.

But he also says he learned an important skill that will help him in his future: time management.

“I learned to divide the work I needed to do each day because most of the time after doing an activity, I left with a

bunch of videos to compile and edit together and usually the videos would be for different activities,” Bernabe explains.

This skill will be particularly important for Bernabe when he embarks on his future career as a doctor.

“I’ve always wanted to become a doctor, and in that profession time management is very important,” he says. “This job gave me a great start with learning time management.”

Valerie Vuillemot, Executive Director of Recreation PEI, says the funding helped the small organization add an extra staff member to help support their communications initiatives — as well as give some staff members the opportunity to be mentors.

“We wouldn’t have been able to produce these videos without the CPRA funding for sure,” Vuillemot says. “It also helped Shane’s mentors manage another staff person for the first time. They’ve never had that opportunity before.”

She adds that Bernabe was perfect for the job because he was willing to try new things — even an all-seniors fitness class.

“Shane is such a fun guy, which is why we hired him,” Vuillemot says. “He really just threw himself right into the job.”

Bernabe says that overall, he was grateful for a unique job experience that wouldn’t have otherwise been possible — particularly for someone his age.

“This was my first real job that wasn’t in the fast-food industry. It meant a lot to me,” he says. “The change in environment, especially in the summer, and the opportunity to try and learn new things meant a great deal.” 🍁