

Jordan Takkiruuq's eventful summer

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July 21, 2018

“All days are full.”

That's how Gjoa Haven's Jordan Takkiruuq described his eventful stay at SHAD, a month-long entrepreneurial program that took him to the Mount Allison University campus in Sackville, N.B. in June.

Swimming in the Atlantic ocean; tagging fish; eating lobster; identifying invertebrates; practising fly fishing; unicycling; candle-making; learning about salmon stocks, sea levels and tides; day trips to Hopewell Rocks, N.B., Fundy National Park and Prince Edward Island – these are just some of the many highlights that Takkiruuq has experienced. There have also been numerous lectures on physics, biology, the science of music and business fundamentals, among others.



Jordan Takkirug has spent most of July in Sackville, N.B. with SHAD, an entrepreneurial program. He's been to the Maritimes several times before as his mom Susan Hillier hails from Nova Scotia. Jordan said his fellow program participants, mostly from the south, are captivated to hear that his dad Jacob Takkirug recently slayed a polar bear and Jordan ate some of the meat. photo courtesy of Jordan Takkirug

Much of the subject matter has fascinated him as it's in line with his future aspirations.

"I'd like to pursue a career in the sciences, specifically environmental science," said Takkirug, a 17-year-old who will enter Grade 12 at Qiqirtaq Ilihakvik this year.

Some of the activities, like unicycling, weren't as appealing, at least not initially, he admitted.

"That's what SHAD really promotes – getting out of your comfort zone," he said.

Socialization is also strongly encouraged, he said, noting his 47 counterparts on campus.

"I've really enjoyed it. We're more than halfway through the program and I know I still have a lot friends to make and a lot of connections to build, but I know I'll get there," he said.

Takkirug is the only SHAD participant from Nunavut. He's been asked a few times about sleeping in an iglu and riding with a dog team, but he said some of his cohort are familiar with current events and politics in the North and they probe him on food prices, housing issues, power generation, language and culture.

He was planning to further educate them with a presentation on how climate change impacts Nunavut.

"As a local, how climate change has affected me, that's what I want to enlighten people on," he said.

Erin Penney, a program director with SHAD, certainly appreciates Takkirug's presence and his perspective, referring to him as studious, hardworking and insightful.

"Jordan embodies everything that we want to see in a SHAD participant. While many students take a few days to adapt to the business and rigour of the program, Jordan seemed to happily jump right in," said Penney. "(He) also has a great sense of humour. He is lighthearted and his jokes never fail to leave us all with a smile on our faces."

Takkirug learned of SHAD last year while attending the Canada-Wide Science Fair in Regina. To raise the several thousand dollars needed to attend, he sold Rice Krispie squares, Kool-Aid and pop. He added that he's very thankful to the businesses that made donations as well.

The program itself relies on fees, government grants and public and corporate donations to maintain operations. For the curious, SHAD isn't an acronym. It was named after a creek in Aurora, Ont., where the program launched in 1980.

Takkirug has enjoyed the experience in New Brunswick so much that he's planning to become an assistant director with SHAD in the future.

"I just love the program," he said.