Increasing Capacity in Community-Centred Programs -
How a Nova Scotian Environmental Charity is Utilizing
Student Employment to Empower Local Change

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Executive Summary

Background

Community-centred programs (CCPs) are recognized as an effective tool to support grassroots change. Yet the organizations which typically facilitate CCPs are often overworked and understaffed. Student employment is recognized as a mutually beneficial, low-cost strategy to increase the capacity of these important programs.

Purpose

We present two case study projects from the Ecology Action Centre that employ students to empower local action: the Pop-Up Bike Hub (PUBH) Mini and the Eelgrass & Blue Carbon Project. Through consultations with program supervisors, community partners, and past interns we reflect on the student experience and identify key factors contributing to their success. Further, we offer a range of targeted recommendations for the future integration of paid student employees in other CCPs.

Pop-Up Bike Hub Mini

The PUBH Mini is an electric cargo bike loaded with cycling repair supplies. In the summer interns travel across the Halifax Regional Municipality on the PUBH Mini to provide free bike repairs and cycling education to their five local community hubs.

- During consultations community partners praised the PUBH Mini for being self-sufficient and widely accessible to residents.

As of 2022, the team has been employing two full-time interns from May to August to increase the EAC Transportation team's capacity and allow for the operations of the PUBH Mini.

- The team offers a comprehensive two-week-long training module, including cycling education, bike repairs, and route planning.
- Students reported leaving their internships with an increased sense of confidence, refined skills, and a strengthened desire to work in community-centred work.

Eelgrass & Blue Carbon Project

The Eelgrass & Blue Carbon project is a multifaceted CCP that collaborates with the citizen scientists and community-led watershed groups to study, preserve, and restore Atlantic Canada's eelgrass meadows.

- Watershed group leaders shared how the project has enabled them to expand their monitoring activities.

Since 2021, the Marine team has hired an intern from May to August to coordinate eelgrass programming. By the end of the summer the student effectively facilitates the CCP on their own, engaging in fieldwork and leading research methodology workshops.

- Students initially spend one-to-two weeks closely shadowing their manager. The Marine team takes a personalized approach to supervision, adapting support to individual needs.

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- The consulted student reported the internship cemented teachings from their undergraduate studies and bolstered their desire to be involved with community models moving forward.

Key Findings

Consultations with program facilitators, interns, and community patterns underpin research that states student employment within CCPs is mutually beneficial to all program stakeholders. We found;

- Seasonally hiring students allows organizations to increase capacity in high-demand periods.
- Work experience within CCPs may foster personal growth and shape an individual's aspirations.

Our work contributes to existing literature discussing student evolvement in CCPs by highlighting the unique benefits of paid positions. We determined that paid employment opportunities can assist program facilitators in acquiring qualified, passionate, full-time staff.

Recommendations

When hiring students in CCPs we recommend:

- Where possible, organizations seek out employees based on soft skills and character traits rather than hard skills.
- Employers utilize government-funded internship programs to pay employees.

A thorough training period and clear work plan can prevent students from making mistakes in the field. Training should be considered an investment for program supervisors. CCPs may train students in a multitude of ways.

- For CCPs hiring multiple students at the same time, a structured training period is beneficial. Training multiple students at once allows students to learn from one another.
- For programs hiring a single student, training may be shaped depending on the individual's needs and existing skill set.
- Organizations should incorporate feedback from past interns into their training practices.

To ensure students are most effectively supported within CCPs we recommend:

- Students are provided with hands-on learning/field experiences.
- Supervisors instill significant trust and responsibility in students.
- Supervisors allocate varying responsibilities to their interns, adapting roles based on personal goals.
- Program supervisors, community partners, and students engage in meaningful and constant communication throughout the program's lifespan

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Background

Community-centred programming has long been recognized as a tool to support grass-roots change. These unique programs consider the values, resources, and environments unique to a local community. Further, they not only integrate local knowledge, but centre community input throughout their entire lifespan. Governance officials, non-profits, and Indigenous communities alike, are increasingly employing community-centred programs (CCPs) within their communities to mitigate symptoms of the global climate crisis. Student workers form the backbone of many CCPs within the non-profit sector. A link was made between student engagement and community impact by reflecting on existing literature. However, there exists a gap in research that studies the unique conditions and benefits of paid student employment in non-profits. There is a need to explore the experiences and impacts of paid student interns in CCPs.

For several years now, the Ecology Action Centre (EAC), a non-profit charity based in Mi'kma'ki/Nova Scotia, Canada, has found that the employment of student interns is critical to the work they do. The student roles have always been community centred. Students are hired from various disciplines, bringing a variety of skills and assets to their projects. The EAC then provides the students with the training and tools needed to successfully support their CCP. When done right, community-based programming can offer new experiences, and students can gain new perspectives, helping them to better understand the community and become more culturally aware. After completing their contract, many students use this work to shape their future careers and their outlook in their chosen fields.

Our report reflects on two programs from the EAC: the Pop-Up Bike Hub Mini and the Eelgrass & Blue Carbon Project. Through one-on-one consultations with project coordinators, we provide insight into the organization, management, and training of EAC's student interns. Further, drawing on discussions with past student interns, we examine how students benefit from their experience in CCPs, and offer recommendations for the future management of student employees. This report is intended to guide other similar projects, teaching them how to leverage paid student workers in their CCPs in a manner that best supports students and promotes sustainable social change.

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Literature Review

In this literature review, we examine three key themes associated with student involvement in CCPs. First, we investigate how CCPs are defined within peer-reviewed literature and further, how researchers communicate their benefits to local communities. Next, the review analyzes the various ways students are employed under CCPs. Finally, we examine how student workers benefit from their involvement in these important programs.

Theme One – Understanding Community-Centred Programming

Existing literature emphasizes a need to move away from Western-centric approaches to addressing social, economic, and environmental disparities (Canie et al., 2024; Chung-Do et al., 2019). Historically, traditional social programs have employed facilitators external to a target community to carry out programming. Yet, such processes have led to power imbalances and ethical breaches among stakeholders (Chung-Do et al., 2019). They have additionally been largely unsuccessful in promoting ecosystem protection (Gérin-Lajoie et al., 2018), have failed to provide social support for Indigenous communities (Chung-Do et al., 2019), and have even perpetuated systemic barriers to African, Caribbean, and Black (ACB) communities (Canie et al., 2024). CCPs have been identified as important tools for enacting ethical and culturally appropriate action on a local level (Canie et al., 2024; Chung-Do et al., 2019).

Community-centred programming, also referred to as community-based programming, is widely discussed in literature. Existing studies exemplify that in most cases, a CCP is formed when a community is identified as having a social, economic, or environmental disadvantage. A CCP can be established to fill existing gaps in programming, resources, and support for a target community (Carrier, 2023; Main, 2011). It is essential that from its origin, a CCP integrates local perspectives and traditional methods of service development (Carrier, 2023; Chung-Do et al., 2019; Shandas & Messer, 2008). Meaningful, community consultation has been found to improve the results of CCPs and ensure resources are effectively targeted to meet local goals (Drews, 2017; Shandas & Messer, 2008). This is particularly true if consultations are completed before program initiation (Dressel, Steinborn, & Holt, 2014). Program

facilitators might utilize focus groups (Shandas & Messer, 2008) or a voting system to determine the top priorities of a program (Chung-Do et al., 2019).

Canie et al. (2024) build upon this concept by highlighting that groundwork is particularly important when working with historically under-represented or disadvantaged communities. They explain that "professionals need to educate themselves about local ACB communities, including histories and contexts, before engaging" (Canie et al., 2024). Service providers should work to uncover and unlearn their biases while striving to create an anti-racist programming environment (Canie et al., 2024). One technique that may be used to ensure a CCP is ethical, is to conduct communication in a safe and culturally relevant manner (Chung-Do et al., 2019). For instance, service providers may conduct community consultation over meals (Chung-Do et al., 2019) or through frequenting local neighbourhood events (Belkiewitz et al., 2023). Ultimately, protocols to ensure ethically sound community engagement must be co-developed and grounded in community preferences (Canie et al., 2024; Chung-Do et al., 2019).

Meaningful and frequent communication between community members and program facilitators must continue throughout the lifespan of a CCP (Shandas & Messer, 2008). Feedback from the target community can be used to adjust program approaches and enhance levels of trust among program participants (Carrier, 2023; Chung-Do et al., 2019). For instance, in a study of family-focused early learning programs, Doyle and Li (2021) described how they adjusted their activities to target a wider age range of individuals so that siblings could be actively involved, and the program could better support families. Researchers explained that "participants... adapted programs previously developed by their organizations based on the needs of the families and resources available" (Doyle & Li, 2021). Similarly, in a case study on a community-based transportation program, Lee (2022) explained that staff adapted their program to increase support for Latinx older adults who were facing difficulties navigating community resources and accessing health care (Lee, 2022). Their research team expanded the program to offer hands-on support from bilingual students, allowing for increased guidance around transportation options and online applications (Lee, 2022). Such examples demonstrate that CCPs may best promote innovation by being flexible and listening to community input (Shandas & Messer, 2008).

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Existing research clearly emphasizes the benefits of CCPs on program participants. Modern studies have exemplified that following program interventions target populations have experienced feelings of increased determination, pride (Drews, 2017), and emotional support (Lee, 2022). Furthermore, CCPs have been found to build community capacity and empower residents to get involved in the restoration of their own neighbourhoods (Gérin-Lajoie et al., 2018). Local involvement in CCPs promotes ownership over projects and ensures program benefits live on past initial program interventions (Gérin-Lajoie et al., 2018; Shandas & Messer, 2008). In addition, participants often leave CCPs with a new skill that can be shared with others in the community, thus expanding the reach of program benefits (Chandler et al., 2015).

Theme Two – Examining Student Involvement in CCPs

Community groups, non-profits, charities, and other like-minded institutions are notoriously under-supported and understaffed (Knapp et al., 2017; Vinokur-Kaplan et al., 1994). As a result of competitive funding circles (Ringenbach, Working Paper) many non-profits struggle to retain adequate resources for programming (Judijanto et al., 2024). Further, scarce finances mean non-profit employees are commonly paid less than their for-profit counterparts (Knapp et al., 2017; McMullen & Schellenberg, 2003). Low relative pay and limited job advancement opportunities make it difficult for non-profits to attract and retain skilled employees (Knapp et al., 2017). As a result, non-profit employees are forced to take on additional responsibilities and carry burdens that they wouldn't otherwise be required to handle in a for-profit organization. Accordingly, the literature reports non-profit work as being inherently demanding and emotionally draining (Judijanto et al., 2024; Robichau et al., 2024). There is a clear need for increased support among non-profits.

Students – meaning high-school or post-secondary students – are increasingly sought out to lessen the load of CCPs (Hopkins & Dowell, 2022). Generally, students act as technical experts for a CCP (Shandas & Messer, 2008), though they might also work as mentors or researchers (Belkiewitz et al., 2023). Nonetheless, the literature indicates that students can increase a CCPs' capacity (Gazley et al., 2012; Tavanti & Wilp, 2018). Students offer an important alternative to volunteers as they possess existing, degree-specific knowledge necessary for many positions (Chetty & Bhagwan, 2021). They

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additionally can require less training than volunteers and typically join programs as full-time employees (Worrall, 2007). Case studies have also indicated that student involvement can increase a program's/ non-profit's visibility in the community and on campus and thus can bring more attention to the social challenge at hand (Close et al., 2011; Gazley et al., 2012). Numerous articles have described the partnerships between post-secondary schools and community organizations as mutually beneficial (Wodika & Rhodes, 2019; Chetty & Bhagwan, 2021; Hartman, 2016; Nichols et al., 2004).

Through our literature review, we identified multiple ways students might be involved in a CCP. First, service-learning opportunities are among the most common drivers of student involvement. As Gazley et al., (2012) describe, service-learning occurs when "students are involved in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs through a course or other credit-bearing assignment" (Gazley et al., 2012). is a form of experiential learning (Schneider, 2022) that is used to apply student's hard skills, and thus deepen their understanding of course content (Gazley et al., 2012; Schneider, 2022). Students are encouraged to reflect on their time with the CCP to gain the most effective experience (Tavanti & Wilp, 2018). Typically, students derive no form of financial compensation from such placements but instead are motivated by course credits (Close et al., 2011; Tavanti & Wilp, 2018). Among CCP facilitators students are recognized as reliable employees of non-profits because their programs mandate minimum placement lengths (Worrall, 2007). Second, the research describes how students might collaborate with a CCP through volunteering. Volunteering is similar to service-learning opportunities in that it is common among young workers (Hopkins & Dowell, 2022). As Hopkins & Dowell (2022) describe "voluntary employment can give young workers the experience, skills, and confidence needed to retain paid employment." This indicates volunteering is typically used as a means of breaking into the workforce. Finally, students might be paid employees of a non-profit (Shandas & Messer, 2008). This could be in the form of a paid internship or a Co-operative education program. Through our literature review, we identified paid positions as being the least studied form of student involvement in CCPs.

Theme Three – Exploring How CCPs Benefit Student Workers

There is minimal research on the experience of students in CCPs that distinguishes paid/unpaid student positions. Therefore, during this literature review, we will be discussing students working under CCPs more broadly as "student workers." In this final section of our literature review, we examine why students choose to work for these important programs. Furthermore, we highlight how student workers might benefit from their time at a CCP.

Exposure to 'real-world experience' is the most widely discussed driver for student work in CCPs (Close et al., 2011; Tavanti & Wilp, 2018; Wodika & Rhodes, 2019). In a study completed by Wodika & Rhodes (2019), students communicated that university programs lacked meaningful field experience. This perspective is shared by students and academic institutions alike. In response to observed gaps in education, post-secondary schools are increasingly encouraging students to get involved in civic engagement projects (Gazley et al., 2012; Hartman, 2016). For instance, in a case study on a family-centred harm reduction program Belkiewitz et al., (2023) explain how occupational therapy students were encouraged to practice trauma-informed care (TIC) while mentoring local youth. Students had previously studied TIC principles through their school coursework, thus allowing them an opportunity to cement their teachings through practice (Belkiewitz et al., 2023). Through this program students were additionally exposed to new topics – i.e. substance use disorder – that they had not previously discovered in university (Belkiewitz et al., 2023). Therefore, CCPs appear to complement the teachings traditionally gained in academic institutions.

The literature emphasizes work experience in a CCP can function as a stepping stone toward an individual's professional career. For instance, in a case study by McLean et al. (2018), researchers analyzed how the program impacted participants of a four-week Health Disparities Summer Internship Program. They found that "nearly half (47.8%) reported more interest in a career that includes health disparities research" following their internship (McLean et al., 2018). This finding indicates that fieldwork can help deepen a student's understanding of their practice and thus help guide career aspirations (Fisher et al., 2018). Furthermore, some student workers move on to extend their time with their respective CCP. For instance, Nichols et al. (2004) explained how a doctoral student internship at the Youth Emergency Shelter of Peterborough led them

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to work with the organization past their internship and inspired them to become a board member (Nichols et al., 2004). Students may additionally experience increased professional technical skills (Fisher et al., 2018; Nichols et al., 2004) such as community action organizing, verbal communication (Close et al., 2011), and leadership capabilities (Hartman, 2016). Skill attainment is an important benefit of CCPs as it may not only strengthen student workers' sense of confidence (Sax et al., 1999; McLean et al., 2018) but may also increase a student's employability in their field (Fisher et al., 2018; Schneider, 2022). Research has found employers prefer hiring students who have learned experientially and have worked on real-world projects (Tavanti & Wilp, 2018). Professional development is an important benefit of CCPs.

In addition to technical skills, CCPs allow student workers to unlock elements of personal growth that they may not otherwise gain through traditional classroom teachings (Hartman, 2016). As Hartman (2016) explains, student workers can "become whole working with causes that transcend and expand their sense of self-interest." In a CCP student workers are directly exposed to ethnically and socioeconomically diverse communities (Pellerano et al., 2023), with whom they build meaningful relationships (Chetty & Bhagwan, 2021). They might additionally gain an understanding of the social ills burdening communities (Chetty & Bhagwan, 2021), such as environmental justice issues (Close et al., 2011). In response, researchers have observed students develop greater social responsiveness (Chetty & Bhagwan, 2021; Fisher et al., 2018), and express enhanced interest in topics of diversity and multiculturalism (Sax et al., 1999). One example of this important benefit is found in a case study of the Health Disparities Internship Program, where the CCP "increased students' awareness of social determinants of health and... fostered their interest in improving the health of minority populations" (McLean et al., 2018). Therefore, critically engaging in global dilemmas allows students the opportunity to positively support local change (Belkiewitz et al., 2023).

Purpose Statement

In light of the global climate crisis, there is a never-ending demand for social programming to address environmental and socioeconomic disparities. Existing research clearly emphasizes the benefits of CCPs. These important programs centre on

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the knowledge of their target communities, integrating meaningful collaboration in every step of their process. It is because of the unique structure of CCPs that they can complete social programming in a manner that is ethically and culturally appropriate. Yet, non-profits often function within a "do more with less" ethos, a problem which has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Robichau et al., 2024). We found multiple sources describing student workers as a 'mutually beneficial' partnership for CCPs. Students apply their academic teachings through real-world experiences and, in doing so, unlock elements of personal growth. CCPs simultaneously gain support and technical expertise from student workers, allowing them to most effectively drive social change. The integration of student workers can be considered a strategic practice for CCPs.

Our literature review found a wide array of research describing the experiences of service-learning opportunities and student volunteers within CCPs. Amongst this research were case studies that provided strategies for the management of student volunteers (Gazley et al., 2012) and the organization of educational placements (Tavanti & Wilp, 2018). However, there exists minimal research which reflects on the integration of paid student workers in CCPs. Paid employment opportunities are extremely beneficial for young professionals and are a valuable tool to encourage work within CCPs (Robichau et al., 2024). Research acknowledges the importance of proper training, supervisor support, and employment management in the success of non-profit work (Judijanto et al., 2024; Knapp et al., 2017). We believe the study of paid student workers in CCPs is a notable gap, worthy of exploration.

The purpose of this report is to provide an example of existing sustainable CCPs that rely on student employment. We aim to identify key factors contributing to the success of these students and discuss how the programs retain and support their employees. We offer two case studies of CCPs from the EAC: the Pop-Up Bike Hub Mini and the Eelgrass & Blue Carbon Project. Both programs have utilized paid student employees in the facilitation of their programming. In the analysis of these case studies, we strive to achieve three main goals:

1. To outline the ways the EAC organizes and trains their paid student interns.
2. To reflect on the experience of said students, emphasizing the perceived benefits and shortcomings of their internships.

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3. To offer a range of targeted recommendations for the future integration of student employees in other CCPs.

Research Methods

As was previously mentioned, the following report presents two case studies from the EAC: the Eelgrass & Blue Carbon Project and the PUBH Mini. Case studies are the most common qualitative approach to research in social sciences (Hyett et al., 2014; Thomas, 2011). They are used as a vehicle to capture and investigate the complexity of a phenomenon (Hyett et al., 2014; Thomas, 2011). In this instance, we present a 'collective instrumental case' – multiple cases observed holistically – to investigate the phenomenon of student employment within CCPs (Hyett et al., 2014). We draw from one-on-one semi-structured consultations as the primary source of data for this report. In total 10 consultations were conducted with three main stakeholder groups; (two) EAC staff members responsible for managing student interns on their respective projects, (five) community partners of the CCPs, and finally, (three) individuals who previously interned with the EAC. Three general scripts were created for the purpose of the three stakeholder groups, remaining the same for the two case studies. This consultation structure created a basis for comparison between the two case studies. All scripts may be found in the Appendix.

Consultations with EAC staff members and community partners were completed as a means of conceptualizing the phenomena at hand. These discussions allowed insight into the histories of the CCPs, further uncovering EAC's approaches to training and supervising their interns. Because the authors of this report work directly with EAC staff members and the community partners of the PUBH Mini, such participants were contacted directly. A staff member from the Marine team was employed to conduct consultations - using our script - with Eelgrass & Blue Carbon Project community partners to ensure their comfort. Following these consultations, past interns were contacted by EAC staff members via email with an invitation for consultation. The majority of interns agreed to interview, however, a select few did not respond. These discussions are used to illustrate the experiences and reflections of students in CCPs.

Consultation scripts were designed to last 10 to 45 minutes. Participants were offered the choice to engage in discussions in person, over the phone, or on a virtual

calling platform (i.e. Microsoft Teams). At the beginning of our consultations, participants were encouraged to pause questions to gain clarification and/or skip any that they were not comfortable answering. We additionally asked all stakeholders if they were comfortable being recorded to quote them in the report. For participant confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used in replacement of the participant's real names. The professionalism of our consultations and the general ethics of this report are of the utmost importance to us.

Case studies include a case description and case themes (Hyett et al., 2014). To begin, the case studies describe each CCP and the history of involvement of student interns. We then summarize the consultations with past interns of the respective projects. Finally, this report presents a comparative analysis of interviews with students who participated in the community-based programming initiatives. The goal of the analysis is to highlight the divergent approaches and takeaways from the program, as well as the impact of the experience on the students' future paths.

Results - PUBH Mini

An Overview of the PUBH Mini

The EAC's Transportation team strives to improve equitable access to sustainable transportation modes in Nova Scotia. Further, the team aims to provide people with viable alternatives to single-driver trips, advocating for policies which advance safer transportation for all road users and pedestrians. As part of this mission, they specialize in transportation modes and infrastructure that reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and promote healthy, safe communities. Cycling infrastructure is an important component of this work.

For rural Nova Scotians, access to bike repair can be limited by long distances, expensive fees, and inconvenient transportation options. The EAC has been working alongside equity-deserving communities in an effort to improve access to bike repairs. Notably, in 2020 the Transportation team established the Pop-Up Bike Hub (PUBH). The PUBH is a mobile community-centred bike repair and cycling education program. The program operates out of a 7.5' by 14' trailer, that contains the tools and resources necessary to provide bike repairs and bike maintenance education. Program facilitators travel across Nova Scotia to partnering communities to offer free bike repair

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pop-ups and develop programming that promotes a culture of active transportation (AT).

This report focuses on the PUBH Mini project, depicted in Figure 1. Inspired by the success of the community partnerships developed with the PUBH trailer, in 2022 the EAC piloted the PUBH Mini. Instead of a trailer, the PUBH Mini is an electric cargo bike loaded with cycling repair supplies. The PUBH Mini program collaborates with communities in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) to provide resources like those of the PUBH trailer. Yet, the PUBH Mini helps to overcome the trailer's size and capacity restraints. The Mini additionally produces far fewer GHG emissions and has increased the program's accessibility to urban neighbourhoods within a 45-minute bike ride from the EAC office. By providing free and convenient access to bike repair knowledge and safe cycling education, the program aims to foster a culture of AT via a mode of Transportation that is active and sustainable.

Figure 1. Photo depicting the PUBH Mini and a summer student repairing a bike.

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PUBH Mini Community Partners

Since its pilot launch in 2022, the PUBH Mini has maintained partnerships with five neighbourhoods/communities in the HRM. The PUBH Mini partners with local organizations such as family resource centres and recreation centres. The community partners are core hubs for youth and other community members, with longstanding histories in the community, making them ideal stakeholders to advocate for local needs. Figure 2. illustrates a lineup of bikes which formed at one of the program's community hubs, as residents waited for services from the PUBH Mini. The community partners of the PUBH Mini are recognized for their role in organizing and facilitating the program. When the Transportation team organizes the PUBH Mini they engage in comprehensive meetings with community partners. These meetings gauge interest in the project and determine how the program can be set up to create the greatest impact. The PUBH Mini's community partners recognize CCPs as an important tool to increase equity in their communities. They emphasize when designing CCPs, it is crucial that programming centres on local needs and desires. Each community we spoke with had different needs to fulfill. Without meaningful consultation, these needs could be overlooked or addressed in ways that are not accessible or relevant to community members.

Figure 2. Photo depicting a lineup of bikes waiting to be repaired by the PUBH Mini team.

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Through our consultations, we gained insights into the realities of AT in the three partnering communities. We found local adults typically use and value all modes of transportation – i.e. driving, walking, biking, and busing. Whereas, walking and biking are relied on as the primary mode of transportation for youth. Yet, the community partners told us that many families cannot access bike repair services due to factors such as expensive repair fees and proximity to bike repair spaces. Accordingly, all three partners identified the PUBH Mini as an in-demand program.

During consultations with the community partners, the PUBH Mini was praised for being widely accessible to residents. The program does not involve a registration process and thus does not require residents to share their personal information. Furthermore, the PUBH Mini fully eliminates financial barriers to bike repairs and minimizes transportation obstacles. Partner A told us "The program fits so perfectly because it's centred around what the community needs and it's convenient for the PUBH Mini to be in our park... it's a challenge for some people to go far away but we have the PUBH Mini coming in." Partner C shared similar feelings about the program's accessibility stating very simply, "If you can just get here, then you're okay." Furthermore, community partners shared the PUBH Mini is particularly successful as a CCP because it does not put additional strains on any of the centres' already full-capacity staff. Partner A explained that "the program is self-sufficient... they run the program, I don't even need to be there. It's one of the only programs that we have here, where they bring everything." Overall, the consultations demonstrated satisfaction across all three partnering community organizations and positive feelings towards the EAC's interns who were facilitating the program.

Student Employment within PUBH Mini

The EAC's Transportation team has been hiring summer students since 2019. Originally, a summer student was brought in to help with the delivery of their safe cycling education program; Making Tracks, and over time, they expanded this practice to hire four student interns every summer. Supervisor A explained students are an important tool to help build the capacity of their team. To Supervisor A the integration of summer students is "really a bit of a no-brainer." By nature, the Transportation teams' cycling projects are largely seasonal. Thus, they incorporate summer interns as a

mechanism to build their team's capacity on a seasonal basis. Supervisor A further expanded on the decision to incorporate students as paid interns rather than volunteers. They told us the Transportation team has brought on student volunteers in the past. Yet, volunteering typically occurred in instances where students needed specific hours for a course credit and involved students working on a once-a-week basis. For the teams' summer projects, such as the PUBH Mini, they require full-time support. Accordingly, Supervisor A told us, "I don't think we would get much uptake if this was an unpaid internship." When employing interns, the EAC always strives to provide a living wage to their staff. This is not only important to them because it upholds their values as an organization but also because it makes them a competitive employer. Offering a living wage has allowed the Transportation team to source passionate and experienced interns.

As of 2022, the team has been employing two full-time interns from May to August to facilitate and manage the PUBH Mini's programming. Although the general requirements of the interns have remained the same – i.e. providing bike repairs and teaching community members basic repair skills, Supervisor A shared students' involvement can vary from intern to intern. The team hires students from a variety of academic and work backgrounds, lending them diverse skill sets. In some instances, interns have returned to work on the team for multiple summers. Returning students are able to maintain relationships with the team's community partners and typically develop extensive bike repair knowledge. Accordingly, supervisors often allocate varying responsibilities to their interns and adapt their roles based on the students' interests.

The Transportation team has evolved their job ads so that bike repair skills are no longer a requirement of the job. Interviews for the positions instead focus primarily on the community engagement portion of the role. Supervisor A emphasized that "there is a lot going on beneath the surface of bike repairs" – i.e. relationship building, community context and history – "so students need to be sensitive to the communities they are working for." The team recognizes that bike repair is a skill which can be taught, and therefore they instead seek out character traits in potential students, such as a keen attitude, enthusiasm, and empathy.

While the team no longer requires bike mechanic experience, they have simultaneously evolved their program to include more in-depth technical training. When the team first hired summer students, they began their positions just days before heading out to fix community bikes. At this time students were offered 'Making Tracks' training and approximately two days to shadow the PUBH Mini and Trailer staff. Following the initial years of student interns, the EAC encouraged students to provide feedback on their experiences and how they could be better supported. The Transportation team was keen to ensure students felt prepared for their internships. This feedback helped formulate their new and improved two-week comprehensive training session. Similar training is required by interns from the PUBH Mini and the PUBH trailer. Therefore, there are instances where all four interns engage in the training together, allowing returning students to offer their guidance to new interns. The training builds upon the 'Making Tracks' program while also teaching students about the histories of their community partners and the team's various projects. During training, interns are encouraged to review and alter the routes that they will be cycling along to access the PUBH Mini community hubs. For Supervisor A it was crucial that their students felt comfortable riding on the electric bikes and were able to safely navigate the HRM roads. Through test rides, students gain familiarity with the routes and learn how to load/ unload the cargo bike smoothly. Notably, students also spend over a week in a community bike repair space, "Bike Again", which aims to increase access to secondhand bikes, parts, and volunteering opportunities. During students' training, they shadow the shop's passionate volunteers, EAC staff, and past interns, stripping bikes, learning about bike anatomy, and developing their bike repair knowledge. Halfway through the training students are prompted to share what they feel they have been missing from the training. Thus, allowing the latter half of the training to be adapted to their specific needs. The EAC Transportation team has utilized their updated training regimen for two years as of the summer of 2024.

Supervisor A explained since introducing their updated training regiments, they have received positive feedback from students. Following their onboarding training, interns expressed they felt prepared for their roles and well-supported with any concerns or questions they may have had. During the training sessions students were further able to learn from one another and bond as a team. Supervisor A believes that

their training is particularly beneficial because "when students feel more confident in their skills, they can be more sensitive to participants' needs.... and take ownership over the role." In other words, when working on community bikes, the PUBH Mini interns can better adapt to what happens on the day, rather than being concerned over technical challenges. Supervisor A emphasized that a well-thought-out training period is one of the most important steps in making a student's internship with a CCP successful and positive.

Finally, Supervisor A highlighted the importance of relationship building amongst the EAC Transportation team's staff, interns, and PUBH Mini community partners. The Transportation team relies on students to be comfortable coming forward with concerns that arise day-to-day. Although the team prides itself on fostering a welcoming work environment, they have learned that not all students are comfortable expressing issues straight off the bat. Accordingly, they have made a great effort to do regular one-on-one check-ins, allowing students to bring up anything which might be bothering them. Furthermore, regarding the operation of the PUBH Mini Supervisor A explained shaping a strong relationship between the community partners and student interns is a top priority. Supervisor A noted, "For any organizations looking at hiring students for community-centred work, the key thing is strong relationships... or at the very least the commitment to building those community relationships." Throughout the PUBH Mini pop-up sessions, interns speak with community partners to ensure community needs are being met and the program is making a meaningful impact. Through continuous communication, CCPs can establish and maintain trusting relationships among all actors.

Student Experiences

We consulted two individuals who had previously worked with the EAC's PUBH Mini. The first student worked on the project from June to August of 2022. This was the first year the Transportation Team had hired interns to facilitate the project. At the time of their position, Student A was a first-year international student studying chemical engineering. Student A entered the internship with no prior work experience or background in CCPs. Before the internship, their understanding of CCPs revolved around the role of a knowledge keeper and teacher within the community, aiming to

preserve cultural practices. While reflecting on community-centred work they shared "Yeah, it's really changed myself and changed the way I look at other people's views, and it's given me a chance to learn how to listen to people." For Student A, the PUBH Mini internship was an opportunity to be pushed out of their comfort zone. They described being encouraged to try new things and reported feeling more "open-minded" to community-centred work following their position.

Student A emphasized the novelty of experiences they gained from the project, integrating them with their existing skillset to access new opportunities. During our consultation, Student A told us they learned the "skill of communication...how to deal with people, how to learn, and how to make people understand ideas." They expanded on this development saying "The position I did with the EAC gave me the skills and knowledge to work with Indigenous people... I'd never have that in my country." Following Student A's time with the EAC, they have been working on an Indigenous ecological project. Their current work draws heavily on their experiences and emphasizes the importance of preserving and learning from local cultural practices. Student A acknowledged that their EAC position is one of the reasons they were hired for their new role.

Although the student indicated an increased sense of confidence and a clearer direction for their future endeavours, they noted their experience was not without challenges. Student A described experiencing feelings of confusion and isolation while working on bike repairs. They told us "I had a really hard time learning how to fix bikes... I struggled to catch up with other teammates, they already knew how to fix bikes professionally." Student A hoped the EAC would integrate more thorough bike repair training for students, to leave students feeling more prepared for their roles. Student A found the overall internship to be fun and rewarding and believed introducing a structured bicycle repair training regimen would have furthered their experience working with the CCP.

The second student interned with the EAC from May to August of 2023. Student B had recently graduated from their undergrad in sustainability and urban planning, at the time of their internship. Contrary to the first student, Student B had worked for CCPs prior to the PUBH Mini. For Student B, working with the PUBH Mini only reaffirmed their love for community-led work. They described it as an approach to programming that

"instills a greater sense of trust in communities than traditional programming." While working in CCPs Student B approaches their work with a flexible attitude, telling us that "Sometimes your perception of how a program will roll out isn't necessarily the reality but that's okay... It is positive to go back to the drawing board and make sure that your work is having the greatest impact possible."

It is important to note that Student B received the updated two-week training program. Student B emphasized that the Making Tracks Safe Cycling program and bike repair training were particularly important for their success as an intern. They told us that time practicing repairs in the shop allowed students to make mistakes in the comfort of the shop, rather than in the field. They expanded on the importance of this training period by saying "It got me in the practice of the type of problem-solving required for bike mechanics, but also in the habit of knowing who I could ask questions to, and who I could go to for support on the team." Once their training was complete and Student B began the program rollout Student B viewed their experience with the program as a means of refining and realizing existing skills (i.e. research, engagement, and facilitation). Confidence-building and exposure to environments which aim to improve the representation of marginalized identities were additional key takeaways for them.

Student B's overall impression of their time in the community was extremely positive. They explained that they "truly believed in the work" the PUBH Mini was doing and enjoyed the experience of participating in meaningful change. Still, Student B recognized work in CCPs is at times, equally challenging as it is rewarding. While recalling their experience repairing bikes, they told us "There were some days where we'd have line-ups of people hoping to get their bikes fixed and we wouldn't even be able to get to anyone until the following week... it reminded me of the impacts these types of programs have, but also just the amount of work that still needs to be done." Working with the PUBH Mini reaffirmed their desire to work in urban planning with a focus on community engagement and public participation. Student B worked at the EAC Transportation team again in the fall of 2024 on another project.

Results - Eelgrass & Blue Carbon Project

An Overview of the Eelgrass & Blue Carbon Project

Eelgrass (Zostera marina) is found boarding Nova Scotia's coastlines in shallow, sheltered bays. It is the most common form of seagrass among all three of Canada's coasts and is recognized as an exceptionally culturally and environmentally relevant species. Eelgrass meadows support fisheries, serve as an important habitat for marine species and act as a physical protector against storm surges on coastlines. Eelgrass has additionally been recognized for its ability to sequester carbon along coastal sediments using its roots and rhizomes. Unfortunately, like many of our other coastal species, human activity is causing a decline in seagrass meadows across the globe. The EAC's Marine team recognizes there is an ever-growing need to study this impressive species. The 'Eelgrass & Blue Carbon' project is a multifaceted CCP that aims to study, preserve, and in some instances restore Atlantic Canada's eelgrass meadows. Through this work, the team advocates for the protection of eelgrass meadows and explores various methods of eelgrass restoration. Figures 3 & 4 depict an example of a pilot eelgrass restoration project from the EAC. Moreover, they partner with various local organizations to undertake eelgrass stewardship, monitoring and mapping projects.

Figure 3. Photo depicting an EAC employee harvesting eelgrass shoots & seeds from a donor bed to transplant in a degraded area.

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Figure 4. Photo depicting an EAC student intern harvesting eelgrass shoots & seeds from a donor bed to transplant in a degraded area.

In 2022, the Eelgrass & Blue Carbon project developed a shared eelgrass monitoring program with a coalition of watershed groups conducting conservation projects in their local areas. The coalition included six Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups in the Southern Gulf of St. Lawrence and Northumberland Strait region, including western Prince Edward Island and eastern New Brunswick. The EAC's Marine team has adopted an administrative role for the coalition and has strived to ensure the watershed groups have the resources, funding and support needed to continue their work. More specifically, the EAC has coordinated program development by facilitating collaborative discussions between the groups and organizing field research opportunities. Through this cross-sectoral collaboration, the EAC has strived to enhance our collective ability to conserve this valuable but under-appreciated coastal habitat.

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Eelgrass & Blue Carbon Project Community Partners

The EAC's watershed group partnerships are a crucial component of their work. The organization recognizes that eelgrass restoration begins locally, requiring support and involvement from communities and individuals who know their coastal ecosystems best. We spoke with two of the Marine team's community partners to better understand their experiences with the Eelgrass & Blue Carbon Project and student employees.

Partner D is an organization whose primary objective is to prioritize the ecological welfare of its neighbouring watershed, emphasizing both freshwater and tidal water areas. One of the key community services provided by the organization is the implementation of a swim watch program during the summer season, enabling the monitoring of various swimming areas. Through collaborative efforts with its partners, the organization actively shares information and works towards maintaining the safety of the beaches. With a strong reliance on community volunteers, the organization involves residents in monitoring activities, including paddling for monitoring and managing waste lines. Furthermore, the organization plays a vital role in providing emergency response services during the winter months, serving as a crucial resource for the region.

The integration of the EAC has allowed Partner D to expand the diversity of initiatives undertaken in their organization. As Partner D explained, "We're thrilled... for the first time, we might get a more accurate picture of the status of seagrass meadows in our watershed... it's been a tremendous partnership, we're delighted with the engagement." The Marine team's interns have worked with Partner D to expand their mapping and carbon monitoring initiatives. In the future, Partner D hopes to encourage greater marine stewardship in their community, engaging more residents through an expanded social media presence.

Partner E's main mission is to maintain biodiversity within their local watershed, focusing on the linkage between animals, wildlife, and the health of drinking water and water resources. The organization offers services to the broader community by sharing practices, offering outreach on wetlands, water quality, and boat safety, and collaborating with communities and partnerships within and outside the watershed to compare data and address concerns. Their community is involved in industries like blueberry agriculture, peat harvesting, clam harvesting, and aquaculture.

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Partner E expressed their organization's greatest challenge has been staffing shortages, deterring outreach and education efforts. With their other partnerships, support typically revolves around equipment. During our consultation, Partner E explained support from the EAC has allowed them the capacity to continue their seagrass net monitoring and has assisted in connecting their organization to their community members. Furthermore, they shared that their partnership provides them with increased "methodologies, a library of resources... different perspectives and different ways to collect information on biodiversity." Overall, Partner E expressed having a "positive" and "smooth" experience working with the EAC and their interns.

Student Employees of the Eelgrass & Blue Carbon Project

In 2022 the Marine team had just one team member spearheading the Eelgrass & Blue Carbon project. Yet, early on the team recognized that hiring an intern would be beneficial in building their program capacity over the summer months. Summer is the primary field season for eelgrass research. Accordingly, in May 2023, the Marine team hired a summer student to support the Southern Gulf watershed group's involvement in the Eelgrass & Blue Carbon project. The internship requires a student to act as the main point of contact and support for the watershed groups during the summer. With the supervision of their manager, the student fulfills the summer-season correspondence, logistical work and program planning for the project. As Student C explained, by the end of the summer, "the student should be effectively managing the project on their own... will have built strong relationships with the community partners and will have worked in a very hands-on way." Furthermore, the intern takes over most of the fieldwork for the team. Students travel to eelgrass meadows across the Maritimes to complete research, monitoring, and conservation-oriented activities. They are additionally responsible for the operations of the community partners' eelgrass skill-building and research methodology workshops. Following the success of the team's first summer student, they hired a second intern in summer 2024. The students' roles have not significantly changed over the years.

Supervisor B aspires to introduce students to environments and tasks they might not otherwise access in a traditional classroom setting. The Marine team provides students with "an opportunity to do work that's fun, engaging, meaningful, and a rich,

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cultural experience." During eelgrass fieldwork, students travel to work alongside communities. Here, students gain experience applying their skills in a way which serves the environment and makes a meaningful difference to the community partner. Supervisor B also highlighted the importance of engaging the students in the organization's culture. They told us they spent time "making sure they get to experience all that working at the EAC has to offer… there are great people there. It's a cool culture and there are a lot of opportunities to do stuff outside." For this reason, Supervisor B explained that managing fully remote interns can be extremely challenging. Supervisor B believes remote interns often miss out on the cultural experiences of the EAC, making it harder to fully engage them in their work. The Marine team has chosen to integrate both summer interns working on the Eelgrass & Blue Carbon project as in-person interns, with some opportunities for online work.

We asked Supervisor B why the Marine team decided to incorporate the students under a paid position rather than a volunteer opportunity. Although Supervisor B is grateful for the work volunteers complete within the EAC they explained the EAC can not place the same expectations on volunteers as they would a full-time staff member. Supervisor B told us, "I am not able to work with a volunteer in the same way as a paid person... they're giving their time for free, in my opinion, I feel like... what right do we have to dictate how much they're supposed to do and when they're supposed to do it?" At the EAC the paid interns typically commit to 30 hours of work a week. There is more latitude for paid employees to work hard, drive improvement in the organization, and build strong working relationships with community partners. Supervisor B recognizes the importance of providing a fair wage to students.

When seeking out interns the Marine team pursues students who demonstrate relevant experience in their application. First and foremost, Supervisor B looks for students capable of coordination work, community organizing, and professional correspondence. They additionally seek out students who are comfortable in a coastal setting – i.e. individuals with kayaking, first aid, or outdoor safety experience – as well as students who understand the basics of Atlantic Canada's coastal ecosystem dynamics. Finally, Supervisor B requires students to understand social and environmental justice issues. The team commonly works with Mi'kmaq communities– the largest Indigenous group local to areas across Atlantic Canada – and therefore, an appreciation for what

it means to support Indigenous communities and be stewards of the land is an asset. Still, Supervisor B recognizes an extensive professional background is uncommon directly following one's undergrad studies. Therefore, the team strives to find individuals who are keen and capable of adapting to their role within a short-term work contract. Further, when the opportunity presents itself, the Marine team likes to allow volunteers to progress their volunteer experience into a paid position. Thus far the Marine team has been very happy with the quality of their interns. Supervisor B expressed the students have been "very personable people who are enthusiastic about helping." For Supervisor B and the Marine team, summer students have made an invaluable contribution to the project.

When summer interns are first brought onto the team, they must complete a series of digital onboarding seminars, covering topics such as organizational history, communications, and operational information. All employees of the organization are required to complete the seminars. Although the Marine team does not have a highly standardized training regimen external to the EAC's seminars, the team incorporates training specific to the Eelgrass & Blue Carbon project. Supervisor B explained they like to spend one to two weeks working very closely with the student. This time is used to provide them with informational materials summarizing the history of the project. They also spend time building a work plan together to ensure the student understands their requirements, associated timelines, and how they can be successful in their role. During these first couple of weeks, the intern and their manager organically get to know one another and iron out any foreseen challenges. The team offers one-on-one training when there are specific tasks the intern doesn't understand. For instance, they might spend three days on a kayaking program or learning to write a brief/ policy document. An adaptive, person-based approach to training has been successful in ensuring the Marine team's interns are prepared to spearhead the Eelgrass & Blue Carbon project.

Once the students have completed their initial training, their supervisor continues to work alongside them to ensure the students feel qualified to perform their duties. When working with students Supervisor B explained that communication has been their greatest challenge, both between the interns and manager, but also the interns and community partners. Accordingly, Supervisor B spends time with students at the onset to ensure there is a strong basis of communication, and that expectations around

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communication are clear. Communication ensures students are accountable for their work, the project, and themselves. Supervisor B additionally encourages students to check in and reflect on their plans before fulfilling tasks. Thus, allowing them to identify inconsistencies in the student's expertise required for the position and ensure students are taught residual skills. For Supervisor B managing students is about walking the fine line between closely supervising students and empowering students to manage projects on their own. Supervisor B told us "At some point, we don't monitor people extremely closely. We don't have to. But we do regular check-ins, and we keep up to speed on stuff." Ultimately, Supervisor B believes students working with CCPs should leave feeling empowered. It is the manager's responsibility to understand what the student needs to not only succeed but also thrive in their work.

Student Experiences

The first intern worked on the Eelgrass & Blue Carbon project from May to August 2023. At the time of their internship, Student C had recently completed an undergraduate degree in sustainability, where they minored in environmental science and international development. Student C notably, had a background in CCPs, gaining experience from previous coastal restoration, water monitoring and citizen science work. For this student, interning with the EAC's Marine team was a natural career progression, and an opportunity to cement teachings from their undergraduate studies. They explained "In the sustainability program we talked a lot about bottom-up approaches, theoretically how it's impactful, but I found it meaningful to get to do that type of job and see the impact firsthand... "My time at the EAC solidified my position that community-based work is often the most meaningful, lasting, and impactful type of work."

As their supervisor described, this CCP utilized a "learning by example" model to train interns. There was no comprehensive training regimen. Instead, their supervisor would complete a task once (i.e. facilitate a workshop), allowing Student C to shadow them, and then in subsequent weeks, they would be encouraged to complete the task themself. For Student C, this was a "Blessing and a curse." They recalled making mistakes along the way, however, they remained grateful for the extent of the freedom they were allowed. Although they had worked in CCPs before, this experience was

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unique, they explained "I felt lucky in a way, they gave me this thing and let me go, I got to do a lot! The EAC does a great job of letting people have the experience that they want to have, the more work you put in, the more they're willing to give you responsibility." Student C had additional opportunities to shadow other projects offered within the EAC, developing their knowledge of marine issues and respective techniques of preservation.

One of the most influential aspects of Student C's time spent with the EAC was their collaboration with the watershed groups. They told us "It was neat working with the community partners because they all care deeply about the issues that the EAC is fighting for... I don't think I had ever worked with folks that were that keen before.... that was a big takeaway for me." Student C was tasked with distilling Dalhousie University researchers' data into information that other organizations could easily understand. Presenting scientific data in a manner which was accessible to the public was a new challenge for Student C and an important lesson. They expanded on this experience by saying, "Community-centred programming taught me to find creative solutions, ones that often get overlooked, because you're working with people that you wouldn't necessarily have the opportunity to work with otherwise, passionate people from different backgrounds." Overall Student C spoke very highly of their internship with the EAC.

Following Student C's initial internship with the EAC that summer, their contract was extended for an additional year. In the winter, their internship shifted away from fieldwork, primarily focusing on coordination with the watershed coalition. This time allowed Student C to develop an Eelgrass Library, a collection of all the tools and resources required for the watershed coalition to move forward on projects independently of the EAC. Student C expressed that their experience with the Eelgrass & Blue Carbon project made their "want to continue working for environmental nonprofits moving forward, or even just be involved with different community models." Succeeding their internship, Student C has worked as a forest firefighter and has volunteered for a local environmental monitoring project in their free time.

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Discussion

This report presents two case studies of CCPs operating out of the EAC, the PUBH Mini and the Eelgrass & Blue Carbon project. In this section, we analyze the programs in contrast with one another to allow for a rich discussion of how student employment in CCPs can be mutually beneficial to all stakeholders. In addition, we reflect on the important lessons which can be derived from student employment at the EAC and analyze how past interns have been impacted by their time working on a CCP. A range of targeted recommendations for the future integration of student employees in other CCPs will be offered throughout.

Satisfaction Amongst CCP Community Partners

The PUBH Mini program and the Eelgrass & Blue Carbon project are creating meaningful environmental and socioeconomic changes across Atlantic Canada. During our consultations, community partners indicated having positive experiences collaborating with the EAC on their respective CCPs. The PUBH Mini partners commended the program for successfully increasing equitable access to bike repair services while requiring little to no resources from their local communities. Members of the Southern Gulf watershed groups similarly spoke highly of their partnership with the Marine team, telling us their collaboration has been imperative in expanding their mapping and monitoring methodologies. Positive reflections from the community partners are important in demonstrating satisfaction with the programs themselves as well as the EAC student employees responsible for running the projects.

Introducing Student Employees to CCPs

To operationalize the PUBH Mini, the Transportation team hires two summer students from May to August. At the same time, the Marine team brings on one intern to coordinate the Eelgrass & Blue Carbon project. Through our consultations, we determined that EAC's approach to hiring is integral to the success of their interns. First and foremost, the EAC chooses to integrate their students as paid interns as a means of sourcing passionate, experienced, full-time support. Within our literature review, we found the majority of CCPs incorporate students as volunteers or through a university credit program. However, Supervisor B emphasized hiring students as paid employees

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rather than volunteers allows them more latitude when drawing on students' work. We recommend that other organizations facilitating CCPs consider government-funded internship programs to support student hiring. This approach will ensure that no financial strains are placed on the organization.

Next, when hiring students, CCPs can look to the EAC's varying recruitment and training processes for best practices. While seeking out potential interns, the Transportation team values an applicant's character and soft skills (i.e. a passion for social/environmental justice) over hard skills. The Transportation team then compensates for any technical gaps by engaging students in a comprehensive two-week training regimen. Supervisor A told us that their updated training had received positive feedback from interns, a sentiment reflected in Student B's consultation, telling us their training contributed to their confidence as an employee. The Transportation team's training was designed considering input from previous students such as Student A, who communicated they would have benefitted from additional bike repair teachings. The Marine team's onboarding process is slightly different from that of the Transportation team. During recruitment, the Marine team seeks out students with basic experience in community organizing, coastal work, and social justice. Introductory experience and an ability to adapt in a short period are very important to Supervisor B. The Marine team additionally takes a less structured approach to training. Considering the Eelgrass & Blue Project hires only one intern per summer, training is person-based and adapts to the individual experience of each intern. Although formal training only lasts one week, Supervisor B additionally offers his interns opportunities to shadow them before completing tasks themselves. Based on the findings of our consultations we believe it is vital that CCP supervisors include a comprehensive training period. During this time supervisors can create a work plan with students. We determined early communication will ensure transparency in the job requirements moving forward and prevent missteps down the line. Approaches to training can vary based on the technical level of work required for the job. For CCPs hiring fewer students, training may be designed to be more adaptive. For programs with multiple students, supervisors can draw on returning interns to transfer their knowledge. Supervisors may consider the time required to train students an investment in the success of their CCPs, minimizing their workload in the future.

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Supervision of Student Employees

We observed minimal structural hierarchy in the EAC, with full-time supervisors receiving the same respect as student employees. Through our consultations, it was evident that EAC supervisors instill high levels of trust in their interns. By the end of their work term, the students were effectively organizing and facilitating the CCPs independently. Providing key responsibilities to interns allows full-time EAC staff (i.e., the student's supervisors) to engage in their team's other important projects. Accordingly, student interns can reduce overbearing workloads and staffing shortages, challenges typical to non-profit organizations. Student C explained that although challenging at times, the responsibility given to them as an employee greatly developed their personal growth. Constant communication between interns and supervisors can ensure students perform their duties to the best of their abilities. Furthermore, we argue an adaptive approach is imperative when supervising interns. On the Transportation team, students receive slightly varying responsibilities depending on their past work experience and skill set. All program stakeholders benefit from this approach, as students are provided ample opportunities for personal development and supervisors are supported to meet project deliverables.

Opportunities for hands-on experiences within target communities are integral to providing a rich experience for CCP interns. Supervisors identified relationship building between all CCP stakeholders as being very important to the success of the program and their students. We found collaboration with community partners was the most impactful aspect of students' work. Students reported being grateful to work with marginalized/ under-represented identities and expressed feeling inspired by the passionate individuals striving to make a difference in their communities. Our findings underscore existing research arguing that CCPs expose students to experiences not typically offered in a traditional classroom or workplace.

Takeaways from Community-Centred Internships

A comparative analysis of the student interviews illustrates the diverse impact of community-based programming on individuals with varying backgrounds and experiences. All students shared a common experience of personal growth when

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faced with challenges outside of their comfort zones. Furthermore, our findings highlight the significance of CCPs in contributing to securing work in their respective fields. For instance, working in the CCP provided Student A with experience working with Indigenous populations, a skill that helped them secure and thrive in their current work position. In addition, we found two of the interviewed students came back to work for the EAC again following their internship. Interns hired back for multiple internship sessions have opportunities to expand their skill set further and have proven to be important teachers to new interns. Although our findings demonstrate students' career paths directly following their internships, it is important to note that all interns were consulted for our study just one or two years following their internship. Therefore, our consultations with the students cannot demonstrate how their time working in a CCP altered their career paths in the long term. Instead, our consultations revealed perspective shifts in their attitudes toward similar work. While Student A expressed leaving more open-minded to CCPs, Students B & C highlighted the refinement of their existing desires. Overall, our findings highlight the significance of CCPs in fostering personal transformation, while also shaping individuals' aspirations.

Conclusion

Existing literature clearly defines the value of CCPs in addressing environmental and socioeconomic disparities. By centering the perspectives of their target communities, CCPs can effectively allocate culturally appropriate resources and programming. Yet, non-profits, the organizations which typically facilitate CCPs, are commonly under-financed and understaffed. In this report, we examine student employees as a low-cost but highly effective resource for CCPs. Drawing on one-on-one consultations, we shared the stories of two CCPs from the EAC, the Pop-Up Bike Hub Mini and the Eelgrass & Blue Carbon project. We determined student employment is mutually beneficial for all stakeholders of the CCPs; community partners communicated positive collaborations with their respective program facilitators, EAC supervisors observed increased capacity during their busiest seasons, and student employees underwent positive personal/professional transformations.

Our report highlights the importance of paid employment opportunities for students, filling a gap in existing literature that revolves around the experiences of

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student volunteers. We argue that paid employment opportunities can assist program facilitators in acquiring qualified, passionate, full-time staff. For students to meaningfully participate in a program, their work in the community must be hands-on and engaging. Furthermore, training and supervision should be adaptive, based on the individual needs of employees. A trusting and non-hierarchal approach to management and communication may empower students in their work. The recommendations offered throughout this report may be utilized by other CCPs to most effectively support students in promoting sustainable social change.

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Appendix

Interview Questions for EAC staff/ CCP program facilitators

Thank them for speaking with us.

Before we begin, we just wanted to double check you are okay with being recorded.

Please keep in mind you may skip a question or take a break at any time.

Introduction to themselves and the organization:

1. To begin, can you please tell us your name, your role at your organization, and how long you have been working in this role (and with the organization)?

Community-centred programming:

2. Can you describe community-centred (or community-based) programming in your own words?
3. Why is community-centred programming important to your organization?

Community-centred programming at the EAC:

4. Can you please describe the _____ project?
   a. What important gaps does your CCP aim to fill?

The management of student interns in community-centred programs:

5. How are student interns involved in the _____ project?
   b. How did their involvement come about?
6. Has the role of the student intern changed over the lifespan of this project?
7. How does the EAC integrate student interns?
   c. Could you please briefly describe the funding processes?
   d. How do you choose your student employees? Is there anything specific you look for?
   e. Do you believe there is an important distinction between paid students interns and student volunteers?
8. What does training the student interns look like?
   f. How can training contribute to the success of a student employee of a CCP?

The benefits and challenges of integrating student interns in community-centred programs:

9. How has incorporating student interns been beneficial to the _____ program?
10. What have the main challenges been while incorporating and collaborating with student interns?
    g. Have there been any significant challenges while training them?

Moving forward:

11. Do you have any recommendations or best practices for other CCPs planning to integrate student interns into their programs?
12. Are there any final comments you would like to add before we conclude the interview?

Interview Questions for PUBH Mini Community Partners

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Thank them for speaking with us.

Before we begin, we just wanted to double check you are okay with being recorded.

Please keep in mind you may skip a question or take a break at any time.

Introduction to themselves and the organization:

1. To begin, can you please tell us your name, your role at your organization, and how long you have been working in this role (and with the organization)?
2. Can you please briefly describe your organization's main purpose or mission, and the key services you offer?

Getting to know the community and what AT looks like:

3. What best defines your community?
   h. What are your community's greatest strengths?
   i. What are your community's greatest challenges that require additional support or resources?
4. What are the most common forms of transportation (walking, driving, cycling, taking the bus) in your community?
5. Could you please describe what cycling and access to repairs look like in your community?

The next two questions relate to community-centred programming which is defined as:

Community-centred programming:

6. Can you describe community-centred (or community-based) programming in your own words?

"Community-based program design is a social method for designing programs that enables social service providers, organizers, designers and evaluators to serve specific communities in their own environment."

7. Why is community-centred programming important to your community?

Collaboration between the PUBH Mini and community partners:

8. How does the PUBH Mini fit into your organization?
9. Have you been involved in any stage of the design and implementation between _____ and the PUBH Mini?
10. What impact have you noticed from the PUBH Mini program? (Do you have any specific stories from the PUBH Mini?)
11. How would you describe your community's experience collaborating with the leaders in the PUBH Mini program affected your programing?

Moving forward:

12. Keeping in mind the general purpose of the PUBH Mini program, what are your community's future goals/ aspirations?
13. Can you think of any changes (or additions) which could be made to the PUBH Mini so that it is most effective in meeting important needs in your community?
14. Are there any final comments you would like to add before we conclude the interview?

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Interview Questions for Eelgrass & Blue Carbon Project Community Partners

Thank them for speaking with us. Before we begin, we just wanted to double check that you are okay with being recorded.

*Please keep in mind you may skip a question or take a break at any time. *

Introduction to themselves and the organization:

1. To begin, can you please tell us your name, your role at your organization, and how long you have been working in this role (and with the organization)?
2. Can you please briefly describe your organization's main purpose or mission, and the key services you offer?
3. Do you have any key services that you do offer to the broader community or ways that you connect with the broader community?
   a. Do you have community volunteers that will come in and assist you in the activities that you're completing for monitoring?

Community relationships to eelgrass meadows and marine environmental stewardship:

4. Could you please describe the nature of your broader community?
   a. What are your community's greatest strengths?
   b. What are your community's greatest challenges that require additional support or resources?
5. Please describe the landscape of environmental/marine stewardship in your community.
   a. Do you get the sense that there is that care from the public and involvement in monitoring protocols?
6. How does your organization engage the broader community in marine stewardship?
   a. Do you have any outreach strategies?

Community-centred programming:

7. Can you please describe community-centred or community-based programming in your own words?
8. Why is community centred programming important to your community?
9. What resources or expertise do you find most valuable when collaborating with external organizations to benefit your work and the community?
   a. What types of training or capacity building activities have been or could be most effective in engaging community members to participate meaningfully?

Collaboration between the EACs Marine team and community partners:

10. How does the EACs program fit into your organization?
    a. How did this partnership originate?
11. Have you been involved in any stage of the design and implementation between _____ and the Eelgrass & Blue Carbon Project?
12. What impact have you noticed from the Eelgrass & Blue Carbon Project?

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13. How would you describe your community's experience collaborating with the leaders of the Eelgrass & Blue Carbon Project (from the EAC) and how has this affected your programing?

Moving forward:

14. Keeping in mind the general purpose of the Eelgrass & Blue Carbon Project, what are your community's future goals/ aspirations?
15. Can you think of any changes (or additions) which could be made to the Eelgrass & Blue Carbon Project so that it is most effective in meeting important needs in your community?
16. Are there any final comments you would like to add before we conclude the interview?

Interview Questions for Student Interns

Thank them for speaking with us. Before we begin, we just wanted to double check you are okay with being recorded.

*Please keep in mind you may skip a question or take a break at any time. *

Introduction to themselves/ their position:

1. To begin, can you please tell us when you worked at the EAC and describe your role at the EAC?
2. What was your work/ education experience prior to working at the EAC?

Work in Non-Profits:

3. Do you believe work experience with community-based programs/ nonprofits offers students skills which are different from post-secondary education?
4. What are three skills/ qualities you utilized for your position at the EAC?
5. What are three skills you developed or learned from your position at the EAC?
6. Did your perspective on the world change while completing your work/ collaborating with community partners?
7. Were you offered any tools or training for your position at EAC?
   a. Can you describe how this influenced your time with the EAC?

What past student interns doing now:

8. What are you doing now? (Time off, school, job etc.)
   a. What type of work have you done since working at the EAC?
9. Do you believe your work at the EAC influenced what you did following or intend to do in the future?

Community-centred programming:

10. Can you describe community-centred (or community-based) programming in your own words?
11. Why do you believe community-centred programming is important?
12. Have you been a part of community-centred programming? (Can be a part of the EAC or externally)
    a. What has community-centred programming taught you?

Final thoughts:

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13. Is there anything you would change about your position at the EAC that would have made it better or make future students' experiences better?
14. Are there any final comments you would like to add before we conclude the interview?