

## Hogan wins big at Indigenous Games



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By Nate Smelle

Born and raised in Bancroft, Bernie Hogan has spent countless hours running the track at North Hastings High School and on the trails throughout North Hastings. Recently, his years of training paid off. While competing on behalf of the Kijicho Manito Madaouskarini Algonquin Nation at the inaugural Masters' Indigenous Games held in Toronto from July 12 through July 15, Hogan earned five gold medals, one in each of the races he ran. Running in the Men's 35 to 44 category he crossed the finish line first in the 800-metre, 1,500-metre, 3,000-metre, 5,000-metre and 6,000-metre races. Having done most of his training running on dirt and gravel, Hogan noticed a huge difference once he began training on the professional tracks in Toronto.

"I do lots of running, but it is usually on the road, so I had to go find a track to run on to get ready for the races," Hogan said.

"I have been training every day just to get the feel of running on a track. The tracks that I would run on at the high school are gravel and dirt, so when you get on the nice tracks in Toronto you just fly because they are rubber and you just bounce."

The first Masters' Indigenous Games brought together hundreds of athletes aged 20 years old and up from across North America to compete in sport competitions, celebrating the wellness of the Indigenous cultures of Turtle Island. Hogan explained that the games are much more than just an opportunity for Indigenous athletes to compete. He said they are also an excellent opportunity for Indigenous people to come together and celebrate Indigenous cultures. For example, Hogan said that during the games there was also a cultural festival that showcased the talents of Indigenous artists, performers, storytellers and vendors.

"It's really good to get Indigenous people together at these type of events," he said.

"They are a great way to get people out to do activities together and promote the sports."

Recognizing the value of sports in terms of the health benefits they provide the athletes, Hogan said competitions like the Indigenous Games also help to connect Indigenous people and communities. He hopes that his success at the games will inspire other Indigenous athletes to compete in the next competition, so they too can share in the experience. Hogan encourages anyone interested in taking part in the games to check it out online, and then come out to give it a try.

"There is no harm in giving it a try," Hogan said.

"There were young people there competing and people who were 60-years-old and older. It's still competitive, but the people there are very down to earth. Of course, I still wanted to win, but when I go down to compete in other races it's a very different atmosphere."

Hogan recently carried on his winning ways on Saturday, July 21 winning another gold at a 5,000-metre race in Bala. With his eyes already set on the next Masters' Indigenous games to be held in Halifax in 2020, he said he has no intention of slowing down. Until then, Hogan plans to continue competing and carrying on with his daily training regimen.

Expressing how proud he and the members of the Kijicho Manito Madaouskarini Algonquin Nation are of Hogan's accomplishments at the Masters' Indigenous Games, Chief Stephen Hunter congratulated him on his tremendous effort and success.

"He is a clear example of the growth we are experiencing within our community," said Hunter.

"Our members are gathering together in support of one another. We are proud and we are eager to celebrate our identity with

others.?