

Where are they now: Sarah Rogers

By Gordon Lambie

Sarah Rogers wrote for The Record between the Summer of 2007 and the end of 2008 but said that, even in that short time, working for the paper proved to be an important stepping-stone for future work.

"It presented to me a really interesting challenge that I wanted to take on, but I remember feeling really nervous about that," she said, sharing that the job was her first in Quebec. "It ended up being a really great way to improve my French and learn, because you're just sort of thrown into it."

These days Rogers is reporting for Nunatsiq News, which covers news for communities in Nunavut and Nunavik, but she said that she came to Sherbrooke from work in Alberta because her partner was from Quebec.

"I have some really good memories of being there," she said, expressing particular gratitude for the support and mentorship of veteran reporter Rita Legault. "I was really lucky to have her as a mentor because she had been in the region for so long."

Rogers said that Legault made a point of introducing her to other reporters and people in the community, which helped to show the value of being well connected in the work of a community journalist.

After her time at The Record, Rogers said that her family travelled north because her partner got a teaching job in Nunavik. It was during this time, she said, that she first made contact with Nunatsiq News through various freelance contracts, although she didn't start working there full-time until after a brief return to Sherbrooke.

"I'd had my second daughter at that point so it was a little harder to travel," she said, explaining that although her

new baby was only three months old, the contract that came up to be the Townships reporter for the CBC seemed like one not to be missed.

"I had a neat time learning the ropes with radio," she said, noting that she was on the job with the national broadcaster at the time of the Lac-Mégantic explosion, among other local events. Ultimately, however, Rogers said that radio was not for her.

"I think at the end of the day I realized that I didn't like the public personality I had to have to work in radio," she said. "I'm really a print journalist at heart."

Although the reporter said that she always imagined herself moving towards work for a larger daily newspaper in some big city or another, her experiences working in smaller communities have proven to be the most fulfilling.

"I think that's because of the advocacy you feel like you're doing for these often-underrepresented communities," she said, sharing that this is particularly the case working and living in northern communities. "There is very little media coverage and very few journalists present in the region."

Looking back to that idea of getting to know community members in order to be able to tell their stories, Rogers pointed out that the way people talk about isolated communities is negatively impacted by long-distance reporting.

"The journalism community in Canada has come a long way as far as how we approach stories about Indigenous or marginalized communities, but I still think there's a lot of stereotyping and really narrow ideas about what happens in the north," she said. "If you're a reporter based in Ottawa or

Montreal and you've never been to the north, and you're trying to report on it, it's really hard to get that full story."

In terms of her time working for Nunatsiq News, Rogers said that she spent some time living in Iqaluit and Nunavik, but also did a fair amount of travel back and forth.

"I'd do five or six trips a year, usually focused around covering a government meeting, then stay on for a week or so after," she said, explaining that it is in that time afterward that she could build the connections and relationships needed to provide a broader picture of peoples' day-to-day lives. "It takes a really long time to build up that kind of trust in communities."

Asked about what she feels Canadians are missing in conversations about life in the north, Rogers said that reporting often highlights present-day issues without looking at the history and the trauma behind them.

"I'm constantly faced with having to report on high rates of 'fill-in-the-blank'," she said, naming suicide, poverty, and high school dropouts as a few examples. Speaking at a time when many are becoming more aware of the ways in which Indigenous Peoples in Canada have been systemically mistreated or abused over the course of the country's history, Rogers added that, "it always takes an awful traumatic event for people to dig in."

School drop-out rates, or a reluctance to trust the healthcare system, look different, she noted, in a community that has suffered repeated intergenerational trauma through institutions such as schools and hospitals in the past.

"Now there's a few more people reading the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission," she said. "We're understanding it better,



COURTESY

but there is still stuff missing."

Although Rogers remains committed to sharing the stories of northern communities, she shared that she is struggling a little bit at the moment due to the fact that she has been outside of the regions she reports on for two years now.

"In 2019, I took a leave of absence to do a journalism fellowship at (The University of Toronto), and that ran into 2020," she said, explaining that once the pandemic hit, quarantine restrictions kept her away.

"It has been hard to not be up north at all for two years, because every trip you do reinvigorates those connections," she said, sharing the hope that with a second vaccine dose now behind her, she'll be heading back soon, in person.

New summer student at the Missisquoi North Volunteer Centre



THE SCOOP

MABLE HASTINGS

Meet 15-year-old Aryane Bahl who has been hired as the new summer student at the Missisquoi North Volunteer Centre (CABMN) where she will assume the role of Receptionist and multi-functional super girl for the next eight weeks.

Aryane is the daughter of Yannick Bahl (WAX Ski Shop) and Fanny Boulais (Mansonville Elementary School Principal). She has one brother, Alexy and she proudly announces the

addition of a family dog named Lylou. Given her family's interest is sports it is not surprising that she has been in the Owls Head ski Club for seven years and intends to continue for as long as she can.

"Skiing is a part of my life," shares Bahl. "I'm proud to say that I excel in my age group which is made up of both boys and girls."

Aryane loves to read and enjoys spending hours shopping for books and added to her list of hobbies is : jewelery making, clothes shopping, music and she even played the piano and sang when she was younger. Aryane is a student going into secondary five in the fall at LaRuche in Magog. She says that she has good grades but being top of her class in some subjects always varies from year to year. She is one of two students in the entire school who is in two different "sport-etude" programs (skiing and swimming).

"School is very important to me," says Bahl. "I will always do my best to keep good grades and to pursue partaking my my favorite sports," she

added.

Bahl took part in the CABMN youth programs as a member of the Girls Group and also participated in Saturday Dance Group. She performed in some of the annual talent shows and was always a youth who supported others. Regardless of the age, Aryane was willing to work with all other members of the group and to offer her encouragement and help if needed. Pursuing her skiing meant that she could not always participate but when she could, she was there.

"I don't know exactly what I want to do in the future," she said. "I still have time to figure all of that out. I do know that I want to live a little before starting a career (travel around the world, do some ski trips...).

Aryane is looking forward to learning about the CABMN Volunteer Centre, a non-profit charitable organization. She has already managed in her first week at the CAB Main Office to capture the respect and friendship of the staff. Quickly referred to as a multi-functional quick learner, Aryane is



KRYSTEN VANIER

already a member of the team!

To reach the CABMN call 450-292-3114 or visit the website at www.cabmn.org.