

Another winning season for Algonquin athlete Bernie Hogan



By Nate Smelle

Algonquin athlete Bernie Hogan has been on a roll. At the recent Masters Indigenous Games held in Ottawa from Aug. 24 to Aug. 27, Hogan won four gold medals and one bronze. Hogan brought home the gold in: the 400-metre, 800-metre, 1,500-metre, and 3,000-metre races. On the final day of the competition, he also brought home a bronze medal in the open five kilometre cross country race. While Hogan competed in the track and field competitions, the Masters Indigenous Games also brought together athletes to compete in a wide variety of sports, including: basketball, golf, volleyball, archery, canoeing, kayaking, standing kick, and teepee building. On Sunday, Aug. 27, the Masters Indigenous Games held its closing ceremonies at the Cultural Village located at Lansdowne Park in Ottawa. During the ceremony Hogan received a Spirit Award. The Spirit Awards are given out to the top athlete in each sport. Acknowledging that this was the first year that the Spirit Awards were handed out, Hogan said he was especially grateful to receive the award because all of the athletes who competed voted on which of their fellow competitors deserved the honour. "To be picked by other athletes means so much to me because a lot of the athletes I had never met before until the games," Hogan said. "Others I have met before back in 2018 at the games in Toronto but I didn't talk to them that much; so for them to vote for me means that they liked how I was around them, and how I was as an athlete. I treated everyone as a friend and got everyone involved in the runs." On one occasion during the competition, Hogan recalls another athlete asking him whether they should try competing in one of the races. Encouraging them to give it a try, he told them to go for it because it didn't matter how they did as long as they tried their best and had fun. Reflecting on the outcome of this athlete's decision to compete, Hogan said "It was great that they did the race because they won the race. So again it was great that someone had the courage to come talk to me about it when they could have went to anyone, or just [decided] not to do the race. I am glad that I can inspire people along the way." As a

member of the Kijicho Manito Madaouskarini Algonquin First Nation, Hogan was proud to represent the Algonquin people by competing on the traditional lands of the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation. "I am so happy that I am Algonquin, and I am happy that they have these games so that people can get out there and watch and show what they can do," he added. "It's something we have to look forward to every two years." Hogan said he is already looking forward to the next games, which will again take place on the traditional lands of the Algonquin Nation throughout the Ottawa area in 2025. In the meantime, Hogan has no plans to slow down. On Sept. 16, he placed first overall out of 2,512 runners in a five-kilometre race at the Toronto Zoo. On Sept. 30 he will be running the Muskoka Marathon as he attempts to qualify for the Boston Marathon. Once the snow returns, Hogan said he will hang up his running shoes for the season, and replace them with his snowshoes again to prepare for the snowshoeing competitions this winter.