

Sodergren Scholarship

Gabriella Denis

About me:

My name is Gabriella Denis and I am 32 years of age. I am from Sydney, Australia and I have been working Winters since 2014. I started working back to back winters in Guest services at Perisher and Rentals in Canada, then moved into Snowsports where I found my purpose. I have always had a passion for Snowsports but when I started instructing, I knew I'd found where I belonged. In 2023 I celebrated my 10th year of service at Perisher, a milestone I was very proud to achieve. This combined with my 8 northern hemisphere seasons has led me to 18 winters, 15 of which I have had the pleasure of working as an instructor or in a Snowsports leadership position.

Commitment to education, training and accreditation:

Since getting my Snowboard level 1 in Canada in 2015, I have continued my development not only in Snowboarding but also in Alpine, Telemark, Adaptive, Race and Park. I am passionate about Snowsports and enjoy numerous ways of sliding down the hill. Over the last 9 years I have achieved the following: Snowboard Level 2 (CSIA), Alpine Level 3 (APSI), Adaptive ski and Snowboard Level 1 (CADS), Telemark Level 2 (APSI), Coaching 1 (Snow Aus), Snowpark 1 (CSIA) and Avalanche Safety 1 (NZ). I believe it is important to keep progressing in this industry, developing my skills and becoming a well rounded and experienced instructor. I also find training to be a great way to meet like minded individuals, which share the same interests and goals, allowing you to support each other and strive to progress.

Professionalism

As a Snowsports Instructor, I show professionalism through my appearance, demeanour, communication, reliability, ethics, accountability and safety. I believe communication with guests and colleagues is a big part of professionalism. Both verbal and non-verbal communication impacts your day, I prioritise using positive language and tone, being respectful, maintaining open body language and pride myself in being an approachable member of the team. I consider myself to be reliable; I fulfill my commitments whether it is showing up to work, unpaid training or a meeting regarding an upcoming social event. Ethics, accountability and safety work hand in hand. I believe it is crucial to take responsibility for one's actions. I believe in doing the right thing and owning your behaviour when choices don't quite work out the way you expect them to be. Safety is how I run my lessons, maintaining both the safety of my guests, myself, and other people on the mountain. Once we understand how to be safe, we can have much more fun.

Contribution and service provided to the industry

Guest services gave me excellent experience in customer service and taught me how much goes into someone's holiday before they even meet their instructor on the snow. As an instructor I have the capability of creating new Snowsports enthusiasts, ensuring they learn in a fun and safe way, creating memories and the desire to come back again. The other way in which I have contributed to the industry is through my versatility and professional development. I am capable and willing to teach in a number of disciplines, in many ability levels, and with all ages.

In Canada I have been given the opportunity to work as a Kids Centre Supervisor in Big White for last two years. In this role I assist in providing training to new staff, I ensure daily operations run smoothly and I am ready to jump in and teach if the situation presents itself. Part of my job as a supervisor also includes instructor reviews, where I shadow a lesson and assess the instructors skills in a number of areas. These include but a not limited to; Safety, Fun, Class Management, Inclusivity, Knowledge, Tactics, and more. The review process allows us to assess instructors in real time and sit down with them at the end to provide them with some feedback and areas to improve. I love this part of my job, it drives me to continue to instruct and train order to expand my toolbox which I can then share with my team.

Future direction and commitment to the industry

I plan on returning to Perisher for a 9th Instructing winter season and then returning to Big White in a supervising role for the 24/25 season. The last few perisher winters have been spent training towards the Alpine Level 3 exam which I passed in 2023. Since then, I have been actively training towards my Snowboard Level 3. I hope to continue my training journey this winter at Perisher, participating in inhouse training, the APSI course at Thredbo and getting closer to that Snowboard level 3 standard. Thank you for this opportunity.