

Cape Breton Regional Library
Report on Victoria County Active Gear Loan Program 2017

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The winter of 2017 was our first experience as a library system loaning out winter recreational gear.

Feedback from our library members was very enthusiastic. Most people who borrowed the gear had never used it before and many confessed they might not have tried it without this free loan program.

The numbers speak for themselves:

67 individuals borrowed gear for themselves or their families

18 New library memberships as a result of the program

Total Gear checkouts: 411

Baddeck Library: 352

Victoria North Regional Library (Ingonish): 35

Victoria County Bookmobile: 24

For an inaugural year we were amazed at both how popular the program was and how seamlessly it came together.

The equipment is all barcoded and entered into the library database and staff are able to track exactly what equipment is out and who has it. If an individual is looking for a particular size and it is already "Checked out" we can place a hold on the item and the software will prompt us to pass it along to the next person in line.

The equipment is all housed in Baddeck with the exception of 12 pairs of snowshoes which are held in Ingonish. Bookmobile users are able to have equipment brought to them on regularly scheduled bookmobile stops. For example, this allows us to bring someone in Dingwall a set of skis and save them a long drive down to Baddeck.

Before next winter library staff will meet to discuss the length of the loan period and the length of the holding period and make any adjustments we feel are necessary.

Unanticipated Costs

Library funds (from fundraisers and donations) were used to purchase 50 bags for the initial 50 sets of snowshoes. Total cost for the bags: \$846.

Responsibilities of the Borrower:

Before borrowing the equipment all users sign a waiver to declare responsibility for any damages to equipment beyond what would be considered normal wear and tear. They also sign to accept responsibility in case of loss or theft. (See attached Borrower's Agreement)

Using the library's automated overdue system, library members are contacted first by phone or e-mail and later by letter mail to notify them of overdue items including any Active Gear loans they have.

In the event of damage beyond repair, loss, or theft the borrowing user is billed the full replacement cost. This cost is added to their library account and they are blocked from borrowing until it is paid off.

We have yet to deal with replacement of lost or damaged equipment but if the situation arises funds received from the borrower would be forwarded to Victoria County c/o Physical Activity Strategy Coordinator Vince Forestall, who can then order replacement equipment (An invoice would be required.)

Routine Maintenance:

From the beginning it was the understanding of the library that routine maintenance would be the responsibility of Victoria County. Luckily the gear has stood up quite well and we do not anticipate high maintenance costs.

Future maintenance may include:

- Zipper repair on snowshoe bags
- Replacement of lost "baskets" from poles
- Assistance with cleaning equipment and waxing skis.

Any maintenance relating to library processing such as re-labeling equipment and replacing lost barcode tags will be covered by the library.

Free Program Access:

It has come to our attention that the Budget Committee has inquired about possibilities of charging for the use of the equipment or requesting donations for the service. From the beginning this program was designed to be free as stated in the objectives of the program:

To make various pieces of outdoor equipment available for loan to Residents, students, workplaces & community groups to allow them to access equipment (Snowshoes, ski's, traction & neon/reflective wear) in rural, isolated and First Nation areas, free of charge to be physical active safely in our natural environment on their own or with family, friends, co-workers benefiting *physically, mentally, socially & environmentally* (<https://naturallyactivevictoriacounty.com/active-outdoor-gear-loan-program/victoria-county-active-outdoor-gear-loan-program/>)

Funding was provided to Victoria County for the program from NS Department of Communities Culture and Heritage under the condition that the program would be free to all users.

All library services are free to library card holders and this program is no exception.

Equipment rental is available at many places throughout Cape Breton but as a library we will continue to stand by the loan of this equipment for free, to equally benefit all members of our community.

The library has been thrilled with the success of this program. Virtually all of the borrowers commented that they had wanted to try these sports, but they were not ready (or did not have the resources) to buy their own equipment. Many borrowers were trying this out for the first time.

Some final words from our library users:

- * The skis are much better than my abilities :) Lots of fun, though, and good exercise.
- * My eight-year-old used them for her first skiing experience and enjoyed it. It tired her out, too!
- * Wonderful to borrow! My boys had a great time, and we're hoping for more snow so we can borrow again.
- * This has really changed how I feel about winter. I'm loving it! And if this program hadn't existed, I never would have tried skiing.

- * Good quality snow shoes - nice and light.

- * Fantastic idea! Kudos for this wonderful program. I've always wanted to get the family into cross country skiing and you made it possible. Looking forward to doing it again. Thanks again. Let it snow!

- * Great service to have these snow shoes at the library. Thanks so much and will be looking to borrow these next season.

- * I very much enjoyed the shoes and poles. Many wonderful outings!

- * I'd recommend anyone to try them, and the service straps are really good (on snow shoes). If I purchase some, I'll get the same kind.

- * Excellent, great idea. Maybe there should be a youth cross country skiing club?

