



Let's Go to the Beach

IT'S ACCESSIBLE IN ANTIGONISH COUNTY!

THE FRAMEWORK FOR RECREATION IN CANADA GOALS AND PRIORITIES:



**INCLUSION
AND ACCESS**



**CONNECTING PEOPLE
AND NATURE**



**SUPPORTIVE
ENVIRONMENTS**

CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

The Antigonish County Recreation Department had some accessibility equipment available for free loan (Including the hippocampe, a wheel chair that can access many different types of all season terrain and can also float in the water) but not enough to meet their goal of inclusive recreation for all.

IMPLEMENTATION

When a Councillor in Antigonish heard about the installation of a new product-- Mobi Mats— that would make a beach accessible for wheeled devices such as strollers and wheelchairs and for individuals with low mobility issues—he suggested that the Recreation Department look into it. Recreation Director Marlene Melanson did the research, garnered support and approached the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources.

Thanks to this partnership 148-feet of Mobi Mat was installed off the boardwalk at Pomquet Beach to allow for a highly accessible transition from boardwalk, to beach, to water. The Mobi Mat is a lightweight, non-slip, portable, roll-out beach access pathway that extends off the boardwalk to the high-water line. The mat will remain through Fall and taken out during winter months. The province did the installation work, made an adapted picnic table, and also made change rooms and washrooms more accessible.

OUTCOMES

Most inspiring were the stories from individuals who enjoyed a beach outing, some for the first time. Willemina MacDonald, age 93 said being able to return to the beach with her family was “the gift of a lifetime”, allowing her to relive some of her greatest memories from her younger years.

Word of the initiative spread quickly via social media and mainstream media, ensuring that many people would go to the beach and raising profile for the Provincial Park and the Municipality of the County of Antigonish and the Department of Natural Resources.



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The hope is to support other beaches in installing the mats. Physical Activity Coordinator Meaghan MacNeil says, “We are committed to the idea of all ages and all abilities being able to access the beaches. The more the better for sure.”

The initiative has also got the attention of Recreation Nova Scotia and Communities, which recently hosted a Summit on Confronting the Challenges of Access, and the Government of Nova Scotia, which passed accessibility legislation in April 2017.

LESSONS LEARNED

Form and nurture relationships with key partners. This would not have happened without collaboration with Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources.

Look at how you can modify existing infrastructure to foster inclusion and access. Do your homework when considering the purchase and installation of materials that will increase accessibility. Know that the innovation works, is sustainable and cost effective.

Gain buy in and participation with the help of media. Tell the personal stories behind the story.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- Marlene Melanson, Recreation Director, Antigonish County:
marlene.melanson@antigonishcounty.ns.ca
- Meaghan MacNeil, Physical Activity Coordinator:
meaghan.macneil@antigonishcounty.ns.ca

Framework Goal and Priority	Goal # 2 Inclusion and Access Also addresses Goals 3 (Connecting People and Nature) and 4 (Supportive Environments)
Population Addressed	–
Community	Antigonish County, located in northern Nova Scotia on the Northumberland Strait, includes Town of Antigonish, the Acadian Village Pomquet and several other communities. There are many beaches in the area. Pomquet Beach is a 3-km long sandy beach is part of a Provincial Park maintained by the Nova Scotia Provincial Parks branch of the Department of Natural Resources.
Setting	Rural
Lead Implementer and Organization	Marlene Melanson, Director Recreation, Antigonish County; Meaghan MacNeil, Physical Activity Coordinator
Key Partners	Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources (Lands and Forestry Department)
Activity Focus	Enhancing infrastructure to increase accessibility at the beach
Stage of Development	Ongoing