

Paddle program appeals to adults

by Heather MacAdam
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More than half a dozen adults had a great view of Antigonish Harbour last Thursday evening while learning new skills.

Paddle Antigonish is offering free sessions to those interested in learning to canoe or kayak. Sessions take place every Thursday night at 6 p.m. in various locations.

Andrew Foran said the program started a year ago with canoeing and this year they are offering canoeing and kayaking.

Foran said the sessions started as an “after work program.”

“I work with kids during the day and when we bring kids into the outdoors doing outdoor pursuits they think it’s wonderful but when they want to get their parents to do it, the parents are a little uncertain.

“So instead of having an after school program, a year ago myself and my students figured we’d do an after work program to get some adults active.”

There is no shortage of people wanting to take part, Foran said, so they decided to expand to kayaking in addition to canoeing.

“For the last two years we’ve had wonderful turnouts on both accounts.”

Foran said the sessions are in partnership with St. F.X. University, adding they began through Service Learning, and the Town of Antigonish recreation department.

Foran said his physical education class at St. F.X. needed people to teach and adults and kids in the community love to take part in these activities.

“We figured lets get the adults out, teach them, then they’ll get more kids out and it’s a win-win.”

All the sessions are free of charge.

“That’s the part that has always been challenging with a lot of adults – they’d love to try [canoeing or kayaking] but it’s a lot of investment just to try. It’s about finding out whether you really like it or not.”

About 35 people come out to paddle, Foran said, and there are many repeat attendees. New participants are always welcome.

The program includes canoeing lessons for three weeks, followed by three weeks of kayaking. Last week Foran held the first kayaking session of the year.

Foran said he always speaks with participants before they come.

“They contact me and I send out a list of where we’re going

and I send out an equipment list of what they have to bring personally so they know. But as far as the equipment they bring it’s always just clothes and wet wear.”

Foran said in the winter he also facilitated skiing sessions for adults once a week and family ski session on the weekend.

“They were all fully attended. There’s no shortage of interest – people want to do this, it’s just about getting access.”

Foran said he is a member of Canoe Kayak Nova Scotia and one of the aims of the organization is to get out into the public and promote safe paddling for all ages.

“That’s a key piece here – Canoe Kayak Nova Scotia and Paddle Canada are two affiliate organizations that promote safe paddling and provide instruction. This is a weekly recreational paddle – it’s not for certification – but it is for recreation. We follow the same mandate of Paddle Canada to make sure that people are safe, they’re on the water so I’m making sure that everyone has safety gear with them.”

Anyone interested in taking part can contact Foran at aforan@stfx.ca or call 863-2963/867-5422.



Andrew Foran gives participants some final words for heading out on the water during last week’s Paddle Antigonish kayak session. (Heather MacAdam photo)

