

## Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility Highlights

### Highlighting: Richmond County's Point Michaud Accessibility Project

*"Our project will provide more accessible access to the Point Michaud Beach for all persons with mobility issues." - Sharla Sampson, Richmond County Active Living/Community Engagement Coordinator*

September's Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility Highlight comes from the Island of Cape Breton, where one municipality works to improve beach access for people with disabilities. Richmond County's Recreation Department has purchased two Mobi-Chairs and two Mobi-Mats to make Point Michaud an accessible beach.



Mobi-Chairs are chairs that float and roll on the beach, designed to assist people with mobility challenges in accessing natural waterfronts. Mobi-Mats are installed over the sand to facilitate more accessible travel for the chairs towards the water or to make walking across the sand easier for everyone. Equipment is available at no cost to users, benefiting the County residents and tourists.

Each Mobi-Mat is 100 feet long with hardware to secure them in the sand. The mats are portable and made from 100% recycled materials. The Mobi-Chairs are designed with everyone in mind, including wheelchair users, people with special needs and even children, to be convenient, portable, and comfortable.

Richmond County is home to various age groups that can benefit from this equipment, from families with young children who need assistance accessing the beach to older adults or anyone with accessibility barriers. This project has allowed more people to enjoy a supervised beach and the outdoors.

The project has its challenges. Active Living/Community Engagement Coordinator Sharla Sampson says the surf at Point Michaud is rough, which created an issue with securing the mats, "Our mats are installed to the water line and, as such, need to be checked frequently for wrinkles, rocks and debris given the impact of the surf." Another challenge has been finding resources for summer staff to educate users on using the mats and chairs.



If you are considering undertaking a similar project, Sampson has some advice. "Reach out to community groups who have executed similar projects to obtain first-hand knowledge of their successes and challenges." She says it is essential to prepare for the installation and removal of the mats and have proper storage for them. The mats take up much space when stored for the off-season. For this reason, Richmond County purchased rollers, which made setup and removal much more manageable.

The Point Michaud Beach accessibility project was supported by funding through the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage. The municipality secured 50% of the project's cost through the Community ACCESS-Ability Program.

For more information on the ACCESS-Ability Program and how it can help your community projects, visit the [Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage website](#).