

Media Advisory

March 1, 2018 - The Initiation to Hockey Program a resounding success in our community!

A \$10,000 donation from Caisse populaire Alliance and the support from the Northern Ontario Hockey Association allow our local minor hockey associations to ramp-up the (hockey) Initiation Program! A ribbon-cutting presentation will start at **12:15 PM on Sunday, March 4th, 2018** at the Verner Arena.



For kids starting hockey on a full sheet of ice can be compared to adults playing the game on frozen lake with nets 100 yards apart spending their time chasing the puck rather than playing.

This has changed this year with the support from the Caisse populaire Alliance, the Northern Ontario Hockey Association (NOHA) and the dedicated volunteers of Markstay-Warren, Verner and West Nipissing Minor Hockey Associations.

Hockey Canada has introduced important changes to how our Game is introduced to new players. The Initiation Program is a learn to play program and is intended to be the foundation of the skills development for hockey in Canada. "It's all about leveraging the benefits of the modified approach to initiation hockey" says Jason Marchand, Executive Director of the NOHA, "young players have substantially more opportunities to touch the puck, make more passes, take more shots in this version of the game which also allows for more body contact and to become comfortable with the sport at that age."

Renée Giguère, Andrée Maisonneuve and Natalie Piquette assume the role of Initiation Program Convenors of their respective associations (Verner, Warren and West Nipissing). They acknowledge that "the successes witnessed this year would not have been as great without the support from la Caisse populaire and the NOHA." The \$10,000 financial contribution from the Caisse helped the three associations to purchase rigid rink boards and dividers needed to provide an authentic hockey environment for the young players.

Thinking about long-term player development, Dan Paquette, who is the coach for the Program in Verner says that “the partnership between our associations has allowed us to leverage the financial contributions and we now have a set of real-hockey rink boards which will be used not only by players starting the game but to help the players learn additional skills at the Novice level before they transition to a full-ice format.”

Caisse populaire Alliance General Manager (Verner), Stéphane Méthot said that “...the Caisse provided this donation to help ensure that the all young players can benefit from a quality, local hockey program without being faced with increasing fees.”

“The cooperation between our hockey associations will allow for a larger number of players to benefit from the equipment while they learn the game and have fun” stressed Julie Armitage, the Board Chair for the Caisse. She continued by indicating “that area covered by the partnership mirrors the geography served by the Caisse - Field, Sturgeon Falls, Verner and Warren.”

This collaboration between associations was also noted by Claudette Myre, the President of the NOHA by stating that “the associations involved need to be congratulated on the successful implementation of cross-ice programming this past season.” She continued by acknowledging the effort of the many involved by noting “that while change is always difficult, the Coaches, Volunteers and the Executives have fully bought in to the Program and its benefits.”

The NOHA provided each association up to \$1000 each to support the purchase.

On **March 4th**, the Initiation Program will have its yearly Fun Day in Verner where this equipment is installed. All players from all five hockey associations (French River, Markstay-Warren, St-Charles, Verner and West Nipissing) will benefit from this investment by playing a series of modified hockey games supported by their volunteer coaches. This Fun Day will be preceded by a ribbon-cutting ceremony starting at **12:15 PM** with representatives from the Caisse populaire Alliance, the NOHA and the partnering associations.

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For information regarding this release and the ribbon cutting ceremony contact Mike O’Connor | president@vernerbulls.ca | 705-845-8816

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