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VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION, ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA

RESOURCE PAPER FOR LEADERS OF SCHEDULED TRIPS

Thank you for offering your time and skills. The club depends on its volunteer leaders and greatly appreciates them.

In general, the section likes the way it has been run in the past, with a minimum of rules and the expectation that participants in club activities will take responsibility for their own safety and that of the group.

This resource paper has evolved from the following question: “How do we, as a club, working within the present and evolving legal and political climate, continue our efforts to provide safe and enjoyable climbing and mountaineering outings with more or less loose organization around volunteer leaders?”

The following could be considered a motto of our section:

**COME BACK ALIVE
COME BACK FRIENDS
RESPECT THE LAND
HAVE FUN
GET TO THE TOP**

(IN THIS ORDER)

PRE-TRIP PLANNING

As a trip leader you are entitled to set the conditions for your trip. The following suggestions may be helpful:

Learn all you can about the area, routes and weather. In addition to maps, books and Bushwhacker articles, contact experienced mountaineers, wardens or guides to obtain information on the physical and technical demands of the trips. Be aware of the conditions, especially avalanche hazards, at the time of the trip.

Describe the proposed trip as accurately as possible to prospective participants. There is the option of designating the trip for experienced mountaineers only, or requiring some minimum level of qualification (e.g., ice axe workshop).

Take the time to inquire thoroughly as to the experience, training, fitness and personal equipment of prospective participants who are unfamiliar to you in order to ensure their suitability for the proposed. For example, you could ask, “What have you climbed?” Do not accept participants whose lack of experience, equipment, or fitness might endanger themselves or others. If someone asks to bring a friend/partner etc. whom you do not know, ask that this person phone you so you can assess the situation.

Set group-size limits where appropriate for reasons of safety, environmental impact, logistics, or your own comfort level.

It is a goal of the club to encourage participation by those who are newcomers to mountaineering and climbing. Therefore some club outings will be larger groups with varied levels of experience. In such mixed groups you will be a leader, and you must actively give direction to the group's actions. Novices depend on your mountaineering and climbing judgement.

However, in general this only applies to the easier trips. If you are more comfortable leading a smaller, more difficult trips of experienced people, that is fine, since there is room for many styles of trips.

If more novices than you are comfortable leading express interest in your trip, you could start a waiting list until experienced members phone, or you might ask someone to assist you. Then you can team up the less experienced with the more experienced participants.

If you have a pre-arranged assistant, communicate all relevant information to the assistant *before* the trip begins.

You could alternatively choose to be the contact person for the trip and have someone else in charge of the mountaineering side, or vice versa.

Make sure the participants understand what is their responsibility and what you will be arranging. Arrangements for transportation, tenting, ropes and other technical equipment (hut space and keys, overnight registration, etc., where relevant) will need to be made. Personal gear (e.g., rental of club equipment) is the responsibility of the participant.

You may occasionally have to decide whether the trip is open to participants' pet dog(s).

If you have questions, you can phone any of the executive, and they will either answer your question or direct you someone who can.

LIABILITY

All participants must sign the waiver form if they wish to participate. Participants are to have read it *before* they go. You may need to tell newcomers that a sample waiver is on our website (<http://accvi.ca>). *A parent or guardian of a junior participants (17 years and under) must sign for the junior.*

Read the covering letter for the waiver (go to the [ACC Safety Site](#) and click on the "Waiver Admin Policy" link on that page). It has a section on what to do in the event of an incident.

The ACC liability insurance policy covers situations where alleged negligence on the part of an ACC volunteer or member results in personal injury or certain types of property damage (\$2M maximum). The group is not covered for any travel or approach involving white-water, nor for third-party liability. The basic legal test that would be applied to any incident on a climb is that an individual *acted reasonably and with the skill of a person of similar background and experience in a given situation.* The test simply measures the reasonableness of a particular act in a given set of circumstances.

DURING THE TRIP

It is normal and preferred that groups remain together.

Consideration of group size or experience may suggest the advisability of appointing a willing experienced assistant leader. This approach has been found to work well if the party must separate for any reason, including pace, route choice, injury or illness, (or in extreme cases of punning or spoonerisms!).

Communication is important. Outline to the group your idea of the day's activities and, during the trip, give reasons for your decisions. Be open to input from the group.

Stay in touch with the safety needs of the group. You decide when to rope up. *Be sensitive to the comfort level of inexperienced participants.*

In the event that a participant becomes ill or injured, or in case of unsafe conditions, it is better to change plans, or return to town, and forego the original objective.

Ask a participant to write a trip report for the Bushwhacker (or do one yourself), and be sure to include photos.

Have fun!

AFTER THE TRIP

Record any comments you deem relevant on the waiver form and send it to the section archivist, who will keep it on file for 7 years.

FURTHER GENERAL INFORMATION FOR LEADERS

Skills Checklist

The following are some ideas for skills that are useful for a leader to work toward attaining. However, our section is grateful that there has always been a ready supply of responsible leaders willing to volunteer.

- climbing/mountaineering, including anchors, ropes, protection, etc.
- avalanche danger assessment and avalanche rescue
- ice axe skills, snow anchors, crevasse rescue
- route finding, navigation, with map, compass, GPS
- pre-trip assessment of terrain, routes, and conditions
- wilderness first aid
- accident response and wilderness rescue
- understanding of group dynamics
- understanding of legal and liability issues
- weather interpretation

Resources for Leaders

- Other trip leaders are a great resource. There is a large collective experience within the section.
- The section organizes a variety of informal and professionally led workshops.
- If funds are available, the section may be willing to partially subsidize trip leaders who wish to take appropriate training courses.
- See the section website <http://accvi.ca> and click on the links.

This paper is one of the results of a series of Leadership meetings over two years from 1996 to 1998. These suggestions come from experience. Members: Your comments and continuing input are welcomed.