



Snowshoeing

Program Purpose

To let youth experience winter hiking with specialized equipment.

Length of Program: 1 – 1 ½ hours

Age: 2nd grade - Adult

Maximum Number of Participants: 30

Basic Outline

- I. Introduction
- II. History of Snowshoeing
- III. Strapping on
- IV. Heading out

Introduction

Bring the students to the craft building and sit them down on the picnic tables. If you have time, explain that snowshoes have been used for many years as a way to travel in the snow. Evidence has been found of snowshoe use in central Asia over 6000 years ago!

The purpose of snowshoes is to increase the surface area of your foot so that you do not sink down into the snow as far. Many animals in nature have natural snowshoes built right into their bodies. Ask the students if they can think of any animals that have this adaptation of snowshoe feet? (wolves, lynx, snowshoe hare)

History of Snowshoes

Before the invention of snowshoes vast regions of the world were virtually unreachable. Snowshoes changed all that. They opened up the world.

Some of the earliest snowshoes were over 7 feet long which, though unwieldy, were helpful in navigating through very deep powdery snow. They were made of wood and coated rawhide. Snowshoers looked to the naturally efficient design of animal paws and began modeling their snowshoes after animal prints they found in nature.

The "beavertail", the most popular traditional style, has a round nose with the ends coming together in a long tail. The "bearpaw," as its name implies, is short and wide with a round tail. Both styles have had enormous influence on modern snowshoe design.

By the turn of the century, the snowshoe had evolved to a point where some styles were fewer than 3 feet in length. But even as snowshoes were shrinking in size,

they were also reaching a pinnacle of craft. The snowshoe became more than simply utilitarian, but was appreciated as an aesthetic object as well.

As cities grew and society shifted from a farming to an industrial culture, people who no longer had to trap, hunt or forage for food, took to the woods for pure enjoyment and exercise. The recreational sport of snowshoeing was born.

Strapping on

Traveling with snowshoes is the same as walking though since the snowshoes are wider than your feet, you might need to take longer and slightly wider steps to avoid walking on your own feet and tripping. It is important not to "bridge" the snowshoe. You want the whole sole of the snowshoe to always be in contact with the ground. "Bridging" is when one end of the snowshoe is higher than the other and there is a gap underneath the middle, this is the surest way to snap a shoe in half. When encountering a log or stump, either walk around it or side step over it. Turning around can be accomplished by walking around in a circle, or by flipping first one, then the other foot 180 degrees. And if you fall down; get into the "dead bug" position (on your back with arms and feet in the air), roll over onto your knees, and push yourself to a standing position with your hands.

- If there is time allow students to try running in the snowshoes.

Heading out

Direct the group to the Riverbend or Westridge trail for their adventure. Have them return to the craft center when finished. Make sure they the snowshoes have snow off of them before they store them back in the storage sacks.