

INTRODUCTION TO THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN AND SPORT (CAAW+S)

1. Overview of Women in Sport

In the past decade in Canada, there has been evidence gathered at conferences, through surveys and university programs to determine the status of women in sport. Three specific conferences in 1974, 1980 and 1981 were funded, at least in part by Fitness and Amateur Sport, and focused on problems and concerns for Women and Sport in Canada. The following points provide a starting place for understanding those concerns and changing the sport environment for women:

- (1) Women have the lowest level of health and physical fitness in population surveys.
- (2) Sport in Canada has historically provided fewer opportunities for female participation and career development.
- (3) Sport is a social good and social service, widely subsidized by public resources and, as such, all citizens should have the right to equal access to sport opportunities. There are current funding inequities.
- (4) Sport, with its emphasis on physical attributes and capacities of individuals, may either buttress or negate perceptions of female physical inferiority and male physical superiority.
- (5) Women will be largely responsible for efforts to eradicate sexism in sport. Change toward equality in sport will not occur spontaneously or naturally; they will be the product of deliberate effort.
- (6) Participation in physical activity has an undeniable effect on women as they understand themselves as physical beings.
- (7) Demonstrations of female proficiency in sport may have a more generalized social impact in terms of creating awareness of the potential of women to perform in areas hitherto thought beyond their capabilities, i.e. women need role models.
- (8) Women with concern not only for the elimination of sexism but also for other humanistic values have an obligation not only to work to eradicate sexism, but also to change sport more fundamentally so that it embraces more humane values.

2. Why was CAAW+S Established?

An analysis of women in sport identifies that inequality is not occasional or incidental, but rather that it is woven into the structure of sport and society in general. The status of women in sport can only be understood by an understanding of the place and role of women in society. Specific instances of discrimination are not accidental. If a female is denied the chance to play a certain sport, it is because sport is organized predominantly for male participation. Much of the evolution of women's sport is the history of women fighting to gain access to opportunities the system has always provided for males.

3. What is CAAW+S?

Founded in March 1981, CAAW+S is an organization dedicated to the advancement of women in all aspects of Canadian sport and physical activity. Whether eight or eighty, a woman concerned with health, a fitness participant, or an Olympic athlete, CAAW+S has been founded offer a national voice for enhancing participation in sport and physical activity.

4. Who founded CAAW+S?

CAAW+S was founded by women representing all facets of Canadian life. The 1981 organizational year brought together leaders of national, provincial and local sport groups and leaders from the feminist movement. CAAW+S is an organization comprised of a unique blend of recreational and competitive athletes, health leaders, sports administrators, housewives, coaches, professors, lawyers and activists.

5. Mission Statement

To advance the position of girls and women and to improve the quality of sport and physical activity by defining, promoting and supporting a feminist perspective.

6. Target Groups

CAAW+S is aiming to effect change for all women in sport, fitness and recreation, particularly those girls and women who are not reached by any organized sport or recreation institution. CAAW+S focuses on three major groups:

- (1) The Grassroots - Those with little connection to organized sport, recreation and fitness, eg. adolescent girls, adult women, seniors and disabled women.
- (2) Female Athletes - Those who are part of the organized sport delivery system.
- (3) Career-oriented women in sport, recreation and fitness, eg. sport administrators, coaches and teachers.

7. Major Accomplishments

Over the last few years, CAAW+S has been active in a number of different activities. The following are some of the highlights of CAAW+S accomplishments.

Human Rights and Sports Policy Commentary:

- CAAW+S published a discussion paper, research and written by Helen Lenskyj "Female Participation in Sport: the Issue of Integration versus Separate-but-Equal".
- Ontario Human Rights Code: CAAW+S supported the repeal of Section 19(2) of the Ontario Human Rights Code. CAAW+S was opposed to segregation in sport on the basis of sex. All people should have the opportunity to participate in sport on the basis of ability, not gender.
- Quebec Sport Policy Review: Following the Samson report on Quebec sport and future policy directions, CAAW+S made recommendations to the effect that the review must focus on women's needs as a specific and priority policy issue. To ensure that policy implementation is based on concrete measurable objectives, CAAW+S also recommended that a committee be struck for the purpose of evaluation and that CAAW+S be part of this committee.
- Ontario Women and Sport Program Discussion: CAAW+S has expressed its concerns on the inequality of females in sport in the province of Ontario, including a commentary on the Sopinka Report, and has provided a number of policy solutions.
- Sport Canada Policy on Women in Sport 1986: CAAW+S was involved in the development of the Sport Canada policy on Women in Sport and there are discussions around CAAW+S's possible role related to the implementation and enforcement of the policy.

Facility Utilization Study:

Facility utilization studies were conducted in Vancouver, B.C. and Hamilton, Ontario. The purpose was to study the policies governing the booking and assignment of sport facilities. There are 4 conclusions from these studies. First, access to public recreation facility use is not equitable between males and females. Second, scheduling policies reinforce existing programs because they are historically based. Third, activities offered are stereotypic. And finally, women participate primarily in non-competitive, individual and expensive activities.

Leadership Seminar:

CAAW+S organized a national leadership seminar bringing together coaches, national sports administrators, students and teachers. The seminar provided education on issues facing women in sport and strategies for effective advocacy. A booklet called ORGANIZING was developed to suggest strategies to make sport and physical activity available to women from all social and economic levels. CAAW+S is studying the probability of proceeding with a second printing next year.

National Activity Week:

The 1984 Walk and Roll project, part of National Physical Activity Week has been significant for CAAW+S. This nationally organized project introduced CAAW+S to a large number of people, tested old organizational structures and created new structures to run the project. It gave CAAW+S national status along side other widely recognized organizations.

Canada Games Program:

CAAW+S wrote to the Minister of Fitness and Amateur Sport expressing concern for the ratio of male/female participants and a number of sports in the Canada Games Program. Specifically, five of the total fifteen sports were for males only in 1981. As a result of the action taken by CAAW+S, Fitness and Amateur Sport and a few National Sport Organizations, three sports (synchronized swimming, modern rhythmic gymnastics and judo) have been added to the 1987 program.

The Olympic Charter:

CAAW+S has written the International Olympic Committee concerning the sexist clauses of the Olympic Charter. Other groups including the Canadian Olympic Association, Fitness and Amateur Sport, national women's organizations (CRIA, NAWL, NAC etc.) have been asked to join us in our effort to delete Rule 29 (which states that women are "allowed" to compete in the Games) and secondly to add sex as a basis for non-discrimination in the Fundamental Principles of the Olympic Charter. CAAW+S will ensure that further action is taken in contacting the IOC and recruiting the pertinent groups to support this lobby.

Breakthrough Award:

First presented in 1987, this special award is for singular achievement that represents a breakthrough by a Canadian women in sport, fitness or recreation. Remitted annually, the first recipient was Sharon Wood, the first North American women to reach the summit of Mount Everest. Recognition of and financial support for women's endeavors by the media and the Corporate Sector are also rewarded. Accordingly, the Breakthrough Award has three components: The Woman, The Sponsor, The Media.

National Coaching School for Women:

CAAW+S is endorsing a National Coaching School for women in basketball and volleyball to take place at the University of Alberta from August 23-30, 1987. Despite the existence of a national coaching certification program, there persists a very real difference in the number of male and female coaches. The National Coaching School is designed to create new means to access to the organized sport system for women. Women coaching volleyball and basketball

in Canadian universities and colleges will have the opportunity to obtain technical certification with the National Certification Program.

Annual Conferences:

Each year CAAW+S organizes a national conference for women in sport and physical activity:

1983 Understanding the System

1984 Sport and the Empowerment of Women

1985 Sport and Politics — Playing the Game

1986 Sport and Feminism

1987 Sport and Policy Development

HISTORY OF THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN AND SPORT

Following the Female Athlete Conference at Simon Fraser University in 1980, an ad hoc committee met to provide guidance and direction to Fitness and Amateur Sport's Women's Program. During the meetings the issue of the need for a national organization dedicated to the promotion of women and sport was raised on several occasions.

No existing organization was dedicated work on behalf of women and sport, and while there were several groups with a local interest, there was no national focus for action, no lobby effort directed toward government, national sport organizations or the general public.

With the assistance of the Fitness and Amateur Sport Women's Program, funds were provided for a meeting in March 1981, to discuss the possibility of forming a national organization dedicated to the interests of women and sport. If a national organization for women and sport was to be formed, it would have to tap into the experiences and knowledge of existing women's organizations (National Action Committee, Canadian Research Institute for Women, etc.), and reach out to establish sport as an area of concern for the women's movement and bring women interested in sport into the mainstream of the women's movement.

The three-day workshop was held at McMaster University under the organizational stewardship of Dr. Mary Keyes, suitably enough the first women director of a School of Physical Education and Athletics in Canada.

The workshop discussions were directed toward: the question of whether women and sport issues could or should be dealt with within a feminist framework (and what it would mean to adopt a feminist position), the feasibility of forming a national organization (including a discussion of the nature of the formative stages), and the delineation of specific areas of activity that such an organization might take (ultimately leadership, advocacy, research and communication were identified).

The McMaster participants named the new organization CAAW+S - the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport with a mandate to promote, develop and advocate a "feminist perspective on women and sport". A meeting that had been called to discuss the feasibility of forming a national organization, in fact, became the founding meeting.

In the year following the founding of CAAW+S, an interim planning committee met to:

- write the organization philosophy paper
- prepare a structural proposal
- develop plans for activity
- investigate funding sources

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