

A Case Study:

IMPLEMENTING GENDER EQUITY IN A SPORT ORGANIZATION

Over a three year period Water Ski Canada undertook the following initiatives and activities to promote gender equity. Many of the items listed below are neither labour intensive nor expensive to implement. The actions send a clear message that Water Ski Canada welcomes the participation of women as participants and leaders.

- Formed a women's committee. Meetings were held in conjunction with other events, so costs were kept to a minimum.
- Assigned staff resources to support the work of the women's committee. About 10% of one staff member's time was assigned to this portfolio.
- Developed an equity workplan, which was integrated into the overall strategic plan. No cost.
- Included gender equity as one of the Association's values. No cost.
- Developed a childcare reimbursement policy. About \$300/year is budgeted for this.
- Developed a harassment policy. No cost.
- Changed the language in the by-laws to be gender neutral. No cost.
- Changed the language in the rule book to be gender neutral. This was done in conjunction with the standard rule book revision process, so no additional costs were incurred.
- Conducted a survey of women who used to be involved in water skiing to determine their reasons for not remaining involved. Minimal postage and phone costs were incurred.
- Hosted a women only training camp, conducted by female national team members.
- Adopted the practice of always having at least one woman on all interview committees.
- Began to collect gender-based statistics on members.
- Adopted the practice of having a balance of women:men visuals in all publications.
- Held information sessions on gender equity at the annual meeting to educate board members on the issues. No cost.
- Held sessions at the National Championships to solicit advice and input from female skiers about the directions the women's committee should pursue. No cost.
- Adopted the practice of having one female and one male serve as public address co-announcers at the National Championships.
- Updated the promotional video. The old video was ten minutes in length. Nine minutes and fifteen seconds were dedicated to males, the remaining 45 seconds showed women. The images of women presented in the video were not dynamic, athletic, and powerful ones. This was a disservice to the women world champions and world record holders that Water Ski Canada has. A revised video was produced which portrayed the women as gifted athletes, and showed a more balanced distribution of time between male and female athletes.
- In order to reduce volunteer burnout, and create new openings in the volunteer leadership ranks, human resource policies were drafted which discouraged the holding of multiple positions and lengthy terms of office. No cost.
- Meeting norms were adopted. The norms were designed to create an environment which was more appealing and welcoming to women and men. No cost.



FROM ASSESSMENT TO IMPLEMENTATION

Now that the assessment of your sport is complete, you have a good idea of some of the policies, goals and practices that could be implemented by a sport organization that operates on the principles of equitable treatment of girls and women. From the assessment, it is now clear whether or not your sport has already implemented practices that will result in equitable treatment of girls and women. If it has, you are to be congratulated. Progress will be reflected in the composition of your membership and leadership, and in the level of participation by girls and women in your sport.

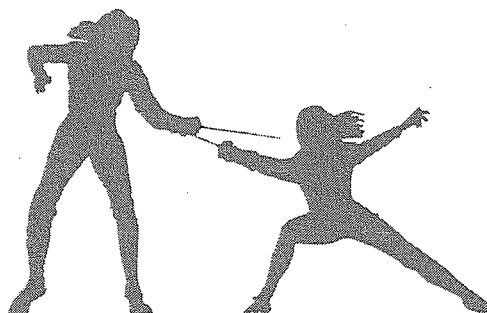
If you are just beginning, remember to undertake the process of change in manageable stages. Set goals that are both realistic yet challenging. Not every organization will progress at the same speed nor implement the same gender equity plan. If you want more information, refer to the appendices that discuss the roots of inequity, answer commonly asked questions, provide interesting data on gender equity, explain the legal issues raised by gender equity, define the language of gender equity, spell out the recommendations affecting gender equity from *Sport: The Way Ahead*, present Federal Directions in Sport, delineate the guiding principles of the Canadian Sport Council, and introduce the Foundation Themes of Leadership and Equity and Access from an Emerging Sport Plan for Canada.

A MINIMUM FRAMEWORK

To help you get started, the following is a minimum framework of recommended actions that position your organization to attain gender equity.

1. Make a public commitment to gender equity through a board motion and a membership resolution at your annual general meeting, and reflect this commitment in major policy documents including your vision, your values, your mission statement, and your by laws.
2. Declare your organization an equal opportunity employer.
3. Establish a board position, an executive position, or a portfolio responsible for gender equity.
4. Develop and monitor a gender equity plan as part of your organization's overall plan.
5. Assign staff time for the implementation of the gender equity plan.
6. Dedicate sufficient financial resources to implement selected special measures for girls and women in sport.
7. Develop a data collection system to provide a gender profile of your organization.

In addition to the Minimum Framework and the Gender Equity Assessment of your sport, the Four Steps outlined on the next page will assist you in developing an overall plan to attain **Gender Equity for Women in Sport**. Use **Part Two** of the handbook — **Steps to Achieving Gender Equity For Women in Sport in Your Organization** — to develop your detailed plan.



FOUR STEPS TO GENDER EQUITY — A PREVIEW

To meet the actual needs of girls and women in your sport, use the results of your assessment to develop a gender equity plan covering areas where very little is happening. The four steps in developing your plan are outlined below.

Step One — Commit Your Organization to Gender Equity

- Familiarize your executive and/or board and senior management with gender equity issues and information.
- Obtain executive and/or board and senior management commitment to the goal of gender equity and to overseeing the implementation and monitoring of an equity plan. Publicize your commitment.
- Assign a person responsible for gender equity and create a gender equity committee to develop and implement your plan. Commit personnel and financial resources to gender equity.
- Develop mechanisms to solicit the views of members regarding the equity issues and concerns of your sport.
- Solicit assistance from CAAWS and other sport organizations advanced in gender equity.

Step Two — Collect and Review Data

- Undertake a statistical analysis of the participation profile of girls and women in your sport, examining levels of competition, national teams, coaching, administration, volunteers, international representation, and so on. Use this data as a starting point to develop your gender equity plan.
- Using the above mechanisms, solicit opinions about the issues facing girls and women in your sport, and compile suggestions for change.
- Review all policies and practices to identify those which may be discriminatory to women, either directly or indirectly. Pay special attention to areas where the statistical analysis indicates a disproportionate representation of girls or women, or a concentration of girls or women in the lower levels of your organization.

Step Three — Develop and Implement a Gender Equity Plan

- Develop policies, programs, practices, and special measures to remedy the under-representation of women. Common areas for introducing changes are contained in the Assessment Tool that begins on page 8.
- Develop an action plan which includes specific and realistic goals and targets. Integrate the plan into your overall organizational plan by assigning responsibility to individuals and establishing time frames.
- Begin implementation of gender equity programs and policies.

Step Four — Monitor and Evaluate Implementation

- Develop a regular monitoring and a longer-term evaluation process. Setting goals and objectives facilitates this process, allowing your organization to measure progress.
- Remember - - monitoring and evaluation are essential if the plan is to be developed and implemented successfully. Once a program's goals have been met, future programs build on this success. If goals are not met, your organization will need to determine the reasons why and revise your strategies accordingly.

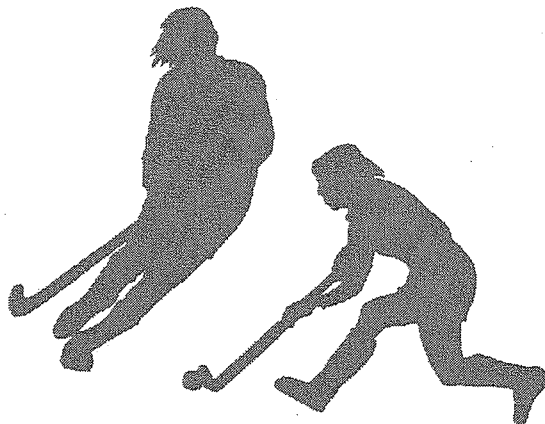
Part Two of this Handbook— *Steps to Achieving Gender Equity For Women in Sport in Your Sport Organization* — is a detailed examination of these four steps. It is designed to help you develop a comprehensive plan. “**Tools**” follow an extensive description of each step and are supported by working examples. **Part Two** is available through the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity, or the Women’s Program, Sport Canada.

***Only by daring to do things
differently does change occur.***
— Rose Mercier

COMMUNICATING AND BUILDING COMMITMENT

Success in each of the four steps described above depends on education, effective communication and involvement of members, volunteers and staff. The following suggestions are designed to assist organizations in building commitment through effective communication.

- Involve key staff and volunteers in the planning and implementation of gender equity initiatives.
- Plan educational programs to inform members about gender equity and to answer questions and address concerns.
- Ensure regular consultation with your members on the development and implementation of the plan.
- Inform members on a regular basis of gender equity targets and time frames. Publicize your gains by communicating the results of monitoring and evaluation.
- Incorporate issues that are relevant to girls and women into training and planning workshops.



A FEW HINTS

Implementing a successful gender equity program requires foresight, planning, good faith, and a sense of humour. Here are some hints to manage the process:

- Be clear in your commitment to gender equity. Keep your goals in mind as you embark on a new program. The long-term goal of becoming a gender equity organization should be your guide throughout.
- Maintain good faith in people's willingness to change once they understand the reasons and the benefits change can bring.
- Understand the need to overcome out-dated attitudes and barriers. Adapting to change is what healthy growth is all about. With sufficient motivation, planning and involvement, change can be invigorating and exciting.
- Careful planning is the key to success. Do your research and prepare a comprehensive plan. Allow enough time and resources to implement the plan successfully.
- Success breeds success. Start today and set realistic short-term targets such as those spelled out in the Minimum Framework on page 24. Build on your successes.
- Maintain statistics on gender balance among participants, athletes, coaches, officials, and administrators for use in building a case, as a guide to where to start, and as a tool for measuring progress.
- Explain the legal advantages of being a gender equity organization. Defending charges of discrimination, harassment and unfair procedure can cost your organization time, money and human resources, and destroy your public image.

Now you are ready to turn to **Part Two!**

***If they are not present,
women cannot speak. And if their voices are not heard,
their concerns cannot be addressed.
— Marion Lay***

