

Sue Vail

*Le Programme pour les femmes, une part intégrale de Condition physique et Sport amateur, a débuté en 1980. Son mandat est de développer et de promouvoir des moyens pour encourager les femmes à participer aux activités sportives et de conditionnement. Ce*

## **The Past**

*programme donne son appui à des organisations nationales; il agit comme liaison entre les groupes fédéraux et provinciaux; il recommande une politique fédérale dans le domaine des femmes et du sport. Le Programme pour les femmes a publié des brochures, des livres, et des films pour améliorer la prise de conscience du public envers les femmes engagées dans le sport et les activités de conditionnement physique.*

Fitness and Amateur Sport (FAS) was established in 1961 "to promote, encourage and develop fitness and amateur sport in Canada." This federal department pursues its dual purpose through the activities of Fitness Canada and Sport Canada. The Women's Program is an integral part of Fitness and Amateur Sport, working at the national level with sport and fitness associations and with women's organizations.

In 1972 Fitness and Amateur Sport began to undertake special projects that addressed the needs of women in sport and physical activity. This action was stimulated by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, whose research showed that significantly fewer girls than boys were involved in school physical-activity programs. In addition, 1975 was International Women's Year, and the federal government was responsible for the development and implementation of projects to recognize and improve the status of women.

In 1974 Fitness and Amateur Sport staged in Toronto a National Conference on Women and Sport. This conference was the first of its kind in Canada, and its proceedings reflected the quality and commitment of the participants. Many projects within the Women's Program today are based upon the detailed recommendations proposed at the Toronto conference.

A second conference on women and sport did not take place until 1980. The Female Athlete Conference, hosted by Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, brought together hundreds of women from across North America to discuss the

# **What the federal**

# **Government is doing**

status of girls and women in physical activity and sport. The conference proceedings contained a series of recommendations for various governmental and non-governmental agencies that provided further direction and justification for the formalization of the FAS Women's Program.

## **TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S SPORT**

# The Present

In October of 1980 the Women's Program became fully operational and an integral part of FAS. The mandate of the Women's Program is to develop and promote ways of involving more women in sport and fitness activities. One objective is to help remove some of the traditional barriers that have inhibited full and equal participation by women in the past. The program administers projects that improve the status of women in fitness and amateur sport; conducts studies designed to assess the status of women in fitness and amateur sport; and acts as a focal point within the federal government for issues related to women and physical activity.

The four major activity areas within the Women's Program are as follows:

**1. National Association Contribution Program** — Contributions are provided to national sport and recreation organizations for projects related to the participation of women and girls in sport and fitness. These have included support for the development of female coaches and officials as well as providing opportunities for women to obtain leadership positions, both paid and volunteer, within their national organizations.

**2. Internship Program for Women Athletes** — In an effort to encourage and prepare women athletes for leadership in sport management, the program provides funds for retired women athletes to participate in supervised management-training positions in national sport or sport-related organizations.

**3. Liaison** — The Women's Program exchanges information and, where possible, co-ordinates activities with other federal programs whose mandate includes the status of women; national women's groups; national sport and fitness organizations; and provincial/territorial ministries of sport, fitness, and recreation.

**4. Policy Development** — The program recommends federal policy on various matters related to

women and physical activity, addressing such issues as federal funding for national organizations that practise discrimination on the basis of sex.

# The Future

In the past two and half years the Women's Program has attempted to identify the "state of the art" with regard to the status of women in fitness and amateur sport at the national level. It has been important to find out what is happening in our own back yard before venturing beyond.

We have now documented the underrepresentation of female leaders in our field and clearly identified barriers to female participation. As a result, increasing amounts of time will be spent over the next five years to ensure that all Fitness and Amateur Sport policies and legislation are based upon sex equality. These changes in policy will directly affect the national sport and fitness organizations that receive funding from the federal government.

Such action will not be effective without the active involvement of women from within the sport domain and within the greater women's movement. It is important that feminists across the country recognize women and sport as an issue. Just as importantly, the women's movement must recognize that confronting the problems faced by women in fitness and sport may assist in the understanding and the identification of solutions that eliminate discrimination on the basis of sex from all aspects of society. The Women's Program will continue to meet with representatives from national women's organizations and agencies to ensure that such consultation between sportswomen and other female activists takes place.

## Publications and Films

Through its pamphlets, books, and films, the program strives to increase awareness about the role of women in sport and fitness activ-

ities and to motivate more women toward increased and more active participation.

*For the Record: Canada's Greatest Women Athletes (1981)*. This book highlights the careers of some of our top women athletes since World War I.

*Women in Sport Leadership Survey (1982)*. A summary of the survey provides statistics, analysis, and recommendations on women in sport and recreation leadership in government, associations, universities, community colleges, and coaching.

*Canadian Directory of Women in Sport Leadership*. The directory profiles women who are paid staff and volunteer administrators, sport scientists, coaches, and officials in the fitness and amateur-sport community.

*National Conference on Women and Sport (1974)*. This report presents the proceedings and recommendations of the conference, covering coaching, sport research, school sport, and other areas.

*The Female Athlete Conference (1980)*. This report includes a series of extensive recommendations on women in sport and recreation (available only from Simon Fraser University).

*Growing Together (1981)*. This booklet describes two demonstration projects on fitness and lifestyle counselling for low-income women (available only from the Canadian Public Health Association).

*Your Move (1974)*. In this film, pentathlete Debbie Van Kieckebelt talks about her life and her experiences as an athlete (available only through the National Film Board).

*Just for Me (1982)*. In this film, three women in different situations each decide to take some time for themselves and become more physically active (available only through the National Film Board).

For further information write to: Fitness and Amateur Sport, Women's Program, Government of Canada, Ottawa K1A 0X6.

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