

REMOVING BARRIERS TO KEEP SELF-IDENTIFIED GIRLS IN SPORT.

MILESTONE #1 REPORT – DECEMBER 2021

A collaborative sport and leadership initiative between Fast and Female and Canadian Women & Sport, funded by Silver Gummy Foundation



FEMMES ET SPORT AU CANADA
CANADIAN WOMEN & SPORT



CONTENTS

Organization Profiles	4
Executive Summary	8
Milestone #1	10
By the Numbers: Findings and Feedback	18
Key Learnings and Next Steps	20

Land Acknowledgment

Fast and Female and Canadian Women & Sport would first like to acknowledge the Indigenous Peoples of all the lands that our staff and network are on today. We recognize the importance of the lands, which we each call home. We do this to reaffirm our commitment and responsibility to improve relationships between nations, and improve our understanding of local Indigenous Peoples and their cultures.

If you would like to learn more about the Indigenous lands you live, work and play on, please see: native-land.ca or text 1 (907) 312- 5085 followed by the city and province you reside in for more information.



ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILES

Fast and Female

Fast and Female is a registered Canadian charity on a mission to keep self-identified girls aged 8-14 healthy and active in sports and physical activities. Founded in 2005 by Olympic gold medalist Chandra Crawford, Fast and Female believes in the power of positive sport and physical activity experiences and role models to give girls leadership, teamwork and resiliency skills. In our endeavour to foster lasting involvement in sports, we host national and local events and programs in collaboration with community partners and like-minded individuals. Fast and Female provides opportunities for powerful connection with REAL (Relatable, Empowered, Active Leaders) Role Models from within the girls' communities.



Canadian Women & Sport



Canadian Women & Sport, informed by 40-year history of committed leadership and impact, partners with sport organizations, governments, and leaders to build better sport through gender equity. Canadian Women & Sport are experts on systemic change and strive to build a stronger, more equitable sport system for girls and women, benefiting all Canadians. The organization has resources and programs that offer foundational knowledge to increase sport leaders' awareness about the experiences of women and girls and provide recommendations to address the factors that influence their athletic development, leadership and life-long participation in sport and physical activity.

Canadian Women & Sport is a Canadian not-for-profit corporation governed by the Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act. The organization has a board of directors consisting of nine independent members. The leadership team consists of Allison Sandmeyer-Graves as Chief Executive Officer and directors in each of programs, communications and marketing, and finance and operations. There are several other employees providing support in all areas.





“The biggest thing I learned from these 6 week is how different boys and girls are when it comes to sports, from what they value in sports, to the different hurdles they need to overcome in order to excel. It is truly eye opening when you start to talk about some of the reasons why girls drop out of sports, and see how normalized these things are in our society.”

- Removing Barriers Sport Leader

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Problem:

Girls are underrepresented in the Canadian sport system, as participants and as leaders, due to pervasive systemic barriers that limit their engagement. Before the global stoppage in sport and physical activity occurred due to COVID-19, as many as 62% of girls were not participating in any kind of sport compared to 44% of boys, and one in three girls drop out compared to one in seven boys (Canadian Women & Sport, 2020). The spectrum of gender-based violence (GBV), including body shaming and sexual harassment, is a significant factor that drives girls out of sport (Kerr, Willson, & Stirling, 2020). And for girls facing additional barriers related to intersecting social identities, or intersectionality, the opportunity to engage in sport participation is even more important. For example, girls from lower income households report that cost, access, confidence, lack of feelings of belongingness and safety are barriers to their sport participation (Canadian Women & Sport, 2020). Now, as public health sanctions begin to lessen and more opportunities become available, one in four Canadian girls who were physically active prior to COVID-19 are not committed to returning to sport which demands that leaders in this sector aim to build back better (Canadian Women & Sport and E-Alliance, 2021).



What We Planned:

Removing Barriers to Keep Self-Identified Girls in Sports is a collaborative sport and leadership initiative between Fast and Female and Canadian Women & Sport, funded by the Silver Gummy Foundation. This multi-week program for girls, aged 10 to 14, and their coaches, sport program developers and/or administrators is designed to be inclusive, and developmentally appropriate while building knowledge, competencies and attitudes to help keep girls safe in sport.

Fast and Female Supporting Women in Sport Foundation (“Fast and Female”) partnered with Canadian Women & Sport to create joint programming that engaged and aimed to retain more self-identified girls in safe, welcoming, and inclusive sport experiences (“the Project”). Using an intersectional framework, the Project addressed gender-based violence in two key ways:

1. Within Sport:

Girls and their sport leaders were provided with information and resources that enhance their understanding of gender-based violence in sport and how to prevent and address it;

2. Through Sport:

Girls and their sport leaders were provided with an experience and training that improves the retention of girls in sport throughout adolescence. This enables girls to access the benefits of sport—confidence, self-esteem, sense of social belonging and resilience—which enhances their life-long well-being and act as protective factors against gender-based violence.

What Happened:

Together, the two organizations co-hosted a training series wherein Fast and Female engaged and trained the girls, and Canadian Women & Sport engaged and trained the sport leaders (coaches, sport program designers and administrators) who provide the sport environments and experiences at a community or sports organization. The core training for the girls and leaders was delivered concurrently in two distinct streams, with the girls and the leaders each receiving training and messages tailored to their role. The two groups connected at the start and end of the training series to create linkages and share learnings and experiences between the girls and the leaders.

This pilot was particularly challenging given its implementation during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Our recruitment efforts resulted in partnering with 4 Alberta-based sport organizations and a total of 35-40 girls and 7 program leaders who participated in the virtual pilot.

Despite the challenges of delivering during the pandemic, the program was a success with over 90% of girls reporting feeling more confident, brave and strong because of the program. 100% of coaches who attended the full 5 week training reported an increase in knowledge gained and competencies to apply new strategies for creating a safer environment for girls in sport.

MILESTONE #1

Project Objectives:

1. To educate girls about the value of sport and how to create a safe and inclusive sport environment free from violence (e.g. bullying, bystander empowerment, peer support).
2. To educate sport leaders, building their knowledge, motivation and competence for creating girl-centred sport experiences and environments that are safe, welcoming and inclusive meeting girls' needs and interests.
3. To provide access to girl-centered sport experiences to retain girls in sport. The expected measurable outcomes for our stakeholders:
 - **Girls:** increased confidence, sense of support system, increased sport-related value, positive intentions regarding future sport participation, and sport-related skill development
 - **Sport Leaders:** increased knowledge, motivation and competencies to create equitable, safe, welcoming and inclusive conditions that intentionally foster girls' participation in sport.

All offerings were developed through an intersectional framework (gender +). We provided education and knowledge about how other intersecting identity factors beyond gender, such as race, sexuality, ethnicity, among other key identities, intersect to create different sport experiences and create different barriers to sport for girls.

- **Year 1 (completed)** – develop and pilot programming in one community, reaching up to 150 girls and 20 sport leaders.
- **Years 2 and 3** – launch and continue refinement of programming, delivering in two communities per year inviting up to 600 girls (up to 300 per community), and 80 sport leaders (up to 40 per community).

Total anticipated reach is approximately 1,350 girls and 180 sport leaders.



Program Development, March – June 2021:

Fast and Female and Canadian Women & Sport collaborated on planning the development and delivery of our virtual pilot program. After consulting with [Dr. Gretchen Kerr of the University of Toronto](#), our organizations made the decision to focus on one province (Alberta) and recruit partners from within the province to support the recruitment of local sport leads and girl participants. This would ensure that the sport leaders and girls were connected to one another.

Recruit Partners, June – July 2021:

Fast and Female and Canadian Women & Sport share a public [Call for Community Partners in Alberta](#) for the pilot program. Inclusion criteria for partners were as follows:

- Located in Alberta
- Offer seasonal or annual sport and/or physical activity programming for girls aged 10-14
- Able to recruit a minimum of 20 girls, max 150, aged 10-14
- Able to recruit 5-20 coaches, sport program designers and/or administrators with a minimum of 2 years experience in sport and physical activity program delivery
- All participants able to attend all sessions (more information below)
- All participants have access to the technology to participate virtually.

The recruitment strategy included extensive and targeted social media promotion of the project, as well as direct outreach to our sport and physical activity partners across the province. The application period was extended to offer more flexibility to potential partners and many one-on-one conversations were held to explore project partnerships. After a promising turnout of 5 community partners all committing to source a base number of program participants, COVID continued to challenge prolonged commitment for our cohort. As the fall ramped up, it became clear that a multi-week program was no longer possible for many given the ever-shifting social and health regulations, in addition to financial pressures, lower engagement in communities and program deliverers, and competing priorities. With 1 partner dropping out, both organizations moved forward with 4 partner organizations. All partners were provided with information letters, sample e-mails and registration links to support recruitment of girl participants and sport leaders. Additionally, a call for open registration to any girls or sport leaders in Alberta was shared through social media 1-2 weeks prior to the start of the program.

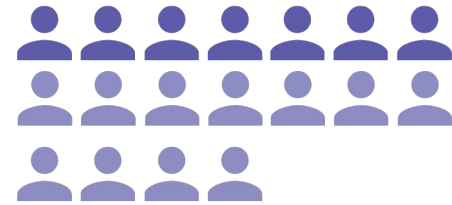
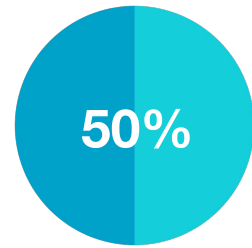
Final partners: Alberta Alpine Ski Association, Cochrane Minor Basketball League, Sole Girls YYC, and Lethbridge Sports Council



With this in mind, both organizations made the decision to open registration to any participants and sport leaders in Alberta.

Recruit Girls and Leaders, July – September 2021:

With the support of the 4 partners, we engaged:



74 girl participants registered
with approximately **50%** of them
regularly attending our programming

18 sport leaders registered,
with a consistent **7** of them
regularly attending our programming

- Additionally, Fast and Female recruited 4 of our REAL (Relatable, Empowering, Active Leaders) Role Models and 8 of our Youth Advisory Council Members to support as Leaders in Training throughout the program. Fast and Female also brought in 2 special guest facilitators for our Opening and Closing Ceremonies: Meaghan Cotterill, owner of 5 Elements Martial Arts and Tammy Cunnington, Paralympic Athlete.
- Canadian Women & Sport recruited 2 Teaching Assistants to support the delivery of the program.



Deliver Program, September – October 2021:

The core training for the girls and leaders was delivered concurrently in two distinct streams, with the girls and the leaders each receiving training and messages tailored to their role. The two groups connected at the start and end of the training series to create linkages and share learnings and experiences between the girls and the leaders.

- **Joint Kickoff Event: Saturday, September 11th**
 - Hosted over Zoom
 - Included: a live boxing session and keynote from Fast and Female Role Model, Meaghan Cotterill
 - Girls and Sport Leaders split up for separate orientation
- **Independent Live Sessions from September 12 - October 15**
 - Fast and Female delivered 3 live workshops (more details on page xx)
 - Canadian Women & Sport delivered 5 live workshops, in addition to asynchronous independent learning
- **Joint Celebration Event: October 16**
 - Hosted over Zoom
 - Included: keynote speaker, Tammy Cunnington; engagement activity led by Sport Leaders to build connections and leverage the learnings from the training program; Girls' Panel facilitated by Fast & Female for the girls to showcase their learnings from the program

Evaluate and Debrief, October – December 2021:

Both organizations delivered their own post-program surveys based on the program themes, topics, and key outcomes. More information on the findings can be found in the "By the Numbers" section.

FAST AND FEMALE CURRICULUM:



Tasha Belix, M.A., Registered Psychologist, speaker and author, designed and delivered three scaffolded workshops which served as the core curriculum for this program. The goal with the curriculum was to plant the foundational seeds of knowledge for our girl participants on consent and boundaries, on ‘good’ and ‘bad’ things in their environment, and using their voice.

Overview of 3 Curriculums

WORKSHOP #1: Circle of Friendships

Learning Objectives:

- To identify friends and supportive people in the world;
- To brainstorm strategies to grow deeper connections;
- To identify ways to take steps away from unhealthy friendships if it is no longer filling the person up.

WORKSHOP #2: Pulling Weeds and Planting Seeds

Learning Objectives:

- To identify the qualities and behaviours modelled by peers, coaches and parents that work to grow a positive team atmosphere;
- To identify the qualities and behaviours that work to unravel self-confidence and team spirit.

WORKSHOP #3: Speaking up for Yourself

Learning Objectives:

- To learn the skill of speaking up for oneself;
- To set healthy boundaries and to get ones’ needs met;
- To practice assertive communication using confident body language and I-messages scripts



All girl participants also received a copy of Tasha Belix’s “Finding Yourself Tool Box: 30 Ways To Find Yourself To Get What you Want From Life” workbook. Each workshop offered suggested activities within the workbook for girls to do on their own time.



Sample Session Schedule:

Time	Activity
9:55 am MT	Let girls into Zoom - play music
10:02 am MT	Welcome, Land Acknowledgement
10:07 am MT	Agenda for the Day
10:10 am MT	Physical Activity Session
10:25 am MT	Workshop Session by Dr. Tasha Belix
10:45 am MT	Breakout Rooms with REAL Role Models (RRMs)
11:05 am MT	Group Sharing Circle
11:20 am MT	Workbook Activity Assignments
11:30 am MT	Group Photo and Goodbye

CANADIAN WOMEN & SPORT PROGRAMMING:

In addition to the joint-sessions with Fast and Female, sport leaders participated in 5 weekly, 2-hour learning sessions. Sport leaders engaged in activities and conversations rooted in the experiences of girls in sport in Canada at each level of the intersectional-ecological systems model, which are highlighted in the Weekly Session Overview.

The Removing Barriers: Sport Leader Training sought to achieve 7 key outcomes for the participants:

1. Apply a gender lens to day-to-day decisions.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the benefits of sport participation for girls.
3. Describe the barriers that impede girls' participation and retention using the intersectional-ecological systems model.
4. Describe the role of the various stakeholders in the retention of girls in sport.
5. Apply research evidence to demonstrate an understanding of the optimal girl-centered sport experience.
6. Understand and be able to apply key processes and competencies that help retain girls in sport in both design and delivery of programs.
7. Locate expert resources, materials and guidance to support future, ongoing learning and implementation.



Weekly sessions were enhanced by asynchronous independent learning including:

- Keeping Girls in Sport e-learning module
- Supplementary resources
- Videos
- Discussion prompts

Weekly Session Overview

SESSION	DESCRIPTION
Course Orientation	This session will act as the “hook” for participants by speaking to the need for the <i>Removing Barriers: Sport Leader Training</i> as a method of intervention to address the gender inequity in sport from grassroots to high performance. This session will provide participants with an understanding of the outcomes and their role in achieving them.
GE in Sport: Systems of Oppression & Intersectional Feminism	This session explores the societal level of the socioecological model as it relates to sport, community resources and gender equity. Participants will learn about the history of sport through an intersectional gender lens. Participants will be empowered by the knowledge and encouraged to ask critical questions about existing policies and how to create meaningful change.
Equity is a Team Sport	This session explores the community level of the socioecological model as it relates to sport, physical and social spaces and gender equity. Participants will explore the factors that contribute to a supportive environment including the community of stakeholders who empower a girl to be physically active.
Creating Social Connection	This session explores the relationship level of the socioecological model as it relates to sport, relationships and gender equity. Participants will understand the crucial role of healthy relationship building in the retention of girls in sport and why the current Canadian sport landscape faces a deficit of women role models.
The Value of Sport in the Girls' Lives	This session explores the individual level of the socioecological model as it relates to sport, personal development and gender equity. Participants will understand the potential impact of their programming on the personal development of their participants which contributes to the greater achievement of a more equitable society.
Putting It Into Practice	This session will offer participants the opportunity to share all of their learnings over the previous 5 weeks by applying the skills and knowledge developed for their sport environment. Participants will leave with a greater knowledge of the main equity issues that exist in sport while understanding that their role as a sport leader is to create relationships, environments, and programs that will allow girls to meet their potential in sport and society.

Sport leaders completed a pre-training survey, weekly post-session feedback surveys, and a post-training survey.

BY THE NUMBERS: FINDINGS AND FEEDBACK

Fast and Female:

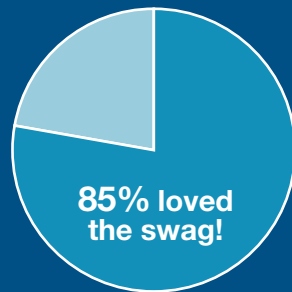
Age range of participants: **9-14 years old**



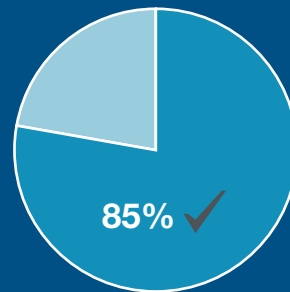
Girls rated connecting with Role Models 4.8 Smiley Faces out of 5



Star rating of curriculum by girl participants: 4.6/5



Over 85% of participants said it was very useful meeting Fast and Female Real Role Models (RRMs)



"I felt that they taught me a lot of good lessons. What I took away from the REAL role models is stuff that I can apply in life."

"Made me feel more confident and that I can accomplish and achieve great levels in sports."

Other Stats:

- 100% said they would attend again
- 100% would recommend Fast and Female to a friend
- After the program, over 90% of the participants felt:
 - More confident, brave and strong
 - That they could distance themselves from people that bring them down
 - That they can speak up for themselves
 - That they can plant seeds of change in their lives

"I loved hearing stories from older athletes. It really made me think I could do anything too."

"I have been able to now, stand up for myself, and bring friends closer."

Learn more about what the participants had to say about the Fast and Female program by [clicking here](#).

Canadian Women & Sport Findings

Canadian Women & Sport developed pre-and-post program evaluations based on a 7 point scale to measure the growth in the sport leader's knowledge and competence about the experience of girls in sport and how to apply a gender lens to their work as a result of participating in the program.

Overall, participants who participated in the full 5 week training (n=7) self-reported an increase in knowledge gained and competence to apply new strategies for creating a better environment for girls in sport. Notable examples of this increase include greater understanding in the following areas:

- **How systems of oppression such as sexism, racism, ableism, classism, create barriers for girls in sport;**
- **Their role as a sport leader in maintaining a girl's continued participation in sport;**
- **How to create inclusive environments for girls to participate;**
- **How the benefits of sport can act as protective factors against gender-based violence.**

Program Leaders' demographics:

- 5 women and 2 men;
- Leader's experience coaching ranged between 1 and over 10 years;
- All leaders reported having previous professional training prior to participating in this program (i.e., NCCCP training and Respect in Sport training); and
- 100% of leaders reported that they would recommend the program to colleagues.

Evaluation Question	Pre-Program Mean Result	Post-Program Mean Result ↑
I understand how the benefits of sport can act as protective factors against gender-based violence.	4/7 or "good understanding"	6/7 or "great understanding"
I understand how unconscious bias can influence my decisions.	5/7 or "very good understanding"	6/7 or "great understanding"
I am able to use an intersectional lens as a tool to design and deliver programs for girls.	3/7 or "fair level of competence"	6/7 or "great level of competence"
I am able to utilize strategies to support redefining a girls' relationship with risk-taking.	4/7 or "good level of competence"	5/7 or "very good level of competence"

Examples of Sport Leaders' key learnings:

STOP ●	START ●	CONTINUE →
Using gender biased language: "I will stop using the phrase "hey guys" when teaching girls, as I subconsciously do this, but I am now more aware of it."	"I will start promoting good social interactions when teaching girls before competitive games to ensure they will try their best and will learn the most from my program."	"I will continue to focus on personal relationships and culture on my team, creating more opportunities for team building ensuring that cliques don't form."
Adhering to rigid and exclusive policies: I will stop having black/white rules around attendance at team events	"I will use the gender equity lens and intersectionality in my perspective a lot more and take that perspective into my own decision making."	"Playing more games to get groups comfortable with each other, trying to understand individual needs rather than using a one size fits all approach."

KEY LEARNINGS AND NEXT STEPS:

Fast and Female:

- Workshop delivery by a facilitator with a background in psychology, social work, mental health, etc. allows for immediate support if any of the discussions or topics may be sensitive or triggering
- Girls loved sharing and just talking with Role Models and each other! Ensuring to find a way to manage time in our sessions - including leaving more time and space for girls to just chat with each other and the Role Models
- Finding a way to keep the Role Models and girl participants connected beyond the program – through e-mail or some other communication method.

Canadian Women & Sport:

- Sport leaders identified early on that they benefited from being able to discuss the new ideas that they learned with their peers. Adjustments were made to the live sessions to be able to facilitate more discussion opportunities.
- The volume of independent work assigned to sport leaders was not feasible. Updates will be made to the independent learning curriculum to prioritize and advance the learning outcomes of the program.
- Canadian Women & Sport will be exploring new avenues to build sustainable communities of practice for sport leaders who have completed the Removing Barriers: Sport Leader Training to encourage continued learning and connection.

Collaborative/learnings together/key considerations:

- Ensure there are more linkages between the content of our programs.
- Provide additional support to delivery partners to ensure increased registration and program participation.
- Explore additional recruitment strategies to bolster pilot participant numbers.
- The kick off and culminating events were so valuable for the participants. Allowing the girls to see their sport leaders in this environment and the sport leaders to hear direct feedback from the girls was both beneficial and rewarding. This will be prioritized and a must for our programs moving forward.

By working together to simultaneously engage sport leaders and girls in sport, this program served as a wholistic intervention that leveraged the strengths of each organization delivering more impact than either organization could individually. Thank you to the Silver Gummy Foundation for the support and making this program possible. We look forward to Milestone #2!





Fast and Female Supporting Women in Sport Foundation

Gabriela Estrada
gestrada@fastandfemale.com
www.fastandfemale.com
#fastandfemale

Registered Canadian Charity: 830781613 RR0002



Canadian Women & Sport

Stephanie Talsma
stephanie.talsma@womenandsport.ca
www.womenandsport.ca
@womenandsportca



Thank you to Canadian Women & Sport, Denise Militzer, Chris Monette, Dave Holland, Shannon Hastings, and Sask Sport for the photos provided