

# Female Engagement and Gender Equity Strategic Plan 2020-2022



5/11/2020

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## INTRO

There are wide discrepancies between the number of men and women who make up the player, coaching, officiating, and leadership communities in squash in Canada. The Female Engagement and Gender Equity Strategic Plan aims to narrow the gap by implementing tactics to increase female participation in squash in all roles and at all levels. The plan includes short term initiatives to create awareness and build momentum and also focuses on long-term engagement and retention by addressing ways to integrate activities and actions into organizational planning. The intended impact of the strategy is to create a supporting environment for female engagement in squash leading to sustainable programming being made available to women across the country.

## ABOUT THE FEMALE LEADERSHIP AND GENDER EQUITY PROJECT

In late 2019, Squash Canada launched the Female Leadership and Gender Equity Project, an important first step in identifying any barriers that stand in the way of more women and girls enjoying and benefitting from participating in the sport. To support this national project, Squash Canada appointed a project lead, allocated financial resources, formed a Female Engagement and Gender Equity Committee, and piloted activities.

As part of the initial activities, a National Gender Participation Survey was drafted and launched and opened to Provincial and Territorial Associations (PTAs) to complete. The survey was conducted in order to gather data to gain insight into current perceptions of female participation in squash in Canada, to identify recruitment and retention strategies, as well as potential barriers to participation. Results from this survey supported Squash Canada's Female Engagement and Gender Equity Team with findings to help develop the Squash Canada Female Engagement and Gender Equity Strategic Plan presented in this report. Further project activities included a Women in Squash Encouragement Fund, executing female programming concepts, and developing mentoring programs.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Drafting of the Female Engagement and Gender Equity Strategic Plan and analysis of the National Gender Participation Survey data was possible through the dedication and support of Dan Wolfenden (Executive Director), Tara Mullins (Project Lead), Stephanie Edmison (Board Liaison), and the Squash Canada Female Engagement and Gender Equity Committee members: Elizabeth McBeth, Susie King, Renee Blanchard, Janice Lardner, Lia Johnson, Annette White, Caroline De Vries and Robert Pacey.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The Female Engagement and Gender Equity Team participated in a strategic planning process that included the following components:

October 2019	Project Launched	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Launch of the Female Leadership and Gender Equity Project</li> <li>● Engaged Project Lead</li> <li>● Appointed Board Liaison</li> </ul>
November 2019	Resources Sourced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sourced representatives and engaged Female Engagement Gender Equity Committee</li> <li>● Developed National Gender Participation Survey</li> </ul>
December 2019	Stakeholder Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Distributed National Gender Participation Survey to PTA's; collected responses</li> </ul>
January 2020	Data Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Findings and data analyzed by Female Engagement and Gender Equity Committee</li> <li>● 1-day planning session held with Executive Director, Project Lead and Female Engagement and Gender Equity Committee Members</li> <li>● Drafting of core pillars, activities and reassessment of current project deliverables</li> </ul>
February - March 2020	Drafting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Further drafting of goals and objectives by Project Lead and Female Engagement and Gender Equity Committee</li> </ul>
April 2020	Stakeholder Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Circulation of Strategic Plan content to stakeholders for feedback</li> </ul>
May 2020	Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Circulation of Strategic Plan to stakeholders</li> </ul>

## CURRENT STATE

Information gathered in the National Gender Participation Survey and reviewed at the January 2020 data analysis and planning session, helped to foster a better understanding of the present state of female squash in Canada. Key findings and identified gender equity opportunity areas are listed below.

### **Key Findings**

<b>Engagement</b>
Overall, 25% of Canadian coaches and 22% of Canadian officials are female The largest female player market is between the ages 20 years to 50 years There is a steady decline in female participation after the age of 10 with the highest attrition at age 16 The largest female participation gaps are in the Open, A and E levels Females are not underrepresented in management/administration roles 40% of contracted coaches are female
<b>Recruitment and Retention</b>
A personal approach via email, word of mouth, conversation and/or referrals seem to be the most commonly used and successful approaches to bridge female participation into squash Word of mouth is used as the most frequent channel of communication by PTAs Female player participation seems to be the largest focus of female engagement for PTAs Most PTAs do not consider gender equity in their engagement of coaches and officials Approximately 50% of PTAs do not employ a retention strategy for female participants in the sport Lack of opportunities, support, financial remuneration, and all-female training sessions affect retention PTAs actively look to recruit for management/staff and governance positions but don't seem to focus on a gender equity balance in their structure
<b>Barriers to Engagement</b>
The most common perceived barriers to engagement are: Lack of female coaching role models Lack of time due to competing priorities Lack of all-female programs Lack of support/encouragement
<b>Governance/Support</b>
31% of PTAs have a policy that addresses inclusion of female participants and leaders Supporting materials that would help PTAs to raise the level of female engagement include: Promotional material and training and development, financial resources, increased interconnection between PTAs, role models/leadership and the presence of policies
<b>Other</b>
There is a lack of female adult development training opportunities Communications gap between Provinces; there is an opportunity in sharing best practices, and highlighting events and/or models that work the best Communications and promotional material should employ inclusive language and imaging (diversity of age, ethnicity, skill and fitness level, etc.) Engaging male allies and aligning with other Squash Canada governing committees are important factors for strategic success Increased community awareness on the lack of female participants in all streams is needed Sustainability and succession planning are key factors to address for long-term success

## Gender Equity Opportunity Areas

Based on the discoveries, the following gender equity improvement areas were identified:

- ❖ Raising the ratio of female to male coaches, officials, players
- ❖ Governance, policies, PTA support and guidance, succession planning
- ❖ All-inclusive female communications; inclusive language, images, diversity
- ❖ Identification of role models, supporting environments, all-female training and development opportunities
- ❖ Establishing and recognizing male allies
- ❖ Increase in community awareness, training, education, and funding opportunities
- ❖ Retention strategies
- ❖ Sharing of information, successes, showcasing females in squash

## SWOT Analysis

Key findings and gender equity opportunities were then reviewed through the lens of a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strong market</li> <li>● Most PTAs starting</li> <li>● Strong pool of applicants</li> <li>● Identifiable leaders</li> <li>● Funding</li> <li>● Identified gaps: know what we want to do</li> <li>● Existing programs: improve not create from scratch</li> <li>● Male allies</li> <li>● Existing committees</li> <li>● CAAWS as an ally</li> <li>● Good timing</li> <li>● Cascading communication channels</li> <li>● Fitness benefits of the sport</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Misperceptions - squash is tough on the body, can't play for life</li> <li>● Court access</li> <li>● Lack of trust/track record               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ New team</li> <li>○ New strategy</li> <li>○ PTA relationship with S.C.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Under-resourced PTAs/lack of capacity</li> <li>● Broken communication chain</li> <li>● Engagement of pros</li> <li>● Thinking long-term/people are more immediate in thinking</li> <li>● Business development strategies</li> <li>● Long sales cycle</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Informal leaders</li> <li>● Capture non-members</li> <li>● Stop attrition in teens</li> <li>● Flexible sport (scoring, format, etc...)</li> <li>● Market Gender Equity brand awareness</li> <li>● Word of mouth/small community</li> <li>● Age not a barrier – despite perception</li> <li>● Recruit more volunteers</li> <li>● Shine a light on successes</li> <li>● Destination sport</li> <li>● Condo courts</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Unsupportive pros</li> <li>● Unqualified pros</li> <li>● Substitutes (pickleball)</li> <li>● Facility access/court closures</li> <li>● Access to funding</li> <li>● Support for Gender Equity declines/fatigue</li> <li>● Not enough results</li> </ul>

Results set forth the Female Engagement and Gender Equity strategic direction.

## STRATEGIC PLAN

The Squash Canada Female Engagement and Gender Equity Strategic Plan outlines five strategic pillars as the focus of the period from 2020-2022 that are not presented in any particular priority sequence.

The five strategic pillars are:

1. Operational Excellence
2. Community Engagement
3. Professional Training and Development
4. Events and Activities
5. Showcasing and Sharing Successes

Each pillar's initiatives and intended impacts for year 1 and year 2 are described below. Accountability, timeline and resources will be included in a high-level implementation follow up report.

### **1. Operational Excellence**

- 1.1. Improve governance for gender equity in squash throughout Canada
  - 1.1.1. Update Squash Canada gender equity policy
  - 1.1.2. Create template for PTAs to adopt/create their own gender equity policy
  - 1.1.3. Maintain gender equity committee; consider succession planning
- 1.2. Develop best practices of programming around Canada and share with PTAs
  - 1.2.1. Continue researching, compiling, packaging and promoting gender equity best practices and resources; add/edit updates on Squash Canada's website
  - 1.2.2. Strongly encourage coaches to take the Respect in Sport - Keeping Girls in Sport - Training Program
  - 1.2.3. Actively recruit and include male allies engaged in activities and initiatives
- 1.3. Conduct a yearly National Gender Participation survey
  - 1.3.1. Consult CAAWS for best practice/data to be collected
  - 1.3.2. Develop/update survey, distribute, analyze results
  - 1.3.3. Generate report, including major findings and comparisons with previous year's results
- 1.4. Host bi-monthly Squash Canada Female Engagement and Gender Equity Committee meetings cost effectively and efficiently
- 1.5. Host quarterly Gender Equity Leadership Meetings with PTA executives, board liaisons, committee chairs, etc... cost effectively and efficiently
- 1.6. Develop a communication strategy
  - 1.6.1. Produce an Engagement Calendar - a year at a glance of women's initiatives across the country; consider posting openly online so that stakeholders can populate the document with their own female activities
  - 1.6.2. Develop a tactics and deployment schedule for gender equity communications
- 1.7. Ensure alignment with Squash Canada committees and working groups
  - 1.7.1. Engage with other committees and working groups to streamline efforts and reduce duplication of work and/or materials; increase awareness between leadership teams

INTENDED IMPACTS	
YEAR 1	YEAR 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Processes and tools set up to execute the Female Engagement and Gender Equity Strategy effectively and efficiently</li> <li>❖ Key stakeholders engaged in the squash community to support female engagement opportunities</li> <li>❖ Continuous effort by Squash Canada to gain a better understanding of female needs and expectations; solutions developed to support them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Use of processes and tools such as gender equity policies throughout the country</li> <li>❖ Key stakeholders developing and deploying their own gender equity projects and initiatives</li> <li>❖ Individuals reaching out to be involved in and/or supporting leaders leading the path towards gender equity in squash</li> </ul>

**2. Community Engagement**

- 2.1. Create awareness of Squash Canada’s Gender Equity Committee and Gender Equity Funding
  - 2.1.1. Provide clear communication on Gender Equity Committee needs and responsibilities
  - 2.1.2. Provide clear communication on the Women in Squash Encouragement Fund expectations
  - 2.1.3. Create committee governing documents to provide more clarity
  - 2.1.4. Consider increasing visibility through apparel/equipment and posting mentor bios online
- 2.2. Develop a Community of Practice creating an environment for the squash community to connect, learn and share
  - 2.2.1. Host webinars
  - 2.2.2. Ensure female engagement content is present in newsletter(s)
  - 2.2.3. Research and establish a social media platform
- 2.3. Educate community on Gender Equity financial opportunities across the country
  - 2.3.1. Ensure other institutional financial grant opportunities are communicated to the squash community and posted on Squash Canada’s website (For example: WISE Funding)
- 2.4. Stakeholder education on Gender Equity
  - 2.4.1. Share information on National Gender Participation Survey results and other published findings/documents (for ex. CAAWS, Coach.ca, etc..)
- 2.5. Share successful female engagement models
  - 2.5.1. Share material from successful pilots including templates, promotions, budget, formats, etc...
  - 2.5.2. Research, compile and share current successful and sustainable women’s programming in the country



INTENDED IMPACTS	
YEAR 1	YEAR 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Growth and sustainment of the energy that people are putting into Gender Equity by sharing tools, advice, support, and encouragement</li> <li>❖ Increased awareness in the squash community of gender equity barriers and tactics to overcome them</li> <li>❖ Growth of Squash Canada’s organizational strength through increased awareness helping to build more sustainability in squash in Canada</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Increased community engagement and willingness to support Gender Equity in squash</li> <li>❖ Educated community on gender equity barriers and tactics to overcome them</li> <li>❖ Active community supporting one another in the findings, learnings, processes and programs favoring gender equity in squash</li> </ul>

**3. Professional Training and Development**

- 3.1. Recruit more females into coaching, officiating, volunteering, participation in sport and leadership
  - 3.1.1. Ensure skill development opportunities are communicated through all channels
  - 3.1.2. Engage in casual conversations to gain a better qualitative understanding of the conditions impacting recruitment
  - 3.1.3. Monitor and increase identified targets *(See Measuring Success section of report)*
- 3.2. Encourage certification level advancement of current female officials and coaches
  - 3.2.1. Host 2 all-female coaching courses
  - 3.2.2. Host 2 all-female officiating courses
  - 3.2.3. Increase the certification level of 2 female officials/year
  - 3.2.3. Establish 1 new female Provincial assessor
  - 3.2.4. Create a friendly environment for female participants; consider sending females into activities where females are greatly underrepresented in pairs or small groups
- 3.3. Plan, develop and/or execute squash mentoring program(s)
  - 3.3.1. Execute mentoring programs
  - 3.3.2. Analyze, re-evaluate, and update models as needed
  - 3.3.3. Mentorship of 3 stakeholders initiated in each of coaching, officiating, grass roots programming and high performance





INTENDED IMPACTS	
Each of YEAR 1 and YEAR 2	
❖	Activities identified, developed and piloted to overcome barriers and retention to female engagement
❖	Increase in the number of events and activities available to females across the country
❖	Increase in the number of women and girls that are engaged in squash as participants, coaches, officials, volunteers, and staff
❖	Professionalized promotion, content, delivery, and support of female activities

**5. Showcasing and Sharing Successes**

- 5.1. Showcasing Women in Squash Encouragement Fund activities, success and impact
  - 5.1.1. Content sourced and/or developed and deployed through communication channels
- 5.2. Showcase female success and growth in squash and across Canada in all sports
  - 5.2.1. Content sourced and/or developed and deployed through communication channels
- 5.3. Showcase female and male squash leaders supporting female engagement across the country

INTENDED IMPACTS	
YEAR 1	YEAR 2
❖ Build momentum for a stronger female presence in communications	❖ Increase in conversations regarding Gender Equity in Squash in Canada
❖ Successes of female and gender equity engagements highlighted in National communications	❖ Successes of female and gender equity engagements highlighted in Provincial and club communications
❖ Recognition of stakeholders supporting female engagement	❖ Stronger female presence in squash community(ies)
❖ Increase awareness of Gender Equity across Canada	❖ Long-term initiatives showing growth and sustainment through repetition (of events and customer engagement), replication (of events in other areas of Canada), activities at capacity, increased activity for longer term programs (8+ weeks)

## ALIGNMENT WITH SQUASH CANADA’S STRATEGIC PLAN

To ensure that the Female Engagement and Gender Equity Strategic Plan aligns with Squash Canada’s overall objectives, the 5 strategic pillars were reviewed with Squash Canada’s 2016-2021 strategic direction. The Female Engagement and Gender Equity strategic pillars align with a Squash Canada strategic pillar as follows:

### Strategic Pillar Alignment

SQUASH CANADA	FEMALE ENGAGEMENT AND GENDER EQUITY
Increase the awareness of squash in Canada	Community Engagement Showcasing and Sharing Successes
Develop and implement a unified Canadian ranking and customer relations management system	
Increase and diversify revenues for reinvestment into the sport	Events and Activities
Enhance relations and alignment with Provincial and Territorial Partners	Operational Excellence Community Engagement
Further define and enhance pathways for player, coach and officials’ development	Professional Training and Development
Enhance international high performance success	Professional Training and Development

## MEASURING SUCCESS

To measure success, key metrics have been identified and recommended to be monitored throughout the implementation of the plan. At the conclusion of the 2 year planning cycle, achieving the targeted metrics would indicate growth in female engagement and retention, an enhanced supporting environment for stakeholders, changes to PTA strategic outlooks to include a more gender equity focus, and an overall increase in capacity for achieving gender equity in all aspects of squash. Qualitative assessments have also been included to help gage the level of impact that the plan is achieving.

Numerical metrics aim to achieve a 10-15% yearly increase from current state figures. Figures were sourced from the Squash Canada National Gender Participation Survey Report, the Women in Squash Encouragement Fund Applications, and the Gender Equity Project Initial Findings, Ideas, Activities and Key Practices Report. Lists and tables have also been included in Appendix A.

Metric	Current State	Target
Number of Provincial Gender Equity Committees in Canada	5	Increase to 7-8
Ratio of female to male coaches in Canada	25%	Increase to 30%
Ratio of female to male officials in Canada	22%	Increase to 26%
Ratio of female to male players in Canada	24%	Increase to 28%
Attrition rate of junior girls in the 16-19 year age bracket	51%	Decrease to 41%
% of PTAs that employ female retention strategies for coaches and officials in their strategic plans	54% (female coaches) 46% (female officials)	Increase to 65% Increase to 56%
Number of eligible and complete Women in Squash Encouragement Fund Applications	34	Increase to 44
Qualitative Assessments		
A noticeable increase in the number of female programming options available across the country		
Content in communications highlighting impact of gender equity initiatives		
A national network of stakeholders that support gender equity initiatives		
Identified and promoted champions (male allies and female role models)		
Engaged communities building and implementing ideas together		

## CONCLUSION

There is a significant gap between the overall level of female and male engagement in squash in Canada. The Female Engagement and Gender Equity Strategic Plan provides the roadmap to start bridging this gap. The plan identifies steps to be taken to move beyond barriers to engagement and aims to create a supporting environment to foster growth and opportunities. It includes both short and long-term activities to create awareness, build skill sets, and increase knowledge as well as to develop new practices and policies increasing the likelihood of success and sustainability. Squash Canada, together with the Female Leadership and Gender Equity Committee, is committed to supporting the growth of female participation in all aspects of squash.



## APPENDIX A

### Canadian Squash Gender Equity Committees

1. Squash Canada Female Engagement and Gender Equity Committee (FEC)
2. Squash BC's Women & Girls in Squash Committee (WinS)
3. Squash Ontario's Gender Equity Committee
4. Squash Alberta's Programming for Women's Squash Committee
5. Squash Alberta's Edmonton Women's Squash Society

### Canadian Female Coach Ratio per Certification Level

Certification Level	Female %
Level 1/Squash Instructor	22%
Level 2/Club Coach/Intermediate Instructor	20%
Level 3/Provincial Coach	30%
Level 4/5	50%
Incomplete	64%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>25%</b>

### Canadian Female Official Ratio per Certification Level – Singles and Doubles

Officials by Level	Singles			Doubles		
	Total #	Female #	Female %	Total #	Female #	Female %
Club Referee	762	189	25%			
Local Referee	55	14	25%			
Provincial Referee	57	4	7%	191	19	10%
National Referee	31	5	16%	43	12	28%
Provincial Assessor	15	2	13%	39	11	28%
National Assessor	7	2	29%			
Total	927	216	23%	273	42	15%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>1200</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>22%</b>			

### Adult Female Player by Level

Level	Total #	Average	% Overall
Open	37	4	3%
A	65	6	6%
B	228	21	20%
C	348	29	30%
D	294	25	25%
E	183	23	16%
Total	1155	107	100%

### Ratio of Female Players Overall

Province	% Female overall
AB	18%
BC	24%
MB	24%
SK	21%
NB	40%
NS	21%
NT	33%
NL	27%
ON	27%
NU	14%
PE	10%
QC	21%
YT	31%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>24%</b>

### Female Players by Age

Players by Age	Total #	Female #	Female %
50+	1950	341	17%
36-49	1957	440	22%
20-35	1753	436	25%
16-19	422	99	23%
11-15	623	202	32%
6-10	278	106	38%
0-5	14	4	29%

## Women in Squash Encouragement Fund

Applications	Count
Eligible and Complete	34
Ineligible or Incomplete	17
Total	51

## Percentage of Female Representation in Administration and Board Roles

Province	Administration	Board
	% Admin Female	% Board Female
AB	33%	21%
BC	100%	38%
MB	100%	43%
SK	0%	29%
NB	0%	22%
NS	100%	14%
NT	0%	13%
NL	0%	20%
ON	60%	30%
NU	0%	50%
PE	NULL	NULL
QC	50%	0%
YT	100%	71%

**Figures and information are sourced from the following:** Squash Canada National Gender Participation Survey Report, Women in Squash Encouragement Fund Application File, and the Gender Equity Project Initial Findings, Ideas, Activities and Key Practices Report.