

PLAY THE GAME 2013

Is it Really A New Era for Women's Sport? The International Canoe Federation's Dirty Little Secret Pamela Boteler/Elaine Keene WomenCAN International

London 2012 was touted as “the Women’s Games”.
But - is it really a new era for women’s sport?
Are all of these sport reforms fact or fiction?
There has been considerable progress for women,
yes, but there is still much work to be done.
And there is a LOT to be done in Olympic Canoeing.

While London 2012 had record levels of participation of women, dig a little deeper and you will find there were over 1,200 fewer female athletes and 30 fewer medal opportunities for women. And Canoeing remains a poster child for gender imbalance having one of the poorest gender equality ratios of any Summer Olympic sport.

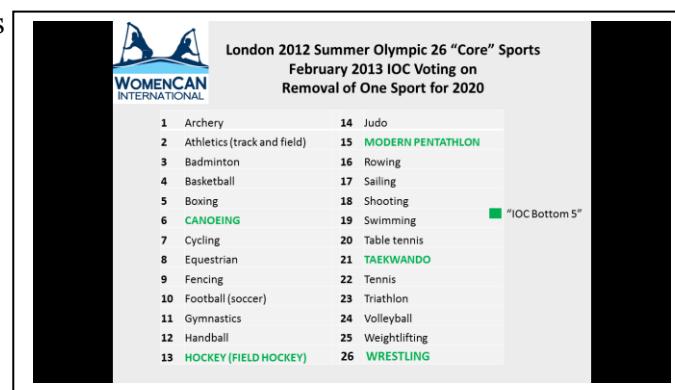
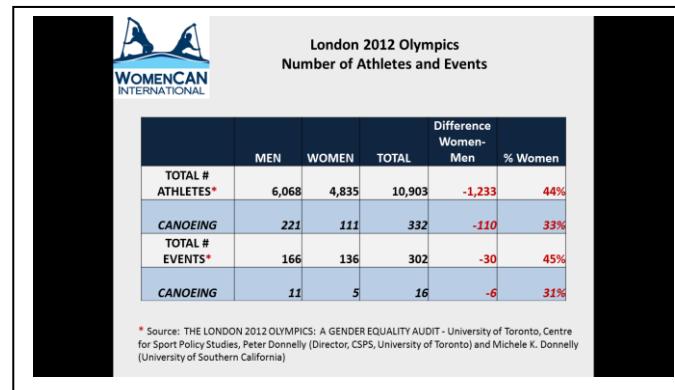
Let's take a look at a big picture view of the Olympic program. These are the 26 sports from London 2012 with green highlighting those on the IOCs February 2013 “Bottom 5” list for removal.

Note Canoeing. We think gender inequality was one factor in its placement in the Bottom 5 and from our vantage point, the International Canoe Federation’s (or ICF) failure to immediately address clear gender equality issues – as wrestling did to get reinstated for 2020 – is indefensible.

It seems the ICF’s Dirty Little Secret has helped keep them IN THE GAME, all while they are still keeping women OUT OF THE GAME.

What's their secret? It's all in their name:
International CANOE Federation.

“Canoe” or “Olympic Canoeing” is the generic term referring to both Kayak & Canoe.
Doublespeak at its best.



EVENT STRUCTURE:

We have 16 events total: 12 Sprint (with 9 kayak and 3 canoe) and 4 Slalom (2 kayak, 2 canoe).

Notice what's missing?

Canoe and kayak are vastly different, using different equipment and attract different kinds of paddlers. Olympic kayakers use a double blade and sit while paddling in an extremely tippy boat and steer using a rudder.

Canoeists use a single blade paddle and paddle only on one side while kneeling on one knee in an extremely tippy boat. The boats do not have a rudder, so to go straight they do steering strokes using their paddle.

Slalom kayakers sit and use a double blade and canoe paddlers kneel on BOTH knees and use a single blade paddle.

The X's through the women canoeists are just for effect. But, 89 years – That's how long women have felt that X and have been kept out of the Olympics.

A word that gets thrown around a lot for why women's canoe is not in the Olympics and should not be in any time soon is: DEVELOPMENT.

ICF officials say "women canoeists need more development." Sorry Charlie:
DEVELOPMENT IS CODE FOR DELAY.

 WOMENCAN INTERNATIONAL	OLYMPIC SPORT: CANOEING DISCIPLINES: Sprint & Slalom SUB-DISCIPLINES: Canoe & Kayak # EVENTS: 16			
	SPRINT (12)		SLALOM (4)	
	MEN'S KAYAK (K)	MEN'S CANOE (C)	MEN'S KAYAK (K)	MEN'S CANOE (C)
	K1 1000	C1 1000		
	K2 1000	C2 1000	K1	C1
	K4 1000			
	K1 200	C1 200		
	K2 200			C2
	WOMEN'S KAYAK	WOMEN'S CANOE	WOMEN'S KAYAK	WOMEN'S CANOE
	K1 500		?	
	K2 500		K1	?
	K4 500			
	K1 200			



 WOMENCAN INTERNATIONAL	OLYMPIC SPRINT KAYAK MEN & WOMEN SINGLES, DOUBLES, FOURS			
	MEN'S KAYAK (K)			
	K1 1000			
	K2 1000			
	K4 1000			
	K1 200			
	K2 200			
	WOMEN'S KAYAK			
	K1 500			
	K2 500			
	K4 500			
	K1 200			



 WOMENCAN INTERNATIONAL	OLYMPIC SPRINT CANOE MEN ONLY SINGLES & DOUBLES ONLY			
	MEN'S CANOE (C)			
	C1 1000			
	C2 1000			
	C1 200	WOMEN'S CANOE	X	




Here are two of our "favorite" quotes from the ICF:
"The ICF would like to point out that on a global scale, FEW National Federations are developing the Women's Canoe category in the Sprint discipline whereas much progress is being made in the development of the Women's Canoe category in Slalom."

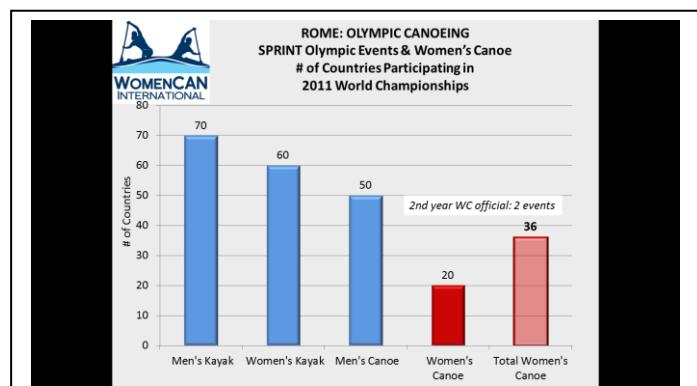
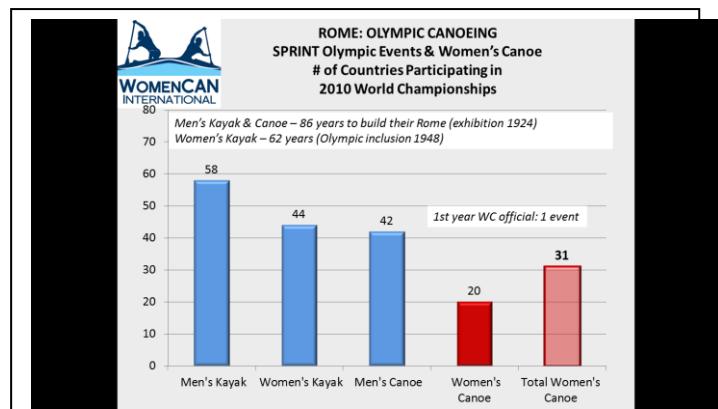
and,

"It is good that people are mindful of gender equity in our sport, but it is equally important that people acknowledge the progress that has been made, and ... they have to recognize that Rome wasn't built in one day."

Let's take a look quickly at "our Rome". In 2010 there were 20 countries at the Senior World Championships for the first year with one women's Canoe event as official. In total in 2010, we had about 31 countries total with women either competing or developing in canoe. That's more than men's and women's kayak and men's canoe had when they first started in the Olympics decades ago and many of those women canoeists did not have coaches and had to pay for themselves. One note - participation rates for women's canoe are deceiving: you have to look at who is not there and ask why.

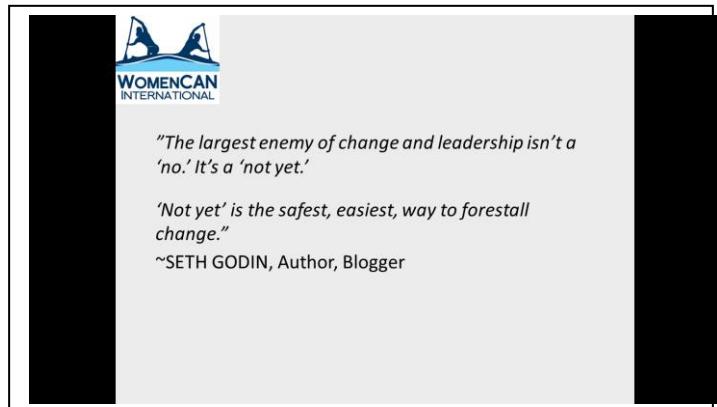
In 2011, there were about 36 countries total competing and developing women canoeists. That is clearly more than "a few"! But progression has stalled because until we achieve Olympic status, women canoeists will be denied the opportunity to participate, denied access to the same environment for success that their teammates enjoy, and national federations and the ICF will do this with impunity.

The ICF's failure to change, delaying gender Equality and maintaining imbalance between canoe and kayak, is diminishing the very discipline it states is a strategic goal to build. In our view, if the ICF cannot claim control over adding women's canoe events to the World Championship Program to level THAT playing field, then they have no credible plan for adding women's canoe to the Olympics.



ICF – it's time. Women are Ready for RIO and simply waiting for you to open the door for them to pursue the same dreams their brothers do.

By calling everyone Canoeists the ICF is hiding the fact that there-are-no-women-canoeists and they and the national federations can actively and openly discriminate against and discourage an entire vibrant class of paddlers in complete violation of the Olympic Charter and ICF Statutes.



WHAT DO WE WANT AND WHEN?

Balance between men and women, and canoe and kayak by 2020

We have created a time line of key events for which we need women's canoe included and/or achieve equal status to the men by a date certain. The ICF needs to commit to 2020 or we will lose another generation of canoeists and turn away the next generation.



WHAT CAN YOU IN THE SPORT COMMUNITY DO TO HELP US?

1. Recommend and discuss-widely the creation of an external Olympic/Sport accountability arm similar to the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) to address Human Rights issues related to
 - Equal access/opportunities for all
 - Anti-discrimination
 - Anti-abuse/harassment (physical, sexual, emotional, mental – includes bullying)
 - Corruption in sport (match-fixing, doping)

2. Petition for an independent economic analysis of the Olympic program to determine what is the “magic number” of athletes/events. Why cap @ 10,500 athletes and not 12,000 or 15,000?

IOC quotas or caps are arbitrary numbers used to ”control costs” of the Olympics and have left the Sport community in a battle against itself. They pit men against women and sports against each other in a no-win either/or situation when there is no justifiable reason we cannot co-exist in a YES/AND and WIN/WIN environment. IOC quotas are red herrings to divert attention away from the true ”gigantism” of the Olympics.

3. Petition the ICF to change its name to International CanoeKayak Federation (ICKF).

This would also assume changing the name of the sport to “Olympic Canoe/Kayak”. Many national federations have canoe/kayak in their name. The ICF should follow suit. This will go a long way toward bringing more transparency to our sport, including tracking participation rates, and would help the media present a truer picture of our sport.

4. Petition Women’s Commissions – at the IOC and IF levels – to follow up on the University of Toronto’s London 2012 Gender Equality Audit, track/report on progress and recommend solutions

We need Women’s Commissions to be more active in advocating and providing recommendations for achieving more balance/equality at all levels of the sport. And we need them to serve as confidential ombudsman for athletes to voice concerns/issues. While the IOC has mandated women’s sports commissions in IFs, none have power to affect change and few have adequate skill sets to be effective. The ICF Women’s Commission has failed us time and again and has yet to produce any meaningful data or recommendations that will take women canoeists off the slow track to equality at the WORLD level let alone the Olympics.

5. Petition the IOC to “Get Equal Before Adding” and to increase the caps

There is no justifiable reason to continue adding new sports to the Olympics when the existing playing field is not balanced.

6. Write about Olympic Canoe/Kayak and gender equality in the Olympics

7. SIGN OUR PETITION: Lift the Ban on Women’s Canoeing at the Olympics for Rio 2016!
<https://www.change.org/petitions/lift-the-ban-on-women-s-canoeing-at-the-olympics-for-rio-2016>

It has been signed by more than 6200 people from 60 nations across 5 continents. Help us reach 7000!

8. Connect with us: www.womencanintl.com, Twitter @WomenCANIntl, “Like” and share our Facebook page Vote Yes for Women’s Canoe

We ask for all of us to work together as a global sports community to ensure the core values of the Olympic Charter move away from fiction and truly toward fact.

To the ICF: Put the CANOE back into the International Canoe Federation and let ALL women

Play The Game!



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Facebook: Vote Yes for Women's Canoe C1 & C2
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