

Biathlon Canada Selects New Group of Female Coaches and Mentees for the 2021-22 Women in Coaching Mentorship Program

By: Adriana Vicic

This article is part of the "Women in Biathlon Series". With excellence and leadership at the forefront of Biathlon Canada's values, we will be featuring some of the great female athletes, coaches, officials and volunteers that support us in sport and help build our close-knit community. Follow us on social media @biathloncanadaofficial to keep up with each story as we hear from women across the country.

As women continue to break ground in the biathlon landscape, they depend on other women to lead the way. That's why for its second straight year, Biathlon Canada is activating the Women in Coaching Mentorship Program. It's an opportunity for Canadian female biathlon coaches from coast to coast to learn from some of the best, most decorated female biathlon coaches the nation has produced.

Renowned biathlon athletes-turned-coaches, Jacqueline Akerman, Gail Niinimaa and Allie Dickson, have been selected as mentor coaches for six female mentee coaches representing different Canadian provinces.

Over the next few months, each coach will bring their unique experiences, lessons and wisdom to the teaching table, to advance the same goal: growing the sport of biathlon and strengthening the relationships of women in the biathlon community. Akerman will be paired up with Ali Cadell (BC) and Sheri Adams-Selinger (SK), Niinimaa will be working with Christine Trotter (BC) and Genevieve Blais (ON), and Dickson will be mentoring Fiona Milne (BC) and Adrianna Emond (QC).

For Niinimaa, she is returning to the program for a second time to help guide the new coaches. She believes that the program is very important to help new coaches of biathlon navigate the system of sport.

"As a young coach I would have benefitted from a program like this as there were very few female coaches involved and it was sometimes difficult to figure out the system or how to get through the coaching path," said Niinimaa. "As coaches it is important to share our knowledge and help younger or newer coaches avoid the same pitfalls that we may have experienced."

Niinimaa has been around biathlon since the early 1980s, participating in National Championships, World Championships, and later acting as an official and coach. With over 30 years of experience in the sport,

she stands as a witness to where biathlon started and where it is now, and it motivates her to continue to be involved on the coaching level.

"It's important for female coaches to have someone that they can approach for questions or even just to bounce ideas with who will help them through the system," said Niinimaa.

Adams-Selinger, one of the mentee coaches selected, is most looking forward to capitalizing on the knowledge and understanding her mentor coach (Akerman) has to offer, in the hopes that it will help her achieve some of her personal objectives.

"I'm grateful to Biathlon Canada for continuing the program, and for the opportunity they've given me to work with a mentor to help me become the best coach I can possibly be," said the Regina resident. "I'm really looking forward to diving into some longer-term goals that I've set for myself and drawing from my mentor's wisdom and experiences. I'm hoping that with her guidance, I can put together an action plan and get on the road to achieving them."

Milne, the mentee selected from Smithers, BC, is especially looking forward to growing as a coach and mentor. She says that education never ends, which is why programs like this are so important.

"Continuing to build my skill set will help me become a more diverse and confident instructor/coach. Networking with other like minded women will add the next level of empowerment I feel I have been missing," says Milne. "I am blessed to be in the company of so many great women!"

And with so many great women becoming more involved in the sport of biathlon, initiatives like the Women in Coaching Mentorship program will help to continue growing the next generation of female biathlon coaches.

2021-22 Biathlon Canada Women in Coaching Mentorship Program

Mentee Coach	Province	Mentor Coach	Province
Ali Cadell	Prince George, BC	Jacqueline Akerman	Vernon, BC
Sheri Adams-Selinger	Regina, SK	Jacqueline Akerman	Vernon, BC
Christina Trotter	North Vancouver, BC	Gail Niinimaa	Calgary, AB
Genevieve Blais	Oro Medonte, ON	Gail Niinimaa	Calgary, AB
Adrianna Emond	Quebec, QC	Allie Dickson	Vancouver, BC
Fiona Milne	Smithers, BC	Allie Dickson	Vancouver, BC

If you would like to read more stories like this, check out our Women in Biathlon section on the [Sport Development](#) page of our website.