

Clara Geffraud, 23, stretches toward the mirror as she takes one of her first spins on the strip pole at Flirty Girl Fitness on Wellington St. W. About 100 women a day make their way to the downtown studio to learn how to bump and grind, lap dance, spin on a stripper pole and do cardio classes designed to work their booty — all part of a growing trend across North America. Story, B4.



PETER HORNBY/THE CANADIAN PRESS

BUMP 'N' GRIND: At Pole 101, the emphasis is on fun, fitness — and attitude

Working it on out

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Def Leppard's *Pour Some Sugar on Me* is blaring on the sound system as 16 women strut their stuff, letting their inner stripper out. As the beat pulsates so do their hips as they begin to caress the strip pole in front of them.

"Be as sexy and dirty as you want to be," their instructor says as the class at Flirty Girl Fitness in downtown Toronto begins. It is one of a number of classes offered daily at the fitness studio in everything from pole dancing to chair striptease.

About 100 women a day, including some of the Toronto Raptors' wives, make their way to the Wellington St. studio to learn how to bump and grind, lap dance, spin on a stripper pole and do cardio classes designed to work their booty — all part of a growing trend across North America fueled by a fascination with the fine art and athleticism of striptease dancing.

First it was Demi Moore in *Striptease* performing on a stripper pole. Then former *Baywatch* babe Carmen Electra came out with a

there was nothing in Toronto. I ordered a pole and some videotapes. I fell in love with it."

Eight months later, Kneé, who has an MBA from Concordia University, and her sister Krista set up shop and now have plans to franchise their operation. "There's something empowering about it," Kneé said. "No one ever teaches women how to be sexy."

"Welcome to the Pole 101 Workshop," says Daina Sutherland as she introduces herself to a Saturday morning class. "The poles are industry standard. They are the kind women at the strip clubs use. You'll never know what you'll do with the skills you learn here today. People think it's about the men watching. But it's all about women — building your confidence and feeling sexy."

The class is an opportunity for 31-year-old Kathleen MacDonald, a Toronto lawyer who just broke up with her boyfriend, to get in touch with her "inner diva," she explains. "If you're in nylon and suits all day you want to come and shake your booty."

"What's more girly than a strip

their places — some with trepidation — by the 11 poles that line the dance studio. Some are there to surprise their boyfriends or husbands; others are there just for a laugh; and some are there to get a workout.

And work out they do. For two hours these women learn a pole dancing routine that not only makes them sweat but also would rival many strip-club acts. And by the end of the class each has gained a kind of attitude and unshakable self-confidence that is hard to develop in a regular aerobics class.

"It's a lot of fun — kind of cool and sexy," said Pam Nguyen, a 22-year-old from Woodbridge. "I can always use some confidence and it's building confidence."

None of the women expected they would master the class or learn the fireman's spin, a staple of any stripper's routine. But master it they did — along with a whole lot of other moves.

As Sutherland shows the class just how the fireman's spin is done, the women watch intently and follow along. "First step with your right leg, then lift your left leg and



Kim Russell, left, and Jen Pickett take great delight in friend Lesley Sharpe's moves on the pole.

cism or striptease dancing.

First it was Demi Moore in *Striptease* performing on a stripper pole. Then former *Baywatch* babe Carmen Electra came out with a video for striptease aerobics. Now just about everyone wants to do it.

"I was watching an episode of Oprah and I was watching Teri Hatcher (a *Desperate Housewives* star) talk about these sexy fitness classes she takes in Los Angeles," explains Kerry Kneel, the 35-year-old owner of Flirty Girl Fitness.

"I'm a real fitness bug and when I saw it I said I have to take a class like this. I looked all around and

with her "inner diva," she explains. "If you're in mydens and suits all day you want to come and shake your booty."

"What's more girly than a strip class," she said, wiping the sweat from her brow. "I have a new respect for strippers. They're acrobats."

"It's so sexy," said Janice Chung, a 32-year-old lawyer and friend of MacDonald's. "We wanted to do something sexy and a workout. We have such conservative jobs. It's nice to let loose."

MacDonald, Chung and the other women in the class giggle and take

As Sutherland shows the class just how the fireman's spin is done, the women watch intently and follow along. "First step with your right leg, then lift your left leg and catch the pole with your ankle and then spin," instructs Sutherland.

"Let the momentum take you. Then as you fall bring your back leg up."

One by one the women try the move. Some burst out laughing and collapse on the floor. Others spin on the pole perfectly as if they were made for it. After a half hour they all have mastered the spin — and have the bruises on their legs

Kim Russell, left, and Jen Pickett take great delight in friend Lesley Sharpe's moves on the pole. T

to prove it. Then the really hard work begins as they learn a complete strip-pole dance.

"This is an attitude routine," explains Sutherland as she shows them the dance. "If you feel sexy and sassy — put that into it. You want to perk that ass out." Sutherland begins to count and teach the class the routine. "Body roll, body

roll. Down, butt, flip, step right, step left," she calls out. With the music pounding out a solid beat, the women strut their stuff. "This is where tits and ass come into play," she says as she encourages them to play up their sexuality.

Then the women grab their respective poles, lift themselves up and magically spin. Then they grab

the pole and lean their backs arched, space between you Sutherland says. "It's Then the women looies down to the gym their backs and keep on the pole.

"If you forget the make it up. You never