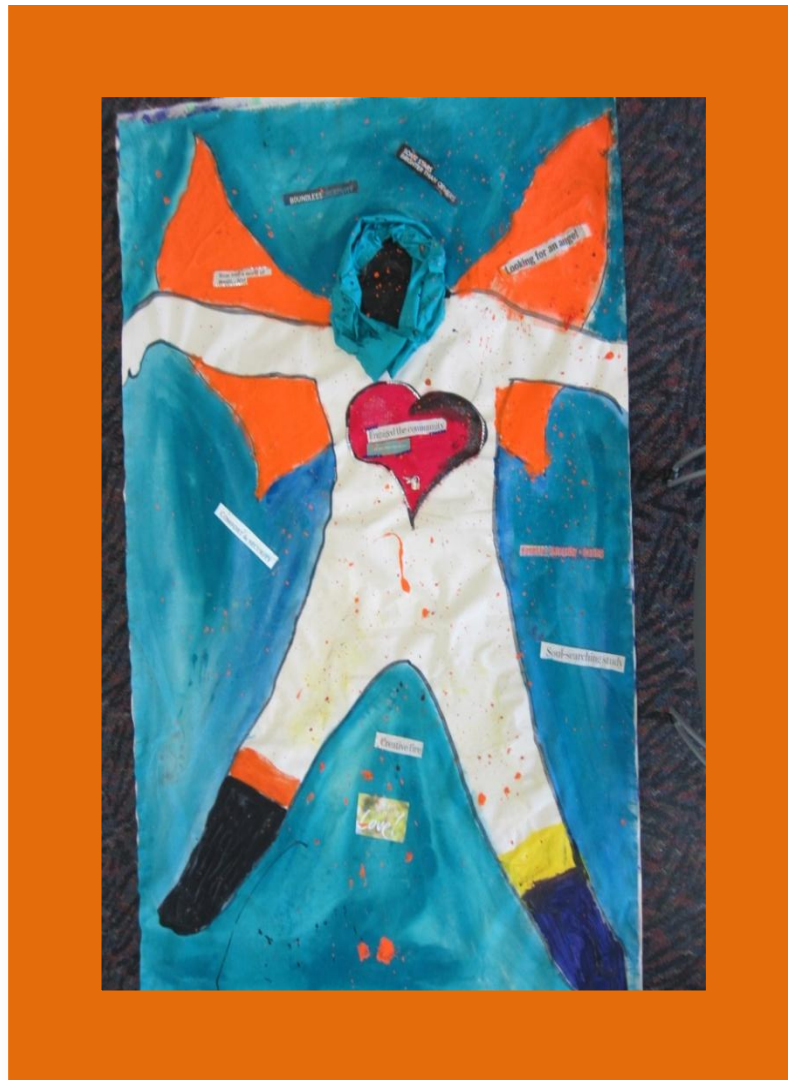


# Women and Girls' Eyes on the Neighbourhood: *Feeling Safe in Public Space*



A Participatory Research Project facilitated by Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre (PQCHC) and City for All Women Initiative (CAWI)

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## Executive Summary

Everyone has a right to feel safe in their community. To create safe public spaces, we must identify and understand what makes people feel unsafe in their neighbourhoods. There has been limited focus on how women and girls experience safety at a neighbourhood level. To address this gap, Pincrest-Queensway Community Health Centre (PQCHC) and City for All Women Initiative (CAWI) worked with women and girls in four West end neighbourhoods in a community research project funded by Crime Prevention Ottawa, which is part of United Neighbours (funded by Trillium), and supported by many other partner agencies and individuals.

The central purpose of this research is to ignite a fresh dialogue on the gendered nature of safety and to map steps that residents, service providers, and decision makers might take to increase women and girls' ability to safely use public space within their neighbourhoods. This report presents the findings from a 10 month Participatory Action Research (PAR) project with women and girls in 4 neighbourhoods in Ottawa's West end who explore factors that contribute to their sense of feeling safe or unsafe in their communities. The research and subsequent findings have been informed by a literature review, an advisory committee, and employed the methodologies of Safety Audits, PhotoVoice, Workshops, Community Conversations, and Body Mapping as a means of deepening their own, and others' understanding of what safety feels like and how to be an active agent in accomplishing a sense of safety and connectedness to one's community.

Research findings demonstrate the strength, resiliency and knowledge-sharing that participants use to feel safer and create a strong sense of community in their respective neighbourhoods. We are happy to share these in the hopes that other Ottawa residents might share their own strategies and challenges, thereby deepening the discussion about women and girls' feelings and experience of safety at the neighbourhood level. Participants in this research use a wide variety of creative and collective strategies to make them feel safer. A major learning in this project has been to unearth what is *between* the lines. To get between these lines, to the interstices of the issue, means to come to the understanding that while women and girls may *say* they feel safe, their actions speak louder than words. Safety can be measured by *acting* as though you feel safe, not just saying that you are.

We have organized the recommendations under 5 themes: 1) Community Participation, 2) Reporting, 3) Environment and Beautification and 4) Training and Awareness Raising 5) Community Development Initiatives. Under each theme we list recommendations for partners followed by recommendations for residents.

# 1. Introduction

To date, there has been limited focus on how women and girls specifically experience violence at the neighbourhood level. To address this gap, Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre (PQCHC) and City for All Women Initiative (CAWI) worked with women and girls in four West end neighbourhoods in a community research project funded by Crime Prevention Ottawa.

While recognizing that women and girls often experience violence or feeling unsafe in the domestic spaces in their lives, this project has focused on public space. The intention of this community-driven research is to inform service providers and decision makers about steps that can be taken to increase women and girls' ability to safely use public space within their neighbourhoods. This report is the culmination of a 10 month Participatory Action Research (PAR) project in which women and girls living in the four neighbourhoods explored the factors that contribute to their sense of feeling safe or unsafe in their communities. The research that participants carried out and subsequent findings have been informed by a literature review, an advisory committee, the expertise of Women's Initiatives for Safer Environment (WISE) and various other research methodologies. The intention of the research was to gain:

- An increased understanding of women's safety concerns within 4 neighbourhoods in the PQCHC catchment area, particularly through a diversity lens of culture, race, income, age and ability
- An increased awareness for participants about violence against women (VAW), and developing their own skill set to conduct participatory needs assessments and research
- Develop a set of strategies women and girls currently use to feel safe and to outline recommendations for residents and service providers in order to make neighbourhoods safer for women and girls

Following a review of the literature, this report presents the research methods, findings, and the strategies and recommendations established through this research. The colourful Body Maps, coupled with their insightful narratives are presented throughout the report and express the ways that women and girls navigate their experience of feeling safe or unsafe in their neighbourhoods. A total of 57 Participants and 15 Advisory Committee members informed the findings.

## 2. Literature Review

Sources for this literature review included academic journals, articles and books. A key source for this research has been Women in Cities International (WICI), an international, Montreal-based organization that focuses on women's experience of safety in public spaces around the globe. This network of academics and women's organizations bring together a wealth of experience, research and

literature with a focus on urban environments. Research focusing on women and girls' sense of safety at the neighbourhood level is limited. Here we draw upon the literature to consider how best practices might be applied to Ottawa neighbourhoods.

## **2.1 Women's Safety Matters, Women Most Affected**

**The physical and sexual abuse of girls and women costs the Canadian economy \$4.2 billion dollars each year, factoring into account social services, criminal justice, lost employment days, and health care interventions. Nearly 90% of the financial cost is borne by government.**

(Morris, 2011)

When women are isolated or targets of violence, a neighbourhood's productivity is jeopardized and women's social, psychological and economic mobility is impeded. As a community, there is a strong need to educate ourselves on all the factors that predispose women to such vulnerable positions. Cultural, migratory, minority and economic status are some of the main factors that make women more susceptible to violence and harassment<sup>1</sup> (WICI, 2010). Women's safety is important as it is a factor in creating healthy and vibrant neighbourhoods. Violence and fear of violence exclude women and girls from various aspects of city life as it robs them from experiencing the same rights to the city as men (WICI, 2011).

Women who reside in the country illegally, migrant women who have not yet integrated in the Canadian culture, and migrant women whose status depends on their husbands, family members or employers are at higher risk of feeling and being unsafe. They are less likely to report violence because they fear repercussions (such as deportation) due to a lack of awareness and trust in law enforcement (Ortiz & Sweet, 2012).

Community building can only occur if residents feel safe and secure in their neighbourhoods (Pilson, 2012). Some of the negative impacts of violence against women and girls at the neighbourhood level as outlined by Minchew & Tobia (2012) are:

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<sup>1</sup> "Harassment" refers to unsolicited/ unwanted: Sexual compliments, inappropriate touching or staring, inappropriate gestures, asking questions or talking about someone's sexuality, sex life, or body, demanding hugs or sexual favours, making unnecessary physical contact, inappropriate language; showing or sending sexual pictures, spreading sexual rumours (including online), threatening to fire or punish someone if they don't accept sexual advances, stalking, following, and so on.

- Safety is a serious obstacle to achieving gender equality;
- Lack of safety curtails women's mobility and ability to participate fully and freely as citizens in their communities;
- Lack of safety restricts women and girls' access to their cities, including access to employment, health, education, political and recreation facilities;
- Violence devastates lives, fractures families and communities

Now, more than ever, marginalized women are at greater risk of being victims of gendered-based violence (Ortiz & Sweet, 2012). The cutbacks and underfunding cities face is one of many contributing factors in this reality as cutbacks place women and girls in vulnerable positions. For Ottawa, the bus route reductions in 2011 are an example that point to how the city's service reductions can put women and girls at risk of violence and harassment in public spaces. Low-income residents, students, and people with disabilities often rely on public transportation as their sole means of transportation. Many women who rely on public transportation in low-income, high density neighbourhoods face systemic challenges. This reality may force them to work jobs with irregular hours. As a result of the bus route reduction, women in these situations must walk longer distance between stops and wait longer for the bus; which could put them in very dangerous positions (WICI, 2010).

Fiscally speaking, the physical and sexual abuse of girls and women costs the Canadian economy \$4.2 billion dollars each year, factoring into account social services, criminal justice, lost employment days, and health care interventions. Nearly 90% of the financial cost is swallowed by government tax dollars (Morris, 2011).

On July 3, 2013, the City of Ottawa Transit Commission accepted a report, "Equity and Inclusion Lens Review of the September 2011 Bus Route Changes" which revealed ways in which the September 2011 bus reductions had a disproportionate impact on women, immigrants, seniors, and people on low-income. The study noted that when an individual is from one or more of these marginalized groups, they are even more impacted by the cutbacks. Safety and isolation were cited as factors that had not been fully taken into account in the reorganization of routes. For this reason, the Transit Commission accepted recommendations to apply the City's Equity and Inclusion Lens in all decisions and consultations related to bus changes in the future. This study reveals how a city's decision can have unintended negative impacts on a woman's sense of safety in her neighbourhood, and furthermore, can be revised and have positive impacts when these factors are taken into consideration.

In a similar vein, Ottawa's *Community Development Framework* (CDF) is an approach which brings together residents, service providers, agencies, researchers and funders to improve the quality of life at the neighbourhood level. The success of this neighbourhood-based approach depends on the empowerment, inclusion and participation of a diversity of community members, including women and girls from



varying groups to ensure that the CDF is taking into account their initiatives leading to an inclusive city for all.

Women who are Aboriginal, immigrant, lesbian, living with disabilities, seniors and transgendered/transsexual are more likely to experience violence and harassment than other women (Ortiz & Sweet, 2012). Many of these women are already battling language and/or cultural barriers, movement restrictions, isolation, and stigma. Violence and assaults towards these women can be attributed to racism, sexism, and ableism (WICI, 2010; Morris, 2011).

More specifically, young women and teens are those most at risk to experience sexual harassment in public spaces (WICI, 2010). There are varying reasons as to why this is the case. Young women are often easily targeted so that self-worth are figments of today's pop and urban cultures (Kleinman et al, 2009) leading them to lack the appropriate amount of experience and skills in managing risks associated with harassment and violence (WICI, 2010).

The impact of crime affects the whole population however; marginalized groups are the ones that are the most vulnerable. Neighbourhoods with a high percentage of immigrants, people living on low-income and women are impacted by crime the most (WICI, 2010). Factors such as lack of education and lack of employment place residents in situations where they are not economically stable. Lack of, or limited income, forces women and girls to live in communities that are perceived by many to have high rates of crime and violence, thus increasing the risk of victimization. Limited education and minimal marketable skills also force many women to seek employment in areas that are unsafe and with inconsistent shifts that force them to work late hours.

## ***2.2 Further Contextualizing the Issue***

It is critical to contextualize: Things that some might consider to be intimidating, scary or examples of harassment might not be seen the same way by others. Safety and one's sense of safety varies based on women and girls' culture, age, social location, access to transportation, motility, in addition to many other factors. In other words, living in a particular neighbourhood or under particular social conditions can contribute to a desensitization of what signifies harassment, fear, or a crime. "Women's sense of safety and security in public places depends on their own personal experience of the place, or based on the experiences of other women. These experiences structure the daily lives of women and girls to the extent that their freedom of movement becomes restricted" (WICI & Jagori, 2010).

Policies, or lack thereof, around city infrastructure affect women's and girl's safety. For instance, lack of public street lighting, lack of public phones, poor maintenance of streets and sidewalks, and inadequate policing, are some of the issues which put women and girls at higher risk of violence (WICI, 2010). Women in Cities International (2010) note that public transit and bus stations have been

flagged as areas where women and girls feel unsafe. Infrequency of service, distance between bus stops, the lack of visibility at bus stops and the mistreatment by bus drivers are all factors which contribute to women and girls' fear when accessing public transit services. Men rub their bodies against them, and target them in sexual or aggressive manner (WICI, 2010).

This is the focus of Hollaback! International, more specifically the local Ottawa Chapter. The "Hollaback" campaign is a world-wide movement geared mostly towards women and girls that stresses "street violence is one of the most pervasive forms of gender-based violence and one of the least legislated against" (Hollaback, 2012). Hollaback empowers individuals to publicly document harassments using smart phone and web applications. This international campaign to raise awareness about street harassment is based upon the fact that "street harassment is used to exert control over others by making them feel scared or uncomfortable" (Hollaback, 2012). The "Hollaback" campaign brings public attention to the fact that street harassment hotspots in most cities are often centred on high pedestrian traffic areas. More recently, through their Ottawa-based report (2012), Hollaback points to Ottawa women being harassed on public transit or at bus stops. Their report does emphasize that when women are harassed, a majority of their survey respondents (90%) do not report it and that bystander intervention is unacceptably low.



There are many possible solutions and practices that can increase women and girls' safety when using public transportation such as passengers asking to be dropped off closer to home; more security cameras; more effective bus routes, services, resources and laws which increase their safety on public transportation. Additionally, transit law and the police can apply strict repercussions/penalties when perpetrators disobey these laws aimed at reducing harassment towards women and girls on the Transit Way.

In "Building Inclusive Cities", it is emphasized that women's safety remains unarticulated in policy terms. Policy makers' unclear position around this issue contributes to the idea of women's culpability; the notion of "she asked for it", based on how a woman presents herself (Shaw et al., 2013). The commoditization of women due to societal gendered norms and expectations is another important factor that places women in vulnerable situations. Gender is widely cited as a factor which increases women's risk of violence. Additionally, those who identify as LGBTTTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Two-Spirited, and/or Queer) report

experiencing harassment and violence due to their sexual orientation (WICI, 2010). Women and girls also face an added vulnerability to rape in situations of robbery and mugging in public spaces (WICI, 2010).

Women and girls are exposed to more scrutiny when they are victims of violence or harassment. This is supported by Morris (2011) who states that women fear reporting crime and harassment for fear of not being believed, being ridiculed, being alienated from their family, place of worship, school community (which at times, a community to which the offender may also belong). The patriarchal society we live in still values the “good” woman as being pure and innocent and any woman who deviates from this norm is often seen as devious as outlined by Morris (2011). Morris also emphasizes that many women are less likely to report because they are ashamed of having been violated and therefore do not want anyone to know. The fear of retribution and further violence are other factors that place women and girls in disadvantaged position, resulting in many women not reporting (Morris, 2011).

Furthermore, the inclusion of male allies is a crucial component in the elimination of violence and harassment against women and girls. Our lives are inextricably interwoven with men’s as they are our fathers, sons, husbands, friends, co-workers, and so on. Calling Violence Against Women (VAW) whether street harassment or sexual assault a “women’s issue” permits men to ignore it as if they have no responsibility for it or stake in ending it (McPherson, 2013). One critical step we can collectively take in this is to stop framing this as a women’s issue. It is a people issue.

Males can be strong, supportive and empowered bystanders who can confront their own privilege and masculinity, and challenge the abusive behaviour of their peers (Couchman & Lomatski, 2011). To understand such a pervasive societal problem, we must first unpack the various factors involved in the socialization of girls and boys (Morris, 2011). Men and women can reject the script that gets played out in media every day that tells our boys to be unemotional and violent while objectifying girls at increasingly younger ages (McPherson, 2013). In order to reduce and eliminate violence and harassment directed towards women and girls in public spaces, strategies need to be implemented at the city level as well as the neighbourhood level. The role of males is also crucial in achieving such change.

### ***2.3 What Women & Girl’s Safety Looks Like***

As previously outlined, the concept of safety and sense of safety does not hold universal meaning to all women and girls. Women’s safety, and their sense of safety, varies based on one’s perception of harassment and violence as well as factors such as one’s perception of safe space; financial security and autonomy; accessibility; neighbourhood; and the applicability and enforcement of the law, among many other factors. While women’s and girl’s safety implicates a range of partners, possibilities, and political/policy promises, some key indicators we can look to in assessing the safety of place have been summarized here. These are

drawn from international perspectives that could be applied in Ottawa into the following categories (WICI & Jagori, 2010):

- **Safe spaces:** Space where communal gatherings can take place and community members feel free and safe to move about. Lack of movement and comfort is a form of social exclusion
- **Freedom from poverty:** This includes safe access to water, gender-sensitive streets and city design, safe car parks, shopping centers and public transportation
- **Financial security and autonomy:** Women's economic empowerment reduces their vulnerability to situations of violence as they become less dependent on men and better able to make their own decisions
- **Self-worth:** In safe homes and communities, women have the right to value themselves, to be empowered, to be respected, to be independent, to have their rights valued, to be loved, to have solidarity with other family and community members and to be recognised as equal members in society
- **Strategies and policies:** Strategies and policies that work to prevent violence and street harassment. This can happen by improving knowledge and attitudes that correspond to the origins of domestic or sexual violence, such as adherence to societal norms supportive of violence, male superiority and male sexual entitlement
- **Safer, healthier community:** This is a participatory process focused on changing community norms, patterns of social interaction, values, customs and institutions in ways that will significantly improve the quality of life in a community for all of its members. This is a natural by-product of efforts that attempt to address issues such as family dynamics, relationships, poverty, racism and/or ending sexual violence.
- **Security:** Implies not only security of home, but also freedom from poverty and violence, which influences their ability to access education and healthcare, as well as their ability to earn a living and exercise their full rights as citizens
- **Universal Accessibility:** For women with disabilities, safety goes hand-in-hand with universal accessibility. Safety means to have the freedom to move about without impediment and being able to access the city alone at any hour, without constraint.
- **Communal areas:** Spaces where community organizations operate are considered safer. Commercial areas with police surveillance, neighbourhoods which have created safer spaces for women, are also considered to be safer
- **Cohesive communities:** The existence of numerous interactions and networks amongst residents and community institutions shows the health and strength of a community. Organized and socially cohesive communities are better able to prevent crime and instil some measure of social control (Pilson, 2012).

## **2.4 PhotoVoice and Body Mapping**

The methods we have chosen to use in this research all stem from a participatory action research (PAR) approach which is characterized by community members exploring a particular social issue or community problem alongside a professional researcher with intention to effect change. Because PhotoVoice and body mapping are not yet well-known or common methodologies, they are outlined here highlighting their multi-purpose use in a variety of contexts.

Body mapping involves outlining one's body onto a large piece of canvas or paper and using various mediums, pictures, news clippings, symbols and words to represent one's lived experience through their body. In this way, it provides a space for people to speak about their cause, experience, concerns, and hopes for change.

Body Mapping has been used in countless geographic and cultural contexts around the globe and can be used as a form of communication across languages to shine attention on various health, economic, and social issues. It has been used in workplaces and even used in factories and mines whereby workers map out health and safety concerns (Keith & Kirby, 2002; Keith & Brophy, 2004). It is said to have originated in South Africa as an art-therapy method for women living with HIV/AIDS in 2002 through "The Memory Box Project" designed by Jonathan Morgan, a clinical psychologist from the University of Cape Town, South Africa (Gastaldo, et al. 2012) who utilized this as a way for affected women to tell their stories, hopes and dreams through a map they could leave for their children.

Body Mapping is one tool that can be used to combines elements from art & narrative therapy, body work, and story-telling and guide participants through a process of identifying an issue and speaking to it through a large canvas map. Body mapping provides a safe place to explore and share personal experiences and places emphasis on respect and non-judgment. In Ottawa, a collaborative research project between Concordia University and Minwaashin Lodge (an Aboriginal Women's Support Centre) Lu & Yuen (2012) demonstrates how a public exhibit of body-maps acted as a powerful medium of empowerment, a forum for women to be witnessed by the community, and a means for Aboriginal women to act as their own agents of social change and social justice.

Similarly, Photovoice (photography) can be used in various ways to focus on many social issues. Whatever the issues involved, participatory photography has proven to be a versatile and powerful tool to engage people and reach stakeholders who can impact positively on their situation (Wang & Burris, 1997; Harper et al., 2009; Wang, 1999; Gastaldo et al., 2012). In Photovoice, a picture is taken with a camera turning the lens onto a particular issue and participants can add their narrative, a poem, a call to action to those who can make a difference- in our case, safety, or feelings of safety in public spaces with the view to reach decision makers and the broader community in Ottawa's West end.

## **2.5 Summary of Literature**

Women and girls are more prone to violence and harassment due to culture, patriarchal beliefs and other structural factors such as economic status. This results in women and girls not feeling safe in their own communities. This thereby limits their societal input and experience to feel safe to freely move about and make positive use of the public spaces around them.

This review has outlined in brief, some ways in which women can be included more into society and feel safer in public. Some examples and best practices have been outlined, many of which have been drawn from an international perspective, and some from Ottawa-based knowledge sharing and lessons learned. For example, in terms of city infrastructure, buses can drop women off close to their home, work, school or place of worship, and while OC Transpo may already offer such choice, the barrier is that women and girls may not be aware of it or know to request a special bus stop. It has been highlighted here that when a city improves lighting, women feel safer. At the neighbourhood level, neighbours can, and should, watch out for each other, be self-aware in public spaces and be encouraged to report issues of concern to the appropriate agency or institution. The impact of bystander intervention can be very powerful, as can the benefits of working closely with male allies to help remedy issues of concern.

While there is ample work and great efforts in cities internationally, and specifically in Ottawa in combating Violence Against Women, there is little research on women's and girl's safety at the neighbourhood level. We might call for increased efforts on the local dialogue to the hyper-local strategies and solutions needed, as these will vary by neighbourhood.

Women and girls' right to the city is an important topic to discuss. The discussion though, whichever form it takes, should not happen in silos; the dialogue and solution-seeking requires the input, suggestions and recommended strategies from a multitude of players. It is up to all of us to take part in this discussion as have all been affected by women or girls in one way or another.

## **3. Methodology**

Several research methods were used in this grassroots action research including PhotoVoice, Safety Audits, Body Mapping, Community Conversations, Workshops, a Literature Review and drawing on the expertise of an Advisory Committee comprised of various partners, stakeholders and decision-makers. In this section, the geographic context, sampling and the various methods used in this research are summarized.

### *3.1 Sampling and Geographic Context*

Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre serves a high needs catchment area with one of the highest concentrations of low-income housing in the City of Ottawa with over 1500 households living below the poverty line. According to the most recent neighbourhood specific 2006 census data there has been a dramatic increase in this catchment area in the number of newcomers and immigrants, who make up 35% of residents; much higher than for greater Ottawa (22%). Many of these individuals face language and cultural barriers in accessing resources and finding employment (unemployment rate of 7.3% in the PQCHC area, compared to 5.8% in greater Ottawa). It is estimated that 1 in 4 residents of the catchment area come from outside Canada.

This area has a higher than average number of female led single-parent families, and a higher percentage of people who are well educated yet still living in low-income situations. This is reflective of the reality faced by many immigrant families who arrive in Canada with professional qualifications not yet recognized in Canada. As a result, many highly educated professionals are unable to find work in their field and must resort to finding low-paying work in the service industry. In the catchment area, this phenomenon is made worse in some neighbourhoods by the expense of non-subsidized, private market rent, resulting in a neighbourhood with a very high percentage of working poor families. This combination of poverty, multiple cultural backgrounds and single-parent families, can lead to an overall lack of cohesion in the area, with many people living in a small area together, yet not engaging in neighbourhood life or contributing to improve how life is lived in this community.

Upon embarking on this research project, we had decided to focus on 3-4 neighbourhoods in Ottawa's West end. Since there are many different neighbourhoods with varying demographics, characteristics, strengths and weaknesses, we determined that we should establish criteria for selecting the neighbourhoods and be able to justify why we chose to focus on the specific neighbourhoods that we did. Our criteria for neighbourhood selection was established by the project partners and confirmed and agreed upon by project advisory members. The criteria are as follows:

#### *Criteria for Choosing Neighbourhoods:*

- High density, lower income, high crime
- Culturally diverse
- Large percentage of woman-headed households
- Diversity of types of communities
- Cross-section of age
- Accessibility
- Ward or Catchment area
- One vertical neighbourhood
- Parks/ public space

### Criteria for Choosing Participants:

- Ethnic/racial diversity
- Age
- Girls and women with disabilities
- Various socioeconomic classes of women and girls
- Reside in social housing, private homes and apartment buildings
- At least 3 different languages besides English
- Use of public spaces
- Interested, excited and committed to the project

We looked at the various neighbourhoods in our catchment area and based on the abovementioned criteria chose to focus on the neighbourhoods of Michele Heights, Britannia Woods, Morrison Gardens, and Foster Farm.

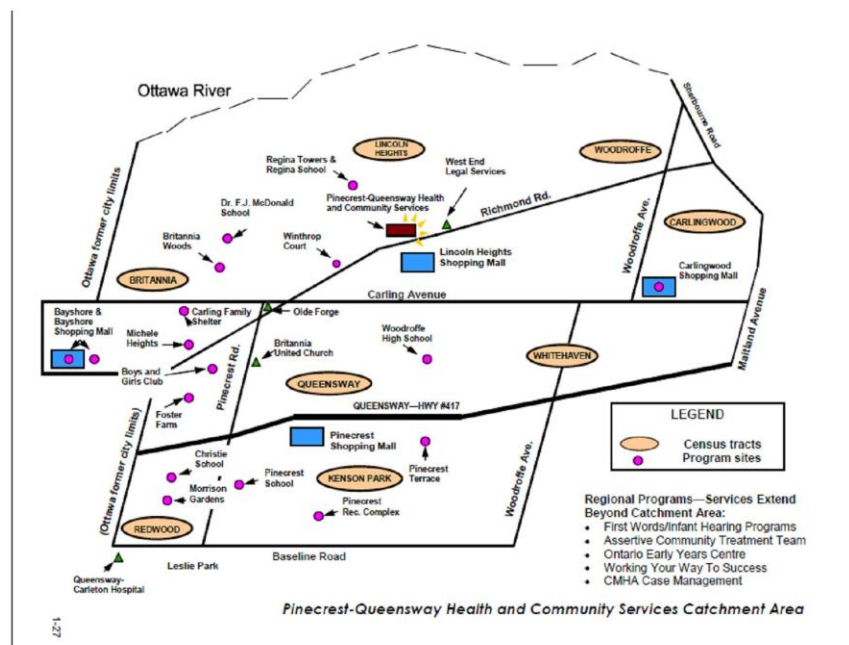


Figure 1: Catchment Area Map

### 3.2 Research Participants

A total of 7 women and 8 girls, ranging in age from 13 to late 60s, from diverse cultural backgrounds, ethnicities and religious or spiritual traditions responded to our Call for Participants. The participants live in one of the 4 selected neighbourhoods. Out of respect for those women and girls who shared their experiences, PQCHC, CAWI and all project participants committed to maintaining confidentiality as to who shares what in the workshops, surveys or conversations



with friends. All participants of the project were asked to only to share what they were comfortable sharing. Photos taken during the fieldwork were not to have people in them or make visible a specific person's home. If at any point during the project, a woman or girl shared an experience that stirred up strong feelings, they were encouraged to contact a support worker at PQCHC.

Research participants chose to have their name associated with their Body Map and the pictures they took during their fieldwork. Several also choose to write their own name on their Body Map, despite a commitment to anonymity at the outset of the project. We see this as a positive step in the women's and girl's having the desire not to remain nameless. Several of the participants in the project also chose to speak openly about their Body Map and their role in the project at a public forum at Ottawa City Hall where the Body Maps were on display in the City Hall Gallery for two days.

### **3.3 Methodology**

#### **3.3.1 Workshops**

Two full day workshops were co-planned and facilitated by PQCHC, CAWI and WISE. The first full day workshop provided participants with an opportunity to collectively reflect upon their own sense of safety, acquire information as to women's safety and prepare women to do community research in their neighbourhoods. Women and girls participating in the workshop were also provided with education around gendered violence and personal safety. The second full day workshop reviewed and reflected upon learning's and insights from the first workshop and time was provided to reflect on participant's fieldwork during the 2 weeks in between workshops, and most importantly, focused on the making of Body Maps.

#### **3.3.2 PhotoVoice**

Photovoice is a research method and advocacy tool that has gained greater attention in recent years in participatory action research (PAR), community development strategies, and education around topics of environment and public health, as has been outlined in the review of the literature. As a method, participants take pictures and speak to the pictures through the use of narrative, poem, recording, or other chosen method. In this research, participants took pictures of what contributes to their sense of feeling safe and unsafe. They took these photos in their specific neighbourhood either during Safety Audits, or on their own personal time between workshops. The women and girls were invited to incorporate the photographs into their Body Maps and speak to the photos through their maps. Not only did participants take photos of where they felt unsafe in

public, they also shared many photos of where they felt safe and things that make them feel pride and comfort in their community.

### **3.3.3 Community Conversations**

Participants used a conversation guide (Appendix A) to talk with other women and girls in their neighbourhood about how they feel about their sense of safety in public spaces. A total of 41 community conversations were documented. These Community Conversation guides helped to both gain additional information from women and girls who were not actively participating in the core group of the study, but also provided the space for participants to share their learning's from the workshops and provide resources and possible actions and solutions.

### **3.3.4 Safety Audits**

Safety audits help people to evaluate how safe a physical environment feels and to identify changes that would make it safer for everyone who use it. WISE specializes in carrying out Safety Audits through a gendered lens, hence their name Women's Initiative for Safer Environments. Safety audits were first developed by the Metro Toronto Action Committee on Public Violence against Women and Children (METRAC). Women's Initiatives for Safer Environments has adapted the safety audit checklist to better include the concerns of women with disabilities, francophone women, rural women, aboriginal women and immigrant and visible minority women.

During safety audits, people walk through a space, noticing what feels safe and what does not. A checklist is used for the purpose of considering questions such as: What is the lighting like? Can I see what's up ahead? Are there places someone could be hiding? Is this place accessible? And so on.

With the support of WISE, a safety audit was held in each of the 4 neighbourhoods. WISE compiled all of the audit data and produced a summary report from each of the neighbourhoods. The results of these 2013 safety audits were compared with the ones conducted in the past (Morrison Gardens 2006; Foster Farms 2007; Michele Heights, 2007; Britannia Woods, 2007) to analyze changes that have or have not been implemented since the last safety audit and to bring forth any further recommendations to the appropriate decision-makers and appropriate agencies.

### **3.3.5 Body Mapping**

In a second workshop, participants expressed their experience of feeling safe or unsafe through the creation of body maps. Using paints, photos, and objects allows both the conscious and unconscious experience to emerge. Participants were

invited to come to the Mapping workshop with any artifacts, pictures, and personal pieces that they might wish to incorporate into their Maps. The creation of the Body Maps was guided by visualization and 3 probing questions: 1) When you're moving around in your neighbourhood, how do you feel? 2) As an individual in your diverse community, how do *you* contribute to \_\_\_\_\_ (i.e.: neighbourhood safety, beautification, crime prevention, reporting, coming together, nurturing each other) 3) How do you envision a safer community? What needs to happen/ change and *who* else needs to help? Participants were also asked to comment on their Body map once it was finished.

The analysis of the Body Mapping is rooted within a community art-based learning and participatory action research- with the view to illicit changes (at the community, institutional, and city levels) deemed necessary by the participants through their Body Maps and other methods we've employed in data collection.

### **3.3.6 Advisory Committee Discussions**

Concurrent with the above research methods, the Advisory Committee comprised of organizational and agency representatives met several times over the course of the project to inform the research and reflect on the research findings. Advisory Committee members included representation from Community Houses, United Sisters, Pathways to Education, PQ Youth programs, Ottawa Police Service, Ottawa Community Housing, OC Transpo, WISE, as well as the staff of CAWI and PQCHC who coordinated this project.

## **4. Research Findings**

The following section outlines the findings from the various research methods and presents these against a gendered tapestry of learning's that have been unearthed throughout this project. Following this, Section 5 deepens the analysis of the findings by presenting strategies that research participants and Community Conversation respondents currently employ in order to feel safer in their neighbourhoods.

### **4.1 Women & Girls' Sense of Safety**

During focus groups, in order to operationalize what "safety" actually means to the research participants, we asked them what safety means to them and through this, got a deeper sense of what it means to feels safe. Participants put forth that to them, safety feels like:

- Talking & people "getting along"
- Sharing with other neighbourhoods
- Sense of togetherness & making friends
- Reciprocation (of neighbourly help)
- Positive sense of self/community
- Animal-friendly community
- Non-judgmental neighbours
- Kids playing in public space
- No gossip
- Gardens taken care of & trash-free environment
- Looking out for each other
- Feeling like nothing bad is going to happen
- Being able to let my guard down
- Participants also said that metaphorically, safety to them feels like a warm fuzzy blanket, a good belly laugh, being worry free and a sense of calm.



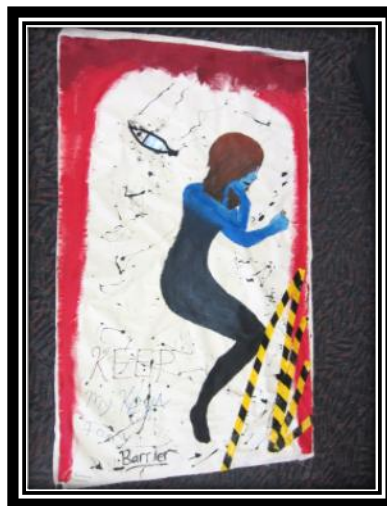
**Figure 2: Kathy's Body Map**

Kathy says this of her Body Map: "That's me in the middle; I am all curled up because I am feeling unwelcome and left out. But then I start to move out to try something different." Kathy did however, have many actual words and cut-outs around her body with an outline of positive words and hope for positive change. It also looks like her body outline has some frog legs coming out from it, as though she was just about ready, or at least preparing to leap forward.

Additionally, we also wanted to understand what women and girls defined as feeling "unsafe". They put forth that unsafe feels like: Being over stimulated; hypersensitive; no communication; misinformed; feeling "cold prickles"; shortness of breath; feeling like a victim; having to be alert; being aware; feeling uncomfortable. 29/41 respondents in the Community Conversations reported feeling unsafe or somewhat unsafe (10 unsafe, 19 somewhat safe). Among those who said that they

felt safe (12/41), they nonetheless proceeded to give examples of how they did not feel safe. This may be due to women employing strategies to feel safe, or simply denying their fear and refusing to be afraid, which was mentioned on many occasions in several of the data collection methods. This may point to the fact that many participants have become accustomed to living with a sense of not feeling safe. This feeling may be normalized and not recognized as fear.

When asked what kinds of violence women and girls have experienced, respondents reported that they get harassed by men as they move about in public space; gangs “taking a woman down”; sexual assault; called names; followed; physically assaulted; being sexually assaulted when men introduce young girls to prostitution. Participants said that the types of violence they fear most are when gunshots are heard, sexual harassment, rape, being followed, and being jumped.



**Figure 3: Jeanvieve's Body Map**

*“It is dark because I don't feel safe in my neighbourhood because of past experiences. The red around is a barrier because I don't trust. And yet there is resistance, a fist.”*

## **4.2 Type of Neighbourhood**

Through this research we were also seeking to discover how one's sense of safety may differ depending on the type of neighbourhood or building they live in. For instance, we were interested in knowing if women and girls feel safer in public housing communities and row homes or vertical neighbourhoods (apartment buildings). We learned through our findings that while there is an impression that high-rise apartment buildings appear to be safer because they are assumed to be more secure, this is not the case. People who live in these vertical neighbourhoods often let non-residents/ strangers into the building through what are to be secure,

locked doors, making other residents more vulnerable. This was an issue for respondents who stated that letting strangers into the building is often due to drug dealing or perceived gang activity.

Solutions to this may include information sheets and reminders to residents that they have a responsibility to other residents not to allow strangers in the building and refrain from buzzing people in that they don't know. Here both landlords and residents can play a role in educating each other: residents should be encouraged to report illegal entry or activity so that the landlord can appropriately respond in a timely fashion.

We do know however that a lack of willingness or fear of reporting is a pervasive problem, particularly in vertical neighbourhoods. This under-reporting can be attributed to living in very close quarters. While living in apartment buildings brings the benefit of connectedness and a tight-knit community, people can also feel "too close" and there are nuanced stressors that come with living in vertical neighbourhoods. For instance, it may be more of a challenge to report a neighbour if you have to see them in the lobby or in the elevator every day. Suggestions from respondents also point to a desire for landlord's to adopt a "zero tolerance" policy in terms of loitering, public disturbance and people utilizing public space in a negative or illegal way, and that these people be removed from the property and banned from using it.

### ***4.3 Using Public Transit***

30/41 respondents in the Community Conversations said they feel safe or somewhat safe (21 yes, 9 somewhat) taking public transit in or near the neighbourhood. Respondents were asked to elaborate on why they feel safe, their answers were that the bus is in close proximity, the stop is well lit, or that there are people around. Nine respondents noted that they feel unsafe on the bus or transit way because they remember the violent Voyager bus incident, bus shelters are often a place where people gather to drink and smoke, or because they are afraid to use the bus at night. Specific OC Transpo routes were mentioned such as the #152 because it is poorly lit and the loitering and illegal activity at the Lincoln Fields station such as drinking in public, harassment, and of being followed. Two respondents said that they do not use public transit.

When asked if they know of women and girls who experience sexual harassment when taking public transit, 17 said yes, 24 said no. Examples of harassment that were mentioned in the Community Conversations included:

- People talking really loudly or obnoxiously
- Women being followed when walking home from bus
- "Outsiders" who are taking the bus into the neighbourhood
- Verbal and physical abuse when returning home
- Harassment from people perceived to be high or on drugs at transit station.

Overall, research participants and the respondents in the Community Conversations report generally feel safe using public transit.

#### **4.4 Factors that Contribute to Feeling Unsafe**

In the Community Conversations, women and girls cited knowing people in the neighbourhood, length of time in the neighbourhood and moving problem neighbours as being factors that contributed to feeling safe. When asked about factors that contribute to feeling unsafe, there were responses related to visibility, the physical surroundings, lack of trust and women's lived experiences of gender-based violence. Factors that most contribute to women and girls feeling unsafe are:

- Dark pathways and parking lots
- Obstruction of sight, grown bushes
- Drug dealers fighting, drugs and drinking in the parks
- News of stabbings
- Bad people, irresponsible bullies
- People not knowing each other
- Outside visitors, strangers
- People loitering in public spaces
- Knowing of women raped or harassed
- History of having been sexually assaulted
- Socialization, having learned to be afraid
- Fear that boys might bother me

Through various data, women and girls reveal that they feel unsafe in areas that were dark, isolated, abandoned or where work needed to be done to fix a problem (i.e. shrubbery needing trimming). They also mentioned getting rid of aggressive dogs and dangerous people, like drug dealers. Aggressive animals and irresponsible pet owners are reported to be a huge contributor to women and girls feeling unsafe in public space.

##### **4.4.1 Safety Audits**

It was through the Safety Audits that some of the most tangible information was gathered about what contributes to the women and girls' sense of safety while moving about in public space. The safety audits each had approximately 25-45 points of recommendations or problem areas that had been identified by those on the safety walk about. For this reason and with the assistance of WISE, we have captivated the bulk of the findings from the safety audits and put the most problem areas into themes or sub-headings here. The current safety audits were compared to the previous safety audits and changes or improvements are noted here.

The major themes where there has been improvement are: signage; lighting; garbage; visible perceived gang activity; patrolling by OCH security and OPS; sightlines; communal activities; and maintenance.

**Signage:** Related to residential areas where maps are either non-existent or confusing; most are now larger, more legible and best of all, more welcoming, giving a safer "feel" to the neighbourhood.

**Lighting:** This has been a major issue over the years; in some housing complexes, larger lights have been installed on each and every building, giving a much safer "feel" to the neighbourhood; larger porch lights that have been installed over each individual unit's back door; residents are being encouraged to turn them on after dark.

**Garbage:** A pervasive issue of garbage lying around, has historically given the impression of an "uncared-for" community. Since this problem is being addressed, the communities have a much safer "feel" to them.

**Visible Perceived Gang Members "hanging out":** Historically, there has been readily visible criminal activities; perceived gang members "hung out" together, hours on end, each and every night and at "all hours of the night". They got louder and louder as the night went on, as they became more and more intoxicated, as they drank alcohol, in plain sight, without impunity "right in the middle of the complex." They have now been "pushed" into more public space, right off of housing property, where they have a more difficult time hiding.

**Security Guards are now doing foot patrol;** They had historically only patrolled by car, just driving through the complex at predictable times. This change is appreciated by community members; more visible presence by police has also given residents a feeling of increased safety.

**Sight-lines:** Bramble and bushes have been thinned out, however there are still areas where CPTED and safety audits point to a need for regular maintenance for shrubs and bushes that are easy to hide in.

**Positive Community Activities:** Historically there were lots of unsupervised kids yelling, screaming and running through the housing parking lots. Our audits revealed that this has been replaced with positive interactive social activities (largely through the efforts of Tenant Associations and the Community Houses). A number of former drug dealers have been evicted which makes people feel safer.

**Maintenance :** The cement retaining walls that had been falling down have been replaced by landlord; new doors and windows have been installed; basements/foundations have been reinforced; steps have been repaired; graffiti is removed more quickly and has, in several cases, been replaced with community developed murals (Paint it Up! projects); new fences have been installed; there's a new water-park for the kids to play in within one community and a completely renovated community Fieldhouse in another; a brand new basketball court has been installed in one community and another is under way.



In sum, while there still are issues in the four communities related to lighting, pathways, garbage, loitering and surveillance, we noted that in a comparison of previous safety audits (ranging from 2006-2007) and current ones carried out for this project by participants and WISE, great improvements have been made in the neighbourhoods. We can attribute many of these improvements to being a result of residents making the right call and reporting problems, trust-building residents, networking and strengthening the relationship between residents and the landlord (in most cases, Ottawa Community Housing) and a deeper sense of pride and ownership of one's space in their neighbourhood.

#### **4.5 The Gendered Nature of Safety**

As has been identified in a review of the literature on women's safety in public spaces, we know there is a gender gap in how men and women *perceive* of their sense of safety in public space. This gap in how one's experience of safety in public space differ based on several underlying factors underscores that an increase in policing, security and harsher penalties are not adequate solutions to addressing the root of the problem.

Women and girls do fear violence and for their own safety in both the public and private spheres. In addition to gathering anecdotal and factual stories about how participants feel about moving through public space in and around their neighbourhood including their use of public transit, the participants also had several opportunities to engage in a conversation about how they experience crime and safety through a gendered lens as well as some of the challenges they encounter in their neighbourhood.

In the community conversations, 33/41 respondents (22 yes, 11 somewhat) felt that women and girls are more vulnerable to violence or feel less safe in the neighbourhood than men and boys. The reasons given were: women perceive themselves to be the weaker sex, men dominate/are bullies, gangs find it easier to take a woman down, girls don't stick together enough, men harass as women walk, going out at night and fear for our daughter's safety. Some of the qualitative answers respondents provided in the Community Conversations point out why this may be the case are:

"Because if I am walking out and about, guys can "holla" at me and harass me as I walk" said one young woman. Another woman and mother of young daughters said that "All women are afraid at night. We wait for our daughters at night." Another woman put forth that women are just generally easier targets, particularly when they are alone, and further, "Women are hardly recognized as a person of gain."

An element of this research process that was perhaps most striking at the outset is that in the first workshop when facilitators asked participants about their "gendered" experience of safety, there was a silence within the room. All of the girls

were silent about the topic at first. Overall, they did not feel that their experience of being female had any bearing on whether or not they felt safe or unsafe in public spaces. It was as though most of the young participants had not considered themselves gendered beings and/ or how their gender may impact upon how they view, move, or act upon the spaces that they use. There was, at least in the first workshop, a general unawareness around their gender and the gendered nature of safety. This could be because they did not have the words or language to describe what they implicitly saw as gendered differences. In the second workshop which was held 2 weeks later (after the Community Conversations, Safety Audits, PhotoVoice, and workshop material had percolated with them) they were a lot more forthright, opinionated, and self-aware of their gender and the gendered differences in terms of safety in public space. We attribute this to the participants going out in their communities doing fieldwork about their sense of safety in public spaces. In other words, women and girls were already apprehensive about using particular public spaces, especially alone, but had not named that experience or been self-aware of why that might be.

Throughout the course of the project, women’s and girl’s self-reported a deeper level of self-awareness. By “self-awareness,” we mean being aware of oneself, having a level of introspection and mindful of one’s gendered experience and how that alters the way they move about and use public space. This recognition of one’s gender, gendering of oneself and the gendered experience of moving about in public space is most apparent in Behishta’s Body Map, one of the youth participants, where she speaks of the impact of socialization of young girls: *“My body map shows the difference in how men and women feel in the neighbourhood. A lot of people think that guys are not afraid, women are the caregivers. Guys are not as afraid as women, women are more cautious.”*

By the end of the second workshop and fieldwork, we noted that the youth participants had started to truly reflect on the continuum of violence. One young woman said to us, “Men need to know that hitting is not the only form of violence but that there are many acts of violence that lead up to that.” When describing her body map, Negad spoke to this continuum of violence as well as the gendered differences in terms of safety, and the need for women to assume an attitude to change this. Mohubo



Figure 4: Behishta’s Body Map

intentionally chose to place a mirror where her face would be so that when others look at her, they might reflect: *“The mirror is so that you can look in and see yourself. Women are usually more afraid than men when we go about the neighbourhood. Women can remember they are strong. If you are scared, people will know. We need to stay strong.”*



Figure 5: Segment of Mohubo's Body Map

#### **4.6 The Cross-Generational Sense of Safety**

Research findings not only uncovered perceived differences between men and women/girls' and boys' experiences of safety in public spaces, findings also revealed some cross-generational differences between girls and women. Initially, the girls in the workshops were hesitant to speak about their experience of being sexually harassed as though it were a new consideration for them. This reinforces the findings in the literature review in that many youth do not recognize the sexual harassment they are experiencing. Through the course of the discussions and their own fieldwork, the girls became more ready to articulate their experiences. Several of the girls expressed that there should be more opportunities and forums for girls and young women to discuss these issues. Both the youth and the women expressed their appreciation for the opportunity and the space provided in the workshops to have a dialogue about these issues (gender, violence, safety, fear, harassment, etc.) across generations.

In the group discussions, community conversations and mapping processes, adult women often spoke about their fear for their daughters. In one Body Map, Rose spoke of the kind of inter-generational support she seeks to give to young girls:

*“Being effective within yourself has a transforming power for the world around you. It is a non-verbal effective tool to brighten someone’s day, dissipate darkness, eliminate fear. In my neighbourhood people come up to me to get advice on how to be fit and have a glow. I try to promote a sense of spirituality for young girls. This gives them the confidence that they need a sense of bravery.”*



**Figure 6: Rose’s Body Map**

Similarly, through the Safety Audits and Community Conversations, findings point to a marked difference between the women and girls in terms of what they view as unsafe. In general, the youth who contributed to the Community Conversations seemed far less apprehensive to use public spaces such as unlit pathways, being alone on the OC Transit line, walking about on their own. We can consider this cross-generational difference in 2 ways: First, youth participants are generally less afraid due to a lack of awareness of perceived danger and second, they may have come to adopt a “new normal” in terms of what is acceptable behavior or not. It is suggested here that perhaps youth have a higher “tolerance” level for what is frightening or unacceptable behavior from peers. A finding we see that calls for deeper examination and research at the neighbourhood level.

## 4.7 Safety across Culture

Four of the 16 participants in the workshops chose to identify their religious background or faith. It remains unclear as to how many participants subscribe to a particular religion or faith. However, a majority of the Body Maps point to some sense of spirituality and having faith and hope as a source of strength. The following maps by young teen participants reveal how religion and pride in their faith is integral to what gives them strength. All the young Muslim teens who mapped their bodies, added a hijab within their map, even though not all of them actually wore a hijab. This could be tied to the idea that “being a good girl means to wear a hijab”, as one advisory committee member noted, or the belief that dressing modestly is a strategy for being safe.



Figure 7: Mohubo's Body Map



Figure 8: Sahra's Body Map

Mohubo said of her Body Map: *“I am kneeling, praying. With the shooting and stabbings that have taken place in our neighbourhood recently, we need to pray.”* *“If you wear lots of clothing you are considered safe. Here I cover up to be safe. I have the mirror because I want people to look into it and consider how they feel in their own neighbourhood. I want people to reflect on this because of what OCH neighbourhoods are like. There are good things in my neighbourhood too. We are all like one big family, with all the kids running around.”*

Sahra is holding diamonds in her hands and she says that the diamonds symbolize power, the sparkles radiate power.

Additionally, findings point to the realization that safety, and one's sense of safety is somewhat contextual and relative, depending on lived experiences and past experiences. Several participants who have immigrated to Canada revealed in their body maps that their sense of safety in their neighbourhoods is relative to their experiences pre-migration. With this comes a determination to do what they can to make their new home safe.



Figure 9: Cheryl's Body Map

Cheryl's map has symbols from her past, present and future as she envisions a safer neighbourhood through the use of words inscribed (Peace, Love, Unity, Stand). With the globe symbolizing she is from both places, she brings her learning's from her own country of what it means and what it takes to stay safe. *"It is rumours and lies that make things unsafe. Neighbourhood is part of my heart. Palm trees represent where I am from. I left my country for greater life and safety for my kids. You don't hear anything, keep yourself away from rumours, to hurt someone."* At the same time, she has placed a huge red heart in the centre of her body. In the heart shape it says "I Lead," speaking to her leadership within her neighbourhood to bring people together.

When asked about her Body Map, Christiana elaborated on the words and images that demonstrate her sense of safety and her sense of pride in her new country. Her narrative also reinforces a common theme in the research findings, that safety and one's expectations and perceptions of safety are indeed relative and highly contextual. She says:

*"Personally, I feel safe in my neighbourhood. It is much safer than where I lived in my home country. However, I know that others feel unsafe so I want to help them feel safe. I love Canada. Based on my past experience in my country, Canada is the best country in the world. I am an active volunteer and I want to continue to make my neighbourhoods better for others."*

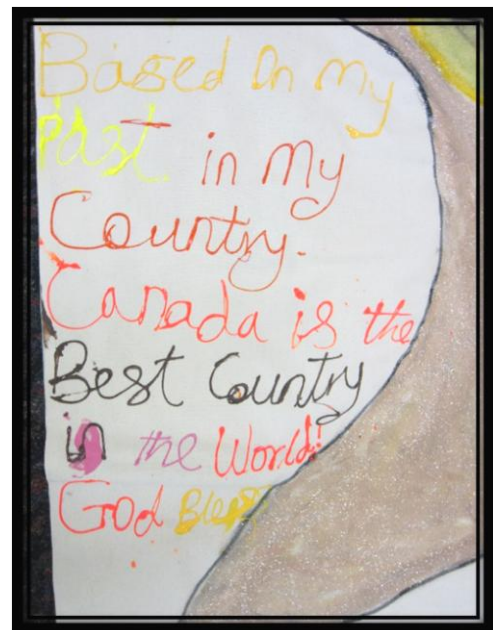


Figure 10: Segment of Christiana's Body Map

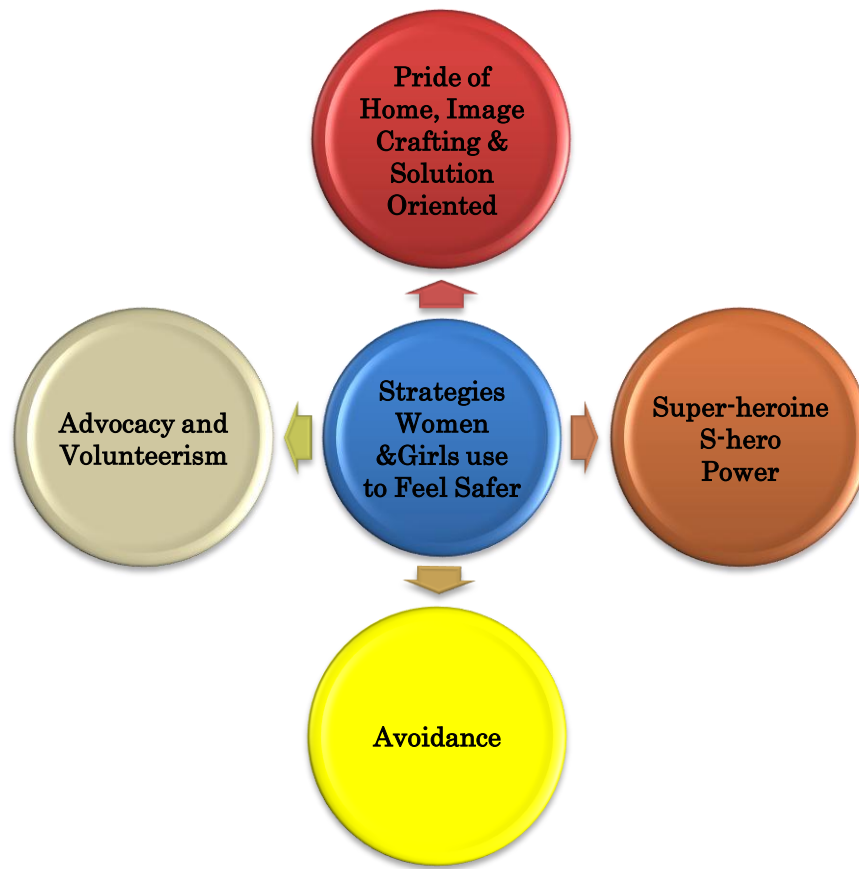


Figure 11: Lillian's Body Map

*“My body map is titled ‘Working on What Matters’ and I added that because I think that we should work on what really matters and that is making our neighbourhoods better and safer. It also says on my body Map that “my opinion matters” it says “making life bright and I put that on because I want life to be brighter in my neighbourhood. It also says the word “hope” on my map because I have hope that our neighbourhoods can change and be safer for everyone we can do it if we work together. I also have “love” there- which just means love one another and have peace- inner and outer.”*

## 5. Strategies Women & Girls Use to Feel Safer

Through the Safety Audits, Community Conversations, Workshops, PhotoVoice and Body Maps and the analysis of these, it becomes clear that women and girls in these 4 neighbourhoods use a variety of innovative strategies to feel safer in their communities. However, for the purpose of being succinct, these strategies are described here and grouped into 4 central themes which are 1) Pride of Home, Image Crafting and Solution Oriented 2) Super-heroine S-hero Power 3) Avoidance and 4) Advocacy and Volunteerism.



### 5.1 Pride of Home, Image Crafting & Solution-Oriented

Through PhotoVoice and the analysis of these photos, it became clear more often than not, that the participants chose to take pictures of places they felt needed some attention from respective institutions or agencies, and/ or “hot spots” where they suspect or have witnessed criminal behavior taking place. However, it is the photos that captivated the positive things about the community that made it into the Body Maps. We attribute this to a sense of community pride that is indicative of residents wanting and choosing to depict a positive image of their neighbourhood, not an unfavorable one. Participants brought personal photographs from home that depicted what was important to them. Items, quotations, poems, and personal photographs of family and pets, their own gardens etc. represent things that make women and girls feel safe.

Participants reiterated that if you don’t create a sense of home, you can’t create a sense of safety. This is exemplified in Penny’s Body Map. Penny’s Body Map includes many pictures of her family, home, pets, and places in her neighbourhood of safe/ unsafe spaces. When asked about her Map, Penny explains:

*“One side of my map has pictures of where I feel safe in my neighbourhood; the other side has pictures of where I don’t feel safe. There are two images of*





**Figure 12: Penny's Body Map**

*me in the middle. In one drawing, I am upside down doing cartwheels because life is good and I have a fun side. It also represents the cyclical nature of change. In the other drawing, it shows my caring side. I have wisdom and time to think and organize to make things better in the neighbourhood. If you can identify your problem areas and know where to go, you can work with other to make your neighbourhood a better place. The colours of red, black white and yellow around the heart in the kneeling position pays homage to our First Nations Medicine Wheel & respect of tradition and culture. Integrity, hope, wisdom, humour and transformation.”*

In analyzing Penny's Body Map, one Advisory member noted: “The upside down figure seems to say there is a whole new way of how to see the world, she seems rejuvenated, like there are spirits around her that are helping her to move in her life.”

Lucy's Map also depicts her need for creature comforts and familiar surroundings of home and neighbours in order to feel most safe and happy:

*“My body map shows pictures with where I feel safe on one side and, on the other side, where I don't feel safe: extra grown shrubs, extra foliage, signs too low to see. They don't maintain the landscape between the back of the houses anymore, and residents are not allowed to maintain it, so it gets all grown up and there is less visibility. As a woman I don't walk down the back paths for that reason, I have to go the long way around. The middle of the body map represents the things that make me happy: gardening that I like to do, my high school diploma that I got a few years back, my husband and I, resting at the end of the day. With the hair, I show that I like to go a little crazy and wild.”*

While all research participants noted problem areas and “problem people” or “problem houses” what they chose to depict in their PhotoVoice and Body Maps were in fact positive images of Self and Community. We call this positive image crafting and see it as a strategy that women and girls use to feel safer in their neighbourhoods. While they recognize the negative issues within their neighbourhoods, they choose to pour their efforts into solution-seeking actions and behaviours and want others in the city to see them (and their neighbourhoods) in a positive light.



**Figure 13: Lucy's Map**

This image crafting is very important to the participants who reside in these neighbourhoods that are often stereotyped or feature in the local news media as being unfavourable places to live and raise a family. Other themes noted were that of community, hope and strength and that it is apparent that these women and girls have love for themselves and their community, sending a positive message. This is evidenced through Lakeesha's Body Map which she says: *"The bottom of my body are all the negative things that happen in my neighbourhood: guns shooting, people doing drugs and smoking cigarettes. The upper part of my body is music that I fill myself with so as to push the negative out."*



Figure 14: Lakeesha's Body Map

One resident in the Community Conversation wanted to reinforce that "There are good things in my neighbourhood too, we are all like one big family, with all the kids running around" and another young teen girl said that "If you feel confident walking around people we see you as confident".

In Negad's Body Map, she chose to use the words "Solution Seekers" on her face and has mirrors for eyes. This reflexivity and desire for her to see herself as part of the broader solution is apparent, and she wants other area residents to know that they are also part of building a stronger, healthier and more unified community.



Figure 15: Negad's Body Map

## 5.2 Super-heroine S-hero Power

The Body Maps elicited and demonstrated a personal inner strength and power not only through the actual body outlines and poses of participants but also through the words and symbols chose on the painting. The Body Maps portrayed participant's ideal self and how they see themselves. In this way the maps encompassed many of the characteristics that a Superhero/ Super-heroine would typically have:

- Intelligent
- Has a goal
- Brave
- Has Special Powers
- Earns respect from others
- Athletic
- Is a Role Model
- Unique
- Caring
- Confident
- Dedicated
- Altruistic
- Has a fear or weakness
- Has a safe space to hide
- Has an interesting past

Super-heroines often have a “good” set of morals which they adhere to and believe that people are generally good. Super-heroines are resilient and solution-oriented and as we can see from many of the Body Maps, the women and girls who participated in this study shows signs of their resiliency, hope, trust and faith in humanity- through their body maps. Through Hibo's Body Map, we can see just from the body outline and the wings she has given herself to fly, that she saw herself as Super-heroine-like. She chose to depict herself as a Superhero and the quotes and power words around her body suggest a sense of self confidence and control. Hibo chose to have different coloured socks on because “I want people to know that I am confident and not afraid of difference.” Hibo also had this to say about her Body Map:

*“My Body Map represents how I love my community in my heart. I really want to put out there that my culture is Somali, which is why I have wings to fly. I want to be all that. I really want to talk about this in my community because no one asks us about this. This discussion has really opened my mind.”*

About the overall process, training and discussion around crime and safety in her neighbourhood, Hibo said “I am excited that you have given us this opportunity to talk with women and girls about safety. You really inspire. Girls in my neighbourhood need to have more girl power. Some girls don't stand up with this program, they would start now. I learned that the confidence we have shows. When you are confident, others see you as confident and that helps make us safer.”Not only does culture and



Figure 16: Hibo's Body Map

a sense of spirituality overlap with the Super-heroine theme, this shines through in Rose's Body Map as she speaks of the necessity of being non-judgmental and helpful to others as well as the shameless exhibition of the Super-heroine qualities as she writes "courage, wisdom, caution, and confidence" around her Body Map. Rose elaborates on what she was hoping to get across through her use of words and images.

### 5.3 Advocacy & Community Engagement

Research participants exhibited signs of being an advocate at the individual or community level. This advocacy strategy used by women and girls is closely linked to the aforementioned strategy of being a Super-heroine. Participants and Community Conversation respondents showed a great deal of excitement, personal drive, community pride and solution-seeking not only by suggesting ways to improve their neighbourhood, but most often by implementing these to increase their own feelings of safety and community engagement. While participants and respondents had a surplus of suggestions and recommendations for things they have previously done, or plan to do in the near future, some of the established and/or recommended strategies that were revealed are: To establish a Neighbourhood Watch; hold community potluck and BBQs in public spaces; host all women or all girls' picnics; promote a "zero tolerance" attitude within the community around harassment; ask for more visible presence of security; encourage neighbours to turn lights on at night at the back of their units; encourage residents to report maintenance issues themselves; advocate for public information boxes; have educational forums in the community about harassment and self-defense; use social media to promote positive neighbourhood-level programs; offer events and classes just for males about being allies to women and girls; invite women's rights and advocacy groups to do "You Can MANifest Change" type programs with men and boys in the neighbourhood; organize events that emphasize cross-generational talks between women and girls; mentor and connect young women with the larger community; host "Coffee Houses" about topics of interest or concern; and "Be the Change You Want To See."

Some of the Body Maps, pointed to the women and girls' advocacy and activism (whether for Self or Other) and presented signs, symbols and metaphors of being resourceful, positive, productive

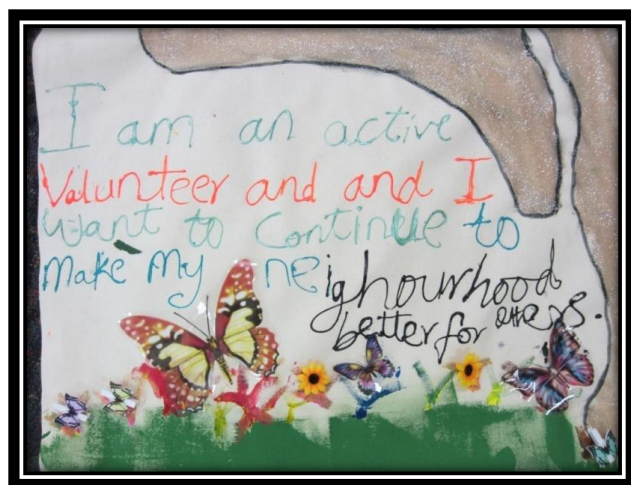


Figure 17: Segment of Christiana's Body Map

members in their community, and in most instances the Body Maps show how the participants root themselves in their neighbourhood, both practically and metaphorically. We can see an example of this in the corner of Christiana's Body Map where she states *"I am an active volunteer and I want to continue to make my neighbourhood better for others."*

In line with the strategies of Advocacy and Community Engagement, Sharon spoke about her Body Map in this way: *"My image is about making it a lot safer to go out and do whatever I want, to have fun. I selected pink because it makes me happy. The posture signifies 'Yes, We Can Do It!' and the light on my hand symbolizes safety. I am still wild at heart."*

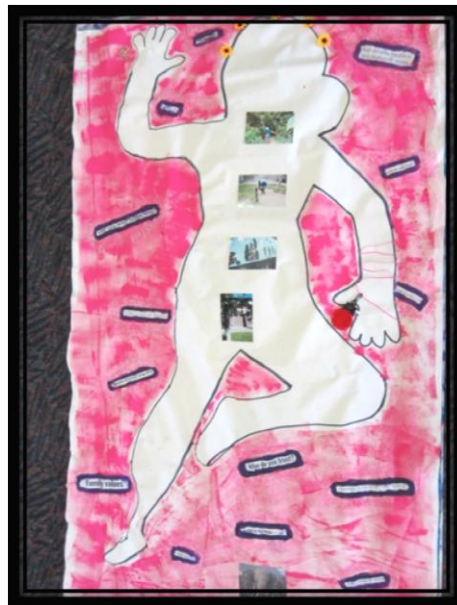


Figure 18: Sharon's Body Map

As part of the analysis of the Body Maps and PhotoVoice, not only did the participants write a narrative about their map, they analyzed and coded for signs, symbols and metaphors. Additionally, the Advisory Committee was also asked to explore the Body Maps and pull out the themes and thoughts. The Advisory members assisted with the analysis through various comments such as noting that the contradictory themes in the PhotoVoice and Body Maps between identified larger city-community-world, while others focused on individual experience. Other Advisory members said the PhotoVoice show vitality and a looking towards the future. There was a consensus that "time" was a theme in many of the works as well; that the art seemed to be saying "This is our Time."

And while it may not have been explicit to the facilitators at the time, Advisory Members did make mention that the participants seemed to be very self-aware and reflective, especially through the use of mirrors and reflective artifacts placed on the maps. They also established that the photographs and maps pointed

to a true sense of community engagement and that people wanted to contribute to a beautiful environment to live and thrive in. The participants showed characteristics of good role models, good values and women inspiring other women. Another comment from Advisory observers was:

*“I find it interesting that a young woman who was not wearing a hijab in the Mapping workshop asked for a cloth to include a hijab on her body map – it would be interesting to unpack that. Is it because she felt positive to wear the hijab or was she responding to the message that you are better if you wear a hijab. There is bullying going on with a guy walking up to a Muslim girl to say hey you aren’t wearing a hijab. It is like how a mini-skirt gets repackaged, where it is considered cool at one time then promiscuous in another moment”*

Under the strategy of Advocacy and Community Engagement, suggestions were put forward by participants that there is a need to further educate and raise awareness around respect (both for youth and adults alike), teach self-defense and empowerment, learn safety and protection, talk with young girls about alcohol and safety. Participants also encourage people to come together in public space by doing activities such as movies and activities in the park and street dances. In some cases, women spoke about encouraging people to be friendlier and interact more, and by doing this, they are sure to feel safer because they are better engaged in their community.

## **5.4 Avoidance**

This is a strategy that respondents report using. Avoidance can be understood as having a direct result of feeling too unsafe positively using public space. This strategy points to a chief contradiction we unearthed through this research:

*Women and Girls may report that they feel “safe” for the reason that they avoid the use of public space and further isolate themselves in their home or neighbourhood.*

When asked if they hesitate to use public space because they don’t feel safe in the neighbourhood, 28 said yes or somewhat (19 yes, 9 somewhat). Of the 12 who said that they do not hesitate to use public space, five still continued to provide examples as to why they do not like to use public space, such as parks and pathways. It is important to consider if there are other spaces that went unmentioned because respondents were not cued to mention them. A recurring theme was fear of going out at night. For some, this leads to isolation and limits their movement in the neighbourhood as described through comments such as: “I only go out in the daylight; “I rather stay at home with the children. I don’t have friends in the neighbourhood. I go to church and visit friends in other

neighbourhoods;" "I do not go to parks, pathways or anything;" "I avoid pathways, as I have been attacked."

In responding to questions through the survey, women shared the strategies they use to increase their sense of safety and for some, this took the form of isolating themselves by staying inside, remaining in front of their own home, not going out alone and not talking to people they don't know. One respondent said that she just doesn't talk to anyone she doesn't know, she just keeps to herself and her family. Respondents report that they tend to avoid situations where they feel unsafe by only going out during the day or stay inside and don't leave their homes.

While for others, the strategy was to reach out to people so that they feel safer. This approach included talking with neighbours, calling someone while travelling the bus, travelling in packs, and community networking. Women also take action to feel safer in the following ways: walk with a dog, hold keys in hand, always have phone, speak loudly when nervous, carry a heavy purse, use locks and alarm systems and confront fear. Participants and Community Conversation respondents additionally recommended that if females want to feel safer they should always tell someone where they are going and an expected time of return, walk together when possible; get to know your neighbours; become aware and more educated; get to know the public spaces around your neighbourhood; as well as encouraging women and girls to get to know who hangs around the neighbourhood and who is "out of place."

While some women and girls may use avoidance as a strategy to feel safer, this can work to further isolate women and girls who are living in fear and have the perception that they must avoid the use of public space. By disseminating this research and reporting back to respondents, it is our hope that we can work to eradicate their use of this avoidance strategy and encourage the use of the other identified strategies.

## **6. Evaluation**

In order to assess what participants got out of both Workshops 1 and 2, we developed a fun and interactive workshop evaluation. The method is called "Head, Heart, and Foot" and is used to determine the participant's views on what went well and what could be improved.

Using yellow construction paper "Light Bulbs" represent one idea or "ah-ha" moment, red construction paper "Heart" represent one feeling from the workshop, and orange construction paper "Feet" represent a next step that the individual will commit to and take from what they have learned.

Some of the ideas (light bulbs) that came out of the evaluation are that unity makes all things possible; We need more groups for Women & Girls; We can put into practice everything we learned and know - to reinforce 'community'; At first, I couldn't think of anything for the Body Map, but when my ideas started, I couldn't

stop!; I got an idea to somehow make a change in my neighbourhood/community; For the group to all draw/write on one large poster board, ideas relevant to women and girls' safety and to post in the foyer of Pinecrest-Queensway; we need more feedback from community and to work more with youth; There is no better way to express yourself than expressing yourself through art.

The feelings (the heart) expressed during the evaluation were that participants felt more confident, that they are going to be more careful; they felt calm, relaxed, and interested while doing the Body Map; everyone was willing to help everyone and there was no negativity; they felt excited, educated, inspired, and “out of everyone's creations today, I feel more open toward others' concerns and feelings about their neighbourhood safety.”

Research participants additionally put forth recommendations and gratitude for the educational pieces, the fieldwork experience and connecting to new friends. Next steps identified from the evaluations are:

- “It’s good to hold more workshops like this one. Talking amongst women and girls helped me to get an understanding of what other neighbourhoods are like. I also got to see people open up and out of their shell, which really inspires me to talk to more people and become a better person.”
- “Taking action and initiative to make my community a safer environment for women and girls helps to promote gender equality”.
- “I feel more empowered now as I have more knowledge”.
- “Safety audits can be empowering as people are interested and want to know”
- “Do body mapping with men and boys”
- To carry out more community-based research on this topic
- Take initiative and try to make my community a better place to live for other

## 7. Recommendations

Achieving community safety, as in all aspects of a successful democratic society, is dependent upon the concerted, collective and collaborative efforts of all members of that society. When working in concert with one another, the organizations and service providers that have been delegated responsibility to provide safety services can deliver the anticipated quality of service only when constituents take an active role. Members of the Women and Girls Project believe that individual community members, including women and men, and organizations, all have a role in creating safety for women and girls.

Below is a summary of what women and girls who participated in this project, and those they interviewed in the Community Conversations said mattered to them to improve their safety and security in their neighbourhoods. Comments below also include reflections by the project Advisory Committee. Increased neighbourhood safety has been happening largely due to strong partnerships and ongoing, focused efforts. As we continue our work in this area, we acknowledge that



some requests in this report will come with the need for additional resources which can take time to obtain.

We have organized the recommendations under 5 themes: 1) Community Participation, 2) Reporting, 3) Environment and Beautification and 4) Training and Education and 5) Community Development Initiatives. Under each theme we list recommendations for partners followed by recommendations for residents. We list Ottawa Community Housing, Ottawa Police Services and OC Transpo as these are the 3 main institutions that have been mentioned by participants and these are the agencies that might best elicit change in these respects. We want to be clear however, that we work with dozens of partners and that positive change for women and girls' sense of safety is a collective effort. We encourage other partners to assist in implementing what recommendations they can through their own policies and practices.

The list is long as we want to fully reflect the voices of participants. Additionally, some neighbourhoods, residents and partners are already successfully carrying out many of these recommendations. We also note a limitation with the scope of the project, timeline and sample size, noting that these recommendations may shift based on feedback and suggestions from the broader community and partners alike. We look forward to working together on the suggested recommendations and believe that increasing safety for all is possible.

## ***7.1 Community Participation***

### **Ottawa Community Housing, Ottawa Police Services, OC Transpo**

- Participate and drop-in into community programs
- Increase the number of Special Constables patrolling the Transit Stations after dark.
- Place heightened awareness and resources on the positive and preventative community policing.

### **Residents**

- Post "Who to Call" sheets in public areas.
- Host crime prevention "Coffee Houses" on crime and safety issues.
- Get to know each other; it's this that is proven to make people feel safer.
- Keep your unit's back lights on at night to deter crime and help brighten pathways at night.
- Post positive activities and programs and "good news" stories on bulletin boards in your community.
- Be visible and own your public space. Observe what is happening and be a good bystander.
- Promote the positive use of public space- eat, drink coffee, play, dance, socialize in parks and public areas.

- Be aware of your surroundings at all times and trust your instincts. If you think you are in an area you should not be, you probably are.
- Know where you're going and the safest way to get there, particularly when moving about the city during hours of darkness. Walk/run in well-traveled, well-lit areas avoiding short cuts through alleys and parking lots.
- Have a plan of action in mind. Decide where you would go and what you would do should some dangerous situation occur. Know where the nearest police/fire station is located, who to call in the event of an emergency.
- In public places don't wear headphones or listen to music. These can distract you from being aware of your surroundings and who may be approaching you.
- See what is happening around you- convicted burglars say that a "nosy neighbour" is their biggest deterrent, and in fact is the reason why many get caught by police.
- Walk with confidence on the street, keep your head up, observe your surroundings.
- If you are being followed: Show you are suspicious and turn to look at the person; it sends a clear message that you will not be taken by surprise.
- Change direction if someone is following you on foot, cross the street and vary your pace. If the person following you is in a car, turn and walk in the opposite direction. Go into the nearest store or public place. Call police. Get to a safe space. Make noise.

## **7.2 Reporting**

### **Ottawa Police Services, Ottawa Community Housing, OC Transpo**

- Promote widely a clear process of who to call and how residents can call to safely report maintenance and security issues
- Build on existing "Who to Call" and "My Call Makes a Difference" posters/campaigns
- Take steps to emphasize that the criminal investigations often require time and patience. Continued reporting on the community's part is often needed to achieve positive results and successful intervention and action.
- Share broadly that residents can remain anonymous when reporting to the Police and ask investigating Officers to not come to their door.
- Encourage residents to build a relationship with property managers and maintenance crew, so tenants can directly ask for, request, or even help with things that require attention
- Share statistics on the positive impacts of calling to report crime or suspicious criminal activity. Show where reporting is highest, and it's impacts
- Adopt a zero tolerance policy with regards to street harassment, loitering

## Residents

- Law enforcement officers can't be everywhere at once, but you and your neighbours can. You're the ones who really know what's going on in your neighbourhood. Please use your eyes and ears — then your telephone.
- Take a more active role in patrolling your own neighbourhood (i.e.: walking groups, Neighbourhood Watch, etc.)
- Report suspicious activity and crime to OCH Security, Police/ Crimestoppers
- Organize a Neighbourhood Watch
- Know that just because you don't see police in the neighbourhood, it doesn't mean there isn't a police presence

## **7.3 Environment & Beautification**

### Ottawa Police Services, Ottawa Community Housing, OC Transpo

- To debunk the myth that living in social housing is a transitional process and to develop initiatives which help create a sense of home –i.e. encourage residents to beautify, bring their own creativity to their landscape and care for spaces between units
- Take steps to improve lighting at Transit Stations and install more 2 way mirrors and security cameras
- Continue to improve lighting, at back of townhouses, in parking lots and pathways and continue to encourage tenants to keep their backlights on at night
- Install more welcoming way-finding signs in OCH neighbourhoods.
- Continue to improve garbage removal system

### Residents

- Have pride in your yard- keep yards and bushes, grass, trimmed. Clean up your garbage and call bylaw or housing when garbage bins are overflowing or causing problems
- Take an active role in applying for grants for murals and other beautification efforts, build partnerships with local businesses to secure in-kind resources
- Make positive use of public space as much as possible- taking ownership of you neighbourhood

## **7.4 Training and Awareness Raising**

### Ottawa Police Services, OC Transpo, Ottawa Community Housing

- Engage residents in public awareness campaigns with signage like “Heads Up, Earphones Out”, “Don't Be That Guy”
- Widely promote the OC Transpo “Safe Stops”
- Initiate a public awareness campaign about the Yellow Call Boxes available at OC Transpo transit stations.

- Offer women and girls' self-defence and street safety classes in the neighbourhoods
- Offer resident workshops/ talks on safety and crime prevention
- Promote examples of the positive outcomes of reporting
- Share with the community that just because residents do not see uniformed Officers, it does not mean there is not a Police or Security presence

### **Residents**

- Take a more active role in researching, applying for grants and funding that can better your community development efforts in your neighbourhood
- Support youth to be more involved in planning events and get their feedback about crime prevention
- “Be the Change You Want To See” - use your own initiative

### ***7.5 Community Development: Suggestions for Agencies, Community Centres, Community Houses, Tenants Associations/Circles***

- Promote gender awareness and street safety education
- Use social media to promote positive neighbourhood-level activities and programs
- Offer Cooking Classes for Males
- Invite OCTEVAW to do "You Can MANifest Change" program with Neighbourhood Male Youths
- Organize public rallies about topics and issues of concern
- Organize “Women’s Only” times such as picnics in the park, Coffee Houses, etc.
- Promote and organize programs/events that emphasize cross-generational talks between women and girls
- Incorporate Workshops I & II from this project into United Sisters program
- Offer Workshops I & II from this project to community again
- Use artistic means to "get to" the important issues
- Work to connect young women and marginalized women with the larger community
- Circulate a letter or petition i.e.: How we can have a safer community, and present it at City Hall and other public events
- Conduct more participatory safety audits and have residents take a role in following up on action items
- Make use of social media to promote positive activities happening

## 8. Reflections

There are a number of lessons learned through this project; some more recognizable than others. The workshops, Safety Audits, Advisory Committee Discussions, Community Conversations, and Body Mapping provided a safe space for women and girls to come together, across generations, languages, age, culture, race and to deepen the dialogue about safety in Ottawa's West end and collaborate on solution-seeking with project partners and their respective agencies and organizations. We are confident that this dialogue will remain ongoing and because of it, friendships, partnerships, trust and understanding among residents and partners will be strengthened.

Both participants and advisory members report having learned a lot from each other and became more informed about the neighbourhoods in this study. This networking and information-sharing have an important impact in terms of developing stronger community relations, among neighbours and social service providers. The engagement of the community has been very positive and the project itself has cracked open new ways of understanding people's use and feelings about public space and their security within these spaces.

There is a strong prevention piece to this Participatory Action Research. Women and girls feel better informed and empowered to act in partnership with decision-makers. The methods we experimented with can be used again in future projects. Now that participants know about these methods and how to use them, it is out hope, to make use of these in future community-driven action projects and needs assessments. Having said this, the numerous methods we employed in this short-term project and the data we collected was somewhat overwhelming for the scope of this small project. We drew the recommendations and strategies from a total of 57 Participants and 15 Advisory Committee members. While this can be considered to be a limitation, with a smaller sample we were able to go deeper in our exploration of the identified issues and analysis. This project has been a good launching point for us to reinforce the interest from the community and our partners on this topic.

Additionally, to do this again we would plan for more time to discuss workshop material and debrief about the safety audits, Community Conversations and Body Mapping. As the research and time requirements increased we realized that we needed a lot more time with participants than we initially asked them to provide.

Overall, the results and concrete answers unearthed in this work can be considered to be contradictory at times. While participants and respondents may say they "feel" safe, sometimes their actions or lack thereof, to make positive use of public space suggests otherwise. This requires further exploration to truly understand the gendered nature of safety for women and girls in these neighbourhoods.

## 9. Conclusion

This research process has reinforced the interconnectedness of several issues of concern that impact how women and girls move about in public space. Similarly, our findings point to the complexity of the issue and the need for multiparty solutions and strategies to provide safer public spaces where women and girls can more confidently move about. The research has highlighted inconsistency in the literature around women and girls' safety and sense of safety and how this can be translated to the neighbourhood level. This research has pointed to something novel: While women and girls may *say* they *feel* safe, it may be attributed to their living in fear of using public space and their inhibitions to freely own that space and move about within it, safely. We might reconsider this lesson when designing research and asking questions of women and girls about their safety. To feel safe because you don't leave your home or use transit, or take a walk on a pathway, is meaningless. We want women and girls to be able to feel safe and demonstrate practices and actions that show this sense of safety.

The potential for using participatory needs assessments, mapping tools and relevant, grounded research methodologies has been explored and proven useful, in an exploratory way, in this community-driven research. Future community research in these neighbourhoods may wish to deepen these methods and findings with an aim to increase knowledge and understanding of how women and girls can feel safe in public space and what service providers, neighbours, allies, and other partners can do to deepen their awareness of the gendered nature of safety and strengthen the strategies and policies that may assist in securing safer neighbourhoods.

It is a challenge to feel safe if you are isolated, marginalized, or feel at risk in your environment. One's sense of safety is contingent upon many factors including one's own agency, willingness to act, speak up, report crime, harassment or maintenance issues, how connected and civically engaged one is in their community, their own sense of inner strength and how they draw upon this to make sense of their sometimes scary environment. Most critically though, one's sense of safety is contingent upon their concerns and their voices being heard, their recommendations and suggestions being acted upon and implemented at the institutional level in a collective way. Furthermore, we succeeded in bringing our partners together with residents not only throughout the duration of the project, but also to present these findings and recommendations to a panel of decision-makers at Ottawa City Hall in November 2013. These efforts will inevitably increase awareness of what is currently being done and outline possibilities of what could be done better to ensure women and girls' safety in these neighbourhoods.

While there is a significant amount of work and effort being carried out in Ottawa around Violence Against Women (VAW), there are few studies and research initiatives that focus on women and girls' safety in public space. The Ottawa chapter of Hollaback! has made great strides in bringing this issue to the forefront in their work on street harassment, bystander intervention and the safety of women

using public transit (2013). Through collaborating more with local VAW efforts we hope to deepen our partnerships, shine the light on how women and girls in these four neighbourhoods feel unsafe and highlight some of the strategies they utilize to feel safer, as well as share lessons and best practices within Ottawa's VAW networks as to how we have effectively worked with a broad cross-section of partners and service providers towards effecting change at the neighbourhood level.

Participants in this research use a wide variety of creative and collective strategies to make them feel safer. These strategies may or may not be specific to the neighbourhoods we focused on, which is why it would be interesting to replicate this process in other Ottawa neighbourhoods. Our findings, and subsequent recommendations, stress that safety concerns and possible solutions be considered in a holistic way. Residents, partner agencies and institutions can make their own contribution to women and girls' safety by adopting recommendations and continuing to listen to concerns and building stronger relationships and mechanisms for reporting. The more women and girls are intentionally asked about their experiences of violence and what limits their positive use of public space the more imperative it becomes to ensure we collectively create a space for these voices to be amplified and that we act together to create positive change.

A major learning in this project has been to unearth what is between the lines. To get between these lines, to the interstices of the issue, means to come to the understanding that while women and girls may *say* they feel safe, their actions speak louder than words.

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## Appendix A: Conversation Guide

Women & Girl's Eyes on the Neighbourhood  
A Participatory Safety Project by PQCHC &  
City for All Women Initiative (CAWI)  
Funded by Crime Prevention Ottawa

Please use this survey-type template as a “guide” to have a conversation with women and girls in your neighbourhood and share some of your learning's from our workshop. You may complete this form as you speak with a neighbor, or they may wish to fill it in themselves. You can ask people for a few minutes to help our project by answering these questions about their sense of safety in their neighbourhood. Any information that shared will be kept anonymous.

1. In general, do you feel safe in your neighbourhood?  
 Yes  No  Somewhat  
Please explain:
2. Do you feel that women & girls are more vulnerable to violence or feel less safe in your neighbourhood than men and boys?  
 No  Somewhat  
 Yes. If yes, please explain why:
3. Do you sometimes hesitate to use public space (i.e.: parks, paths) because you don't feel safe in the neighbourhood?  
 No  Somewhat  
 Yes. If yes, can you tell us more?
4. Do you feel safe taking public transit in or near the neighbourhood?  
 No  Somewhat  
 Yes. If yes, can you tell us more?
5. Do you know of women or girls who have experienced harassment when taking public transit in or near the neighbourhood?  
 No  Yes. If yes, can you tell us more?
6. What factors contribute to feeling unsafe? When and where?
7. What do you already do to improve your safety?
8. How do you see your neighbourhood needing to change to feel safer as a girl or women?
9. Are there policies/ practices that service providers (Community Health Centres, Police, OC Transpo, OCH, etc.) or neighbourhood organizations could use to improve upon you feeling safer? If so, what suggestions can you provide?

*Additional Feedback*

Please list any areas in which you feel women’s and girl’s sense of safety could be improved in your neighbourhood or any additional comments you’d like to share:

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*Follow Up*

Would you like to be contacted regarding the research results, final report and public forum at the end of this project?  Yes  No.

Providing the following information is completely optional. If you would like to be informed about the results of this research project, please give your name and contact information, and we will keep you up to date. Thank you for taking the time to answer our questions. We rely on feedback from residents like you to build a safer Ottawa. Your input is greatly appreciated.

