



**MUSLIM FAMILY  
SERVICES OF  
OTTAWA**



#CPOevents

# Perspectives of weapons-carrying among Ottawa youth

A discussion of the role of racism, systemic oppression,  
and migration trauma in the age of social media

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Muslim Family Services of Ottawa Research and Education Department  
Funded by Crime Prevention Ottawa

In Partnership with Regroupement ethnoculturel des parents francophones de l'Ontario (REPFO)



# Research Project: Perspectives on Weapons-Carrying Among Ottawa Youth Ages 14-21

## Research Team:

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## Partners:

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# Introduction

Methods:

Key Informant Interviews (frontline workers)

Focus Groups (youth)

Qualitative Analysis

What this research is not (Limitations)

# A Few General Findings

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# Weapons of Choice

les couteaux, on peut les  
acheter en ligne.

- Francophone Female  
Focus Group, 07:23

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Self-Protection  
VS.  
Self-Expression

Yeah, we see people, on  
people's [Snapchat] stories...and  
they're pointing a gun.

- Prince of Wales Focus Group,  
10:20

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# Masculinity and Self-Expression

Status, Identity, Belonging

Key Informant Perspectives and  
Youth Perspectives

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# Snapchat

and other social media

Ephemeral

Instant

Effective

messages erase and it's a lot harder to [track]

- Prince of Wales Focus Group, 11:06.

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# Gender differences

Self-defense or a weapons culture

Young women carry pepper spray, improvised weapons (Francophone female group)

Young men are the ones mainly involved with non-defensive weapon use (Francophone male group)

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# Findings on Racism, Migration Trauma, and Social Media

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# Migration Trauma

Carrying heavy burdens.

ils voient des gens mourir. On les prend comme esclaves, on les brûle. Vraiment, si tu arrives à sortir de tout ça, si tu n'as pas vraiment été suivi par un psychologue ou quelque chose pour t'aider, c'est sûr que tu retournes dedans automatiquement

- Francophone Female Focus  
Group, 30:24

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# Migration Trauma continued...

Carrying heavy burdens.

The first few months after moving here, I still had that notion when I just came here. I still had that the notion of maybe keeping a screwdriver in my back

and all of that. Then it took awhile. After awhile it takes a while. Then you start to notice like, huh. Actually, there's nothing for me to be afraid of about. Then you're like, I don't actually need this.

- Centretown Newcomer Focus Group,  
14:59

# Anti-Black Racism

the Black community...they get really stereotyped a lot. And sometimes this could push to aggravated behaviors as well because sometimes youths will not know how to deal with it.

- Centretown Newcomer Focus Group, 21:56

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# Racism in School System

Especially Anti-Black Racism

Quand on parle de la discrimination, très souvent les jeunes Noirs ils reçoivent de la discrimination à l'école. Ça peut être de la part des enseignants, soit la direction ... Donc, c'est un peu comme c'est tout une équipe. Ça peut décourager les jeunes. -  
Social/Community Worker 3, 10:04

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# Select Recommendations

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# Youth- Driven and Youth-Centred Interventions

**Augmenting peer to peer mentorship:** To expand programs that provide training and support for youth to mentor one another

**Youth entrepreneurship opportunities:** To offer increased entrepreneurship opportunities for youth to counteract pull of the illegal drug trade

**Engage youth and youth mentors in conversations about values**

**Youth guided research (Later slide)**

# Innovative Community Engagement

**Engaging parents and families:** To ensure that all existing youth services also seek to engage parents and families

**Engaging places of worship and ethnocultural associations:** To increase capacity and offer training to cultural and faith community leaders and to build closer partnerships

# Cultural Responsiveness and Anti-Racism

**Increased culturally-responsive and trauma-informed supports for youth:** To significantly increase counselling and mentorship services available in multiple languages, that take into account migration trauma and racial trauma as factors;

**New initiatives to address anti-Black racism at all levels:** To urgently address anti-Black racism, including instituting mandatory anti-racism trainings and new increases in hiring Black professionals;

Further Study

Further study on **how knives are acquired** and used by youth

Ottawa-specific studies on the **cumulative effects of racial trauma** on the lives of Black and other racialized youth in Ottawa

Further Study on **the role of Snapchat** and other social media in weapons-carrying behaviour

**Youth-guided research:** To encourage youth to propose areas of research and to engage youth ages 16 to 21 to guide and lead research projects

Questions?