



# Winnipeg Safe City

Working for a city free from violence  
against women and girls

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A partner in  
**UN Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Initiative**

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## About the Winnipeg Safe City program

On December 10, 2013, Winnipeg was the first city in North America to join the UN Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Initiative. The Winnipeg Safe City work involves collaborative research and advisory, program and policy-related efforts to end violence against women in public spaces.

Led by Manitoba Status of Women and the City of Winnipeg, the program includes partnerships with:

- Winnipeg Police Service
- Klinik Community Health Centre
- Ka Ni Kanichihk
- the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program at the Health Sciences Centre
- The University of Winnipeg (including the University Students' Association and the Women-Trans Spectrum Centre)
- Province of Manitoba (led by Manitoba Status of Women and including Manitoba Justice and Manitoba Children and Youth Opportunities)
- UN Women
- individual citizens of Winnipeg

Currently, there are two intervention sites, one in downtown Winnipeg and the other at The University of Winnipeg. The University of Winnipeg is the first campus in the world to join this global initiative.

## What is the goal of the Global Safe City Initiative?

The goal of Safe City interventions is to build safe and inclusive public spaces where women and girls are free from sexual harassment, other forms of violence and fear of violence.

"Freedom from violence and sexual assault is a fundamental human right," said Manitoba Premier Greg Selinger. "Manitoba is proud to work with the City of Winnipeg and community partners in this growing global movement seeking to end sexual violence against women."



## Why is this important?

The threat and reality of sexual violence and other forms of violence in public spaces prevent women and girls from participating as full and equal citizens. When women and girls are unable to access public spaces and public life, they face significant barriers to social, economic and political opportunities.

“All Manitobans can take an active role against gender-based violence and be more than bystanders when it comes to stopping sexual violence and harassment,” said Kerri Irvin-Ross, Manitoba’s minister responsible for the status of women.

## What makes a city safe or unsafe for women and girls?

Women’s safety and perceived safety is affected by many factors, including crime and violence, but also including social, cultural, economic and familial circumstances.

“Every person has the right to feel safe and live in a world free from sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence,” said Winnipeg Mayor Brian Bowman. “As the only Canadian city to have joined this global initiative, Winnipeg is a leader and we remain committed to working on ways to reduce and respond to sexual violence against women and girls.”

“Klinic is committed to supporting people who experience gender-based violence and working with our partners to end gender-based violence in our communities,” added Nicole Chammartin, executive director of the Klinic Community Health Centre.

## What are some expected results?

- Reduce sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces.
- Help women feel safer and improve their freedom of movement.
- Improve reporting rates for incidents of sexual violence that occur in public spaces.
- Improve public understanding of the personal and social consequences of sexual violence against women.

“We are working alongside community partners and we are collaborating across various levels of government on preventing and responding to sexual violence in public spaces,” said Winnipeg Councillor Cindy Gilroy, who is also Winnipeg Safe City steering committee co-chair. “We are committed to improving the lives of everyone who calls Winnipeg home, and through our work with Safe Cities we are committed to addressing sexual violence against women,” she said.

“To improve women’s access to public spaces, including higher education, it is imperative that work to eradicate sexual violence continues,” said Kelby Loepky, The University of Winnipeg director for Status of Women. “This includes fostering a culture of consent, implementing sexual violence policies that respond to students’ experiences and offering community supports for all forms of sexual violence,” she continued.

## What is involved in the Winnipeg Safe City Strategy?

Sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women and girls – around the world and in Manitoba – is complex, with multiple risk factors. It will require an evidence based and comprehensive approach to prevent and respond to this problem. The safety strategy in Winnipeg has involved a careful assessment of local challenges that influence women’s and girls’ safety and access to public spaces. This knowledge informs plans for interventions that will promote safe and inclusive spaces for women and girls.

In assessing safety and developing plans for interventions, the Winnipeg Safe City partners have focused on the following four areas of work:

1. data collection and analysis, scholarly and nationwide, including focus groups with local women from diverse backgrounds, highlighting that the lived experiences of women and girls represent key sources of information
2. building partnerships with local people who bring knowledge and expertise in public safety, violence against women, urban planning, crime prevention and gender equality
3. developing public awareness and community engagement materials based on national, local and international evidence that will help improve understanding of sexual violence
4. building organizational and institutional capacity to better understand, prevent and respond to gender-based issues, including violence, safety and barriers to women’s and girls’ access to public spaces (investments in the safety and economic viability of public spaces, changing attitudes and behaviours to promote women’s rights to enjoy public spaces free from violence)



“Collectively we have a responsibility to foster a culture of respect and safety,” said Jan Byrd, The University of Winnipeg executive director of Wellness and Student Life. “By working closely with and listening to our students,” she said, “we are proactively encouraging difficult conversations and teaching new skill sets to confront sexual violence. We believe it is possible to create change.”

## What have we learned?

- In Canada, the single greatest risk factor for experiencing sexual violence is to be a woman or girl or be perceived as feminine.
- Women living with disabilities are three times more likely to experience sexual violence than women not living with disabilities.
- Indigenous women are 2.5 times more likely than non-Indigenous women to experience sexual assault.

“We know that many Indigenous women who have been victims have not accessed existing services,” said Leslie Spillett, executive director of Ka Ni Kanichihk. “By offering a service within an Indigenous environment, it is our hope that they will come forward. Ka Ni Kanichihk will work closely with our partners to build on best practices,” she said.

- Immigrant and newcomer women who arrive in Canada traumatized by war or oppressive governments are significantly less likely to formally report physical or sexual violence.
- Estimates suggest one in four women attending university or college have experienced sexual assault or attempted sexual assault on campus.
- The majority of women who have experienced sexual assault are under the age of 35.
- Women from diverse backgrounds and communities in Winnipeg shared that they actively avoid certain areas of the city because of their experiences with sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence.
- One locally-produced survey found that more than two-thirds of women experienced sexual harassment in public spaces at least once a month, while more than one-third experienced it at least once a week.

“As a woman on campus, I know that my chance of experiencing a sexual assault during my university career is one in four,” said Emily Epp, vice president of Internal Affairs for The University of Winnipeg Students’ Association. “This initiative is so important in combating gendered violence,” she said, “we all – in the university and broader community – have a responsibility to engage in this fight to eliminate such violence.”

## Early achievements and supported interventions

- Between September 2014 and March 2015, Winnipeg Safe City stakeholders held focus groups with women from diverse backgrounds who shared their experiences and perceptions of safety, public spaces and sexual violence against women.
- In December 2014, Manitoba partnered with Ka Ni Kanichihk to develop the first Indigenous-led program in Canada for women who have experienced sexual violence. An advisory committee composed of community advocates, local women, men, youth groups, service providers and government officials provided input into the program design.
- In February 2015, The University of Winnipeg Students’ Association hosted a Forum on Sexual Violence. Students shared their experiences and perceptions of safety and gender-based violence, and embraced the importance of developing a culture of consent on campus.
- In April 2015, the Winnipeg Safe City Transportation sub-committee met with City of Winnipeg transit officials to explore the development of training materials on gender-based violence and public safety.
- In June 2015, The University of Winnipeg developed sexual misconduct prevention protocols and guidelines, implemented a 24/7 Sexual Misconduct Response Team phone line and offered bystander intervention and education about consent through their Sex: Ask First, Ask Always campaign.
- In June 2015, representatives from the Winnipeg Safe City Steering Committee attended the Global Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Leaders’ Forum held in New Delhi, India, contributing insights to the *Proceedings Report UN Women’s Safe Cities Global Leaders’ Forum 2015*. See more at: [www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org).
- In November 2015, Manitoba released the *Who Will You Help* public service announcements and webpage about sexual assault and other forms of sexual violence including harassment.



- In November 2015, Manitoba proposed legislation that will require post-secondary institutions to develop policies for preventing and responding to sexual violence on campus.
- In November and December 2015, Winnipeg Safe City partners hosted and participated in numerous community events during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign.
- In December 2015, Manitoba Status of Women joined young women in hosting a panel discussion at the Legislative building about sexual violence on post-secondary campuses.
- In December 2015, the *Winnipeg Police Service 2016 Business Plan: A Culture of Safety for All* included the Winnipeg Safe City program under the second of four strategic goals. Actions to support the program include data collection and the development of new strategies for reducing and preventing sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces.
- In January 2016, Ka Ni Kanichihk will host an Ending Violence Core Training Session in Winnipeg for individuals and organizations to learn about gender-based violence, colonialism, and the importance of culturally-appropriate services for victims of sexual violence. Participants in this five-day conference will include staff from the City of Winnipeg, including members from the Winnipeg Police Service.
- In January 2016, Manitoba released a comprehensive website on sexual assault, fulfilling key commitments under Manitoba's Multi-Year Domestic Violence Strategy and the four-point plan on sexual assault. This website will be a one-stop resource for social, legal and health-related questions Manitobans may have about sexual violence.

"The University of Winnipeg is a central and accessible space within our city, and we are proud of the UWinnipeg community's role in making our campus a safe, respectful environment for everyone to learn, work, and visit," said Dr. Annette Trimbee, President and Vice-Chancellor of The University of Winnipeg.

"Whether it's in our homes or our community, we all have the right to feel safe and respected," said Deputy Chief, Danny Smyth of the Winnipeg Police Service. "Don't remain silent. We will support victims of sexual violence."

Partners

## UN Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Initiative

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