




Perceptions of Safety and Issues of Violence Experienced by Aboriginal Women & Girls

**National Webinars
September 10, 2015**

The national voice of Aboriginal women in Canada since 1974.



Overview of Presentation

- Introduction/ Project PEACE
(Prevention, Education, Action, Change, Evaluation)
- National Surveys: Aboriginal Women & Girls
- National Focus Groups: Aboriginal Women & Girls
- Conclusion



Project PEACE (Prevention, Education, Action, Change, Evaluation)

- Project PEACE aim is solely to promote safety, violence prevention and solution based approaches for Aboriginal women and girls through engagement processes.
- This unique three (3) year project has been conceived with the goal of creating safety nets for Aboriginal women and girls to enable their success in life across all platforms.
- The Project PEACE toolkits aims to support Aboriginal women and girls in achieving their personal and professional life goals and ambitions by empowering service providers, and Aboriginal men and women.

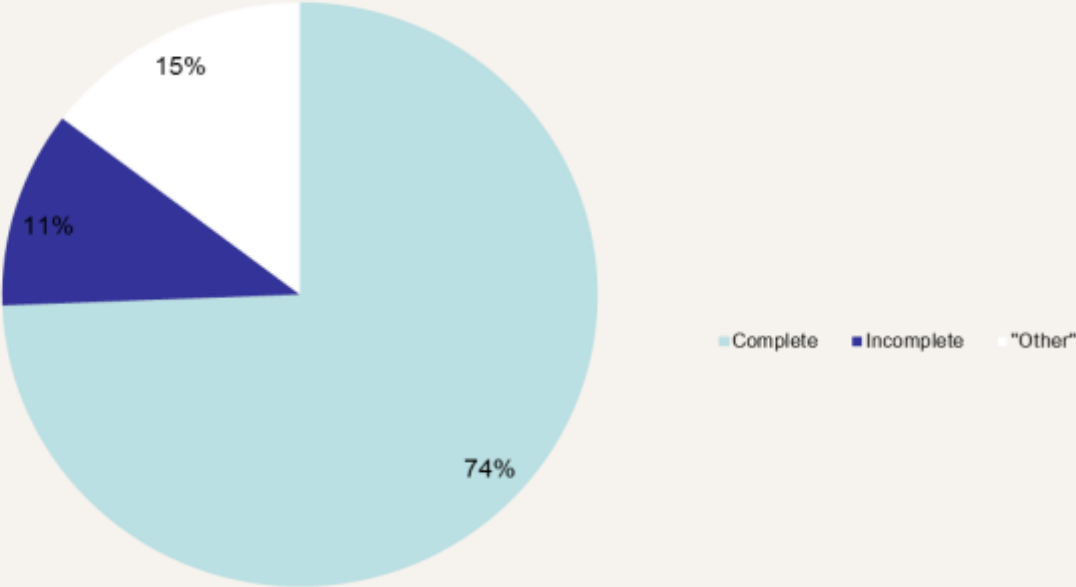


Experiences of Violence

- Aboriginal women are 8 times more likely to be killed than non-Aboriginal women.
- Rates of spousal assault are more than 3 times higher than non-Aboriginal women. (Spouse is not necessarily Aboriginal).
- More severe and potentially life-threatening forms of spousal violence (54% versus 37% of non-Aboriginal women).

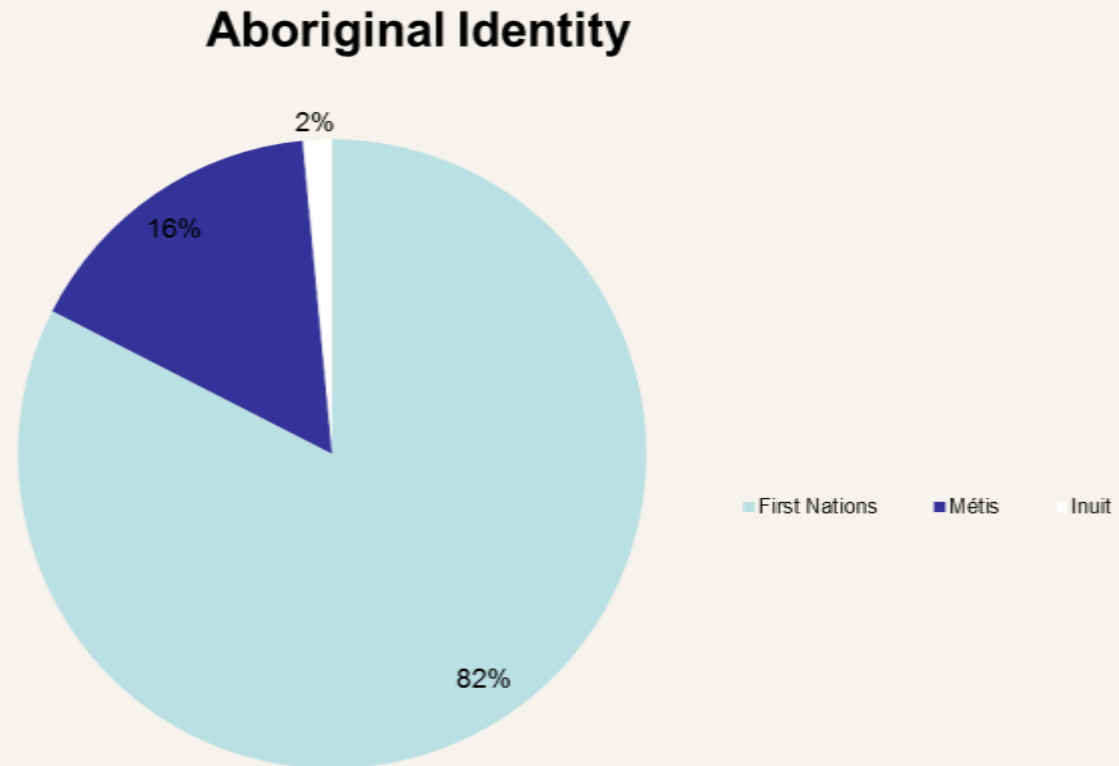
Total: five hundred and thirty-nine (n=539) respondents, comprised of five hundred and twenty-three (523) English respondents, and sixteen (16) French respondents. Seventy-nine (79) people identified as “Other” on Q2 and were disqualified from completing the survey. Of the remaining four hundred and sixty (460) respondents, four-hundred and one (401) effectively completed the survey, while fifty-nine (59) did not. **Therefore, this summary takes into account the four-hundred and one (n=401) completed qualifying survey results, which constitute the great majority of attempted surveys.**

Attempted Surveys

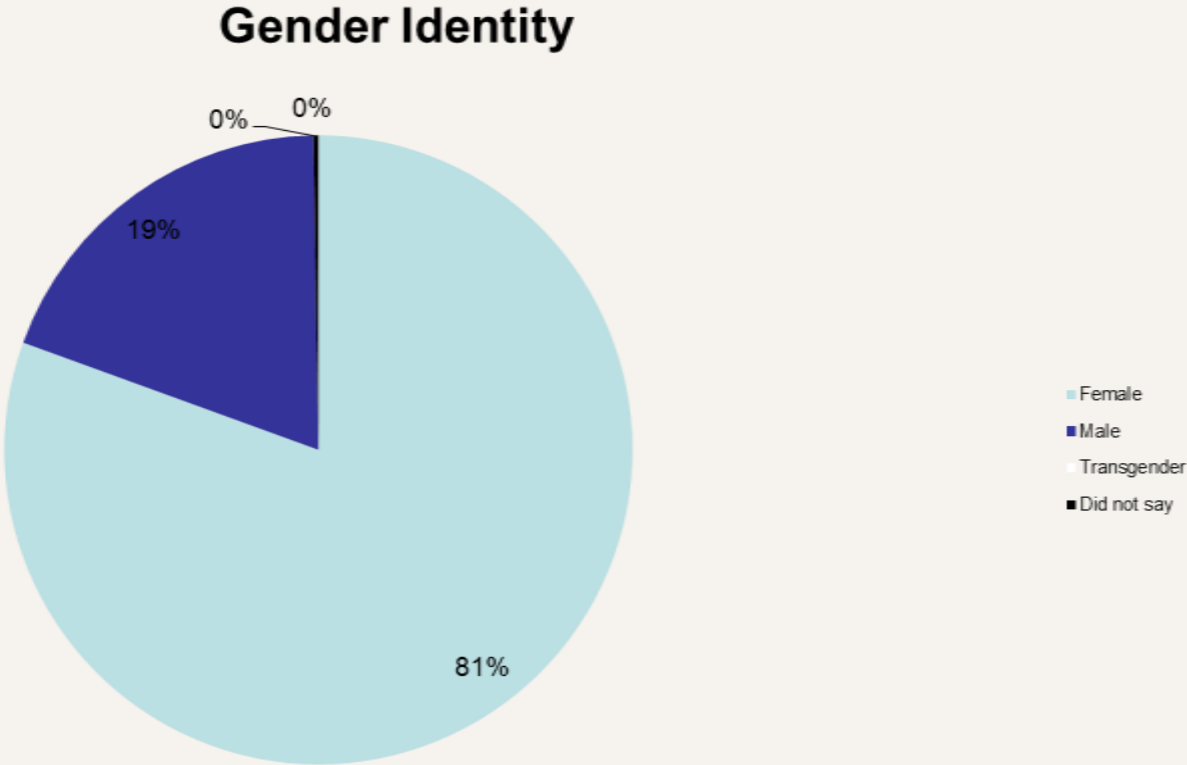


National Surveys: Aboriginal Women & Girls (cont'd)

Four (4) options for respondents to indicate their Aboriginal identity: First Nations (Status/non-Status), Métis, Inuit and Other. The “Other” category was intended to mean non-Aboriginal

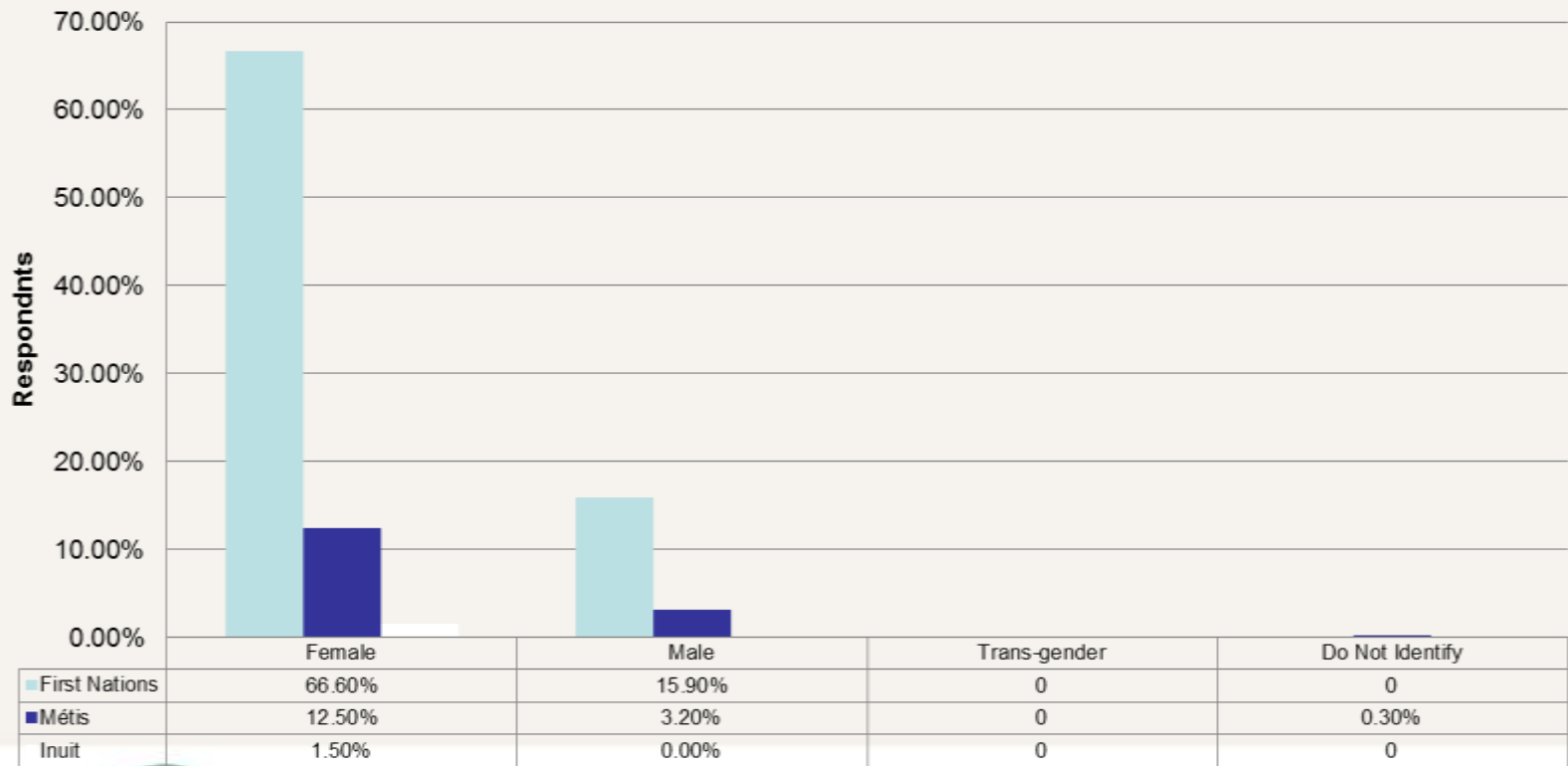


National Surveys: Aboriginal Women & Girls (cont'd)

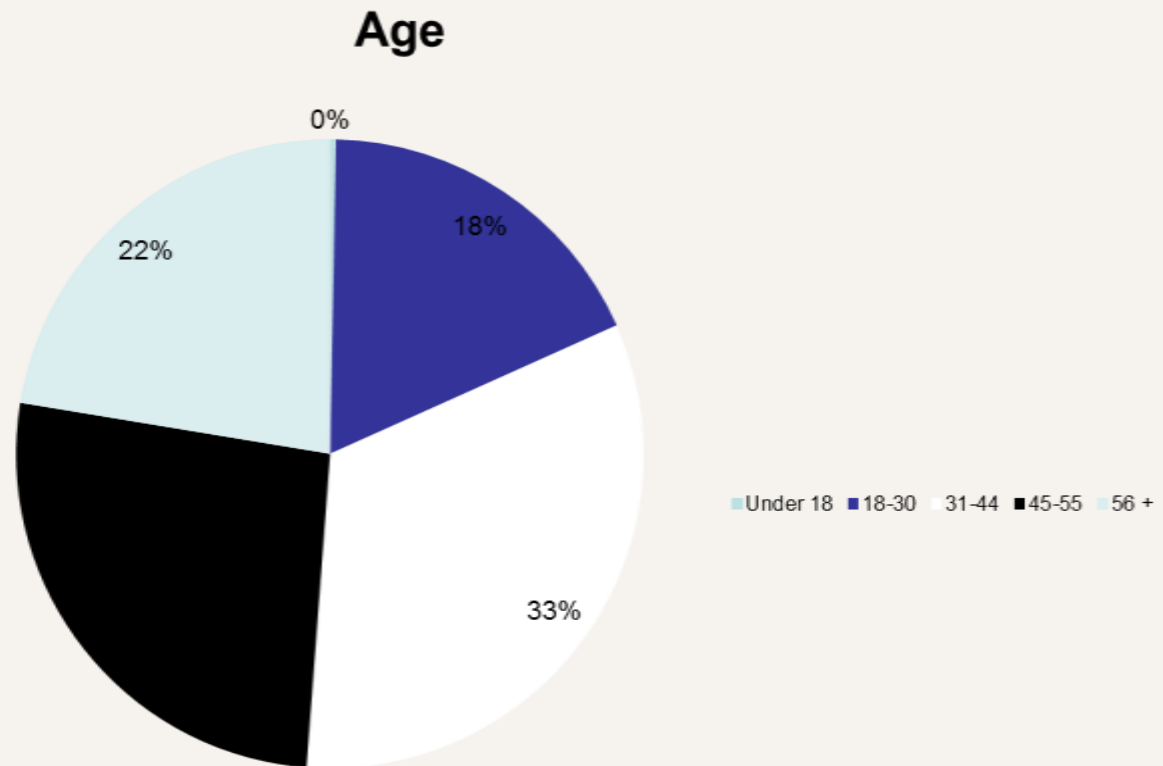


National Surveys: Aboriginal Women & Girls (cont'd)

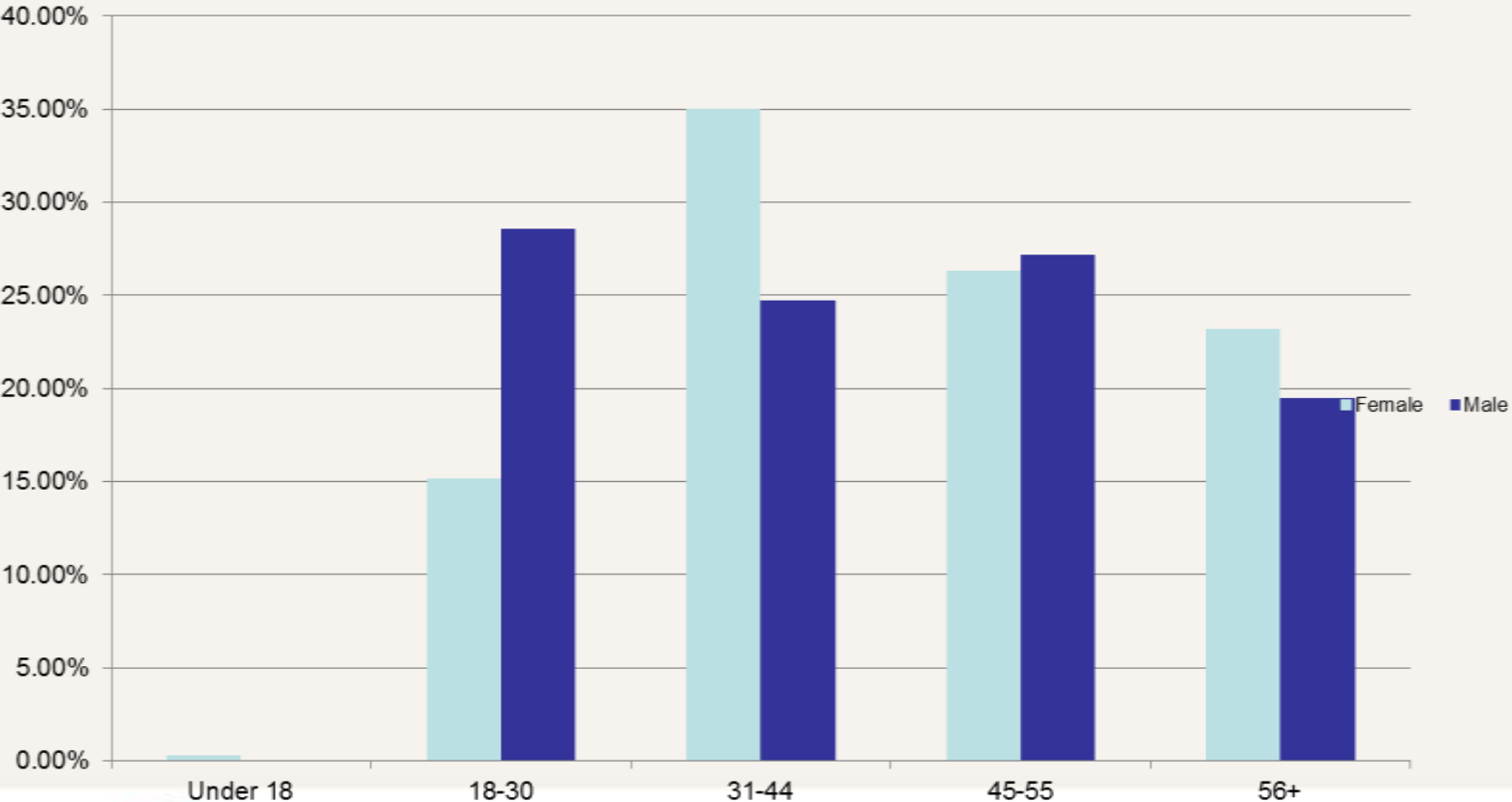
Aboriginal and Gender Identity



National Surveys: Aboriginal Women & Girls (cont'd)

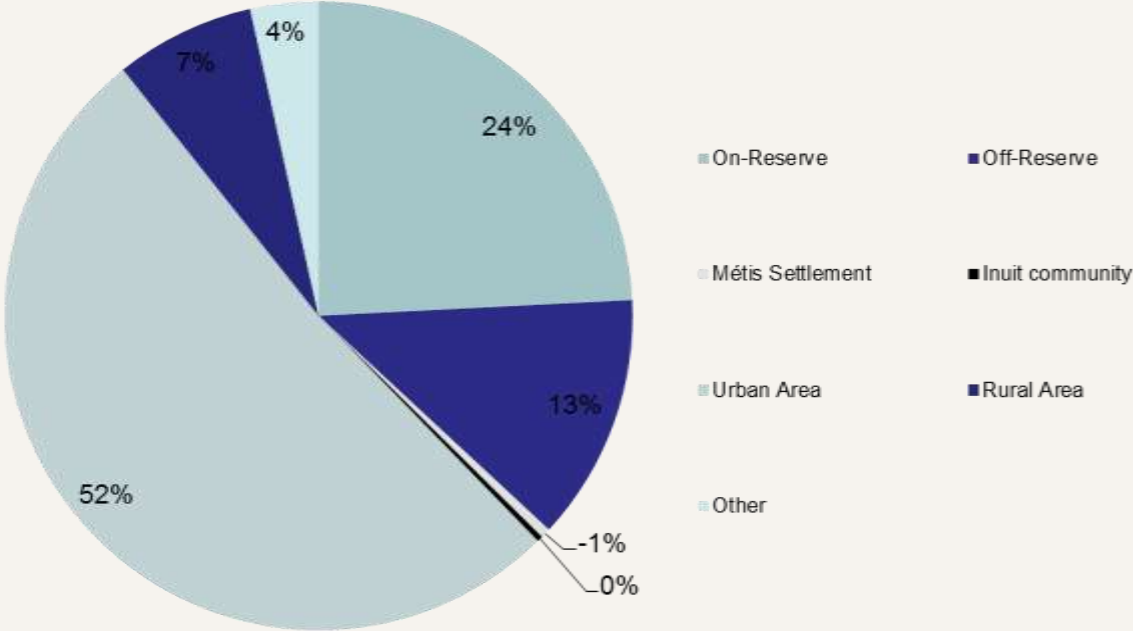


National Surveys: Aboriginal Women & Girls (cont'd)

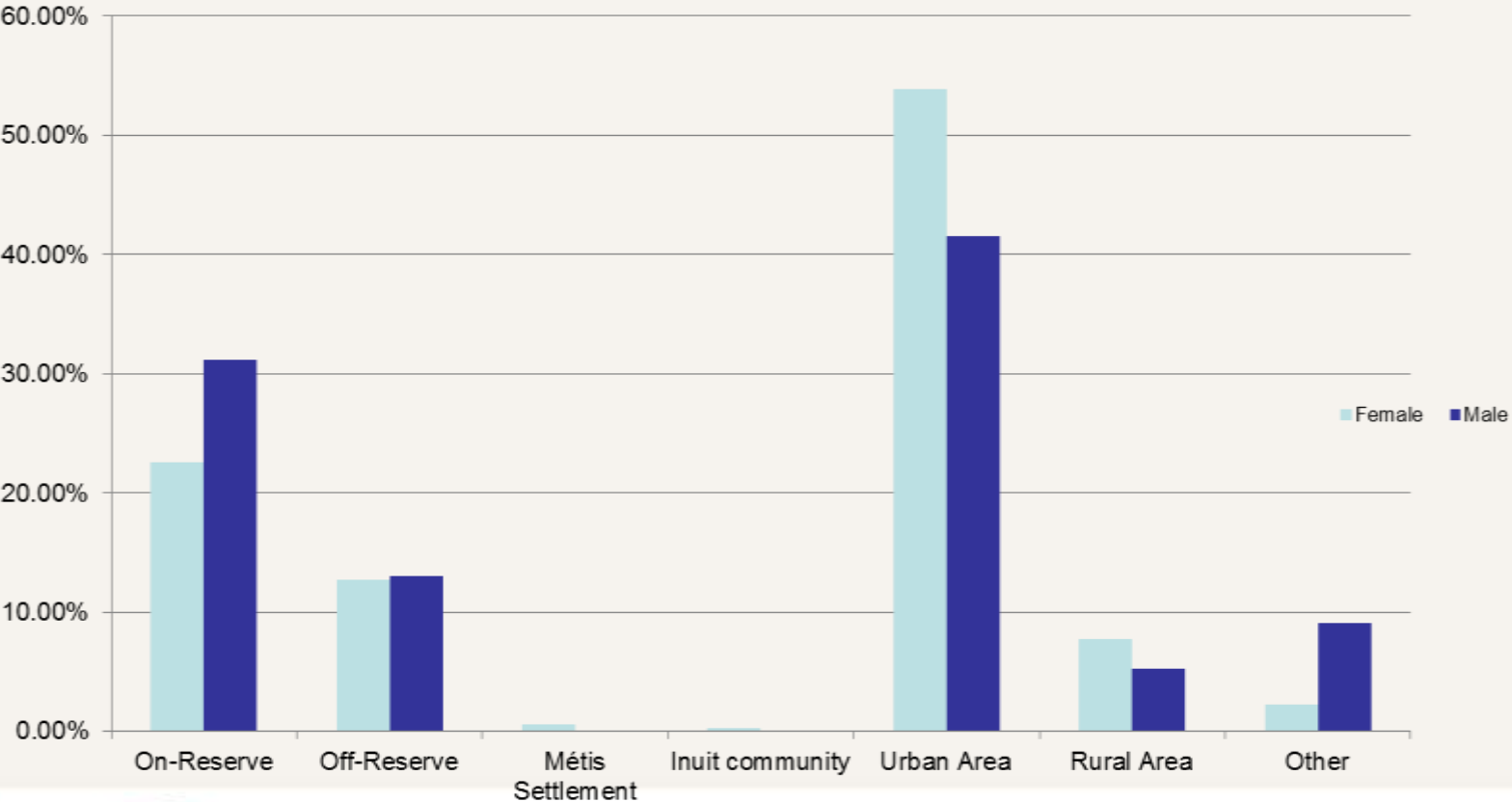


National Surveys: Aboriginal Women & Girls (cont'd)

Residency



National Surveys: Aboriginal Women & Girls (cont'd)

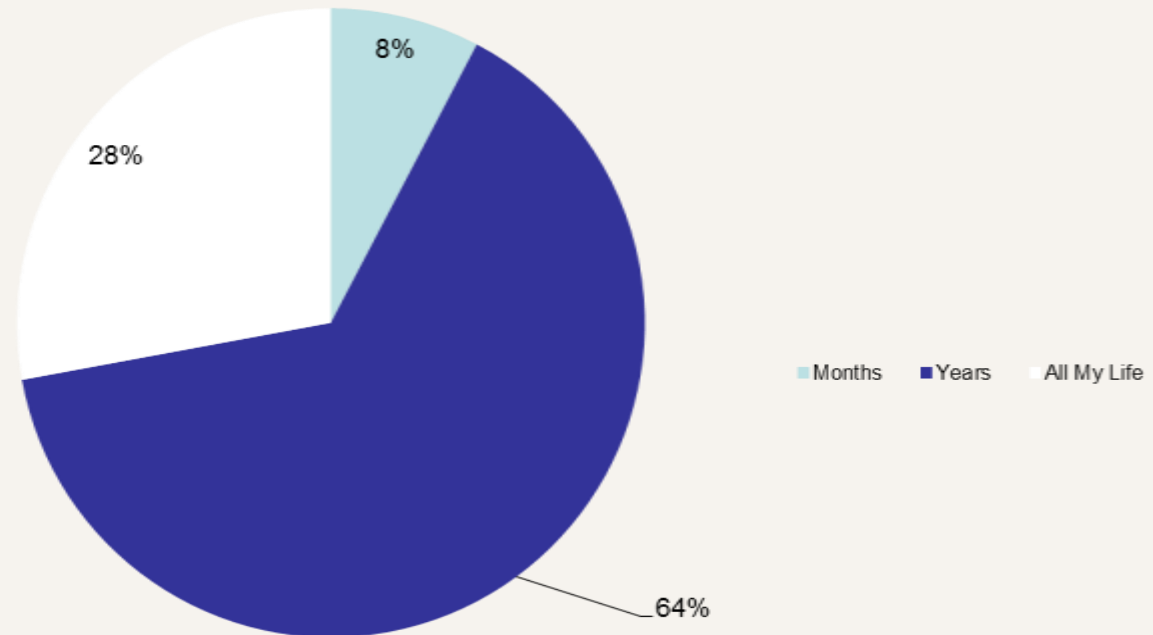


Women's Analysis



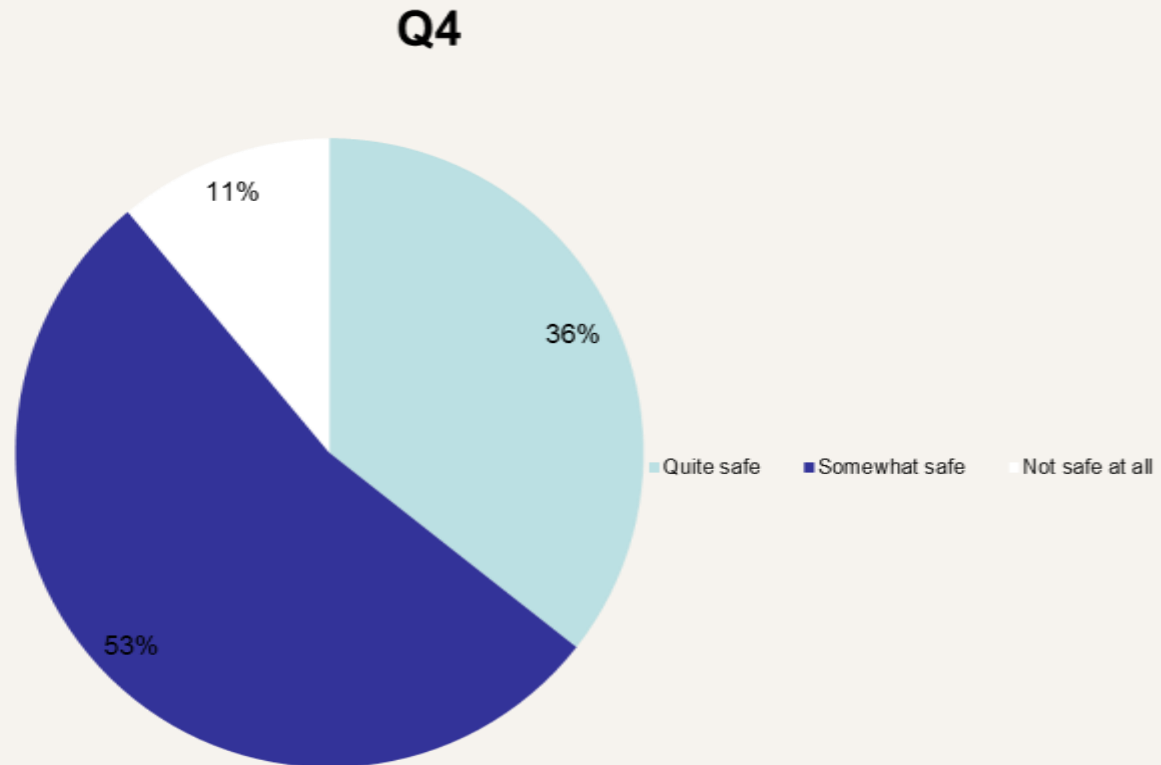
The women and transgender survey asked age and residency first. Q3 asked the respondents how long they lived in their community or neighbourhood, directly relating to Q2 on residency. The objective of this question was to determine longevity of the awareness of the person's neighbourhood, and confidence in their experience regarding the neighbourhood's safety. Respondents were given three (3) choices: years, months, or all my life.

Q3



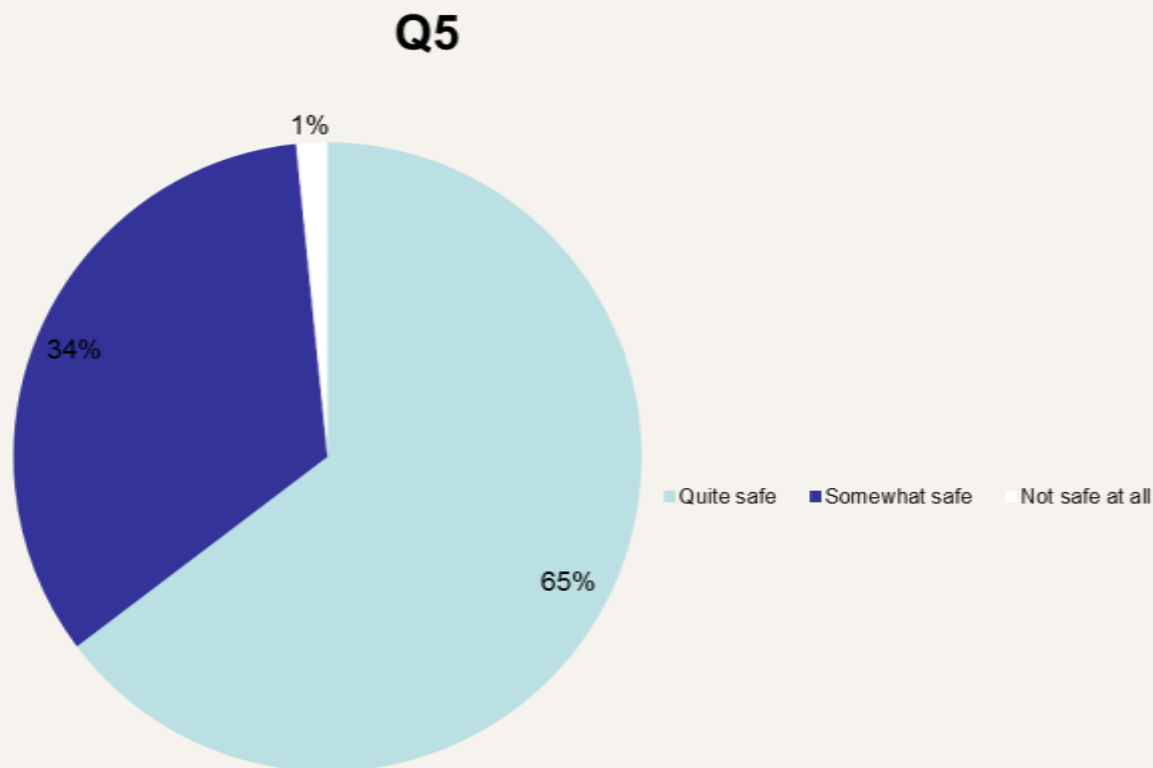
National Surveys: Aboriginal Women & Girls (cont'd)

The **majority** of the respondents felt their community/neighbourhood **somewhat safe** (172), while one hundred and fifteen (115) respondents felt their area was quite safe. A small percentage of respondents felt their community/neighbourhood was not safe at all (36). Therefore, it can be ascertained that the majority of respondents experience or perceive relatively safe neighbourhoods and communities.

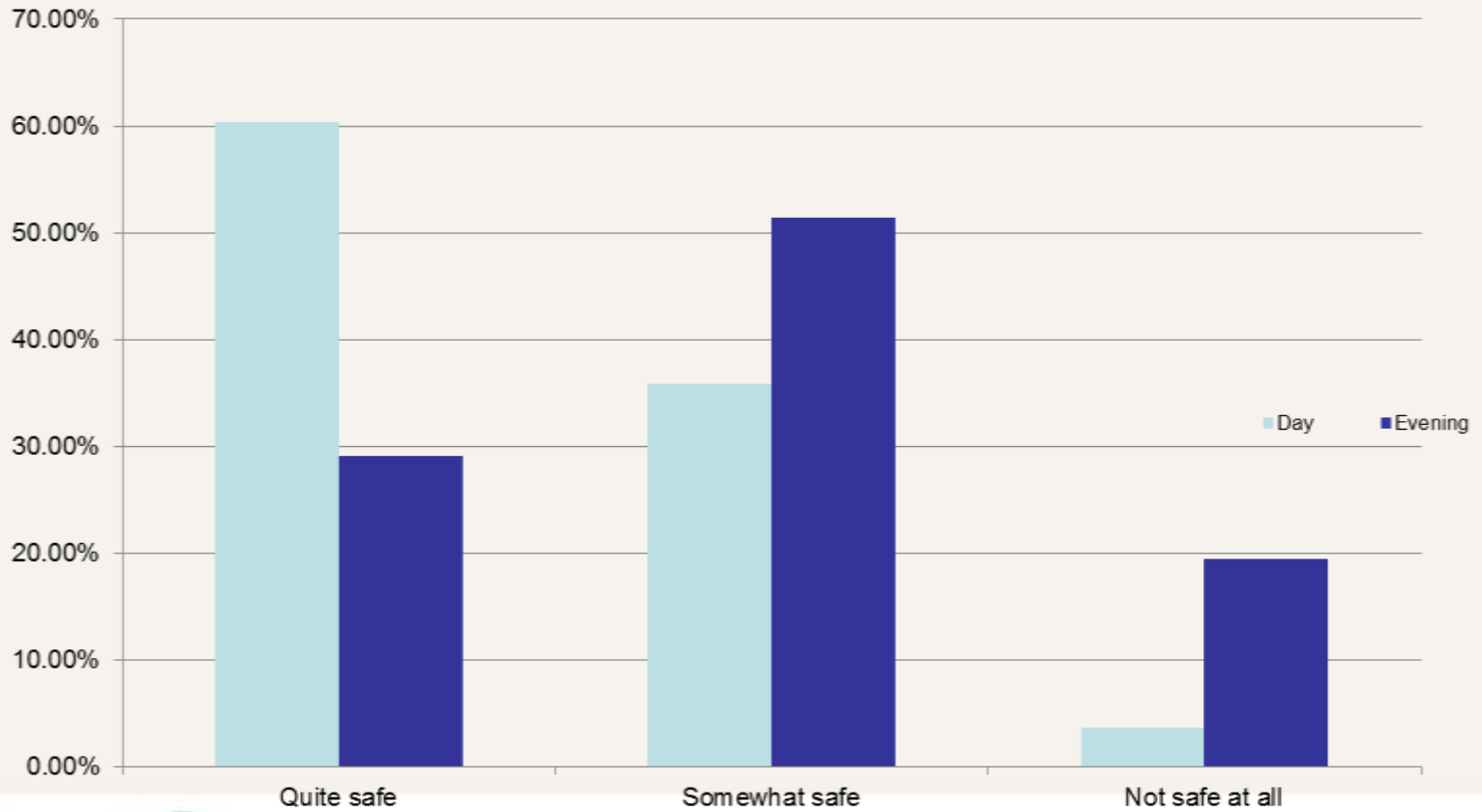


National Surveys: Aboriginal Women & Girls (cont'd)

With respect to safety within the home, the majority of respondents felt quite safe (209), with 'somewhat safe' presenting as the second highest response (109). A small amount of people did not feel safe in their homes at all (5). When compared to the data from Q3, it appears as though **respondents feel almost twice as safe (quite safe) in their own homes as they feel about their communities and neighbourhoods.**



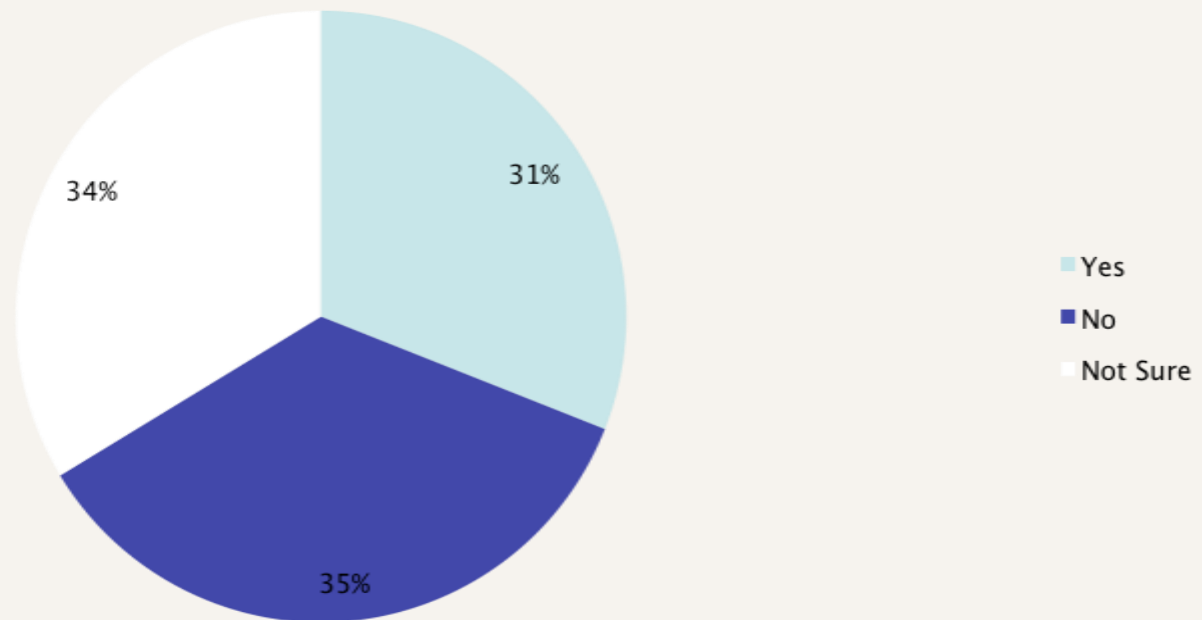
National Surveys: Aboriginal Women & Girls (cont'd)



National Surveys: Aboriginal Women & Girls (cont'd)

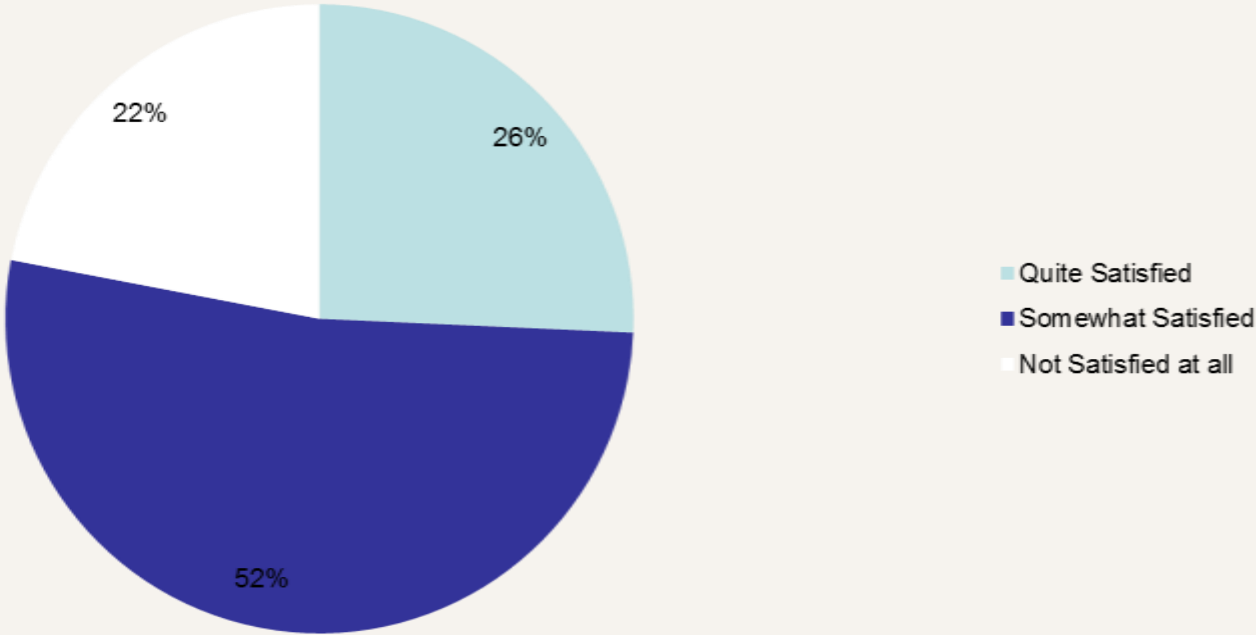
When questioned about the level of satisfaction with **police response time** within the community, responses were relatively equal with one hundred (100) 'yes', one hundred and fourteen (114) 'no' and one hundred and nine (109) 'not sure'. The survey did not make the distinction as to whether the response was based on an assumption, or firsthand experience with making a police call and noting the subsequent response time.

Q8



In terms of the **overall level of satisfaction** with policing in the community/neighbourhood, over half of the respondents were somewhat satisfied (169), while an almost equal amount felt quite satisfied and not satisfied at all.

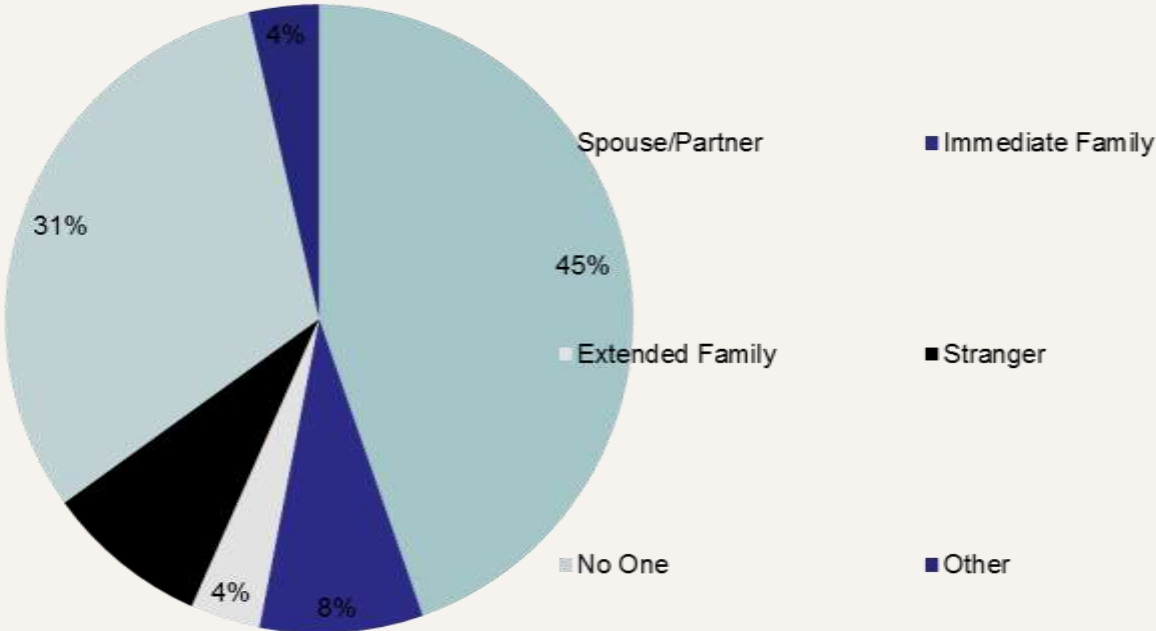
Q9



The respondents had the option to check all that apply with regards to the question. Many respondents only ticked off one choice (166), while the remaining ticked off two (64), three (51), four (34) and five (5) choices.

51.4 % of respondents checked off one answer – either they were assaulted by only one party or they had never been assaulted, while the remaining 48.6% were assaulted by multiple parties. For those who were assaulted by one party or no parties, the breakdown of perpetrators is as follows:

Single Response



When “no one” is removed from the analysis, the results become:

	Count	Percent
Spouse/Partner (current, former, boyfriend, girlfriend)	74	64.9%
Immediate family	14	12.3%
Extended family	6	5.3%
Stranger	14	12.3%
Other	6	5.3%
TOTAL	114	100%



Of 323 women respondents, 52 (16.1%) answered “No one”, indicating that they had never been physically assaulted while the remaining 83.9% had been physically assaulted by 1 or more people.

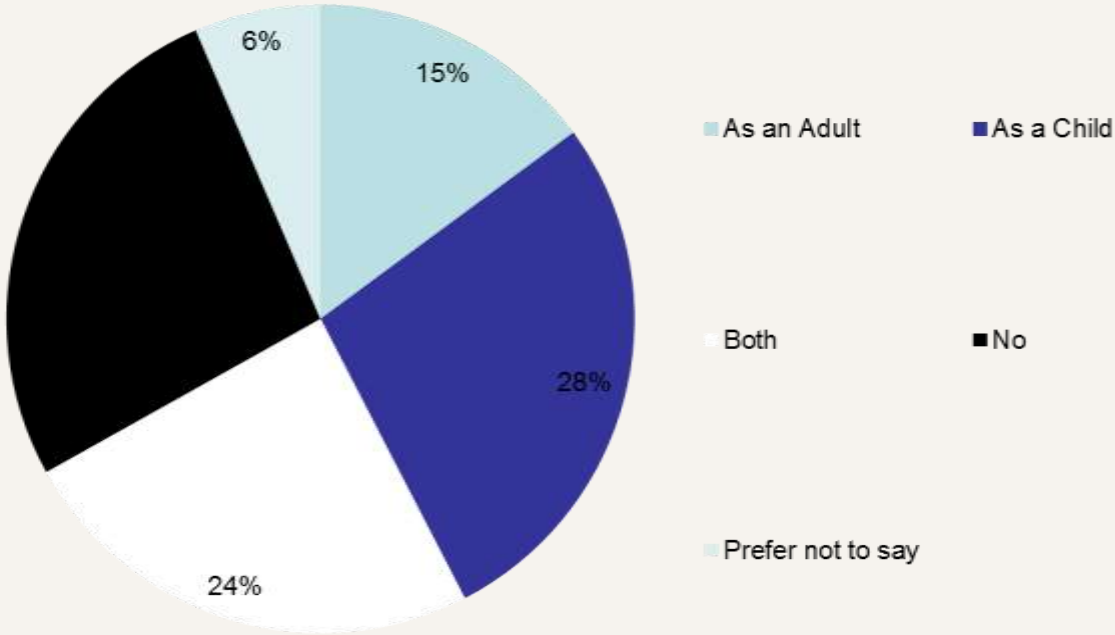
Frequency table by category, based on 323 respondents:

Category	Frequency	Percent (of 323 respondents)
Spouse/Partner (current, former, boyfriend, girlfriend)	205	63.5%
Immediate family	181	56%
Extended family	74	22.9%
Stranger	114	35.3%
No one	52	16.1%
Other (see Appendix A)	48	14.9%



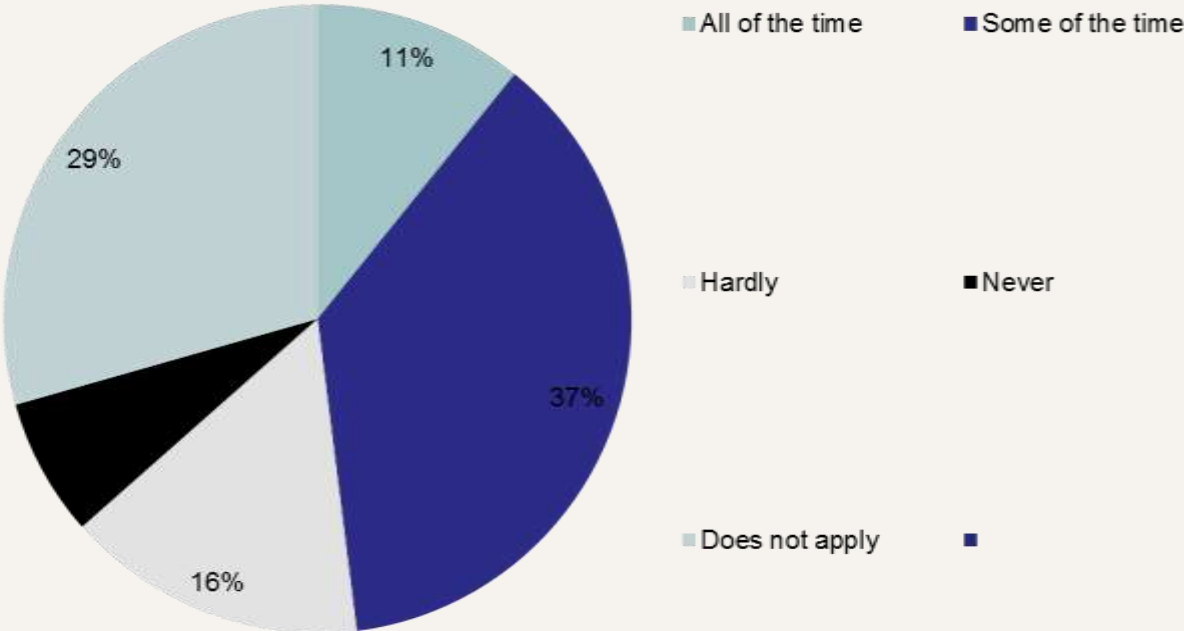
The top **3 most frequent categories** of aggressors were: **“Spouse/Partner”** with 206 respondents (63.8%) having been physically assaulted by them, **“Immediate family member”** was second most common aggressor with a frequency of 181 (56%), while **“Stranger”** was the third most common aggressor with a frequency of 113 (35%). With respect to sexual assaults, only 86 respondents indicated that they had **never** been assaulted. The majority of assaults occurred in childhood (89), with assaults occurring both in childhood and adulthood happening at a close rate (79).

Q11



When asked how sensitive police are to problems when asked for help, the majority of respondents indicated that the police are helpful “some of the time” (120), with 95 respondents indicating this question does not apply. **These responses suggest that almost one third of respondents did not request assistance from the police when faced with a situation of aggression or assault, and those who did were not entirely satisfied with the sensitivity of police.** A slim amount of respondents (35) indicated that police were sensitive “All of the time”.

Q12



When it came to **what respondents feared the most** with respect to their personal safety, the majority indicated **break-ins** (183) followed by **physical assault by a stranger** (133). **Sexual assault** (125) and **theft of personal items** (122) also ranked amongst the highest responses. The least amount of respondents was in fear of **sex trafficking** (33) and **other** (32) forms of violence, such as police brutality and lateral violence in the workplace (See Appendix B).

Question 13 – What do you fear most in regards to your own personal safety?		
	Frequency	Percent (of 323 respondents)
Break-in	183	56.7%
Theft of personal items	122	37.8%
Touching & Harassment	91	28.2%
Physical assault by a partner	47	14.6%
Physical assault by a stranger	133	41.2%
Sexual assault	125	38.7%
Kidnapping	48	14.9%
Sex trafficking	33	10.2%
Murder	81	25.1%
None of the above	36	11.1%
Other (see Appendix B)	32	9.9%

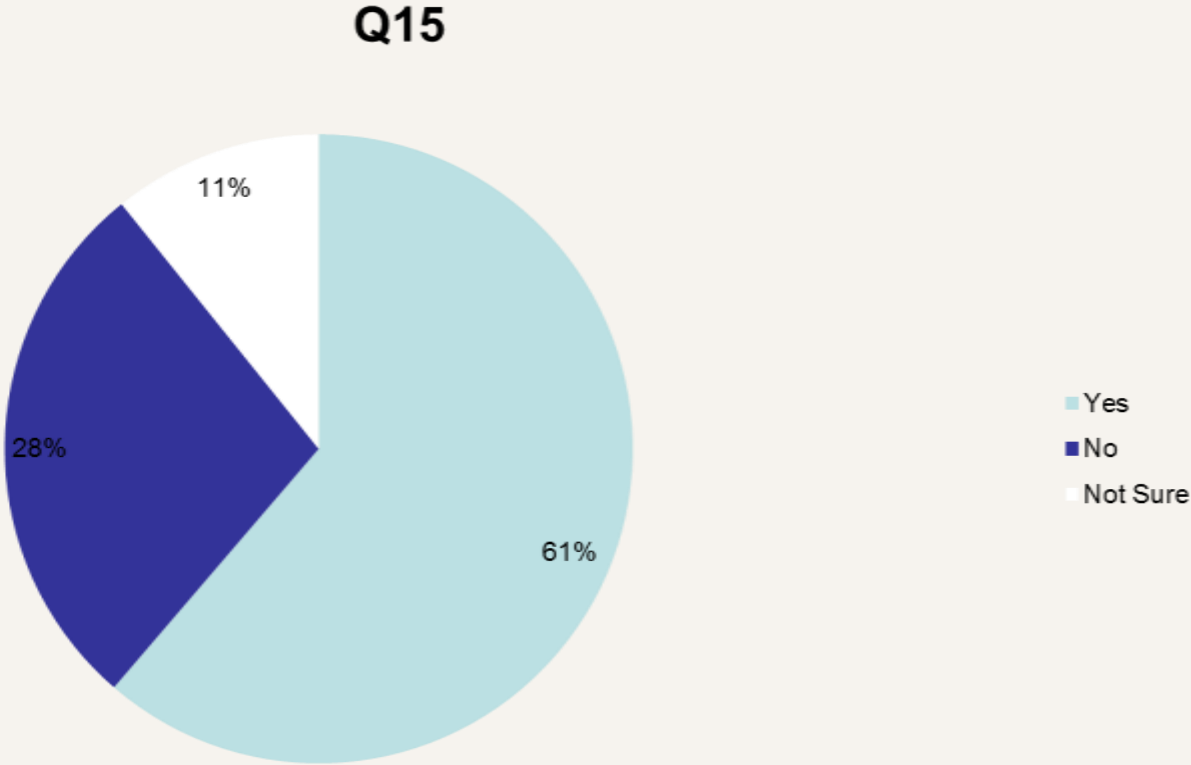


Regarding concerns about the threat of violence inflicted on those close to respondents, including themselves, the majority indicated that they feared most for the safety of their **children** (156), with **themselves** being the second most concern (106). **Other** people included friends, Band members and grandchildren (See Appendix C).

Question 14 – Regarding the threat of violence, who in your family are you most concerned about?		
	Frequency	Percent (of 323 respondents)
Yourself	106	32.8%
Spouse/Partner	31	9.6%
Your children	156	48.3%
Siblings	69	21.4%
Parents	40	12.4%
Grandparents	14	4.3%
Extended family members	77	23.8%
No one	66	20.4%
Other (see Appendix C)	34	10.5%



Regarding access to affordable housing in their communities, the majority of respondents felt they had access to affordable housing (198), while the second most amount of people indicated that they did not (90). A small amount of respondents were not sure (35).



Thematic Analysis

Both the women's and men's surveys included open ended questions (W=Q18 & Q19; M=Q32) relating to the perceptions around what causes family violence as well as women's abilities to escape violence. The responses were synthesized into nine (9) common themes that emerged from all questions. Although not conclusive, the following themes are defined below:

“Q18: What do you believe are the reasons why women cannot escape violence?”

“Q19: What do you think are the factors that contribute to family violence?”

“Q32: What do you think are factors that contribute to family violence?”



- **Women's Question 18: "What do you believe are the reasons that women cannot escape violence?"**

NOTE: most respondents included more than one response (as this was an open ended question) and therefore each theme within a response was identified and coded into this analysis. As a result, three (3) themes proved to be the most prevalent in the responses to Q18:



Women's Question 18: Three (3) themes *(cont'd)

1.) Lack of Supports & Barriers

- An overwhelming majority of responses were in regards to the lack of social, financial and familial supports for women to be able to escape violence.

2.) Skills, Education & Awareness

- Another overwhelming amount of responses were related to a lack of skills, education and awareness required for Aboriginal women to escape violence and violent situations.

3.) Self Perception & Empowerment

- This theme also revealed an overwhelming focus on the importance of self-perception and empowerment for Aboriginal women to avoid/escape violence. Self-perception relates to issues like low self-esteem, and empowerment is seen as the vehicle to overcome negative self-perceptions.



National Surveys: Aboriginal Women & Girls

- **State-imposed Violence & Federal Policies**

- This theme relates to issues such as police brutality, a justice system that prejudices Aboriginal women and peoples, the 60's Scoop, Indian Residential Schools, and the Indian Act that discriminates against Aboriginal women.

- **Intergenerational & Other Traumas, PTSD**

- This theme relates to intergenerational trauma mostly resulting from Indian Residential Schools, but also numerous other types of abuse, foster care and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

- **Lack of Supports & Barriers (Social, Financial, Familial)**

- This theme relates to a) lack of social, financial and familial support, and b) barriers that prevent Aboriginal women from avoiding and/or escaping violence.

- **Oppressive Structures**

- This theme relates to oppressive structures such as racism, misogyny, sexism and heteronormativity.

- **Skills, Education & Awareness**

- This theme relates to skills such as parenting, financial and marketable skills. Education refers to lack of formal education as well as knowledge about laws and resources. Awareness relates to a lack of understanding of how to escape violent situations, and what supports and resources are available to assist Aboriginal women and families.

- **Self-Perception & Empowerment**

- This theme relates to issues such as low self-esteem, negative self-thought, fear and the importance of empowering Aboriginal women in order to avoid violence.



Lack of Supports & Barriers

An overwhelming majority of responses were in regards to the lack of social, financial and familial supports for women to be able to escape violence. Further, when attempting to escape violence, women experienced many barriers, and therefore were doubly at risk of remaining in violent situations. Some responses included:

Poverty

Lack of financial resources

Nowhere to go

Systemic barriers

Inability to “start over”

Isolation (social and geographical)

Lack of housing

Not being able to support children

Financial dependence on men

The majority of female responses leaned towards **poverty/lack of financial supports** and **nowhere to go** as the primary socio-economic and systemic reasons why Aboriginal women cannot escape violence and violent situations.



Skills, Education & Awareness

Another overwhelming amount of responses were related to a lack of skills, education and awareness required for Aboriginal women to escape violence and violent situations. Some responses included:

Education

Lack of awareness

Fear (of the unknown, repercussions)

Not aware of any other way of life

Think abuse is normal/acceptable

Brainwashing by spouse

Conditioned to live with abuse

Cannot break cycle of violence

Not enough teachings on “healthy love”

Don't have skills to escape

Not aware of advocacy

Normalized

Don't know how to assert/defend themselves

In general, respondents felt that a lack of formal education greatly contributed to Aboriginal women being unable to recognize abuse and avoid it/escape from it. This includes education on proper, healthy behaviours in relationships as well as the knowledge that violence is not “normal”. With respect to skills, many respondents felt the skills needed to escape violence were oftentimes not present in violent situations, such as money management or simply reaching out to people for help. Awareness relates to being aware of resources, and ties into education regarding healthy behaviours, boundaries and relationships.



Self-Perception & Empowerment

This theme also revealed an overwhelming focus on the importance of self-perception and empowerment for Aboriginal women to avoid/escape violence. Self-perception relates to issues like low self-esteem, and empowerment is seen as the vehicle to overcome negative self-perceptions. Some responses include:

Self-esteem

Insecurity

Fear of being alone

Not confident in ability to succeed alone

Believe that cannot succeed

Low confidence

Vulnerable

Dependant on other

Guilt

Shame

Fear

Low self-worth

Feelings of powerless

Many respondents indicated a lack of self-esteem and confidence as major contributing factors in violence against Aboriginal women. High self-worth is seen as a way to avoid violence and violent situations, and according to respondents this is partially accomplished through empowering women through building self-esteem, independence, and the confidence to assert themselves and seek healthier environments while recognizing that it is not the fault of the victim to have found themselves in a situation where their perceptions of themselves have been influenced and compromised by a myriad of experiences with colonialism, abuse, injustice and other factors.



Health

The third most overwhelming amount of responses related to health. This includes issues such as: mental health, addictions, disability, self-esteem and so on. It is a common sentiment in responses that when poor health is present, Aboriginal women are more likely to experience family violence. Some responses included:

- Drinking and drugs
- Stress
- Childhood trauma
- No programs for personal healing
- Anger
- Mental health
- Depression
- Pain
- Shame



Women's Question 19: What do you think are the factors that contribute to family violence?

NOTE: most respondents included more than one response (as this was an open ended question) and therefore each theme within a response was identified and coded into this analysis. As a result, three (3) themes proved to be the most prevalent in the responses to Q19. Two themes carry over from Q18 (lacks of supports & barriers and skills, education & awareness), however, “Health” replaces “Self-Perception & Empowerment” as the top three when it comes to the issue of family violence (Q19) versus escaping violence in general (Q18).

Lack of Supports & Barriers

- An overwhelming majority of responses were in regards to the lack of social, financial and familial supports as well as systemic and socio-economic barriers as factors that contribute to family violence. Some responses included:
- Poverty
- No programing for abusers and those experiencing abuse
- Reliance on welfare
- Lack of healing programs
- Little access to food/basic needs
- Issues with mobility
- Lack of housing
- Overcrowded housing



FOCUS GROUPS

- Total: 18 focus groups (Winnipeg, MB; Selkirk, MB; Vancouver, B.C., Squamish, B.C.; Whitehorse, Yukon, Carcross, Yukon; Halifax, N.S.; Shubenacadie, N.S.; Montreal, Q.C.)
- Focus groups were carried out in urban and rural settings. The age group of the participants ranged in ages 18 to 55 years and older.
- Focus groups ran from 1.5 to 2.5 hours long



Focus Groups (cont'd)

- Important to note that participants felt the need to discuss historical violence that still continues today before they discussed what was needed for the Toolkits.
- Many participants wanted additional or new resources and services to protect and stop the violence against Aboriginal women and girls.



Focus Groups (cont'd)

- Many of the same issues that were discussed in the surveys, also arose in the focus group discussions.
- Residential schools through institutionalized method of punishing children has encouraged the normalization of violence.
- Many focus group participants identified drugs and alcohol abuse as one of the major causes of violent behavior in Aboriginal communities.



Focus Groups: Aboriginal Women & Girls

South Region's Recommendations For Toolkits

- Purse of pocket sized brochures with telephone numbers and emails to call or text when you need help.
- Tips on how to identify a child predator.
- Tips on how to recognize a pimp's grooming techniques for recruitment.
- Tips on how parents can protect their children from victimization.



Focus Groups: Aboriginal Women & Girls (cont'd)

South Region's Recommendations For Toolkits

- Tips on how to protect yourself from internet predators who frequent chat rooms
- Tips on how to prevent kidnapping
- Tips on how to keep safe while out in the evening
- Tips on how to escape your kidnapper
- Tips on how to protect yourself from sexual violence



Focus Groups: Aboriginal Women & Girls (cont'd)

South Region's Recommendations For Toolkits

- Resources for domestic violence and where to get help
- How to find crisis or counseling agencies
- List of safe houses
- Tips on how to protect yourself from bullies at school



Focus Groups: Aboriginal Women & Girls

North Region's Toolkit Recommendations

Toolkit needs to be visual and needs to be adaptable to small and remote First Nation Communities and CD's should be included. Some First Nation elders cannot read, so it is important to include audio, DVD and adding modern technology added to these toolkits



Focus Groups: Aboriginal Women & Girls (cont'd)

North Region's Toolkit Recommendations

- The toolkit must be responsive to the needs of the people who live in the urban and rural communities and address various learning styles.
- Developing a process to educate youth, elders, leadership and professionals will ensure education is available for all people. The use of technology needs to be considered along with training opportunities and involvement of interested groups to expand.
- Focus group participants stated they would like the toolkit to contain information that is actually useful to their community or their community will not use these resources



Focus Groups: Aboriginal Women & Girls

North Region's Toolkit Recommendations

- Participants stated they need actual resources and counseling and a hotline and other things that people can access, for example, transportation.



Focus Groups: Aboriginal Women & Girls

West Region's Toolkit Recommendations

- First Nations need transition houses for domestic violence.
- Need more visual learning, as this has more impact ie. C.D's
- Ensure that smaller FN communities are included in this initiative
- Make the toolkit more global, it should be shared with other agencies not just NWAC, it should be shared in schools, and shared in other professional domains, all transition homes, and every shelter.
- It should not contain too much info, 1 pager
- Toolkits should be available at every doctor's office, at every hospital, around violence, violence against children, violence against women, violence against parents, and grandparents.
- Cross cultural component is really important as well



Focus Groups: Aboriginal Women & Girls

East Region's Toolkit Recommendations

- More program like these need to be included
- Regionalized toolkits vs. more national toolkits needs to be tailored for each audience.
- Need to consider will the toolkit be geared more towards a front line worker who is helping a woman trying to escape a violent situation or is it going to be geared towards a person who is experiencing violence.
- Things to include in a toolkit would be how to help someone who is leaving a violent situation and how can I support them? How do I support my friend or family member who is in a violent situation?
- Need a actual definition of what violence is, and the different types of violence so people can easily identify it.



Focus Groups: Aboriginal Women & Girls (cont'd)

East

- Need to consider if the toolkit is going to be a community response for helping people or helping yourself through a situation. Need to educate people on the issue in order to stop violence from occurring.
- Need to include info re: how to respond in cases of disclosure of violence, i.e. if someone was sexually assaulted or they want to leave a domestic violent situation, how would you respond.
- Include generalized info re: going to police and making a report in cases of domestic violence, to include this information.
- To be aware in case a woman wants to report a case of domestic violence, that Child Welfare may possibly be involved and what to do in this situation.



Focus Groups: Aboriginal Women & Girls (cont'd)

East

- Target the toolkit towards the high school ages, from Grade 9 to Grade 12. Good to educate students what violence is.
- Big issue because there are so many angles, and how to include all topics of violence i.e. lateral violence, bullying, sexualized violence, and domestic violence. How do you address all of these issues?
- Remember to include transgendered persons
- Need to focus on internalized racism and consider the cultural aspect, and recognize the history of violence in Canada.
- Self defense courses should be offered for free in the toolkit, or a list of self defense courses that are offered in your area.



Focus Groups: Aboriginal Women & Girls (cont'd)

East

- Include inspirational messages or quotes in the toolkit.
- Remember to consider your average every day reader i.e. especially in legal jargon terms etc.
- Modernized tips for getting yourself out of situations i.e a QR code you can scan on your phone and it will tell you where to go for help or assistance, in cases of domestic violence.
- Use of an app that is inconspicuous that an abused person can download on their phone.
- Getting information re: domestic violence into the schools i.e. junior high and senior high is important.
- Include a facilitator's guide, a trainer's guide on how to create roundtables or support groups or women's groups.



Focus Groups: Aboriginal Women & Girls (cont'd)

East

- Some toolkits are too basic or vague, and include general facts and are not very useful. The toolkit needs to be informative.
- More specialized, and include more preventative measures.
- Needs to include information of where to go and have more resources.



*Merci
Chi-Miigwetch
Nia:wen
Hiy Hiy
Thank you*

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