



**CCPA**

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES  
MANITOBA

# Spaces for Female Immigrant Youth

Girls Night Program Evaluation:  
Perspectives of Participants

By Emma Higgs

SEPTEMBER  
2017

**Spaces for Female Immigrant Youth  
Girls Night Program Evaluation: Perspectives of  
Participants**

**ISBN 978-1-77125-358-1**

**SEPTEMBER 2017**



Unit 205 – 765 Main St., Winnipeg, MB R2W 3N5  
TEL 204-927-3200 FAX 204-927-3201  
EMAIL [ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca](mailto:ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca)



**Acknowledgements**

Thank you to the youth participants in this research and Spence Neighbourhood Association for supporting this research.

**About the Author**

Emma Higgs is an undergraduate student of Social Work at the University of Manitoba and a volunteer with Girls Night at the Spence Neighbourhood Association. This research was conducted for her practicum placement with CCPA Manitoba in 2016/17.

# Spaces for Female Immigrant Youth:

## Girls Night Program Evaluation: Perspectives of Participants

Programming for youth is an important part of many community organizations' mandates and structure. The Spence Neighbourhood Association (SNA), a community organization serving the inner-city community of Winnipeg's Spence neighbourhood, provides a program for female-identified youth called Girls Night.

This report examines the research on youth development and programming for female immigrant youth, and identifies the outcomes of Girls Night from the perspectives of the program participants. These outcomes are analyzed in terms of their relation to Spence Neighbourhood Association's Five Year Plan, and Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC) Mission, as well as the academic literature. To achieve this, an overview of Girls Night, the Spence Neighbourhood Association's Five Year Plan, and the IRCC's Mission are presented first. Next, the report incorporates a Literature Review which examines the specific demographic which is served by Girls Night, Youth Development, female youth programs and newcomer youth programs. The final section is the Program Evaluation, including the research questions, methods, research findings and discussion.

To guide our research, our questions were structured around the Five Year Plan of Spence

Neighbourhood Association, and Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada's Mission. These are the outcomes we identified, and we left the questions as open-ended as possible to gain a meaningful understanding of what the participants wanted to say about the program.

Throughout this report, the term 'immigrant' is usually used when referring to the participants, rather than newcomer. While it may be the case that some of the participants are state- or privately-sponsored refugees, when given the choice to identify themselves as an immigrant, refugee, or newcomer, nine of the ten youth research participants self-identified as an immigrant. The term female-identified is also used throughout, as this is the term used by Spence Neighbourhood Association to describe the participants of Girls Night. Used herein this refers to all female people, regardless of gender assigned at birth.

At this time, Girls Night is directed towards any female-identified youth, and there is a separate program held at the same facility and time by a different organization that is directed towards male-identified youth. A future direction for Girls Night or Spence Neighbourhood Association and other community based-organizations may be to expand program offerings or the

characterization of the Friday evening programs to include non-binary or genderqueer youth who do not identify as either female or male.

The Principal Investigator, Emma Higgs, is a casual volunteer with Girls Night and a social work student at the University of Manitoba with a practicum placement at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives- Manitoba. This research project was done in partnership with the Spence Neighbourhood Association.

### About Girls Night

Girls Night began in late 2014 as a partnership between Islamic Social Services Association (ISSA) and Spence Neighbourhood Association. Girls Night takes place Friday evenings at the University of Winnipeg Recplex and the program is for female-identified youth aged 12–18 years. It is now purely a Spence Neighbourhood Association Youth Program (ISSA runs a program for male youth in the same facility). The program is funded in part by Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada. Many of Girls Night's participants are immigrant and/or racialized youth, but all female-identified youth are welcome at Girls Night.

On a typical evening, the program will open with a Sharing Circle where all participants can choose to share as little or as much as they choose, and then an activity is facilitated for the remainder of the program. Snacks or a meal are provided. There is usually one staff person and a number of volunteers who facilitate the program.

As a program of the Spence Neighbourhood Association, Girls Night's goals and objectives are developed within a community development framework as articulated in the area's Five Year Plan.

### Spence Neighbourhood Association Goals: Five Year Plan

The Spence Neighbourhood Association seeks community input to create their Five Year Plans, which guide their work and helps them set ap-

propriate and reasonable goals (Spence Neighbourhood Association 2016: 1). The 2016–2021 Five Year Plan incorporates five areas of focus, one of which is 'Youth and Families'. The goals most relevant to Girls Night are from the 'Improve Life for Vulnerable Youth' section within this area of focus, and includes the following goals:

- Develop community- based accessible safe spaces for all youth;
- Provide programming during critical hours (after school & evening) for children & youth that addresses basic needs, removes barriers, & ensures equitable access to opportunities;
- Ensure youth have positive adult & peer mentors in their lives so youth feel supported & thrive holistically (spiritual, mental, emotional, physical); [...]
- Foster community ownership/connections for youth through community- based programming;
- Ensure children & youth have equitable access to sports & recreation opportunities in the community & across the city;
- Ensure children & youth have equitable access to arts & cultural opportunities in the community & across the city (SNA 2016: 7)

These goals reflect the community's desire for safe spaces and activities for youth, connections to other community members and the community itself, and equal access to opportunities and leisure activities. SNA seeks funding to support these goals and, in the case of Girls Night, this funding is secured from Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada.

### Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada: Mission

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada has a mandate and mission which reflects its di-

verse roles in Canada. The section of their mission which most relates to the role of Girls Night is the following:

“Developing and implementing policies, programs and services that: [...] reach out to all

Canadians and foster increased intercultural understanding and an integrated society with equal opportunity for all, regardless of race, ethnicity and religion” (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2016).

# Literature Review

To contextualize and support this program evaluation, a literature review examining academic, government, and civil society literature regarding topics related to Girls Night was undertaken. There are distinct facets to a program evaluation, and Spence Neighbourhood Association's program 'Girls Night' serves a diverse population. As such there are several elements to be discussed in this literature review. In the interest of providing as helpful a background as possible, this literature review will present research and findings regarding youth development and the demographic for which Girls Night is intended. Further, this review will examine research regarding gender-based programs and youth development, programming and development for youth newcomers and racialized youth, and intersections of some of the above topics. Finally, a critique of current programming and potential directions for future program development is included.

## Research regarding Youth Development and Newcomer Female Youth

Positive Youth Development is a term which covers a broad scope of techniques, strategies and theories. The literature identifies three central

elements of Positive Youth Development which can be useful for contextualizing the discussion regarding community-based youth programming : a strength-based approach, the importance of community, and the possibilities for using elements like "values, moral perspectives, and religious worldviews" (Damon as cited in Benson et al. 2007: 895: 1). These themes can be used to inform current programs or strategies for positive youth development.

University of Manitoba graduate student Allison Odger's thesis investigated the impact and interpretation of sexual health messages by African newcomer women, particularly youth (Odger 2015: 6). Odger's research is focused on Winnipeg residents, and Girls Night is a Winnipeg-based program encompassing a very similar group of women and youth. This research does not incorporate as many concrete findings or direct research results in relation to programming. However, it is an ethnography which helps illustrate some nuances of the perceptions and realities of the specific population of Girls Night participants.

Odger describes tensions newcomers can experience between their Canadian public school educations and the beliefs and norms they were raised with in Canada or their home countries.

There is tension between a system that encourages youth to take an active role in maintaining their sexual health and the messages about abstinence they have received from their families about sex. It is clear from this narrative we cannot simply disentangle the different axes of identity upon receiving particular types of sexual health information and each of these young women will understand and respond to these messages in their own ways. (Ogder 2015: 52)

This passage demonstrates how newcomer youth may experience complexities of straddling two distinct “worlds,” which can cause tension. This tension, and the ways it is navigated, may be an important element to be aware of when interacting with newcomer youth, and considering helpful and relevant programming. The topic at hand in Ogder’s research, sexual health, is also a topic which is purposely open and encouraged at Girls Night.

The 2002 Government of Canada Publication, “Mental Health Promotion Among Newcomer Female Youth,” discusses several aspects of the newcomer female youth experience, and differences between them and male newcomer youth. The report explains how the female youth participants “recognized that, while newcomer male youth face similar issues, based on their new immigrant status [...], there are differences in experiences on the basis of gender” (Khanlou et al. 2002: 44). While further discussing the emerging issues of the study, the report outlines how certain social elements are promoting influences—one example being the role of having friends in developing a positive sense of self (Khanlou et al. 2002: 44). Some of the recommendations of this report include focusing on the strengths, as well as the challenges of female newcomer youth, to provide sustained government funding for resettlement services for newcomer female youth and their families, and to develop partnerships, for example in education and social services, across systems (Khanlou et al. 2002: 54–57).

This publication affirms the importance of having specific and focused programming for newcomer female youth. The recommendations outlined in this review can be directly applied to community-based programming for newcomer youth in Winnipeg, and provide helpful concrete suggestions for organizations and government.

### Research Regarding Gender-based Programs and Youth Development

As Girls Night is a program for female-identified youth only, it is important to examine the literature regarding why gender-based programs (specifically, girls programming) are important, and what they have to offer to the sphere of youth programming and development. The Girls’ Fund, a fund established by the Canadian Women’s Foundation (CWF), provides funds to several youth female programs (CWF et al. 2012: 3). The CWF undertook program evaluations of their 12 sponsored girls programs from across Canada for the period 2009–2012, and published a detailed report about the findings.

The Girls’ Fund uses a program logic model which incorporates three central protective factors for their programming: self-confidence, connectedness/sense of belonging, and critical thinking skills (CWF et al. n.d.: 10). The 12 programs were found to improve and strengthen all of these important elements, and as protective factors these attributes can have meaningful implications for the development of girls. For example, in all three years of the research, over 80 percent of respondents felt anywhere from “a little” to “totally better” about their connectedness to the other girls in the program, their school and community (CWF et al. n.d.: 19). Protective factors, or “contextual variables that promote [...] the process [of reaching developmental competencies]” are critical for personal development of youth (Youth.gov n.d.). The report also identified that “Girls linked the program outcomes to the girls-only aspect of the programs, the caring



and supportive environment, the caring and supportive staff, the activities where they had fun, learned, and gained skills” (CWF et al. n.d.: 66). These elements of the programs were the ones which helped facilitate the outcomes, from the perspective of the participants.

The British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women’s Health partnered with the Girls Action Foundation and multiple research organizations and universities across Canada to prepare a mixed-methods research project which compared the academic literature on girls groups and gender- or sex-based programs and the perspectives of participants of these programs across Canada. This research identified nine promising practices in health promotion with girls, and found that the perspectives of participants were consistent with the literature on girls’ groups.

One of the promising practices for girls’ health promotion was being gender-specific “Girl-focused” or girls-only” (Poole et al. 2012: 10). The research further discussed how “Girls in all focus groups discussed the benefits of participating in a girls-only space, including having a safe space to discuss issues that are normally avoided or regarded as taboo (i.e., sexuality, sex, substance use, suicide and eating disorders) and to obtain accurate information about these issues” (Poole et al. 2012: 21). The scan of the literature incorporated into this research also found numerous systematic reviews which had found the importance of single-sex groups, as well as instances where mixed-sex groups could be preferable for discussing certain issues. The reviews of programs which participated in the research described elements such as the safety of being in an all-girls group (Poole et al. 2012: 17). The review also found that eliminating power-issues which silence girls in co-ed settings is an important factor for building positive peer-relationships among female youth. Within the focus groups, girl-participants discussed the benefit of the girls-only spaces, including feeling empowered, being able to create bonds with other girls

more easily, feeling less judged and more comfortable and free to discuss their experiences as girls (Poole et al. 2012: 21–22).

Girls on the Run is a physical activity Positive Youth Development program for female youth, which uses different types of physical activity to help girls aged 7–13 develop life skills such as confidence, caring, character, social, emotional, and physical competence, and community contribution (Riley and Weiss 2015: 3). Their program evaluation published in 2015 found that overall, “Girls who began with lower pre-season scores on confidence, connection, character, caring, and physical activity frequency, and higher scores on sedentary behaviors showed statistically significant improvements from pre-season to post-season. Improvements suggest that girls who need the program the most are likely to improve” (Riley and Weiss 2015: 12). Overall, the girls who had lower than average scores to begin with experienced more improvement in the listed Positive Youth Development skills by participating in the program. More specifically, of the girls who began with a score lower than the mean for confidence, 60.2 percent improved in that area, and of the girls who began lower than the mean for connection, 62.7 percent improved (Riley and Weiss 2015: 10). These findings suggest that this program has been effective for helping the girls most in need of support in regards to confidence and connection. Girls on the Run, while being intended for a younger group than Girls Night, has demonstrated its efficacy in supporting girls in some key development areas which also can apply to a slightly older group of girls.

These research studies and program evaluations have demonstrated the effectiveness of girls-only groups for achieving positive outcomes. In summary, these three studies have found girls-only social- and recreation-oriented groups have achieved an array of positive outcomes such as supporting newcomer female youth to debrief their experiences of their cultural community and the Canadian experience, the value of developing



positive female peer relationships and the benefits of girls-only spaces to developing confidence.

### Research in Support of Newcomer and Racialized Youth Programs and Youth Development

Daisy Camacho and Andrew Fuligni published an article regarding their research into first, second, and third generation immigrant students in Los Angeles, and their extracurricular activities (Camacho and Fuligni 2015: 1252). Their research connected participation in extracurricular activities to effects on Grade Point Average (GPA), and other factors such as sense of school belonging and intrinsic motivation. The study found that “apparent benefits of participation can be modified by generational status” (Camacho and Fuligni 2015: 1259). They found that “the gain in GPA as a function of participation [overall participation, participation in academic activities, and a greater breadth of participation] was greater for the first-generation students who showed greater overall participation, as compared to those who did not” (Camacho and Fuligni 2015: 1259). Their research suggests that the impacts of academic youth extracurricular programming can be more significant to first generation newcomers than later generation newcomers. Although Girls Night is not an academic program, the findings from this research may suggest that programming and extra-curricular activity particularly helps with engaging first-generation immigrant youth, like many of the participants at Girls Night. The book *Community Youth Development: Programs, Policies and Practices* includes a section on the importance of community-based youth workers supporting immigrant youth. Chapter five of the book, “Facilitating Positive Development in Youth: The Role of Mentors and Community Organizations” argues that “For immigrant youth, mentors and non-parental adults in community agencies may prove to be invaluable for optimal

development. Volunteer mentors and community youth workers can support children and adolescents growing up in challenging environments by providing structure and supervision during out-of-school hours” (Roffman et al. 2003: 91). Further, the chapter describes the importance of supporting immigrant families and youth by having spaces and programs for youth outside of school, as well as how reliable community workers can help immigrant children and adolescents manage cultural differences and identities, and provide a strong positive relationship for youth (Roffman et al. 2003: 109)

### Critique and Future Directions for Youth Gender-based and/or Newcomer Programming

Hieu Van Ngo’s article, “Patchwork, Sideline and Marginalization: Services for Immigrant Youth” analyzes services for immigrant youth. Within the critique, Van Ngo describes how many services and programs serving immigrant youth are frequently not evidence-based, and generally do not incorporate clear goals or objectives. This has implications for service delivery, as he describes, “As a consequence, the existing service delivery to immigrant adolescents appears intuitive and less coherent than planned, evidence-based practice” (Van Ngo 2009: 88–89). Additionally, the article elaborates how the programs frequently do not sufficiently connect immigrant youth to the broader community. This can put youth at risk of being over-reliant on “intra-ethnic or immigrant networks” (James 1997, as cited in Van Ngo 2009: 89).

This review of the literature gives a brief overview of what is known about this demographic, youth development, and youth programming. This research also helps frame our findings from the interviews and focus group, and provides guidance while identifying themes and patterns from the records.

# Program Evaluation

## Research Questions

As discussed above, Girls Night is guided by the SNA Five Year Plan Youth outcomes. To help frame the discussion with the participants, the questions were structured around the missions of the Spence Neighbourhood Association and Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada, as well as findings from the literature review, and they were formulated as open-ended questions. The research questions are attached as an appendix to this report.

## Methods

This research project was approved by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Research Ethics Committee. Participants for the research were recruited through posters, presentations at Girls Night, word-of-mouth, and informal conversations between youth participants and staff and volunteers. Ten girls involved with Girls Night participated in short interviews with the Principal Investigator. These were recorded and transcribed. Three of the youth participants also did an additional focus group (also referred to as a Sharing Circle) where they discussed a different set of questions together. All of the questions were reviewed and

approved by Spence Neighbourhood Association staff, and youth participants received a ten dollar gift card for a local mall for their participation.

Of the youth participants, nine of ten identified as immigrants and one explained that her parents were immigrants and she was born in Canada. The participants ranged in age from 15–18 years.

Two key informants involved with the programming and/or delivery of Girls Night were also interviewed. One was a staff member of Spence Neighbourhood Association, and one was a volunteer with the Girls Night program.

## Findings

### **Relationships and Mentoring**

The importance of Girls Night as a setting for the development and maintenance of positive relationships was referred to and discussed consistently throughout the interviews and focus group. Participants made positive references to Girls Night as a space where they can meet new peers or friends, as well as spend time with their current friends.

I would describe it [Girls Night] as a time for girls to come together, and, just to spend time with others, and get to talk to other girls (P9)

Other points regarding relationships between the participants that were mentioned during the interviews and focus group include feeling supported at Girls Night, and being able to interact, connect, and feel welcomed at Girls Night.

I see like, other girls connecting with each other, and I like that, 'cause they communicate, and maybe at school they don't have friends to communicate with and then at Girls Night they have people to talk to and, like do activities with and stuff (P5)

Within the key informant interviews, the relationships between participants were also emphasized. These research participants discussed how Girls Night is a place where the participants can explore new relationships with other female-identified youth, and how they can receive support from each other during the Sharing Circle portion of some Girls Nights. Further, Girls Night was characterised as a place where the female-identified youth can participate and interact in relation to each other, not in relation to male youth.

There was also a significant amount of discussion during interviews and the focus group regarding Girls Night's success at fostering positive relationships between the adult female-identified staff and volunteers, and the program participants. Generally, the participants characterized the staff and volunteers as being helpful or supportive, as being genuine, kind, or non-judgemental, and as trustworthy.

My favorite part about Girls Night, was, um, the way the staff communicated with us, which was really nice and sweet (P8)

Further, the approach of the staff and volunteers is mentioned as being among the participants' favourite parts about Girls Night, or the element of the program that most helps them deal with personal issues.

The staff here are also super helpful because, like, I talk to them, every time I'm here, and like,

they like when I talk to them they make me feel like they actually care and [...] it's nice to be able to talk to people (P10)

### **Safe and Welcoming Space**

Another theme that emerged from the interviews and focus group was the type of space Girls Night creates for its participants. The most common words used when describing Girls Night include safe, welcoming and comfortable. Girls Night as a program is described as important or useful for the participants for several reasons. Some participants mentioned how Girls Night plays a positive role for them because as immigrant youth there are some added challenges, and the program is a place where many female-identified immigrant youth can connect. Others said that because Girls Night is a space for female-identified youth only, they feel more comfortable discussing some subjects, and feel the participants are more focused on each other, as female-identified youth.

Participants even mentioned some benefits of Girls Night as a space for female-identified youth such as supporting each other through personal or broader social issues, or that Girls Night is meaningful to them because in other settings male youth tend to have more power or are able to dominate interactions.

I feel like it's a place where just girls are welcome, cause everywhere you go, it's like guy dominated (P2)

The key informants also identified a number of ideas about the importance and effects of Girls Night as a space. They brought forward ideas about Girls Night as a safe space, a characteristic that allows for a number of specific outcomes to occur. The safety of the space for the participants encouraged discussions and relationships to flourish, often as a result of one another. The Key Informants also outlined how the space, the programming, and the entire focus of the evening centred on the female-identified youth and

their needs. It was mentioned that this helped validate the experiences of the participants as they attended, and allowed participants to be vulnerable.

any [...] female-identified person can come into those doors without judgement, and stay there, and be safe, and be valued, and participate in whatever we are doing (K12)

The safety of the space was attributed to the characteristic of it being for female-identified youth. Consistency of meeting times and the staff/volunteers present were identified as an area to be improved for the program overall.

### **Community and Culture**

Another theme was the positive view of Girls Night as helping the participants feel more connected or welcomed in the broader community. This was explained in both more specific and more general terms. Examples include meeting new people at Girls Night, and later seeing and recognizing them while out in the community, or simply feeling more comfortable in their community and attributing this in part to Girls Night. Girls Night was also identified as being a place where the participants can engage with the wider community (for these purposes, excluding the home and school) and still feel comfortable.

before [Girls Night] I didn't really like go out [...], like I would just go home, maybe after school programs, sports, but just it would be like home, school, home, school [...] But now I'm starting to see that there's like a world outside of home and school (P7)

Finally, some participants described how they felt Girls Night helped strengthen or reinforce existing positive cultural or ethnic community bonds. Participants were also asked if they felt they learned about Canadian culture or issues during Girls Night. This term was left ambiguous to solicit varied or broad answers based on

the participants' understanding of the term "Canadian culture and issues." Three of the ten participants did not have examples to give of Girls Night achieving an educational or immersive experience about Canada, while several others did discuss various examples based on their understanding of the question, which included arts and culture based examples. A participant discussed attending a cultural event which included First Nations drumming and storytelling as an outing with Girls Night. Five participants provided examples which portrayed Girls Night itself, or some specific activities (such as making music or painting) as helping explore the various multicultural backgrounds of the youth, and the volunteers and staff. In one case this was related to having a chance to play an instrument they identified as being central to Canadian music (guitar). For some, Girls Night was a way to express or share cultural backgrounds or identities doing arts and crafts like painting.

One of the two Key Informants also discussed Girls Night as being a place where the participants could discuss and celebrate their cultural backgrounds in an inclusive space.

it's like a positive environment, and meeting new people from different, like, races, and different backgrounds, ethnic, religious backgrounds, and it's just kinda like, we're all just, we're all just hanging out (P3)

Girls Night was portrayed as a space that encourages inclusivity and community. In terms of connecting the participants to their community, other key informant responses also discussed how the program seeks to hire female-identified activity instructors from the community, to add more levels of connection and role-modelling.

it [Girls Night] is very good at [...] helping to um, employ and showcase the talents of local female professionals (K11)

Some areas for improvement were also identified in this area by key informants, including

## Spence Neighbourhood Association

It is clear that Girls Night is successful in achieving the relevant main goals of SNA's Five Year Plan. There are certainly some areas to be improved, but when viewed in its entirety Girls Night is taking specific action to adhere to the Five-Year Plan. This is evidenced in both the structural organization and activities of the program, as well as the feedback from participants regarding their experience with Girls Night and what they think about the program overall.

SNA's list of goals within their Five-Year Plan section for Youth and Families provides a concrete framework to evaluate Girls Night's success. The relevant points are each discussed separately below.

"Develop community based accessible safe spaces for all youth" (SNA 2016: 7): The research participants discussed at length how the space Girls Night creates is welcoming and safe for its participants, who are female-identified youth.

"Provide programming during critical hours (after school & evening) for children & youth that addresses basic needs, removes barriers, & ensures equitable access to opportunities" (SNA 2016: 7): Girls Night addresses basic needs by providing snacks or a meal to participants, as well as having free menstrual and sexual health products. Girls Night also aims to reduce barriers and provide equitable access by purposefully occurring at a community facility where youth were already spending leisure time, and during key evening hours.

"Ensure youth have positive adult & peer mentors in their lives so youth feel supported & thrive holistically (spiritual, mental, emotional, physical)" (SNA 2016: 7): This point is another one that the research participants discussed repeatedly throughout interviews. The relationships between the youth, as well as with the adult role-models were described in various positive manners. The role of the adult role models (whether they are staff, volunteers, or activity instructors) was discussed positively by numerous participants.

"Foster community ownership/connections for youth through community based programming" (SNA 2016: 7): A number of important elements of the program, such as outings into the community, meeting new community members and purposefully hiring community members to teach activities help facilitate this goal within Girls Night. Overall, not all research participants could discuss examples of this point from Girls Night, but there were many who could.

"Ensure children & youth have equitable access to sports & recreation opportunities[and] [...] arts and cultural opportunities in the community & across the city" (SNA 2016: 7): Participants discussed numerous activities which adhered to this goal, including outings, martial arts and music-related activities. Participants are regularly able to work with instructors who teach martial arts/self-defence, as well as arts-based activities such as painting, song-writing and karaoke. Some research participants wanted to include more organized sports as part of the programming. Overall, the range of activities provided free to the participants certainly serves to improve access to these youth, with some additions which can be made based on participant preferences.

the need for more role models (as volunteers, staff, or instructors) who reflect the diversity of the participants, or who share a background of immigration to Canada. Connecting with other community organizations who also provide youth programming in the same facility to better coordinate the programs was mentioned or

discussed by both key informants, and suggested by a participant as well.

### Summary of Findings

The broad themes and characteristics of Girls Night, identified from the interviews and focus groups, connect positively to the literature identi-



## Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada

As partial funders of youth programming at SNA, it is important to connect IRCC goals with the outcomes of Girls Night. Girls Night, as a program serving youth most of whom are immigrants to Canada, facilitates a number of the elements of IRCC's Mission. By providing a safe and open space, the participants are able to learn from each other through discussion and questions about their diverse backgrounds, as well as from participants or adult role models who may come from Canada. Finally, by specifically reaching out to marginalized youth, Girls Night contributes to improving equal opportunity regardless of identity, achieving this by offering recreation activities, a safe space, and encouraging discussion and relationship-building.

fied herein in a myriad of ways, and demonstrate a number of the elements from the missions of SNA and IRCC. This indicates that Girls Night is achieving its goals, and serving as a positive feature within the lives of its participants. First, the role of Girls Night as a place where positive relationships can develop between peers and between the youth and adult role models is identified by the literature as being important (CWF et al. n.d.: 19; Poole et al. 2012: 21–22; Roffman et al 2003: 91). As our interviews and focus group demonstrate, many participants and key informants find that Girls Night is fostering or creating these strong relationships, which are valuable according to the literature for achieving a positive sense of self, and connectedness with peers (Khanlou et al. 2002: 44; CWF et al. n.d.: 19). These positive benefits occur in the context of the female-identified youth navigating the challenges of being a youth, as well as additional challenges associated with holding marginalized identities.

When discussing the space, many variations on the benefits of it being a program exclusively for female-identified youth emerged. The importance of this characteristic and the importance of the existence of this program at all is also supported by the literature (Poole et al. 2012: 10, 21). Some of these specific reasons from our interviews were even reflected in the literature, including unequal “power over” situations male-identified youth can hold, and feeling like they, the participants, can connect with

other female youth in this safe space (Poole et al. 2012: 17; Canadian Women's Foundation et al. n.d.: 66). Two participants referred to Girls Night positively specifically in reference to the role it plays in supporting them as immigrant youth. In addition, the key informants discussed how the space aims to centre the female-identified youth, validate their thoughts and ideas and allow for conversations to occur safely.

Girls Night's mixed success at engaging participants with their broader community is a starting point worth expanding upon. Our research shows that fostering community within Girls Night is going well, based on the positive feedback regarding relationships at Girls Night. However, our interviews demonstrated that finding ways to help the participants feel welcome as part of their broader community in meaningful ways is an emerging area for Girls Night. The literature suggests that using the broader community as a tool and space for youth development is helpful (Benson et al. 2007: 895). In addition, the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation's 94 Calls to Action illustrate the importance of better education for newcomers to Canada in regards to Indigenous people and the Treaties, specifically with calls 93 and 94 (Truth and Reconciliation Canada, 2015). Incorporating this learning through Girls Night programming in partnership with Indigenous organizations and individuals should be viewed as a specific area for development in terms of connecting participants to the broader community. Overall, continued and bolstered funding for

Girls Night could help staff and volunteers of the program find ways to achieve some of these goals in partnership with the participants themselves, by providing more time and material resources.

### Conclusion

Participants generally find Girls Night to be a meaningful program and a safe space where they can make friends, adult role-models, and participate in various activities. This research also confirms that some elements of the program need improvement, including building community connections. As highlighted above, the importance of these characteristics for youth development

is demonstrated throughout the literature. The feedback provided by Girls Night participants demonstrates that Girls Night achieves the relevant elements of the SNA Five Year Plan, and IRCC's Mission Statement.

Many of the developing or emerging areas for Girls Night may be impacted by uncertain or limited funding amounts and the many roles community-based organizations and their staff aim to fulfill. Based on the positive feedback from Girls Night's participants, hopefully this program and others like it can continue to develop and expand in the coming years. Thank you to Girls Night participants, volunteers and staff for taking part in this research project.



# Appendix A: Interview and Sharing Circle Questions

## Questions: Sharing Circle Sharing Circle Script — Preamble

*Thank you everyone for your interest in this sharing circle! Before we begin, we're going to hand out the Informed Consent forms and we're going to go over them together. I'll read it out loud and explain a few points, and you can ask any questions you may have.*

—Read Consent form aloud

*I am a student at the University of Manitoba, who is doing a placement with an organization called Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. But I have also volunteered with the Spence Neighbourhood Association (SNA) for a few years casually, which is why I would like to work on this project to find out more about Girls Night!*

*Like the letter says, all you will need to do is participate in one sharing circle or interview during part of a Girls Night. You will be asked to keep everything discussed in the circle confidential. You can withdraw from the research, or withdraw your responses at any time up until April 1st, 2017. I will be recording this discussion. If you wish to stop the tape you can ask to not be recorded at any time. All*

*participants will receive a 10\$ Portage Place gift card as a thank you!*

*Thank you in advance for your help!*

## Questions

1. We're going to go around the circle, and when it's your turn can you please tell us your name and age, how long you've been coming to Girls Night, what neighbourhood you live in, and how you ended up coming to GN for the first time.
2. What do you like most about Girls Night? Why?
3. What do you think about the free meals and the activities at Girls Night?
4. Do you think Girls Night has made a difference in your life (it can be little or big things)?
5. As young women and immigrants or refugees, do you feel welcome at Girls Night? Why or why not?
6. If you could change one thing about Girls Night, what would it be?
7. Tell us what you've learned during Girls Night.

## Questions: Interview with Youth Participants

### Preamble

*Thank you for participating in this interview. It will only take 15–30 minutes. Everything you say here will be kept confidential and anonymous. You can withdraw from the research, or withdraw your responses at any time up until April 1st, 2017. With your permission, I will be recording this discussion. If you wish to stop the tape you can ask to not be recorded at any time.*

### Questions

1. Can you say your name and age, and whether you identify as an immigrant, refugee or newcomer?
2. How long have you been coming to Girls Night? How often do you usually come?
3. What made you want to come to Girls Night?
4. What about Girls Night has been most important to you, and why? (ie meeting new people, trying new activities, going to different outings, connecting with a trustworthy adult, going somewhere you feel safe, etc)
5. Do you think having a space for only girls your age is important? Why?
6. Have there been parts of Girls Night that have helped you learn about Canadian culture or issues that you thought were important?
7. There are many parts of being a teenager, being a girl, and moving from another country that are hard. Do you find Girls Night helps you deal with some of these things?
8. If you could change Girls Night to be better for you, what would you change?
9. If you were talking to a friend who had never been to Girls Night about the program, how would you describe it?
10. Has participating in Girls Night helped you feel like more a part of the Inner

City/West End community, and/or the broader Winnipeg community? *Some examples of this would include making friends or connections with people from different backgrounds, knowing about resources in your community, or feeling welcome and safe in the community.*

Thank you for your participation.

## Questions: Interview with Key Informants

### Preamble

*Thank you for participating in this interview, it will only take 20–30 minutes. You can withdraw from the research, or withdraw your responses at any time up until April 1st, 2017. With your permission, I will be recording this discussion. If you wish to stop the tape you can ask to not be recorded at any time. Thank you for your participation.*

### Questions

1. Can you please describe the philosophy or thinking behind Girls Night from your perspective? Probe — what are the goals?
2. What do you notice that participants like most about Girls Night?
3. What do you notice that participants like least about Girls Night?
4. Have you noticed participants who have become more involved in the program, have shown leadership, or who have shown signs of development or growth?
5. In your opinion, what are the most important things Girls Night brings to it's participants?
6. If you could do anything, what would you change about the Girls Night, and why?
7. Would you say that Girls Night helps participants learn about Canadian culture and issues?
8. What about Girls Night makes it a safe space for female-identified youth, in your opinion?

# Appendix B: Activity and Meal Preferences of Programming: Participants

The data included below is intended to help staff and volunteers of Girls Night, and any youth programmer, make choices in regards to their activities and meals which is based on youth participant’s preferences.

The following snacks or meals which have previously been served at Girls Night were referred to specifically in a positive manner: pan-

cakes, breakfast foods, pizza, Thai food, and spring rolls. Meals containing chicken was the only main meal or snack suggestion.

Having a free snack or meal was referred to either positively, as an incentive for participation, or important to the program *eight times* during the interviews and focus group with youth participants.

**TABLE 1 Activities and Meals**

Activities Participants Liked and/or Described as Fun and/or Referred Positively to	Number of Times Mentioned	Activities Participants Mentioned Wanting to Do	Number of Times Mentioned
Forks Outing	2	Mental health workshops	1
Taekwondo	1	Social Justice Activities	1
Nails/Spa Nights	2	Outings	3
Karaoke	2	General or female-youth centered workshops	3
Documentary Viewing	1	Dance workshop/class	1
Forks Outing with drumming and Sharing Circle	1	Organized Sports (soccer, basketball, volleyball, etc	1
Games	1		
Self-defense/Boxing	2		

# Appendix C: Ideas for Future Directions: Key Informants

The Key Informants had numerous suggestions regarding the programming of Girls Night, which they believe would improve the program. Many of these suggestions for further development are currently restricted by the amount of time and funding available to the staff and volunteers of Girls Night for planning and resources.

- Coordination with other youth programming organizations who also use the Recplex Friday nights
- Paying honorariums to participants who come regularly
- More consistency of scheduling and timing of Girls Night

## Program Structure and Functionality Suggestions

- More program leadership from youth participants
- More follow-up on youth participants programming suggestions
- More staff time allotted to planning Girls Night

## Programming Suggestions

- Positive femininity and feminist education
- Pro-social character development programs
- Workshops on Social Inclusion
- Workshops on Mental Health

## References

- Benson, Peter L., Scales, Peter C., Hamilton, Stephen F. and Sesma, Arturo. 2007. "Positive Youth Development: Theory, Research, and Applications". In Damon, William and Lerner, Richard M. (eds.), 2006. *Handbook of Child Psychology, Volume One: Theoretical Models of Human Development*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.
- Camacho, Daisy, and Fuligni, Andrew. 2015. "Extracurricular Participation Among Adolescents from Immigrant Families." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 44, 6.
- Canadian Women's Foundation, Alcade, Judit, Hayward, Karen, Loomis, Colleen, and Hodgson, Pytor. n.d. "Building Strong Girls: Girls Fund 2009–2012 Evaluation Report". <[canadianwomen.org/sites/canadianwomen.org/files//CWF-GirlsFundReport-Full-web%20single%20page.pdf](http://canadianwomen.org/sites/canadianwomen.org/files//CWF-GirlsFundReport-Full-web%20single%20page.pdf)>
- Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada. 2016. "Our Mandate". <[cic.gc.ca/English/department/mission.asp](http://cic.gc.ca/English/department/mission.asp)>
- Khanlou, Nazilla, and Status of Women Canada. 2002. *Mental Health Promotion among New-comer Female Youth: Post-migration Experiences and Self-esteem*. Ottawa: Status of Women Canada = Condition Féminine Canada.
- Odger, Allison, Frohlick, Susan, and Ibáñez-Carrasco, Francisco. 2015. "At-risk? Really? I Think Anyone Can Get It": Bio-pedagogy, Sexual Health Discourses, and African New-comer Youth in Winnipeg, Canada'. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Faculty of Graduate Studies.
- Poole, Nancy, Talbot, Christina, Haworth-Brockman, Margaret, Fridell, Mara, van Daalen-Smith, Cheryl, Thakur, Shvata, Vissandjee, Bilkis, Y., Natalie, Kuntz, Jonathon, Bernier, Jennifer, Clow, Barbara, Fraser, Tatiana, Pierre-Jacques, Fabienne, Ahsan, Saman. 2012. "I love it because you could just be yourself" A Study of Girls' Perspectives Girls' Groups and Healthy Living'. <[bccewh.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/BCCEWH\\_girls\\_perspectives\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://bccewh.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/BCCEWH_girls_perspectives_final_report.pdf)>
- Riley, Allison, and Weiss, Maureen R. 2015. "Summary Report: Spring Evaluation". <[girlsontherun.org/assets/img/uploads/media/Spring%20Evaluation%20Report\\_FINAL\\_for%20website.pdf](http://girlsontherun.org/assets/img/uploads/media/Spring%20Evaluation%20Report_FINAL_for%20website.pdf)>

- Roffman, Jennifer G., Suárez-Orozco, Carola, Rhodes, Jean E. 2003. "Facilitating Positive Development in Immigrant Youth". In Villaruel, Francisco A., Perkins, Daniel F., Borden, Lynne M., and Keith, Joanne G. 2003. *Community Youth Development: Programs, Policies, and Practices*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Spence Neighbourhood Association. 2016. "SNA 5 Year Plan 2016–2021 At a Glance". <docs.wix-static.com/ugd/37e087\_f2882f6a8d7e4735a4d-41e039701de44.pdf>
- Truth and Reconciliation Canada. 2015. "Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada". Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.
- Van Ngo, Hieu. 2009. "Patchwork, Sidelineing and Marginalization: Services for Immigrant Youth." *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 7, 1.
- Youth.gov. n.d. "Risk and Protective Factors". <youth.gov/youth-topics/substance-abuse/risk-and-protective-factors-substance-use-abuse-and-dependence>









Unit 205 – 765 Main St., Winnipeg, MB R2W 3N5  
TEL 204-927-3200 FAX 204-927-3201  
EMAIL [ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca](mailto:ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca)  
WEBSITE [www.policyalternatives.ca](http://www.policyalternatives.ca)