

British Columbia

Kamloops mapping project reveals where women find safety, danger and beauty in city

More than 800 women were surveyed for EmpowerHer map

Clare Hennig · CBC News · Posted: Aug 21, 2018 9:14 AM PDT | Last Updated: August 21, 2018



Emily Dundas Oke says the maps show both the good and bad sides of the city. (Jenifer Norwell/CBC)

Hundreds of women in Kamloops, B.C., have helped create a map of the city that marks areas where they feel safe and unsafe, in a new participatory art project.

More than 800 women were surveyed for the *EmpowerHer* mapping project, created by artist-researchers Marnie Badham and Emily Dundas Oke. The map was unveiled to the public this week.

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"We had lots of information but we also wanted to find a way to visualize that," Dundas Oke said.

The project asked women to answer four main questions:

- Where do you feel safe?
- Where is there beauty?
- Where do you feel unsafe?
- Where are there important community services?

The map highlights issues of safety for women but it also shows the positive sides of the city, Dundas Oke told CBC's Jenifer Norwell.

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"One of my biggest reflections was asking women, 'What's beauty to you?' And it was social things: it was 'karaoke with my friends', it's 'this neighbourhood because I know I'll see my friends,'" Dundas Oke said.

On the map, the blue dots mark beauty, the red are areas of safety, yellow are important services and an "X" marks areas where women don't feel safe.



Cynthia Travers on a walk around Kamloops, pointing out areas where women marked feeling safe and unsafe in the city. (Jenifer Norwell/CBC)

Women's guide to the city

Cynthia Travers, who was involved in the project, said she was interested to know why certain areas were marked as unsafe and surprised at some of the answers she got.

Riverside Park, for example, was marked with Xs by several women. Travers asked the women why: "Was it the home free people, was it the garbage, was it the needles?" she wondered.

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"[One woman] said no, it was the men coming out of [a nearby club] that were verbally sexually harassing her," she said.

Another woman, who is currently homeless, also marked the park as unsafe but for a different reason: the glass and needles on the ground, Travers said.

For Dundas Oke, the map provides a guide to finding the beauty in the community, but also areas where improvements can be made for women.

The information will be used to advocate for more services for the community, she said.

With files from Jenifer Norwell and Daybreak Kamloops.

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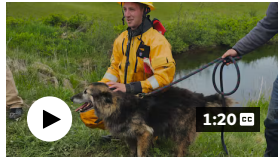
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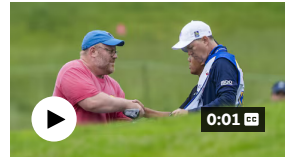
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