ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT 2016-2017
LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

This is a very exciting year for Women in Cities International (WICI). WICI was born in 2002 in Montreal in conjunction with the First International Conference on the Safety of Women and we are now fifteen years old. The organization is about to enter a new and exciting phase when in August 2017 Barbara Holtmann from South Africa will become President of the Board, continuing our determination to be a global organization, and to be seen as such.

Our activities this year, as you will learn from this Annual Report, were indeed international in scope. WICI’s Executive Director, Kathryn Travers, played a very active and important role in Habitat III in Quito, Ecuador in October 2016, and in a number of preparatory meetings in Geneva, Barcelona, New York and Berlin. She also took part in an extremely innovative women’s safety audit project with UN Women in Papua New Guinea. This involved working with female market vendors, many of whom are illiterate, with the development of audit material using pictograms – a lovely social innovation.

WICI also worked locally in Canada with a wonderful group of interns who launched a number of activities and projects. The Right to Campus campaign was launched at McGill University and our earlier Montreal project, “My City! My Safety!” was a finalist for a global award, demonstrating how it continues to be a dynamic tool for building local partnerships and shared activities.

With Barbara Holtmann taking on the Presidency of the WICI Board this is my last President’s letter. I owe immense gratitude to the WICI family for the privilege, the fun, and for the knowledge I have gained over these years about the ways we can work together to make cities safe and secure spaces, and places for the full diversity of women and girls.

CAROLINE ANDREW
A YEAR WITH WOMEN IN CITIES INTERNATIONAL

25 COLLABORATIONS
20 EVENTS & CONFERENCES
2 TOOLS DEVELOPED
12 PRESENTATIONS
8 MEDIA COVERAGES
6 REPORTS & PUBLICATIONS
11 NEW VOLUNTEERS

1563 TOTAL LIKES
433 SHARES ON TOP POST
+ 522 LIKES

139,389 VIEWS BY WOMEN
47,979 VIEWS BY MEN
10,768 PHOTO VIEWS

AROUND THE WORLD FOR HABITAT III...

MONTREAL OCTOBER 2015
Habitat 3 Thematic Meeting: Metropolitan Areas

GENEVA JULY 2016
Habitat III Cross-Cutting Expert Group Meeting on Safer Cities in the New Urban Agenda

NEW YORK JUNE 2016
Expert Group Meeting: Gender Perspectives of the New Urban Agenda and Informal Hearings with Stakeholder Groups

BERLIN JUNE 2016
German Habitat Forum

BARCELONA APRIL 2016
Habitat 3 Thematic Meeting on Public Spaces

QUITO OCTOBER 2016
The United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development
This year WICI played an important role in the lead up to, and during, Habitat III, the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, which took place in Quito, Ecuador from 17 – 20 October 2016. The conference brought together around 36,000 people from 167 different countries and some 50,000 at the associated exhibitions. WICI’s Executive Director Kathryn the conference, where she played a major role in organizing and moderating the Women’s Assembly.

The Habitat Conferences result in global normative frameworks to guide urban development for the next 20 years, the period between the Habitat conference. Habitat III concluded with the adoption of the New Urban Agenda – a framework that sets a new global standard for sustainable urban development, and will help in rethinking how we plan, manage and live in cities. The New Urban Agenda provides a roadmap for building cities that can serve as engines of prosperity, and centers of cultural and social well-being, while protecting the environment.

Several regional and thematic preparatory meetings were held to explore urban issues and inform the New Urban Agenda, WICI participated in three such meetings. Additionally, WICI participated in two Expert Group Meetings (EGMs) to provide technical inputs to the Secretariat on the first drafts of the New Urban Agenda. One focused on the role of women and girls in urbanization, while the second considered the importance of safer cities for sustainable urban development.

Prior to Habitat III, a General Assembly of Partners (GAP), made up of 17 constituency groups, was created to assist negotiations of the New Urban Agenda, and WICI was a member of the Woman’s Partner Constituency Group (WPCG). In June 2016, WICI Executive Director Kathryn Travers gave a statement on behalf of the WPCG at the UN in New York during the Informal Stakeholder Consultations. These consultations were groundbreaking as they were the first time stakeholders were given space alongside member states for such negotiations. Habitat III was thus exemplary in terms of global diplomacy.

The final version of the New Urban Agenda reflects many of WICI’s core values. For example, it utilizes the concept of the Right to the City, which is an entry point for much of WICI’s work. The New Urban Agenda also provides guidance for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and actions to address climate change, whereas SDG 11 (make cities and human settlement inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable) and SDG 5 (gender equality) in particular are central to WICI’s work.

“We need a multitude of perspectives in participation to ensure we are building inclusive, resilient cities with social cohesion”
-- Kathryn Travers in an article by The Guardian

We attended the opening breakfast networking session at the Ville de Montréal in April to launch the Cité d’elles initiative, which trains women to join municipal politics.
Through action-based research and projects, WICI works to create more inclusive and meaningful participation for city stakeholders. In March 2016, for example, it concluded a collaborative project with UN-Habitat’s Safer Cities Programme on the development of UN Guidelines on urban safety, conducting a series of consultations with Habitat partners and making recommendations to inform the new Guidelines. These new Guidelines, which are still being developed, will complement the Guidelines for the Prevention of Urban Crime (ECOSOC Resolution 1995/9) and the Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime (ECOSOC Resolution 2002/13). The purpose of the new Guidelines is to establish norms and standards for creating safer cities for policy makers at national and local levels, as well as internationally.

In August 2016, Executive Director Kathryn Travers, together with a team from UN Women Papua New Guinea, conducted a participatory Women’s Safety Audit (WSA) in Port Moresby. The audit piloted a new adaptation of the WSA for markets and bus stops in Port Moresby. Training on the tool was provided to the vendors, but also to local government, academics and researchers and local NGOs to support implementation of the methodology. The resulting guide uses icons and a color-coded rating system, making it easily accessible to its users.

Throughout the summer of 2016, two McGill students and WICI volunteer research assistants, Dina Al Shawwa and Arianne Kent, worked on developing a women’s safety project drawing on WICI approaches at the McGill University Campus in Montreal. This resulted in the development and implementation of the Right to Campus (RTC) campaign. The RTC campaign draws on Henri Lefebvre’s concept of the Right to the City, which aims to reshape the power dynamics that exist within an urban space, serving the needs of the community rather than the state.

By bringing this concept to a university campus, the RTC project aimed to promote a safer and more equitable engagement on campus, and included a number of events hosted on and off campus.

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1Women’s Safety Audits were first developed by the Metropolitan Toronto Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC) in 1989, and have been used and adapted extensively in Canada and internationally since that time.
SECURITY AND SAFETY FOR SUBSTANTIVE CITIZENSHIP

For women and girls in all their diversity, cities and communities that ensure a robust experience of security and safety create an essential foundation for substantive citizenship. Without this, participation in the life of the city is curtailed and substantive citizenship denied.

As part of the RTC project’s goal to create safer, more inclusive and equitable spaces, the RTC team worked in collaboration with McGill’s Orientation Leader Coordinator to improve the McGill Orientation Leader Training. RTC helped reframe the training material in terms of space, highlighting the importance of creating an equitable and inclusive environment for all users. Subsequently, the RTC team collaborated with the Orientation Leader Coordinator to create the Frosh Leader Guide, which is a mini-handbook that summarizes the information the Frosh Leaders learned during training at their fingertips.

In April 2016, to mark International Anti-Street Harassment week, WICI released a video created by WICI Communications volunteer Kathleen Ellis in partnership with Lucie Pagès and Noémie Bourbonnais. The video presents interviews with passersby on the prevalence and impacts of street harassment in Montreal. The aim is to shed light on women’s experiences of navigating and occupying Montreal spaces. Several media outlets picked up the story to discuss women’s experiences of harassment in the city.

On 6-8 July 2016, WICI was invited to take part in the Reviewing the State of Safety in World Cities: Safer Cities +20 Conference in Geneva, Switzerland, organized by UN entities and the

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2 The book is forthcoming in Spanish, and will be translated to English at a later date.
ACCOUNTABILITY
AND INTEGRITY

We are accountable for our actions to women and girls in cities across the world who struggle on a daily basis to achieve equitable urban development. Our integrity is fundamental to this accountability.

Ensuring equitable urban development for all means that WICI is committed to supporting the inclusion of women in many different settings. During March 7-9 2017, WICI attended The Fifth Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas, which brought together key players involved in disaster risk reduction and resilience building from North, South, and Central America and the Caribbean. Hosted by the Government of Canada, in cooperation with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), the Regional Platform was the first opportunity for governments and stakeholders of the Americas to discuss and agree on a Regional Action Plan to support the implementation of the Sendai Framework for DRR 2015-2030 (Sendai Framework). The Huairou Commission joined WICI in representing the voices of grassroots women who are leading resilience work in their communities, but who are rarely heard at the international level. Collectively, the participants worked to ensure that gendered differences in relation to disasters were taken into account at the meeting.

This year saw WICI’s 2013 project “My City! My Safety!” named a finalist for The City to City Barcelona FAD Award, for offering educational workshops on issues related to security and the social inclusion of women and girls in the urban context. “My City! My Safety!” resulted in active engagement with groups of girls and boys living in a diverse urban environment, in the adaptation of existing participatory tools, and the building of new creative partnerships with local artists, urban specialists and NGOs.

In September 2016, WICI’s Senior Analyst Jennifer Robert-Colomby served as an advisor, and organized the women’s session, at the Global Social Economy Forum in Montreal. Making the recommendation that the rest of the sessions be gender mainstreamed, WICI pushed for greater inclusion of women’s issues throughout the forum.

“My favorite part about working at WICI is the atmosphere that has been created for the volunteers and interns. We are held accountable for our work, because of the responsibility that we have been delegated, but we are also the leaders of our projects. Not to mention that everyone is great to work with – it’s been a valuable learning experience”

– Dina Al Shawwa, Research Analyst (Volunteer)
REFLEXIVITY AND RESPECT

As a learning organization we are committed to reflecting on our actions, learning from our practices and continually evaluating our capacity to achieve our objectives fully in line with our values and principles. An integral part of our reflexivity is to monitor our own practice in treating others with respect.

Throughout the past year, the WICI team prioritized a reflection on the organization’s actions, practices, progress, and structure, both internally and externally. One of the major changes that took place was the development of a new and broader WICI structure, with a revamping of the volunteer and internship program. This change partly relates to the current economic climate, also affecting many other NGO’s, which requires them to be partly volunteer-driven organizations. The team concluded that the organization’s flexibility was a real asset that allowed them to be active and sustainable in spite of funding challenges. At WICI’s 2016 Annual General Meeting, flexibility was highlighted by Board Members as a strength that creates space for WICI’s future generation to innovate and grow.

The WICI team has also reflected on the value of fostering collaboration. For example, the RTC Campaign was not initially a formal McGill group, but RTC was able to work with on-campus groups that helped in room bookings and event funding, as well as attending other relevant campus meetings. However, collaboration provides more than financial advantages, as one member of the RTC team eloquently described:

“While working at WICI this last year, I’ve learned the significance of grassroots movements and that through fostering collaborations, individuals can come together to effectuate positive and lasting change within their communities” – Arianne Kent, Research Analyst (Volunteer)

Externally, WICI has many opportunities to reflect on its work with other organizations through conferences and events. In February 2017, for example, Executive Director Kathryn Travers and Board Member Margaret Shaw attended UN Women’s Global Forum on Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces, held in Mexico City, which brought together some 200 leaders and experts from over 20 cities and countries working to increase women’s safety and inclusion in cities as part of the UN Women Global Flagship Programme.

With that same vision in mind, WICI is also broadening their scope through a piloted initiative that asks its members about their opinions on the thematic areas WICI should focus on. The results are:

1. Sustainable Development
2. Urban Planning
3. Governance
4. Safety
5. Girls and Adolescence
6. Climate Change

“By better consolidating the way in which volunteer teams are structured and improving communication between/within our teams, WICI has developed a clear organizational structure which improves the level of interconnectedness and comradery between volunteers.” – Karlene Ooto-Stubbs, Volunteer Coordinator

From November 30th to December 2nd, Executive Director Kathryn Travers was invited to attend the Women’s Forum for the Economy & Society in Deauville, France. Honored this year were the delegations from Canada and the Philippines, which gave her the opportunity to meet with, and discuss, issues crucial to the advancement of equitable urbanism among globally influential women leaders, including Canada’s then Minister of Status of Women, Patty Hajdu.
This year, WICI garnered a lot of attention on its social media platforms through knowledge sharing and awareness-raising efforts. WICI’s social media presence includes a Facebook and Instagram page, and an entirely restructured website with its own blog. In addition, the RTC project created its own website and Facebook page, and WICI and RTC cross-supported each other’s social media platforms. This proved to be beneficial since the Anti-Street Harassment Video was covered by CBC News (TV), MTL Blog, and several radio interviews. The dissemination of the video through several media outlets helped it gain more publicity, further sharing knowledge on issues of street harassment to the wider Montreal community.

WICI also participated in three online discussions on gender in the city, together with the OECD Development Centre and Wikigender, and UN Habitat. These exchanges took place on Twitter, Facebook and wikigender.org, and included free online webinars to explore the topics in greater detail. The discussions covered the gender dynamics of Africa’s structural transformation; gender perspectives for more inclusive urban mobility; and mainstreaming gender in urban governments. WICI has engaged in several efforts to share knowledge on an academic front. WICI interns Dina Al Shawwa and Arianne Kent set out to conduct their own research with respect to safety on campuses as part of the RTC campaign. This further allowed them to disseminate information regarding safety on McGill’s Campus with the McGill community.

Additionally, RTC held a film screening of the Unslut Documentary which aimed to raise awareness on issues pertaining to sexual bullying and gender based violence. The film screening was followed with a panel discussion, in which several dimensions were discussed such as the ways that GBV impacts mental health, people of different identities/intersections, and women’s navigation/occupation of public space. In November 2016, Kathryn Travers was invited to give a lecture at a Research Seminar on International Development at McGill University.

We believe in, and practice, the sharing of knowledge, continually striving through innovative ways to ensure that this knowledge is fully accessible to all women and girls and therefore to all.
SUSTAINABILITY

Our strategies and actions are to create sustainable transformation of the social, economic, cultural and environmental dimensions of equitable urban development, sensitive to the full diversity of women and girls and to help build the capacity of the organizations working towards the goal of equitable urban development.

On October 24, 2016, RTC attended McGill’s SEAMLESS (Student Executives at McGill Learning, Engaging, Sharing, and Strategizing) Conference where presentations were held by speakers from various campus organizations such as SEDE, Mental Health McGill, and the Office of the Dean of.”

Partnering with like-minded institutions is a major part of how WICI contributes to the sustainability of our message and the long term implications of our goals.

Over the past year, WICI has partnered with many women’s groups in Montreal and internationally at events, presentations, workshops and consultations. These have included, but are not limited to, partnerships with OECD and UN Habitat for the Wikigender online discussions; our work with Plan International and UN Habitat for the Safe Cities for Adolescent Girls programme; our ongoing knowledge sharing and collaboration with UN Women and their Global Flagship Programme Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls; our membership and participation in the Technical Working Group on Gender and Safer Cities, as part of the Global Network on Safer Cities; and our membership in the UN Habitat Gender and Urbanisation UNI Hub. For many years WICI has collaborated with the Huairou Commission, Red Mujer y Habitat and Jagori on projects and events. The Right to Campus team has accumulated fourteen partners and collaborators with networks at McGill.

WICI also actively participated in the Women’s Partner Constituency Group of the General Assembly of Partners (GAP) developed to support Habitat III and the NUA process; and is a member of the Habitat UNI Hub on Gender and Urbanization.

“Through WICI, I have met a community of inspiring women that all have so much different knowledge, strengths, and talents, and collaborating has only made our work better and more effective. I have learned a lot from working with them, and also from working with people outside of WICI. Listening to others, while also developing the skill of having to promote your own work, have been central in working with WICI and Right to Campus” – Hannah Mccasland, Communications Manager (Volunteer)

Left Executive Director Kathryn Travers with participants of the Women’s Safety Audit conducted in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. Above An excerpt from the pictographic Women’s Safety Audit.
**PUBLICATIONS**


2016 Al Shawwa, Dina. “Determining students safety perceptions on and around McGill’s Downtown Campus based on elements of the built environment” (Unpublished undergraduate research) Montreal: McGill University


**MEDIA**

The Guardian – Right to the city: can this growing social movement win over city officials?
CBC News – Anti-Street Harassment Week brings awareness to catcalling in Montreal: Montreal-based organization hit the streets to gather comments and start conversations
CBC News Radio 1 (88.5 FM) Kathleen Ellis Interview
MTL Blog – What Men Vs. Women Really Think About “Street Harassment” In Montreal
The Concordian – Intersectional feminist art exhibition puts spotlight on emerging artists
The Concordian – Blowing the lid off slut-shaming
Le Delit – Je ne suis pas une salope
Stop Street Harassment – Canada: Promoting Right to Space on University Campuses
Stop Street Harassment – Canada: How to Make Cities more Inclusive and Safe for Women (Part II)