

**Appendix 10 Mobile Midnight Picnic Fieldnotes (selected excerpts, various researchers)**

**May 28, 2002, 12 am- 3 am (Jax Guillion)**

After several hours of running around to organize the soccer mom Save the Children Van & the food & drinks, I collected at 11pm the 3 men with whom I was to cruise around during the dark hours of the night. We agree that I'll be in charge of the food & driving, R1 & R2 will be responsible for spreading the word about us. We drive off into the warm, dry night.

12:05 –12:20 First stop Boystown Davie & Homer.

We park on Davie, R2 & R1 go talk to 3 guys working who R2 knows. Get his phone number “Usually he’s dressed as a girl” for a further interview. I note that they are prostituting but they seem to have no responsibility to a pimp. I don’t know anything about how young men are prostituted & make a plan with myself to see what happens.

In the dark, it’s hard to determine their age- the 3 are within 18-28. Two of them seem to me to be people of color- hard to tell in the dark. They want coffee, bananas & granola bars. We convince them to take soup. We discover how awkward it is to serve food out of the side of the van & move the gear to the back. We hang around for about 15 minutes & then R3 recommends we leave. R1 navigates.

Stop #2 12:30- 12: 50 Parking lot on Granville at Helmcken

Some squeegee kids notice us as a charity van & come over to see what’s going on. We give them soup, bread, bananas, hot chocolate, coffee. Hot chocolate is the most popular beverage here. We meet 11 young men (all white), and 1 young woman who had been asleep by a tree. Most of these are wearing a sort of punkrock look: black hoodie with jean shorts over tights. Several are carrying duffel bags. I guess them to be 17-20 years old. I meet an aboriginal guy named Steve who works with Mom 1 night a week on her rounds. He’s 30ish & has lived on the streets when he was young. Now he believes God has sent him to Vancouver to help the youth here. He’s a missionary, who’s worked in many countries. Now he has a day job & wants to spend his nights helping the kids like him who are on the streets. I tell him we’re doing a research project then lose him in the activity of serving soup.

One of the boys asks R2 if he can bum a smoke- R2 says “of course, we have some to give away’. I think that’s cute.

R3 seems frazzled by the activity. The van doors are open. We wait for a lull in the activity & then R3 suggests we leave. Again R1 navigates. We make another loop through Boystown (down Davie to Homer, Homer to Robson). We see one guy working & R1 goes to see if he talk to him or offer him food. He’s not interested- he’s working. So do we. ..

**...Researcher notes:**

I was determined to be cheerful and accommodating on this van run, and very interested in what we’d be up to. I was amused and relieved to be the only woman- it meant for me that we’d have

a boy-related agenda and I would not have to or be good at chatting up boys to come over to our van. Though I was at times amused and resentful about doing the women's work of preparing, serving, and cleaning up after the food, I liked the chance to be able to look over the whole scene from a more peripheral position.

Getting the van & food etc was a logistical nightmare, which took a lot more of my Friday & Saturday than I expected.

As usual, I was thoughtful about what outfit to wear. I was intent throughout the night on chatting with the folks who came up to the van & was satisfied that I was able to ask them their experiences, discuss why we don't like cops, and reveal some things about myself in an amiable way.

#### Analytical notes

##### **Research in the community:**

I'm seeing more evidence that the folks on the street are used to the charity culture and were trying to place us. Research seemed to be new to them- they seemed to be used to Outreach workers and Christian foodvans. I guess we're some cross between both. It does seem that Mom and the volunteers in some of these charity outfits, as further marginalized "service providers" would be a rich source of information about the lives of the street involved youth & the needs they have.

Within our research team, it was apparent that a need for both a plan (to minimize panic, chaos, and risk) and flexibility. In retrospect, considering the rednecks driving by and shouting fag at us, it seems foolhardy to have been in the backalley behind the Dufferin at 3 in the morning (with cops ignoring us) without a safety plan. When we were out there, I was became concerned about protecting us from rednecks, and realized when I had thought earlier about safety, I had drawn on what I know about men's attacks upon women, but that I really have no understanding of how heterosexism plays out in the dark alleys for "visibly" gay men, never mind for gay boys on the street, it would have been useful to discussed this point with the team.

##### **Youth**

The youth we spoke to were all in their 20s- and those we saw throughout the night (both girls and boys) appeared to be 18 or older. While some we spoke to described having been on the street since their early teens, I don't think we asked them if they know any kids who are teenagers and on the street now. I would be interested to know where the younger people are whether their communities overlap with those of the guys we spoke to, because it seemed to me that the young men on the street use each other for support and protection- everyone knew everyone and engaged in what seemed like friendly banter with one another.

##### **Prostitution**

I have a very rudimentary knowledge of how prostitution of boys & men works, and given that all the queer men we spoke to were prostituting, an analysis of prostitution seems important to this project. What I learned was that if you can, you work the Dufferin to try to pick up a date, and that some have an analysis of this as being different from hooking. It was not clear what

conditions lead these young men into prostitution of any kind, though the descriptions of leaving home early lead me to believe it was about economic survival.

### **Housing needs**

The young people we spoke to were variously housed: some were crashing with friends, others sharing a place & paying for it, others sleeping outside. None of those who identified as queer were sleeping outside. What they described they needed was a reliable source of money- some wanted to work, others didn't. Some wished they could get welfare, others didn't. Some were high on drugs, some weren't, but throughout, I heard a desire to be in charge of their own lives, but no practical plans to do it. Given my own frustration in this project with being unable to help problem-solve these material conditions, I began to consider how the existing resources in the community are working to assist youth to describe their own needs and get them met. Does The Center do welfare advocacy? Does it job search support? Does it offer support in finding rental housing? What resources does it refer to for detox? Do youth go there now? If this research project is to generate data on supporting queer youth becoming less street involved, I am hopeful that our interview questions will unearth that data.

### ***June 1, 2002 (Francisco Ibanez)***

#### **Suggestions for next MMP**

- Headquarter: It can be Francisco's house one more week in a row. After that locations need to be altered.
- Under 'other supplies' we forgot Consent Forms and 'receipts' to sign. P.J. had to run home to bring 'cards' but could not go back for other stuff.
- I have created a checklist out of all our experiences. Will copy and pass around.
- Who puts gas in van? Does it have to be returned with full tank. If yes, we need petty cash.
- Less soup or none. More coffee, better quality and real milk.
- Crackers instead of focaccia
- More granola bars and snacks that can be taken away. People doing drugs are not hungry (unless it's weed) and prefer to stash snacks for later.
- Cigarettes were a big hit. They are good to jumpstart a conversation, they break the ice and turn contacts/interview into a social moment.
- Thermoses need to be warmed up with hot water to keep liquid hot longer.
- Set up should be at the back of the van. It looks ratty, youth notices. No cardboard boxes, they should be plastic trays or something that looks more professional.
- Garbage bag needs to be very visible.
- Cash flow is needed. I cannot pay upfront and get the money later. A friend offered me to teach us how to manage petty cash, maybe in the group somebody knows already.
- It was such a good idea to remove mid seat of van and leave back seat to conduct interviews. One sits on the floor and one on seat or both next to each other. It is semi-private. Jacqueline's recorder picked up on conversation well. Not sure our

low quality recorders will. I didn't have to have the mike too close to people's faces to make it uncomfortable.

- Front doors have to be kept closed at all times when no one is in van. Side door open only when interviewing is in process or to get stuff out of boxes.
- It was not optimal to have to come back with food. If we stayed longer, we could have delivered. Do we have more time to spend. Also, it takes away all Friday evening and Saturday morning to work and recover.”

**June 22, 2002      “All Girl” van run (Loree Lawrence)**

“We didn't have much of a plan when we left my place at 11:30 but, in retrospect, I think we did a fine job navigating around the city with intuition as our guide. We began by circling Grandview Park hoping that the solstice would call urban refugees to congregate there. No such luck. Except for a group of four youth (2 of each gender) partying and drinking coolers and some older dog walkers, the park is dead. We talk about the extra 200 cops who have been added to the force and how police harassment has forced young people in particular to search out other places. (I've witnessed the summer street sweep after a year in downtown Toronto. The idea seems to be to stop the fun before it starts and move undesirables underground during tourist season)...

...[at Davie and Bute] one young guy who appears with an equally young woman asks me for “cleans” (rigs) and I say no feeling ill-prepared and somewhat ridiculous – we have surveys but no rigs? When asked whether she would do a survey the young woman with the “cleans” guy said she didn't want to but changed her mind (because of the money?) Now loaded down with granola bars she sits to write while her guy takes off to pee. Beside her a guy strips a bike he has just stolen. The young woman filling out the survey speculates about her annual income and concludes that she makes \$200-\$300 hustling and panning a day to support her drug habit. We are amazed that, in her estimation, she makes over \$60 000/year. In the meantime her guy has come back and left again to get blankets from behind the grocery store. She is uneasy with his absence and checks with us a couple of times to figure out how long he has been gone. We discover that she is only 17 years old. Her drugs of choice are coke and heroine. She gets upset and cries slightly when she believes that her guy has been gone too long so we wait in the van guarding her things while she walks to the corner to look for him. When she comes back another youth arrives on a bike and offers to circle the block to find him. Deciding that she has support we drive away...

...It is becoming clear that, for the most part, though we feel comfortable approaching young men while they're prostituting, it's a different case with young women. The circumstances around young women who are prostituting – in terms of the geographical area that they work in and their relationships to pimps – make it difficult and unsafe to intervene in the van. As a result, we're interrupting entirely different activities and encountering different segments of the male and female street-involved populations when we're out in the van at night. Because we avoid approaching female prostitutes – for good reason – we are limiting our research to

speaking to women who are either panning alone in seemingly safer places or who are in the safety (??) of male friends and boyfriends."