

Trafficking of women and girls

Spring 2007 Bi-annual Newsletter



**Metropolitan Action Committee on
Violence Against Women and Children**

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Newsletter Contents

Message from the ED	p. 3	Volunteer Program Update	p. 13
Message from the President	p. 4	2005 Annual General Meeting	p. 13
Trafficking: Issues to Consider	p. 5	Thoughts from a METRAC Board Member	p. 14
Interview with a Human Rights Lawyer	p. 6	Profile of a METRAC Volunteer	p. 14
Profile of Some Anti-Trafficking Work	p. 7	Thank You to METRAC Supporters	p. 15
METRAC's A Night Out with a Difference and First-Ever Bowlathon	p. 8	METRAC Membership Form	p. 16
Outreach and Education Program Update	p. 9	METRAC Donation Form	p. 16
Community Justice Program Update	p. 10	Greeting Card Campaign Announcement	p. 4
Community Safety Program Update	p. 11	Annual General Meeting Announcement	p. 10
THRIVE Coalition Update	p. 12	Lerners Balancing the Scales Announcement	p. 12

About METRAC

Since 1984, the Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC) has pursued its mandate to build the capacity of individuals, communities, and institutions to prevent and respond effectively to the issue of violence towards diverse women and children. Our mission has been undertaken through public education and training, safety initiatives, partnerships, research, and policy in three (3) program areas: Community Outreach and Education, Community Safety, and Community Justice.

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Message from the Executive Director

Wendy Komiotis, Executive Director

In the spirit of hope we extend a warm welcome to existing and new supporters of our work to build a violence-free society for women, children, and everyone. This is our first Newsletter for 2007, in which we hope to share information about our programs, events, opportunities for involvement, and current issues affecting women and children. This issue's theme is trafficking of women and children, a major contemporary challenge for violence prevention workers. The United Nations estimates between 1 and 4 million women and children, mostly girls, are victims of trafficking worldwide. It is often assumed the problem is one of foreign women and children being recruited and transported into Canada for prostitution markets. In fact, trafficking is a domestic Canadian issue, as much as it is a transnational issue.

Aboriginal women and girls who move from reserves to urban areas are being trafficked into prostitution within Canada and many of them are at risk for experiencing horrific violence. The Native Women's Association of Canada estimates that over the past 20 years more than 500 Aboriginal women may have been murdered or gone missing. The disappearance and presumed murder of at least 68 women who lived and worked in Vancouver's downtown eastside - many of them Aboriginal, drug users and poor - graphically attest to the vulnerability of Aboriginal women and girls to systemic violence.

Globally, predominantly poor women and children are being trafficked into Canada from parts of Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Eastern Europe, for prostitution markets and other employment such as domestic service, manufacturing, and hospitality and entertainment. This means trafficking has gender, race, and age dimensions. As caregivers, and out of desperation, women and girls move within or into Canada to earn a living and send money home to their families. Children are vulnerable by age because they are more compliant and can easily avoid prosecution.

The root causes of trafficking can be attributed to poverty, gender, race, and age inequities, inequalities between nations, global markets, civil war, civil conflict, dispossession, and strict migration policies. Trafficked

Aboriginal children often have histories of child abuse, foster care, and homelessness.

Notably, there is a demand for low-wage trafficked labour by those who employ non-status workers, manage industries, and seek domestic services. Source countries are complicit as they rely on foreign remittances from women and children who are trafficked. The World Bank's Report on Global Development Finance 2003 estimates migrant remittances to developing countries reached almost \$80 billion in 2002 and that these remittance exceeded the net foreign direct investment for the first time (World bank 2003; IMF 2002).

Responses to trafficking have failed women and children, as they tend to focus on law enforcement against crime emphasizing border controls, security, and smuggling in humans. Laws are most visible in US legislation, which fit within the UN framework of anti-international organized crime. While prosecution is needed to stop traffickers, it offers little to prevent and protect the human rights violation of trafficked women and children. Measures to stop the violence of trafficking in women and children must include:

- Solutions designed and facilitated by Aboriginal communities with their distinct needs in mind.
- Elimination of inequalities that create the conditions of poverty for women and children within Canada and around the globe.
- Aid and international development resources to source countries, subject to the protection of the rights of women and children at risk of being trafficked.
- Policies that recognize market demands for cheap labour and facilitate legitimate, safe migration.
- Protection, services, and supports for women and children who need help to deal with the violence they have suffered from being trafficked.

Sources: "Trafficking Reconsidered" (Kamal Kemadoo, Jyoti Sanghera, Bandana Patanaik); "Motion in Place/Place in Motion 21st Century Migration" (Iyotani Toshio, Ishii Masako); National Association of Women and the Law (NAWL); "Stolen Sisters: Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada" (Amnesty International);

Message from the President

Min Kaur, President of the Board of Directors

I am excited to introduce myself as METRAC's Board President, and delighted to open METRAC's Spring 2007 newsletter focussing on trafficking of women and girls. As you read, you will notice that this is a multi-layered topic that is important for us to pay attention to as people who are concerned about the safety and rights of women, youth, and children. Although statistics on the issue are difficult to find, it is clear that women and girls are most at risk of experiencing trafficking, and those who are living in poverty are all the more vulnerable. Like so many kinds of violence, trafficking is a gendered phenomenon that impacts women and girls differently, based on their identities.

Mainstream discussions of trafficking often miss its many complexities

Mainstream discussions of trafficking often miss its many complexities; our hope is that this newsletter will help shed light on the issue in an insightful way.

Our newsletter also outlines some of METRAC's recent innovative work addressing violence against women, youth, and children. You will find updates for our programs, as well as information about special events and initiatives coming up very soon.

I would like to extend heartfelt thanks to all of the people who make METRAC the great organization it is - our dedicated staff, volunteers, and my colleagues on the Board of Directors. I would like to welcome our new Board members: Nina Chomuklieva, Elaine White, Shakti Jeyachandran, Bixi Lobo-Molnar, Sudabeh Mashkuri, Jennifer Mathers, Vashti Persad, Monica Vermani, and Andrea Wobick. We are so excited and thankful to have you. I would also like to say farewell and thank you to departing Board members: Diane Cunningham, Stephanie Dutrizac (Past President), Donna Hepkin, Kimberly Morris, and Katherine Parsons. You have truly made a lasting impact on our organization's well being and for that, we are thankful.

I look forward to being involved with METRAC as it continues to move towards becoming a fully sustainable organization, strong in necessary resources and community support to make a difference for women, youth, and children. I encourage you to join us at our upcoming fundraising event, **Lerners Balancing the Scales: Making Justice Work for Women on Thursday May 10th at SPIN Gallery** (1100 Queen Street West) - it'll be a great night for a great cause. Above all, my sincerest hope is that METRAC will continue doing the work that we do to end violence against women, youth, and children.

"EVERY CHILD DESERVES A VIOLENCE-FREE HOME" GREETING CARDS TO SUPPORT VIOLENCE PREVENTION

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Trafficking: Issues to Consider

According to the Canadian Council for Refugees, trafficking of women and girls occurs anywhere from small towns to big cities, and it can take a variety of forms. For example, it can happen when a woman is brought into Canada for domestic work, her passport is taken from her, and she is forced to work without pay. It can happen where a child comes to Canada with a family and instead of being sent to school, she has to work at home. Trafficking can happen in cases where women are brought to the country to do sex work, with or without their knowledge. Trafficking can also happen within Canada's borders and is not just an international issue - for instance, some of the many Aboriginal women who have gone missing in this country may have been subject to trafficking.

It is difficult to measure the extent of trafficking and estimates vary widely, partially because trafficking can involve many illegal activities and no official statistics are kept. Added to this are the many different definitions of trafficking from sector to sector - the various ideas about what "true" trafficking looks like lead to vastly different measurements of the problem.

Women and children are key targets, especially those living in poverty

Trafficking involves exploitation of people, usually the most vulnerable of a society. It is no wonder, then, that women and children are key targets, especially women and children living in poverty. These women and children can be subject to deception and kidnapping, but they may also get into trafficking situations as they seek survival and an escape from poverty for themselves and their families. Trafficking usually involves forced labour, including domestic work, sex work, service work, and manufacturing work. Finally, trafficking involves transportation across borders or within a country - certainly, people kept away from their home, community, family, and first language will be less likely to know their rights and particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

A 2000 United Nations Special Rapporteur report explains that women in trafficking situations are

subject to many forms of physical and sexual violence, especially if they try to exercise their freedom of movement. Government policies can create a climate where those abuses are tolerated or "in their attempts to respond effectively to growing international concern about trafficking, [governments] may misconstrue the needs of victims and ... institute policies and practices that further undermine the rights of women."

Trafficking needs to be approached from a human rights perspective

It is clear that trafficking needs to be approached from a human rights perspective, rather than simply from a criminal law perspective. The Canadian Council for Refugees states that victims of trafficking must be given non-conditional protection that is not dependent upon the trafficked person providing testimony or other assistance in prosecution. "Without a legislative mechanism to protect victims," the Council notes, "people who are trafficked can not access basic survival services. Nor can they count on other support such as translation/interpretation, counseling, or legal advice which may make them aware of available alternatives."

Government resources are needed to make sure that women and children who have been subject to trafficking can access the health care, housing, and legal and victim assistance they need. On a more local level, widespread implementation of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policies may help make it safer for trafficking victims to come forward with less fear that they will be subject to detention and deportation.

Sources: "Trafficking of Women and Girls", (Canadian Council for Refugees, April 2006); www.trafficking.ca (Canadian Council for Refugees); "Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, on trafficking in women, women's migration and violence against women, submitted in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 1997/44" (29 February 2000).

Interview with a Human Rights Lawyer

Sudabeh Mashkuri, Vice-President of the Board of Directors

Sudabeh has years of experience as a human rights lawyer and is very knowledgeable on issues faced by diverse women and girls.

Q: What does it mean to you to look at trafficking as a human rights issue?

A: I think that the majority of governments look at trafficking as an issue of law and order, enforcement, and criminality, rather than looking at its root causes ... such as poverty, globalization, lack of opportunities, restrictive immigration policies, gender discrimination, social and political violence against vulnerable populations, and demand for services in countries that women and children are being trafficked to. By focusing on issues of power, choice, and consent, the dialogue on forced migration changes to focus on human rights rather than enforcement of restrictive migration policies or organized crime prevention ... a rights-based approach would take into consideration the needs and the rights of those being trafficked as well as the responsibilities of the receiving states.

Q: What is the biggest legal challenge in addressing trafficking of women and girls in Canada today?

A: There is a lack of public and state awareness of what constitutes trafficking and the plight of those being trafficked ... Secondly, there is a stigmatization of those who have been trafficked, because the anti-trafficking laws generally focus on sex trade work. Other labour sectors such as factory work, agricultural work, domestic service, the garment industry, begging, and forced marriages are often ignored. I also believe that there is a lack of housing, health care, social assistance, legal advice and protection for victims of trafficking ...

Q: What are some of the important international law considerations in addressing trafficking of women and girls?

A: The UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime was ... supplemented by a Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons in 2003, which addresses trafficking in the context of organized crime rather than migrants' rights; ... anti-trafficking measures are framed mostly as migration control measures. This Convention, in my

opinion, is not a human rights based international instrument. I think that ... one should use instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ... and incorporate a gender-based analysis in new

Countries that demand the services of trafficked people rarely apply international laws to protect their rights

protocols. However, countries that demand the services of trafficked people rarely apply international laws to protect the rights of trafficking victims.

Q: How does trafficking of women and girls intersect with immigration status issues?

A: The majority of trafficked women and girls end up in Canada without any immigration status ... In May 2006, the government brought in temporary measures for victims of trafficking after much pressure from advocates. Currently, if a trafficked person can prove that they are a victim of trafficking, they can apply and receive a temporary resident permit for up to 120 days for a "reflection period." They may also apply for Interim Federal Health program to receive emergency medical assistance. These measures are not enough ... trafficked persons may eventually become a part of the vast number of undocumented migrants who live and work in our society and contribute to our economic system without any rights and protections.

Q: How do you think organizations and individuals can advocate for the rights of women and girls who have experienced trafficking?

A: We should approach our politicians to speak about issues affecting trafficked women and girls, such as poverty and lack of access to justice, housing, health care, and permanent immigration status. Service providers should be trained to detect whether a woman or a girl has been trafficked and provide appropriate referrals and services. Lastly, it's important to raise awareness of the serious issue of trafficking and undocumented migrant workers in Canada and attempt to change the system that perpetuates a demand for the services of trafficked persons worldwide.

Profile of Some Anti-Trafficking Work

Bahar Bashi and Kamila, METRAC Volunteers & Farheen Beg, Justice Program Coordinator

Stop the Trafficking Coalition (STT), co-chaired by Toronto-based activist Irena Soltys, is composed of individuals, informal groups, and organizations from across Canada. It is dedicated to three related objectives:

- preventing the most vulnerable elements of society from falling into the hands of traffickers;
- combating the actual trade in human beings and those that perpetrate it; and
- helping victims of the trade reintegrate successfully into society.

Stop the Trafficking Coalition (STT) is the effort of those in the Ukrainian Canadian community and many other concerned Canadians who wish to put an end to this crime. STT does this by providing public awareness on trafficking and partnering with immigration and police officials.

Another organization working collaboratively with STT is Help Us Help The Children (HUHTC), which focuses on the plight of Ukrainian orphans. HUHTC organizes anti-trafficking awareness and life skills sessions for orphans and facilitates summer and winter camps for them. The goal is to inform the children about the risk involved in accepting work offers from abroad. HUHTC also provides an information booklet containing contact information for Ukrainian consulates and women's organizations abroad for those who choose to leave the country and find themselves needing help.

The solution is multifaceted, requiring cooperation

Although focused on the Ukrainian elements of the trafficking in humans, Stop the Trafficking (STT) recognizes that it is a much wider social and economic problem that has echoes around the world and here in Canada. According to STT, the solution is therefore multifaceted, requiring the cooperation of many agencies and the coordination of work in broad thematic and geographic areas. The STT has sought to

establish cooperation with a wide variety of groups, including the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the Toronto Police Victim Assist Program, Streetlight Support Services, local shelters, and others.

In November 2005 Canadian anti-trafficking activists were successful in their law reform efforts when Bill C-49 was introduced into Federal Parliament. Previous to this law, Canada did not have explicit anti-trafficking legislation; only immigration legislation addressed the issue. This law makes possible the punishment of

Previous to Bill C-49, Canada did not have explicit anti-trafficking legislation

perpetrators, and provides more assistance for victims. The Bill's victim assistance guidelines, introduced in 2006, recommend that courts impose the punishment of life imprisonment for traffickers who kidnap, assault, rape, or murder their victims. Bill C-49 is available online at www.parl.gc.ca.

Stop the Trafficking (STT) believes that:

- Traffickers are criminals.
- Individuals that create the "demand" for trafficked persons must be held accountable.
- The Canadian government must change immigration regulations to recognize the subjects of human trafficking as victims of a crime and not as conspirators in a criminal act and offer protection.
- The Canadian government must ensure coordination among government agencies and law enforcers.
- The Canadian government must work nationally and internationally to address the issue of trafficking to protect and support women and children.

For more information about the Stop the Trafficking (STT) Coalition, contact 416-806-4469. For more information about Help Us Help the Children, visit www.chornobyl.ca. For international information on anti-trafficking work, visit: www.safehorizon.org, www.kvinnoforum.org, and www.traumacenter.org.

METRAC's A Night Out With a Difference & First-Ever Bowlathon

Andrea Gunraj, Outreach Manager

On September 18th 2006, METRAC hosted its third annual A Night Out *With a Difference* fundraising event. Held at the Drake Hotel in downtown Toronto, the night turned out to be a wonderful celebration to support METRAC's work to end violence against women, youth, and children. Guests of A Night Out enjoyed delectable food, lovely gift bags, live entertainment by MJ Cyr (acoustic guitar soloist and singer/songwriter) and Oufiti (acapella trio), and a fabulous silent and live auction.



A Night Out With a Difference

METRAC thanks RBC Financial Group for its Platinum Sponsorship of A Night Out. We would also like to thank our auction and gift bag donors (listed on page 15). Last but not least, we would like to thank everyone who came out to this event and supported METRAC's work.

METRAC also held its first Bowlathon at Bowlerama West on Saturday, December 2nd 2006. Approximately 100 people collected pledges and participated as Team Captains and Bowlers to support Respect in Action (ReAct), METRAC's peer-to-peer youth violence prevention program. Together we raised \$15,000 to make a difference in our communities!

Our thanks go to the Bowlathon's Lane Sponsors: All Languages Ltd.; Anne Spencer Insurance Agencies Ltd., Borden Ladner Gervais LLP; Kyle Spencer - Bosley Real Estate; Debra Smith, CA; Frito Lay; Kristyn Wong-Tam; Lerner's LLP; Sherrard Kuzz LLP; Woolgar, Van Weichen Ketcheson, Ducoffe LLP; and Donovan by Design Inc. We also thank Team Captains, Bowlers, and those who made pledges - we would not be here without all of you!



METRAC's Bowlathon

Outreach & Education Program Update

Andrea Gunraj, Outreach Manager & Alana Lowe, ReAct Coordinator

METRAC's Outreach and Education Program has been busy raising public awareness of violence against women, youth, and children. We were delighted to learn that our website, www.metrac.org, received more than 1.2 million hits over 2006 - an indication that people need relevant information to identify what gender-based violence is and understand how they can make a difference in their communities.

Respect in Action: Youth Preventing Violence (ReAct), has been continually delivering youth peer-to-peer workshops, trainings, and speaking engagements about preventing violence against women and youth in Toronto and beyond. ReAct has had the privilege of partnering with Tumivut Youth Shelter to deliver a series of workshops with youth who use the shelter's services. We also recently recruited new Youth Peer Facilitators who bring a wealth of experience and skills to the program. Finally, ReAct has continued to participate on a number of coalitions and committees to promote youth safety and draw attention to the issues of violence against young women, including the Toronto Police Service's Youth Advisory Committee to the Police Chief and the Toronto Youth Cabinet's Young Women of Colour Collective.

The Outreach Program is in its last stages of our



Images & characters from the RePlay game

RePlay Video Game Project, funded by the Ontario Women's Directorate, in partnership with the White Ribbon Campaign, Springtide Resources, and the London Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children. It is exciting to see how the game and accompanying resources are shaping up as fun tools to help children and youth aged 8 to 14 years old know about healthy relationships, challenge sexism and inequity, and envision a violence-free world. Stay tuned for our RePlay media launch and visit www.metrac.org to play the RePlay Video Game in the near future.

We are also in the process of completing a massive revision, reprint, and translation of written violence prevention resources for women and youth. They include zines and booklets for youth about sexual assault, dating violence, systemic violence, and violence at home; multilingual bookmarks listing community services for diverse communities; and tuck cards for youth about sexual harassment and dealing with sexual abuse. All of these revamped materials will soon be available for order for individual and organizational use.

In January 2007, we participated in a meeting of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights that addressed the application of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as it is applied in Canada. Sudabeh Mashkuri, METRAC's Vice-President, presented METRAC's feedback calling for:

- more effective legislation to assist children facing violence at home
- a holistic strategy to eliminate child poverty
- immigration and refugee laws that better allow for family reunification of children and their caregiver(s)
- a recognition of the gendered nature of violence and its impact on the lives of girls.

The Outreach Program has continued to participate in intersectoral networks and coalitions to address violence against women, youth, and children. Our thanks goes to community partners who work with us to deliver effective programming to raise awareness about violence in diverse communities.

Community Justice Program Update

Farheen Beg, Justice Program Coordinator

In Fall 2006, Clara Ho (METRAC's Legal Director), facilitated three days of training in Toronto for 26 service providers. METRAC's Legal Information Training Workshops are popular and another round of training was arranged in February and March 2007 to accommodate 24 registrants who were on the waiting list. The training is designed to support anyone whose work involves women who have experienced or are experiencing intimate partner violence. Over the course of the three days, Family Law, Criminal Law, and Immigration and Refugee Law were covered. Thank you to the many guest speakers (CLEOnet, Legal Aid Ontario, and a variety of lawyers) who generously volunteered their time and shared their expertise. Here is some feedback from participants:

- *"I am really amazed at all the materials that you provided. I find them very valuable. I really enjoyed these workshops (more than workshops I've been to recently) as I find the information to be very practical to my work with clients."*
- *"The trainer was patient and great at explaining things in terms everyone understood."*
- *"I really enjoyed the interactive and diverse presentation styles ..."*

In December 2006, the Law Foundation of Ontario granted METRAC funding for another 18-month period of important work to make justice more accessible to vulnerable and marginalized women who have experienced violence. We have begun to form community partnerships to develop legal information and materials for Aboriginal women, women in the workplace, and criminalized and imprisoned women.

A major initiative we have been involved in is Family Law Education for Women (FLEW), a province-wide legal education project. Its goal is to raise awareness of women's rights and options under Canadian and Ontario family law for vulnerable women who face barriers due to factors such as immigration, ethno-cultural background, faith background, language, disability, or geography. This project came about as a result of the changes to Ontario's Arbitration Act and other related legislation and is funded by the Ontario Women's Directorate.



Sudabeh Mashkuri & Loly Rico at forum

On February 27, METRAC's "What's New in the Law?" forum was presented by Clara Ho and Loly Rico (moderated by Sudabeh Mashkuri) on trafficking of women and girls. Community members, service providers, and women's advocates were present, along with representatives from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Stop the Trafficking Coalition. METRAC's Justice Program staff continue to present legal information workshops upon request. Recent workshops were presented at Ryerson University, George Brown College, the University of Toronto, Asian Community AIDS Services, and Jewish Family Services.

Legal information pamphlets are available in eight languages (English, French, Spanish, Simplified Chinese, Punjabi, Farsi, Russian, and Tamil). English pamphlets were recently updated. All legal information materials are available upon request, free of charge.

METRAC's Annual General Meeting

Thursday June 7, 2007
519 Church St. Community Centre
6:00-8:00 PM

*With panel discussion on the
issue of violence against
Aboriginal women*

Info: 416-397-3135 | www.metrac.org

Community Safety Program Update

Narina Nagra, Safety Director

METRAC's Community Safety Program continues to address violence against women, youth, and children by building the capacity of communities (particularly those who feel most vulnerable to violence) to assess and respond to personal and community safety needs; developing and implementing community safety initiatives and action plans with strategic partners; and broadening community understanding of safety to include the experiences of discrimination as a barrier to safety in various marginalized communities. METRAC's primary community development tool is our Safety Audit. The goal of a Safety Audit is to evaluate the safety of streets and public spaces. Through the audit, common safety concerns come to light by opening up discussions among residents on violence that can lead to long-term solutions to make communities safer for everyone. This spring, we are eager to integrate our newly revised Community Safety Audit Kits in neighbourhoods across Toronto.

Our Safety Audit process will be implemented in priority neighbourhoods to increase safety supports in the city's more vulnerable communities. We will also support neighbourhood Safety Audits outside priority neighbourhoods by delivering Safety Audit training sessions in May for various Toronto residents, community groups, and organizations, with priority given to women and ethno-lingual groups (Chinese, French, Punjabi, Spanish, and Tamil). All safety audit priority results will be compiled into a report at the end of the year.

The Community Safety Program is also developing new safety materials, resources, and workshops, including a new Community Safety Program brochure, workshops on personal safety for frontline workers and women's safety, a youth safety workshop, and new safety materials for women and community workers.

THRIVE Coalition Update

Narina Nagra, Safety Director

THRIVE: the Multicultural Women's Coalition Against Violence and Oppression is a coalition of agencies and individuals working together to develop a response to the issue of violence against women of colour, Aboriginal women, and their communities. THRIVE was established in Toronto in 2002 through the initiative of METRAC.

In 2006, THRIVE underwent several changes to increase participation, refine the coalition's membership, and clarify THRIVE's goals and objectives. These included revisions of our mission, vision, and basis of unity to focus on training, research, and policy reform; expanding our membership base to include individuals; and implementation of a new structure to integrate a Steering Committee and an Annual Members' Meeting.

THRIVE also hosted its first annual forum entitled "Women of Colour: Creating Change and Challenging

Violence" in October 2006 at Women's Health in Women's Hands to great success. Over 100 diverse women from across the Greater Toronto Area convened together for a day filled with inspirational

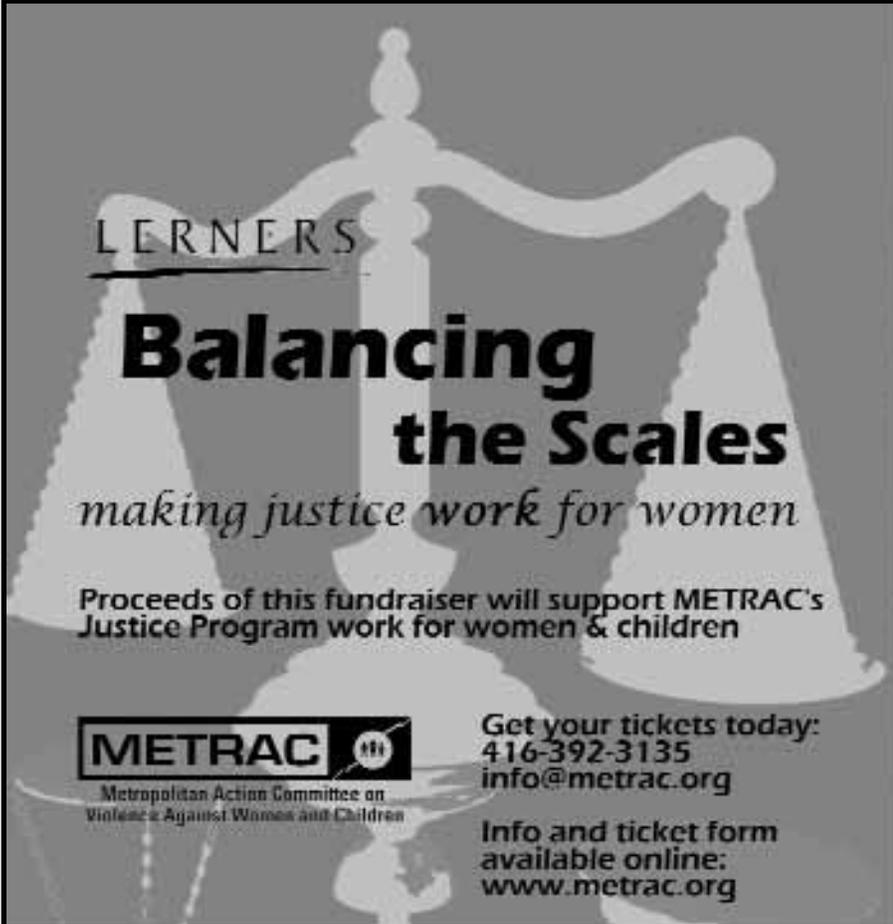


THRIVE's Women of Colour Forum

speakers and entertainment, delicious food, and rousing discussion. The forum provided an opportunity to develop collective strategies and network on how to address issues of access and gaps in services for women of colour and Aboriginal women experiencing violence.

The THRIVE Coalition is excited to continue to collectively address violence and oppression against women of colour in all its forms in 2007 through the work of its membership, which includes: AIDS Committee of Toronto, Asian Community AIDS Services, Assaulted Women's Helpline, City of Toronto's Emergency Medical Services, Council of Agencies Serving South Asians, Housing Connections,

MUJER, Multilingual Community Interpreter Services, Nellie's, The Salvation Army's Immigrant and Refugee Services, Women's College Hospital's Sexual Assault/ Domestic Violence Care Centre, Sexual Assault/ Rape Crisis Centre of Peel Region, Sherbourne Health Centre, Springtide Resources Inc., St. Joseph's Women's Health Centre, Supporting our Youth (SOY), The Multicultural Inter Agency Group of Peel, Thorncliffe Ontario Early Years Program, Toronto Rape Crisis Centre, Trans Anti-Violence Project at the 519 Church St. Community Centre, Women's Counselling, Referral and Education Centre, Women's Health in Women's Hands, Women's Multicultural Resource Centre Of Durham, and Working Women Community Centre.



LERNERS

Balancing the Scales

making justice work for women

Proceeds of this fundraiser will support METRAC's Justice Program work for women & children

METRAC
Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children

Get your tickets today:
416-392-3135
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Info and ticket form available online:
www.metrac.org

Join us
Thursday May 10
6:30 pm at
SPIN Gallery
(1100 Queen St. W.)

- + Live entertainment:
Farheen Beg & DJ Vashti
- + Food by Rancho Relaxo
- + Silent Auction 6:30-9:00 pm
- + DJ Party 9:00 pm onward
- + Tickets \$25 advance, \$35 door
(DJ party entry included)
- + \$10 entry for DJ party only

Many women and children who face violence are unaware of their legal rights. METRAC works to increase access to justice for vulnerable women and children by providing accessible, relevant legal information.

Thank you to our Gold Sponsors:

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Volunteer Program Update

Suzanne Methot, Admin-Volunteer Coordinator

METRAC's latest crop of volunteers participated in an orientation session on February 10th, 2007. Since then, they have been busy taking on their new duties - everything from photocopying the newsletter you now hold in your hands to updating METRAC's referrals binder to staffing the registration table at various events. There's always something to do at METRAC, and our volunteers have been stepping up to the challenge. We have also confirmed 9 volunteers for METRAC's Lerner's Balancing the Scales fundraiser (happening May 10th), including a smartserve-certified volunteer bartender!

If you've visited METRAC lately, you've probably noticed that the library is undergoing a transformation. We've cleared out the dusty stuff, removed items to the basement, and are also re-organizing the resource section. Kirsten, a longtime METRAC volunteer, has been in charge of the reorganization project. She's spent many days at METRAC clearing the shelves, grouping materials by subject matter, and labelling new sections on the bookshelves. Good thing she's not allergic to dust! Her next step is the creation of an improved cataloguing system, so staff, members, and volunteers can more easily access the items in our archives.

But volunteers aren't always stuck indoors. On February 14th, a METRAC volunteer delivered a presentation at Fairview Library on the topic of violence against women. She modified speaking notes from the Outreach and Education Program to better meet the needs of the audience she was presenting to.

And on April 23rd, a METRAC volunteer attended an event at Harbord Collegiate Institute, organized by the University of Toronto's Faculty of Law, aimed at introducing Grade 10 civics students to social justice organizations.

METRAC's volunteer program also includes placement students. METRAC usually has at least one placement student on site, from institutions such as George Brown College, York University, and Ryerson University. These fabulous women work in various program areas and perform a variety of duties as part of their academic studies. They come from a variety of backgrounds - some are just out of high school and others are mature students with work experience - but they all contribute a great deal to the agency. Currently, our placement students are assisting with the following projects:

- planning community safety audits and train-the-trainer audit workshops as well as special safety projects;
- programming and special events; and
- METRAC's upcoming rebranding work.

The volunteer program exists to build connections among the community, the membership, and the agency. It also exists to provide work experience and skills training for women interested in working in the area of violence against women. We welcome volunteer and placement student applications - for information, please visit METRAC's website at www.metrac.org.

2005 Annual General Meeting

METRAC held its 2005 Annual General Meeting on October 11, 2006 at the 519 Church Street Community Centre. Attendees learned about our work, asked questions, and had a say in the organization's structure. Thanks to Amanda Dale and Pamela Cross (right) for speaking about their experiences working on Religious Arbitration and Women's Rights in Ontario.



Thoughts from a METRAC Board Member

Bixi Lobo-Molnar, METRAC Board Member

To imagine a world in which we as women can exist free from the threat of violence is not easy. This is made especially difficult when our daily experiences with violence and oppression silence us, divide us, and remind us that we are living in dangerous times. Fortunately, I derive courage by being in the presence of the strong, intelligent, and diverse women who sit on METRAC's Board of Directors. These 12 women, along with METRAC's staff, volunteers, and active community members, remind me that I am not alone in my endeavour to live in a safe community. Indeed, METRAC is not only a place for strategizing, information-sharing, and community-building, it is also a place of hope.

As a METRAC board member, I look forward to the

learning process that inevitably results from working with diverse women towards social and political change. Moreover, I believe strongly that the inclusion of the experiences of all women is a pivotal aspect of violence prevention that must constantly inform my work as part of a decision-making body.

It is by working through the complexities, the differences, and at times the contradictions to include all women that I hope METRAC as an organization will continue to welcome creative and new ways of approaching issues of violence from an anti-oppression framework. Here, the words of Gloria Anzaldúa come to mind: "For positive social change to occur we must imagine a reality that differs from what already exists".

Profile of a METRAC Volunteer

Suzanne Methot, Admin-Volunteer Coordinator

Ellie* feels comfortable at METRAC - which is a good thing, seeing that she recently spent an afternoon sitting at the admin desk, fixing METRAC's database. "The experiences that I've had, the way that I've lived, have shaped who I am as a person," Ellie says. "That outlook and perspective is what draws me to METRAC. METRAC looks at systemic issues, and I understand those issues on a personal level. I understand the effects that poverty and violence have on youth, and I know what it's like to struggle."

Ellie spent some time searching - she attended a theatre program but dropped out after a year - and she says she is finally in a position to use her personal experience to give back to the community. She approached METRAC in the summer of 2006, interested in volunteering.

"I just turned 22, and I'm finding myself!" Ellie laughs. "I'm going through the process of finding my individuality. The academic program I'm in [Information Technology Management] is not one I'm naturally

**A pseudonym.*

interested in. So I try in the rest of my life to balance that out, which is why I volunteered. METRAC's mandate speaks to my passions and interests. If I can use my academic knowledge along with that, it's perfect."

Ellie is assisting METRAC with a database project. She will work with the Admin Coordinator to check the accuracy of records, enter new information, and update our data system. METRAC is incredibly lucky to have a qualified volunteer willing to contribute her valuable skills to the work of the agency.

"I want to contribute to METRAC's goals," Ellie says. "I'm really passionate about women's issues, and that makes me want to contribute to METRAC in a valuable way." Ellie feels that this commitment will pay dividends. "It goes both ways," she says. "I give, but I get to take, too. I'm excited about attending events and learning from all the women here. But I want to contribute, too, and put in my share of the effort to end violence against women."

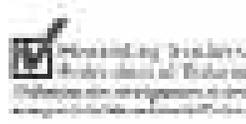
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Staff, Board, Volunteers, Interns, & Community Partners

We extend thanks to our dedicated staff, board, volunteer, and intern team. Thanks to departing volunteers and ReAct Peer Facilitators for their hard work in the organization. METRAC would also like to thank our community partners, including organizations and individuals dedicated to ending violence against women, youth, and children.

METRAC Membership Form



Please mail or fax completed form back to METRAC. A non-tax deductible receipt will be sent to you. Thank you for getting involved!

Yes! I understand that METRAC is committed to promoting the rights of diverse women and children to live free from violence, and I endorse this mission!

Name: _____ Organization(if applicable): _____

Full address (with postal code): _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

I'm a new member I'm a returning member Send me volunteer information

Annual Membership Options and Fees (choose one that applies; please pay by cash or cheque; if paying by Visa, please use the Visa information space in the donation form):

- \$10 (sliding scale \$0-\$10): youth 15-24, students, seniors, under/unemployed individuals
- \$25: other individuals
- \$35: non-profit organizations (one delegate can vote at Annual General Meeting)
- For profit organizations (one delegate can vote at Annual General Meeting, based on annual budget):
 - \$50,000 or less: \$100 \$50,000-\$1,000,000: \$250 \$1,000,000 ore more: \$500



METRAC Donation Form

Please mail or fax completed form to METRAC. A tax deductible receipt will be sent for donations of \$10 or more. Donations include a complimentary one-year membership to METRAC. Thank you!

Yes! I want to support METRAC with a (choose one): One-time donation Monthly donation

My donation will be: \$25 \$50 \$100 \$200 Other: \$ _____

Name: _____ Full address (with postal code): _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

I do not want to become a member at METRAC at this time Please keep my donation anonymous

Payment information (choose all that apply):

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- I am paying by Visa: total enclosed: \$ _____

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