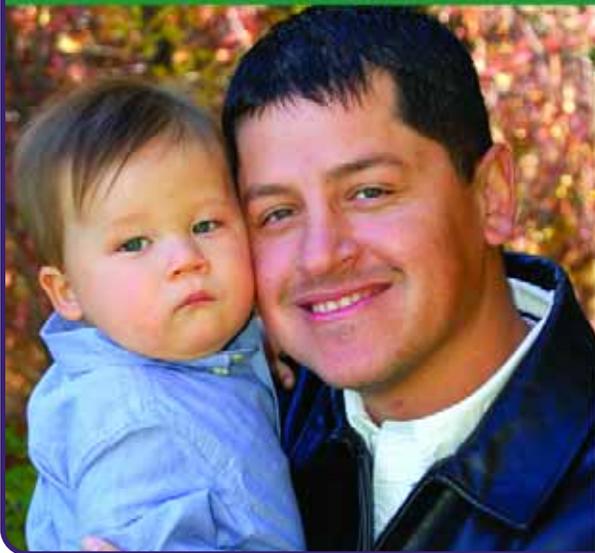




engaging
boys and men
to help prevent violence against women and girls



Spring 2009 Bi-annual Newsletter



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

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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 program areas: Community Outreach and Education, Community Safety, and Community Justice.

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Message From the Executive Director

Wendy Komiotis (Executive Director)

Welcome to the spring 2009 edition of METRAC's newsletter. With warmer weather ahead, I hope we can look forward to long sunny days, despite the current economic downturn. Since our last newsletter, we have undertaken a multitude of projects, from developing several legal information materials, delivering legal trainings in the far north, hosting international partners, facilitating youth violence prevention workshops in schools on violence against young women, producing a social policy research paper on women's experiences of violence and poverty with recommendations to inform Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy, to surveying the safety needs of LGBTTIQQ2S women and Trans communities of Toronto in order to develop and enhance safety resources. As always, we are proud to provide our members and supporters with updates on these and other METRAC activities.

In this issue, we also examine how men can work for gender equality and the prevention of violence against women and girls. Not discounting the progress made



*Night Court Comedy Hour fundraiser for
the Justice Program (October 2008)*

by the women's movement, sexism continues to flourish in its most extreme form of male violence against women and girls. To the point, some people might ask, what will it take to end gendered violence? What can be done differently to make real and lasting change? What can men and boys do to help end violence against women and girls? If there is to be hope, there must be attainable answers to these

questions.

At METRAC, we believe that ending violence against women requires holistic approaches that engage men and boys in redefining themselves, their practices and relationships to women, girls, and to each other in order to achieve the gender equality precepts of our constitution. By becoming “allies” - men who challenge, resist and reject violence and the advantages of sexism - to women, men can be powerful agents of change, actively working for gender equality and non-violence in their personal relationships, families, communities, and institutions.

*By becoming allies to women,
men can be powerful agents of
change working for gender equality
and non-violence*

Despite the frequency with which male violence against women occurs, in practice, not all men are violent. As part of a community response, these men can actively promote alternative, positive, and constructive behaviours and attitudes through modeling and mentoring boys and men in new ways of being. These men can also break the silence on violence against

women by inspiring other men to work for change in their lives and in the lives of other men. Furthermore, men have a major role to play in nurturing their sons and daughters in a manner that prepares them for true and meaningful equality between women and men.

While there is no quick fix to ending violence against women and girls, I dream of the day when a critical mass of men of diverse races, classes, abilities, sexualities, genders, and faiths will step up to the challenge of being allies to women and work to end the cycle of gendered violence against women and girls.

Announcements

METRAC's **Annual General Meeting** will be held on Tuesday September 29 from 6:00 to 8:30 PM (location to be announced). The focus will be on poverty and gendered violence and our *No Cherries Grow on Our Trees* social policy report. We are also hosting a **Community Safety Audit Training** on Wednesday September 23 from 6:00-9:00 PM at the Northern District Library. Note-taking, ASL interpretation, and childcare is available on request. Please contact us at 416-392-9138 or assistant@metrac.org for information.

Men and Boys Challenging Violence

Heather Skelton (METRAC Volunteer)

METRAC focuses on prevention of violence against diverse women, youth, and children. Over the 25 years that this organization has existed and the years that the anti-violence against women movement has been working, solidarity between women has been a cornerstone of progress made for those who experience or are at risk of experiencing physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, and sexual abuse. However, in recent years, more attention has focused on the role boys and men can play in reducing gender-based violence and achieving gender equity.

While women and girls suffer most from the perpetuation of gendered violence, it certainly hurts us all. Both boys and girls who witness violence directed at their female relatives learn to associate masculinity with force, and they do not experience the positive

outcomes of equal partners supporting each other with love. Statistics demonstrate that the cycle of violence not only continues in such a context, but it can also negatively impact the abilities to children - boys and girls alike - to establish healthy, fulfilling relationships. Writers at Feminist.com assert that, “the man who believes he is superior to another, also believes that another is superior to him.” Belief in a gendered hierarchy perpetuates women’s oppression and promotes divisions between those with power and those without. In the end, it limits success, connection, and happiness for most of us and ruins communities’ capacities to be just and fair for all.

Since violence against women and girls is most often perpetrated by men and boys, their actions to work against it and support the efforts of women and girls

can be transformative. For instance, boys who witness influential men in their lives taking responsibility for their actions and engaging in caregiving duties are more likely to emulate these traits and are less likely to commit violence against women and children. Many men and boys do not agree with violence and sexism, but do not know how to challenge it and may feel alone in the process. Again, the positive influence of and support from other men and boys in these situations can be of great benefit.

Understanding how power works in our world, it is clear that violence against women and girls is part of a larger dynamic of oppression, and not every man experiences power and oppression in the same ways. For instance, men and boys who are part of racialized

and/or LGBTTIQQ2S communities are more at risk of violence, discrimination, and abuse. While shared experiences of violence and oppression are rooted in the same problem of unequal power in our world, they can also be used to build solidarity and motivate people to become allies against all forms of oppression and violence, even the forms they don't experience personally. This is often the case for marginalized men and boys working to end gender-based violence and sexism, and it is a key factor in the inclusion of diverse young men in METRAC's Respect in Action youth program and our newly forming Black men's group to challenge violence against women and girls. Organizations such as the White Ribbon Campaign and Men Can Stop Rape also aim to educate and encourage men to take action. The Walk a Mile in Her Shoes initiative encourages men to engage in literally walking a mile in women's shoes and learn to engage in honest communication about sexual and gender violence. Many of these programs emphasize men's responsibility to recognize the privileges afforded to them by virtue of their gender and empower them to speak openly about abuse they have witnessed or committed.

Update: GGC Girls & Safety

This year, our Safety Program will partner with Girl Guides of Canada-Guides du Canada (GGC) to launch **Girls for Safer Communities**, a project funded by Status of Women Canada to engage GGC girls and leaders in safety audits across Canada.

Engaging Men & Boys in Black Communities

Anna Loi (METRAC Volunteer)

Leopold Campbell is vice-principal at Fisherville Junior High School in Toronto. In addition to the work he does in that role, such as scheduling classes, supporting teaching staff, facilitating connections between the school and community organizations, and maintaining relationships with parents, Leopold is also a member of METRAC's newly forming Black men's group to address violence against women and girls. While still in its early stages, this group focuses on engaging Black men and boys on the issues and opening a space for them to challenge gender-based violence, as few programs address racialized men. Indeed, the opportunity to work in partnership with racialized men and boys to challenge violence often remains untapped.

Leopold is particularly interested in addressing gender-based violence, because he notes it hurts both men and women. For him, it's important to directly confront patriarchy in the process of trying to reduce violence,

as patriarchy is a key factor in how violence is justified in our everyday lives. He also says that it is important to focus on what men and boys who are violent towards women and girls view as normal - he notes that it can be difficult for them to truly understand the impact and consequences of this behaviour, as boys and men from a young age are so often rewarded for relating and responding in aggressive ways in our society.

The opportunity to work in partnership with racialized men and boys to challenge violence often remains untapped

It is also essential to move a step deeper and examine how socialization of boys can play out with different nuances for different communities, depending on individual and shared experiences within those

communities.

“The number one role that men can play in preventing and ending violence,” Leopold says, “is having an open mind.” He says that it’s important to engage boys and men in Black communities with reflective conversation, free of biases or attacks. Such a dialogue with is indeed necessary, particularly given experiences of racism that Black communities face and the racist ways that members of Black communities - especially Black men - are so often portrayed in the media and in our society’s mainstream imagination as instigators of violence. Leopold stressed the need for a safe, comfortable, and flexible space for dialogue, where people feel mutually respected and, as such, encouraged to join in with the discussion. In his work

Update: Recent Events

The **Night Court Comedy Hour** fundraiser was held in October 2008 at Arcadian Court and included performances from the Monkey Toast Players. Many thanks to our sponsors and donors. **Women Read** celebrated International Women’s Day in March 2009 with authors Priscila Uppal, Alissa York, and Lisa Gabrielle. Thank you to donors, Shamba Foundation, and Random House of Canada for your support.

with the Black men’s group, he is especially interested in participating in a forum event to bring boys and men from Black communities together, as it can serve as an effective and accessible way to build up participation of children and youth.

Interview: Doctors Without Borders

Marie Skinnider (MD MPH DTM&H) is Health Advisor for Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) Canada. MSF is an international humanitarian aid organization that provides emergency medical assistance to populations in crisis in over 70 countries around the world. Provision of medical care, counseling, and other forms of support to survivors of sexual and domestic violence is part of the response of addressing people’s health needs. MSF strives to make comprehensive health care for victims of sexual violence available in all of its projects. Where there is massive need, specialized clinics may be opened, like MSF’s Women and Children Support Centre in Papua New Guinea.

In conflicts situations, Marie explains that rape, sexual violence, and domestic violence is often increased and can be widespread. Although the media may not always mention it, “Rape is often used as a weapon of war to inflict humiliation, punishment, fear, and destroy communities.” In addition, crisis can disrupt the well-being of communities, which can lead to increased violence at home. Issues of gender-based violence necessarily come up when patients seek care at MSF supported health facilities, whether for injuries related to physical violence; medical care required for rape, for example, post exposure prophylaxis for HIV, hepatitis B, sexually transmitted infections, and unwanted pregnancies; and/or counseling for the emotional and mental impacts of violence.

Marie says that MSF’s role is to provide health care to survivors of violence. Women who are raped may experience rejection by husbands and family members. Through counseling for the woman and her family, the issue of stigma and rejection can be addressed. Women who are survivors of violence can also have difficulties accessing care. This can be related to stigma and a lack of available services, and it may tie into gender oppression of women in general - in Canada and other countries, research demonstrates that women and girls do not always get the rights and respect they deserve. MSF believes that it is important to understand these dynamics. With respect to men and boys, Marie notes that, “Sensitising men in the community regarding gender-based violence is very necessary to address access barriers.” For MSF, sensitisation focuses on the health consequences of violence and the need for timely care - for instance, women who experience rape must access medical care within 72 hours to best address sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancy. Although MSF’s role is not violence prevention, their programs are part of the matrix of services that address violence both before and after incidents. Marie says that access to health services for survivors of violence is of key importance. “Men and women need to understand the health consequences of violence,” she says. “More information, education should be done to address this to different groups in the communities, including men and boys.”

White Ribbon: Men Working with Men

Humberto Carolo, Director of Programs at the White Ribbon Campaign in Toronto (WRC), works with individuals and organizations in Canada and around the world to engage men and boys in promoting gender equality and ending violence against women. He manages the Canada-Brazil cooperation program, an initiative to help strengthen the Brazilian White Ribbon Campaign Network and support development and implementation of programs and campaigns targeted at youth and men in general.

Q: What are best practices to involve diverse men and boys in addressing gender-based violence, both locally and globally?

A: Gender equality and violence against women must be viewed as men's issue and, as such, men and boys need to be involved and inspired to speak up against gender inequality, and work alongside women's organizations to bring about much-needed change. Almost all violence against women is committed by men but not all men commit violence against women. In fact, 75% of Canadian men feel that it is important for men to speak out against violence against women and 66% feel that men are not doing enough about the problem. Men must be considered part of the solution.

The White Ribbon Campaign began in Canada in 1991, two years after the Montreal Massacre. The White Ribbon symbolizes a man's pledge to never commit, condone, or remain silent about violence against women. The campaign took off very quickly in Canada and shortly after 1991 and it began spreading to the rest of the world. Today, it is present in almost 60 countries in every region of the globe. The campaign is so successful because it involves large numbers of men and is easy to implement at the community level. Violence prevention and gender equality programs that have directly or indirectly engaged young men in gender-based violence prevention are showing promising results throughout the world, yet these still comprise a very small percentage of overall programs targeting youth. Our own WRC gender-based violence youth initiatives have proven successful and the demand for direct youth engagement has increased significantly over the past years. Involving men and boys in gender equality must occur at all levels of

society - in schools and community groups, in the workplace, at home, in government, and in popular culture. Any program or initiative that engages men and boys using a positive inspiring approach can make a significant difference in addressing gender equality. Traditional approaches where men are viewed as perpetrators and women as victims have not been successful in changing men's perceptions. However, programs that work to challenge traditional values and norms associated with masculinity and promote new alternative healthy masculinities among young men have shown promising and positive results. These approaches must be tailored to meet local needs and address specific community values and norms in order to be successful.

Programs that promote alternative healthy masculinities among young men show promising results

Q: What are barriers to the involvement of men and boys, particularly marginalized men and boys in Canada and beyond?

A: Both cultural and systemic barriers exist all over the world which prevent men and boys from being engaged in gender equality. Some examples include strict traditional norms associated with masculinity (e.g. conventions and social values, misogyny, homophobia, fundamentalism), lack of visible male role models that embrace gender equality, continued views that gender equality and gender-based violence are woman's issues, lack of experience of organizations and governments in engaging men, and so on. In order to successfully increase the involvement of men and boys in gender equality, programs must work to deconstruct and redefine traditional masculinities. Men's violence against other men must also be addressed as this continues to create systems of male domination over other men, whether it be because of age, class, race, sexual orientation, or economics. Social policies that address and promote men's increased role in family life, equal division of responsibilities at home, and involved fatherhood have proven successful in increasing women's role in society and men's emotional health and well-being.

Safety Program: Pushed (Back) in the Closet

Anna Loi (METRAC Volunteer), Narina Nagra (Safety Director)

METRAC has an overall commitment to building safer communities for women, children, and everyone. The goal of the Community Safety program is to develop the capacity of individuals and communities to assess and create positive responses to personal and community safety needs. Today, we continue to re-define our understandings of safe communities by being attuned to the ever-changing realities in today's society.

Results of the survey demonstrate that LGBTTIQQ2S communities are aware they are more likely to be targets of violence

In 2008, we focused our attention to the safety needs of the broad and diverse LGBTTIQQ2S (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, intersex, queer, questioning, two-spirited) communities of Toronto. Public safety and the increased risk of violence for these communities is often ignored, but as violence, harassment, and discrimination continue to fester, METRAC and our community partners recognize the importance of addressing these communities' unique safety needs and concerns.

In partnership with the 519 Church Street Community Centre's Anti-Violence Program, we developed an online survey to assess the safety needs of LGBTTIQQ2S women and trans individuals in the City of Toronto. The project was supported through funding received from the Community One Foundation (formerly the Lesbian and Gay Community Appeal Foundation). From the results of survey findings, we recently launched *Pushed (Back) In the Closet: Research Findings on the Safety Needs of LGBTTIQQ2S Communities of Toronto*. The purpose of the report was to gain a general understanding of women's and trans communities' experience with and fear of violence in public spaces within Toronto, and to use this information to develop and enhance the safety resources available for these communities. The survey was structured to capture the complexity of individual experiences of harassment, discrimination, and violence and in turn, the multiple ways oppressive



Panel for Pushed (Back) report launch (May 2009)

behavior is used against members of LGBTTIQQ2S communities. Results of the survey illustrate that individuals within the LGBTTIQQ2S women and trans community are aware that they are more likely to be targets of violence - one of the key reasons for highly motivated hate crimes is that targets do not conform to mainstream norms of heterosexuality and/or gender identity. The survey also highlighted that a high number of incidents are unreported to police because respondents believe they will be re-victimized and/or their victimization will not be taken seriously. Ultimately, the survey demonstrated that, although many LGBTTIQQ2S individuals feel safer in their own neighbourhoods, they live with a heightened sense of fear and vigilance about their safety. When asked to identify unsafe spaces, themes included: feeling less safe using public transit, feeling less secure in parks or at nighttime on the street, and feeling endangered when using public washrooms. In addition, a wide range of strategies to deal with violence and harassment were given. They ranged from alterations to physical spaces, such as improved street lighting at night and more public spaces identified as "positive spaces", to education campaigns geared towards police, community services, and schools, to more enforcement of hate crimes legislation. It is telling that many respondents spoke about constantly changing their physical appearance to appear straight and prevent getting targeted. The report demonstrates that increased research, education, advocacy, structural changes, and action are needed both at local and national levels to address the ongoing unsafety LGBTTIQQ2S communities experience. *To access the full report and recommendations, visit METRAC's website or contact us at safety@metrac.org.*

Justice Program: Up North & Down South

Zahra Dhanani (Legal Director)



METRAC's Bowling 4 Change fundraiser (November 2008)

Through funding from the Law Foundation of Ontario and in partnership with our Provincial Advisory Committees, the Justice Program conducted research and created legal information materials for women experiencing workplace violence and criminalized/imprisoned women. These projects were directed and guided by our Women in the Workplace Provincial Advisory Committee and Criminalized Women Provincial Advisory Committee representing 11 organizations across Ontario. We are currently translating the materials into Spanish, Tagalog, Tamil, Simplified Chinese, and Vietnamese. We are also coordinating launch events and developing a distribution plan. The workplace materials will be launched on May 28 at the Safe, Respectful, and Inclusive Workplaces Conference hosted by the University of Western Ontario, and the criminalized women's materials will be launched on August 7 at No Holds Barred, a Prisoner's Justice Day celebration hosted by METRAC in partnership with the Elizabeth Fry Society of Toronto.

Justice Program team members traveled to Kapuskasing, Ontario in early February to conduct training on the law's impact on young and older women. They were well attended and received - participants said, "Thank you. Heavy topic was made enjoyable and down to earth for us to pass on to clients"; "Excellent job. Awesome networking opportunity, valuable and applicable info and very informative. Thanks for coming way up north. Excellent, knowledgeable, professional and dynamic!" With the limited access to legal information and

services, there is a huge demand for the kind of training that METRAC's Justice Program provides.

Melody Darkey, Program Officer from our international partner agency Women in the Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF) visited us in February and March. We were also joined by James Leong and Reena Shadaan, who have been doing outstanding work as interns at WiLDAF. METRAC and Canadian Crossroads International (CCI) hosted a panel at the University of Toronto on February 25, where Melody, James, and Reena shared WiLDAF's work and "court watch" advocacy being done in Ghana. We also hosted a meet-and-greet to share work being done on domestic violence legislation in Ghana. It took place in Ottawa during the Post-Jane Doe Era Sexual Violence Conference, and it brought influential women of colour together to discuss issues of violence in a Canadian and international context. METRAC's Legal Director, Zahra Dhanani, also traveled to Accra, Ghana in April to visit WiLDAF and learn from their amazing work and best practices.

Finally, the Justice Program provided guidance and coaching to six pro bono law students from the University of Toronto from November 2008 to March 2009. Working in conjunction with the students, several public legal education workshops were developed and delivered to organizations that provide services to women who have experienced violence. Workshops covered topics including child protection, sexual assault and harassment, and immigrant and refugee women's rights. Sessions were delivered at shelters including YWCA Toronto, Red Door Shelter, and Juliette's Place.

Update: V-Day & More

Our sincere thanks extend to students organizing **V-Day events at Ryerson University** and **V-Day Toronto** organizers, who donated proceeds of their multiple initiatives in 2008 and 2009 to METRAC. Also, our thanks extend to **Benjamin Pierre**, who donated proceeds from their fall 2008 launch party to our ReAct youth program.

Outreach Program: Passion for Prevention

Andrea Gunraj (Outreach Director)



National Victims of Crime Awareness Week activities

METRAC's Outreach Program has been busy. Respect in Action (ReAct), our youth violence prevention program, continues to deliver workshops, trainings, and speaking engagements for youth, educators, and youth workers. Through an evaluation of services delivered in 2008, it is clear that the program is making an impact - 94% of youth participants expressed that they learned "a lot" or "something" and 98% of participants gave the workshops a rating of "great" or "okay". We also recently launched an Advisory Committee of teachers, youth workers, and youth who will drive the program's success.

Through funding from the Department of Justice, ReAct engaged in public education activities for 2009's National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. In addition to developing educational materials, we delivered several speaking engagements, workshops, and information for Toronto schools, students, and teachers on issues of violence against young women.

ReAct wrapped up the Youth Alliance Project on safety for young women in Toronto. Funded by the Canadian Women's Foundation, we released a literature review and report on violence and safety for young women and developed *Don't Make Me Repeat Myself*, a peer youth training on how youth can advocate for girls and women. This training is available at www.metrac.org for download and is being offered through ReAct.

We also completed our partnership with Social Services Network, who we teamed up with funding from Canadian Women's Foundation to reproduce ReAct's program model in Markham. We trained young women to develop their own peer workshops and

workshops and deliver them to local schools in the area. This initiative demonstrates that ReAct has proven itself to be a best practice model in preventing violence against girls and young women.

The Girl EmPower Project, funded by the Government of Ontario and in partnership with Girl Guide of Canada-Guides du Canada (GGC), has been moving forward in supporting more than 40,000 Ontario girls and women in GGC programming to build healthy, equal, and non-violent relationships. After receiving hundreds of entries for the Girl EmPower Badge contest, girls voted online and chose their favourite design. We are in the final stages of testing the curriculum and activities for Guiders and Brownies, Sparks, and Pathfinders.

We recently teamed up with San Romanoway Revitalization Association to contribute to their Achievers Project, a gang alternative strategy for middle school youth in Jane-Finch who are at high risk. METRAC is working with SRRA to create curriculum on gender, sexuality, and sexual harassment. We also completed a quick project, funded by the Ontario Government, to reprint popular, educative resources on stalking, mediation, and healthy relationships.

In October 2008, the Take Action Project culminated to the release of *No Cherries Grow on Our Trees*, a social policy research paper to address women's poverty and violence they experience. Last month, we had the opportunity to present the report's recommendations to the Ontario Government's Cabinet Committee on Poverty Reduction alongside the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH).

Finally, the Outreach team has continued to be a strong voice. We participated in research on violence against youth to inform the Ontario Government's Domestic Violence Advisory Council's work to address gender-based violence; outreach for Canadian Women's Foundation's Shelter from the Storm Campaign; interviews with media such as the Toronto Sun, CBC Radio, and OMNI News South Asian Edition; and the Police's Youth Advisory Committee and Lost Lyrics.

Thank you to METRAC's Supporters

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We acknowledge the funding received from the Department of Justice Canada - Victims Fund

Staff, Board, Volunteers, Interns, Donors, & Partners:

We extend our thanks to METRAC's dedicated staff, board, volunteers, and placement students. Thank you to departing staff members Mary Auxil Guiao and Rita Nketiah, as well as departing placement students, Raksha Jeyaratnam, Kelly Montgomerie, and Lok Wong for their hard work. METRAC would also like to thank our community partners, including organizations and individuals dedicated to ending violence against women, youth, and children. Finally, we extend sincere thanks to individual and anonymous donors who have contributed to METRAC since fall 2008 - we could not survive without your support.

Yes! I would like to support METRAC's work to end violence against women, youth, and children. Enclosed is my gift of:

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