



*Images (left to right, starting at top): volunteer appreciation at 2011 Fabricating Change event; TELUS volunteer painting office; volunteer performance by Stolen from Africa at 2007 "Get Up, Stand Up" event; student volunteer leading safety training*

# *The power of volunteers*

Fall 2012 Newsletter



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***METRAC is a community-based, not-for-profit organization that prevents violence against diverse women and youth. Since 1984, this mandate has been undertaken through public education, training, safety initiatives, partnerships, research and policy in three program areas: justice, outreach and education and safety.***

*Image: volunteer hat design at 2005 Open House event*



## **METRAC's Team**

### **Board of Directors**

- Melanie J. Adams
- Khadeeja A. Ahsan
- Carole Dahan, Treasurer
- Shabnum Durrani, Secretary
- Tracy Ford, Co-President
- Martha Ocampo
- Andrea Sanche
- Kripa Sekhar,
- Nadine Sookermany, Co-President

### **Staff**

- Asam Ahmad, ReAct Co-Coordinator
- Tricia Bennett, Justice Projects Coordinator
- Karen Darricades, SchoolED Project Co-Coordinator
- Michelle Davis, Safety Director
- Najla Edwards, ReAct Co-Coordinator
- Andrea Gunraj, Communications Specialist
- Joanna Hayes, Legal Information Coordinator
- Wendy Komiotis, Executive Director
- Jessica Mustachi, Safety Coordinator
- Jannette Saberon, Administrative Assistant
- Talayeh Shomali, Coordinator of Sustainable

### **Development**

- Shequita Thompson, SchoolED Project Co-Coordinator
- Tamar Witelson, Legal Director
- Navneet Marwaha, Safety Audit Coordinator

### **ReAct Youth Peer Facilitators**

- Kavita Bee
- Linda Frempong
- Ray B. Garcia
- Angela Musceo

### **Placement students:**

- Silmi Abdullah
- Shadika Grimes-Jackman
- Manivillie Kanagasabapathy
- Arooba Khan
- Crystal Sukhdeo

# Message from the Executive Director

Wendy Komiotis, Executive Director



*Image: dance performance at METRAC's Annual General Meeting (June 2012)*

*"No one can whistle a symphony. It takes an orchestra to play it" (H.E. Luccock)*

METRAC operates like an orchestra, and volunteers are instrumental in helping us fulfill our mandate and vision. Volunteers regularly contribute to governance, programs and administration, and in doing so, they play an integral role in shaping our success.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all past and current volunteers for sharing their time, knowledge and skills with METRAC. Your work has made an impact on our collective efforts to end violence towards women and youth. We are much better off because of you.

## *Volunteers play an integral role in shaping METRAC's success*

I would also like to take a moment to remember Tanya Veinot, a student intern who worked in our ReAct youth violence prevention program in 2005. Sadly, Tanya passed away, much too soon, in 2006. She will be remembered for her passion to prevent and end sexual violence.

It has been five years since METRAC has operated without a Volunteer Coordinator and the critical funding required to support such a position. Yet, our commitment to sustaining volunteer involvement remains strong. When funding dried up in 2007, all

staff members stepped forward and offered to keep the work active in their respective areas. To this day through the collaborative efforts of our administrative and program team, we have maintained a dedicated pool of some 40 youth and adult volunteers annually.

I am truly thankful for the commitment of staff who continue to keep volunteer involvement alive and vibrant, utilizing limited funding resources from the City of Toronto and the Law Foundation of Ontario.

One of our strategic directions is to strengthen the organization. To this end, there is much room to improve volunteerism. As a result of years of chronic underfunding, we need to focus on obtaining adequate resources to enhance volunteer recruitment and retention; keep volunteer work descriptions relevant and current; develop training and orientation; implement strong exit processes; create an environment that encourages consistency and accountability; and build a solid reward and recognition system. We recognize that clear policies and consistent practices are key to the sustainability of successful volunteer involvement. It is our plan to address these issues over the next two years and consult with our volunteers about their needs and what's most important to them.

Shifting to the broader organizational context, METRAC has been very busy working to strengthen our programs and administration. We have made structural changes to the ReAct Program to increase supports for youth programming and engagement. Our search for an accessible office and programming space continues. Over the summer, we brought in external support to help us develop an anti-oppression framework that is a work-in-progress. We have finalized new value statements and they are ready for approval by the board. We will soon roll out staff training on our new human resources policies and we are continuing to bolster our finance policies.

As part of recognizing volunteers, I would like to give my heartfelt appreciations to our volunteer Board of Directors. Over the years, I have had the privilege of working closely with these fabulous women who commit at least five to 10 hours per month to lead the organization by setting priorities, making policy and

*“I found this workshop empowering and inspiring.” (THRIVE sound workshop participant)*

*Image: participants performing at a THRIVE Ripples of Voices: Waves of Change sound/spoken word workshop (October 2012)*



financial decisions, reporting to the general membership and supporting me in my role as Executive Director. To all board members, past, continuing and new, I am truly thankful for your dedication and work to keep our agency strong.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank departing staff members Keli Bellaire and Darcel Bullen and our summer student, Mehret Biruk. We also extend a warm welcome to new staff members, Asam Ahmad, Tricia Bennett and Najla Edwards. Tricia used to be a placement student with us and Asam and Najla

both have a long history as Peer Facilitators in the ReAct program. We're happy to have them on board in their new roles. I'd also like to give a special year-end thanks to staff for their unwavering passion to our mission and for making METRAC a great organization.

As the year closes, we extend best wishes for a happy, healthy 2013 to our funders, donors, partners, volunteers, students, community members and friends. We look forward to sharing updates and initiatives again in our spring newsletter.

## Legal information events

### Training for frontline service providers:

- Vulnerable Status - the impact of immigration changes on women: November 20 or December 4 (10:00 AM to 5:00 PM)
- Take back the neighbourhood - personal and community responses to sexual assault: November 26 (9:30 AM to 5:00 PM)

Location: 519 Church Street Community Centre (519 Church Street), Toronto

For information and to register: call 416-392-9138

or fill out the registration form ([www.metrac.org/upcoming/upcoming.htm/events](http://www.metrac.org/upcoming/upcoming.htm/events)).

**Legal information webinar** on Mediation, Arbitration and Other Types of Alternative Dispute Resolution: November 22 (12:00-1:00 PM). Stay tuned to register online: [www.yourlegalrights.on.ca](http://www.yourlegalrights.on.ca).

Find other webinars on the Ontario Women's Justice Network website ([www.owjn.org](http://www.owjn.org)) and on the Family Law Education for Women website ([www.onefamilylaw.ca](http://www.onefamilylaw.ca)).

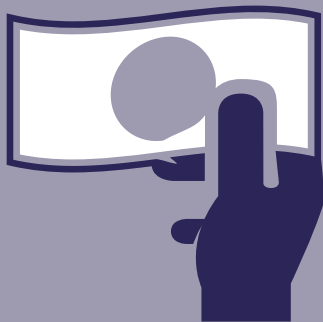
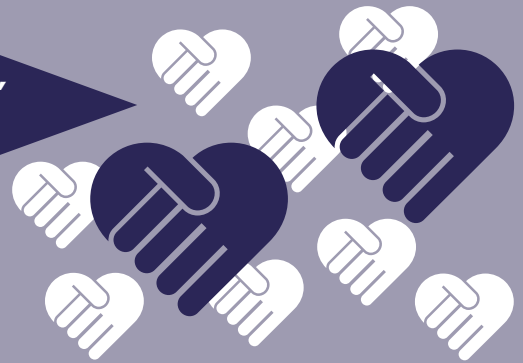
# Volunteers in Ontario: findings

Andrea Gunraj, Communications Specialist

From the Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating ([www.givingandvolunteering.ca/files/giving/en/factsheets/volunteering/volunteering\\_ontario\\_2004.pdf](http://www.givingandvolunteering.ca/files/giving/en/factsheets/volunteering/volunteering_ontario_2004.pdf)).

## "Much comes from the few"

"Although many Ontarians volunteer, the majority of volunteer hours are contributed by a small minority ... [the] **top 25% of volunteers ... contributed 77% of total volunteer hours.**"

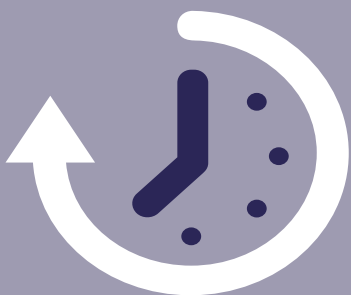


## "What volunteers do"

"The most common activities performed by Ontario volunteers were **fundraising** (47% of volunteers did this), organizing or supervising events (47%), sitting on a committee or board (33%), and teaching, educating, or mentoring (32%)." ("Money" image designed by Øystein W. Arbo from The Noun Project)

## "Motivation of volunteers"

"Ontario volunteers were most likely to say they volunteered because they **wanted to make a contribution to the community** (92%), wanted to use their skills and experiences (76%), or had been personally affected by the cause the organization supports (57%)." ("Community" image designed by Roger Cline from The Noun Project)

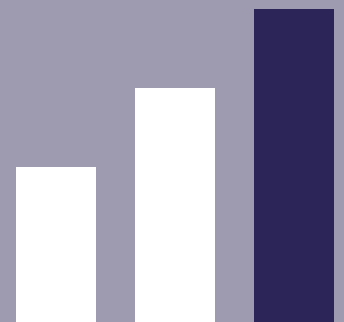


## "Barriers to volunteering"

"Those who did not volunteer were most likely to say they did not do so because **they did not have the time** (68%), were unable to make a long-term commitment (61%), or donated money instead of volunteering (52%)." ("Time" image designed by Richard de Vos from The Noun Project)

## "Employment"

"Those who were employed were roughly as likely to volunteer as those who were not in the labour force (53% vs. 51%); however, volunteers who were not in the labour force **tended to contribute more hours** (197 on average) than volunteers who were employed (147 hours)." ("Bar Graph" image designed by P.J. Onori from The Noun Project)



# Girl Guides & Safety Audits

Shanon Kalra-Ramjoo, Communications Committee volunteer

Girls for Safer Communities is a project that was funded by the Ontario Government. It allowed Girl Guides of Canada-Guides du Canada and METRAC to partner and mobilize girls to become safety leaders in their communities. We collaborated to create a “Girls for Safer Communities Challenge”, complete with a special Safety Audit tool achievement badge for volunteer Girl Guide members and leaders. Since the project’s launch in 2009, hundreds of audits led by Girl Guide units have been conducted in neighbourhoods across Canada.

The 8th Brantford Girl Guides is one such unit. Supported by leaders Elaine Burnside and Mary Boudewyn, unit members Hannah, Kenzie, Aimee, Emily, Kaya, Kristina, Hope, Chloe, Bella and Haillie-Jade did a Safety Audit of sections of public space in their Brantford community.

These community-involved volunteer girls told us that doing the challenge allowed them to learn about their surroundings and doing things like identifying pay phones and coming up for a code word for “family”. Even though “seeing dog poop”, “garbage lying around” and graffiti made them sad, the girls enjoyed learning about dealing with strangers and taking pictures of safety issues in the course of the audit. The

girls especially noticed “alleys that weren’t closed off” in unlit alleys and doorways.

What’s amazing about the 8th Brantford Girl Guides is that they brought their comprehensive audit results forward to their city mayor, who the girls say received them well and was “funny”, “friendly” and “helpful”. As a result of their community action, waste removal bins were added to high traffic areas that were disordered and appeared uncared for.

Unit leaders Elaine and Mary said that, to begin addressing girls’ safety, they “started with a self-defense class” and discussed personal safety issues with the support of others in the community. During the audit itself, they say that the most important thing was to really listen to the girls’ safety concerns and “let them write down on their own clipboards”.

We think the 8th Brantford Girl Guides are rockstar community volunteers making a real difference for everyone in their neighbourhood. In addition to this Safety Audit work, the girls are also working on a graffiti removal project and community garden project. We’re delighted to learn about their successes and look to them as an incredible example of what girls can achieve.

*The Girls for Safer Communities Challenge “gave us the opportunity to get out in the neighbourhood, meet the mayor and discuss personal safety.” (Elaine Burnside, Unit Leader)*

*Image: 8th Brantford Girl Guides meeting with the mayor to discuss Safety Audit results*



# In the Words of a Placement Student

**Shadika Grimes-Jackman, placement student**

*Shadika is a student who participated in the SchoolED Project at Cedarbrae Collegiate Institute. SchoolED is an after-school violence prevention initiative of METRAC's ReAct Program, funded by Status of Women Canada. Now she's a volunteer co-op student doing her placement at METRAC.*

When I first entered the SchoolED program, I was a little bit nervous; I didn't really know anyone who was there. But as the weeks went on I grew to like the environment I was in. I would look forward to coming to school on Thursdays just so I can see the SchoolED facilitators and my new friends - also to have very interesting conversations about things that are usually kept on the hush-hush. One of my favourite moments in SchoolED was during the 2012 March Break sessions. It just revealed who the real and dedicated members were. SchoolED youth participants at my school, Cedarbrae Collegiate Institute, got to meet the participants at John Polanyi Collegiate Institute (and that felt like the best song collabo ever done). I personally think these kinds of groups are important because free time usually means boredom, which is usually where mischief starts. They keep us busy and in the end, out of trouble. For me, SchoolED was kind of like a pick-me-up time, a "forget about school and home for a moment" kind of a place. It was also a breeding ground for new friendships and my possible future career.

Now I am working as a program assistant co-op student until January 2013. I've accomplished quite a

few things such as posting youth-related programs and opportunities on the ReAct Program's Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/respectinaction](http://www.facebook.com/respectinaction)) and researching programs and resources for youth in Toronto. I also watched a number of documentaries that gave me a new perspective on this generation and others to come. My favourite was *The Interrupters* (Kartemquin Films, 2011), because of how straightforward the youth "violence interrupters" were. They didn't sugarcoat anything; if it had to be told, someone was going to say it.

*SchoolED was a breeding ground  
for new friendships and  
my possible future career*

I'm looking forward to having a wonderful year with the SchoolED project and hopefully with new youth joining too. I want to take the outreach segment of our work to the next level, possibly make some big changes with small steps at Cedarbrae. I want to experiment and see what kinds of things solidify groups so that in the future when we've graduated, the essence of positive change will continue. I am also looking forward to learning how to work with youth effectively, knowing when to speak and when to listen. Really and truly, I have way too many things I'm looking forward to! For now, I will look forward to having another day with METRAC.

# In the Words of a Former Volunteer

**Tamar Witelson, Legal Director**

*Darcel Bullen first volunteered in the summer of 2010 as a member of the Youth Advisory Team developing "What It Is", a digital quiz game challenging sexual violence against youth ([www.challengesexualviolence.org](http://www.challengesexualviolence.org)). She was finishing a Masters thesis in Women and Gender and Sexual Diversity Studies at the University of Toronto. At the same time, she was looking for a way to effect the change she had been studying about. Her volunteer experience grew into employment with METRAC and has now taken her farther afield towards realizing her goal of*

*being an activist for social justice. In her own words....*

METRAC is unlike any organization I had been a part of. The mission, staff and actions of the organization all came together to support racialized women and marginalized youth in innovative ways like games and self-determined advocacy in local communities. As a volunteer responsible for shaping a community tool, I saw first-hand how existing knowledge in our

communities can be used to support our communities. At the time, METRAC was a place where I could put my beliefs into action and work alongside brilliant people committed to strengthening the capacity of communities to define themselves. METRAC offers space for people to actually practice feminism, anti-racism and equity.

After volunteering at METRAC, I was excited about participating in an organization that represents the living history of feminist and anti-oppressive commitments in the Greater Toronto Area (and in Canada, dating back to before I was born!). I knew I wanted to stay connected to the organization and be part of the amazing team doing crucial work. When

a position opened up at the organization, I did not hesitate to apply and was thrilled to join the team as the Justice Projects Coordinator in the Community Justice Program in July 2011.

Working alongside METRAC's team of lawyers confirmed that there remain so many gaps for women and families to access legal rights, adequate legal representation and ultimately, justice. Not only was I inspired day after day by the dedicated work of my colleagues, but I learned community-based strategies to try to close the gap between what the law does right now and what it could do. I can't wait to become a lawyer and continue to support our collective efforts to challenge gendered violence.

## Board Member Profile: Nadine Sookermany

**Shabnum Durrani, METRAC board member**

Nadine Sookermany has been a member of METRAC's Board of Directors since 2009. She has been re-elected to the position of Co-President after having taken a break from the position for a year. In the past, she has served on the Finance and Human Resources and the Board Nominations Committees and has been involved with the development of METRAC's most recent Strategic Plan. She has also helped by reviewing new policies and procedures and doing ongoing training in areas such as Board Development and Anti-Oppression and Social Justice.

*Nadine finds her work with METRAC incredibly rewarding as it keeps her grounded in feminist work she has long been committed to*

Nadine was familiar with METRAC's work before joining the board. She first started following the organization when she moved to Toronto from Winnipeg and worked front-line in the violence against women sector. Nadine joined the Board of Directors of Nellie's Women's Shelter and used METRAC as a resource for much of her work there.

Nadine was interested in volunteering with METRAC

because it connected well with her work as a Professor in the Assaulted Women's and Children's Counsellor/Advocate Program at George Brown College. She was drawn to the organization because of its capacity as a feminist-minded, violence against women prevention organization and also because of its deep-rooted commitment and applied community practice from a social justice/anti-oppression framework.

Nadine finds her work with METRAC incredibly rewarding as it keeps her grounded in feminist work she has long been committed to. She also enjoys it and is thankful for the opportunity because she gets to support a fantastic group of women.

### Upcoming events

**December 6 Day of Remembrance:** at Central Neighbourhood House (349 Ontario Street), 12:00 to 7:00 PM. A partnership between METRAC, Central Neighbourhood House, Women's Health in Women's Hands, Act Toronto, The Redwood and Elizabeth Fry Society of Toronto. Come and share your knowledge and narratives. All are welcome.

**THRIVE "Ripples of Voices" CD launch:** read page 12 for details.

# Technology in Community Initiative

Karen Darricades, SchoolEd Project Co-Coordinator



Image: “What It Is” Facebook game question and answer card

*“What It Is” is METRAC’s digital quiz game that challenges sexual violence against youth across Canada. It has been downloaded and played over 85,000 times globally since its official launch in November 2010. “What It Is” can be played in English or French at [www.challengesexualviolence.org](http://www.challengesexualviolence.org); it’s also available on that site for download on Java-based mobile phones, iPhones, Blackberry phones and Android phones. “What It Is” has been funded by Department of Justice Canada and TELUS. We’ve been fortunate to work with a special team of volunteers from TELUS to create a Facebook version of the game, led by Ajinkya Kulkarni. He tells us more about the initiative below ...*

Emerson Cho, Jennifer Cua and myself are part of a

team called Technology In Community Initiative in the Business Transformation Leadership Development Program. While it’s quite a mouthful, we are basically a team of new graduates at TELUS making a difference in the community by donating our technology skills. Our team aims to bring technology within reach of organizations like METRAC.

We are creating a Facebook version of METRAC’s “What It Is” game. It features flipping cards in a memory game to link common questions about sexual violence against youth with the facts and realities. It’s a quick, fun and engaging way to help youth and other stakeholders learn about sexual assault and prevention methods. Once the game is launched, anyone with a Facebook account can go to METRAC’s page and play it from there.

The development process has been quite exciting for us. Our team went through iterative cycles of designing the Facebook game, working with METRAC’s Communications Specialist. There have been lots of challenges in the process, but we hope the Facebook game will be ready for launch soon. We hope that making the game available through Facebook will allow for rapid and widespread engagement that will drive violence prevention action on the part of youth and the general population.



*“I learned there are a lot of people out there who are ready to help when the opportunity is given.” (“What It Is” Youth Advisory Team member)*

Image: members of the volunteer Youth Advisory Team who led the design of “What It Is” (November 2010)



*Images: May Be Me Celebration Night (May 2012). Volunteer photographers: Sam Javanrouh and Andisbeh Mina.*

*“The great success of this first year of our May Be Me campaign is due to the contributions of volunteers and generous supporters who believe in the cause. It wouldn’t be possible without them.” (Talayah Shomali, Coordinator)*

## Designing May Be Me

**Shanon Kalra-Ramjoo, Communications Committee volunteer**

The May Be Me campaign was launched in 2012 to support METRAC’s work to prevent violence ([www.maybemecampaign.ca](http://www.maybemecampaign.ca)). Into the future, we hope it will build on its initial successes and branch out to benefit other charities that prevent violence.

METRAC was privileged to interview Golsoo Saimee, volunteer graphic designer for the campaign. Golsoo has a Bachelors degree in visual communications and a graduate certificate from Sheridan College, and she brings over 18 years of experience in the design of print and interactive projects, brand identity and logo development.

Golsoo describes her vision for creating the bold purple May Be Me logo, explaining that she wanted to “create a peaceful image, full of positive energy, as it was the very first impression we make on our target audience.” She says that she wanted it to be “appealing in every sense” and exude “freedom and reliability”. She wanted it to bring to mind not violence, but peace. From a design perspective, Golsoo notes that such messages conveyed to a broad audience should always

be simple and not over-designed.

Golsoo joined the campaign as volunteer designer to support the cause of preventing violence against women and youth. In her role, she created a website, social media wallpapers and profile images, and iconic posters in addition to the logo. Golsoo says she knew the experience would be different from past projects she worked on that were commercial-based. “To be honest with you,” she says, “it was the first time I have worked on a charity fundraising-based campaign with such a great goal.”

*“It was the first time I have worked on a charity fundraising-based campaign with such a great goal.”*

Golsoo is a dynamic designer with an incredibly generous spirit and we look forward to seeing her amazing work into the future. Visit her website at [www.golsoosamiee.com](http://www.golsoosamiee.com).



## EXPRESS YOURSELF IN PURPLE AND JOIN THE MOVEMENT TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND YOUTH

JOIN US TODAY: [WWW.MAYBEMECAMPAIGN.CA](http://WWW.MAYBEMECAMPAIGN.CA)

*We thank our generous May Be Me supporters, volunteers and advisors - our "Purple People" - who helped us raised \$10,993 between January and June. Those funds are now supporting the following METRAC violence prevention initiatives.*

### **Respect in Action (ReAct) youth violence**

**prevention work:** ReAct is our peer youth program that creates opportunities for young people to challenge each other to prevent violence against women and youth. ReAct helps youth understand the warning signs of violence such as abuse in dating relationships, date rape, bullying and harassment. The program also focusses on empowering youth to find healing after violence and do what they can to lead the way toward positive change. With funds from May Be Me, ReAct will deliver violence prevention work in communities that rarely receive this kind of programming.

Earlier this year, ReAct worked with youth to offer a workshop on holistic justice issues and an online version of an accompanying information "zine" (grassroots magazine). May Be Me funds will allow ReAct team members to have paper copies of the zine to distribute to young people in the community.

**Community Safety Audits:** METRAC has a successful history of helping community groups do neighbourhood audits to make public spaces safer for women, young people and others at high risk of violence. These audits are unique because, instead of bringing in external "experts", they allow everyday people from diverse backgrounds to be their own

experts and share what physical features, policies, practices and past incidents make them feel unsafe. They open space for people to create their own solutions to make a difference.

This year, Community Safety Audits have been conducted in neighbourhoods such as the Bloor and Christie area to address incidents of sexual assault. May Be Me funds will help us support more neighbourhood groups to conduct audits across the City of Toronto.

**Not Your Baby app project:** released September 10, the Not Your Baby iPhone app to help people deal with sexual harassment has made a bit of a splash in the media - Jezebel called it "genius". May Be Me funds will help us build on this initial success and release other versions, including one for Android phones.

**Forum on sexual violence:** given ongoing concerns about sexual violence in our communities, we're planning to host an interactive forum in 2013 to support those who are at risk and engage service providers and members of the legal system and government to better support communities. May Be Me funds will help us ensure the forum is engaging and accessible and provides important written materials for attendees to take away.

**Future events:** May Be Me Celebration Night on Friday May 31, 2013 (stay tuned for details).

# Community Justice Program Update

Tamar Witelson, Legal Director



*Image: legal information materials provided at a training*

Autumn is when the Justice Program starts many new projects and sets the agenda for the coming year. This autumn, we will focus on immigration and refugee issues because of recent and expected changes to the law, and their effect on women who are marginalized as refugees, permanent residence applicants, sponsored spouses or as non-status women in Canada. We are planning two day-long training sessions on immigration and violence against women on November 20 and December 4. And we have been talking with community groups and academics about potential partnerships to provide legal education supporting women with precarious immigration status and highlight the Canadian problem of human trafficking, employment and sex trade exploitation.

It's the second year of the Family Law Education for Women (FLEW) campaign, and the fall schedule of webinars includes: Aboriginal women and criminal law; non-court ways of dealing with family law concerns; and the ins and outs of the child protection system ([www.onefamilylaw.ca](http://www.onefamilylaw.ca)).

We have begun training a new group of law student volunteers who will help us write legal information articles for the Ontario Women's Justice Network ([www.owjn.org](http://www.owjn.org)) and present legal education talks in Toronto-area women's shelters. These 16 volunteers from across the province join us from Pro Bono Students Canada and will dedicate up to five hours a week to support the Justice Program.

In fact, the program is currently rich with volunteers. Manivillie Kanagasabapathy, a Masters student in the Public Policy, Administration and Law at York University, is now working with us to organize and expand our database of partnering organizations throughout the province. We are also finalizing a research project with another volunteer to help define the term "marginalized" in the context of our work to support women.

All in all, it's a busy and exciting time for the Justice team, our articling student Silmi Abdullah, and our many student volunteers.

## THRIVE Coalition Update

Jessica Mustachi, Safety Program and THRIVE Coordinator

This fall has been incredibly busy for THRIVE as we have started our Ripples of Voices: Waves of Change sound/spoken word workshops in collaboration with Rosina Kazi and Nicolas Murray from the music group LAL ([www.lalforest.bandcamp.com](http://www.lalforest.bandcamp.com)).

Workshops were highly successful and we are excited for the **CD Launch** that will happen on Friday December 7 between 6:00 and 9:00 PM at Academy of the Impossible (231 Wallace Avenue, Toronto) during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence. It

has been humbling to listen to the voices of women and trans people of different ages and hear about their perspectives and experiences living in this city. As one participant stated about the workshops, "I found this workshop empowering and inspiring."

We are very grateful for funding received from the Toronto Arts Council and Ontario Arts Council to provide this space for women and trans people to create sound art and are very excited for the CD launch coming up next month. Hope to meet you there!

# Community Safety Program Update

Michelle Davis, Safety Director



*Image: area of safety concerns, taken during an audit*

Fall has arrived with its crisp mornings and beautiful colours. Fall also means we are very busy leading community, campus and workplace Safety Audits around Toronto and across Canada. I would like to extend a very special welcome to Navneet Marwaha, Project Lead on Campus Safety Audits, and to our new placements students Arooba Khan and Crystal Sukhde. Navneet will help to lead our campus audits both in the Toronto area and beyond. Navneet previously worked with us on the City of Toronto's Tower Renewal Project and the Girls for Safer Communities Project. Crystal is a final year student at Centennial College's Social Services Worker program. She is helping with our Community Safety Audits, including trainings, walkabouts and audit report cards. Arooba is a fourth year Criminology student at York University. She is supporting our campus audits and literature reviews on campus safety issues. We are very happy to be working with two very enthusiastic and skilled students.

Over the summer, a number of young women were sexually assaulted in the Trinity-Spadina and Christie-Pitts area. In response, City Councillor Adam Vaughan invited us to lead a safety workshop for women from the area. A number of women and service providers attended the event on August 30. We provided a legal overview of what constitutes sexual assault and harassment and led an activity to debunk myths and misconceptions about women's safety. In the last half of the evening, we encouraged community members to consider the action they could take to respond to and prevent sexual violence. Ideas discussed were very good and have led us to consider how we can better

support communities that are coping with the trauma of ongoing sexual assaults.

City Councillor Mike Layton also asked us to lead a Community Safety Audit in response to sexual assaults in Christie Pitts area. We did so on September 10 and almost 30 residents participated. We followed a route with locations where a number of assaults occurred. Persons noted a number of issues in relation to both the physical and social safety environments, including the need for better lighting, improved maintenance and better awareness of the issue of gender-based violence. Please visit our website for the full report ([www.metrac.org/programs/safety/safety.htm#report.cards](http://www.metrac.org/programs/safety/safety.htm#report.cards)).

We are also working with three groups to prevent gender-based violence on college and university campuses across Canada. Last November, Status of Women Canada issued a call for proposals to engage students to lead initiatives that prevent gender-based violence on campuses. The Government of Canada has funded 22 such projects around the country - we are very fortunate to work with some of these groups to share our expertise on the issue, particularly our Campus Safety Audit Process. We are excited to learn from promising practices that will emerge from these projects over the next two years. Engaging and supporting students to be safe from and prevent gender-based violence is very important to fulfilling our mandate and vision.

Preventing and responding to sexual violence remains one of the cornerstones of METRAC. We continue to locate our work in community-led responses to the issue. We are rooted in the history of women's activism to contest and challenge systems that often do not take sexual violence seriously. For 23 years, our community, campus and workplace Safety Audits have been important, action-oriented tools that allow those who live, work and study in a space to not only identify their safety concerns, but also to recommend ways to improve the safety of that space. Our model acknowledges that everyone is an expert on their own safety and that persons most at-risk of experiencing violence are integral to the audit process. Thank you very much for your support of and interest in our work.

# ReAct Program Update

Asam Ahmad and Najla Edwards, ReAct Co-Coordinator

As usual, fall is an intensely busy time of year for the Respect in Action (ReAct) youth violence program. With our SchoolED after school project restarting, as well as regular ReAct programming, the next few months promise to be intensely packed. As we became interim Co-Coordinator, that left only one Peer Youth Facilitator remaining on the team. We've since hired three new Peer Facilitators to make sure requested workshops are done in an efficient and timely manner. We are pleased to announce that the brilliant Kavita Bee, Linda Frempong and Ray B. Garcia have now joined our team - we are all extremely excited to work with them.

ReAct was fortunate to see one participant from the SchoolED Project as a successful hiree for a summer position with the team. Mehret helped organize the program while other participating in day to day activities. ReAct also has a dedicated secondary school co-op student who has contributed critical and insightful feedback to our current programming,

including recruiting and hiring new facilitators, workshop development and program structuring. We are pleased to welcome Shadika and happy to have opportunities for youth in our communities.

Next month, the ReAct team will be travelling to Red Lake in Northern Ontario to deliver a mini-conference for students from four different schools in the region. This is the second time ReAct has been invited to this community, and we are excited to work with both girls and boys this time to help interrupt patterns of violence that some of these young people live with in their communities. This will also be the first time our new facilitators will be presenting with us.

Finally, ReAct is in the process of reviewing all workshop materials and revamping some of our brochures/pamphlets/guides. This will be an ongoing process to make sure our curriculum and promotional materials stay relevant and up-to-date.

## Education and Action Resources

Andrea Gunraj, Communications Specialist

**Not Your Baby:** since its release on September 10, our free Not Your Baby iPhone app has been downloaded 3,831 times and has been featured in media such as The National Post, Huffington Post UK and Canada, Mail Online, Jezebel (September 14, 2012) and Torontoist. We've been delighted with the uptake and hope to build on this initial excitement by adding new categories, features and versions for other smartphones.

*Since its release on September 10, our free Not Your Baby iPhone app has been downloaded 3,831 times and has been featured in many media sources*

Not Your Baby helps users fight, prevent and deal with sexual harassment at work, school, transit, home or in public spaces. It's a "sexual harassment response

generator". Once installed, the app allows users to input where they are and who's harassing them – such as a boss, coworker, family member or fellow student. A possible response is generated "in the moment", based on the input of people who've shared what they've done to deal with similar instances of harassment. Not Your Baby includes resources, information about the law, definitions, tips and stories, and it allows users to submit their own stories and ideas.

**"What It Is" digital game challenging sexual violence:** stay tuned for new exciting "What It Is" initiatives, including an animated short and educational webinars on the issue of sexual violence against youth.

In the meantime, check out our report on the game's impact on youth players and youth ideas about sexual violence, entitled *Game Changer: Evaluating "What It Is", a Game Challenging Sexual Violence Against Youth* ([www.metrac.org/resources/downloads/game.changer](http://www.metrac.org/resources/downloads/game.changer)).



**Game Changer:**  
evaluating "What It Is", a game  
challenging sexual violence against youth

*Images from: Not Your Baby iPhone app; ReAct program's Holistic Justice zine; "What It Is" evaluation report*

*"What It Is. is an excellent tool for  
and has significant potential to prevent and intervene  
in situations of sexual violence ..." ("Game Changer" report)*

evaluating.what.it.is.game.report.2012.pdf).

For instance, the report notes:

*While respondents recognized sexual violence as an issue that affects everyone and acknowledged perpetrators' responsibility, they debated women's "fault" in their victimization, especially in partying and drinking contexts. They struggled with the notion of women's freedom to have a social life and behave, act and dress as they choose. This tension between perpetrator responsibility and victim-blaming is indicative of prevalent social myths about gender roles and rape. Young people are not exempt from the impact*

*of widespread stereotypes and tropes about gender roles and who is to blame for sexual violence.*

**Holistic Justice zine:** in connection with the National Victims of Crime Awareness Week in April, ReAct team members engaged youth to understand their ideas of justice and gaps in their understanding. The result was a Holistic Justice zine to examine what justice is and how you can get it; what forms of justice can be found outside of the usual justice system; and how justice issues and legal matters affect the lives of youth. Find the zine at [www.metrac.org/resources/downloads/holistic.justice.zine.pdf](http://www.metrac.org/resources/downloads/holistic.justice.zine.pdf).

## Articles & opportunities

**OWJN online survey** ([www.surveymonkey.com/s/Y9GK25L](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Y9GK25L)): tell us what our legal information website does well and how it can be improved. Your answers will be anonymous.

**Legal information articles on Ontario Women's Justice Network** ([www.owjn.org](http://www.owjn.org)):

- What is Sponsorship Breakdown?
- Refugee Status in Canada: Gender Related Claims
- Rights and Protections for Live-In Caregivers
- Relationship Breakdown: Common Law

Couples

- The Criminalization of Polygamy: Step Forward or Back for Women's Rights?
- Supreme Court Protects Rights of Intellectually Disabled
- Canada's Missing Aboriginal Women

**Megaphone Diaries blog** ([www.metrac.wordpress.com](http://www.metrac.wordpress.com)): "Digifest Delights and Violence Prevention" series on learnings from Digifest 2012, "Toronto's international festival celebrating innovation and digital creativity" ([www.torontodigifest.ca](http://www.torontodigifest.ca)).

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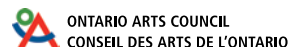
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## Our Team, Donors & Partners:

We extend our thanks to METRAC's entire team of staff, volunteers, supporters and placement students working across the organization. You are appreciated and you make a difference in our organization and communities. Deep thanks to departing staff members and volunteers for how they supported the cause.

We would also like to thank community partners, including organizations and individuals dedicated to ending violence against women and youth. Finally, we extend sincere thanks to individual and anonymous donors who have contributed to METRAC since spring 2012 - we simply could not survive without your support.



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

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(Charitable registration number 130069123RR0001)

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