



Images: May Be Me photoshoot with volunteers from Jazma Hair Inc. (Photo credit: Sam Javanrouh)

Empowerment for women & youth

Spring 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: METRAC staff and volunteers from TELUS, who graciously beautified our office space.



METRAC's Team

Board of Directors

- Melanie J. Adams
- Carole Dahan
- Shabnum Durrani
- Jennifer Fehr
- Tracy Ford, Secretary
- Sudabeh Mashkuri (on leave)
- Martha Ocampo, Treasurer
- Andrea Sanche
- Kripa Sekhar, Co-President
- Nadine Sookermany, Co-President

Staff

- Keli Bellaire, Youth Program Coordinator
- Darcel Bullen, Justice Projects Coordinator
- Karen Darricades, SchoolED Project Co-Coordinator
- Michelle Davis, Safety Director
- Andrea Gunraj, Communications Specialist
- Joanna Hayes, Legal Information Coordinator
- Wendy Komiotis, Executive Director
- Jessica Mustachi, Safety Coordinator
- Jannette Saberon, Administrative Assistant
- Talayah Shomali, Coordinator of Sustainable

Development

- Shequita Thompson, SchoolED Project Co-Coordinator
- Tamar Witelson, Legal Director

ReAct Youth Peer Facilitators

- Asam Ahmad
- Najla Edwards
- Angela Musceo
- Helen Yohannes

Placement student: Tricia Bennett

New resources:

- **Family Law Education for Women webinars:** www.onefamilylaw.ca/en/webinar
- **May Be Me campaign on prevention of violence against women and youth:** www.maybemecampaign.ca
- **Statement and press release on proposed amendments to immigration regulations:** www.metrac.org/about/press.room.htm

Message from the Executive Director

Wendy Komiotis, Executive Director

After an unusually mild winter, we're happy to keep you informed about METRAC's activities to advance safety, equity and justice for women and youth affected by violence. This issue focuses on empowerment, a concept that evokes a range of interpretations and meanings for describing ideals of social justice work.

Empowerment is not something you do to people or for them. It is a process of brokering access to supports and resources to enable people to steer their own lives. This is one of the greatest lessons I have learned from my daily work to end violence towards women and youth. At METRAC, we recognize that women and youth of diverse backgrounds have the power to lead change in their own lives and communities.

*“The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any.”
(Alice Walker)*

Our Community Justice Program facilitates a process of self-determination by consulting with women to find out what legal issues impact their lives. We've learned that certain groups of women experience isolation and barriers to information on family law. Focusing on the issues raised and solutions recommended by women, we have spread legal information across Ontario, including rural and remote areas. As a result, vulnerable women and service providers learn about the law in clear language and in multiple, culturally-appropriate formats and languages. They learn how legal processes work and the rights and legal entitlements of women. Importantly, they learn about options to help keep women and youth safe. The program also uses accessible strategies to deliver legal information at women's shelters and community centres as well as through webinars and websites such as www.owjn.org, www.onefamilylaw.ca and www.yourlegalrights.on.ca.

Through our Safety and Respect in Action (ReAct) Programs, METRAC invests in youth leadership to find solutions to daily challenges youth encounter in school, at home, in the media and in their neighbourhoods. Since 2007, the Youth Alliance Project has drawn upon

the collective power of youth to conduct research and develop tools for meaningful engagement. The Alliance has created self-advocacy tools and opened opportunities for youth to influence police policy and responses to the sexual violence that impacts young women in high numbers. And the SchoolED Project is heading into its second year of bringing Toronto high school students together to share ideas, experiences and creative problem-solving to lead action on violence issues that affect their lives and communities. In the Safety Program, we continue to utilize a participatory action model rooted in diverse voices and perspectives of women and people with increased risks of victimization. Space is opened for them to define their own safety needs and solutions. People come together and learn how to audit places where they work, live and study, assessing physical features, policies and programs, security measures and social dynamics. They also learn how to share necessary safety-enhancing changes with planners and decision makers.

Organizationally, METRAC has focused on strengthening operations through regular planning processes and monitoring progress of the implementation of our strategic priorities. We continue to work on finalizing value statements to guide our activities and steer how our team works with stakeholders. Our search for a new office in a physically accessible building continues and has produced some promising results. Finally, we've been working on generating funds to help sustain our mission, as accessing funding is increasingly difficult and competitive in these times of austerity. Please consider joining our awareness-raising and fundraising campaign, May Be Me, aimed at drawing widespread attention to the need and promise in preventing violence against women and youth. To get involved and learn more, visit www.maybemecampaign.ca.

As I close, I'd like to thank our departing board member, Jennifer Fehr. Jennifer has been a champion for the organization and cause for years. We will miss her immensely and wish her all the best. Until our next issue, we also wish all of our funders, donors, partners, volunteers, students, community supporters and friends a sunny, colourful spring and a safe, enjoyable summer.

Board of Directors Update

Martha Ocampo, Board Treasurer

METRAC's Board of Directors is currently recruiting women volunteers to join the board. We are looking for applicants who have a solid background in non-profit accounting and financial management, marketing, fund development and real estate/facilities development to help us build organizational capacity. We are also seeking an impact data specialist.

All interested applicants are invited to visit METRAC's website and fill out the online application (www.metrac.org/about/get.involved.htm). Please submit your application along with a resume to our Nominations Committee (fax 416-392-3136; email info@metrac.org).

Despite the many challenges of non-profit governance in these tough times, I am proud to be a part of METRAC's team

The board is preparing for the upcoming Annual General Meeting on Wednesday June 27 at 6:00 PM (501 Adelaide Street East). We will be updating by-laws and proposing amendments to align articles with current operations. At a later date, we will conduct a more extensive overhaul of the by-laws to fulfill legislative requirements of Bill 65. The board is discussing changes that will result from Bill 65, which will impact the role of members and the board.

The Fundraising Committee has just released its very innovative May Be Me campaign to raise awareness and funds to prevent violence against women and youth (p. 5). The board is happy to support the campaign and contribute by identifying donors and sponsors. A May Be Me Celebration will be held on May 31 at Wychwood Barnes at 7:00 PM (601 Christie Street). We hope to have a big turnout of 200 participants, all expressing themselves in purple. Please join in at www.maybemecampaign.ca and meet us at the event!

METRAC's strategic plan and priorities are being implemented through programming and administration of the organization. The board's Planning and Evaluation Committee has collected a variety of anti-

racism/anti-oppression (AR/AO) policies and will be working on developing an AR/AO framework by the end of the year.

METRAC has also developed a response to new immigration legislation on "conditional permanent residence", which will have a negative impact on women and youth affected by violence. If the proposed changes become law, women with conditional status might be deported if their relationship with a sponsor ends. It can create greater risks that may trap women in an abusive relationship due to the fear and shame of deportation. See page 15 of this newsletter for a brief summary of our statement.

I'd like to extend thanks to the many individuals, organizations, foundations and corporations who support METRAC and help fund our programs to fight violence against women and youth. I would like to extend special thanks to board member Jennifer Fehr, who is leaving us this year. Jennifer has given great service to METRAC's board over the past four years, wearing many hats over her term including Board President. We can't thank Jennifer enough for what she has contributed and will miss her sorely. We wish her all the best into the future.

Despite the many challenges of non-profit governance in these tough times, I am proud to be a part of METRAC's team – board, staff, volunteers and supporters who work hard and stay committed to preventing violence.

Upcoming events:

- **Annual General Meeting:** Wednesday June 27, 6:00-8:30 PM at 501 Adelaide Street East
- **Youth Alliance Talk that Talk: Young Women discuss Abuse, Police and Justice:** Thursday April 26, 4:00-7:00 PM (details at www.metrac.org)
- **May Be Me Celebration:** Thursday May 31, 7:00 PM, Wychwood Barnes, 601 Christie Street (tickets at www.maybemecampaign.ca)



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

JOIN US TODAY: WWW.MAYBEMECAMPAIGN.CA

May Be Me is an annual campaign to raise awareness and funds to prevent violence against diverse women and youth. Join today by:

- registering at www.maybemecampaign.ca;
- choosing how you'll express yourself in purple on **May Be Me Day** (May 31); and
- connecting with friends, family and social media contacts to gather pledges.

The Cause

In Canada, one in two women will experience sexual or physical violence in their lifetimes. Youth, especially girls, are most at risk. Sexual harassment at school is a daily reality, and so is bullying based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Studies show that women and youth who face violence experience negative emotional, physical and mental impacts. They experience isolation, blame, fear and silencing – violence can take away the freedom to express and truly be yourself.

May Be Me does the opposite. It encourages people to express themselves and raise awareness. It breaks the silence that violence creates and builds a movement of people who want to stop violence against women and youth before it starts.

Why purple?

Purple ribbons have been used across the globe to raise awareness about domestic violence and commemorate lives lost to this violence. Purple is connected to International Women's Day and various campaigns addressing the issue of violence against women and youth.

The Future

May Be Me is a growing annual campaign. It is being launched in 2012 to support METRAC's work to prevent violence. Into the future, the campaign will build on initial successes and benefit other charities that prevent violence. *Please join the movement today!*

Save the date! May Be Me Celebration

Thursday May 31, 7:00 PM
Wychwood Barnes (601 Christie Street, Toronto).

Your chance to shine in purple and get photos taken. Great entertainment, food and more. Tickets \$25 in advance, \$30 at door.

Facebook and Twitter: [maybemecampaign](https://www.facebook.com/maybemecampaign)

More info: contact Talayeh at 416-392-3135 or sus@metrac.org

Empowerment at METRAC

Andrea Gunraj, Communications Specialist

Community Safety Audits

There are other audits out there. But METRAC was the first to develop one focused on women and marginalized people. And unlike other safety audits, our audit turns to diverse space users as the experts. Community members, especially those who tend to get silenced, are empowered to communicate what makes them unsafe and what would make them safer (p. 10). *Image: METRAC audit in a neighbourhood space.*



Accessible legal information

The law is pretty confusing. METRAC focuses on demystifying it for women and youth at risk of violence and those who work with them. When women and youth are empowered to know their rights, they're better able to act on them. They have tools to help them escape violence and break the cycle in their lives (p. 8). *Image: a legal information training session.*



Peer-to-peer youth programming

These are not just programs geared toward youth. They are youth-led initiatives to support other youth and promote youth voice. ReAct, the Youth Alliance and SchoolED all stand as examples (p. 11). *Image: ReAct violence prevention workshop, led by Peer Youth Facilitators.*



Art-based programs

Artistic practices are great tools for empowerment. Accessible, community-based art can open spaces for diverse community members to contribute and share their experiences of violence, ultimately leading to better, more impactful violence solutions. Artistic activities are woven into much of METRAC's prevention programming. *Image: THRIVE Coalition's Fabricating Change Project (p. 14).*



Community input

It's one thing to say we provide services. It's another thing to ensure the community shapes them. Community input can be a challenge but it's vital to lasting impact. METRAC uses surveys, advisory groups, research and other methods to get input. *Image: Girls for Safer Communities, based on Canada-wide surveys of girls and girl leaders (p. 10).*



Anti-oppression framework

Anti-oppression principles, by definition, compliment the goal of empowerment and guide METRAC's work. They help us understand how violence impacts people differently based on their experiences and identities. Anti-oppression work challenges power imbalances and pursues equity, inclusion and power-sharing. *Image: From Counting People to Making People Count conference (p. 14).*



Youth empowerment

Shequita Thompson, SchoolED Co-Coordinator

The peer-based model is an approach directed at shifting our understanding of the world while redistributing the power to ensure young people are seen as experts of their own knowledge.

Throughout the next two years, five high schools across the Greater Toronto Area will be engaged in year-long programs that promote a peer-to-peer understanding of gender-based violence. Since its inception, this program has fostered youth empowerment by allowing youth leaders to naturally emerge during weekly after-school sessions. Since then, young women and men have shifted their own understanding and conception of what empowerment means in subtle yet strong ways.

For example, in a participatory action research session held over March break, participants addressed research and what it means to be the “researched” as opposed to the researchers. The process of exploring a shift in those power dynamics was refreshing.

In understanding youth empowerment, it is important that the term isn’t co-opted into just having safe spaces for young people, explains Karen Darricades, Co-Coordinator of the SchoolED Project, although safe spaces are certainly necessary. “Telling young people

they are powerful is not enough. We need them to show us what power looks like. The peer-to-peer model does exactly that: models and reflects what a world with youth in power positions can be.”

The peer-to-peer model reflects what a world with youth in power positions can be

This calls for a shift in the power imbalances that are often produced in “youth programming”. Youth need to have tangible roles of leadership and engagement to feel and be a part of the process and, subsequently, the solution. Another program that represents this is the Youth Alliance Project, which has put forward recommendations to Toronto Police Services on the inclusion of young people in organizational governance and policy development.

Tangible engagement of young people results in activism and agency that isn’t just peer-based. It ultimately results in youth leading the process of their own research and answering the questions that impact their lives and communities on a daily basis. With the right engagement tools, possibilities become limitless and the peer-to-peer model prevails.

*“I love it
Because
Because it provides
opportunities
To bond
To be girls
To laugh together”
(poem by SchoolED youth
on the program)*

Image: SchoolED after school project participants





146 people attended
**the Fabric of Violence:
Fabricating Change
THRIVE art exhibit in
during the 16 Days of
Activism on Gender
Violence (November 25 to
December 10, 2011).**

*Image: THRIVE Coalition art exhibit at Queen
Gallery in downtown Toronto*

Empowerment through legal information

Tamar Witelson, Legal Director



*Pro Bono Students Canada year end celebration at
McCarthy Tétrault LLP*

At shelters for women survivors of abuse, staff and volunteers do work every day that's all about empowerment: helping women find support and courage to leave an abusive situation; face the economic, family and legal challenges that may follow; and take control of their lives in a positive direction. This March, METRAC and three volunteer law students were a part of this empowering work. We visited three Toronto-area shelters for women who have experienced abuse to give legal information seminars on child custody and access; court protection orders; and risks that arise for non-citizens in Canada convicted of a criminal offence. The presentations were developed and delivered by

senior law students as part of Pro Bono Students Canada (PBSC) and were designed to be empowering all round.

First, they provided information about the law directly to women who have experienced abuse. It included defining legal terms and concepts, fitting them into their experiences and determining options. This information can help women take control of legal issues and navigate the legal system more effectively. Secondly, the project gave students first-hand knowledge of the real consequences of violence against women. Preparation included sensitivity training about triggering fear, hurt and anger when working with survivors of abuse. Building on their interest in METRAC, we hope these students will feel confident in continuing to contribute to social justice work in their legal practice and ongoing volunteer work. Finally, METRAC gained student research to help deliver legal information in the community. The presentations formed a base for future in-shelter and other kinds of training.

We hope to have generated a few more synergies between women and the law; front-line workers and resources; and future lawyers and community work - all of which add power to our goal of ending violence against women and children.

Partnership with WiLDAF & CCI

Darcel Bullen, Justice Projects Coordinator

In February, we travelled to Accra, Ghana to continue our partnership with Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF) and Canadian Crossroads International (CCI), a project funded and facilitated by CCI. Objectives of the exchange were threefold:

1. share the ReAct program model on youth violence prevention work;
2. gather templates and legal tools used in WiLDAF's Legal Literacy Program; and
3. strengthen partnerships between the organizations.

Our partners at WiLDAF warmly welcomed us into their country and workplace! They made time to meet with us, share information about their work and learn about our work. METRAC is truly part of an inspiring international movement to prevent and end gender-based violence across the globe.

Soon after we arrived, we got down to work. We met with local teachers, administration and over one-hundred students at Osu Presbyterian Junior High School. An alumni of the ReAct program, David Lewis-Pert, facilitated multiple sessions about sexual health and sexual violence prevention. A common issue that came up during the needs assessment process was

students' desire to support their rural peers. These students are brilliant and already engaged in social justice! WiLDAF staff member Mercy Adjabeng and various CCI volunteers worked with David over the two weeks to deliver two interactive sessions with a newly formed team of 30 Youth Motivators.

In addition to sharing METRAC's models, we also brought many back to Canada. WiLDAF has cemented their expertise at developing and delivering legal literacy trainings for rural women over the last 10 years. It was an honour to learn from their staff, who taught us about their model in the United States, Europe and Africa. We exchanged information on legal responses to violence against women with other women's rights organizations including the International Federation of Women Lawyers, ABANTU for Development, UN Women Ghana and Legal Aid Ghana.

In an increasingly connected world, METRAC's partnership with WiLDAF and CCI remains incredibly valuable. We look forward to having another exchange with WiLDAF in Canada to continue to exchange information on youth violence prevention, support our newly formed legal literacy program for women in Ontario, and establish a stronger relationship with allies in Ghana.

"We are happy to have had the opportunity to share our work while learning about the excellent work you've been doing with youth."
(WiLDAF-Ghana partner)

Image: David Lewis-Pert, facilitating a session with Osu Presbyterian Junior High School students in Ghana



Community Safety Program Report

Michelle Davis, Safety Director



Image: Youth Safety Audit process, carried out in a Toronto neighbourhood

At METRAC, we focus on working with people who experience marginalization to prevent and end gender-based violence. Our Safety Audit uses a community development and empowerment model to support people to create safer communities. It's centered on the belief that everyone is an expert on their own safety and reflects our commitment to equity and inclusion.

Our Safety Audit uses a community development and empowerment model to support people to create safer communities

Public transit remains an important issue and we continue to advocate for safe, accessible transit services. The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) asked us to help in its process of expanding the Request Stop Program, which originally started as a result of METRAC's Safety Audit with the TTC in 1989. The Request Stop Program allows women travelling alone after 9:00 PM to be let off of a bus between stops. In October 2011, we surveyed 150 members and supporters, who overwhelmingly agreed the program should be open to everyone who feels unsafe travelling by bus after 9:00 PM. We sent these findings to the TTC, whose Chairperson then announced that the program would be expanded to anyone who feels vulnerable. TTC is now drafting procedures to guide the new policy. We will continue our work to ensure that the needs of those who feel most unsafe are taken

into account by transit and other service providers.

Our Girls for Safer Communities Project with Girl Guides of Canada-Guide du Canada (GGC) ended in December 2011, but only after 253 girls had led Safety Audits across Canada! In addition, another 162 GGC units committed to leading audits in 2012. Some of the comments we received includes the following.

"With our group of girls coming to an age where they would like to perhaps go out and meet some friends, we chose to audit the neighbourhood shopping centre. They really appreciated the education behind safety and are now more aware of their surroundings. Thank You!"

"It was dark at 6:00 PM when the girls did it but they really enjoyed feeling all official with their flashlights and clipboards. This is important information for girls to learn. It is not about scaring them but empowering them to make smart choices with regards to their personal safety. Moreover, that if there is something wrong that they can do something about it such as informing the owner of the building or a public official."

Advocating for the safety of youth is a priority for METRAC and the Safety Program. We were happy to partner with GGC and create age-appropriate Safety Audit tools for girls across the country. Over the past two years, we have used our Youth Safety Audit process to engage youth to create safer communities that reflect their needs. Youth are often blamed for a lack of safety in public spaces but from our work we know that youth, particularly young women, are at greatest risk of experiencing violence.

Because of METRAC's unique approach to personal and community safety, we continue to be contacted about our work by individuals and organizations across Toronto, Canada and the world. We support community members, including youth, to lead Safety Audits. We also lead workshops on women's safety and domestic violence for community groups in addition to completing audits of workplaces and college and university campuses. Through our model and anti-oppression framework, we endeavor to ensure that those who feel most at risk lead initiatives to create safer spaces for everyone.

Youth Programs Report

Keli Bellaire, Youth Program Coordinator

The world of youth work is a whirlwind in the spring, and this year continues the trend for METRAC's youth programs! Some exciting highlights are the continuing growth of the SchoolED project funded by Status of Women Canada, a new mentorship model for ReAct, and the Holistic Justice Project.

Two SchoolED youth groups are now half way through their year of programming, and have each had 17 sessions full of learnings about gender roles and expectations that young women are subjected to and homophobia and transphobia. They've also had the change to create beautiful art. Participants from both schools came together over March break to learn about participatory action research and discuss issues of violence and oppression that youth in their schools face. The session was a great success and participants were inspired to learn how research can be done in empowering, grassroots ways, by youth and for youth.

An exciting addition to the Youth Program is a recent addition of a team mentor. As part of partnering with the Toronto District School Board, a Clinical Supervisor is required. We took this opportunity to find someone who shares a vision of creating support systems for frontline youth workers (in our case, ReAct Peer Youth Facilitators) and who can help us create this

for the team. As well as support around disclosures, our mentor is facilitating group sessions with the team to build practices for self and collective care. So far, it has been an overwhelmingly inspiring process and we are excited about where it will take us.

The Youth Program was successful in an application to Justice Canada for funding to do projects related to the National Victims of Crime Awareness Week (April 23 to 27). Entitled "Holistic Justice", this five-month project explores what young people think about "justice", what role transformative justice could play in the lives of Toronto youth and how to build skills to achieve justice. Throughout the winter, ReAct facilitators conducted five focus groups with youth across the city to complete a needs assessment. The team will use data collected to develop workshops on the theme of holistic justice as well as a "zine" (print booklet) to accompany the new curriculum. These workshops and materials will be launched during the awareness week.

We would also like to welcome Najla, a past Peer Facilitator, back to the team! We are honoured she has joined us again and is sharing her passion and brilliance with the program.

In numbers ...

2093 workshop/training participants

96 workshops delivered to youth

896 "Youth Surviving" zines on self-care distributed

98 young women contributed to Youth Alliance report on police practices on sexual assault

Community Justice Program Update

Tamar Witelson, Legal Director



Community legal information training on access to justice

Even though it was a mild winter, the Justice Program started 2012 with a flurry of activity!

January was the first month of the Justice Program's series of webinars on family law related issues for the Family Law Education for Women (FLEW) project. The hour-long webinars are conducted by me and joined by lawyers with expertise in different fields of law. The following is a list of completed webinars:

- “Property Rights and Obligations of Married Spouses and Cohabiting Partners” with Robert Halpern, family law specialist and author, TorKin Manes, Toronto (January 19)
- “Looking for a Family Law Lawyer – from a

Woman’s Perspective” with Lisa Cirillo, acting Executive Director, Downtown Legal Services, Toronto (February 23)

- “Immigration, Women and Children: Part 1 – Basic Concepts” with Raoul Boulakia, Immigration and Refugee law specialist, Toronto (March 22)
- “Immigration, Women and Children: Part 2 – Sample Situations” with Raoul Boulakia (April 12)

More than 100 people have registered for the webinars so far. The webinars are facilitated by Community Legal Education Ontario (CLEO) and can be found on their website at www.yourlegalrights.on.ca as well as on the FLEW website at www.onefamilylaw.ca.

Our project with Pro Bono Students Canada is complete. Nine law students from across Ontario worked with Joanna Hayes, our Legal Information Coordinator, to write material for the Ontario Women’s Justice Network (OWJN) website. A dozen articles have been posted with updates on issues ranging from legal aid to explanations of immigration legislation. In addition, three upper year law students visited three Toronto-area shelters for women survivors of violence to give legal information presentations. The project wrapped up end of March for this academic year, but we hope to start up again with a new group of law students next year!



“I loved knowing I was helping out the planet and working with the team was lots of fun (Youth Advisory member supporting “What It Is.”)”

Image: pinata game at Toys and Games With a Twist exhibit at Longwood Art Gallery (New York City), featuring METRAC’s “What It Is.” digital game challenging sexual violence (December 2011)

Volunteer Spotlight: Jennifer Fehr

Karen Darricades, SchoolED Project Co-coordinator

Jennifer Fehr has been a fervent supporter of METRAC and a dedicated member of the anti-violence against women movement for a number of years now, both as a volunteer and creative contributor to women's cultural tradition of performing arts. She honored the Respect in Action (ReAct) program with a Vagina Warriors award several years ago as producer of the Vagina Monologues and Chair of the Women's Empowerment Committee at Queen's University.

Since joining METRAC's Board of Directors in 2008, she says she has "always been amazed with the incredible dedication of the staff of METRAC and the sheer volume of effort that it takes to keep METRAC and all of its many programs, initiatives and campaigns going." She adds, "I hope the new board member taking

my place will bring the same enthusiasm that I have for METRAC; the dedication to our work, commitment to anti-oppression and hopefully some fundraising experience because we can always use more of that."

Jennifer is moving on from her board position to enjoy more time with her baby son, who will also be missed at meetings. "Since his birth, he's been attending board and fundraising meetings in addition to other events. I think it's a great start to his feminist upbringing!" When asked about the many fond memories she will take with her as a board member, she remembers METRAC's Women Reads fundraiser held in 2009. "I really enjoyed hearing our very own staff member Andrea Gunraj reading from her excellent novel, *The Sudden Disappearance of Seetha*."

Employee Spotlight: Talayeh Shomali

Shabnum Durrani, Board Member

Talayeh Shomali is METRAC's new Sustainable Development Coordinator. This is a new position and Talayeh is just finishing her first six months of projects. She has always had a deep appreciation for METRAC and its work and began volunteering with the organization in 2007.

At that time, Talayeh was completing an undergraduate degree at York University. She was a relatively new immigrant from Iran, where she had studied law and worked as a law consultant. She heard of METRAC when a friend suggested they volunteer for the organization together. Talayeh's experience as a volunteer for METRAC helped her learn more about violence against women and gain a deeper understanding of the cause – so much so that she was inspired to pursue a Masters degree in Women's Studies and Gender Studies at University of Toronto, focused on public policy, feminism and the law.

AT METRAC, Talayeh is contributing to ongoing viability of the organization by increasing fund growth and building and maintaining internal and external relationships to achieve diversified revenue. She is

coming to the organization when the entire sector is facing tough financial times and many organizations are experiencing reduced donations and funding cuts at all levels of government. But Talayeh's not fazed by the economic situation and is excited for the challenges and opportunities the work brings. She commends METRAC for being open to using new technology and creativity when looking for funding sources. Right now, she is coordinating our first social media-based campaign, May Be Me, officially kicking off May 1 (visit www.maybemecampaign.ca for details). Talayeh considers METRAC her second home and sees this job as a dream come true.

Did you know ...

April 15 to 20 was National Volunteer Appreciation Week and Violence Against Women Prevention Week? A happy coincidence! We give a cheerful thank you to all our volunteers, past and present. **There is no way we could do any of this work without your passionate support and generosity.** You make METRAC what it is.

THRIVE Coalition Update

Jessica Mustachi, Safety Program and THRIVE Coordinator



Fabricating Change workshop (2011)

As part of the 16 Days of Activism to End Gender Violence, THRIVE, the Multicultural Women's Coalition to End Violence Against Women, launched an art exhibition between November 25 and December 10, 2011 at Queen Gallery in Toronto entitled *Fabric of Violence: Fabricating Change*.

The launch night was a wonderful evening with lots of people stopping in to enjoy fabric art pieces made from everyday materials – handkerchiefs, fabric cut-outs, string, buttons, markers and more. Pieces were created by women and trans people from around the city to express their ideas about freedom, violence and hope. Through funding from the Toronto Arts Council, we organized art workshops with ten community groups. Workshops were facilitated by two local artists, Karen Darricades and Meera Seethi, who created safe spaces for women and trans people to make their own original pieces.

Throughout the 16 days, 144 people visited the exhibition. Many thanks to the Toronto Arts Council; our two collaborating artists, Karen and Meera; the community groups that invited us to work with their program participants; Queen Gallery; and, of course, women and trans people who designed over 100 unique pieces of art.

“Making People Count” Conference

From Counting People to Making People Count: Workplace Inclusion Conference will be held from Thursday September 20 to Friday September 21 at Monte Carlo Inn and Suites (7255 Warden Avenue, Markham ON). It is hosted by Diversity Intelligence in partnership with METRAC.

Non-profit and public sector organizations face challenges as they try to comply with equity-related legislation, respond to the changing demographics and create inclusive and effective organizations – all within fiscal constraints. This conference will help further equity and inclusion practice for non-profit and public sector organizations. It will provide an excellent opportunity for senior managers, line managers, human resource staff and Diversity Officers to receive important training from experts in the field, learn from each other and learn from organizations that have successfully implemented various diversity initiatives. Participants can choose from a number of concurrent sessions according to their interest and

needs. Workshops include the following.

- Creating an Inclusive Organizational Culture
- Anti-Oppression Practice for Community Service Organizations
- Discrimination and Harassment Prevention
- Creating LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer) Positive Spaces in Organizations
- Protecting Workers from Domestic Violence
- Mastering Aboriginal Inclusion: Creating Workplaces of Choice for Aboriginal Talent
- Inclusive Leadership
- New Responsibilities for Workplace Safety
- Becoming an Ally for Positive Social Change
- Building Bridges: Making Multi-Generational Workplaces Work
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act: What Employers Need to Know
- Mental Health and Racism in the Workplace

Visit www.metrac.org for details and registration.

Empowerment-based initiatives

Shanon Kalra-Ramjoo, Volunteer

Here is a list of organizations and campaigns that engage in empowerment-based initiatives in a range of fields. Get in on one today!

Because I am a Girl

Toll-free phone: 1-800-387-1418

Phone: 416-920-1654

www.becauseiamagirl.ca

Canadian Women's Foundation

Toll-free phone: 1-866-293-4483

TTY: 416-365-1732

www.canadianwomen.org

Community Legal Education Ontario

Phone: 416-408-4420

www.cleo.on.ca

Girls Action Foundation

Toll-free phone: 1-888-948-1112

Phone: 514-948-1112

www.girlsactionfoundation.ca

Ontario Associations of Women's Centres

www.oawc.org (lists locations)

Ontario Native Women's Association

Toll-free phone: 1-800-667-0816

www.onwa-tbay.ca

Positive Fabulous Women

www.positivefabulouswomen.com

Scarborough Women's Centre

Phone: 416-439-7111

www.scarboroughwomenscentre.ca

Springtide Resources

Phone: 416-968-3422

www.springtideresources.org

YWCA Canada

Phone: 416-962-8881

www.ywcacanada.ca

On "Conditional Permanent Residence"

Recently proposed amendments to Canada's Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations could increase domestic violence by trapping women and children in abusive homes. Proposed changes will affect sponsored partners who have been in a relationship with their sponsors for two years or less, with no children at the time of application. The sponsored partner and sponsor will be required to live in a conjugal relationship for two years during a "Conditional Permanent Residence" period. If the sponsored partner leaves, she could face deportation.

The majority of sponsored partners are women and women are at highest risk of the most serious forms of domestic violence. While the proposed amendments include an exemption for people in abusive situations, it requires victims to prove the abuse and the genuineness of their relationship before violence forced them to

flee. In Australia and the UK, conditional permanent residence periods have created risk for women and children, and similar exemptions for people facing abuse have been criticized as an ineffective safeguard. "It victimizes the most vulnerable," says Wendy Komiotis, Executive Director of METRAC. "Immigrant women have identified fear of deportation as a barrier to safety. Now more than ever that fear will be warranted." Proposed amendments must protect the vulnerable. Alternative measures include: conducting research on the extent of "marriage fraud" and exploring other practices to address it, if warranted; elimination of gender inequality and conditions that allow for coercion and force that result from proposed amendments; and direct assistance and legislation to facilitate permanent residency when sponsorship breakdown results from domestic abuse. *For the full statement, visit www.metrac.org/about/press.room.htm.*

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Canada

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Canada



Gift of Gertrude Milrod Gotlib

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 Board member Jennifer Fehr, who has been with the organization for two years and has contributed so much.

We would also like to thank our 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 fall 2011 - 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:

- \$25 \$50 \$100 Other: \$ _____
- I would like to give monthly support of \$ _____
- Do not publicly acknowledge my gift.
- Donations include membership for 2012-2013. I want to become a member of METRAC at this time.

Please return to:
158 Spadina Rd.
Toronto, ON
M5R 2T8



Name: _____
Address: _____
Postal Code: _____
Phone: _____
Email: _____

I've enclosed a cheque made payable to METRAC

I prefer to pay by VISA (include details below):
Card # _____ Expiry: _____
Name on Card: _____
Signature: _____
Date: _____ | Spr. 2012

Thank you for your support
(Charitable registration number 130069123RR0001)

Privacy Statement: we collect information on this form for administrative purposes. None of your contact information is shared with or accessible to anyone other than METRAC and our funders. If you have any questions, please contact us.