



# COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND IMPACT

2015 Annual Report

**METRAC**  
ACTION ON VIOLENCE





Images: **Cover:** Founders and Keepers Gala (May 27, 2015). From top to bottom, left to right: Anoodth Naushan, Chenthoori Malankov, Shequita Thompson, Stephanie Wong, Linda Frempong, Ray B. Garcia, Wendy DeSouza, Gail Robinson, Mary Eberts, N. Jane Pepino, Patricia Marshall and Marilou McPhedran. **Above:** participant at THRIVE: Our Voices Rising Forum (December 12, 2015).



**METRAC works with individuals, communities and institutions to change ideas, actions and policies with the goal of ending violence against women and youth. Delivering relevant and boundary-breaking services and programs, we focus on education and prevention and use innovative tools to build safety, justice and equity.**

# What we do

- Undertake safety Audits and safety promotion for individuals, communities, workplaces, service environments and institutions
- Develop relevant, clear legal information, education and resources
- Build youth skills and leadership to prevent violence
- Create education and prevention tools like apps, zines, games and webinars
- Engage in strategic partnerships to reduce violence across communities and sectors
- Share knowledge to end gender-based violence and build equity



**Vision:** a safe world for ALL women and youth



**Where we work:** Toronto, across Ontario and beyond



**Values:** Equity, Respect, Safety, Excellence, Innovation, Feminisms, Collaboration

**METRAC**



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Icon image credits: School designed by Ben Rudolph, Website designed by Wilson Joseph, Brochure designed by Luboš Volkov, Game designed by Edward Boatman, Volunteer designed by Stephen Borengasser and Clock designed by John Caserta from the [thenounproject.com](http://thenounproject.com). Timeline image by Freepik. All other images are used with permission or owned by METRAC.

“Without Community, there is no liberation.” – Audre Lord

In 2015, METRAC marked its 30th Anniversary with reflections on our triumphs, disappointments, and future. Since 1984, when METRAC was formed, we have made significant progress in achieving our mission – from co-founding a program for training community counsellors at George Brown College; to making public transit safer; to replicating METRAC’s Safety Audit Best Practice across the globe; to producing and disseminating award-winning resources for promoting safety and preventing violence; and to advancing policy and law to protect the safety and rights of ALL women and youth. Over the years, METRAC has worked with groups at highest risk of harm caused by gender-based violence – Indigenous women, women with disabilities, young women, racialized women, women who identify as LGBTQ2S, and immigrant and newcomer women. Despite these important successes, gender-based violence continues to be an epidemic within society. METRAC’s work is far from over; we must continue working to shift attitudes and behaviours of those who do harm, and to work for changes within a larger system and culture that upholds this violence.

We delivered another year of excellence in our programs to prevent and respond to gender-based violence occurring so pervasively within all aspects of society. The Community Justice Program continued to reach out in communities to increase access to justice by helping survivors of sexual violence and intimate partner violence to know their rights, to understand different laws that affect them and their children, and build skills and knowledge in how to navigate a complex legal system.

In April 2015, METRAC launched a Toronto Safe City Committee – over 100 Torontonians applied to be part of it. The Committee’s goal is to identify safety changes and initiatives to prevent and reduce sexual assault and harassment. It will serve as a voice to help Toronto leaders, decision-makers, planners, law enforcement and service providers understand diverse communities’ prevention and safety needs, and find relevant and effective ways of addressing them.

METRAC’s youth prevention program, Respect in Action (ReAct) performed exceptionally well in 2015. Locally, our Peer Facilitators delivered 2 successful afterschool programs in west Toronto, at Westview Centennial Secondary School and George Harvey Collegiate. They completed the year’s curriculum and supported a total of 41 youth to engage in conversations about healthy, equal relationships. Curriculum topics focused on Team and Community Building, Gender Based Violence, Anti Oppression, Civic Engagement and Leadership.

Internationally, METRAC continued to grow its relationship (since 2006) with Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF) – Ghana, which has been facilitated by Crossroads International (CI). In February 2015, METRAC’s Program Director and Youth Program Coordinator travelled to Ghana to work on projects in selected schools with Girls Empowerment Clubs (GEC), to reduce violence against young girls. Within 2 weeks, our staff worked to increase awareness and knowledge about ReAct’s peer-to-peer model for youth prevention and reduction of gendered violence, through practice in building skills in peer leadership, designing and delivering peer activities, developing “safe spaces” for GEC girls to talk and learn about gendered violence by drawing upon their own solutions for reducing it,

and by determining how best to adapt the ReAct youth peer model within Ghanaian schools.

Good governance is a cornerstone of METRAC's success. Our Board of Directors is committed to keeping the organization relevant and effective. This year we concluded our Strategic Plan for 2011 to 2015. In October 2015, a Strategic Planning Committee led by board and staff members began working with NeOle Consulting to renew METRAC's Strategic Plan for 2016 – 2019. As part of the process, we held interviews and an online survey with internal and external stakeholders. Additionally, we conducted an analysis of trends, strengths and weaknesses, and threats and opportunities, within the current environment for tackling gendered violence. By early 2016, METRAC's Board will approve a new set of strategic directions to guide our programs and administration in a rapidly changing world.

Administratively, all staff continued to meet regularly for planning, monitoring and evaluating program accomplishments and effectiveness. During the year, we reviewed and strengthened our data collection systems for greater consistency across the organization. We developed a Business Plan to guide social enterprise strategies and worked to develop these new ideas. Our Relocations Committee focused much of its attention on preparations for moving to a new location.

Financially, we continued to diversify our revenue by securing a mix of grants from the City of Toronto, the Law Foundation of Ontario, the Ontario Government, Canadian Women's Foundation, Department of Justice Canada, Les Lois Shaw Foundation, and other private foundations. Donations were slightly less than the previous year. Our Social Enterprise program is only one year old, and growth has been slow, but steady. Fundraising increased overall in 2015, due to a mix of fundraising activities. METRAC celebrated its 30th Anniversary by holding a beautiful gala – The Founders and Keepers Gala at Casa Loma – which was successfully staged, but failed to raise large returns as projected; and we closed the year with a deficit.

In closing, we honour METRAC's founders for their legacy. We sincerely thank our passionate, hardworking and talented team of staff and board members, volunteers and students, who exemplify a deep commitment to ending gendered violence. We acknowledge Chris Rahim who left the organization over the course of the year. In 2015, we welcomed new Board members, Mohammad Akbar, Anupa Ann Varghese, Vivene Salmon, and Roxana Tavara. At the same time, Nadine Sookermany stepped down after completing 6 years of dedicated volunteer service on METRAC's Board. Other board members Amina Farah, Khadeeja Ahsan resigned from the board. We thank them for their contributions and service, as well as all volunteers, students, board members, funders, donors, and community partners who have contributed to our mission, and have helped to build a resilient organization over the years.

METRAC's survival and existence is a testimony of strength gained from supporters, funders and donors who inspire us to work for change. It is our hope that one day soon, gender-based violence will crumble.

Wendy Komiotis  
Executive Director

Caitlin Maxwell  
Board Co-President

Michelle Mulgrave  
Board Co-President

## 2015 impact snapshot



2,883

youths, youth service providers & participants trained in youth engagement, healthy relationships and gender-based violence



1,635

youths and community members participated in 14 events organized by METRAC.



3,336

participants in safety and Safety Audit events, workshops and trainings and recipients of safety tools and materials



171

community members attended our Reclaiming our Narratives event on gender and racial profiling on November 28, 2015.



265

people referred to services and supports they needed



784

participants in legal information public education events/meetings, workshops and recipients of legal information materials



27,463

hard copies of written legal information distributed across Ontario



66

volunteers working across the organization



752,037

legal information website views (onefamilylaw.ca and owjn.org)



2,466

volunteer hours contributed across the organization



865

likes on METRACorg's Facebook page in December 2015

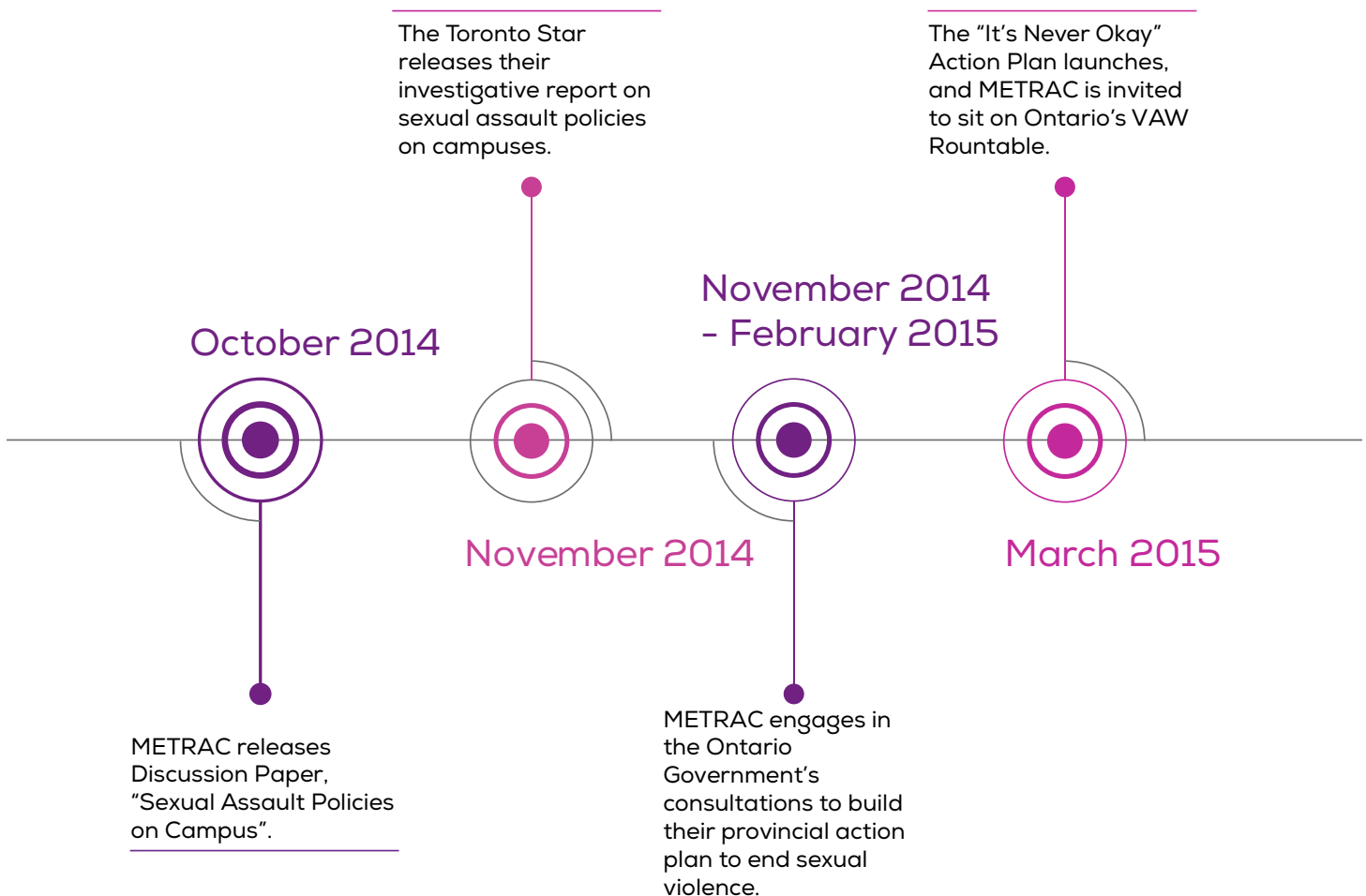


80,360

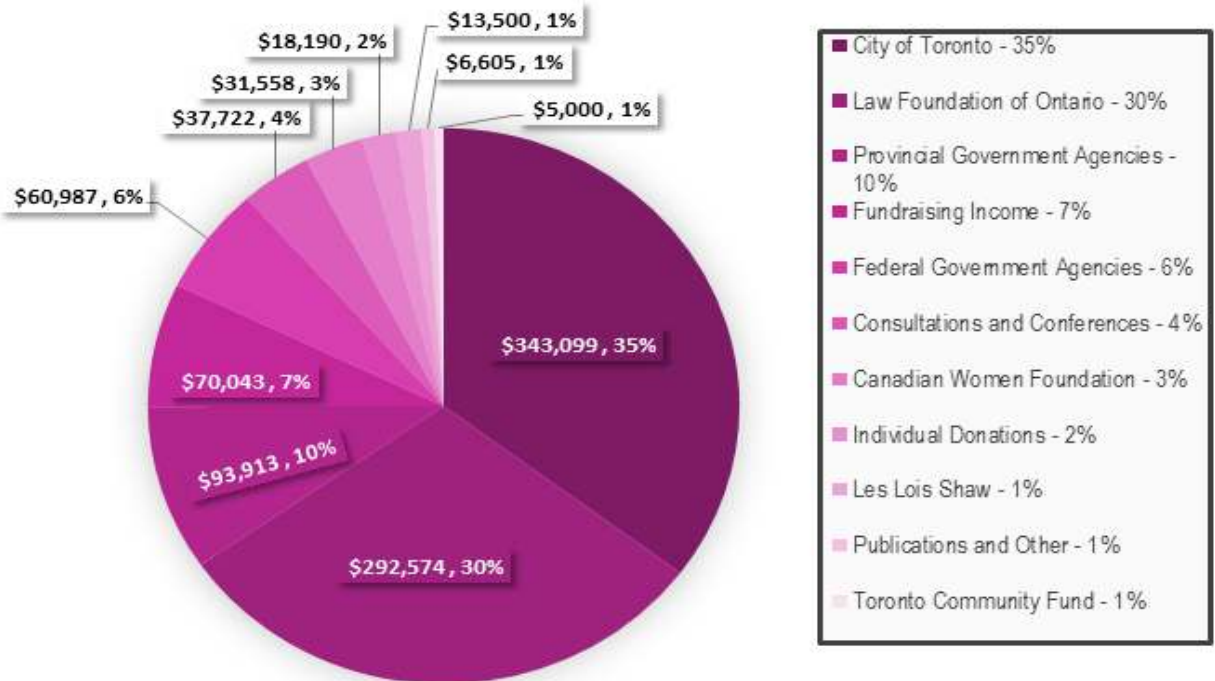
Family Law Education for Women (FLEW) webinar views

## METRAC's contributions to Ontario's Sexual Violence Action Plan

In 2015, the Government of Ontario took the lead from community groups, organizations and activists in the Violence Against Women sector and launched a provincial action plan to end sexual violence and harassment, titled "It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to End Sexual Violence and Harassment". METRAC: Action on Violence helped pave the way for the Action Plan, and has been actively engaged in the unfolding of the Plan's objectives, with a focus on safer campuses. METRAC: Action on Violence has more than three decades of experience working with campus communities to foster safer institutions for everyone, with specific attention to individuals and groups at higher risk for experiencing violence. The timeline below highlights METRAC's contributions to making Ontario safer for all.



Where METRAC income comes from in 2015 ( Amount of \$973,191)



How METRAC spent the money in 2015 ( Amount of \$ 980,973)

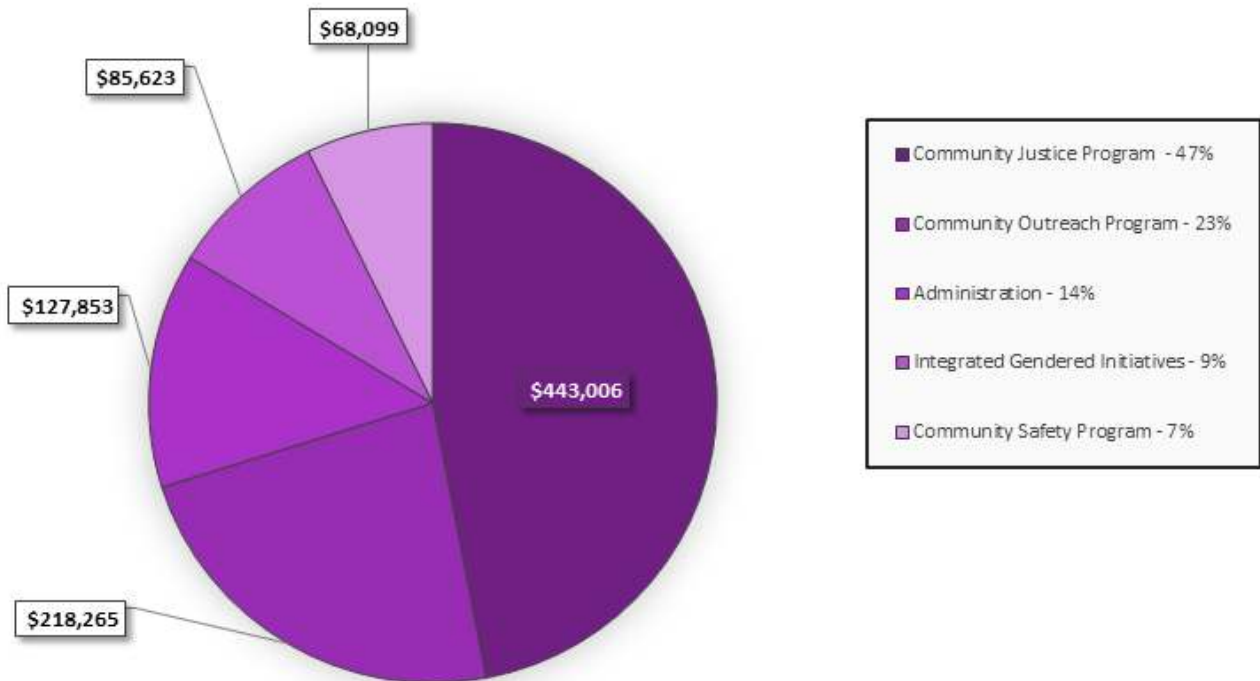






Image: taken during the first Safe City Committee meeting.

## How we helped women, youth and others at high risk of violence and harassment to build safer communities:

- training diverse community members in safety and the Safety Audit process
- supporting communities through safety tours and action planning to address safety issues and concerns
- bringing attention to safety needs and concerns affecting women, youth and other groups through a focus on public policy
- hosting events and workshops and participating in public discussions focused on Safety
- partnering with other organizations to promote safer neighbourhoods and communities

## Our effectiveness

# 96%

of trainees felt prepared to conduct a Safety Audit after our training and rated the safety audit training an average of 8.5 out of 10

## What safety training participants say they learned

"A better understanding of what consent is and what it isn't."

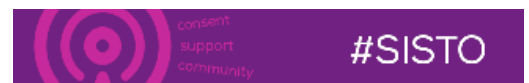
"Safety is not just about you but others as well, safety is also about prevention."

"Who to call when there is an issue. It's Important to speak up, so you can be heard."

## Some partners we worked with

Blakes Law Firm, Canadian Federation of Students, Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre, City of Toronto Affordable Housing, Culture Link, Colleges Ontario, Cynthia Petersen (partner of Goldblatt partners law firm), Dalla Lana School of Public Health, Dr. Robin Mason, Dr. Ilene Hyman, Emergency Communications Network, George Brown College, Healthier Cities and Communities, It Starts With Us, Jane Doe, Migrant Sex Workers Project, Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, Neighbourhood Change Research Partnership, Planned Parenthood, Scadding Court Community Centre's Market 707, Sheridan College, SKETCH, Strategisense Consulting, St. Stephen's House, The Wellesley Institute, Toronto District School Board, Toronto Enterprise Fund, Toronto Police Service, Toronto Public Health, TTC, University of Toronto, Women's City Alliance, Women in Toronto Politics, Women's Residence and York University.

## METRAC's Safety Information System (SIS)



The SISTO project is a violence prevention and education tool. The system offers information on issues such as bystander intervention, sex education, building a culture of consent and equality especially regarding indigenous, racialized, immigrant, homeless and other marginalized communities. On December 10, 2015 METRAC's Safety Information System (SISTO) officially launched. The launch continues the momentum gained in the Summer 2015 when close to 300 early adopters registered to the alert system following a poster art gallery event in July of 2015.



Image: Training on “Legal Updates on Women, Immigration and Safety” to service providers, December 14, 2015

## We increased access to justice for women and youth by:

- legal information trainings, community presentations and webinars about the Domestic Violence Courts, updates in law affecting immigrant women, sexual assault and consent, and family law, for women facing violence and their service providers
- legal information materials, articles, infographics and videos to address needs of women and youth experiencing violence
- partnerships and collaborations to educate about the legal system and its impact on women and youth affected by violence

## Our effectiveness

# 95%

of our legal training, webinar and presentation participants report increased understanding of women's rights and options under the law

# 55

communities across Ontario have received legal information materials, from Ottawa to Sault Ste. Marie and many communities in between.

## What participants of our legal education trainings and presentations say

*"I learned a lot because the format was conducive for discussion without feeling too exposed in sharing. Felt like a safe space and everyone was patient with questions."* (Bill S-7 Public Forum, April 15, 2015)

*"I got a lot more info that I did not know before about the legal system."* (Yorktown Women's Shelter, April 29, 2015)

*"Presentation was clear and concise. Very helpful if you have no previous knowledge about rights and options under the law."* (Toronto Rape Crisis Centre training for new helpline volunteers, May 2, 2015)

## Some partners we worked with

Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes, Act to End Violence against Women, Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, Bellissimo Law Group, Canadian Civil Liberties Association, Canadian Council of Muslim Women, Carleton University, Community Legal Education Ontario, Ernestine's Women Shelter, George Brown College, Halton's Women Place, Juliette's Place, Law Society of Upper Canada, Legal Aid Ontario, Law Foundation of Ontario's Executive Directors' Network, Migrant Mothers Project, Nellie's, Newcomer Women Services Toronto, Ontario Justice Education Network, Osgoode Hall Law School at York University, Parkdale Community Legal Clinic, Pro Bono Students Canada, Queen's University, Rexdale Women's Centre, South Asian Legal Clinic Ontario, South Asian Women's Centre, Springtide Resources, Toronto Police Services, Toronto School of Public Policy and Governance, University of Ottawa, University of Western Ontario, University of Windsor, University of Toronto, WomenatthecentrE, Women's Habitat, Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF), Workers Action Centre, YWCA Toronto, Yorktown Women's Shelter.



Image: ReAct Youth Peer Facilitator team

## We increased access to justice for women and youth by:

- training and supporting ReAct Program youth peer facilitators and leaders
- providing youth violence prevention workshops, trainings and after-school programming for young people, educators and service providers in high schools and middle schools
- building awareness of youth voices and needs in policy
- bringing the peer-to-peer intervention model to international communities

## Our effectiveness

# 90%

of youth afterschool participants report feeling “better about myself” as a result of the program. 85% of youth participants said they are now able to say ‘no’ to things that seem wrong or make them uncomfortable. 76% said they are better able to handle whatever comes their way.

## What workshop/training participants say

*“I love coming to program every week, the facilitators are amazing and they get me”* (female participant, 15 years old)

*“I can talk to the Facilitators about real situations that are happening in my life, they understand my struggles as a young person living and coming from my community because they have been through it themselves”* (male participant, 17 years old)

*“I love being in a space where my ideas can be heard, and feel that I can thrive to be my full self”* (female participant, 14 years old)

## The METRAC & YMCA Youth Exchange

The YMCA Youth Exchange was a partnership between METRAC, the YMCA and the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) through Westview Centennial Secondary School. This collaboration opened doors for 20 racialized, women-identified youth in the Jane and Finch community to travel outside of their community to Winnipeg, Manitoba. There, they lived for one week with other youth hosts from “The Peaceful Village”, a non-profit organization that supports newcomer youth in Canada who have come from war-torn countries. Memorable accomplishments were achieved: staff were able to support youth in cross-cultural learning and build cultural sensitivity through intergenerational conversations with Indigenous elders from Reservations in Winnipeg. Youth were able to listen to testimonies of Indigenous Elders who went through the Residential School System, and were able to build on the narrative of the Canadian experience through storytelling and cultural artistic expression like Native Beading styles. There were many opportunities to learn about and explore social justice and Canadian history through participation in tours at the Human Rights Museum and The Manitoba Legislative Building, highlighting the value of youth voices in history. The tours revealed the power and importance of isolated youth accessing these spaces. These experiences embedded a sense of global citizenship and encouraged civic action in youth, leading many of them to express their desire to volunteer upon their arrival home.

# The Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon

On Sunday October 18, 2015, a team of a diverse group of METRAC staff, volunteers, Board members, family and friends participated in the annual charity Waterfront Marathon. Some did the 5K race and others did a half-marathon and some fundraised and served as our cheering team. In the end, we were humbled by the support provided to this fundraising effort, thrilled at the energy of our team members and just a bit achy. Some of us moved through the streets with people clapping all around and remembered why we love making communities safer for women, youth and everyone. With the community's generous support, **METRAC exceeded its goal of \$10,000** to go toward our violence prevention and education work!

## Social Enterprise Report

Since October 2014, we have been focusing on developing a portfolio in the new direction of social enterprise, with the following accomplishments in 2015:

- Conducted a review of existing social enterprise activities at METRAC
- Upgraded METRAC's safety materials for promotion and distribution
- Worked with a team of four (4) students from Sheridan College's Business Program to develop a project management tool to track internal resources and capacity required for handling multiple safety projects simultaneously
- Developed a Business Plan for social enterprise activities
- With the support of two (2) dedicated volunteers conducted telephone and e-marketing to more than 20 potential clients
- Distributed marketing materials to more than 25 potential clients
- Responded to emerging trend towards policy and productive enterprise in safety work
- Developed a brand new website for hosting a METRAC Learning Community
- Researched and developed a new online Learning Management System for delivering E-courses
- Supported staff and worked with volunteers to develop the content and format of a new E-course
- Helped to solicit capital funds for developing a package of E-courses



## METRAC remembers

### Lynda Roy & Clara Ho

**Lynda Roy** was on the Springtide Resources team working with METRAC to develop our two newest family law videos in ASL for Deaf women. She had not yet completed the project when she passed away unexpectedly in August 2015. Lynda was a dedicated advocate for the rights of all people to be fully included in society, and was committed to working on the project to bring accessible legal information to women in the Deaf community who are experiencing violence. We have dedicated the newest FLEW videos in ASL (on child custody and access; and the Victim/Witness Assistance Program) to the memory of Lynda Roy.

On January 19th, 2015, METRAC lost a past Legal Director, **Clara Ho**. Clara was a true example of a quiet yet palpable champion of human rights and social justice for women. She will be remembered for her passion for advocacy and action to protect the rights of immigrant and refugee women, especially those with precarious immigration status, and women who had been trafficked. Clara loved Pandas and had a quirky sense of humour. It is with a heavy heart, that we reflect on what the world has lost, and what could have been, but we are thankful for all that Clara accomplished in such a short time on earth. Her legacy at METRAC will be cherished. We honour Clara's achievements and draw strength from the example of her life.





# Acknowledgements

We extend thanks to our team of staff, volunteers and supporters. We would also like to thank our members and community partners. Finally, we extend thanks to all funders and donors who contributed to METRAC in 2015 - we simply could not survive without your support.

## Funders and donors



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
DALLA LANA SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

## Our team

Silmi Abdullah, Legal Information Coordinator\* | Baljinder (Kitty) Bhogal, Bookkeeper | Kavita Bissoondial, ReAct Peer Facilitator | Shaneen Cotterell, Summer Student\* | Wendy DeSouza, ReAct Peer Facilitator | Linda Frempong, ReAct Peer Facilitator | Ray B. Garcia, ReAct Peer Facilitator | Andrea Gunraj, Communication Specialist | Joanna Hayes, Legal Information Coordinator | Benita King, Access to Justice Lawyer | Ransford Kissi, Safety Support Manager | Wendy Komiotis, Executive Director | Chenthoori Malankov, ReAct Peer Facilitator | Sony Matthew, Bookkeeper\* | Jessica Mustachi, Safety Program Coordinator | Anoodth Naushan, Community Safety Coordinator | Philip Park, Student\* | Michael Penczak, Student\* | Chris Rahim, Program Manager\* | Brandon Rooms, Student\* | Jannette Saberon, Administrative Support | Talayeh Shomali, Justice Projects Coordinator | Jessica Silva, Research Consultant | Shequita Thompson, React Program Coordinator | Tiger Tsuei, Student\* | Tamar Witelson, Legal Director | Stephanie Wong, ReAct Peer Facilitator

## Board of Directors

Caitlin Maxwell, Co-President | Michelle Mulgrave, Co-President | Anupa Ann Varghese, Secretary | Martha Ocampo, Treasurer | Mohammad Akbar | Alana Boltwood | Tanya Humphrey\* | Amelia Martin | Vivene Salmon | Kripa Sekhar | Roxana Tavana

*\*Departed from role in 2015*

## Volunteers

Many thanks to our dedicated volunteers who worked across the organization to strengthen our programming, services and projects. We appreciate all that you do.