

*metrac*  
safer campuses for everyone

Creating



*Campus Safety Audit Services*



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

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For more than 15 years, the Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence against Women and Children (METRAC) has been a leader in facilitating personal and institutional safety on university and college campuses across Canada. Our Campus Safety Audit Services provide assessments of campuses and make important recommendations to prevent and respond to multiple forms of violence. METRAC's audit services examine all levels of campus life - the physical environment and features, policies and practices, social dynamics, programs, services, and resources. The input of all campus users is integral to the audit process, incorporating the perspectives of those who are likely to feel more vulnerable to violence (e.g. women, visible minorities, people living with disabilities, newcomers, and people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans-identified).

The safety of students, faculty, and staff, as well as the security of campus spaces, are of paramount importance as universities and colleges expand and become increasingly busy and diverse. Ensuring safety and security is essential to building quality learning and working environments.

Violence, sexual assaults, and hate crimes are devastating to any institution and can instill a deep sense of fear among employees, local communities, and the public. In today's current climate, many institutions are taking active steps to implement enhanced safety measures, manage security risk, and prevent crime, all in the effort to protect their most valued assets - employees, students, learning and work spaces, and campus property.

METRAC provides insightful, professional, and unique Campus Safety Audit Services. We are committed to supporting universities and colleges as they build upon existing policies and initiatives to augment safety for everyone.

### About METRAC

The Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children was founded in 1984 in Toronto, Ontario. We are a registered not-for-profit, community-based organization with a mandate to prevent and eliminate violence against diverse women and children. We seek to create communities that are *safer for women and children, safer for everyone*.

*"METRAC is quite the vital agency in Toronto ..."* (community worker)

METRAC is committed to the right of all women and children to live their lives free from violence, including the threat and fear of violence. Our work is informed by equity principles which recognize that women and children from diverse communities experience violence differently, and violence prevention measures must address their distinctive realities.

METRAC builds the capacity of communities to prevent violence towards women and children through community safety initiatives, public education and training, partnerships, research, and policy, in three major program areas: Community Safety, Community Outreach and Education, and Community Justice.

For more information about METRAC and our programs, visit our website, [www.metrac.org](http://www.metrac.org).

## Milestones in Community Safety

METRAC has greatly improved public and institutional safety for women and communities through a wide variety of initiatives as demonstrated below:

- ♦ METRAC pioneered the Women's Safety Audit, in 1989, to address specific issues of safety affecting women. We have since adapted the audit process to a more inclusive community action tool to evaluate environments from the perspective of women and other groups who feel vulnerable to violence (e.g. seniors, newcomers, people living with disabilities).
- ♦ In 1999, the City of Toronto's Task Force on Community Safety recommended that METRAC's Safety Audit Process be conducted in every neighbourhood.
- ♦ As part of the Safe City Committee, METRAC developed safety standards for lighting and signage, which led to the establishment of important safety by-laws in the City of Toronto.
- ♦ METRAC developed best practices to reduce violence and the fear of violence in underground garages, including guidelines on signage, lighting, painting, and exit routes standards. These best practices have been implemented throughout the City of Toronto.

*METRAC partnered with the Council of Ontario Universities and Colleges to adapt our audit into a Campus Safety Audit Guide, kit, and educational video, titled "Safer for Women, Safer for Everyone"*

- ♦ METRAC worked in partnership with the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) to examine women's safety on public transit. As a result, Designated Waiting Areas (DWAs), the Request Stop Program for women traveling at night, transparent bus shelters, elevators for people living with mobility disabilities, emergency intercoms, and mechanisms to address passenger harassment were established, and continue to be standard practices for the TTC. Additionally, the New York City Transit System consulted with METRAC about women's safety concerns.

- ♦ METRAC adapted its Safety Audit Process to meet the needs of youth and children. As a result, in 1999, the Toronto Star printed and circulated 465,000 copies of *KidSafe: A Kid's Guide to Community Safety*, in its newspaper.
- ♦ In 1992, METRAC partnered with the Council of Ontario Universities and Colleges to adapt our audit process into a Campus Safety Audit Guide, kit, and educational video on campus safety, *Safer for Women, Safer for Everyone*. These tools have laid the foundation for METRAC's current Campus Safety Audit Services.

*As a result of METRAC's audit services, emergency systems have improved on campuses to prevent and effectively respond to physical and sexual assaults*

- ♦ Inclusive programs have evolved from METRAC's audit services such as "safe space" campaigns, which have been established on numerous campuses to enhance safety for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ) staff and students.
- ♦ METRAC's audit services have also resulted in emergency system improvements on campuses to prevent and effectively respond to physical and sexual assaults.

## Safety Awards and Best Practices

METRAC's Safety Audit Process© was declared a Best Practice and Strategic Direction for 2008-2013 by the UN Habitat's Safer Cities Campaign

METRAC's Safety Audit Process© was profiled as a *Vital Idea* by the Toronto Community Foundation (2004)

METRAC became a finalist for the Canadian Urban Institute's Urban Leadership Award, City Livability Category (2004)

METRAC's Safety Audit Process© was formally adopted by the Council of Ontario Universities and Colleges (1992)



**True safety is the freedom to move around without facing intimidation, physical harm and fear of violence, crime, or harassment.** It includes feeling a sense of belonging and acceptance by frequent users of any space.

It is a well-known fact that women and girls are at higher risk of experiencing violence and abuse in our society. The fear that many women feel is a response to the threat and reality of violence in their lives. Women can experience violence in the privacy of their homes, as well as in public spaces - neighbourhoods, workplaces, community facilities, and places of study. Some groups are more vulnerable to experiencing violence due to various identity factors, including their ethnicity, faith, income level, sexual orientation, gender identity, and physical and/or mental abilities. Information about these groups and their greater risk of violence and abuse has been well documented.

### The Facts About Campus Safety

- A national survey of campuses found that 20.2% of female students reported experiencing unwanted sexual intercourse because they were overwhelmed by pressure; 6.6% said they experienced unwanted intercourse because they were threatened or physically forced. 13.6% of female students reported that, while intoxicated, they experienced an attempt at unwanted intercourse (1999, *Fact Sheet*, Canadian Federation of Students).
- About one-quarter of female students reported being physically or sexually assaulted by a male date or boyfriend. One-fifth of male students agreed

that forced sex is acceptable if someone spends money on a date, is stoned or drunk, or has been dating someone for a long time (H. Johnson, 1996, *Dangerous Domains: Violence against Women in Canada*, p.115-120).

- ♦ Women are more likely to experience workplace harassment, including leers, name-calling, and sexual assault. Most victims of harassment do not report the behaviour, fearing that they might lose their jobs, that reporting will make things worse, and/or that no one will believe them (Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children, 2004, *Workplace Harassment and Violence*).

*28% of women reported that they had been sexually abused in the year prior to a study of woman abuse on campus*

- ♦ A City of Toronto survey shows that young women regard physical assault, discrimination, harassment, and sexual gender issues as three of the top four factors impacting their personal sense of safety (Youth Safety Survey Project, 2002, *Speak Up: Toronto Youth Talk about Safety in Their Community*, City of Toronto).
- ♦ 28% of women reported that they had been sexually abused the year prior to a study of woman abuse on campus, while 11% of men reported that they had sexually assaulted a dating partner during the same period (1998, *Woman Abuse on Campus: Results from the Canadian National Survey*).

- ♦ Hate crimes against certain groups are also of concern on Canadian campuses. For instance, within three weeks of September 11, 2001, the Canadian Race Relations Foundation noted that Muslim students at a university in Quebec reported harassment and threats, and similar reports came in from campuses across the country (K. Mock, Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2003, *Recognizing and Reacting To Hate Crime in Canada Today*).
- ♦ In a 2001 survey of LGBTQ students from 48 American states, over 84% of respondents reported that they “sometimes” or “frequently” heard homophobic comments at school. Over 81% reported that faculty and staff “never” or “rarely” intervened when these remarks were made (The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, 2001, *National School Climate Survey*).

## **Key Campus Safety Concerns**

In the course of conducting Campus Safety Audits over the last 15 years, METRAC has identified several factors of critical importance to safety and risk management, within a diverse campus environment. These include:

### **Isolation**

By reducing the number of isolated spots on a campus, people are less likely to fear being attacked or assaulted in deserted areas. This measure also reduces the opportunity for criminal or violent activity to occur without being seen, heard or interrupted by witnesses.

### **Lighting**

Good lighting can be a deterrent for criminal activity. If the lighting of a space is adequate, people can survey their surroundings and take precautionary action, if necessary.

### **Accessibility**

Accessible spaces enable people to move about freely and reduce their vulnerability to entrapment and violence. Accessible spaces are more inclusive and can remove barriers to participating in regular activities of work, recreation, community programs, and education, for children, seniors, and people with disabilities.

### **Signage and Layout**

Surroundings with clearly visible signs and a simple, easy to follow layout, can reduce confusion and disorientation. A person who knows her/his whereabouts is less conspicuous and less likely to feel and be more vulnerable to violence.

### **Sightlines**

People who can see clearly what lies ahead and/or behind their path have a better chance of anticipating problems and taking evasive action. Unobstructed views can reduce fear of the unexpected. Objects such as pillars, walls, shrubs, sharp corners, fences, and landscaped hills can block sightlines and create fear by decreasing casual surveillance and increasing the potential for surprise.

### **Maintenance**

Proper maintenance of security systems can increase the ability to prevent and deal with unsafe situations. Well-maintained spaces and lighting can increase opportunities for surveillance, and can reduce incidents of violence.

### **Attitudes and Behaviours**

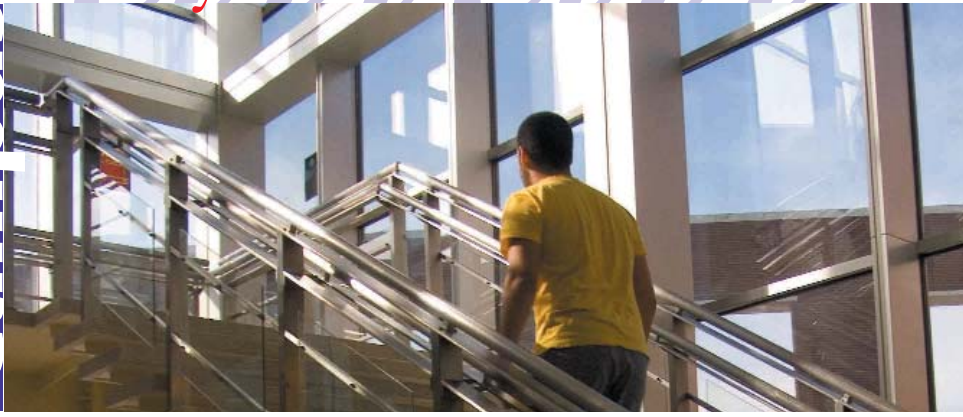
People's attitudes and behaviours can affect the comfort and safety of a space. Discriminatory actions such as homophobic slurs, name-calling and gay bashing can create feelings of fear for everyone. By having clear policies, interventions, and consequences for dealing with discriminatory attitudes and behaviours, institutions can set appropriate standards for members of the community that can result in more respectful and equitable environments.

### **Practices and Policies**

Safety is impacted by an area's rules or patterns of activity, such as when a place opens or closes and when lights are turned on and off. Practices and policies can benefit some while creating hardship for others. Practices and policies of an institution can create safer environments by fostering a sense of belonging, and by removing barriers to safety for vulnerable groups of people, even if those practices and policies may seem neutral on the surface.

# Safety Audit Services

Campus



**METRAC evaluates the safety of campuses through our comprehensive Campus Safety Audit Services.** We are proud of our work to enhance the safety of several educational institutions. Our list of clients include:

- ♦ Laurentian University, 1990
- ♦ Trent University, 1991
- ♦ Carleton University, 1992
- ♦ McGill University, 1992
- ♦ Queen's University, 1992
- ♦ University of Toronto, 1992
- ♦ University of Guelph, 1993
- ♦ University of Massachusetts, 1993
- ♦ Humber College, 1995
- ♦ Ryerson Polytechnical University, 1995
- ♦ Centennial College, 1997-2005
- ♦ University of New Brunswick, 2003
- ♦ St. Thomas University, 2003

METRAC is pleased to work in partnership with universities and campuses to tailor our Safety Audit services to meet their unique needs. Our audit helps to facilitate an effective and resource-appropriate process, which involves the following activities:

## **Background campus research**

Consultations are conducted with staff, faculty members, and students, to clarify their understanding and experience of the institution's history, past and present policies and practices, safety issues and responses, and other pertinent information. Current campus policies, practices, and programming are reviewed and analyzed in detail.

## **Training**

Key staff, faculty members, and students are trained on how to lead and participate in effective Campus Safety Audit Walkabouts. Each training is designed to build participants' knowledge of the safety issues for diverse campus users.

## **Safety Audits**

METRAC will bring together campus stakeholders, including staff, faculty, and students, to assess key areas utilizing METRAC's Safety Audit Process©, in order to evaluate physical features (e.g. lighting, signs, and sightlines) and social dynamics. Auditors convene to review and discuss their results, as well as to explore and develop their own ideas for enhancing safety on campus.

## **Safety Recommendations**

Background research and audit information are analyzed and synthesized into a comprehensive Safety Report, complete with findings and recommendations to improve the campus' safety with respect to physical and social features, policies, and practices. METRAC consultants are available to meet with stakeholders to explain results and facilitate next steps of integrating recommendations into future planning.

*“Reaction to and interest in the Campus Safety Audit guide and video is very positive. Queen's University is using them extensively ... An invaluable education!”  
(University Administrator)*

## METRAC's Safety Audit Process ©

METRAC's Safety Audit Process© is an essential element of METRAC's Campus Safety Audit Services. It helps people identify what makes them feel unsafe, determine what would make them feel safer, and understand how to communicate this information to local decision-makers. The Safety Audit is available in multiple languages and has been used around the world, including England, Holland, Australia, India, Tanzania, and South Africa. Our audit has helped communities evaluate the safety of a variety of frequented public spaces, including neighbourhoods, campuses, parking areas, transit systems, community centres, health care facilities, shopping malls, and parks.

*“Conducting a safety audit is a very effective community development strategy. It brings community members together to discuss their safety concerns and examine what kind of community they want to live in.” (community member)*

Generally, safety audits are recognized practices that can assist people in identifying crime and safety issues. METRAC's Safety Audit Process© uniquely evaluates the safety of public spaces with respect to violence and the fear of violence, building upon the experiences of community members who feel most vulnerable to violence.

*“We now understand the specific concerns women have for transit safety, and have made significant changes that will benefit everyone who rides the TTC. I highly recommend [METRAC's Safety Audit Process ©].” (Toronto Transit official)*

METRAC's Safety Audit is a participatory community action tool. Diverse community members become an integral part of generating creative safety solutions, as they are the true experts of their own sense of safety.

The audit guides the examination of:

- ♦ **Physical features**, such as lighting, signage, accessibility for people living with disabilities, security, and possible entrapment sites;
- ♦ **Attitudes and behaviours**, such as the impact of fear and both reported and unreported past
- ♦ **Practices and policies**, such as “lights off” and lockout times, responses to harassment, and emergency protocols.

### For More Information

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