

Campus Safety Audit Services

Creating safer campuses for everybody

METRAC





Introduction

For three decades, METRAC has been a national and global leader in the advancement of personal and institutional safety on post-secondary campuses across Canada.

The process of creating a safe campus is a partnership between diverse stakeholders – students, administration, faculty, employees and the surrounding community. METRAC’s Campus Safety Audit Process invigorates these partnerships to improve the safety track record of campuses, from those in urban centres and suburban communities to rural areas and distance/online learning programs.

METRAC’s Campus Safety Audit Process entails a comprehensive assessment of a campus’ physical environment and features, policies and practices, social dynamics, programs, services and resources. It brings campus community members together to identify their concerns and contribute to creative solutions.

About METRAC

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.

Select timeline

- 2014: METRAC’s Campus Safety Audit recognized in Maclean’s Magazine University Rankings Issue (R. Browne, “Why don’t Canadian universities want to talk about sexual assault?”)
- 2013: METRAC provides expert advice for the Government of Ontario’s publication, *Developing a Response to Sexual Assault: A Resource Guide for Ontario’s Colleges and Universities*
- 2012: Status of Women Canada recommends METRAC’s audit to colleges and universities across the country
- 2008: UN Habitat names METRAC’s audit a promising practice and strategic direction
- 1992: METRAC’s Campus Safety Audit is adopted by the council of Ontario Universities and Colleges
- 1989: METRAC’s Safety Audit is launched
- 1982: METRAC is founded in Toronto Canada

Where our Safety Audit has worked

Wilfrid Laurier University (2014)
McMaster University (2014)
University of Lethbridge (2013)
Royal Roads University (2013)
University of Toronto Scarborough (2013)
Seneca College (2012-2013)
Mount Allison University (2012)
York University (2010)
Centennial College (1997-2005)
St. Thomas University (2003)
University of New Brunswick (2003)
Ryerson University (1995)
Humber College (1995 and 2012-2013)
University of Massachusetts (1993)
University of Guelph (1993)
University of Toronto (1992)
Queen's University (1992)
McGill University (1992)
Carleton University (1992)
Trent University (1991)
Laurentian University (1990)

Approach

METRAC's Campus Safety Audit combines best practices of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) with a gender-based violence analysis; social ecological model; cultural competency approaches; community development; and Participatory Action Research methodologies. It is a catalyst to reduce sexual violence, assault, harassment and discrimination towards high risk groups, resulting in safer spaces for everyone.

"High Risk First"

Our audit stands apart from other safety assessment processes because it starts by considering safety needs of women and other campus community members statistically at highest risk of violence. It attends to forms of violence that are often missed in other assessments, including sexual and dating violence, and incorporates exclusion factors such as experiences of fear and social marginalization as important barriers to safety and a sense of belonging.

How METRAC's Campus Safety Audit works

1. Collaboration: we consult with administration and student groups and train them on safety assessments

2. Policy and practices: we identify what works and areas for strengthening
3. Needs and assets: we consult with campus users through focus groups, interviews and surveys
4. Safety assessments: we help campus users identify unsafe “hot spots” and discuss solutions
5. Report: we develop comprehensive safety recommendations and a plan for implementation

“The audit created safe spaces for tangible solutions to be drawn out to create a safer campus community through supported students, faculty, staff and community members in ensuring that all voices were heard throughout the process ... I believe METRAC is a true agent of change that every post-secondary institution should have on their campus.” (Livy Visano, York University, Safety Audit Committee Chair)

Results

On campuses across Canada, our work has resulted in:

- enhanced policies and practices to deal with sexual violence and security matters
- establishment of best practice safety measures (e.g. emergency telephones, Safer Spaces campaigns)
- greater campus community awareness of personal safety matters
- on-campus campaigns to reduce assault and harassment
- identification of areas for physical improvement (e.g. lights, signage)
- improved public relations and messaging about campus safety
- installation of security features (e.g. mirrors)
- staff members trained to understand and respond to gender-based violence and harassment issues
- new and improved programs for campus members at high risk of assault and harassment
- renewed commitment to campus safety improvement

“The METRAC Safety Audit Process is the only comprehensive program that analyzes every aspect of the community being audited in a participatory, inclusive way that involves all community stakeholders including students, staff and faculty.” (Lauren Snowball, Campaigns Coordinator, Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario)

Key campus safety factors

Our audit identifies factors of critical importance to safety and risk management in a campus environment.

- **Physical factors:** layout, lighting, signage and security features impact risk and fear of violence. For instance, people often feel afraid in low-traffic areas but campuses tend to abound with them. Strategies for reducing risks within the

physical environment improve safety. They also enable campus users to report criminal or violent activities they witness.

- **Sexual violence:** women are five times more likely to be sexually assaulted, and younger women are at greater risk. Less than 10% of sexual assaults are reported to authorities, but four out of five female undergraduates surveyed at Canadian universities said that they had experienced physical or sexual violence in a dating relationship. Campuses that consider and mitigate risks of sexual assault, whether or not they are officially reported, become safer campuses for everyone.
- **Discriminatory behaviour:** these actions, which can include name-calling, abusive graffiti and slurs, tend to increase fear for everyone. Whether or not instances are reported, women are statistically more likely to experience harassment and hate crimes on Canadian campuses. When clear policies and interventions are in place and enforced to prevent and deal with discrimination, campuses become more respectful, equitable environments.
- **Access:** the ability to move about freely, regardless of one's physical ability, reduces vulnerability. Accessible spaces are more inclusive and build participation for all students, employees and community members.
- **Practices and policies:** an area's rules and patterns of activity are directly impacted by policies and practices. They can create risks for campus users even if they seem neutral on the surface. Safety-enhancing policies and practices foster community spirit; remove barriers and reduce risk; encourage reporting of violent incidents; and support everyone to be safe in their learning, working and living environments.

“Centennial College has used METRAC services for close to 20 years ... We also find their reference material on stalking, personal safety planning and women's safety issues extremely valuable and have the material available to our community.” (Ron White, Manager, Life Safety and Security Services, Planning and Operations, Centennial College)

More information

Email info@metrac.org
Phone 416-392-3135
Website www.metrac.org