

Campus Safety: Considerations and Promising Practices

Written submission to the Status of Women Committee's study on
Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada

September 23, 2016

METRAC



Gabrielle Ross-Marquette, Communications Coordinator
METRAC: Action on Violence

Canadian universities and colleges have faced a drastic demographic shift since the early 1970s: by 2014, women were about 56% of university and college students (Tremblay, 2001; Statistics Canada, 2014). The culture shift needed for women of all backgrounds and gender-non-conforming folks to feel safe on campus has lagged behind the reality of diversity on campuses today. North American research suggests that between 15 to 25 percent of college and university-aged women will experience some form of sexual assault during their academic career (Lichty, Campbell, & Schuiteman, 2008; Newton-Taylor, DeWit, & Glikzman, 1998; American College Health Association, 2008). **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 individual and groups at higher risk for experiencing violence. Drawing upon METRAC's expertise, this submission focuses on rape culture and poverty on Canadian campuses, and proposes effective strategies to address violence against young women and girls.

Rape Culture on campus

Sexual violence is pervasive on Canadian campuses, through behavior such as leering, sexual jokes and innuendo, name-calling, unwanted touching and advances, harassing text messages, repeated, unwelcome gestures of affection, threats, and assault, based on a person's sex, gender identity, race, faith, ability, sexual orientation, age and more (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2011).

- 4 out of 5 undergraduate students surveyed at Canadian universities reported experiencing dating violence; 29% of them reported sexual assault (DeKeseredy, 2011).
- 80% of female student survivors of sexual assault are assaulted by someone they know (i.e. partner, ex-partner, classmate or friend).
- Women are at a higher risk of sexual assaults during the first eight weeks of classes (Kawartha Sexual Assault Centre, 2015; Krebs et al., 2007).
- 32% of women surveyed experienced online harassment or cyberstalking (West, 2014; White & Carmody, 2016).

The statistics show that sexual violence is prevalent in the culture on campuses. The acceptance or normalization of sexual violence is "rape culture", which describes shared social/community beliefs, ideas, structures, and practices that can, when added together:

- make high rates of sexual violence seem normal, unavoidable, and acceptable;
- make us prone to blame, disbelieve, and silence those who experience victimization;
- feed into sexist gender stereotypes and rape myths about men being "naturally" violent and women being at fault for "provoking them";
- feed into sexualized stereotypes about certain groups (indigenous people, racialized groups, trans* and gender diverse communities) and reinforce a belief that they are somehow more likely to abuse or are "immune" to victimization;
- make us think it's okay that our policies, practices, law enforcement, and courts do not respond well to the problem; and,
- keep us ill-equipped and unaware of how to support survivors/victims.

Rape culture is found everywhere from individual beliefs to large social structures. It is grounded in historical patterns and power arrangements between people (e.g. colonialism, sexism). Even as laws against sexual violence and stereotypes improve, these legacies are embedded in our culture and linked with ongoing forms of oppression like racism, homophobia, and ableism (Baker, Campbell, & Straatman, 2012). As a result, rape culture has led to greater risks for vulnerable groups on the margins of society (e.g. young women, Indigenous women, transgender individuals), while there are still not enough appropriate services and supports for marginalized people when they face abuse.

Poverty as a form of violence

The rising cost of tuition fees (CBC News, 2016), the high cost of housing and food coupled with precarious or unpaid work through internships create situations where students are forced to look outside traditional means to survive. In fact, the Ontario Association of Food Banks (2014) reported that an increasing number of post-secondary education students now regularly use foodbanks, with 8% of users being students and senior citizens, and that “there is not one college or university campus that does not have a food bank or hunger-relief program onsite”. International students on Canadian campuses may face even more economic barriers as their tuition fees are often three times the Canadian average, and they may find it even harder to obtain paid work because of negative stereotypes, racism and xenophobia (Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004). This climate of economic uncertainties creates unsafe campuses where developing a culture of consent proves difficult.

The rise in human trafficking

The serious reality of poverty on campuses increases the risk of exploitation of vulnerable and marginalized students. Universities and colleges, with their high proportions of young women on isolated campuses, are particular areas of concern for human trafficking. According to the United Nations, human trafficking is defined as:

the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs (United Nations, 2000)

The internet adds to the problem, and online human trafficking of young women and girls is a growing, serious issue in our communities (Task Force on Trafficking of Women and Girls, 2014). In Canada, this is a particular concern for Indigenous women, because the majority of women who are trafficked are Indigenous women and girls (Dean, 2013).

Effective strategies

Effective strategies to combat sexual violence on Canadian campuses must involve the campus community. The people who study, work, live and use a campus are the “safety experts” in that space, with the greatest understanding of their safety concerns. Students can both guide and help implement the process for change, which should focus on equity, diversity and inclusion to ensure everyone on campus is safe from sexual violence. Some promising practices are:

- 1) **METRAC’s Campus Safety Audits:** These Safety Audits explore physical factors, sexual violence, discriminatory behaviour, access, practices and policies. They require partnership between students, administration, faculty, employees and the broader community, in order to be effective in addressing the safety needs and assets of diverse campus constituencies. Audits review policies and practices, evaluate local needs and assets, assess safety and provide a detailed report with recommendations for implementation. More information: <http://www.metrac.org/what-we-do/safety/campus/>
- 2) **METRAC’s online student training:** METRAC is offering a new online course, the “Campus Consent Culture: Preventing Sexual Violence E-Course for Students”. This online course couple with inclusive education allows students to learn these concepts in a self-directed, interactive way. More information: <https://www.metraclearningcentre.org/>
- 3) **Inclusive Education:** Educating all members of campus communities (students, staff and faculty) on rape culture, sexual violence and fostering a culture of consent through face-to-face workshops led by peers trained by external community partners.

About METRAC: Action on Violence

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.

For 30 years, METRAC has championed women's safety on campuses. Under the philosophy of "safer for women, safer for everyone", we have led many change-making initiatives and learning opportunities to improve campus environments. In 1989, we launched our Campus Safety Audit Process. It addresses sexual assault, harassment and other forms of gender-based violence in public and private spaces between strangers and people who know each other. It has been adapted and utilized across Canada to improve the safety track record of campuses, from those in urban centres to rural areas to distance/online learning programs. More recently, METRAC conducted research, produced and released a brief publication in October 2014, *Sexual Assault Policies on Campus: A Discussion Paper*, featured in The Toronto Star on promising practices and challenges in institutional policies to address sexual violence on campuses, with critical attention to campus tribunals and arbitration processes. The process demonstrated a successful partnership between students, academics, community members and a community-based organization such as METRAC working together to improve policies and programs for addressing sexual violence on campuses. This paper laid a path for the Ontario Government's action plan to end sexual violence and harassment. Prior to this, METRAC contributed to the development of the Ontario Women's Directorate's *Developing a Response to Sexual Violence: A Resource Guide for Ontario's Colleges and Universities* and the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario's *Campus Toolkit for Combating Sexual Violence*.

Reference list

- American College Health Association. (2008) *Shifting the Paradigm: Primary Prevention of Sexual Violence*. Linthicum, MD: American College Health Association.
- Task Force on Trafficking of Women and Girls (2014). *Report of the Task Force on Trafficking of Women and Girls*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/pi/women/programs/trafficking/report.aspx>
- Baker, L., Campbell, M., & Straatman, A. (2012). *Overcoming Barriers and Enhancing Supportive Responses: The Research on Sexual Violence Against Women*. London, ON: Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children.
- CBC News (2016). *Average undergrad tuition rises to \$6,373 this year, StatsCan says*. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/statscan-tuition-1.3751036>.
- Dean, D. (2013). Native American Women Are Being Sold into the Sex Trade on Ships Along Lake Superior. Retrieved from <http://www.vice.com/read/first-nations-women-are-being-sold-into-the-sex-trade-on-ships-along-lake-superior>.
- DeKeseredy, W.S. (2011). *Violence Against Women: Myths, Facts, Controversies*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Kawartha Sexual Assault Centre (2015). *Lessons From Behind the Door: A Community Report Addressing Access to Services in the Response to and the Prevention of Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls in the City and County of Peterborough*. Retrieved from: http://www.kawarthasexualassaultcentre.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/KSAC_FinalCommunityReport_Web.pdf
- Krebs, C. P., Lindquist, C. H., Warner, T. D., Fisher, B. S. & Martin, S. L. (2007). *The Campus Sexual Assault (CSA) Study*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/221153.pdf>.
- Lichty, L.F., Campbell, R., & Schuiteman, J. (2008). Developing a University-Wide Institutional Response to Sexual Assault and Relationship Violence. *Journal of Prevention and Intervention in the Community*, 36(1), 5-22.
- Newton-Taylor, B., DeWitt, D., & Gliksman, L. (1998). Prevalence and factors associated with physical and sexual assault of female university students in Ontario. *Health Care for Women International*, 19(2), 155-164.
- Ontario Association of Food Banks (2014). *Hunger Report 2014*. Retrieved from: https://oafb.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2015/09/OAFB_Hunger_Report_Dec_1_2014.pdf
- Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2011). *Policy on preventing sexual and gender-based harassment*. Retrieved from <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-sexual-and-gender-based-harassment-0>
- Popadiuk, N. & Arthur, N. (2004). Counselling International Students in Canadian Schools. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 26(2), 125-145.
- Statistics Canada (2014). *Postsecondary enrolments by institution type, registration status, province and sex*. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/educ71a-eng.htm>.

- Tremblay, A. (2001). Equality of Access, Inequality of Results: Women and Higher Education since 1960. *London Journal of Canadian Studies*, 17, 101-123.
- United Nations (2000). *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*. Retrieved from <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/ProtocolTraffickingInPersons.aspx>.
- West, Jessica. (2014). *Cyber-Violence Against Women*. Retrieved from <http://www.bwss.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/CyberVAWReportJessicaWest.pdf>
- White, W. E. & Carmody, D. (2016). Preventing Online Victimization: College Students' Views on Intervention and Prevention, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. Retrieved from <http://jiv.sagepub.com/content/early/2016/01/14/0886260515625501.abstract>.