

Report of the Special Advisor to the Provost on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence: **Executive Summary**

Tracy Isaacs

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Land Acknowledgement

Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Chonnonton Nations, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. This land continues to be home to diverse Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) whom we recognize as contemporary stewards of the land and vital contributors of our society.¹

Outline:

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I. Introductory Statement

Gender-Based and Sexual Violence (GBSV) is pervasive in our world. As noted in the Final Report of the Action Committee on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence (April 2022), “About 30% of Canadian Women 15 years or older report sexual assault at least once since the age of 15, about four times more than men. Sexual minority people, people with disabilities, young people and Indigenous-identifying women were more likely to report these experiences.”² The Western University community of students, employees, and alumni is not immune, and the same intersectional vulnerabilities apply. This report offers a summary of the collaborative and ongoing efforts at Western with respect to GBSV prevention, support, and response, specifically in relation to the 39 Recommendations contained in two reports submitted to President Alan Shepard in April 2022 ([*Promoting Transformative Change at Western: Report of the Action Committee on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence*](#) and [*Independent Review of Western University Policies, Procedures and Processes related to the events on campus of September 10 and 11, 2021*](#)). The report concludes with suggestions for maintaining the momentum of the recent initiatives, so that Western may continue to be a leader among post-secondary institutions, prioritizing change in this important area of concern.

¹ [More Than Words, A Guide to Land Acknowledgements at Western University](#)

² [Promoting Transformative Change at Western: Report of the Action Committee on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence](#), p. 5.

II. Background

Orientation Week 2021 marked a turning point at Western, when allegations of sexual assaults started to spread on social media, ultimately resulting in a major student protest for change. President Alan Shepard responded to student advocacy by (1) establishing an internal GBSV Action Committee to make recommendations aimed at changing campus culture and (2) commissioning an independent review to identify policy gaps and/or procedural failures related to the weekend of September 10-11 and make recommendations to address them. These initiatives resulted in two reports, submitted in April 2022:

- *Promoting Transformative Change at Western: Report of the Action Committee on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence* (co-authored by Action Committee co-chairs Terry McQuaid and Nadine Wathen)
- *Independent Review of Western University Policies, Procedures and Processes related to the events on campus of September 10 and 11, 2021* (co-authored by Nathalie Des Rosier and Sonya Nigam)

Between them, the reports offered Western 39 recommendations. All of the recommendations may be categorized under the five domains outlined in the GBSV Action Committee's report, as follows:

Domain	Action Committee Recommendations	Independent Report Recommendations
1 Education and Training	2	5
2 Survivor Supports & Resources	3	1
3 Policy, Procedures & Accountability	11	3
4 Environmental Safety	3	3
5 Cross-Cutting Recommendations on Communications, Coordination & Culture Change	3	5
TOTAL	22	17

III. The Recommendations: Where we are today

The recommendations vary in breadth, depth, and specificity, with some outlining a clear way forward and others requiring careful consideration of possible approaches.

Western appointed Tracy Isaacs as Special Advisor to the Provost on GBSV for a two-year term to collaborate with the GBSV Advisory Committee to advance the implementation of recommendations from the two reports.

The work achieved so far has involved significant collaboration and initiative across campus and beyond, including the efforts of the committee, Centre for Research and Education on Violence against Women and Children (CREVAWC), Western Student Experience, Western Housing, Western Communications, Western Legal Counsel, the Human Rights Office, Human Resources, and community partner Anova. Significant work began almost immediately after the release of the two reports, including major re-organizing of Orientation Week and the implementation of mandatory “Mustangs for Consent” training for all first-year students coming into Western Housing.

Summary of progress by domain

Domain 1: Education & Training

Action Committee Recommendations 1.1 and 1.2; Independent Reviewer Recommendations 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 16

Significant progress has been made in this domain, particularly in mandatory and elective programming for graduate and undergraduate students, student leaders, and student-athletes, led by AnnaLise Trudell (Manager, Wellness & Equity Education, Student Experience). Mandatory modules for incoming students (2022–2024 cohorts) have received positive feedback. An impact study, led by Katreena Scott in partnership with CREVAWC, is underway.

Western employees are required to complete training on best practices for receiving GBSV disclosures, with optional related training available through the Office of EDI. Additional opportunities may be offered through the Talent, Learning, and Engagement Team. The GBSV Advisory Committee recommends prioritizing enhanced employee programming, including specialized sessions for leaders.

Domain 2: Survivor Supports & Resources

Action Committee Recommendations 2.1 to 2.3; Independent Reviewer Recommendations 8, 9, and 13

Western offers robust survivor supports for students through Wellness & Well-being in Student Experience, including two GBSV Case Managers, a GBSV Education Team, and a Senior Advisor (Gender-Based & Sexual Violence Response). These services are easily

accessible via the Student Experience website, with additional support available for on-campus residents through Western Housing. Employee resources have also been clarified on the HR website.

Domain 3: Policy, Procedures & Accountability

Action Committee Recommendations 3.1 to 3.11; Independent Reviewer Recommendations 2, 10, 11, and 15

Progress in this domain includes: developing a GBSV reporting dashboard; maintaining a strong Gender-Based and Sexual Violence Policy (MAPP 1.52) reviewed every three years (most recently in Spring 2023); revising the governance structure for Orientation Week to promote collaboration and low-intensity programming; providing clearer guidance and training on disclosures and complaints; increasing awareness of leader responsibilities under the Non-Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct Policy (MAPP 1.35); and incorporating safety themes into the new EDIDA Strategic Plan.

Domain 4: Environmental Safety

Action Committee Recommendations 4.1 to 4.3; Independent Reviewer Recommendations 8, 9, 12

A top priority from the GBSV Action Committee's Report is to "create a campus environment where people feel safe." This includes enhancing physical safety through measures like improved lighting, CCTV, emergency "blue" phones, visibility-focused landscaping, and safety audits conducted via CSPTED (Campus Safety Provided Through Environmental Design), available upon request through Campus Safety and Emergency Services.

Western is well-resourced with safety personnel, including Special Constables, contracted security as needed, Foot Patrol, and the Student Emergency Response Team (SERT), all of which have expanded post-COVID. The university also has a comprehensive Emergency Response Plan to address various emergencies and threats. Additionally, staffed "Care Hubs" have been introduced at major events like Orientation Week and Homecoming to provide support, quiet spaces, and a place for attendees to recharge.

Domain 5: Cross-Cutting Recommendations on Communication, Coordination & Culture Change

Action Committee Recommendations 5.1 to 5.3; Independent Reviewer Recommendations 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, and 17

Achieving a safer campus requires ongoing culture change and coordination across the Western community. Recent efforts build on decades of prior work, with the 2022 reports providing a valuable opportunity to assess progress, identify gaps, and emphasize the need for a unified approach. The GBSV communications strategy,

developed collaboratively by Western Communications, Student Experience, and the GBSV Advisory Committee (as per Recommendation 5.1), exemplifies an institution-wide initiative to align messaging and approach on GBSV-related issues.

IV. Maintaining our momentum of local success and national leadership into the future

Western has become a national leader in GBSV prevention, support, and response, driven by innovative, large-scale student training and broad campus collaboration. It is essential to sustain the momentum that has brought us to this point.

As the two-year term of the Special Advisor to the Provost on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence concludes on December 31, 2024, the Special Advisor and the GBSV Advisory Committee recommend the following:

1. Continued leadership of the GBSV Portfolio through the Provost's Office and the continuation of the GBSV Advisory Committee.
2. Continue building on our excellence in prevention, support, and response initiatives for students while sharing successes with our community and our peer institutions. This includes, but is not limited to, expanding student training, with tailored programs for graduate students, student leaders, and student athletes; researching and reporting on the impact of the mandatory first-year programming, "Mustangs for Consent"; maintaining support for survivors through GBSV Case Managers; and ensuring fair investigative processes involving students in the application of MAPP 1.52 Policy on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence.
3. Further development in the areas of GBSV prevention (training), support (services for survivors), and response (investigations) **across the entire Western Community** that focus on employees/leaders.

As we look to the future, we can build on the momentum gained over the last few years in the direction of meaningful culture change. We have seen tremendous successes, particularly with respect to student programming in GBSV prevention, support, and response. At the same time, we recognize that GBSV is not limited to students. It has an impact on the entire Western community, and all of us, including our leaders, have a role to play as we continue to make these efforts an institutional priority.



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