

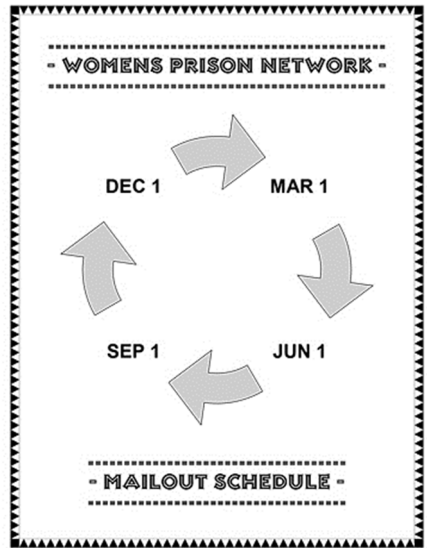
Women's Prison Network
Winter 2015-6 : Issue #1

Editor's Note:

Welcome to the first issue of Women's Prison Network, a magazine by and for women, trans and youth prisoners. Its purpose is to be a safe space to share art, poetry, news, thoughts, conversation, and connections. We will strive to circulate copies to all women's prisons in Canada. In the next issue there will be a section for pen-pal ads. If you would like to put an Ad in the Spring Issue please send it in, no more than 30 words. This magazine is sent into women's prisons only!

Please send in your art, poems, short stories and articles to Women's Prison Network if you would like your voice to be part of the next issue.

Women's Prison Network
PO Box 39, Stn P
Toronto, ON, M5S 2S6



Untitled

*Lonely tears, lonely cries
Too many 'hellos', too many 'goodbyes'
Broken promises, broken hearts
Lost ideas, lost smarts
Fellow convicts, fellow inmates
No more love, no more hates
Stolen memories, stolen youth
Untrue stories, untrue truth
Time wears out, time decays
Lonely nights, lonely days*

Angie D.

'Women's Prison Network' is produced 4 times per year. It is sent out for free to Women's Prisons in Canada.

If you are on the outside or part of an organization, please consider a donation !!!

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Class-action suit launched over treatment of mentally ill inmates in federal prisons

The suit, if certified by the court, would pit the Attorney General of Canada against federal inmates diagnosed with mental illness between 1992 and the present. A proposed class-action lawsuit filed in an Ontario court Friday alleges the federal government fails to provide adequate care to mentally ill prisoners while relying far too heavily on solitary confinement as a way to deal with them. The case, if certified by the court, would pit the Attorney General of Canada against federal inmates diagnosed with mental illness between 1992 and the present. "Prisoners in federal institutions who suffer serious mental illness are not being given the treatment they are statutorily entitled to," said lawyer James Sayce, whose firm, Koskie Minsky, is behind the action. "It's a problem that can't be ignored anymore." The lawsuit, which contains allegations not proven in court, is seeking at least \$600 million in damages and estimates hundreds of mentally ill prisoners could be part of the action if it is certified.

"They are being warehoused and they are being subjected to extended periods of time in solitary confinement because the federal prison system doesn't know what to do with them," said Sayce. "The effect is . . . the illnesses get worse, and you have serious pain and emotional stress being suffered by these unwell inmates." A statement of claim filed Friday alleges that those tasked with caring for mentally ill inmates in federal prisons have treated them with "contempt, prejudice, indifference and abuse." It claims prison staff are unqualified to administer, control, protect and care for mentally ill inmates and instead rely almost exclusively on "force, compliance and behavioural inducement methods." It also alleges that extended periods of solitary confinement are used to "contain and manage" mentally ill prisoners. It alleges the practice amounts to "cruel and unusual punishment" for mentally ill prisoners and claims

that the government is failing in its mandate to rehabilitate rather than punish prisoners. "Federal penitentiaries are becoming Canada's largest repositories for the mentally ill," the statement of claim said. "Prisoners diagnosed with serious psychological disorders and illnesses have suffered severe harm as a result of the defendant's policies and procedures."

The statement of claim also alleges mentally ill inmates face interruptions in care when they are admitted to and transferred between institutions, which lead to them being denied medication for an extended period, and are also allegedly denied commonly prescribed psychiatric drugs. The representative plaintiff in the case, Christopher Brazeau, is a prisoner at an institution in Edmonton. The 34-year-old suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, generalized anxiety disorder and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, said the statement of claim. He is serving a sentence of 12 years for robbery-related crimes. He has spent 12 consecutive months in solitary confinement, has gone long periods without his necessary medications and has "regularly" been prescribed unsuitable medications, the statement of claim said.

"Mr. Brazeau suffered significant worsening of his mental health problems during his time in solitary confinement, including anxiety, depression, self-harm, suicidal thoughts and visual and auditory hallucinations," the statement of claim alleged. "It is likely that Mr. Brazeau's condition will continue to deteriorate as a result of Canada's failure to create and implement policies that allow for the provision of proper health care."

Diana Mehta
The Canadian Press
Jul 17, 2015

Being a woman is hard work.
- Maya Angelou

Aboriginal incarceration up 47 per cent at Canada's federal prisons

Sask. incarceration explored in 'Injust Justice'

Regina - For the researchers on a panel at the University of Regina on Tuesday, the numbers add up to a damning assessment of the state of justice and corrections:

- federal prison populations in Canada over the past decade have risen overall 17.5 per cent, but jumped 47 per cent for indigenous people and dropped three per cent for the Caucasian population;
- while indigenous people comprise 15 to 17 per cent of the Saskatchewan population, 80 to 90 per cent of the men in the province's jails, 90 to 95 per cent of the women and 80 plus per cent of the youth are indigenous;
- 13 per cent of the male prison population and 29 per cent of the female prison population live with mental illness;
- 92 per cent of those incarcerated in Saskatchewan have addictions, while only 44 per cent of those under age 25 have a high school diploma.

They are a few of the statistics cited during a panel discussion titled 'Injust Justice'. It was organized by the Regina Public Interest Research Group, a student-run non-profit organization working for social and environmental justice on campus. The three panellists were asked to address two questions: If they believe the justice system engages in targeted oppression, and what other justice models might work better. Citing the disproportionate incarceration rates, Robert Henry said, "I know that we have targeted oppression towards indigenous peoples." His PhD thesis was on Saskatchewan's indigenous street gangs, and he works with the Saskatoon gang intervention program Str8 Up. Henry said individuals who have watched their fathers, uncles and grandfathers go to prison start to

believe at a young age that their role in life is to become criminals. "It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy," he added. Jason Demers, who teaches classes in English and criminology, authored a study last year on the "warehousing" of prisoners in Saskatchewan.

"We're looking at the necessity of doing different things in order to actually deal with what an entire history has done to a people," said Demers. Michelle Stewart, who teaches justice studies, noted upwards of 60 per cent of people with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder will encounter the justice system at some point in their lives. "Some of the most marginalized people in Canada are themselves subject to the justice system rather than community care and treatment," she added. On the issue of better alternatives, Stewart said therapeutic approaches, such as the mental health courts in Regina and Saskatoon, are improvements. While the accused, who are living with cognitive and mental challenges, often face the prospect of jail, a team approach helps develop a strategy to support them in the community. Noting that upwards of 40 per cent of people in the province's jails are on remand awaiting trial, Demers advocates "pre-charge screening" by the prosecution. He said only 65 per cent of charges result in a conviction, while 30 per cent are dropped and five per cent end in acquittal.

Henry said people walk out of prison with little more than a bus ticket, then easily fall back into trouble as they struggle to find a place to live and the means to pay for it on the outside. He said Str8 Up works because it focuses on health and healing for former gang members. "They're trying to become responsible citizens again," he added.

Barb Pacholik
The Leader-Post
Sep 23, 2015

We are powerful because we have survived.
- Audre Lorde

Burnside Jail

*Had a Sweat today Native ritual I feel cleansed
inside
My mother was there the elder told me
She said she was doing something with my hair
And I felt my hair and the braids I put in earlier
were
Undone*

Sara Tait

Broken-hearted Mistakes at War

*The crowd calls your name but it's not the same.
What are you going to do when they're coming
for you?
You ate so scared, because no one cared.
People make mistakes but get no breaks.
You are ashamed because you are to blame.
All people make mistakes, but when are we
gonna get a break?*

Krystal Paul

Freedom Wasted

*Thoughts ponder through my racing mind
Running scared, trying to hide
From the shame of my crime
Pity & selfish blame, not caring
Or too afraid to concentrate
On the damage & pain
Drained in denial I cry
His false pretence & little white lie
Caused me to receive a Life sentence
No way to deal, no feelings to cope
Creator sent me an angel of mercy
To show me some hope*

Roxanne McGinty

No Man's Land

*On remand
I am my old country's
No man's land
Encircled by recycled air
I see the pastor in the chair
confined I walk the frame
of heavy metal shavings shame*

*On remand
I am my old country's
No man's land
From between the ocean and the cedar wood
you come to see the self aborted adulthood
divided once was our country of origin
freedom never dies under the wing of pigeon*

*On remand
I am my old country's
No man's land
Gravel grows so grey in the strip
inside here and there I can't take a trip
as you sew another patch to life's quilt
I take a seat between innocent and guilt*

*On remand
I am in God's country
safe in the palm of
his hand*

Astrid Literski

Purpose

*In life you will realize that
There is a purpose for everyone you meet
Some will test you
Some will use you
And some will teach you
But most important are the ones
Who bring out the best in you,
Respect you & accept you
For who you are
Those are the ones*

Allara Custer

The Prison Book Club

Ian Brown's 2009 memoir, *The Boy in the Moon: A Father's Search for His Disabled Son* – an unvarnished, heartrending account of Brown's efforts to connect with his uncommunicative, seriously disabled child – struck a resounding chord with reviewers, prize juries, and readers. Their unqualified enthusiasm, however, wasn't shared by members of a book club comprising inmates of the Collins Bay Institution, a medium-security correctional facility near Kingston, Ontario. One of the club's leading voices complained that the author was too self-centred. Another member said he knew a family dealing with a similarly difficult situation but without the "upper middle-class advantages" Brown enjoyed. Some participants rendered more favourable judgments, but the general impression was that plenty of people face trying circumstances without complaint or a need to publicly launder their woes.

The judgments on Brown's book and numerous others appear in Ann Walmsley's empathetic and insightful memoir, *The Prison Book Club*, the most recent entry in the growing genre of books about book clubs. Several have become book-club mainstays in themselves, including *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, *The Jane Austen Book Club*, and *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* – the last of these devoured, and enjoyed, by the critical inmates at Collins Bay.

The *Prison Book Club* operates on a couple of levels. One is Walmsley's initial reluctance to become involved in the first place. Invited by a friend to volunteer at Collins Bay, Walmsley first must overcome the lingering trauma of having been violently attacked by muggers while living in England. Mostly, though, the narrative deals with the inmates' considered and generally astute responses to a wide variety of books, including Lawrence Hill's *The Book of Negroes*, Roddy Doyle's *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, Ayan Hirsi Ali's *Infidel*, and Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace*.

Evidence of the inmates' perceptiveness is abundant throughout Walmsley's book. Club members are intuitively sceptical that all might not be as reported in Three Cups of Tea, mountaineer Greg Mortenson's best-selling account of his humanitarian efforts to build schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan. A collective

eyebrow was raised at Collins Bay well before the veracity of Mortenson's account was assailed by author Jon Krakauer on *60 Minutes*.

Walmsley, whose role is to suggest books, help steer the discussion, and encourage the most committed members to keep journals of their observations, befriends several of the prisoners, two of whom start their own book club after they are transferred from Collins Bay to the Beaver Creek minimum-security facility. It is there that the participants are joined by "one of Canada's best-known white collar criminals," an opinionated, somewhat arrogant contributor disliked by the other prisoners for, among other things, insisting that each book be ranked on a scale of one to 10. Walmsley is careful to protect the anonymity of her subjects, but a quick Google search is sufficient to establish the celebrity felon's identity.

Although Walmsley provides detailed context for each book discussed, familiarity with at least some of the titles lends an additional point of reference. She avoids making blanket claims for the rehabilitative value of prison book clubs, but her account makes a strong case for the humanizing potential of literature.

Vit Wagner
Quill & Quire (Book Review)
Sep 2015

If woman had no existence save in the fiction written by men, one would imagine her a person of the utmost importance; very various; heroic and mean; splendid and sordid; infinitely beautiful and hideous in the extreme; as great as a man, some think even better.

- Virginia Woolf

Books are funny little portable pieces of thought.

- Susan Sontag

Write what should not be forgotten.

- Isabel Allende

Prison for Women event emotionally charged

On the grounds of the former federal Prison for Women, more than 75 people gathered in a healing circle Monday to remember the women who died while incarcerated. The spiritual gathering took place Monday on the 40th anniversary of Prisoners' Justice Day, an annual day of remembrance for the men and women who died unnatural deaths inside Canadian prisons. The emotionally charged event, which saw many tears shed, was organized by a group of five women who all agreed healing was needed. One of the organizers, Laurel Claus-Johnson, a community developer and native activist, said her involvement with women in prison began in 1985. "When I came to Kingston to go to law school, a fair portion of our people were in prisons," the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal recipient said. Along with a few other law students, Claus-Johnson applied to visit Kingston's prisons. "You meet the most downtrodden of the downtrodden," she said. "It just grabbed my heart and my emotional base and my sense of protection. "Many of them died in there with no ceremony." During the healing circle on Monday, more than 50 women formed an inner circle around a fire, which was available for offerings of tobacco in prayer. Surrounding them were about 15 men who formed an outer protective circle. The group was diverse, including former prison staff, aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples, religious leaders and members of Queen's University. Following a welcome and explanation of protocol, a smudge stick for cleansing circled clockwise, counter to the circling tobacco. Each circle member took some of the tobacco, and then released it into the flames along with their words and emotions. Also circling was a large feather that had been used in the '70s in the very first powwow of some of the incarcerated women. As each person held the feather, they offered words in honour of the women, as well as stories of their connection to the prison. Many of those who spoke cried for those they

had lost and for the suffering endured by the women inside the prison's walls. Aboriginal peoples, and in particular women, are disproportionately imprisoned. The incarceration rate for aboriginal adults is estimated to be 10 times higher than that of non-aboriginal adults. Aboriginal women are even more over-represented, as 40% of women in sentenced custody in 2012 were aboriginal, while only 25% of men were, according to Juristat. These numbers were deemed a result of "systemic discrimination" by the Office of Correctional Investigator's report in 2013. It's been 15 years since P4W's last female inmate was transferred out. The facility, which opened in 1934, closed following a series of incidents, including the use of inmates for unethical LSD experiments. In 1994, video footage emerged that showed an all-male Institutional Emergency Response Team (IERT) doing a forced strip search on every female inmate. The incident led to a federal inquiry led by Justice Louise Arbour, which condemned the prison for its "cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment" of women. In 2008, a few months after Queen's University took ownership of the site, the stone security wall that surrounded the prison was demolished. "Even though the walls are down, those feelings are still there," Claus-Johnson said.

Anisa Rawhani
Kingston Whig-Standard
Aug 10, 2015

I postpone death by living, by suffering, by error, by risking, by giving, by losing.
- Anais Nin

You can't turn back the clock.
But you can wind it up again.
- Bonnie Prudden

2 suicides at same N.S. women's prison 'raises a lot of red flags': ombudsman

Camille Strickland-Murphy's family remembers her as funny, smart, and active young woman - not as a 22-year-old drug addict who took her own life last month, at the Nova Institute for Women in Truro, N.S.

Her family hoped that by going to a federal institution she'd get the help she desperately needed.

Strickland-Murphy's shocking turn to crime included an armed robbery at a Newfoundland bank machine, disguising herself in her brother's clothing.

"I believe the crimes themselves were stemming from the influence of drugs or alcohol," her brother Keir Strickland-Murphy said. "But the reason she turned to those were mental health issues, from her anxiety and her OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder)."

Her suicide followed the death of another Newfoundland woman, in April, who was serving time at the same women's prison.

Prison officials haven't revealed the cause of 38-year-old Veronica Park's death. But, Canada's prison ombudsman, Howard Sapers, said such back-to-back deaths are troubling.

"Having two women die in custody in such proximity, in one institution, raises a lot of red flags."

Sapers, whose official title is Correctional Investigator, told Global News a woman hadn't died in federal custody since 2013.

Before that, it was Ashley Smith in 2007 — another mentally ill inmate who choked herself to death, while guards stood and watched outside her segregated cell.

Outrage following Smith's death has forced some changes.

"We've seen some improvements in staff training," said Sapers. "We've seen some capacity enhancements made by Correctional Service of Canada. Some policy changes around the use of segregation."

But, some say communication is still weak.

Officials haven't told Camille Strickland-Murphy's family whether or not she was in segregation when she killed herself.

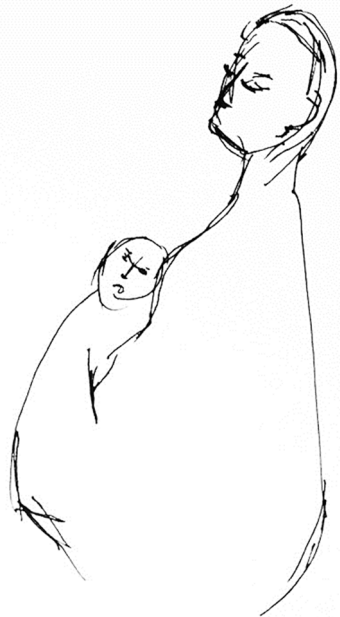
"It was the first attempt we were ever told of, but we have since found out there were other attempts [that] we were not informed of," Kier Strickland-Murphy said.

He said the family should have been told about previous incidents.

Prison officials told the family they didn't say anything prior to her death because it was only self-harm, not actual suicide attempts.

With questions surrounding both recent deaths giving rise to frustration, answers are still in short supply. A spokesperson at the Nova Institution for Women in Truro refused to comment.

Ross Lord
Global News
Aug 14, 2015



Prisoners go to the polls today in Canada

Cutbacks in correctional system a key issue for thousands of inmates

Thousands of Canadians are casting their ballots today to help elect the next federal government — but they're doing it behind bars. Elections Canada has set up polling stations at federal prisons across the country, to facilitate the democratic process for more than 22,000 eligible voters who are incarcerated and under community supervision. Some inmates have become more politically engaged than ever in this campaign, with some planning to use their ballots as a way to bring change to Canada's correctional system. In the last election in 2011, voter turnout was 54 per cent in federal prisons, not far behind the 61 per cent in the general population. And Jason Wisdom, who is serving a life sentence for first-degree murder at Ontario's Beaver Creek institution, predicts that participation will be even higher in this election because of a backlash over cuts to prison services. "Everybody has an opinion. There's a lot of discussion, and I believe it's like that in every unit. It's actually pretty big on the inside, as far as who to vote for, why, who," he told CBC News in an interview. "A lot of guys haven't voted before they came to prison, like myself, but now I would say about 80 per cent of the guys here want to vote and want to have a say." Voting in penitentiaries has been in practice since 2002, when the Supreme Court of Canada ruled it is a constitutional right in this democracy. She has served two years of a five-year sentence for armed robbery, and has never voted before in a federal election. Today, Jeanine will cast her ballot for the first time - behind bars. As chair of the prison's inmate committee, she has been helping and encouraging other inmates to register to vote, and helped organize a question-and-answer session last month attended by candidates from the four main political Parties. One of her main motivations for voting is to improve education, training and other programs on the inside. She said cutbacks have eroded those services, and that has an effect on inmate rehabilitation.

'Revolving door?'

"Without the help that we need, how are we to

reintegrate back into the community?" Jeanine said. "And if there's less programming, and no setup for reintegration, then there's no help for us prisoners. You might as well put a revolving door on the front gate because people will be coming back. With this setup, people will be prone to failure. "Most inmates follow the campaign by watching televised news reports, listening to the radio and reading newspapers. One of the key issues is personal: the effects of cuts to prison services. "Right now all the institutions are suffering from budget cutbacks, and this affects a lot of people in prison. Not only the inmates, but also the staff. Because with all the cutbacks, it's less programming, which means less help for us, and with less programming and funding, there's less jobs for staff, and if we're unable to get the help we need, how are we supposed to be successful upon our release back into the community?"

Some victims groups opposed

But Sharon Rosenfeldt, who co-founded Victims of Violence with her late husband, Gary, after their 16-year-old son Daryn was abducted and murdered by serial killer Clifford Olson, said incarcerated Canadians should not be allowed to vote. "They are Canadian citizens, but they have forfeited that right once they cross that line," she said. "It just doesn't make sense to me. They should not be part of that democratic process." But prisoner advocates say it helps them engage with their communities - and become better citizens when they're released back to society. Prisoners vote for the candidate in the riding where they last resided, not for the riding where they are now incarcerated. Catherine Latimer, executive director for the John Howard Society of Canada, said voting is a positive influence for the rehabilitation and transition process. "I think it helps them to be engaged and to understand the rights and responsibilities that go with citizenship, and I think that helps them in terms of pro-social conduct. So I think it's a very positive sign that prisoners are interested in voting and participating. They are members of the polity."

Kathleen Harris
CBC News
Oct 09, 2015

Motherhood takes on a different meaning when you visit your 19-year-old son in jail

Before driving the 90 minutes it's taken me to get here, I dreaded the visit. I have been dreading it for months. A friend of mine looked at me with kind eyes before I left. "Enjoy it, have a good time," he said. "You are going to see your son."

I swallow the lump in my throat and decide that, no matter what, I will provide love and compassion to my son today. My job is no longer to kiss away tears, keep him safe, drive him to soccer practice or meet with teachers and chair the PTA. That was the past. Motherhood now is stripped down to the barest of bones.

I have never even walked by a jail, let alone set foot in one. I will spare you how I came to be here, outside the Saint John Regional Correctional Centre, but here I am, set to visit my 19-year-old son, who's been held in remand since March 2 of this year. I don't know what to expect. It feels like a jail should: austere brick building; razor wire over a metal fence; cold, unwelcoming.

I am early. I walk in and sit down on a metal bench. More coldness. Fifteen minutes later, other people arrive for their family visits. There is a very young mother with a baby, accompanied by another young lady; a woman about my age with two school-aged children in tow; and another with downcast eyes and a resigned hunch to her shoulders. This is my sangha, my community, for today. We are all united in this strange ritual of visiting a loved one in prison. The young mother seems so thrilled and exuberant, she keeps saying to her baby girl – well, happily shouting really – "We're gonna see Daddy and Uncle Billy!!" She seems genuinely pleased about this.

Eventually a buzzer goes off, the heavy door unlocks and a guard takes our IDs and has us sign in. The next room is where the visit is held. We file in. There are four tiny stools and four cubicle-style things, a plexi-glass window, and a phone. For some reason, I had expected a face-to-face visit without a barrier. After a few minutes, moments, I don't know really, the prisoners file in. He is wearing a grey tracksuit and looks better than I expected. I smile broadly and tell my son that I am just so happy to see him and that I love him. His eyes light up. He

tells me that he loves me too. He is smiling and also crying a bit, wiping tears from his eyes, and I have a few precious moments of seeing my son as I remember him. I guess my friend was right. Deep breath in. Then the look passes. Hardness returns to his eyes, his face, his body language. I want to run away but I don't. Love and compassion are my new job. The woman beside me is there with her children. The phone between them doesn't work. A piece of paper and pen materialize from somewhere and she writes love notes to her inmate. What is their story? They look at each other with love and longing as the kids wait in the next room. Why can't she be offered another option? I consider handing her my place, but I can't; my son has not had any visits yet. My son tells me about his life as someone in remand – that is, not found guilty but awaiting trial. Remand is the no man's land of our correctional system. You sleep all day, play poker and chess with a homemade game, he says. There are no books to speak of. He asks me if I can bring books next time. I say yes. There's no counselling, no psychological help or assessment; no programs or anything useful to fill the days. My son is worried about being there for months on end. Does this happen? Yes. He gets one hour a day in the yard, if he is up, I learn. No fresh air or sun most days. Breathe. Finally our hour is up and I promise to come back as soon as I can.

I ask the guard if I am allowed to mail books. "NO."

Why can't they have any books? I don't feel like I have the right to ask this question. There is a Telmate machine in the entrance way. You can purchase credits for phone calls or the canteen or small necessities. A sign says I can pay with a credit card or cash. I try my card. The very last screen requires my zip code. I don't have a zip code, I live in Canada. This transaction is impossible. Why is this American machine here? I put in cash, and am asked if I accept the taxes and fees. Out of \$40 cash there is a credit of \$32 and change. This is surreal to me. Is it a special tax for inmates' families? Last year, my son was in remand for two months before the charges against him were stayed. That summer, I had a phone bill for collect calls from him totalling over \$800. "You had the choice to refuse the call," I was told when I complained to the phone company. I did not realize that this

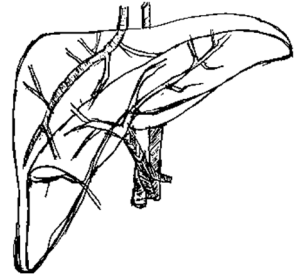
"special rate" existed. I want to write about my experience, to tell someone, but a voice in my head screams out loud and clear: "NOBODY CARES! Lock 'em up and throw away the key. Shouldn't get nothing." I look at the others leaving. Some have no car, they called a taxi or got a ride with a friend. Deep breath in, and exhale. I look at these people, my community and silently wish them well. We are now part of the punishment machine.

Lisette Surette
Globe and Mail
Jul 21, 2015

Federal Incarceration by the numbers

\$322 - average daily cost of a prisoner in a penitentiary in 2011-12 (\$221 in 2001-02)
\$117,788 - average annual cost of a prisoner in a prison in 2011-12
\$151,484 - annual cost of a prisoner in max security
\$104,889 - annual cost of a prisoner in med security
\$91,959 - annual cost of a prisoner in min security
7,695 - number of corrections officers in Federal prisons
\$78.76 - amount paid per Canadian, per year, to fund the Federal prison system
Prisoner Profile
Number of prisoners in Federal prisons:
As of April 14, 2013: 14,745
In 2002: 12,663
Age of inmates:
18-29: 40.5%
30s: 27.5%
40s: 19.4%
50-69: 11.7%
70+: 0.8%
2,823 incarcerated for murder
479 dangerous offenders serving indefinite sentences
58% of inmates are white
23% are aboriginal
36% are Catholic
15% are Protestants
5% are Muslims

Source: Correction Service Canada



Important Hep C Update!

New treatments with excellent success rates are now available!

These are in pill form and have little or no side effects. The downside is the cost of course: \$1000+ per pill.

Harvoni: \$60,000 for 8 weeks (Genotype 1, low viral load, never-treated)

Harvoni: \$90,000 for 12 weeks (Genotype 1)

Sovaldi: \$55,000++ perhaps with other drugs for Genotypes other than Genotype 1

Federal Prison: you may be able to start your treatment while inside.

Provincial Prisons: Depending on the province, you may have to wait till you get out.

When released, get right on welfare or disability. Federal health care programs like NIHB & IFH may cover costs.

Go to a Clinic and get your blood work done so you can get into a Treatment Program at no cost to you.

Important: most prisons, provincial drug plans, and private plans restrict the new drugs to people who have chronic hep C plus scarring of the liver (stage F2 or higher fibrosis). Both never-treated & people for whom Peg-Interferon & Ribavarin did not work are eligible for the newer treatments. For people with hep C and no liver scarring or light scarring (less than F2 fibrosis), it's still Peg-Interferon & Ribavarin. Get your liver tested! New tests have replaced biopsies: Fibre-test (blood) & Fibro-test (imaging).

Federal Prisons Statistics

Q: How many men and women are in a Federal prison on a given day?

A: In 2010/11, on a given day 38,219 adults and 16,279 youth (aged 12 to 17 years) were in custody in Canada (Federal and Provincial), for a total of 54,498 inmates.

Q: Is this number going up?

A: At 140 per 100,000 population, Canada's 2010-11 adult incarceration rate was 1% higher than the year before and 5% higher than a decade earlier. Canada's rate was about one-sixth that of the United States, but higher than that of many European countries of similar social and economic development.

Q: Is this the same for men and women?

A: In the last ten years, the number of women admitted to federal prisons increased 32.3% from 232 in 1998-99 to 307 in 2007-08. During the same time period, there was an increase of 6.6% in the number of men admitted to federal prisons. As of April 13, 2008, there were 495 women in federal prisons.

Q: What is the average age of prisoners?

A: The average age upon admission in 2010-11 is 33 years of age (CSC). This is roughly the same for men and women. However, the average age of Aboriginal inmates is lower, 29.

Offender age at admission to Federal prisons is increasing. In 2010-11, 12.1% of the Federal incarcerated population is age 50 or over, compared to 8.1% between 2001-02.

Q: What are the most frequent complaints from people in Federal prisons?

A: Health Care accounted for 13.5% of complaints followed by conditions of confinement (7.9%), and cell property (6.9%). Together these accounted for 28.3% of all complaints.

Q: How many prisoners have mental health issues in CSC?

A: In 2007-08, 11.1% of individuals committed to Federal prisons had a mental health diagnosis at time of admission and 6.1% were receiving outpatient services prior to admission.

In 2007-08, 30.1% of female inmates compared to 14.5% of male offenders had previously been hospitalized for psychiatric reasons.

The percentage of Federally incarcerated individuals prescribed medication for psychiatric concerns at admission has almost doubled from 11.0% in 1998-99 to 21.3% in 2007-08.

Female prisoners are twice as likely as male prisoners to have a mental health diagnosis at time of admission.

In BC prisons, in one seven year study, over 30% of the prison population had been medically diagnosed with a substance use disorder. An additional 26% were diagnosed with a mental disorder unrelated to substance use. Among those people diagnosed with a substance use disorder, more than three quarters were also diagnosed with a non drug-related mental disorder (concurrent disorders). Importantly, this does not necessarily include alcohol abuse, fetal alcohol syndrome or developmental disabilities which are not often diagnosed.

In BC, an estimated 80% of the female prison population has received a psychiatric diagnosis.

Q: What is the Aboriginal population in federal prisons?

A: In 2010/11, 27% of adults in Provincial and Territorial prisons and 20% of those in Federal prisons involved Aboriginal people, about seven to eight times higher than the proportion of Aboriginal people (3%) in the adult population as a whole. The disproportionate number of Aboriginal people in custody was consistent across all provinces and territories and particularly true among female offenders. In 2010/11, Aboriginal women represent 41% of all incarcerated women while Aboriginal men represent 25% of incarcerated men. The number of federal Aboriginal inmates is increasing.

Q: What is the death rate in Federal prisons?

A: In the ten-year period from 1999-00 to 2008-09, 533 Federal prisoners and 376 Provincial prisoners have died while in custody.

During this time period, suicides accounted for 18.6% of Federal prisoner deaths and 38.3% of Provincial prisoner deaths. The suicide rate was approximately 77 per 100,000 for Federal prisoners, and approximately 71 per 100,000 for Provincial prisoners. These rates are significantly higher than Canada's 2007 rate of 10.2 suicides per 100,000 people. Between 1999-00 and 2008-09, 5.8% of the Federal prisoner deaths were due to homicide, whereas homicide accounted for 2.4% of Provincial prisoner deaths. The homicide rate for Federal prisoners was approximately 24 per 100,000 and 4 per 100,000 for Provincial prisoners. These rates are significantly higher than the national homicide rate of 1.6 per 100,000 people in 2007.

Trudeau calls for ban on long-term solitary confinement in federal prisons

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has directed his Justice Minister to implement a series of recommendations stemming from the death of Ashley Smith that would ban long-term solitary confinement for federal inmates and steer all vulnerable prisoners away from the regressive form of incarceration. The move would bring Canada into line with guidelines set down by the United Nations Human Rights Committee and mark a stark about-face in the federal government's attitude toward the prison practice of isolating offenders upwards of 23 hours a day with little meaningful human contact.

The mandate letter for the Justice Minister, made public by the Liberal government on Friday, uses a phrase that the previous government and corrections officials avoided entirely – solitary confinement. Last year, following a *Globe and Mail* investigation into the death of Edward Snowshoe, a young Gwich'in man who took his life while housed in solitary confinement, then public safety minister Steven Blaney defended the practice during Question Period, but preferred the phrase "administrative segregation."

"It is done for safety reasons: the safety of the inmate, the safety of the personnel, and the safety of the facility," he said. Under questioning about Mr. Snowshoe's death at Senate Committee hearing last March, Correctional Service of Canada commissioner Don Head denied that federal prisons use solitary confinement when asked about Mr. Snowshoe's death. "The term 'solitary confinement,' which has been used in the media quite a bit, actually refers to something different than what we do in Canada," he said. The new Prime Minister clearly disagrees. His letter directs Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould to usher in "recommendations from the inquest into the death of Ashley Smith regarding the restriction of the use of solitary confinement and the treatment of those with mental illness." In total, four provincial and federal government bodies have conducted inquests and investigations into Ms. Smith's death. Chief among their recommendations has been the call for a prohibition on placing inmates in long-term segregation, defined as any term beyond 15 days, and a limit of 60 days in a calendar year. Other key recommendations

include a ban on segregating inmates with histories of self-harm or mental-health issues. As well, there were recommendations for the creation of an independent adjudication system to review all offenders in segregation.

"This is the first time I can recall seeing a minister's mandate letter," said federal correctional ombudsman Howard Sapers, who led one of the investigations. "I find that alone to be quite encouraging in terms of transparency, particularly because so many of the reforms of the past decade seemed to have been done with little consultation and, in fact, were ad hoc. This is a good start." Diagnosed with severe mental disorders, Ms. Smith strangled herself with a ligature eight years ago, at age 19. She had spent more than 1,000 days in segregation, in youth and federal prison. The changes directed by Mr. Trudeau would affect only federal prisons – those in which inmates have been given sentences of least two years. There are 1,800 Canadian inmates held in segregation on any given day. While the United States and the United Kingdom have actively moved away from the practice in recent years due to the severe psychological toll it is believed to have on offenders, its use has been on the rise in Canada, jumping 6.2 per cent in the five-year period leading up to 2013. "The last decade of 'tough on crime' measures have really caused serious problems in corrections and I'm really hopeful this government will take a serious look at remedying some of that," said Catherine Latimer, executive director of the John Howard Society of Canada, which is part of one of several lawsuits targeting solitary confinement. In Ontario, lawyers filed a class-action lawsuit this month asserting that juveniles as young as 12 are being held in solitary, and harmed by the practice. At the federal level, the BC Civil Liberties Association and the John Howard Society filed suit in January alleging that the use of solitary leads to the deaths of prisoners, discriminates against mentally ill and aboriginal inmates and is unconstitutional. Separately, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies have filed a lawsuit calling the federal practice of solitary confinement unconstitutional.

Sean Fine & Patrick White
Globe and Mail - Nov 13, 2015

Imagine a world without juvenile prisons

The city of Seattle, Washington, plans to never put another young person in jail. Is it a naïvely utopian vision or an idea whose time has come? In September, the Seattle City Council unanimously approved a motion calling for zero youth incarceration. Seattle councillor Mike O'Brien told us the idea emerged as community groups met to oppose a county plan to build a new \$200-million youth prison.

Interestingly, the story broke right after Craig was in L.A. meeting youth organizations, including the team from the Challenger Memorial Youth Centre - a detention facility for young people in Los Angeles, California.

At Challenger, educators are using our organization's service learning curriculum to teach empathy and community engagement to young offenders involved with L.A.'s notorious street gangs. Leslie Zoroya, Challenger's lead educator, told us that that simply learning about, and getting involved in, local and global issues is already making many of her young charges rethink their life choices.

Seattle's initiative and the L.A. experience make us question if prison is the best option for dealing with young offenders.

In juvenile detention facilities, youth are disconnected from community and family, with mostly other offenders as role models. This only reinforces negative behaviours and attitudes, according to juvenile justice experts.

"Research shows the earlier and longer youth spend in the system, the worse the outcomes are," says Peter Leone, a professor at the University of Maryland who has studied juvenile justice measures around the world for more than 20 years.

It costs approximately \$100,000 a year to incarcerate one young person in Canada. If that individual becomes a hardened life-long criminal, the amount will exceed a staggering \$2 million, according to a Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada presentation to a House of Commons committee. That's why it's important to consider alternatives to jail.

There's restorative justice, where offenders face their victims in a mediated setting outside the courts and agree on restitution. This approach results in surprisingly high levels of satisfaction for victims. New Zealand, a pioneer in restorative

justice, has been using it extensively since 1989 as an alternative to putting youth in prison, according to Leone.

"Diversion programs" are another option. They give police, prosecutors and judges the flexibility to waive charges if a young offender accepts help such as drug rehabilitation or mental health treatment.

Councillor O'Brien told us about a Seattle effort targeting adult homeless drug addicts and sex trade workers that provides housing and 24-hour support services instead of prison sentences. The program has reduced recidivism by 60 per cent and may become part of Seattle's zero-incarceration strategy for young people.

Denmark maintains only about 10 youth prison spaces for the entire country, and they are reserved for serious violent crimes, Leone tells us. Other young offenders go into social programs.

Kim Pate, executive director of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (a justice reform org.) told us that in the early 1970s, the state of Massachusetts successfully shut down all its youth prisons and transferred offenders to community facilities like group homes. It has maintained that approach ever since.

In Canada, the number of young people in juvenile detention has decreased dramatically since the Youth Criminal Justice Act was passed in 2003, forcing judges to consider alternatives to prison like community service, says Pate. And our country has a growing network of local restorative justice programs.

These approaches are investments in young people that have an economic and social ripple effect, achieving lower rates of youth crime and recidivism.

There will always be a handful of young offenders who commit crimes dire enough to warrant prison. Zoroya admitted there are some youth at Challenger who she believes are just too "ingrained" to ever turn their lives around.

But we share Leone's optimism that, with innovation solutions that tackle root problems instead of aiming to throw away the key, the overwhelming majority of young offenders never need see the inside of a jail.

If Seattle can dream of a world without youth prisons, why can't Canada?

Craig and Marc Kielburger
Huffington Post - Nov 06, 2015

Abuse, trauma leads women in prison to cry out for help

'We have nobody for abuse and trauma,' female prisoner tells Canadian researchers

Women in Canadian prisons should be assessed for previous trauma such as physical and sexual abuse and connected with treatment resources when they're released, a medical sociologist says.

About 80 per cent of women serving two years or more in federal custody had histories of physical or sexual abuse, which increased to 91 per cent among Aboriginal women, according to Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, which help women in conflict with the law. To learn more, Flora Matheson of the Centre for Research on Inner City Health of St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto and her colleagues from Correctional Service Canada Centre in P.E.I. conducted face-to-face interviews with 31 female prisoners with an average age of 36. The women had some serious health and social issues, she said. Many were in prison for drug use and fraud.

"From a Canadian perspective, it actually shows that you know the women are crying out for help with their experiences of trauma, that they want some services," Matheson said. For example, in Tuesday's issue of the journal *Women and Criminal Justice*, Matheson quotes one woman: "We have nobody for abuse and trauma in here. But we've all been through it and we're just holding all that hatred and you know all those emotions inside." Canadian prisons offer substance abuse programs that help women to make the link between trauma in their lives and problems with drugs, alcohol and crime.

While the researchers see a need to offer more services as a standard, they often aren't available, said Kim Pate of the Elizabeth Fry Society. "In theory, they should be getting support with all of those services," Pate said. "But unless it is seen as something directly related to their risk to public safety often times there isn't programming." The researchers said one of the challenges in offering trauma treatment in prison is that after counselling sessions, women return

to their cells, where the tough prison environment could leave them at risk for re-traumatization.

Correctional Service Canada didn't respond to requests for an interview today.

Files from CBC's Pauline Dakin

Jan 06, 2015

Facts about HIV and HCV

With some exceptions, HIV and HCV infection is generally more prevalent among women than men in prison, particularly among those who have a history of injection drug use.

In a study of provincial prisons in Quebec, the HIV and HCV rate among incarcerated women was, respectively, 8.8 and 29.2 percent, compared to 2.4 and 16.6 percent among male prisoners. In a 2007 nationwide survey by CSC, the HIV and HCV rate among federally incarcerated women was 5.5 and 30.3 percent, compared to 4.5 and 30.8 percent among federally incarcerated men. Aboriginal women reported the highest rates of HIV and HCV, at 11.7 and 49.1 percent, respectively. In a study of female prisoners in British Columbia (B.C.), self-reported rates of HIV and HCV were 8 percent and 52 percent, respectively.

While the majority of women in prison are voluntarily tested for both HIV and HCV, the provision of pre- and post-test counselling has been reported to be poor, and in some cases, non-existent. Women in prison are more likely than women in the general population to have faced violence and abuse; therefore, counselling accompanying HIV diagnosis is particularly important. Women in prison have concerns about the privacy and confidentiality of their HIV status. Women have reported being forced to draw unwanted attention. Women (37.0%) reported being HCV-positive. Aboriginal women were identified as a particularly high-risk group because they reported the highest rates of HIV (11.7%) and HCV infections (49.1%). These data highlight the need to ensure that culturally appropriate, effective interventions that decrease risk-behaviours and increase utilization of harm-reduction measures are offered to meet the needs of Aboriginal women.

Women's Prison Network Winter 2015-6 - Issue #1

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Please send in your work
before Feb 1, 2016
Spring Issue #2 is sent
out Mar 1, 2016



F.E.A.T. - Family Visitation

F.E.A.T. for Children of Incarcerated Parents was founded in 2011 to support the needs of the over 15,000 children in the Greater Toronto Area that have a parent in the criminal justice system.

F.E.A.T.'s Family Visitation Program provides weekend transportation from Toronto to correctional facilities in Southern Ontario for children and families to visit imprisoned loved ones. During our trips, F.E.A.T. provides free snacks and refreshments, offers a variety of games and activities, and plays movies. Our bus is a place where youth and families have a chance to talk about their experiences of having a loved one inside and receive support from mentors and other riders. Our Family Visitation Program is free for anyone 18 years old and younger. If you are interested in participating in our program, please call or email F.E.A.T. to register today.

For more information or to book a seat on the bus please contact Jessica or Derek Reid by email at info@featforchildren.org or by phone at 416-505-5333.

Prison Radio

- Montreal - CKUT 90.3 FM
PRS - 2nd Thurs 5-6 pm & 4th Fri 11-noon
- Guelph - CFRU 93.3 FM
Prison Radio - Thurs 10-11am
Call-in 519-837-2378
- Vancouver - CO-OP 100.5 FM
Stark Raven - 1st Mon 7-8 pm
- Kingston - CFRC 101.9 FM
Prison Radio - Wed 7-8 pm

This program features content produced by CFRC volunteers and by other campus and community radio broadcasters, including CKUT Montreal's Prison Radio and Vancouver Co-op Radio's Stark Raven programs.

The last Wednesday of each month, CPR features 'Calls From Home', sharing letters, emails, voice messages and music requests by and for prisoners and their loved ones.

Prisoners and their loved ones are invited to contribute music requests, messages and suggestions for the program.

Write: CPR c/o CFRC, Lower Carruthers Hall, Queen's University, Kingston, ON, K7L 3N6

Email: CFRCprisonradio@riseup.net

Call: 613-329-2693 to record a message or music request to be broadcast on-air.
