

WOMEN'S PRISON NETWORK



ISSUE #15 – SUMMER 2019

Editor's Note:

Welcome to Issue #15 of Women's Prison Network, a magazine by and for women, trans and youth prisoners in Canada.

This is a safe space to share art, poetry, news, thoughts, conversation, connections ...

We send copies into all Women & Youth prisons in Canada.

Send your art, poems, short stories, comments, articles, etc, to Women's Prison Network if you would like to be a part of the next Issue. – Thanks!

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

Contents:

News	3-7, 10-12
Poems	8-9, 12
Resources.....	13-16

Cover Artwork:

'Rose' by Larissa Monique Hauck

Artists:

Cover Artists will receive a \$25.00 donation. Thank you so much for your work! Let us know how & where you would like the donation sent to & where you would like your art returned to. Please note: this magazine is for women, trans and youth from all cultures, so please do not send religious imagery. Thank you for your art!

Writers:

One column is only 300 words, so do choose your words carefully. It must be short & to the point. Poems that are tight & give space for others are the first in. Thank you for your words!

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If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it.
- Toni Morrison

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

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

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Families who lost loved ones to overdose inside local jails press solicitor general

For more than an hour, families who have lost loved ones to overdoses inside local jails met with Ontario's solicitor general and "they didn't hold back."

The meeting involved 10 loved ones left behind after deaths at the Hamilton-Wentworth Detention Centre and Niagara Detention Centre. They met Monday afternoon in solicitor general Sylvia Jones' office where they demanded answers and action to prevent more overdose deaths inside provincial jails. In Hamilton families say the number of deaths and non-fatal overdoses is an epidemic. Jones told the families that 80 per cent of the recommendations that came out of an inquest that examined eight overdose deaths at Hamilton's Barton Street jail last year have or are being implemented. Her press secretary told *The Spectator* the same thing Friday. Yet when pressed for specifics, Jones was able to offer few details, said Amy McKechnie, who organized the meeting and whose brother Ryan McKechnie died June 2017. An inquest has been called into his death, but no dates have been set. *The Spectator* has also asked for details of the "80 per cent," but has yet to receive more information. Coroner's inquest recommendations are not mandatory, but the agencies have to give official responses - the government and jail have yet to release official responses in the super inquest. Some changes have happened in recent years including the addition of full-body scanners. However, the inquest last year heard that inmates believe they can trick the scanner by wrapping packages in carbon paper and hiding them in body cavities. When pressed for a response a staff sergeant from the jail explained the issue was actually staff error as the scanner screens can be difficult to read. McKechnie said she and other families pressed Jones about this, but claims Jones repeatedly insisted staff were all adequately trained. McKechnie said the meeting began with her reading a three-page letter, which she said Jones called powerful and asked for a copy.

Overall the families said Jones said she was committed to bringing changes and wanted to

stop contraband being brought into jails, but appeared to know few specifics.

"If we brought up something specific to HWDC, she couldn't comment," McKechnie said.

The super inquest last year examined eight overdose deaths between 2012 and 2016. Since then there have been at least seven other overdose deaths. Before the super inquest there was also a death in 2007.

"There needs to be preventative measures put in place," McKechnie said, adding that they're "never going to stop all drugs from coming in."

Many of the 62 recommendations centred on better access to healthcare, adding recreation and counselling services and better supervision, including continuous monitoring of security cameras. The continuous monitoring is one recommendation that the families specifically asked about but did not get a clear answer.

April Tykoliz, whose brother Marty Tykoliz died May 7, 2014, said she doesn't believe 80 per cent of recommendations have actually been implemented.

"Stop wasting hundreds of thousands of dollars on inquests if they won't use the recommendations ... it hurts the families (and is) disrespectful to the juries."

She said she also told Jones that she appreciated the opportunity to speak and knew the meeting was not easy for her. The families also met with NDP MPP Kevin Yarde, the party's corrections critic, who both McKechnie and Tykoliz said appeared far more sympathetic. The NDP have been calling for reform and transparency around how the Province of Ontario is implementing any inquest recommendations. Many of the inmates who died struggled to access help inside and inmates do not have access to the opioid overdose antidote naloxone, which is free outside of jails. The families say they want rehabilitation to be part of incarceration, care they and advocates say could not only save lives but prepare inmates to better reintegrate into society when they're released.

"We're not going away," McKechnie said.

Nicole O'Reilly
Hamilton Spectator
May 07, 2019

Sanity is a cozy lie.
- Susan Sontag

Canada's prisons not meeting health, end-of-life needs of older inmates, report says

Older, long-serving inmates are being "warehoused" in Canadian prisons not equipped to handle end-of-life care, Canada's prison watchdog says. The federal correctional investigator and the Canadian Human Rights Commission on Thursday called on the Correctional Service of Canada to meet the unique needs of older people behind bars, whose numbers are going up - along with government costs for holding them. The two bodies said the country needs a national strategy to address the care and needs of people over 50 in federal custody. They said the corrections service should find ways to release older inmates who don't pose undue risks to public safety into the community, long-term-care facilities, or hospices to outsource their care. Many aged inmates remain in prison well past their parole eligibility dates even though they have completed almost all of their correctional plans and pose little risk to the public, the report says.

"Every person in Canada, including those in federal custody, has a right to live their final moments with dignity and safety. Prisons are not equipped to provide end-of-life care," Marie-Claude Landry, head of the human rights commission, said in a release. "Correctional Service Canada must do more to ensure inmates can return to the community and so that end-of-life care is humane and dignified. This starts with encouraging and facilitating inmates to maintain meaningful connections within their community." Older inmates account for one-quarter of the inmate population in federal institutions, with their numbers increasing by 50 per cent over the last decade. Those over age 65 are more likely to have chronic diseases than seniors who aren't in prison, which has helped driven up correctional health-care costs. Interviews with more than 250 older inmates and dozens of staff also unearthed reports that older offenders were victims of "muscling" and bullying. There were also accessibility issues at every prison officials visited as part of their work.

"Older offenders are one of the most costly cohorts to incarcerate, yet they pose the least risk," said correctional investigator Ivan Zinger. "More responsive and humane models of care

exist in the community that would better support the reintegration needs of older offenders at a significantly lower cost. These alternatives could be funded through savings generated by unnecessary incarceration."

The Canadian Press
Feb 28, 2019

How many incarcerated youth are placed in segregation?

Canada is missing swathes of information about young people in the justice system - such as the number who are in segregation (also called secure isolation, or solitary confinement).

More than 7,600 young people aged 12 to 17 were in correctional services on an average day in 2016-17, according to Statscan (even this number is a fragment; it excludes Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick due to the unavailability of data).

But it's difficult to know how those youth are faring within those facilities, and whether some provinces are more apt to put them in solitary or use restraining devices than others, said Alan Markwart, British Columbia's deputy representative for children and youth.

"We're dealing with young people with quite a disadvantage in the first place. And then to deprive them of any kind of mental stimulation and social contact for any prolonged period of time is probably not effective and can be quite detrimental."

The limited data available are troubling - a Manitoba study this year found 957 incidents of segregation in the province in a recent year, citing one youth who was kept in solitary for 400 straight days "in a cell smaller than a parking stall."

"We certainly have very significant gaps in [youth justice] data," says Nicholas Bala, a law professor at Queen's University and global expert in youth justice. This includes data on the lengths of sentences youth receive, how many get adult-like sentences and the number in segregation. "It makes policy making difficult," he said.

Tavia Grant & Eric Andrew-Gee
Suggestion by: Deb Chaboyer, Winnipeg
Globe and Mail
May 6, 2019

Half of Canada's prisoners were abused as children, McMaster study suggests

About half of Canada's inmates were abused as children, suggests a new study out of McMaster University.

Medical student Claire Bodkin led a team that studied data from 30 years of research into Canadian inmates. Their work was published in the March issue of the American Journal of Public Health (AJPH).

The researchers found 65 per cent of female inmates experienced abuse in general, and half of them were sexually abused.

Bodkin said only one study in the data evaluated reported the prevalence of abuse among men. The researchers found abuse rates involving male inmates were at 35.5 per cent, with 21.9 per cent of them having experienced sexual abuse. The team did a statistical analysis of the results to reach the conclusion that half of inmates had been abused, Bodkin said.

"That's an alarmingly high number."

These are the other researchers involved in the work, which included going over 34 studies from territorial, federal and provincial prisons and jails:

- Fiona Kouyoumdjian and Lucie Pivnick, both McMaster.
- Susan Bondy of the University of Toronto.
- Carolyn Ziegler of Toronto's St. Michael's Hospital.
- Ruth Elwood Martin of the University of British Columbia.

Bodkin said understanding people who have been incarcerated - including reoffenders - will go a long way in helping prevent crime.

Prisons need to take trauma into account in how they deal with inmates, Bodkin said.

"Regardless of where you stand politically, I think everyone can agree that prison is not a healthy place for people, and that it's a symptom of multiple other things that have gone wrong."

So "how do we need to think about the impact of childhood trauma? How do we prevent childhood abuse from happening in the first place?"

The findings aren't surprising to Ruth Greenspan, executive director of the John Howard Society of Hamilton, Burlington and area in Ontario.

"Many resort to their own abuse of themselves," she said. "There's a lot of addiction, self-mutilation, self-harm, and suicide, which again,

are all indications of having suffered a lot of trauma. PTSD is something you see when you work with this population."

There have been some great programs over the years to address trauma among people who commit crimes, she said. But the funding comes and goes. On the whole, there aren't enough free resources for individuals - before, during or after prison, said Greenspan.

Prevention 'would just save so much money'

- "If we had more resources at the preventative level, before people got in conflict with the law, that would be really amazing," she said.
- "If we prevented it, we would just save so much money in the criminal justice system. And I don't think we're there yet."
- For her part, Bodkin has done some clinical training with men during and after prison. Some have "really expansive trauma histories," including severe abuse as children, she said.
- "We suspected it was high, but there wasn't good research out there that led to a national perspective in Canada."
- As for what constitutes abuse, Bodkin and her team used a World Health Organization definition, which means attendance at a residential school wasn't considered, although that research would be useful too, Bodkin said.
- At any given time, 41,000 people are incarcerated in Canada, and a disproportionate number are Indigenous.

Samantha Craggs

CBC News

Feb 20, 2019

Nov. 20 is Transgender Day of Remembrance

Nov. 20 is Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDoR), an international event commemorating people killed due to anti-trans violence. In the last year, 369 trans or non-binary people have been killed globally.

And it's a Canadian problem too: 74 % of trans youth in Canada have been harassed at school, and 37% have experienced physical violence.

Federal government ordered to pay \$20M for placing mentally ill inmates in solitary confinement

An Ontario judge has ordered the federal government to pay \$20 million for placing mentally ill inmates in solitary confinement, with the money earmarked to boost mental health supports in correctional facilities.

In a ruling issued this week, Ontario Superior Court Justice Paul Perell says the Correctional Service of Canada violated the charter rights of thousands of inmates who filed a class-action lawsuit against the agency over its use of administrative segregation.

Perell found those who were involuntarily placed in administrative segregation for more than 30 days, or voluntarily for more than 60, experienced a systemic breach of their rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Those who were in segregation for less than 30 days can still make claims later in the case.

Compensation for individual members of the class has also not yet been determined and submissions will be heard at a future date.

\$20M to go to additional resources

The judge says the \$20 million will go to "additional mental health or program resources" in the penal system as well as legal fees.

"The funds are to remedy to the harm caused to society which has suffered from the correctional service's failure to comply with the charter and also its failure to comply with the spirit of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and its purpose of rehabilitating mentally ill inmates to return to society rather than worsening their capacity to do so by the harm caused by prolonged solitary confinement," Perell wrote in his ruling.

The Correctional Service of Canada did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Administrative segregation is used to maintain security when inmates pose a risk to themselves or others and no reasonable alternative is available.

The practice has faced legal challenges in Ontario and British Columbia, both of which found extended solitary confinement to be unconstitutional.

Ontario's top court has given federal government until April 30 to fix its solitary confinement law,

while B.C.'s has extended the deadline to June 17.

The government has pointed to Bill C-83, now before the Senate, which eliminates administrative segregation and replaces it with "structured intervention units" meant to emphasize "meaningful human contact" for inmates and improve their access to programs and services.

However, the bill does not include hard caps on how many days or months inmates can be isolated from the general prison population, and civil liberties organizations have said it does not go far enough.

The Canadian Press
Mar 26, 2019

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This magazine is only sent into women's prisons. Ads are not on the web version.

There is no way to be a perfect mother, and a million ways to be a good one.

- Jill Churchill

Sit down and read.

Educate yourself for the coming conflicts.

- Mother Jones

Action is the antidote to despair.

- Joan Baez

Solitary confinement for more than 15 days constitutes cruel and unusual punishment, Ontario appeals court rules

Ontario's appeals court has ruled that placing inmates in solitary confinement for more than 15 days constitutes cruel and unusual punishment, a resounding legal defeat for Correctional Service Canada's long-standing practice of isolating prisoners for months and even years at a time. The decision imposes a hard cap of 15 days on solitary placements, the first time a Canadian court has placed specific limits on solitary confinement. Those limits will come into force within 15 days, the court ruled.

"With this decision, the Court of Appeal has brought to an end a sorry chapter in the administration of Canada's prisons," said Michael Rosenberg, who served as co-counsel on the case for the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, which launched its challenge of solitary confinement in January, 2015. "This is a significant win for the CCLA and for the administration of justice more generally."

Writing for a three-judge panel, Justice Mary Lou Benotto largely sided with arguments from the CCLA, stating that the Correctional Service's use of prolonged administrative segregation can cause permanent harms that no level of medical monitoring can prevent.

"Legislative safeguards are inadequate to avoid the risk of harm," she wrote. "In my view, this outrages standards of decency and amounts to cruel and unusual treatment."

The decision overturns portions of a lower-court decision that found the laws governing solitary confinement can cause serious psychological harm and clash with prevailing medical opinions, but did not constitute a violation of Section 12, which protects against cruel and unusual punishment, because the harm was not "inevitable."

On appeal, the CCLA argued that Justice Frank Marrocco erred in ruling that harm must be inevitable to engage Section 12.

Crown lawyers contended that existing laws contained adequate safeguards to ensure an inmate's health care would be closely monitored in solitary to guard against potential harm.

Justice Marrocco did, however, strike down a portion of the law governing solitary confinement on the grounds that it violates Section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms because it does not provide for independent review of segregation decisions.

The Marrocco decision was the first of three major judgments that have slowly unraveled the legislation governing solitary confinement over the last 15 months. In January of last year, a B.C. court also ruled that a portion of the law governing solitary violated the Charter. And earlier this week, federal inmates won a class-action lawsuit against the Correctional Service, in which a judge found that the practice of isolating seriously mentally ill inmates breached Section 12.

Last year, the federal government introduced a bill intended to address the legal failings of the current legislation by replacing segregation with a new practice that would allow isolated inmates to spend upward of four hours a day outside their cells, including two hours of programs and services.

The United Nations has defined solitary confinement as prisoner segregation that lasts 22 or more hours a day without meaningful human contact.

Patrick White
Globe and Mail
Mar 28, 2019

You may shoot me with your words.
You may cut me with your eyes.
You may kill me with your hatefulness.
But still, like air, I'll rise.
- Maya Angelou

No matter how well meaning and astute the investigators are or how well-researched, witnessed and documented the incidents of cruelty are, a prison is a prison. The structure of authority that produces the oppressed and the oppressor alike is the key to understanding the problem. Contained within this structure is the authoritative power to agendize language, which is simply another control mechanism.
- Gayle K. Horii

POEMSP OEMSPOEMSPOEMSPOEMSPOEMSPO

EMSP OEMSPOEMSPOEMSPOEMSPOEMSPOE

Guard Down

*I shatter all my hope
By becoming what I need*

*Taking a piece of life
And forming a history*

*All my function denied
To watch the passing time*

*Puzzles glare, steps dare
Every thought is loose in mind*

*The fate of realizing
Comes with care*

*Only to watch
The guilt-ridden beware*

*Slowly rising back to me
I see beyond the guard down free*

- Brandy Laramee

It Is Easy to Tell

*People say it is easy to tell
When someone else is going through hell
I see the pain in your eyes
Like a great big bad surprise
I'm hurt. I don't like it
No I don't. Not one bit.
A sad guilty shameful mother
Who once loved but lost her brother
Also her son who doesn't know
How much or how far it will go
A Grandma who works too much and too hard
Emotionally drained and scarred
A Grandpa who doesn't talk too much
But when he does he has a hard
But soft educational touch
A brother who I adore and loves to score
Well, this is my family which I love and care
This is the love we have to share
These are the things I have to say
To vent my frustrations Day by Day*

- Stephanie Singh

Untitled

*Today I am feeling sad & blue.
I am unsure of what to do
I am stuck here behind prison walls
Footfalls echo in the halls*

*The food looks bad, so hard to eat
When I don't eat, I'll feel so weak
Sometimes I cry, & I can't stop my tears
It's a relief at times, let's go my fears
So here I sit & watch time go past
Wondering how long hardship will last*

- Anny Oyster

No black woman writer in this culture can write "too much".

Indeed, no woman writer can write "too much"...

No woman has ever written enough.

- bell hooks

Untitled

*A green light drops from a blue sky
And waits like winter in its jar of glass
Tells a weather-rotted lie
Or stories of damage & loss*

*Pity my blood hidden & locked
Pity my mouth shut tight
Pity my passing unlocked
Hours, pity my unwatched night*

*Into the carpeted clearing
Into the curtained light
Behind the sun's staring
Away from the sky's hard bite*

*A morning & afternoon &
Night's queer knuckled hand
Hold me separate & whole
Stitching tight my daily soul*

- Rebecca Steele

POEMSP0EMSP0EMSP0EMSP0EMSP0EMSP0

EMSP0EMSP0EMSP0EMSP0EMSP0EMSP0E

Innocence

Running through the streets of my youth
 I saw you, deep in the darkness that surrounds
 paranoid and high
 unsure of where you were
 knowing it was wrong, you hid
 I approached you and held out my hand
 vengeance is not on my tongue
 I want to help
 and lead you away from the pain
 out into the sunshine
 will you follow?
 Flash of dark; taste of fear
 and I am back in the roach infested closet
 the prison which held me for many years
 the paint - cracked and peeling
 knows my secrets
 portions of the ceiling are missing
 like my life
 the tendrils of fear slide through my brain
 threatening to take me back
 into the abyss of hatred and despair
 will I fight this giant
 which controlled me for so many years
 or will I give my hand to be led away
 like the lost child that I was
 one leg is running towards the light
 while the other is firmly glued
 to the needle littered alley
 not knowing which way to turn
 scared of what I will find in the next doorway
 as I crouch down to light the pipe
 held firmly between dry bleeding lips
 my eyes search the darkness for my angel
 sent to protect me, from God Himself
 fear fills my soul like the flames of hell
 and I cry out loud
 as the smoke permeates through
 every blood cell in my brain
 and the tunnel becomes smaller
 I fade away into the child I once was
 dancing through puddles
 no fear or danger chases after me here
 I am 4 years old again
 playing hide and seek with my brother
 laughing and free, everybody loves me
 and this is why I get high

- Diana Govenlock

A Helping Hand

So here I am again
 Nothing changed, still the same
 An empty cold cell, all alone
 My built up tears bleed my pain
 From time to time, down this face of stone
 My life's fucked, it's a joke, a game
 Where's my haven? Where's my home?
 My hands are covered in red
 From all the love we bled
 I just need some warmth, I need a heart
 I need some worth to go back to the start
 My eyes are tired from trauma & hurt
 Please pull me up from this dirt
 Save me from my inevitable fate
 Please pull me up before it's too late

- Sarah Jane Posthumus

Untitled

I keep waking up in jail
 I keep falling on my face
 And waste this beautiful day
 I'm being punished for B&E
 I've been in all winter
 I drink apple juice & orange pekoe tea
 Neglecting my mistake when I drink these
 Must I recoup?
 Must I be forgiven?
 Oh, what is the truth?
 I can't do a bid & be predisposed
 Sometimes in the system, I get that low
 And imagine that's what I am
 A drug rig, more so a foe
 But at the end of a prison afternoon
 I'm a pessimist though
 I've got equipment to get out
 I'm informed & made discoveries
 Possibly yet to come
 Will reach for my hand
 And walk me home
 No more being in the dark
 For being bad once
 I can get a fresh start
 I am a woman
 This is my art

- Rebecca Steele

Sexual assault in prison: Vulnerable women prisoners have few protections and face reprisal for reporting attacks

On May 22, three women incarcerated at the Nova Institution for Women federal prison filed civil suits against the Attorney General of Canada, alleging they were each sexually assaulted by correctional officer Brian Wilson over the course of the past five years.

The allegations included in the lawsuits are harrowing: when the first of the plaintiffs made a complaint about Wilson, she was berated by another Corrections employee assigned to "interview her." The plaintiff was sent to a psychiatric institution in Saskatoon where she was heavily medicated for four years, and, as a condition of transfer back to Nova Scotia to be nearer to family, she was forced to apologize to Wilson. Wilson did not face any discipline at the time, and, in fact, has recently retired. The most recent accusations against Wilson are for sexual assaults in the summer and December of 2018. None of the allegations have been tested in court.

It's difficult to know where to begin to unpack all that is terrifying and frustrating about this case. The persistent myth that women make false rape accusations undoubtedly contributed to mishandling and dismissal of the women's serious complaints. We know from Robyn Doolittle's stellar investigative reporting that police in Canada dismiss one in five reported sexual assaults as "unfounded." Stereotypes and misogyny drive the medicalization and silencing of women's legitimate anger at systemic mistreatment. There is evidence women prisoners experience disproportionate punishment for insubordinate and uncooperative behaviour. And so it is not surprising that these women's complaints were ignored.

But these women are among a population we know to have experienced astonishing levels of trauma. Upwards of 80% of incarcerated women have childhood histories of sexual and physical abuse. PTSD wreaks havoc on their lives and challenges even the most resourceful among them at coping. Most women prisoners develop substance use dependency and mental illness. This is a population in profound need of comprehensive health support and protection from re-traumatization.

And yet, last year, Correctional Service Canada investigated 17 allegations of sexual assault of prisoners within the federal prison system. This likely underrepresents the number of assaults that prisoners experience by a wide margin. Only a tiny fraction of sexual assaults is reported in the public sphere, and within the prison system there are additional disincentives to reporting.

Consider, for example, an internal survey of employees at Edmonton's maximum-security federal prison. The survey, obtained by the *Edmonton Journal*, found that 17 employees reported they had been sexually assaulted by a co-worker and only a minority had reported the incidents. The victims of these sexual assaults were workers, not the far more vulnerable prisoners. What would a comprehensive examination of sexual assault in the prison system - including of prisoners - reveal?

The very nature of imprisonment threatens reproductive justice. In the context of rising anti-choice rhetoric and legislation in the United States, we've been talking a lot about reproductive justice lately. But reproductive justice is not just the right to abortion and to not be forced to experience pregnancy and birth. It is fundamentally about bodily autonomy. Incarceration threatens the human right to govern one's own self, one's body, it's movements, and physical and sexual contact.

Incarcerated women are separated from their support systems, with limited access to expensive phone calls and no access to the Internet. They are subject to use of force, strip searching, restraints, and solitary confinement. Despite the well-established evidence of histories of gendered violence, they are under the supervision and control of correctional officers and wardens who are often men. They experience dehumanization, institutionalization, and are overlooked by our society.

Women inside who experience physical violence or sexual exploitation have little recourse. It is very hard to call the cops from inside a prison. And it is especially hard if you have had to experience arrest, police lock up, and interrogation. The physical barriers to reporting sexual assault are one thing; lack of trust and fear of being disbelieved or reprisal are quite another.

At the same time as this sexual assault case against the federal government, seven people

have a suit against the Province of Nova Scotia alleging 21 years of sexual abuse while they were imprisoned as teenagers at the Waterville Youth Facility. And last month, a worker was charged with sexual assault of a youth at the Wood Street "secure treatment" facility, a quasi-correctional centre operated by Nova Scotia Community Services.

In the wake of these lawsuits, there will likely be calls for sensitivity training and improved internal policies on sexual harassment and reporting processes. But changes in training and internal policies will never be enough to change the fundamental and extraordinary vulnerability of women, transgender individuals, and youth who are locked away.

Incarceration is invisibility and disconnection from the public. The #MeToo era has broken the silence on sexual assault: there were more police-reported incidents of sexual assault in Canada in 2017 than for any prior year for which data are available. Avalon Sexual Assault Crisis Centre cannot even accept new clients, so high is the demand for their services now that we are beginning to talk openly about sexual assault. What about people in prisons: what are they able to say? Who is asking for their truth and who is listening to their voices?

If the mandate of Public Safety Canada is indeed public safety, we must acknowledge people experiencing incarceration are members of the public who deserve safety from violence and exploitation. We must recognize the potential for harm the prison system creates, and proactively seek alternatives to incarceration to protect marginalized individuals from further trauma.

Martha Paynter
The Halifax Examiner
May 24, 2019

Prisons do not disappear social problems, they disappear human beings. Homelessness, unemployment, drug addiction, mental illness, and illiteracy are only a few of the problems that disappear from public view when the human beings contending with them are relegated to cages.
- Angela Davis

Why We Must End Strip Searches in Canada's Prisons for Women

Forcing women to remove their clothes and perform humiliating actions should be understood as state-sanctioned sexual assault.

The following is an op-ed from staff at the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, which advocates with and on behalf of women and girls in prison.

Imagine being told by someone in a uniform, someone with near complete authority over your every need, to undress in front of them, while another uniform stands nearby; "remove your shirt," throw it in a pile on the ground, and then "your bra" and then "your pants, now your underwear." It gets worse: "lift your breasts, open your mouth, turn around, bend over, spread your cheeks, squat, cough." If you're menstruating, "remove your tampon." As a formerly incarcerated woman told Jessica as part of a research study, "I remember there was a time when I was on my period and she told me to squat and cough and I felt so embarrassed because drops of blood came out of me and then they told me to clean it up."

These commands are difficult to read, let alone carry out. Yet women must perform these tasks upon command nearly every day, every week in prisons across Canada. After women visit with their children, with their partners, with their parents; when they go to work, to church, or to a drumming circle. When women lose hope and attempt suicide or self-harm, they are strip searched before being confined and isolated under "observation" in a segregation cell. If a woman refuses to be strip searched, policy enables guards to cut the clothes from her body. In the wake of the #MeToo movement, we are hard-pressed to understand how forcing women to remove their clothes and perform humiliating actions with intimate parts of their bodies is not understood as sexual assault. Outside of state power, this behaviour would be considered and treated as such. Women in prison are more likely than women in general society to have suffered sexual abuse and assault as children and adults. Ninety-one percent of Indigenous women and 86 percent of non-Indigenous women in prison have been sexually and/or physically abused prior to prison. Those who have been sexually assaulted

before prison describe being strip searched as triggering, humiliating, degrading, and traumatizing. One of us - Alia - recalls feeling disgusting and dirty after being strip searched toward the beginning of her sentence, especially in the provincial jail. Over time, however, she numbed out and felt like her body didn't matter at all. The impacts on women's self-worth are far reaching, and last for years following prison.

The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) has managed to remain in the shadows, away from public scrutiny, allowing these degrading and (re)traumatizing strip searches to continue largely unquestioned. CSC would have us believe strip searches are necessary for the safety and security of prisons and yet they uncover little, if any, contraband. Alia knows this first-hand: after undergoing 44 months in prison and countless strip searches, prison authorities found just one piece of contraband on her - a ring given to her by a woman she had grown close to over three years of surviving prison together. Gifts between women in prison are not allowed in policy and can result in a charge, so the ring was technically what CSC defines as contraband.

Evidence suggests Alia's case is not unique among female prisoners. An Access to Information Request of an Australian prison with a daily average of 200 prisoners (similar to the Grand Valley Prison in Kitchener, Ontario) found that of 18,889 strip searches, done over a one-year period in the early 2000s, only one item of contraband was found. CAEFS submitted our own access to information request in 2017 to obtain statistics on strip searching in Canadian prisons; to date we have yet to receive a response. If strip searching is effective at finding drugs and weapons, as CSC claims, then they should be forthcoming with the data to substantiate these claims. While it's true that many women in prison struggle with drug addiction, it is well-known that women self-medicate to cope with experiences of trauma. So, punitive and traumatizing responses, like strip searching, can actually drive up drug use.

Canada has an opportunity to be a world leader and eliminate this archaic practice in prisons for women. We hope that by shedding light on the harm done by these state-sanctioned sexual assaults, people will #HearMeToo and demand an end to the use of this traumatizing practice.

Savannah Gentile, Alia Pierini,
& Jessica Hutchison
Vice Magazine
May 3, 2019

Untitled

My head ... so messed up
I think too much about it ...
Why do you look at me that way,
With those eyes
Staring into me, staring at me
Thick heavy thoughts wash over me
Tingling spine awaking me
Wanting something
That could never be
With this I sit quiet!
Trying not to look
Trying not to stare
Never going to know, inside my head!
If anything could be
Is anything there?
I'll learn to deal with this myself
To keep the peace and respect
For some thoughts
I'll just never know
In any other way
But, content within
That of just friends

- Shawna Taylor

We work on ourselves in order to help others, but also we help others in order to work on ourselves.

- Pema Chödrön

You have to be taught to be second class;
you're not born that way.

- Lena Horne

Grab the broom of anger and drive off the
beast of fear.

- Zora Neale Hurston

What you need is sustained outrage ... there's
far too much unthinking respect given to
authority.

- Molly Ivins

Children of Inmates Reading Program (ChIRP)

"Reading aloud is the single most important thing a parent or caregiver can do to help a child prepare for reading and learning"
"Reading is the gateway to future success in life and in school"

BCFI's commitment to the successful re-integration of inmates and to stronger, healthier communities includes the development of Children of Inmates Reading Program (ChIRP). The mandate of ChIRP is to build and enhance a healthier parent/ child relationship, develop literacy and listening skills, increase vocabulary and attention spans for children and promote a love of learning in children through the consistent presence of a parent and books.

For the past 10 years, Carla Veitch, a children's educator, has been successfully developing and operating a parent/child reading initiative. Twice a month, Carla, along with another volunteer, enter the institution and offer men the opportunity to select a book for their child and then read that book into a recording device. The book and recording are then mailed to the child. This initiative provides a direct connection for the child with his or her incarcerated parent. In addition to the opportunity of hearing a parent's voice, the reading initiative underscores the value of reading and the importance of books. For a number of the participants, reading aloud to their child has not been part of their pattern of parenting, nor was it modeled for them as part of their early childhood years. Children are never responsible for their parents' choices. At the same time, they are the hidden victims not only in the justice and correctional system, but also within our larger community.

Book Clubs for Inmates
 720 Bathurst St.
 Toronto, ON, M5S 2R4
www.BookClubsForInmates.com

I am not eccentric.
 It's just that I am more alive than most people.
 I am an unpopular electric eel set in a pond of goldfish.
 - Edith Sitwell

Book Clubs for Inmates (BCFI)

Book Clubs for Inmates (BCFI) is a registered charity that organizes volunteer-led book clubs within federal penitentiaries across Canada. Currently, BCFI is facilitating 30 book clubs from Nova Scotia to British Columbia.

BCFI runs French and English language book clubs for men and women incarcerated in minimum, medium, and maximum security facilities. Book clubs are usually made up of 10-18 members who meet once a month to discuss books, both fiction and non-fiction of literary merit.

Every month, hundreds of inmates participate in book clubs across the country and each year thousands of brand new books are purchased, read, and discussed.

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Penpal Program for Gay, Queer, Trans Prisoners

The Prisoner Correspondence Project runs a penpal program for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, and queer prisoners in Canada, pairing them up with gay and queer and trans people outside of prison for friendship and support.

We also coordinate a resource library of information and resources related to health, sexuality, and prisons - get in touch with us for a list of resources we have, or for details.

If you want to be paired up with a penpal, please send a short description of yourself & interests to:

Prisoner Correspondence Project
 c/o QPIRG Concordia
 1455 de Maisonneuve W.
 Montreal, QC, H3G 1M8

Please indicate French or in English. Veuillez svp nous indiquer anglais ou en français.

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 study of female prisoners in British Columbia (B.C.), self-reported rates of HIV and HCV were 8 percent and 52 percent, respectively.

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.

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.

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.

Vosevi is a combination of sofosbuvir, velpatasvir and voxilaprevir. These three drugs are combined into one tablet. It is taken once a day with food for 12 weeks.

Federal Prisoners: *Great news, now you can start your treatment while inside!*

Provincial/Territorial Prisoners: *Only BC & ON provide treatment. Elsewhere, you will 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 test done so you can get into a Treatment Program at no cost to you.

There are 2,700 with chronic hep C in Federal prisons.

There are 4,380 with chronic hep C in Prov/Terr prisons.

All Federal prisoners with hep C are now eligible for treatment.

BC & ON Prov prisoners with hep C are now eligible for treatment.

Hep C = 18-30% of prisoners
HIV = 1-5% of prisoners

Do Not Share or Re-Use:
needles, ink, ink holders, rigs,
- anything in contact with blood! -

BLEACH DOES NOT
KILL HEP C



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:

info@FeatForChildren.org
416-505-5333

A Child of an Incarcerated Parent

The Reality

- *Every year over 150,000 adults are remanded into custody which results in approximately 180,000 innocent children who suffer from the traumatic effect of parental incarceration*
- *Over 5,000 children are impacted by parental imprisonment in the GTA*
- *The number of children affected by parental incarceration only increased with the passing of the Crime Bill C-10*

The Need

- *Despite the growing prevalence of these innocent victims the resources available are minimal*
- *The cost and lack of accessibility to correctional facilities restrict child-parent visits. Consequently, some children can never visit their incarcerated parents*

The Impact

- *Children of incarcerated parents grieve the loss of their parent*
- *These children are four times more likely to be in conflict with the law*
- *Social stigma of incarceration causes some families to avoid discussing the absence of a parent*

Research suggests that parental incarceration has a detrimental impact on children. These innocent children suffer the traumatic experience of being separated from their parent. Following parental imprisonment, children are faced with a myriad of challenges including:

- *feelings of shame, grief, guilt, abandonment, anger*
- *lowered self-esteem*
- *economic instability*
- *social stigma and isolation*
- *disconnection from parent*
- *insecurity in familial and peer relationships*
- *school absenteeism, poor school performance*
- *difficulty in coping with future stress & trauma*
- *compromised trust in others including law enforcement*

FeatForChildren.org ~ 416-505-5333

Prison Radio

- Halifax – CKDU 88.1 FM
Black Power Hour – Fri 1:30-3 pm
Youth Now! – Mon 5-6:30 pm
- Montreal – CKUT 90.3 FM
PRS – 2nd Thurs 5-6 pm & 4th Fri 11-noon
- Guelph – CFRU 93.3 FM
Prison Radio – Thurs 10-11 am
Call-in 519-837-2378
- Vancouver – CFRO 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.

PRISONERS JUSTICE DAY

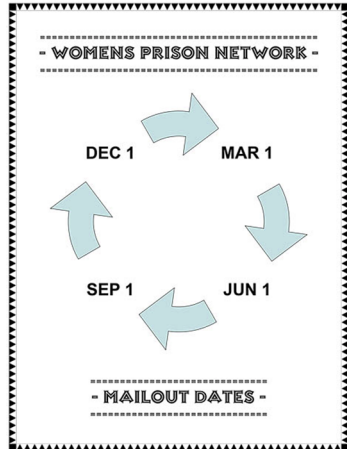
☞ In Remembrance ☞
- August 10 -

There are more than 200 Unnatural
Prisoner Deaths in Canada.
- Each and Every Year -

We maintain a PJD 'In Remembrance' page on our website for Prisoners who have died in Federal and Provincial Prisons, Remands, Lock-ups and Parole in Canada.

If you wish to have someone remembered there, send us a note or email and we will honour your request.

PJD@PrisonFreePress.org



Women's Prison Network Summer 2019 - Issue #15

PO Box 39, Stn P
Toronto, ON, M5S 2S6

info@WomensPrisonNetwork.org

visit, download, print, donate!
WomensPrisonNetwork.org

Send in your work
before Aug 1, 2019
Fall Issue #16 is sent
out Sep 1, 2019

Women, Trans & Youth Prisoners:
Wish to receive 'Women's Prison Network'?
Contact us & we will add you to the mailing list!
Please let us know if you move.
This magazine is by and for you.
Thank you for sharing!
