

# WOMEN'S PRISON NETWORK



**ISSUE #18 : SPRING 2020**

*Editor's Note:*

Welcome to Issue #18 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

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*Artwork: Cover, pgs 8,9*

Miné Okubo (WW2 Internment Camp Survivor)

*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!*

*Funding for this Issue:*

Very special thanks to:

Daumier Register '1293'

*"Actually, I am quite content with our prison system. Maybe the prisoner has gone crazy, but all he needs now, is a little education!"*

*Ancestral Territorial Acknowledgment:*

We respectfully acknowledge that the land on which Prison Free Press operates is the Traditional Territory of the Wendat, the Anishnaabeg, Haudenosaunee, and the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation.

☞ 'Dish With One Spoon' Wampum ☞

'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!!!*

Editor: aliyyah  
 Publication: Women's Prison Network  
 Publisher: PrisonFreePress.org  
 PO Box 39, Stn P  
 Toronto, ON, M5S 2S6

Circulation: 300+  
 Recirculation: ?..???

info@WomensPrisonNetwork.org

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## LETTERSLETTERSLETTERSLETTERSLETTERS

Psychiatrists (in my educated opinion) are bullies who use labels to condescend, prisons & institutions to isolate and false sciences (pseudosciences) to cripple the already vulnerable & less fortunate.

The psychiatrists I've witnessed killed my friend 'Chilli' in Dawson BC by having him confined to an energy-deficient environment as they are doing to me.

I feel psychiatry is the scum of our lives as they use out-dated policies and methods that keep us isolated from the 'real world'.

The 'real world' being: work, sex, love, nature (most important) and activity.

- Anonymous

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## NEWSNEWSNEWSNEWSNEWSNEWSNEWS

### Ontario looking to adjust jail phone call system, include calls to cellphones

Ontario is working toward a new telephone system for provincial jails that would allow inmates to call cellphones.

Currently they are only able to place collect calls to landlines - an absurd restriction in the year 2020, say critics and inmate advocates.

High rates for calls are another barrier, they say. Lawyer Michael Spratt said it can be about \$1 per minute, and families sometimes can't afford those charges when they start adding up.

Inmates need to make calls to maintain employment, housing and counselling connections while incarcerated, Spratt said.

"This all leads to a situation that is unfair, is overly punitive, but more importantly it leads to a situation that makes our streets less safe," he said. "When we have people who lose their job, lose connections to the family and are unable to arrange counselling, it means that it's harder for them to reintegrate themselves back into society."

Gabby Aquino, a law student with the Toronto Prisoners' Rights Project, said the restrictions make it virtually impossible for some inmates to reach family and other contacts.

"Those costs and calls do add up, especially if folks might be in a mental health crisis, or if they

need to get in touch with legal counsel for a time-sensitive issue," she said.

Kristy Denette, a spokeswoman for the Ministry of the Solicitor General, said the government is working on a procurement process for a new, modern inmate phone system that will include calls to cellphones and international numbers.

The existing contract, with Bell, expires in June and the company said it has submitted a new proposal for services.

"Bell provides communications service to correctional facilities in other jurisdictions as well and the terms vary in each case,"

said spokeswoman Jacqueline Michelis.

"Rates for operated assisted calls are the same as Bell's public rates."

That may be, said Spratt, but virtually no one other than inmates pays those posted rates.

He slammed Bell for promoting Bell Let's Talk day, but at the same time making it difficult for inmates suffering from mental health issues to access their support systems.

"I think Bell needs to take a hard look in the corporate mirror about what it's doing and where it's making its profit," he said.

In 2017, Spratt obtained documents under a Freedom of Information request that show Bell pays the ministry a certain amount of "gross revenue generated by all calls made from all telephones" in the offender telephone system. The percentage is redacted.

Part of the new phone system should be to allow inmates to make free calls to an approved list of people, Spratt said.

"If we need to impose a cost for these phone calls, large corporations and government shouldn't be profiting off the back of people who are presumed innocent," he said.

About 70 per cent of inmates in Ontario's adult correctional facilities are on remand, Ontario's auditor general said in her recent annual report, meaning those people haven't been convicted or sentenced.

The Canadian Press  
Jan 14, 2020

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Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?

- Michel Foucault

## Segregating prisoners costs taxpayers up to 10 times amount for other inmates

Canada's federal prisons housed an average of 14,310 inmates last year, a report tabled Thursday in Parliament reveals, with the cost associated with each one of them varying widely depending on the type of inmate and whether they were placed in segregation.

The report, authored by the Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO), estimates an overall average cost for each inmate at \$114,587 per year, or \$314 a day.

But once the fiscal watchdog started breaking down the numbers, it noted that "the cost of incarceration varies substantially depending on the type of inmate."

A male prisoner in a minimum-security facility, for example, sets taxpayers back just \$130 a day. A man in a maximum security cell (with armed guards and a perimeter fence) would cost \$254.

Incarceration in a healing lodge - a facility that uses aboriginal values, traditions and beliefs to design services and programs - works out to \$336 per day. Youth offenders cost just over \$200 a day, and women (across all levels of security) average \$230 a day.

But, as the statistics reveal, it is segregation that makes the biggest difference.

"Our model suggested an incremental daily cost for inmates in segregation ranging from \$891 to \$1,775."

Segregation can be used to protect an inmate or other inmates around them from potential harm or to isolate them in response to a serious disciplinary offence.

The PBO notes that the average number of inmates in the second type of segregation (disciplinary) "is not known."

The practice of isolating prisoners has proven extremely controversial, especially when they are segregated for long periods of time. The B.C. Supreme Court recently ruled that indefinite segregation is unconstitutional.

At the other end of the cost spectrum, supervision of an offender in the community is far less expensive for taxpayers. In 2016-17, the PBO estimates an average of 8,572 offenders were in this situation, at an average cost of \$18,058 per year (about \$50 a day).

Almost three-quarters of the operating expenses in federal corrections facilities are eaten up by salaries and employee benefits for the people working in those facilities. According to the report, the average federal correctional officer is paid \$65,000 per year, excluding overtime.

Monique Scotti  
Global News  
Mar 22, 2018

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## My time in suicide watch and solitary confinement

Every time I see a cattle transport truck on the highway I say a little prayer. I was once one of those animals.

Only I was being transported from the local police station in a van with no windows, shackled to strangers. I struggled to look out the small holes in the side of the van, and had no idea where I was or where I was going.

When I got to Vanier Centre for Women, a medium and maximum security facility in Milton, I was put on "suicide watch." That meant 24 hours a day in a cell roughly five by seven feet.

You don't get much on suicide watch. No mattress - just a hard metal bed. No sheets, no cooked food, no magazines, no underwear. Showers are rare.

I once went to court dirty, my naked body visible through the large armholes in the prison-issue nightgown I was given. Stains from menstrual blood covered my legs.

Suicide watch is one of the many paradoxes of prison life. You go in wanting to kill yourself and the conditions just make you want to kill yourself more.

People ask me why I was incarcerated. The answer is for nothing.

Like the majority of people behind bars in Canada, I was serving pretrial time. When all was said and done, I served 90 days and was never found guilty of anything.

Jails are places where the innocent mingle with the guilty. And the wrongfully imprisoned with murderers and rapists. Everyone goes to the same nowhere place where lawlessness prevails. After spending 14 days on suicide watch, I was transferred to solitary confinement,

a definite step up.

In solitary I got clothes, a thin, hard mattress, cooked food and an hour outside my cell each day – except when a guard called in sick or if there was a fight in the yard. Then we were locked down in our cell for 24 hours. Few books were available – Twilight and the Bible, both their own versions of cruel and unusual punishment.

People have all kinds of ideas about what goes on in jail.

Many people awaiting trial are incarcerated for long periods of time in jails like Vanier. Also known as remand facilities, they were originally designed to hold people for much shorter periods.

There is no library, gym or internet at Vanier. You cannot take a university-level course.

When I was inside, I saw street-involved people cycle in and out, often committing petty crimes to get back in. For these people, jail meant a roof over your head, three meals a day and a place to detox.

In Canada, we use places like Vanier to detain immigrants as well. In November, a 50-year-old immigrant woman died there.

The food inside is forgettable. I literally can't remember what I ate there. It's like everything else, a way to get the prisoners to ingest nothingness.

One inmate collected kernels of corn to construct fragile yellow flowers. They were truly beautiful. She hid them from the guards.

It took me 90 days to get out of Vanier. The difference between me and all the other inmates who remained? The ability to make bail.

Without bail, you're in until your trial comes up and by the time you get your day in court you're typically weary and depressed. People take immediate release in exchange for guilty pleas.

The prison system in Canada is really a large scale travesty of justice.

It incarcerates more mentally ill people than all psychiatric hospitals combined. It is a modern-day asylum.

It is a modern residential school, too. The prison system in Canada incarcerates a vastly disproportionate number of Indigenous people.

People often ask me if there truly is a better way. There is and there has been for some time. Indigenous tribal courts have operated on principles of restorative justice - for perpetrators

and survivors of crime and their communities - for centuries.

Ultimately, we as a society need to acknowledge the failure of the prison system. It is a place that, at best, does nothing to reduce crime and, at worst, is where innocent people go to die.

Annu Saini

Now Magazine

Mar 7, 2018

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## **Do prisons perpetuate problems they are supposed to solve?**

There are approximately 15,000 people serving time in Canada's federal prison system and we pay \$115,000 to \$200,000 per prisoner per year to keep them in custody.

Most come from poverty, many have mental health issues connected to histories of complex trauma and rates of racialized prisoners are disproportionately high. More than one in four prisoners - and more than one in three imprisoned women - are Indigenous; almost one in 10 are Black.

There's something else they have in common: Most of them will one day be released.

But will they be rehabilitated and ready to rejoin society? According to experts, solitary confinement and other correctional practices are not only proving ineffective but are failing to comply with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

We must therefore ask whether corrections' mandate for rehabilitation is being fulfilled - or if we too often set prisoners up to fail.

The Senate Committee on Human Rights has been studying the human rights of prisoners since February 2017. This work has taken senators inside federal penitentiaries across the country, from the metal shop at Collins Bay, where men make the cage inserts that transport them to court or between institutions, to the sewing room at Joliette, where women prisoners make underwear for men in federal penitentiaries for less than \$6 a day.

We met with people serving sentences, interviewed corrections executives, officers and staff, and we took part in public hearings. We heard what happens in the correctional system

and what must be done to ensure the human rights of prisoners are respected.

The committee released an interim report in February to call attention to what we heard and to outline gaps requiring further study. Unfortunately, we were denied leave to meet in the summer to finish the final report.

It is imperative that this study be completed. And the federal government has given us even more motivation now that Bill C-83 has become law.

The bill purports to end the practice of solitary confinement but it doesn't, leaving us and many experts concerned that it is likely unconstitutional.

Bill C-83 continues to segregate prisoners in rebranded "structured intervention units." Although these prisoners are supposed to have four hours outside of their cells, there is no guarantee that times out of cells will involve meaningful human contact.

The bill also allows prisoners to be held in solitary indefinitely, though their health will be subject to "ongoing monitoring."

One hardly needs to wonder what the courts will think.

"Prolonged administrative segregation causes foreseeable and expected harm which may be permanent," the Court of Appeal for Ontario said in a March decision declaring that solitary confinement in excess of 15 days is unconstitutional.

"Monitoring only detects harm once it has already occurred - it does not predict or prevent it."

The British Columbia Court of Appeal was equally clear in a decision issued three days after Bill C-83 became law. The court noted that, "rather than preparing inmates for their return to the general population ... prolonged placements in segregation have the opposite effect."

This could have been prevented.

The House of Commons rejected Senate committee amendments that could have made a significant difference in prisoners' lives, including proposals that would have required a judge to authorize segregation for longer than 48 hours and allowed prisoners to have their sentences reviewed when correctional practices fail to comply with the law.

The legislated purpose of the federal correction system is to carry out sentences through "safe

and humane custody" and to assist in prisoners' rehabilitation and reintegration.

Instead, the system allows what the courts have condemned as cruel and inhumane treatment that disproportionately affects minorities and that too often leaves prisoners worse off than when they arrived.

This is why it is important that the committee complete this study and provide recommendations aiming to ensure that correctional institutions fulfil their mandate and measure up to their constitutional obligations.

Wanda Thomas Bernard

The Star

Jul 28, 2019

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### **Ottawa must tackle the tragic overrepresentation of Indigenous people in prisons**

Indigenous people make up 5% of Canada's population. But they are fully 30% of the federal prison population.

For women the situation is even worse: 42% of federal female inmates are Indigenous.

That's an appalling imbalance.

This kind of thing doesn't just happen. It's not the result of a fair society and equal treatment under the law. This is a systemic problem and one of Canada's most pressing social justice issues.

We wish we could say these shocking new figures, released last week by the federal watchdog for prisons, will galvanize everyone to action. But, tragically, history suggests that won't be the case.

Four years ago, Ivan Zinger, the correctional investigator, reported on this disturbing trend. Indigenous people were 25% of the prison population then.

And, going back two decades, one of his predecessors said the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in prisons required "immediate attention."

At the time, Indigenous people represented 2 to 3% of the population and 16% of male inmates. It was 20% for women.

Those figures have now doubled. And what's been done?

Not much. Certainly nothing that has worked.

"The Indigenization of Canada's prison population is nothing short of a national travesty," says Zinger. It certainly is.

That national travesty, though, begins long before the prison door slams shut.

Every conceivable measure we have to judge how a population is doing shows Canada is failing Indigenous peoples: child welfare, poverty, addictions and mental health, housing and clean water, education and employment, and incarceration.

There seems to be no measure by which Indigenous peoples fare well compared to other Canadians. And until governments start taking more aggressive steps to address those gaps, Indigenous overrepresentation in prisons will persist.

But that doesn't let Canada's justice and prison systems off the hook for the role they play in contributing to such terrible outcomes for so many people.

Indigenous inmates are disproportionately placed in maximum security and have been held longer in solitary confinement. They serve a higher proportion of their sentence behind bars before being granted parole, and are poorly prepared for their release back into the community.

Not surprisingly, then, they are also more likely to reoffend and return to prison, where the tragic cycle begins all over again.

Zinger's list of recommendations for addressing this must have taken little time to compile. All he had to do was cut and paste from previous reports issued by his office, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and various parliamentary committees. His recommendations for "bold and urgent action" include: appointing a deputy commissioner for Indigenous corrections to be accountable for progress; increasing access to culturally relevant correctional programming; and improving reintegration in Indigenous communities.

Given how many times these ideas have been mentioned before - albeit without the necessary action by politicians and the correctional service to turn them into reality - it's hard to see them as bold anymore.

But urgent, certainly. And only getting more so.

Two decades ago, when the federal prisons ombudsman recommended the equivalent of a deputy commissioner for Indigenous corrections, the tragic prison figures were half what they are now. Isn't it about time for some of that "immediate attention?"

If the federal government and correctional services can't manage to move on this one modest proposal, what hope is there for all the other changes?

As Murray Sinclair, who led the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, said: "We owe it to each other to build a Canada based on our shared future."

Zinger has outlined where we'll be in three years without real change: one in three inmates in federal prison will be Indigenous.

That doesn't sound like much of a shared future.

#### Editorial Board

The Star

Jan 27, 2020

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### 'Smarter and stronger'? New law is really a cruel gutting of access to justice for the impoverished

It appears that Ontario's Attorney General, Doug Downey, is a quick learner. The old saying isn't true, an old dog can learn new tricks.

After a rocky summer where Downey took political heat for slashing legal aid funding and publicly musing about messing with Ontario's judicial appointment process so he could more easily pick judges who reflect his values, Downey has finally learned to stop being so transparent.

It's a play right out of the Doug Ford handbook - don't listen to the half-truths he says, instead take a close look at what he actually does.

You see, Downey was all smiles this week when he introduced his signature justice legislation, the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act, billing it as a fix for Ontario's complex and out-dated justice system. He said it would improve legal aid services and enhance access to justice.

Downey also announced that following this year's \$133 million legal aid cuts, the government has decided not to pursue further funding reductions. It all sounded like a breath of fresh air. But the devil is in the details.

It's true that Ontario's court system is in desperate need of modernization. In a damning report, Ontario Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk described a justice system that is out-dated and inefficient.

She found that Ontario's jails have never been more crowded with people waiting for trials, yet our courtrooms are only used an average of 2.8 hours per day. Delays plague the system, and despite spending more money on Crown Attorneys, cases are taking about 10 per cent longer to complete than they did four years ago.

And unlike other jurisdictions, our court system is stuck in the 1970s. In 2018-19, almost 2.5 million documents were filed in Ontario's courts - more than 96 per cent of them on paper.

The utter failure of the double Ds - Doug Ford and Doug Downey - on the justice front has resulted in court delays, wasted money, and decreased access to justice.

So, back to Downey's new legislation.

Contrary to Downey's claims, it is devoid of any meaningful measures to move Ontario's justice system into the 21st Century. Under Downey's rule, the fax machine is still king of the courtroom.

But even more duplicitously, despite walking back \$30 million in planned cuts to Legal Aid Ontario (LAO), Downey's legislation is a Trojan horse for his ultimate goal - a cruel gutting of access to justice for the impoverished.

You see, the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act fundamentally changes the purpose of the legal aid system.

Downey's new law literally replaces LAO's current goal, providing high-quality legal aid services to low-income individuals, with a new goal of ensuring value for money.

The new legislation also allows the government to more easily stack LAO's board of directors with hand-picked appointments. And if we have learned one thing about the Ford government, it's that it loves unqualified patronage appointments. Most insidiously, buried deep in Downey's legislation is the downloading of millions of dollars of costs, currently borne by the government, directly onto LAO's shoulders.

There are a number of circumstances right now that allow a court to order the government to pay legal costs to victims, to youths, to amicus curiae, or to those denied legal aid but in need of a lawyer to ensure fair trial. And these

appointments are happening more frequently as LAO tightens its belt and denies assistance to more and more people.

The Ministry of the Attorney General used to pay these costs when it was ordered to do so by a court. But not after Downey's new bill.

Much like Trump wanting Mexico to pay for his ill-conceived border wall, Downey's legislation says that, "Despite any order of a court requiring that the cost of providing services ... be borne by the Attorney General of Ontario or the Crown in right of Ontario, the cost of providing the services shall be borne by [LAO]."

The impact of this constitutionally dubious immunity clause will be the downloading of millions of dollars in additional costs, probably more than the cost of the abandoned legal aid funding cuts, onto the backs of the very organization tasked with assisting Ontario's poor and marginalized populations.

And as Legal Aid Ontario pays more of these shifted costs, it will have less money to help impoverished accused ... which will lead to more court-ordered costs and even less money to help the poor. It's a destructive feedback loop that will crush Ontario's legal aid system.

Downey says his new bill will modernize the courts, but it won't.

He says his new bill will increase access to justice, but it won't.

He says his new bill will strengthen legal aid, but it won't.

In fact, Downey has actually done the opposite. He did it quietly and covertly. And he proved that Doug Ford's dog can learn new tricks.

Michael Spratt  
CBC News - Opinion  
Dec 13, 2019





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**My Life**

*My Life I no longer love  
I'd rather be set free above  
Get it over with while the time is right  
Late some rainy night  
Turn black as the sky  
And as cold as the sea  
Say goodbye to Ashley  
Miss me but don't be sad  
I'm not sad, I'm happy & glad  
I'm free, where I want to be  
No more caged-up Ashley*

*Wishing I were free  
Free like a bird*

- Ashley Smith (1988 - 2007)  
I 8 yrs old - Oct 1, 2006  
NB Youth Centre

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**Thoughts**

*In your thoughts  
If you can't face the truth  
You'll run away from it, you'll see  
Reality composed in your mind  
Just a fantasy of me in vision left behind  
So lovely, so sweet  
Dreams is what you'll meet  
Something so good bound to lift me off of my feet  
For you I'll leave behind  
Something called heartache just this one time  
This is near to wreck your mind  
That's the way I like it  
I'll be much happier, you'll see  
This time I'll be laughing hysterically  
Because it wasn't me*

- Nicole Miller

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**Too Many Sisters Have Died**

*Our Anishinaabeg queens  
Are dropping like fiends  
In their early teens  
With needles in their arms  
I drop to my knees  
Asking Great Spirit, Please,  
Have mercy for my people  
You see the many tears I've cried  
As they fell from me  
They are a symbol of every  
Anishinaabeg queen that has died  
Too many tears have I cried  
Too many sisters have died  
Without their Anishinaabeg pride!*

- Spirit Child

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**Feelings**

*Some feelings I have  
Just cannot be told  
For they are the ones  
I will always hold  
Can't open my heart  
To see ...  
'cause I know in the end  
It will only hurt me  
I hope you understand  
And realize it's for the best  
To let these feelings die  
And be put to rest*

- Anne Kellar

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**Untitled**

*My home in hell  
Is one small cell  
Where most men remain a stranger  
Home-made knives take human lives  
No jungle holds more danger  
They came today & took away  
The kid that lived next door  
They found him dead, beneath his bed  
Why? No one knows for sure.*

- KP Cell Wall

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**‘We need to speak up’: U of A’s Shama Rangwala on how settlers of colour can be allies to Indigenous people**

Shama Rangwala (SR) was born in Edmonton to Indian parents, but left at age 12 to live in Saudi Arabia, the United States and the U.K. before returning to Canada at age 19.

The entire time she lived abroad, she considered herself a proud Canadian, but it wasn’t until she moved back to Canada that she began to question what that meant.

Rangwala, this week’s Star Alberta guest editor, is now a faculty lecturer at the University of Alberta, where her research focuses on looking at power structures and how they adapt throughout history - including colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy.

She feels strongly about her role as a settler of colour, especially the responsibility that comes with it. She not only feels compelled to raise awareness about issues faced by Indigenous people, but also to point out how people of colour benefit from colonialism in Canada.

In her column, she refers to all people of colour as settlers, except Black people, “because Black people who came here as part of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, that is a different kind of relationship. They weren’t settling here, they were kidnapped and forced to work,” she said.

Star Edmonton (SE) spoke to Rangwala about what made her realize her role in this conversation and how settlers who are people of colour can be better allies to Indigenous people.

**SE:** Normally when you think of settlers, people think of usually white Europeans who moved to Canada. But you say POC should also be aware of their role as settlers here. Could you explain that a bit?

**SR:** I think that a lot of us come from places that were colonized or... it was not safe for us to be there, so we come to Canada. Canada becomes this safe haven.

But we really need to think about what it means to be safe here. Like, what it did cost the Indigenous people of this land? And I think it’s really important to acknowledge those differences so we can show solidarity as colonized people.

**SE:** When did you start thinking about this issue?

**SR:** I have always loved going to national parks. And when I was a kid, I never thought about

“What is a national park?” They would just give me so much pleasure. As an adult, I asked myself, what did that pleasure cost? So that’s what really got me thinking about it.

Canada is, of course, so beautiful, but the history of national parks is so violent, it is a history of displacement and violence. I think that we need to think about that question, what did it cost? That’s what got me thinking about it.

**SE:** How did you feel once you learned about the history and violence associated with parks and about your role as a settler of colour?

**SR:** It makes me feel very grateful and it also makes me feel responsible.

There are bad feelings that can come out of this, like guilt. I am benefitting from this thing that’s so violent, but I don’t think those are helpful emotions, like I think guilt is a kind of impasse. Instead of thinking about that, I think that we should think of responsibility.

There are many ways they benefit. Just by being safe here from the colonialism that we left is a privilege.

I would also say there are ways that immigrants and people of colour who are not Black and Indigenous who get held up as model minorities - as the perfect Canadian - that’s one of the ways you benefit.

If you can succeed as an individual because people see you as a good brown person who has assimilated into being Canadian - this is back to that idea of assimilation being a form of colonial violence - then you are benefiting from that construction.

**SE:** How can settlers of colour counter this?

**SR:** I think we need to speak out. They need to resist being held up as being the good brown person, or the good Asian person. You are not a good Canadian if you are calling out colonialism, you are making trouble by talking about colonialism, that is not a good Canadian.

That’s why Don Cherry is a good example. When he said “you people,” he meant people of colour, everybody knows that’s what he meant.

And the reaction from people of colour was, “No, I am a good Canadian, I play hockey, I take my kids canoeing, and my family fought in imperial armies.” If your response is to say all of those things, that wasn’t the right response.

So when we say “What is the task of settlers of colour?” In that moment, not to play into this idea of a good Canadian, just to say that there is

no such thing as this ideal norm of who a Canadian is.

**SE:** What has been the reaction from other people of colour when you address this issue with them? That they are also settlers here.

**SR:** If we talk about generationally, so my parents' generation - not them specifically, but first-generation immigrants - they really just don't know. This is not about blaming them, it's about the fact that we need to talk about this and we need to educate them.

To them it's really those surface images of Canada that become what Canada means. All of those beautiful surface images are hiding a lot. So what I'm saying is to excavate all that and make it visible.

The other reaction is defensiveness.

Like, "No, but where I came from, I had nothing, I came here and I worked so hard. Why can't other people work so hard?" What they are missing in saying that is their relationship to settler colonialism here is not the same as Indigenous people who are experiencing the structural violence of colonialism here and now.

Kashmala Fida

Star Edmonton - Nov 15, 2019

### **Mandatory minimums are toughest on the most vulnerable**

Rates of Indigenous peoples in federal prison have increased by 43% over the past decade. This is a direct result of systemic discrimination and misguided legal approaches.

On Tuesday I will introduce legislation to give judges the ability to not impose mandatory minimum penalties where they consider it would be just and reasonable. This bill responds to decades of recommendations, most recently from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, aimed at reducing the number of Indigenous people in prisons.

In 1995, recognizing the link between the legacy of trauma and marginalization of residential schools and other colonial policies, and the escalating over-representation of Indigenous people as victims, accused and prisoners, the Criminal Code was amended to require judges to consider "all available sanctions, other than imprisonment" at sentencing.

It directed particular attention to the circumstances of Indigenous people, which "may specifically make imprisonment a less appropriate or less useful sanction."

The possibilities of this provision have been obliterated by mandatory minimum penalties, which eradicate the ability of judges to craft fair sentences based on individual circumstances.

Since 1995, the number of mandatory minimums in Canada's criminal law has increased seven-fold - from around 10 to about 72. Over the same period, the proportion of women in the federal prison system who are Indigenous has increased from 10% to 42%.

One group disproportionately affected by mandatory life sentences is women who have survived abuse. A 1995 government review of 98 cases of women convicted of using lethal force to protect themselves or their children from abusers determined that far too many had pleaded guilty, despite having a potentially valid claim of self-defence.

Faced with circumstances ranging from limited financial resources, to navigating a legal system that had failed to protect them from violence, to fears of having to put their children through the harrowing process of testifying in court, their choice not to risk going to trial was influenced by the spectre of a mandatory life sentence.

Canadian law guarantees a right to a sentence "proportionate to the gravity of the offence and the degree of responsibility" of the person being sentenced. In recent years, courts, including the Supreme Court of Canada, have found a growing number of mandatory minimum sentencing provisions to be unconstitutional because they result in cruel and unusual punishment.

Of the 72 mandatory minimums currently on the books, nearly half - some 31 - have been found unconstitutional by at least one court.

The harms associated with mandatory minimums are clear and there's no evidence they make us safer. In fact, the Supreme Court says "empirical evidence suggests that mandatory minimum sentences do not, in fact, deter crimes."

Mandatory minimums are often advertised as being "tough on crime." In reality, they are toughest on those who are already most marginalized and victimized. They deserve better.

Kim Pate

The Star - Feb 3, 2020

**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.*

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

**✎ PEN PALS ✎**

Send in your ad: 25 Words or Less.  
 We use Code #'s for Personal Safety.  
 When mail contact has been made, it is up to you to exchange your name & address, ... but only, if that is what you choose to do.

Please Print Your Name & Address on All Letters and Photos.  
 All Envelopes are Destroyed !!!

*Participants agree that by using this service, it is at their own risk, and by accessing this service all users agree that WPN is not to be held liable in any way for harms suffered as a result of this service.*  
This magazine is only sent into women's prisons. Ads are not on the web version.

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**NOT AVAILABLE ONLINE !**

**Incarcerated in Canada? Need Information?**

*Write On! is an all-volunteer group whose goal is to support prisoners in Canada by researching the information you need, such as:*

*General legal info, prison rules & policies, resources, programs, services, etc.*  
 Write to us at:

Write ON!  
 234-1110 Cumberland St,  
 Toronto, ON, M5R 3V5



**Prison Visiting Rideshare Project**

*The Prison Rideshare is an ongoing project of Bar None to connect people with rides to visit their friends and loved ones who are in prison in Manitoba.*

*If you or someone you know is interested in getting a ride to visit one of southern Manitoba's prisons, if you are interested in volunteering, or for more info contact: [barnone.wpg@gmail.com](mailto:barnone.wpg@gmail.com)*

*Rides can also be arranged by phone or text message: 204-599-8869 (It's ideal to request a ride at least 5-7 days in advance).*

## 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](http://www.BookClubsForInmates.com)

A drawing - whether it becomes a window, a mirror, a weapon, or a tool - is always also a lifeline.

- Andrea K. Scott

## 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.



## 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.

## 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

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## 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 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Thurs 5-6 pm & 4<sup>th</sup> 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 – 1<sup>st</sup> 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.*

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### PRISONERS JUSTICE DAY

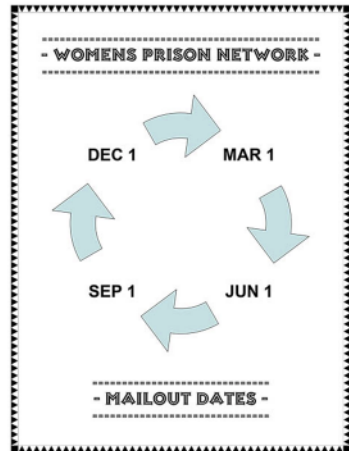
☞ In Remembrance ☞  
- August 10 -

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 Spring 2020 - Issue #18

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

[info@WomensPrisonNetwork.org](mailto:info@WomensPrisonNetwork.org)

*visit, download, print, donate!*  
[WomensPrisonNetwork.org](http://WomensPrisonNetwork.org)

Summer Issue #19 mailed out:

*Jun 1, 2020*

Send in your work before:

*May 1, 2020*

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!*

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