

WOMENS PRISON NETWORK



ISSUE #21
WINTER 2020/21

Editor's Note:

Welcome to Issue #21 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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Cover Artwork:

Erin Marie Konsmo

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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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 ≈

As long as you keep a person down, some part of you has to be down there to hold the person down, so it means you cannot soar as you otherwise might.

- Marian Anderson

'Women's Prison Network' is produced 4 times per year.
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If you are on the outside or part of an organization, please consider a donation!!!

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NEWSNEWSNEWSNEWSNEWSNEWSNEWS

What happened to Lisa Adams?
Just another 16-day torture ordeal in
Canada's Nova Institution for Women

Canada routinely tortures women in prison by throwing them into so-called 'dry cells'. Today, Lisa Adams, 33 years old and about to end a two-year sentence in the hellhole that is Nova Institution for Women, and advocates from the Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia, are challenging that practice in court. Some will ask, "What happened to Lisa Adams?" The real question is, "What happened to Canada?"

Lisa Adams lives with an addiction to methamphetamines and has been diagnosed with bipolar disorder and depression. In March, Lisa Adams was released on day parole. In May, she was picked up on for methamphetamine usage and was taken back to Nova Institution for Women, where she was strip searched and passed through a body scanner. Authorities found nothing in Lisa Adams' body. A few days later, authorities reconsidered the scan and felt they could perhaps see something, small and round, somewhere in her vagina. Authorities then did a scan of Lisa Adams' cell and found traces of methamphetamine. They then gave Lisa Adams a urine test, which came back positive. Lisa Adams protested her innocence, explaining that the meth was from her earlier pre-arrest usage and that she did not have any methamphetamine with her. Authorities did not believe her.

At that point, Lisa Adams was dumped into a dry cell, where she stayed for 16 days, from May 6 to May 22. A dry cell is a cell without running water or toilets. The thinking is that by placing someone in a dry cell, authorities can sift through their waste - feces, urine, vomit - and locate the concealed drugs. The prisoner is kept in segregation in that cell, without any water, under 24-hour-a-day surveillance. Lisa Adams stayed in a dry cell for 16 days. She started to tremble, became incoherent, threatened self-harm and suicide. Remember Nova Institution, the hellhole prison where, in 2015, Camille Strickland-Murphy and Veronica Park were effectively executed by the state? That's where Lisa Adams spent 16 days of hell, and for what?

Lisa Adams only got out of the dry cell when she finally persuaded the authorities to let an actual

doctor examine her. The doctor found nothing in her vagina or anywhere else. What the doctor did find was a severely injured woman, who had been battered and abused by the state.

Lisa Adams and her allies went to court today to argue that dry ceiling is a form of torture. Last year, Canada effectively outlawed solitary confinement, after the court declared keeping anyone in solitary for more than 15 days was cruel, unusual, and torture. Somehow, dry ceiling does not count as solitary confinement. The segregation is total and absolute, the conditions are nothing short of evil. In fact, the actual material facility of the dry cell is worse than that of solitary confinement. Lisa Adams spent 16 days in dry cell and, again, was only released when she begged for a doctor to perform a real examination.

Lisa Adams explains, "For me, on a base level, I'd like to have the idea of dry ceiling removed from female institutions. Because I'm not naive to the fact that drugs are an issue, and there has to be a means to prevent that, I'm hoping that potentially there could be an overhaul throughout all of CSC to find a new way to prevent this from happening. A way that's less invasive, that's more trauma-informed and that takes into account the value of the individual as well as the security of the institution ... I want the public to see that we are individuals. What happens to us in here is important. People wouldn't want it to happen to their mother, daughter, sister, wife. They need to keep an eye on that."

I want the public to see that we are all humans, that what happens in prisons and jails and immigrant detention centers and juvenile detention centers, that what happens "in here", not only in 'correctional institutions' but in here in our hearts, matters. What happened to Lisa Adams? She was tortured, traumatized... What happened to Canada, and by extension to all of us?

Dan Moshenberg
Women In & Beyond the Global
Nov 9, 2020

... than I should ever give my voice in justification of war, except the one war of all the peoples against their despots and exploiters - the Social Revolution.
- Emma Goldman

Prison system is traumatizing: Former prisoners speak up on Prisoners Justice Day

It was a Friday morning when Nicole Tobin was pulled over by police while driving her daughter to preschool.

When they screened her name, an arrest warrant came up. She was arrested on the spot for missing court in relation to a motor vehicle incident. Tobin said she pleaded with police not to handcuff her in front of her daughter, but they still did.

"They held me in handcuffs with my three-year-old for 30 minutes before my stepmother could come pick her up," she said Monday.

That was the beginning of Tobin's plight with Nova Scotia's justice system. She told her story as part of a panel held by Books Beyond Bars in front of the old public library on Spring Garden Road.

Cecilia Masimo, who works with Books Beyond Bars, organized the event to commemorate Prisoners Justice Day. Aug. 10 of every year marks the day when prisoners at Millhaven Institution, a maximum-security prison in Ontario, held a one-day hunger and work strike in 1975. They protested the negligent and inhumane prison system and the lack of an inquiry into inmate Edward Nalon, who bled to death in solitary confinement one year earlier.

Since then, prisoners in Nova Scotia and across Canada refuse to eat, work or practise any activity on this day to demand better treatment in prisons.

Masimo said prisoners who go on strike are thrown in solitary confinement, which has been rebranded to structured intervention units in 2019.

"This (event) is how we can stand in solidarity with the prisoners who are protesting against injustice."

Masimo said she chose to hold the panel across from the provincial court because courts are part of the system that sends people to jail.

"In a way we're holding them accountable," said Masimo.

She added that the statue of Winston Churchill also stood as a reminder of the prison system's roots in colonization.

People in attendance expressed their frustration with the injustices facing prisoners on post-it notes. The notes were stuck on wooden boards

which they intended to leave in front of the courthouse.

Serving time doesn't help

After her arrest, Tobin was taken to the Burnside jail where she was left in a dark room. Tobin who was pregnant at the time, was segregated from the rest of the prisoners for hours with no food or medication.

"The justice system right now is traumatizing. ... It only gave me long-lasting detrimental effects to my mental health."

She said she was also emotionally and physically abused before going to prison but couldn't find any mental health support while serving her time.

"Serving time didn't help us do anything. It's the help we sought afterwards is what helped," she said.

Patricia Whyte, who is Indigenous, said she faced a lot of racism in prison in addition to the lack of support services.

Sara Tessier, who is part of the LGBTQ community, said she was targeted for her identity and referred to as "a predator."

Abolishing prisons and investing in communities

After serving her time, the stigma followed Tobin when she tried to find work. She was a student at Mount St. Vincent University and had a job before her imprisonment.

"It was humiliating going to interview after interview and ... me telling them ... I have a record and then the job is gone."

Tobin is now working with Books Beyond Bars and will be starting a bachelor of education degree in the fall.

Corey Writes, who was previously incarcerated and sat on Monday's panel, said the stigma is present within the prison system itself. When Writes wanted to give a speech to the youth at the Waterville Youth Centre, his case management team said, "it's too late for them."

"If a child does something bad and you tell them go to the corner and you don't explain to them what they did wrong or how to change their mind ... they're going to do the same exact thing," he said.

According to data released by the federal government in 2018, the average annual cost of keeping an inmate incarcerated was about \$117,000 in 2015-2016.

All panelists agreed this money should be going to eliminating poverty and offering services such as rehabilitation and mental health support.

"People wouldn't need prisons if they had the supports in the first place," said Tessier.

Nebal Snan
The Guardian
Aug 10, 2020

Lifeline

*Spend years behind walls the white man built,
Indefinite solitary makes it hard to feel Guilt -
A form of Residential School, ancestors' blood
spilled.*

*Searching, fasting ... praying to find
A shred of humanity, freedom with no binds -
Lift the veil of Revenge that renders me blind.*

*Petition the System for a sweat, a vision ...
To release the negativity in my internal prison -
Where intentions and goals are tainted crimson.*

*Pledged faith, Revolutionary - convict Alliance;
Left to endure, to stagnate in silence -
Mind and spirit plagued by violence.*

*Fighting a war dating back to Crazy Horse,
Too ignorant to comprehend the System is the
Source
Of Revenge, Ruminating ... my lack of Remorse.*

*Spend years behind walls my heart has built,
Feel the lifeline wither when my blood is spilled.*

- Renée J. Acoby

Prison Bound

*We are prison bound for a temporary time
Twenty-four hours on the clock
When we must stop & think about life
It ticks & constantly reminds us
Of what it is like on the outside
I will myself free, out of this prison
Time will pass quickly
And the taste of freedom
Is bitter sweet*

- Anon

Jail Rules

*Jail rules
No, it doesn't
Eyes are the windows to the soul
So keep them shut
For all to see
Your systemic neurosis
No, Pain...
No Gain: you smell
Like a cell
With an amoeba's one-cell brain
Table for one
All rust & rut
Check your dignity at the door
Exercising rights
Is like hugging
And holding hands
It's not allowed
It's contraband*

- Jennifer DeKievit

Time

*Time goes by, seems like forever
Through rain and snow and sunny weather
I wish that I could see your face
It would make life tolerable in this place
For right now that dream can't come true
I have to wait for my life with you
Time has put our lives on hold
But together my love, we will grow old*

- Andrea Absalom Wallace

A New Way of Life

*A new way to spend time
A new way to adjust
A new way to find discipline
A new way to grow up
Time spent is time earned
It makes you brand new
A new way to represent yourself
All the way through
Transforming into the new you*

- Anon

Second COVID-19 wave has inmates locked down in 'atrocious' conditions, advocates say

Rising COVID-19 case count bodes ill for prison inmates, many of whom remain under partial lockdown without adequate health care, says the head of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies.

Three federal prisons have reported five cases of COVID-19 between them in the last few days as the pandemic worsens on the outside.

"They've compensated for the lack of ability to socially distance by locking people down in really restrictive ways, which has tremendously affected the mental health of prisoners," said Emilie Coyle.

She called the conditions in some institutions "atrocious," and said a toxic relationship between correctional officers and inmates conflicts with guards' de facto role as caregivers during the pandemic.

Guidance from public health officials who are not familiar with prisons aggravates a deficient health-care system and translates into restrictions that "don't equate to care," Coyle said in a phone interview Wednesday.

Her advocacy group, which works with female inmates, is calling on the federal government to release some offenders so as to allow easier physical distancing behind bars, a step she says provinces have taken more readily than Ottawa.

She is also asking for more investment in rehabilitation programs to encourage community reintegration and prevent recidivism, paving the way for earlier releases.

The federal prison population fell by only two per cent to about 13,700 between March and April, while the number of Canadians incarcerated at provincial and territorial institutions dropped by 25 per cent to roughly 18,200 between February and April, according to Statistics Canada.

The changes came after Public Safety Minister Bill Blair asked the federal prison service and the parole board in March to consider releasing some inmates early to lower the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Nearly one-quarter of inmates in federal custody are serving life sentences and ineligible for parole, he said in the spring.

But many federal prisoners have been ensnared in a catch-22 that has hindered their release, Coyle said.

"What ended up happening was they shut everything down and nobody had access to programs, and the conditions of parole or release are usually that they've completed their programs within the institution," she said.

The odds of prison depopulation seem even longer as case counts spike across the country, which raises the risk of transmission via inmate transfers and correctional officers.

The five inmates who have been detected with COVID-19 this week - two in Drummondville, Que., one in Stony Mountain, Man., and two at the Edmonton Institution for Women - are medically isolated and being monitored, the Correctional Service of Canada said.

Contact tracing is underway and testing is being offered at the three federal institutions affected, the agency said.

None of the three facilities is currently allowing visitors, a restriction that has been in place at all federal prisons in Quebec since late September due to the coronavirus spike.

"The little social activity they had with family, loved ones, spouses, children - all links with the outside world were suspended," said Samira Figuigui, director general of the John Howard Society of Quebec.

"They find themselves really locked in their cells, sometimes 23 hours out of 24," she said in French, calling the treatment inhumane.

As the second wave washes across Canada, the correctional service said it continues to screen employees and equip correctional officers and inmates with medical masks, on top of heightened cleaning measures and social restrictions.

"For example, in past months, we suspended visits and some activities in certain areas to limit comings and goings within our institutions," spokeswoman Véronique Rioux said in an email.

"In addition, modified routines are in place, which means that movements are carefully considered within the institutions, including between ranges (common areas), to ensuring physical distancing is maintained."

Christopher Reynolds
The Canadian Press
Nov 11, 2020

A trans woman died in Toronto police custody. After public pressure, the SIU has corrected the report that misgendered her

The Special Investigations Unit issued a correction late Wednesday afternoon, acknowledging that a 30-year-old who died in police custody last week was a trans woman.

The statement came a day after a local community group demanded the police watchdog reveal the circumstances behind her death and correct its misgendering of the victim.

"Last week, an organization that services LGBTQ2S communities contacted the SIU and informed that the individual identified as a woman," the police watchdog said in a statement.

"In an abundance of caution, the SIU made attempts to confirm this information with the deceased's next-of-kin. Investigators were finally able to connect with the family this afternoon and the Unit can now confirm that the deceased in this case is a trans woman. At the request of family, the woman's name is not being released at this time."

On Tuesday, the 519, based in the Gay Village, released a statement calling for transparency from Toronto police at 43 Division and the SIU surrounding the death of a Black trans woman.

"Though neither the (Toronto Police Service) nor the SIU has released the name of the person who died or any information related to what caused their death, we have received information that confirms that the individual involved was a much loved 30-year-old Black trans woman," the statement reads.

The organization said it would not disclose the victim's name, out of respect for grieving family and friends who may not know the details of her death.

The SIU originally stated a 30-year-old man had died after being detained by Toronto police officers under the Mental Health Act on Oct. 26. Police responded to a 911 call at a Scarborough apartment at around 7 a.m., the SIU said in a statement. Officers found a person had self-barricaded in the unit, the SIU said.

Police apprehended the person under the Mental Health Act and took them to the hospital, it said. The person "went into medical distress" and hospital staff tried to revive them, but they were pronounced dead at 10:15 a.m., it said.

Earlier that day, police said officers responded to a call about a break-in, but determined none had occurred. Police said they found the person to be "in crisis."

A week after informing the SIU of the victim's gender, the 519 demanded police and the SIU "uphold their responsibility for transparency and accountability, and provide the public with more information about the circumstances that led to the death of the 30-year-old Black trans woman who was taken to hospital by police."

"Silence, in the face of such loss, only serves to cause greater harm," the organization said.

The 519 called on the community to pressure the SIU and Toronto police to issue a correction and disclose more information.

"Time and time again, members within the LGBTQ2S community, particularly BIPOC queer, trans and two-spirit communities, are let down by the organizations that are mandated to serve and protect."

The police watchdog said it continues to investigate the woman's death.

"The SIU appreciates the public interest in this case and is doing what it can to get answers to the public as quickly as possible while ensuring that the integrity of the investigation is not compromised," it said. "We ask for the public's continued patience."

The SIU investigates allegations of serious injury, death or alleged sexual assault involving police.

City Coun. Kristyn Wong-Tam (Ward 13 Toronto Centre) said in a statement that authorities must provide as much clarity as possible.

"There is a history of mistrust for the Toronto police in the LGBTQ2S+ community stemming back to the days of bathhouse raids and even much earlier."

Because the SIU has invoked its mandate, "by law, no further comment can be made at this time," Toronto police said in the Oct. 26 statement.

Manuela Vega
Toronto Star
Nov 5, 2020

Always be nice to your children because they are the ones who will choose your rest home.

- Phyllis Diller

Worsening conditions in prisons during COVID-19 further marginalize women

In August, the Fraser Valley Institution for Women federal prison in Abbotsford, B.C., closed the Annex, its minimum security unit. This closure forced the transfer of all prisoners into higher security units, showing just how much the carceral system fails to create choices for women experiencing criminalization.

We see this failure firsthand: co-author Wendy Bariteau was imprisoned in the Annex and is now a member of the prison abolition collective Joint Effort, Linda Mussell works alongside women who were confined in the Prison for Women (P4W) in Kingston, Ont., and other newer women's prisons, and Martha Paynter is a nurse who volunteers inside and outside of prisons with Wellness Within, an organization for health and justice.

Closures and consequences

Thirty years ago, Correctional Service Canada (CSC) published *Creating Choices: The Report of the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women*. The report recommended closing P4W in Kingston, Ont. - at that time the only federal prison for women in Canada - and the creation of regional prisons to bring federally sentenced women closer to home communities. The Task Force presented a "new vision" of empowerment, respect and dignity, and recognized the role that societal barriers play in women's experiences of criminalization.

Scholars such as criminologists Stephanie Hayman and Kelly Hannah-Moffat, and sociologist Paula Maurutto, have reflected on this legacy and its failures. CSC's *Creating Choices* promised "cottages" with plenty of outdoor time and space, training, support for mothers, education, health care and trauma counselling. After P4W closed 20 years ago, six new prisons for women opened.

Despite the promises, prisoners such as T.A. Glaremin write that the reforms were pointless, and former prisoner and prison abolition activist Ann Hansen explains that the changes disappeared "like bunnies in the magician's hat - an illusion."

Broken systems

In these new prisons, women are incarcerated at an increasing rate; Indigenous and Black women are imprisoned in shocking numbers. Canada

locks up nearly 40 per cent more women now than a decade ago, in lockstep with cuts to social services nationwide and over-policing of racialized communities. Between 2002 and 2012, the number of Indigenous women in federal custody doubled.

Prisoners have said the system is broken for a long time, as in this narrative from a prisoner at the Fraser Valley Institution: "Is prison meant to not just punish us for our crime, but to give us the opportunity to live a better and healthier life upon release?"

With each attempt at reforming prisons, the system regresses. This is evident yet again during the pandemic.

Closure of the Annex

The Fraser Valley Institution (FVI) was designed to house 50 people across three levels of security. The Annex has 20 beds, outside the perimeter fence. Participants in the Mother-Child program live there with their children.

Incarcerated women such as Stephanie Deschene have shared experiences of "pleading out" to be placed there, "in hopes of not being separated from my child once he was born."

On Aug. 26, all the people in the Annex were transferred to medium security units without advanced notice or explanation. The Annex is the only minimum security unit for women in the Pacific region, and no minimum security units for men were closed.

Wardens determine a prisoner's security level classification based on eligibility criteria and conditions outlined by the parole board. The mass security level escalation at FVI violates CSC's own policies.

According to members of Joint Effort, who are in contact with FVI prisoners, FVI states one of the reasons for the move had to do with staffing issues. But these operational challenges translate into human rights violations for women inside: assessed at the same security level as before, the women no longer have the advantages of minimum security. This includes mothers with children. Nearly two months later, the Annex has only begun to reopen.

The 'new normal'

Before COVID-19, people in prison expressed how difficult it was to maintain connections with their children, families and communities, and to access health care, education and meaningful training.

All of this negatively affects transition back to community.

COVID-19 has worsened living conditions inside prisons, which CSC describes as the new normal. In response to COVID-19, CSC modified or suspended many aspects of its operations-including visits and volunteer support. Legal scholar Debra Parkes and Senator Kim Pate noted issues with accountability and oversight years before the pandemic. The new restrictions allow for less accountability and more isolation than we have seen in decades.

Volunteer groups already experienced access barriers. They have yet to regain entry since March 2020.

New rules specify a maximum of three visitors per visit, only two of which can be children. This means parents may not see all of their kids. No physical contact is permitted, visitors must be two meters away and children's play areas are closed. Private Family Visitation has not resumed, and prisoners will likely face two weeks of isolation if it does. Visits are completely suspended in federal prisons in Québec and Manitoba jails.

People inside say they still don't have masks or gloves, are given little access to water or soap and are experiencing crippling isolation. At least 3,000 prisoners have been placed in isolation within their cells since March.

In June, the Correctional Investigator of Canada issued a report criticizing the practice of isolating prisoners during the pandemic. Prisoners have gone on hunger strikes at multiple prisons in response to harsh.

Moving forward

Challenges with safely detaining people during a pandemic should never be met with escalation of security, but rather with a critical examination of whether incarceration is acceptable at all.

With a new outbreak in Manitoba jails threatening the safety of those inside, the need for alternatives is apparent.

Despite ever-declining rates in crime, and ever-increasing needs for social services in communities hit by COVID-19 and economic collapse, incarceration is an enormous and rising public expense. We must pause and ask if this is the right choice to "create choices" for the most marginalized people in our society.

Darryl Dyck, with Wendy Bariteau
The Canadian Press - Oct 18, 2020

'How many Canadians have to be ... robbed of their futures?'

Re: [Bias Behind Bars](#) (Oct 24)

Readers react as Globe investigation finds prison system stacked against Black and Indigenous inmates

A heartfelt thanks to reporter Tom Cardoso for exposing the racism endemic in the assessments of Black and Indigenous inmates. Calls for action should begin with the easiest of remedies: Fire those responsible for exaggerating Black and Indigenous scores, and watch how quickly this problem goes away.

- P.R.

An outstanding piece of investigative journalism - which I am afraid it will go on the pile with all the other reports, commissions and promises to do better. We have repeated examples of rampant abuses in the prison system, failures of the RCMP and other forces to clean up their acts, unconscionable delays in the courts - it just goes on.

Underlying it all is the undeniable stink of firmly entrenched systemic racism. It is clear to me that our criminal justice system is a festering sore no one in government will touch, except to kick the can down the road.

Sad. Shameful.

- P.B.

Such a timely article as many people, including myself, have been subject to risk assessments that are "static" and backward-looking. The risk assessments in presentence reports are equally problematic.

How many Canadians have to be subjected to these biases and robbed of their futures before action is taken?

- S.E.

Globe and Mail

Oct 26, 2020

Every society honours its live conformists and its dead troublemakers.

- Mignon McLaughlin

You don't get to choose how you're going to die, or when. You can only decide how you're going to live now.

- Joan Baez

Ontario breaks its own rules on use of segregation in jails, HRC says

Ontario is failing to meet its own legal obligations by continuing the use of segregation for inmates with mental health disabilities, according to the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

The commission is now pushing for the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal to order a provincial ban on the use of solitary confinement for anyone in the correctional system who has a mental health disability and to appoint an independent monitor to ensure the rules are followed.

It filed a motion with the tribunal earlier this month, stating that "people with mental health disabilities in Ontario's correctional system continue to be warehoused in segregation by the thousands."

"It's important not to lose sight that this is about people's actual lived experience," said Ontario Human Rights Commission staff lawyer Insiya Essajee, in an interview with CBC News. "Every day has a human cost."

The motion is the latest in the commission's push to improve conditions for people with mental health disabilities in Ontario's correctional system. It comes after an independent reviewer determined Ontario failed to comply with previous orders from the tribunal and a 2013 settlement in the case of Christina Jahn. She was held in solitary confinement for more than 200 days due to a mental health disability, according to court documents.

The motion outlines 11 ways in which it claims Ontario is in breach of its own obligations, including:

- Not implementing a system to ensure it's aware of which prisoners have a mental health disability.
- Not using treatment or care programs to ensure people with mental health disabilities receive proper treatment in jail.
- Not accurately tracking or reviewing segregation placements.
- Not conducting baseline or ongoing health assessments of people in segregation.
- Not implementing a definition of segregation based on the conditions of confinement.

The commission defines segregation, also known as solitary confinement, as "the practice of confining a person to a six by nine foot cell [approximately 2 by 3 metres] for twenty-two or

more hours a day with little or no human interaction."

Because of Ontario's "long history of non-compliance," Essajee said the commission is now pressing for an order that goes beyond the previous decisions and imposes a full ban on segregation for anyone with a mental health disability.

For its part, the Ministry of the Solicitor General, which is responsible for Ontario's jails, said it has met 31 of the "deliverables" previously ordered by the Human Rights Tribunal.

Spokesperson Brent Ross said recent government investments in 500 new corrections staff and modernizing corrections facilities "will also help ensure the safety and security of our institutions and ensure government is in compliance with its obligations regarding the use of segregation within correctional facilities."

Currently solitary confinement can be used as a "last resort" in Ontario's jails, but Essajee said the numbers of people in segregation show it's being used far too frequently.

Almost half the people in segregation between July 1, 2018, and June 30, 2019, had mental health alerts, she said.

"People should be able to rely on their government to meet their legal obligations," Essajee said. "We're going to the tribunal to hold the government to account."

The commission is seeking new limits restricting segregation of any inmate to no more than 15 continuous days and 60 aggregate days in a calendar year and the appointment of an independent monitor of corrections in Ontario.

The oversight could help prevent situations such as that of Adam Capay, who spent more than four years in solitary confinement at the Thunder Bay District Jail while awaiting trial for murder. The charges were stayed in 2019.

In that case, the court found that the rules requiring corrections officials to regularly review the use of segregation for each person held in solitary confinement are "meaningless at the institutional and regional levels."

The conditions in the Thunder Bay jail continue to raise special concerns, Essajee said.

"It's such an old facility and such a difficult environment for people with mental health disabilities," she said. "Some of the most vulnerable people are experiencing some of the harshest conditions."

In pre-pandemic times, Ontario would have 14 days to respond to the motion filed by the commission on August 25, but it may be permitted to extend the timeline because of the restrictions that COVID-19 puts on normal working routines.

Ross said with the matter currently before the tribunal, the ministry cannot comment on the timelines.

"Of course our hope is that this will be dealt with as quickly as possible," Essajee said.

Jody Porter
CBC News
Aug 31, 2020

V.C.F.W.

A is for Always being in jail
B is for Because we can't get bail
C is for Court that we attend
D is for D.O. once and again
E is for Everything that we done
F is for Freedom now we got none

- Michele Lampart

Alone

I'm surrounded by people
But I still feel alone
Who knew that this place
Would be called my own
All I want to do
Is go back to my home
The people I love
I talk to on the phone
Other than that
I'm stuck in this zone
Hiding my feelings
They can never be shown
Everything about me
Is better left unknown
I'm surrounded by people
But I still feel alone

- Jessica Skye Bernard

Prison Life

It's waiting on letters
When you're doing time.
And your family won't write,
Or send you a dime.
It's waiting on visits
That never take place,
From friends or loved ones,
Who forgot your face
It's hearing them lie
And saying that we're trying,
Making you promises
But you know they are lying
It's making plans with someone
Who you thought you knew,
But their plans suddenly change,
And it didn't include you
It's hearing them say how much they care,
But in your time of need
They are never there.
It's hearing them promise
And it goes straight to your head,
But when push comes to shove,
They leave you for dead.
It's feelings and Love
Honor and Pride.
Pain & Emotions & hurting inside
It's expressing yourself
To your loved ones & friends,
But they can't feel your pain
Because you're in the pen
It's calling and hearing
" 'A' Block's on the phone."
But you maintain
Because life goes on
It's really messed up when you're doing time
But that's "Prison Life."
Out of sight, out of mind.

- The End

Help one another is part of the religion of our sisterhood.

- Louisa May Alcott

I speak to the black experience, but I am always talking about the human condition -- about what we can endure, dream, fail at, and still survive.

- Maya Angelou

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.

None for this Issue!

Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all. Security is mostly a superstition. It does not exist in nature.

- Helen Keller

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!

234-110 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

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

A life of reaction is a life of slavery,
 intellectually and spiritually.
 One must fight for a life of action, not
 reaction.

- Rita Mae Brown

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

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

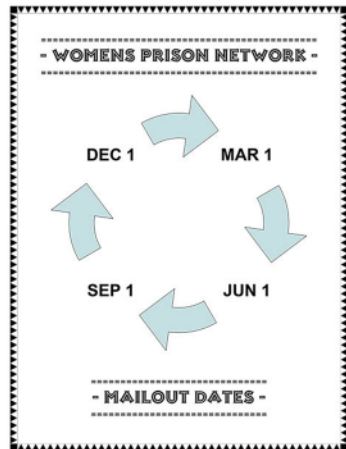
☞ In Remembrance ☞
- August 10 -

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
Winter 2020/21 - Issue #21

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

info@WomensPrisonNetwork.org

visit, download, print, donate!
WomensPrisonNetwork.org

Spring Issue #22 mailed out:
Mar 1, 2021

Send in your work before:
Feb 1, 2021

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!
