

WOMEN'S PRISON NETWORK



issue 30 spring 2023

< Editor's Note >

Welcome to Issue #30 of Women's Prison Network, a magazine by & for women, trans & youth prisoners in 'Settler Canada'.



In every Issue we strive to provide a safe space for creative expression, informative news & support resources. These zines feature art, poetry, stories, news, observations, concerns, & anything of sincere value to share.

Health & Harm Reduction info will always be provided, of course - Yes, Do Be Safe!

Quality & Quantity:

Items printed are those that are common for diverse readers, so no religious items please.

Artwork: Black pen (tat-style) works the best.

Cover Artist will receive a \$25 donation.

Writings: only short poems, news, stories, ...

Items selected are those that fit nicely & allow space for others (1/2 page = 300 words max).

For author protection, letters & story credits will all be 'Anonymous' unless requested.

'Women's Prison Network' is published 4 times per year.

It is sent out for free to Women, Trans & Youth in Prisons in Canada.

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

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< Contents >

News ..... 3-10  
Resources..... 11-16

< Artists in this Issue >

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Very special thanks out to:  
You!

Canadian Charter of Rights & Freedoms

- The right of life, liberty and security of person (Section 7).
- The right not to be arbitrarily detained (Section 9).
- The right not to be subjected to cruel and unusual punishment (Section 12).
- The right to be equal before and under the law (Section 15).

< 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 ~

We live in an era where masses of people come and go across a hostile planet, desolate and violent.

Refugees, emigrants, exiles, deportees. We are a tragic contingent.

- Isabel Allende

Why are we still talking about ...  
... Solitary Confinement

*"I can only say that I do not think it is absurd to suggest that a person should not be kept locked up in a small cell 24 hours a day, and that if there were security concerns, they should be dealt with otherwise than by simply denying an inmate an opportunity to step out of her cell... However, once again it seems that even if the law is known, there is a general perception that it can always be departed from for a valid reason, and that, in any event compliance with prisoners' rights is not a priority... it was part of a general punitive attitude which required inmates to earn entitlements to everything perceived as a privilege rather than a right."*

- The Honourable Louise Arbour, Arbour Report 1996, Commission of Inquiry into certain events at the Prison for Women in Kingston.

Canada's Correctional Investigator Dr. Ivan Zinger submitted the 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Correctional Investigator to Parliament on June 30, 2022. As a part of the report's National Level Investigations section, "Restrictive forms of Confinement in Federal Corrections" focused specifically on the six standalone maximum-security institutions for men, Atlantic in New Brunswick, Donnacona and Port-Cartier in Quebec, Millhaven in Ontario, Edmonton in Alberta, and Kent in British Columbia.

The extract from Madam Arbour's 1996 report was the foreword to this investigative segment into the continued uses and forms of administrative segregation (solitary confinement) in Canada's prisons. Maximum-security prisons are a restrictive form of confinement by design, and while the report identified and described how this environment can negatively impact inmates in general, we will limit ourselves here to how old practices of segregation persist.

Ontario and British Columbia courts determined that solitary confinement violated fundamental rights protected by the Charter. The federal government responded with Bill C-83 in 2019 to eliminate the practice and replace it with Structured Intervention Units (SIUs) which put minimum standards into law and required external oversight and external review.

The correctional investigator determined these standards are vulnerable to interpretation on the

one hand, while the legislation that governs SIUs does not require Correctional Service of Canada to apply its provisions to other areas in federal prisons. As the Annual Report put it, "a wide range of restrictive confinement conditions and practices exist outside of SIUs that are subject to little or no external oversight or independent monitoring."

The OCI resolved that a reasonable definition for a restrictive confinement is anything less than four hours a day out-of-cell time. Its investigation uncovered a number of areas, outside of SIUs and temporary lockdowns in place for COVID-19, where prisoners were given less than four hours of out-of-cell time.

In one institution (the report does not identify specific prisons), and aside from the prevailing standards in the SIU unit, the rest of the prison operated like a former administrative segregation range, allowing inmates less than three hours of out-of-cell time. At another institution, what staff at the facility often referred to as "hidden cells" were used to keep prisoners in solitary confinement-like conditions for weeks at a time. As a contrast, staff at a third institution were using their discretion to allow for more out-of-cell time than was standard. As a result, none of the inmates interviewed complained about out-of-cell time and they all reported having more than four hours a day. They did complain about having nothing to do with the time, but that is another maximum-security prison issue to be addressed in the future.

The Annual Report noted too that while the investigation focused on maximum-security institutions, their findings applied equally to some medium-security institutions as well.

What we have here is an instance of the disparity between policy and practice in our federal prisons which may include a disregard for the law. Not only is there no uniform exercise of all prescribed standards across the system, but the CSC national headquarters in Ottawa will face down calls for accountability. Not even parliament and the courts are spared.

Thus it has ever been, as Madam Arbour would find if she were to revisit operations in our federal prison system today.

[www.turnoverarocktoday.com](http://www.turnoverarocktoday.com)

Jan 22, 2023

Book club helps inmates at this Ontario women's prison connect and communicate

Former inmate Emily O'Brien says the monthly book club she used to attend, as part of a program at federal penitentiaries across Canada, helped her and others learn to "communicate in a peaceful way."

"In prison, there's also a lot of turmoil and a lot of stress," said O'Brien, who was at the Grand Valley Institution for Women in Kitchener, Ont. But during her time in the book club, which started at Grand Valley in 2010, it "made people very open, and it made people talk about their insecurities, and it made people also find relatability in just different stories in life."

Book Clubs for Inmates (BCFI) was an idea proposed by Carol Finlay in 2008, after her visit to the medium-security Collins Bay Institution in Kingston, Ont. Finlay, an Anglican priest and former high school and university professor, proposed the idea to a group of inmates who welcomed it.

When the program expanded in 2010, Grand Valley Institution for Women was among the first to start up its own book club.

According to its website, the BCFI became a registered charity in 2009. Today, the project facilitates three dozen book clubs from Nova Scotia to British Columbia, with hundreds of inmates participating. There are also hopes to have a book club in all penitentiaries.

It's like any other book club, with a lot of in-depth discussion, but without the wine and cheese.

O'Brien, who's become an entrepreneur since leaving prison in 2019, credits the book club with giving her and other inmates strength.

"I think because we had that connection through the book club, it actually made us stronger, and it gave us something to feel good about and to look forward to," said O'Brien, founder of the gourmet popcorn company Comeback Snacks, an idea she said was forged while she was in prison.

'Curious, thoughtful readers'

At the Grand Valley Institution for Women, as part of the club being a registered charity, it accepts financial donations for book purchases. The inmates get to keep the books, and discussion sessions are led by volunteers like Martha Crealock.

Crealock, a Kitchener high school teacher, has been making monthly trips to the prison for the last eight years. She said there have been great discussions about the books and how they connect to their own lives.

"I really like meeting the other readers as humans, and we don't sort of talk about how we all got there, but we just sort of engage with the books," Crealock said.

"It's so easy to have ideas about what prison is like, and there's a lot of images on TV and movies that maybe represent our imagination of prison or what American prisons look like. But it's just been such a lovely club for me to just meet a bunch of people who are curious, thoughtful readers, and mothers, and sisters and professionals."

Inmates get to choose from a list of 250 recommended novels - many written by Canadian authors - and make suggestions on books that should be included.

Since it began, the club has grown to include a creative writing program with author Lawrence Hill and a reading program that provides books for the children of inmates, a project that came out of another penitentiary.

Themes of redemption

Tom Best, executive director of BCFI, said that often, inmates choose books that have themes with "a sense of redemption" and "adversity that is being overcome."

"If we really believe that the inmates are going to be reintroduced into society, we really need to provide programs like this that help them build empathy, and to help them with their communication skills and their listening skills as well," Best said.

"If we believe that people that have been incarcerated are ever going to be reintroduced to society and into the communities in which we all live, we have to do a great deal more than what we have been."

Best believes the program is important, to help reintroduce people who have been incarcerated into the community.

Finding common ground through books

Carroll Calder, the library technician at Grand Valley Institution for Women, said the book club is one of her favourite programs at the prison.

She said the inmates have been able to find common ground through their discussions.

"We always read books about strong female characters, so hearing that and being able to share that in a world view as well - just to hear the perspectives of the different women, how they grew up, how women are treated in their respective countries, even things such as what being a mother is in all our different lives."

Joe Pavia  
CBC News  
Jan 03, 2023

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### Officials must understand why Inuit overrepresented in jails

As the federal government announced funding Thursday to tackle the overrepresentation of Inuit people in jail, the head of Labrador's Inuit government urged policymakers to visit his region and understand the issues for themselves.

Nunatsiavut government president Johannes Lampe said Inuit in the region are targeted by police and forced to navigate a justice system that doesn't understand their language, history or current circumstances.

"Come and see the poverty that Inuit are living today, where at times you are so poor, you have to do what it takes to feed your family," Lampe told reporters. "Where food insecurity is prevalent, high prices ... and not having the means of obtaining a boat or a snowmobile to help you get out on the land to find that fish, the partridge, the seal."

Lampe joined the press conference by video Thursday, as did federal Justice Minister David Lametti, who announced \$1.17 million in funding over several years to help address the overrepresentation of Inuit from the Nunatsiavut region in the justice system.

The Nunatsiavut region comprises five fly-in communities along Labrador's northern coast. Part of the money will fund a cultural awareness educator who will help criminal justice officials better understand why a disproportionate number of Inuit end up in correctional facilities, Lametti said. It will also support the Nunatsiavut government's community-based justice services.

Lametti did not have statistics specific to Inuit in corrections, but numbers last April from the Newfoundland and Labrador Justice Department

showed Inuit women are overrepresented at the province's only women's jail.

Though Inuit women represent less than 1% of the province's population, they accounted for 9% of inmates at the Correctional Centre For Women in central Newfoundland between April 1, 2011, and April 1, 2021.

Lampe said the numbers are too high.

"Labrador Inuit hold solutions that can better help Labrador Inuit," he said, adding: "If our communities are going to make life better for its residents, Labrador Inuit have to be given that self-determination, that ownership ... to run their affairs themselves."

Lametti said the funding is aimed at enabling the Nunatsiavut government to take the lead.

"It's what they're asking and it's what we haven't done in 150-plus years of colonialism in Canada," he said. "We have tended to opt for top-down solutions drafted in the national capital or other provincial capitals, and that hasn't worked."

Sarah Smellie  
The Canadian Press  
Jan 19, 2023

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### Behind These Bars

Behind these bars  
Are stubborn souls  
Broken hearts  
Traumas holes

Behind these bars  
Are racial slurs  
Lateral violence  
A world of unures

Behind these bars  
Are failed schemes  
Disappointment  
Broken dreams

If you only knew  
What's behind these bars  
You would understand  
Why we all leave with scars

Sarah Hilts

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The detention of migrants in Canadian jails is a public health emergency

*This month, human rights organizations launched 12 Days of Action calling on the federal government to stop the incarceration of immigration detainees in provincial jails. The effort is part of the broader #WelcomeToCanada campaign.*

*As scholars who study migration, we have joined this effort, alongside experts and organizations across the country serving and protecting the rights of migrants and refugees.*

*Four provinces - B.C., Nova Scotia, Alberta, and Manitoba - have already decided to stop the practice by cancelling their respective immigration detention contracts with the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA). It's time for the federal government to terminate the remaining contracts and abolish immigration detention in Canada.*

Canada's dangerous immigration detention system

*Migrants and refugee claimants who are arrested and incarcerated in immigration detention are never held on criminal charges or convictions. Instead, the CBSA incarcerates people under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, most commonly because an officer believes the person in question will miss their immigration or refugee proceeding.*

*Every year, hundreds are held arbitrarily in provincial jails. Many people in immigration detention are survivors of armed conflict and persecution, having faced traumas and human rights abuses on their migration journeys.*

*Rather than providing early and evidence-based support for these critical needs, the current approach of detaining migrants results in severe and lasting negative health and social consequences. Canada's immigration detention system is riddled with international human rights violations, and yet the number of immigration detainees continues to rise.*

*Canada is often perceived as a safe-haven for newcomers, but in 2020, 8,825 people were detained on immigration-related grounds, including 136 children. People in immigration detention face some of the most restrictive forms of incarceration in Canada, including in maximum-security prisons and solitary*

*confinement, both of which result in restricted access to legal counsel and other vital support services.*

*Many are shackled, handcuffed, strip-searched and have their personal possessions taken away. People living with mental health conditions and Black men of African and Caribbean origin often face the harshest, most punitive conditions.*

*People in immigration detention are at risk of being detained indefinitely, as there is no legislative cap on the duration of detention. This has left many to languish in confinement, uncertain if or when they will be released or deported.*

*Such was the case for Abdurahman Hassan, who was held in a maximum-security prison for over three years before his death in 2015. Since 2016, at least 300 people have been held in immigration detention for over a year, with the longest detainment lasting 11 years.*

Long-lasting health impacts

*Research demonstrates that immigrant detention is linked to significant mental health concerns. Incarceration without charge, indefinite detainment, the threat of deportation and living in a carceral environment have been shown to contribute to high rates of suicidality, self-harm, depression, anxiety and psychosis.*

*Abdirahmaan Warssama, who was detained for over five years, described his experience as torture. The mental health consequences of detention continue long after release and affect people's loved ones and communities.*

*Children can also be detained, which has severe consequences on their health and well-being. Even brief periods of incarceration cause significant psychological harm. Reports have documented developmental delay, suicidal ideation and selective mutism. In 2014, the UNHCR called for the abolition of child detention - Canada's fulfilment of that call is long overdue.*

*In addition to mental health concerns, immigration detention has been linked to malnourishment, edema, hypertension, increased risk of certain infectious diseases, like COVID-19 and substantial unmet healthcare needs. Concerns are exacerbated among pregnant people, who face poor access to quality prenatal care, high rates of miscarriage, pre-eclampsia, pre-term delivery and infant mortality.*

As a 2019 report on the state of Ontario's jails summarized, "Correctional facilities are not equipped to provide consistent, equitable, or high-quality health care."

The egregious conditions and policies of immigration detention have proven deadly. At least 17 people have died in CBSA custody since 2000. This includes the death of a migrant detained in the Laval Immigration Holding Centre on Jan. 28, 2022, who died after being found in "medical distress."

Like others, they remain unnamed and their cause of death is unknown to the public. CBSA remains the only major law enforcement agency in Canada without independent civilian oversight.

### End 'cimmigration'

Canada's unjust use of immigration detention stands in stark contrast with its image as welcoming and multicultural. Following the onset of the pandemic, authorities released hundreds of people from immigration detention to curb the spread of the virus. That provides ample evidence that immigration detention was not being used as a measure of last resort, and that alternatives to detention are available.

Instead of incarceration, newcomers should be welcomed into communities. There are a host of community-based organizations offering tailored and compassionate support to migrants and refugees across Canada.

Such alternatives to detention allow families to remain together, are more cost-effective and prevent the physical and mental health harms of detention. High rates of compliance have been observed where migrants and refugee claimants are afforded supports like housing and education, granted legal aid and case management support and treated with respect.

Based on the severe health and human rights implications of immigration detention, the public health evidence is clear - it is time to end immigrant detention once and for all.

Emma Stirling-Cameron & Shira Goldenberg  
The Conversation  
Nov 27, 2022

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

- Andrea K. Scott

### Lost by Prison

Troubled kids become angry teenagers and that can make for violent adults. Just so, our prison industry is the dumping ground for what we allow our criminal justice system to see as society's detritus. And to salve our collective conscience in the face of failed interventions to right the wrongs we see around us, we charge our prisons to rehabilitate the lost and damaged and send them back to us 'fixed.'

We could wish that's the way it is.

Global News released the findings of a study in November of this year into an Ontario group home chain and the overmedicating of the teens and pre-teens in its care. Investigators Andrew Russell, Carolyn Jarvis and Michael Wrobel scrutinized the practices of for-profit Hatts Off, the second largest operator of group homes for youth in Ontario. Former clients claim drugs and lots of them were the help they got in response to the problems that brought them into Ontario's child welfare system.

"Experts say intensive therapy is needed for kids to heal from the trauma and abuse, or to live with mental health disorders," the Global report says. Drugs have a role but the counselling and treatment that should be the primary counter was in short supply if available at all. About 20 former staff and youth confirmed the use of psychotropics was "widespread" and melatonin supplements were also on the menu as a sleep aid.

Further, this report tells us that overall, 75% of kids in care in the province's foster and group homes take behaviour-altering drugs. We're allowing our government to mask the problems these children and youth face rather than budgeting for the mental health care that can give them the opportunities to live productively and positively in the community with on-going access to mental health resources as needed.

Drugged, untreated teenagers who age-out of child welfare can easily become fodder for our criminal justice system and the prison industry. And they do, in large numbers. That's costly to us all, but is there a method to this madness?

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turnoverarocktoday.com  
Dec 18, 2022

Deaths in Ontario jails nearly double in one year, report shows

Deaths in Ontario jails have almost doubled from 2020 to 2021 - 23 to 41 - a shocking spike that follows a steady rise since 2017 despite fewer people in custody, according to a new report from the Tracking (In)Justice project released Tuesday.

"It is deeply upsetting," said Sarah Speight, a PhD candidate at the University of Ottawa who co-authored the report with Alexander McClelland, an assistant professor at Carleton University's Institute of Criminology and Criminal Justice. "Every time I look at the chart and see the sharp incline ... that line is a representation of so many more families that have gone through this loss. So many people are dying preventable deaths."

The report publicly shares for the first time the number of people dying annually in jails, where more than 70% of people are awaiting trial, often spending brief periods of time in custody before getting bail. The remainder are serving sentences of less than two years.

There have been 280 deaths in Ontario jails since 2010. Annual deaths ranged between 15 and 20 deaths per year before increasing to 24 in 2017, likely due to the opioid crisis. There have been 28 deaths so far this year.

Speight and McClelland found that, unlike with the federal system which sends out press releases when there is a death in custody, Ontario does not share information about the number of deaths in custody as they happen. This prevents real-time tracking of deaths, as well as causes of death and the institution where the death occurred.

While the province does publicly release some information as a result of a court order, their numbers include deaths in police custody and parole - a total of 49 deaths in 2021. According to that data, half the people who died had a mental health alert on file and 16 had a suicide-related alert on file. Two-thirds were under the age of 50.

There were around 30,000 people who came into custody of police or jails in 2021 and about 7,100 people in custody in a jail on a daily basis. There is little information available about the cause of death - 40 of the deaths are categorized as other or unknown - and the

categorization has been inconsistent. The data also does not specify which jail the death occurred at, making it impossible to know if there are concentrated problems at any jail.

"Due to lack of transparency we do not yet know the reasons for the current increase in deaths between 2020 and 2021," the report states.

"We can't answer some basic questions about how many people are dying and how they are dying," McClelland said, adding that families have long been demanding greater transparency and more accountability.

Possible reasons could include a toxic drug supply being smuggled into jails, lack of safe drug use options, vulnerability to overdoses due to reduced drug tolerance while in custody, witnessing violence and deaths, isolation and limited access to family during the COVID-19 pandemic and the well-documented increasingly harsh conditions, including frequent lockdowns and overcrowding, the researchers say.

There is also an increased risk of suicide as people first go into custody and a lack of nursing and medical staff available 24/7, Speight said. She points to the recent inquest into the drug toxicity deaths of Steven Frenette, Daniel Foreman, David Bullen, Johnathan McConnell and Susan Borja at the Central East Correctional Centre in Lindsay, Ont. between 2018 and 2019. Due to overcrowding, Borja, who used a wheelchair, was sharing a cell with one bed with two other women who both slept on mats on the floor, Speight said.

Several judges continue to sound the alarm on overcrowding and lockdowns that force inmates to remain in their cells with no access to showers, phone calls or exercise for days at a time.

"These are human beings," said Yusuf Faqiri, who has spent the last six years fighting for accountability for the death of his brother Soleiman Faqiri. Soleiman was in a mental health crisis when he was shackled, pepper-sprayed, beaten and pinned face down on the ground - all factors that Ontario's chief pathologist concluded contributed to his death in jail in 2016.

Faqiri said contact with family and a support system for someone with mental health struggles can be a matter of life and death, but visits and phone calls can be limited or cancelled frequently due to lockdowns or staffing shortages.

The message that sends is "that for people with mental illness, their lives are cheap, their lives



don't have the same value as the rest of us," he said.

McClelland and Speight also note that classifying a death as "natural causes" is far more complicated than it seems. McClelland has previously found that deaths due to natural causes in the federal system turned out to be linked to a failure to provide antiretroviral drugs to treat AIDS.

Meanwhile, inquests are discretionary when it comes to prisoner deaths attributed to natural causes.

The report also slams long delays for inquests into deaths in custody - it can be several years before an inquest happens, resulting in out-of-date recommendations.

"Think about the number of people that continue to die as this process keep trucking along," Speight said.

Abby Dushman, director of the criminal justice program at the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA), said the report's findings were shocking and that there isn't more of a public outcry is in part due to the lack of an independent provincial body dedicated to overseeing jails and quickly raising alarms, similar to the federal correctional investigator. The CCLA is one of the groups involved in the Tracking (In) Justice transparency project that ultimately hopes to produce a publicly accessible database about jail deaths and expose patterns.

The current system of oversight, under the provincial ombudsman, and a pending coroner's office review of deaths in custody between 2014 and 2021 is falling short, Dushman said.

"There are enormous problems in our provincial system. There are long-standing concerns about the adequacy of health care, about overdoses, about suicides, about solitary confinement," she said. "How can we hope to prevent deaths in custody if we don't in a robust, independent way look at these deaths and follow up on whether we are actually changing things in the institutions."

In a letter to Solicitor General Michael Kerzner, the CCLA called for the province to implement several recommendations aimed at increasing transparency and oversight.

The report also highlights the lack of assistance for families, including a family liaison who can communicate with families after the death of a prisoner, share information and help with the

collection of personal items. Families are sometimes not able to speak with doctors or find out what happened, Dushman said, and sometimes they are not even notified properly. These families "feel like they aren't treated as victims in the same way as other families who have people who have been killed are treated," Dushman said.

Alyshah Hasham  
The Star  
Dec 20, 2022

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### Canada's prison needle exchange program failing amid poor rollout

The federal prison needle exchange program is failing because of a poor rollout by the Correctional Service of Canada and a lack of improvement since it was introduced four years ago, health advocates say.

Inmates at nine of the 43 federal prisons have had access to sterile equipment for drug use since the program last expanded in 2019, and last summer officials said it would be implemented across the country.

The HIV Legal Network published a report this week that found the program is still inaccessible to most people and has not expanded beyond those nine institutions.

In June, only 53 people - of nearly 13,000 offenders in federal custody - were participating in the program.

Sandra Ka Hon Chu, co-executive director of the HIV Legal Network, said multiple layers of institutional approval and stigma are key reasons for the low participation rates.

"A lot of people who want to access the program because there's injection drug use happening inside prisons are not able to access it because of the multiple barriers to participation," she said.

The federal government said it is committed to expanding the program but that COVID-19 caused a delay in its plans.

A June 15 briefing note prepared for Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino said consultations were held in early 2020 to expand the program to two more institutions, but "following delays as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, re-engagement with these sites is required."

The note, obtained through an access-to-information request, also said Correctional Service Canada would prepare plans for additional sites to be confirmed this fall.

Correctional Service spokeswoman Esme Bailey said in an emailed statement that the department is still committed to putting the program in more prisons and consultations continue.

For people behind bars, participation in the program requires approval that includes an evaluation by a nurse and a threat assessment approved by a warden. No reasons are provided as to why an application is given the green light or not.

Ka Hon Chu says the process creates an "extremely high barrier" that dissuades people from applying "because there is zero guarantee of actually being accepted."

The HIV Legal Network study, which was done with the help of Toronto Metropolitan University, said the assessment process is based on "security rather than clinical need" and the program requires daily inspections to verify equipment is being used correctly.

Participants are given a kit containing one syringe, one cooker, three water bottles, one vitamin C and filters. They are required to always keep the kit visible in their cell and visit a nurse when replacement pieces are needed.

Ka Hon Chu said participants are effectively "outing" themselves as drug users and risk being stigmatized by other inmates, correctional staff and the parole board.

"People were concerned that they would get more heavily surveilled as a result of their participation, that they would (be) more heavily scrutinized," she said, noting one of the most common concerns the group heard is that people may be denied access to other programs as a result of taking part in the needle exchange.

The report recommends enhancing confidentiality by removing the need for daily visual inspections and by offering more discreet distribution points. It also said a lack of knowledge about the program is affecting uptake.

Advocates argue in the absence of adequate programming aimed at harm reduction, the risk of HIV infection will continue to rise because people are relying on using unsanctioned, unsafe means of using drugs while behind bars.

"The concern is that there'll be more equipment floating around in prisons, but the reality is that there is a lot of injection equipment already in prisons that (is) just not regulated and it's not sterile," said Ka Hon Chu.

The correctional investigator said in his latest annual report, released last summer, that the needle exchange program "exists more in name than in practice" because of low participation rates.

Ivan Zinger, who has raised the same concern in previous reports, also said the Correctional Services drug strategy needs substantive reforms. He said the culture in Canadian prisons "remains mired in a prohibitive and repressive mindset."

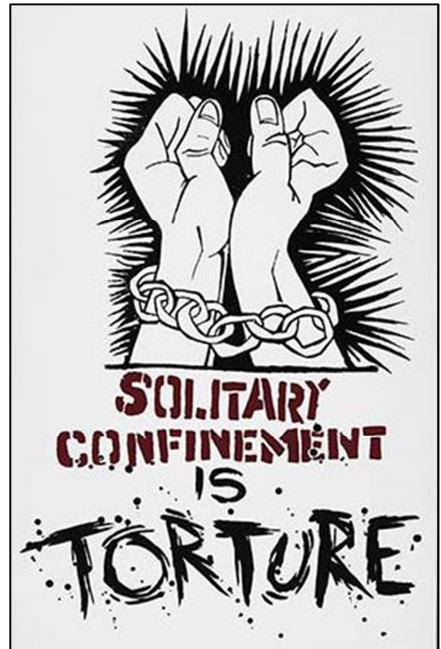
"Maintaining a zero-tolerance approach to drugs that relies on ever more intrusive detection, disciplinary and repressive measures - strip-searches, body cavity scanning, cell searches, charges, urinalysis testing - is a costly game of diminishing returns," the report said.

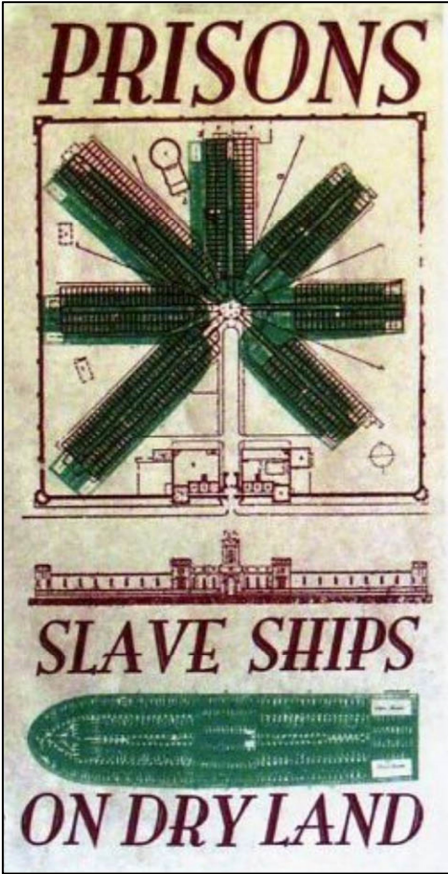
David Fraser

With files from Stephanie Taylor

The Canadian Press

Dec 1, 2022





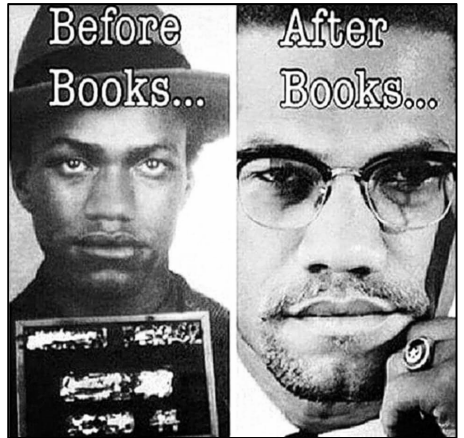
Book Clubs for Inmates (BCFI)

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.

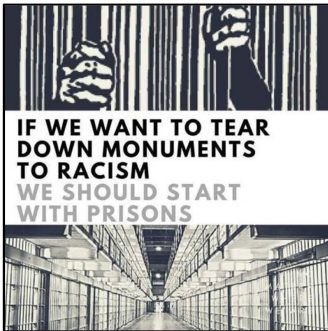
Every month, hundreds of inmates participate in book clubs across the country and each year thousands of brand new books are purchased, read, and discussed.

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



I have often reflected upon the new vistas that reading has opened to me. I knew right there in prison that reading had changed forever the course of my life. As I see it today, the ability to read awoke inside me some long dormant craving to be mentally alive.

- Malcolm X



It's not the load that breaks you down,  
it's the way you carry it.

- Lena Horne

### Toll-Free Support Line for SK Prisoners

*For prisoners in Provincial jails & Federal prisons in Saskatchewan.*

*Funds will be used to help inmates purchase call packages to keep them connected to their family, help out with canteen for necessary things & for transportation home. Maintained by prisoner advocacy groups Beyond Prison Walls Canada and Inmates for Humane Conditions.*

☎ 1-866-949-0074 ☎

### Jail Accountability and Information Line (JAIL) for prisoners in OCDC

*The Jail Accountability and Information Line takes calls from prisoners and their loved ones from 1:00pm to 4:00pm Mon to Wed. This line tracks issues experienced by people incarcerated at the Ottawa Carleton Detention Centre.*

☎ 613-567-JAIL (5245) ☎

### Jail Hotline for MCC, OCI, TEDC, TSDC & VCW

*The Toronto Prisoners' Rights Project (TPRP) provides prisoners with free links to advocacy, referrals, information, and support through the Jail Hotline. This hotline is run by volunteers. It will take calls on:*

*Monday - Saturday  
9-11am & 2-4pm*

☎ 416-307-2273 ☎

#### Why a Jail Hotline?

*Prisons and jails carry out human rights abuses every day because they do not think anyone is watching. We are here in solidarity and struggle with prisoners.*

#### Who Should Call This Hotline?

*Please share the hotline with your loved ones inside. We cannot accept calls from other prisons or jails or from people in the community.*

*If you need to contact us outside of the line, you can message us on social media or an email to:*

*TorontoPrisonersRightsProject@gmail.com*

### 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).*

### 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*

### NEW! Jail Hotline for EMDC

*Mon - Wed - Fri - Sat  
9-11am & 2-4pm*

☎ 519-642-9289 ☎

*In 2020, the most recent year for which data is available, about 77% of people in Ontario's jails were in custody awaiting trial.*

### 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 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)

Being a woman is hard work.

- Maya Angelou

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

- Anais Nin

### 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

Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDoR), is an international event commemorating people killed due to anti-trans violence. In the last year, 375 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**



K.I.P. Canada - Family Visitation

*Kids with Incarcerated Parents (K.I.P.) 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.*

*K.I.P.'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, K.I.P. 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 K.I.P. to register today.*

*For more information or to book a seat on the bus please contact Jessica or Derek Reid by email at:*

*info.kipcanada@gmail.com  
or by phone at: 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

[www.kipcanada.org](http://www.kipcanada.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*

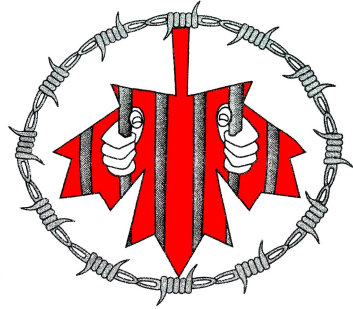
*This program features content produced by CFRC volunteers and by other campus and community radio broadcasters, including CKUT Montreal's Prison Radio and Vancouver Co-op Radio's Stark Raven programs.*

*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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Women's Prison Network  
Spring 2023 - Issue #30

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

visit, download, print, donate:

WomensPrisonNetwork.org  
info@WomensPrisonNetwork.org

> Mar > Jun > Sep > Dec >

Summer Issue #31 is mailed out:  
Jun 1, 2023  
Send in your work before:  
May 1, 2023

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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

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