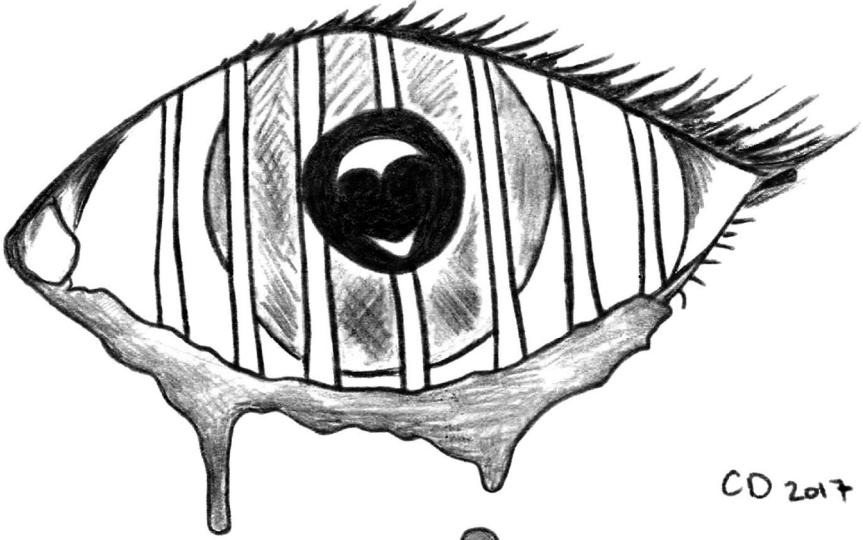
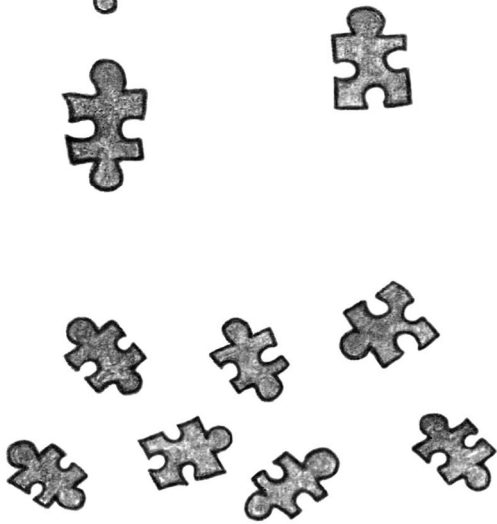


WOMENS PRISON NETWORK



CD 2017



ISSUE 9 WINTER 2017/18

Editor's Note:

Welcome to Issue #9 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

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

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

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Contents:

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

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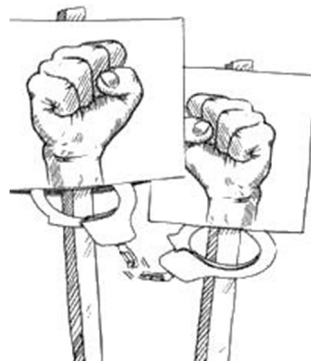
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Thank you for your art!

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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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NEWSNEWSNEWSNEWSNEWSNEWSNEWS

Correctional Service Canada failing younger inmates

Canada's prison watchdog and Ontario's Child Advocate say Correctional Service Canada is squandering opportunities to turn young federal inmates' lives around.

"The majority of them are not enrolled in programs or school, not because they're not motivated but because they're wait-listed and there are very few programs being offered," said Canada's Correctional Investigator Ivan Zinger in an interview with CBC News. "They're also not connecting with the programs."

Zinger said Correctional Services Canada has designed programs - such as anger management - with an older inmate in mind, when younger offenders require basic skills such as how to prepare meals, apply for a job and open a bank account. The report released Tuesday, titled "Missed Opportunities," was produced by Zinger and Ontario's child advocate, Irwin Elman.

"Young people who find themselves in adult custody should have, and be given, the opportunity to positively change the direction of their lives," said Elman.

"As we stated at the inquest into the death of Ashley Smith, the adult correctional system is not equipped to ensure this happens."

While younger offenders make up only 2.7 per cent of the overall federal prison population, they represent six percent of those placed in solitary confinement or administrative segregation. The percentages are even higher for women, Indigenous and black offenders under the age of 21. The report notes younger inmates fare far worse in segregation, given they have less developed coping skills and are less resilient. As such, Zinger and Elman ask the federal government to stop placing inmates in segregation if they're aged 18 to 21.

"I feel it's an arbitrary distinction that as soon as an inmate turns 18, they're an adult," said Zinger.

Other recommendations include:

- Development of a national gang disaffiliation strategy.
- Prioritizing high school education and vocational skills training.

- Weekly meetings with institutional parole officers for the first six months in federal custody.

The report also found higher rates of force used on younger offenders. Of those, 70 per cent involved an Indigenous young adult.

"When force is necessary, it is crucial that the age and physical size of the offender be considered in the techniques that are used to minimize the risk of injury," the report says.

Inmates also told investigators they were often hungry, something Zinger said is easily explained when one considers what younger offenders do all day.

"Playing cards, watching TV and going to the gym. And going to the gym means they're burning a lot more calories," he said. "Many of them told us they're hungry and that they're using the limited amount of financial resources they have to complement their diets."

Offenders under the age of 21 are also joining gangs at higher rates, especially if they're Indigenous, the report said, often in a bid to feel safer inside the penitentiary. The report recommends CSC come up with a gang disaffiliation program that is specific to the unique needs of young Indigenous and women offenders, and ensure that younger inmates are not placed in cell areas where they are more likely to be recruited.

"Engaging with Indigenous offenders through spirituality and culture can be effective in reaching Indigenous gang members," said the report. Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale welcomed the report, saying he's very sensitive to the impact of incarceration on young people.

"Successful reintegration is a key element, especially for young people, to keep communities safe," said Goodale.

"So this work will be a substantial addition to the policy analysis, and I will take it very carefully into consideration."

The minister added he is eager for Parliament to pass legislation, introduced last spring, that would eventually cap an inmate's time in segregation at 15 days. A spokesperson for CSC said the agency is reviewing the report and that it recognizes younger offenders have special needs.

Alison Crawford
CBC News - Oct 03, 2017

Tensions mounting at overcrowded Edmonton women's prison

The Edmonton Institution for Women is overcrowded and at a breaking point, warns an advocacy group for women in prison. Volunteers that regularly visit EIFW are reporting conditions "that seem to us like the perfect recipe for disaster at the institutional level," Cassandra Churcher, executive director of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS), told CBC News. "The last time they visited, they thought they were on the brink of a riot," Churcher said. Churcher contacted CBC News after two inmates escaped the federal women's prison in northwest Edmonton last Monday. Both women have been recaptured. "It's going to put a lot of pressure on them being criminalized again when, in actuality, maybe we'd all try to escape if we knew the situation they were living in," she said. Elizabeth Fry societies are hired on a contract-basis by Correctional Services Canada to run programs and halfway houses. CAEFS staff travelled from Ottawa to Edmonton Tuesday to investigate concerns raised by the local Elizabeth Fry Society. "What I found was very concerning to me," said Savannah Gentile, the CAEFS director of advocacy and legal issues. "The level of human rights abuses really struck me."

Gentile toured the prison Wednesday, interviewing women in minimum, medium and maximum-security areas, as well as in segregation cells. In half a dozen cases, she crouched next to meal slots in cell doors because no rooms were available for face-to-face conversations. "We made a point to put our hands in to shake hands and that's probably the only human contact that they've had," Gentile said. "It's a tough moment because some of the issues that they're facing are horrendous and you want to tell them that you're going to fight for them and fix everything but you really can't."

Gentile said she was most troubled by the treatment of women classified as maximum security inmates, especially those with mental illnesses. One woman had attempted suicide after being placed in segregation, Gentile said. Instead of moving the woman to a psychiatric ward at a hospital, Gentile said she was kept on suicide watch in the same cell.

'It's not a space for healing'

"It's not a space for healing," Gentile said. "It's a very isolating experience. "Those women are just left in a cell with themselves, with their mental health issues, to struggle on their own." Another woman told Gentile she was pepper-sprayed while curled up in the fetal position, after refusing a pat-down search by guards. Use of force at the women's prison is one of the most common grievances by inmates. Of the last 50 grievances tracked by the Elizabeth Fry Society in Edmonton, eight were about use of force. Five more were about treatment by staff at the facility. Many women also raised concerns about strip searches, Gentile said. Some are strip-searched every time they return to the prison from rehabilitation programs in the city, such as addictions counseling. During strip searches, the women are asked to open their mouths and ruffle their hair. They have to remove their tops and lift their breasts. After putting their shirts back on, the women are told to take off their pants and underwear.

"They have to squat, cough, bend over, spread their cheeks," Gentile said. "It's an incredibly humiliating and degrading process." Some inmates, especially those who have been sexually abused in the past, experience strip-searching as sexual assault, she added. "A woman can't really make the decision to say, 'I'm not going to go to this program because I don't want to be strip searched.' Because then she's not working her correctional plan," Gentile said. One prisoner told Gentile she was strip-searched up to four times a week, every time she returned from church services outside the prison.

'They're not just criminals'

Elizabeth Fry societies draft advocacy letters to Corrections Canada after each visit to a federal women's prison, Gentile said. Concerns about segregation, strip searching and the lack of access to mental health support have gone unaddressed in recent years, she added.

"If we want to tackle these issues, we need to start pushing," Gentile said. "Politicians aren't going to change things until we start to message that we care about these issues, that we are committed to these issues and to seeing change happen." Rehabilitating women through programs that promote healing will improve community safety once they are released from prison, Gentile said. Many will return to their former communities, she added, where they

left behind families and children. "Lean in, look at the population," she said. "It's really hard to hate people close-up. They're not just criminals."

Investigator weighs in

The Office of Canada's Correctional Investigator in August singled out the Edmonton Institution for Women in a letter to Corrections Canada, raising "concerns about the current conditions of confinement." The prison is one of five federal institutions for female inmates in the country, with a rated capacity for 167 inmates. An investigation this summer revealed the prison's segregation unit was at capacity, with four women on high suicide watch. "To compound the issue, the secure unit is experiencing population pressures operating at 133 percent, well over the rated capacity for the unit," the letter states. Four women were double-bunked in the understaffed secure unit, including women with "significant mental health problems." The Office of the Correctional Investigator sent a letter raising concerns about EIFW to Corrections Canada on August 21, 2017. The letter is addressed to Kelley Blanchette, the Deputy Commissioner for Women with Correctional Service Canada. "Your personal attention to the conditions of confinement at EIFW is required at this time," the letter states. Conditions at women's prisons in the country should be a priority for reform, Correctional Investigator Ivan Zinger told CBC News. "I am hoping that the government will respond appropriately," Zinger said. "Some of them are concerns that remain unaddressed and some of them for a long time."

Prison not overcrowded: CSC

In an email to CBC News, Correctional Service of Canada acknowledged the department received the August letter from Zinger's office. The Edmonton prison is at capacity, but is not breaching policy on overcrowding, wrote spokesperson Jeff Campbell.

Ten double bunks are approved in the secure unit, which was operating at less than 75 percent capacity during the August investigation.

"CSC takes these concerns seriously and fully reviews and considers any recommendations we receive from external bodies," Campbell said.

The department is conducting a study to determine whether more mental health supports are needed for women in prison, he added.

"Women offenders have unique needs that impact their response to correctional programs,"

Campbell wrote. "To address women's needs, our programs and interventions are delivered with a holistic and women-centered approach."

The department is also aware of concerns raised by the Elizabeth Fry Society.

"Most offenders will eventually return to the community," Campbell said. "Upon their release, whether at the end of their sentence or via parole, successful reintegration requires the support of citizens and communities.

"To that end, CSC is committed to engaging community partners and working collaboratively for safe and vibrant communities."

Zoe Todd

CBC News

Oct 09, 2017



Ending segregation a fitting legacy for Ashley Smith

Ten years ago, at Grand Valley Institution for Women, correctional officers obediently watched as Ashley Smith slowly asphyxiated from a ligature tied around her neck. It was the latest in an endless series of attempts by the 19-year-old to self-harm; her agonizing way of communicating her distress. Ashley's death sparked massive media coverage and shocked the country. Once in a while, one individual comes to symbolize societal success or failure. In Ashley's case, we found it unfathomable that, in Canada, a severely troubled, mentally ill teenager could have been warehoused, virtually untreated, and left to die as correctional officers videotaped her. Over time, additional horrifying facts dribbled out. Ashley had been held in solitary confinement

for months on end with little or no treatment. She was denied basic amenities - paper, books, toilet paper, clothing. Her cell lights burned day and night and she was under constant surveillance. We also learned that Ashley had been transferred more than a dozen times between seven different institutions during her 13 months in the custody of the Correctional Service of Canada. Moving Ashley from prison to prison across the country may have provided relief to frustrated prison staff, but it merely exacerbated her isolation and further alienated her from family in Nova Scotia. It also worsened her distress and self-harming behaviour. The jury at the coroner's inquest heard from dozens and dozens of witnesses, from correctional officers to the commissioner of CSC, as well as a number of experts in the field of psychiatry and prison management. In the end, they concluded her death was a homicide. They also came up with a number of important recommendations to improve our prison system. The jury urged that mentally ill prisoners and those who self-harm be given proper psychiatric treatment in a hospital setting dedicated to diagnosis, treatment and recovery, not bars, locks and security. They also made a series of recommendation aimed at reducing and eventually abolishing the use of segregation in Canadian prisons. The jury recognized that solitary confinement is harmful and it only serves the utilitarian needs of the system. In fact, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture has said prolonged segregation - defined as anything beyond 15 days - constitutes torture. In the decade since Ashley's death, we have seen tremendous change in the outside world. But in the sluggish, security-obsessed world of prison administration little had changed. Calls for reform continue to be ignored. Reports on Ashley's death that urged change have been shelved, including reports from Canada's correctional investigator. And the jury's recommendations are yet to be implemented. On the 10-year anniversary of her death, we owe it to Ashley to highlight the lapsed promise of those recommendations. Segregation is still vastly overused and fiercely defended by correctional authorities as a vital response to disorder, misconduct and vulnerability in their institutions. CSC continues to use solitary confinement to manage people with mental health problems. They might now call it "medical observation" but the effect is the same

- people with serious mental illness and those who engage in self-harming behaviour are still being held in solitary confinement, not in hospitals. When Justin Trudeau came into power in November 2015, he sent a "mandate letter" to the newly appointed minister of justice. In it, he identified as a "top priority" the implementation of "recommendations from the inquest into the death of Ashley Smith regarding the restriction of the use of solitary confinement and the treatment of those with mental illness." The government has introduced Bill C-56, which purports to set a 15-day limit on segregation, with a total of 60 days maximum per year. To be clear, Bill C-56 simply tries to prevent the Correctional Service of Canada from subjecting detainees to torture. That is not something Canadians should be proud of. We must expect and demand more of our correctional system. But the glaring weakness of Bill C-56 is that it only holds out the illusion of limiting the use of segregation. In fact, the bill continues to give prison wardens discretion to hold people in solitary confinement for more than 15 days if they believe it is "appropriate" - and as history has shown, they most certainly will, over and over. One thing we learned from the coroner's inquest into Ashley's death is that if you give CSC management a way to get around a rule, even an apparently clear rule, they will predictably exploit it. With or without Bill C-56, it will be business as usual in the correctional system. Solitary confinement will continue to be the go to mechanism for managing people with mental illness or other difficulties in the institution. Only the abolition of solitary confinement will force the Correctional Service of Canada to make the changes that are so desperately needed. Without abolition, the prison system will grind on, crushing the sick, disordered and discarded, as it always has. The elimination of segregation would have been a fitting legacy for Ashley. And it still can be. We must ensure that another decade doesn't pass before we put an end to the unnecessary and inhumane practice that killed Ashley.

Breese Davies
Toronto Star
Oct 25, 2017

What to do about the over-representation of Indigenous people in prisons

For decades watchdogs and researchers have attempted to draw attention to the disturbing overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the country's prison systems. Yet despite urgent warnings from domestic and international organizations, the latest report from federal prisons watchdog Ivan Zinger makes clear the situation continues to get worse. Between 2007 and 2016, while the overall federal prison population increased by less than 5 per cent, the number of Indigenous prisoners rose by 39 per cent, Zinger reports. In fact, for the last three decades, there has been an increase every single year in the federal incarceration rates for Indigenous people. While they make up less than 5 per cent of the Canadian population, today they represent 26.4 per cent of all federal inmates. And for Indigenous women the situation is even worse. They comprise 37.6 per cent of the federal female prison population.

As Zinger writes, "The over-incarceration of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people in corrections is among the most pressing social justice and human rights issues in Canada today."

So what can be done? The overabundance of Indigenous people in Canadian prisons no doubt reflects larger socioeconomic disadvantages for which there are no simple solutions. Clearly, until governments start taking more aggressive steps to address the poverty, mental health issues and other intergenerational scars of failed colonial policies past and present, the problem will persist. But in the shorter term, there are a number of simple, long-overdue changes to the court and prison systems that could begin to redress this persistent injustice. The first is to ensure that the Gladue principle, in place since a 1999 Supreme Court decision, is consistently followed. Under this principle, judges must take into account information, contained in so-called Gladue reports, about an Indigenous person's background, such as their history with residential schools, child welfare removals, physical or sexual abuse, and health issues such as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Research has shown these reports do affect sentencing, but as legal aid across much of the country shrinks so, too, does the ability of many Indigenous offenders to make courts aware

of their particular circumstances. Governments must ensure resources are in place to allow the court system to truly abide by this important principle. The Zinger report contains other valuable suggestions. For one, it recommends that Corrections Canada finally implement proposals from the 2016 federal auditor general's report to more quickly get Indigenous offenders out of jail and reintegrated into society. The auditor general found that in 2015-16 most Indigenous offenders weren't released from custody until their statutory release date, after serving two-thirds of their sentence. Of those, 79 per cent were released into the community directly from a maximum or medium security institution "without benefit of a graduated and structured return to the community." Nor was Corrections Canada effectively getting Indigenous prisoners into programs within jails that could help them upon their release. Only 20 per cent were able to complete their programs by the time they were eligible for parole. In response to the AG's report, Corrections Canada promised to expand programs tailored to the needs of Indigenous offenders, including preparing them for early release. Yet Zinger found that Indigenous prisoners continue to be released just as late, likely in part because the parole board remains unsatisfied that applicants have in fact been adequately prepared to re-enter the community. This lack of preparation partly explains, too, why Indigenous offenders are so much more likely to be returned to prison due to the suspension or revocation of their parole. And once inside, Indigenous prisoners suffer more than others: they are over-represented in segregation cells, use-of-force interventions, maximum-security institutions and incidents of self-injury. Canada's shameful history of Indigenous injustice continues to play out graphically and painfully in our courts and prisons, which both reflect and reinforce these communities' disadvantage. But the justice system need not deepen these inequalities; indeed, it can play a role in healing Indigenous communities and Canada's relationship with them. Reversing the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in our prison population is an important measure of reconciliation.

Editorial Board
Toronto Star - Nov 6, 2017

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True Friends

Sisters are forever & best friends are too
 In my eyes you are both & I'm glad I met you
 It's been some time since we've been friends
 This friendship of ours, will never end
 I remember the first day we met
 That is something, I'll never forget
 It was in Nova, a few years back
 We used to hang & walk the track
 We've been through a lot, you & I
 We shared our secrets, as we sometimes cried
 We're a lot alike, that's plain to see
 You have a good heart, just like me
 No matter what, I'll always be there for you
 No matter what you're going through or what
 you do
 That's being a true friend
 Who'll be there for you until the end

- Kathy Polchies-Roberts

Mom & Dad

I miss you guys
 With all my heart
 If it weren't for this place
 We wouldn't have to be apart
 If it weren't for you Mom & Dad
 You brought me up so well
 I'm sorry for this
 I've put you's through hell
 But everything happens
 For a reason they say
 So maybe this time
 I'll come home & stay
 For I was getting out of hand
 I realize that now
 I've lost everything
 And now I know how
 It wasn't your fault
 You did the best that you could
 It was me
 I felt I was misunderstood

- Helenann Young

My Window

I look out the window, upon the snow
 I see the light glistening off the fence
 Surrounding the only things I've come to know
 There's lights above the fence
 The light hits the ground
 The light in my room
 They all seem dimmer now
 I am tired, I lay down
 I am tired but my thoughts won't slow down
 When I can no longer sleep, I awake
 I'm reminded I'm still here
 My dream was fake
 I get up, I pace
 I'm wishing these things
 I could erase

- Cheyenne McNeil

Untitled

Do you think life is a thrill?
 Wondering where's the next deal
 Standing on a corner waiting
 For who will help me to get my next thrill
 Oh what a life, walking up & down
 Nowhere to go! Selling my body
 Looking around downtown
 Look at me now!
 All upside-down
 Knowing 'the life' would never be nice
 Or was it a stupid site?
 All I can say is 'Stop the play'
 And look at what I have to say!
 I've been there, done it all!
 All I have to say is: Use Condoms
 Life is only, one life on earth
 Take what I say & listen to people's advice
 Because I am one who lost everything
 To get my next thrill
 Stop! When you're ahead
 Before you end up dead
 Or lose your health instead
 Just like I did, I am HIV+
 So please look at me
 Life is more than the next thrill
 Take my advice & end your next deal

- Little Girl Big Woman

POEMSP OEMSPOEMSPOEMSPOEMSPOEMSPO

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Another Year Passes Me By

*I sit here and think
 As another year passes me by ...
 No one to blame except me
 The one who needs to change ...
 My tears fall like rain
 Why won't they wash away
 The hurt and pain ...
 Outside I see the leaves change
 And the snow fall, the crisp air
 A reminder that winter is here
 Here I sit in this dark pit
 Wondering when will enough be enough
 No more anger, frustrations
 Or stupid blowups ...
 Nothing has changed
 My life is still the same
 Full of anger and pain
 The reminder of how
 I need to change
 As I sit here and cry
 And another year passes me by*

- Amanda Stewart

Thoughts

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

- Nicole Miller

Whispers in the Dark

*Whispers in the dark
 Keep calling her name
 They're telling her she's
 No longer part of the game
 She's got three children
 And nowhere to run
 She thinks of the consequences
 And what could be done
 He promises her over & over again
 This will be the last
 His promises, his lies,
 They all come so fast
 Make-up can no longer
 Cover the damage done
 She's pulled all her resources
 There's nowhere left to run
 She reaches to the closet
 And pulls out the gun
 She knows there may
 Be consequences to pay
 But a reason for living
 She could no longer see
 So she pulled on the trigger
 And set her spirit free
 Gone forever
 Her happiness and pain
 Gone forever is the life
 She could no longer sustain
 She turns to her shadow
 Which no longer remains
 She realizes then
 This life has all been in vain
 Whispers in the dark
 Keep calling her name
 They're telling her
 She's no longer part of the game*

- Shannon Sederquest

Living a life is like constructing a building: if
 you start wrong, you'll end wrong.

- Maya Angelou

Being a mom 'doesn't go away' for prison inmates, program shows

You may not know it, but at the minimum security ward of Grand Valley Institution for Women in Kitchener, you might see something that would seem out of place: children.

The prison on Homer Watson Boulevard in Kitchener has been home to a handful of children under the age of five, who live with their mothers in detached buildings known as cottages. Patrice Butts, the mother child coordinator at Grand Valley and a professor of social work at Conestoga College, said people outside the prison tend to have one reaction when she tells them about the children in prison.

"People think, 'What? You've got a baby in a cell block?' Well, of course not," she said, adding that the children have their own rooms and, frankly, have no idea they are in a prison.

"It's about really helping everybody get a good start," she said. "The idea of planning for a mom and her child and maintaining these relationships and not creating further trauma."

'New ground' for prison

The idea of allowing children to stay with their mothers in prison started back in the early 1990s, when a federal task force released the report *Creating Choices*.

Before that, Butts said women in prison were treated the same as men, and no thought was given to women who were pregnant or to a woman's relationship with children outside of prison.

"It was very new ground for the correctional system and for the women's offender unit," Butts said of the *Creating Choices* document and the flurry of activity that followed it.

Soon after Grand Valley Institution for Women opened in 1997, Butts became involved as the mother child coordinator.

Expanding the program

It's hard to nail down exactly what that job involved in the early days. Butts said she helped develop the program that allowed children to stay with their mothers in prison, but she was also working directly with the women, meeting with them and supporting them through their pregnancies.

She said it soon became clear that the mother child initiative needed to do more to support

other woman in the prison whose children were out in the community.

"When I meet women, the very first thing out of their mouths is their distress and concern over their children," she said. "That, for sure, is a constant. The power of being a mom doesn't go away."

Sentencing the child

So, over the years, the mother child initiative has gone out of its way to support women in fostering strong relationships with their family while they are serving prison sentences.

Just like children who lose a mother to illness, Butts said children who lose a mother to prison grieve deeply, but often they don't have people in their lives to support or sympathize with them.

They often entertain terrifying fantasies about what is happening to their mother in prison, and it's not until they are able to visit her in prison that those terrors can be set aside.

"We need to really keep in mind that, more often than not, when we sentence a woman we often are sentencing a child or children as well," Butts said.

"How we deal with that is really, really important to what goes on, then, in our greater community."

'Everybody does better'

Prison may separate a person from community, but Butts said it shouldn't have to separate a mother from her family, and she believes that if family relationships can be maintained "everybody does better."

She recalled one story where a woman was not able to keep her infant with her in prison, but was able to pump breast milk, which was then shipped to the child, who was staying with a foster family.

When the mother left prison, she was reunited with her child and Butts said mother and child are now living together and have a very healthy relationship.

That's what the mother child initiative is all about, according to Butts.

"They need support and we need to do a really good job to try to help people stay together through this difficult time."

CBC News
Nov 16, 2017

Grand Valley inmate calls on Waterloo region to be more accepting

A 29-year-old inmate is challenging Waterloo region to be more accepting of women who are returning to community after serving time in a federal prison.

"I just want the community to know that women are so much more than their crime," said Jesse, whose full name is not being published for privacy reasons.

Jesse has been living at the Grand Valley Institution for Women in Kitchener for more than a year.

"It's about realizing that they are people and that they've suffered losses and tragedies. You know, I didn't just wake up one day and say, 'I'm going to commit a crime,' or, 'I'm going to start selling drugs.' That was by no means my intention. However, it's led me down that path."

Jesse, who aims to be leaving the prison in April, spoke at a three day event hosted by Community Justice Initiatives, called Women in Prison: Building Community.

CBC News agreed to refer to Jesse by first name only, as former inmates can have a hard time finding work and housing.

"A lot of us coming from prison, we seem to think that we have a label on our foreheads that says 'Just got out of prison,'" Jesse told CBC.

"One of my biggest fears, I guess, is just not being accepted or just having a stereotype where people are just not liking me or judging me or not giving me a chance, because I come from prison."

Research has shown that many women in prison share Jesse's fear that people on the outside will judge them harshly.

Darla Fortune started working with and interviewing the women at Grand Valley in 2005, when she was a masters student at the University of Waterloo.

"There are many fears, I have to say. That was one of the things, I think, [that was] initially surprising to me," she said. "They often spoke about the prison as being a safe place for them in contrast to entering community."

Now a professor at Concordia University, Fortune returns to Kitchener on Thursday to share her 10 years of research with those attending the Women in Prison event.

Fortune said the prison walls separate many women from lives of poverty, homelessness, substance abuse and trauma. They know that when their time is up, they will be returning to those same circumstances.

And many, like Jesse, feel marked by their experience in prison and are worried it will somehow show through and affect their ability to find work, housing and a place to belong.

"By and large the community is distanced from women in prison," Fortune said. "The public just doesn't know the women inside those walls, and there are very few opportunities, really, for people to get to know them. I think more needs to be done on that end, for sure, so that we start to see women as women, and can support women as they come back into community."

That's one of the reasons why Jesse wanted to speak at the event in downtown Kitchener Tuesday afternoon - to ask the community to give women in prison a chance.

"Since being in prison, I've met some of the most talented women that are so gifted - whether it's drawing, writing, singing - and I think that a lot of us have just been misdirected. Like, we haven't had the opportunity to actually realize that we are actually good at something," Jesse said.

"Just give them a chance as individuals, just to get to know them, actually have a conversation with them and to see their drawings, their singing."

If more people took the time to see the women at Grand Valley as woman, rather than as inmates, Jesse said things would change for the better, both at the prison and in the community.

"I know from experience that when I have nothing to look forward to, it's like what's the point in wanting to do good? When you have that one person that believes in you, it makes you want to do good, because you don't want to disappoint that person. I think it gives us purpose and meaning."

CBC News
Nov 14, 2017

The highest result of education is tolerance.

- Helen Keller

Number of women in federal prisons is up

The number of women in federal prisons has jumped significantly in Canada in the last decade, and advocates say that's evidence of what happens when community support programs are cut.

There are 37 per cent more women behind bars than there were 10 years ago (from 502 in 2007 to 688 this year), according to Ivan Zinger, Canada's correctional investigator, who serves as an ombudsman for federal inmates. He said women are one of the fastest-growing populations in the federal system.

Many have been victims of crime themselves, he said. More than two-thirds report being sexually abused at some point in their lives, and nearly 90 per cent were physically abused.

It's no wonder, then, they end up in prison, according to Savannah Gentile, director of advocacy and legal issues with the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies.

"I have heard from a number of women that the first time they felt safe was the first night they spent in a prison cell," she said. "And I think that's really an indictment on our communities if the first time a woman is safe is when she is behind bars. It's really speaking to a lack, a lack of resources that exist for women."

The scarcity of resources can range from lack of housing and good jobs, to difficulties getting help for mental and physical ailments. Gentile said some programs have either been cut or simply can't cope with the demand.

The growing number of women behind bars also raises questions about overcrowding.

Correctional Service of Canada is adamant that female inmates aren't being crammed into federal institutions.

Julia Scott, a spokesperson for the federal agency, said in an email it has up to 805 beds for women (184 of those were added in the last six years), but the female inmate population is below 700.

Scott also said only about two percent of female inmates are double bunked. When women are forced to share a single room, it's generally done to keep them near their home communities, making it easier for family and friends to visit.

But Zinger said Correctional Service of Canada is being "disingenuous" when it says there is no overcrowding.

He said each prison has a rated inmate capacity that's not supposed to be surpassed, but a commissioner's directive allows that limit to be changed if the prison goes over capacity. In doing so, on paper the prison is not overcrowded.

Kassandra Churcher said she has seen overcrowding first-hand as executive director of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies.

Visits by her group have included Nova Institution for Women in Truro, N.S. The prison is not overcrowded, she said, but has seen a "dramatic" increase in numbers since it opened in 1995.

"It's like you build it and they will come," she said.

Inmates across the country are often forced to share a cell that was only built for one person, said Churcher. The result, according to Gentile, is "tension."

"Women can be in these cells for up to 23 hours a day at times, so I mean when you're in a cell with one other person and you have these four walls around you, it leads to a lot of issues," she said.

More women on the inside also shines a light on what may or may not be happening in their communities when it comes to health and other services, according to advocates.

In Nova Scotia, for instance, many people must wait a minimum of 105 days to get outpatient or community based mental health services, according to the province's Healthcare Wait Times website. In Sydney, the wait can be as long as 425 days.

There's also a wait time to get into subsidized public housing. In Nova Scotia, there are 1,308 families and 2,361 seniors on the wait list, according to the Department of Community Services. There are also an additional 750 non-elderly single applicants looking for an affordable rental unit.

The province said there is no average wait time for someone to get a home because there are numerous criteria, including geography, housing type and a person's preferences.

However, the province said priority access can be granted in situations that involve family violence, inadequate housing or loss of a home through a disaster.

The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies said if the federal government put some of the money it spends on prisons into community services, it could keep some women from turning to crime.

Much of the growth in female inmates is the result of more Indigenous women being imprisoned. They make up about two percent of the country's entire population, yet represent 38 per cent of the female prison population, said Zinger.

"It's a staggering gross overrepresentation of Indigenous women in penitentiaries," he said.

"Pay attention to the profile of the inmate population and then you will know where some of the gaps in services, programs and support are."

David Burke
CBC News
Oct 11, 2017



I believe that it is as much a right and duty for women to do something with their lives as for men and we are not going to be satisfied with such frivolous parts as you give us.

- Louisa May Alcott

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This magazine is sent into women's & youth prisons. (ads are not on web version)

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.

Important Hep C Update!

New treatments with excellent success rates are now available!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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**

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.



F.E.A.T. - Family Visitation

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

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

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

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 -

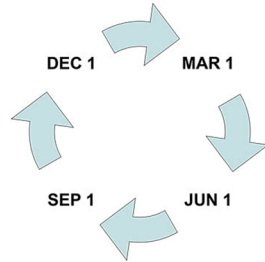
We maintain a PJD 'In Remembrance' page on our website for Prisoners who have died in Federal and Provincial Prisons, Remands, Lock-ups and Parole in Canada.

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

PJD@PrisonFreePress.org



- WOMENS PRISON NETWORK -



- MAILOUT DATES -

Women's Prison Network Winter 2017-8 - Issue #9

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

info@WomensPrisonNetwork.org

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WomensPrisonNetwork.org

Send in your work
before Feb 1, 2018
Spring Issue #10 is sent
out Mar 1, 2018

Women, trans & youth prisoners:
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This magazine is by and for you.
Thank you for sharing!
