

WOMEN'S PRISON NETWORK



ISSUE #23 - SUMMER 2021

Editor's Note:

Welcome to Issue #23 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 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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Cover Artwork:

Jessica Kakeeway

Artists:

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

Writers:

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

< Funding for this Issue >

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 Groundswell Community Justice Trust Fund!

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 ≈

Love is contraband in Hell,
 'cause love is an acid
 that eats away bars.
 - Assata Shakur

LETTERSNEWSLETTERSNEWSLETTERSNEWS

Re: Closure of Youth Justice Facilities and the Impact on Children from Northern First Nations

Dear Premier Ford,

We write today on behalf of our children as we are learning in real time that the Government of Ontario is abruptly closing 26 youth justice facilities across the province.

As Grand Chiefs, respectively representing Nishnawbe Aski Nation and Grand Council Treaty #3, we write to raise our collective horror about the impact on youth, from northern First Nations in particular, resulting from the abrupt closure of these facilities. We can confirm that the youth, as well as the staff, are reeling with confusion and trauma from the shock of such a sudden and unexpected change in the course of their lives. We need not remind you, Premier, these are children who were already fragile.

With the closure of these youth justice centres, there will be no proximate detention facilities for youth from northern First Nations. And by proximate, we mean within hundreds, if not thousands of kilometers.

The careless manner in which these facilities have been shut causes us deep concern. We have been told that lack of appropriate notice and lack of reasonable transition plans are causing great turmoil. The timeframes being imposed are unreasonable. For example, we have been informed about a facility that was provided approximately one-hour notice to transfer children to another facility and that staff requests to accompany the children to the new facility were denied. Staff have described being told that they had no idea this transition was happening at all, not to mention that it was imminent. Staff requested details on where children were being transferred and whether their families would be notified. Staff were told to refrain from informing the children about the transition and that communication to the families would be addressed by the Ministry. Staff have described deep anguish at watching these children being removed in shackles and placed on planes, without time to say goodbye. This is a heartbreaking and incredibly callous way to treat children, their families, and the staff at these centres.

We must never forget that we are talking about a deeply vulnerable population: detained children aged 12 to 17. These are children who have faced many hurdles and who have fallen through the cracks of several government systems. These are children who have increased needs yet limited access to much needed wrap-around services that would assist with their transition to productive and flourishing adulthood.

Like any other child, and as a matter of basic humanity, these children need to be as close as possible to their families and communities. Now, we have children being shackled and flown to distant regions of the province, without appropriate notice or transition planning and without any regard to the long-term impact that this will have on them, their families and their communities. This is nothing less than tragic and completely unacceptable.

There is an undeniable need for youth detention services in the north, yet these services have just been decimated for the sake of cost-cutting. These agencies have tried to develop innovative ways to expand their services to include secure treatment and services for at-risk youth; however, these solutions have been ignored by your government. This province-wide closure of youth detention services feels like a slap in the face for local providers who are willing and able to serve Indigenous children in the youth justice system.

We seek your immediate attention to this matter and call for an urgent meeting to address what is now the real-time displacement of children to youth justice facilities in unfamiliar and inaccessible regions.

Sincerely,

Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler
Ogichidaa Francis Kavanaugh
Nishnawbe Aski Nation
Grand Council Treaty #3

Nature is neither reasonable nor just.

Nature is exact.

- Beah Richards

It does not undo harm to acknowledge that we have done it;

but it undoes us not to acknowledge it.

- Mignon McLaughlin

The pandemic has offered a look at prison reform possibilities

Editorial: A quarter of all adult inmates in provincial prisons have been released since March and there's been no noticeable crime uptick in said provinces. So, why not adopt these policies permanently?

The chance of becoming infected with COVID-19 in prison is 13 times higher than for the general public, a fact that raises many legal and ethical issues. "A prison sentence should not also sentence you to greater risk of disease," advises Adelina Iftene, a law professor at Halifax's Dalhousie University and associate director of the school's Health Law Institute. "The state has a very serious responsibility to protect the people in its custody."

To fulfil this duty, many prisons doubled down on their core competencies of lock and key. "Across the country, lockdown and segregation have been the main responses to COVID," says Iftene. But another way to keep prisoners safe is to set them free.

According to Statistics Canada, a quarter of all adult inmates in provincial prisons have been released since March due to new coronavirus protocols. Nova Scotia reduced its prisoner population by 41%. (Federal prisons, which contain inmates convicted of more serious crimes, are down 1%.) Those who have legally escaped provincial prison in this way include those in remand awaiting trial (and who have yet to be found guilty of any crime), as well as convicts serving intermittent or weekend sentences. Neither group poses a serious risk to public safety. The overuse of pretrial detention is much-lamented and weekenders already spend most of their time in the community. As Iftene notes, there's been no noticeable uptick in crime in provinces that have purged their prisons in this way. So if a minimalist approach to jailing makes sense during a pandemic, why not adopt such policies permanently?

Despite falling crime rates, Canada's prison population has remained remarkably steady in recent years, a product of numerous "tough on crime" reforms delivered by the previous Harper government. While such policies are often politically popular, over-incarceration contributes to social and racial inequities; Indigenous people make up 30% of federal prisons while comprising

only 5% of Canada's total population. Longer sentences also produce older inmates. The share of Canada's federal inmates over the age of 50 has doubled in the past decade. Yet numerous studies show elderly prisoners represent a very low risk of reoffending, regardless of their original crime. And over-incarceration is expensive. The average federal inmate costs taxpayers \$125,000 a year. "We need to remember 'tough on crime' is not free," says Iftene.

With new evidence that many low-risk prisoners can be freed without compromising public safety, now is the time to contemplate broader reforms to Canada's criminal justice system. A wish list would start with changing bail to ensure most accused individuals live at home while awaiting trial. Canada could also follow Britain's lead and give judges the right to defer all sentences of fewer than six months. Short stays in prison serve no rehabilitative function - as former British minister of state for prisons Rory Stewart told the Daily Telegraph, short sentences are "long enough to damage you and not long enough to heal you." Ending mandatory minimums would give judges further discretion in fitting sentences to individual crimes.

Another desirable reform is to make prisons local institutions once again. Large, geographically isolated "super jails" have estranged prisoners from vital family and support networks. "We need to demand that ... prisons are part of our communities, and prisoners are part of our communities," Black activist Syrus Marcus Ware pointed out during a recent Maclean's roundtable on racism.

Finally, any commitment to decarceration must include supports to ensure released prisoners can contribute to society, as is the alleged goal of our justice system.

For all the damage it has caused, COVID-19 offers an unprecedented look at what could be possible if we make it our goal to keep people out of jail, instead of trying to keep them in.

Maclean's
Dec 15, 2020

We don't see things as they are.
We see them as we are.
- Anais Nin

Advocacy group sets up GoFundMe page to help female inmates at Pine Grove

An inmate advocacy group has set up a GoFundMe page to support inmates at the Pine Grove Correctional Centre in Prince Albert, Sask. Inmates For Humane Conditions is raising money to help Pine Grove inmates buy phone packages so they can connect with family, items like vitamins and hygiene products, and transportation upon release.

"Donations will also be used to help inmates who are in need of a means of transportation home to prevent another tragic loss such as Kimberly Squirrel," the GoFundMe page said.

Last month, 34-year-old Squirrel's frozen body was found in Saskatoon just days after she was released from Pine Grove, the province's only correctional facility for adult women.

Cory Cardinal, an inmate at the Saskatoon Correctional Centre and a vocal advocate for prisoner rights, is the founder of Inmates For Humane Conditions. It is a group of inmates advocating for better conditions inside Saskatchewan correctional centres.

Cardinal said he is currently on a hunger strike because of the conditions inmates face at Pine Grove.

Cardinal said there is an overuse of segregation and phone sanctions at the prison, a lack of programming, and a lack of pre- and post-release support.

He said inmates have limited access to services and aren't given access to a phone to set things up prior to getting out.

"They're being failed by the system," Cardinal said.

Prisoner advocate Sherri Maier helped put the GoFundMe together on behalf of Cardinal.

Maier said some women at Pine Grove have also started a hunger strike in solidarity with Cardinal. She said with only one prison for women, some of these inmates have to travel long distances to get home and some don't have anyone to help them.

"There is no way for them to get home and Cardinal doesn't want to see another incident like [Squirrel's death] happen," she said.

"Some girls will get out on a Saturday or Sunday and they'll ask to get out on Friday because there is nothing open on a Saturday or Sunday to get a

bank account or try and get social assistance or anything like that," she said.

She said these requests are usually denied.

"Even in the middle of winter some of them are released into the freezing cold," she said.

Maier said funds raised can also be used by male inmates in the province for things like phone cards.

As of Friday the GoFundMe campaign had raised more than \$1,100.

Scott Larson

CBC News

Feb 26, 2021

TPRP Launches New Jail Hotline!

Starting on Feb 1, 2021: 416-755-9329

The Toronto Prisoners' Rights Project is launching the Toronto South Detention Centre, Vanier Centre for Women and Maplehurst Correctional Complex Jail Hotline. This hotline is run by volunteers. It will take calls on:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday & Saturday
9-11am & 2-4pm 416-755-9329

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. This jail hotline will help us offer support to people incarcerated at the Toronto South Detention Centre, Maplehurst Correctional Complex, and Vanier Centre for Women.

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.

No matter how cynical you get,
it's impossible to keep up.

- Lily Tomlin

COVID-19 cases more than doubled in federal prisons during pandemic's second wave

Canada's prison ombudsman is calling for alternatives to incarceration in a new report that shows the number of COVID-19 cases at federal facilities more than doubled in the pandemic's second wave.

Correctional investigator Ivan Zinger says new cases climbed to 880 at more than a dozen prisons between early November and Feb. 1, compared to 361 cases at six institutions in the first wave.

About 70% of second-wave cases occurred at two Prairie facilities – the Saskatchewan Penitentiary and Manitoba's Stony Mountain Institution – leaving Indigenous inmates disproportionately affected, the report said.

The prisons are the two largest in the country and contain some of the system's oldest infrastructure, with an evident connection between viral spread and large shared living areas, as well as poor ventilation.

Meanwhile, health restrictions behind bars have hampered correctional programs, which range from problem-solving to role-playing exercises. That in turn has delayed parole hearings and community release, since both can hinge on fulfilling program requirements, Zinger said.

Three-metre distancing rules, for example, have reduced class sizes from as many as 15 inmates to between three and five, resulting in slower program delivery and growing backlogs.

Lack of access to computers exacerbates the challenge.

"If offenders had access to technology, it would be much easier for them to be provided with assignments and assistance when teachers are unable to attend the site, or when there are restrictions on distributing materials for class," the report said, quoting a correctional officer.

Zinger called on the Correctional Service of Canada to prioritize early release of older inmates and those with underlying medical conditions, and to move program delivery out of prisons and into the community.

He also demanded the agency develop and make public a national vaccination strategy in the wake of more than 500 pandemic-related complaints from inmates.

More broadly, the ombudsman asked Public Safety Minister Bill Blair to consider closing aging, costly penitentiaries in favour of rehabilitation outside prison walls.

"Beyond the impacts of COVID-19, a more rigorous, humane and cost-effective community-based approach to corrections is long overdue," the report said.

More than 3,800 cells sit empty across the country, equivalent to seven average-sized penitentiaries, Zinger noted.

The Correctional Service says it has vaccinated about 600 older and medically compromised offenders, and plans to begin inoculating the rest of its 12,500 inmates in the spring.

"Our COVID-19 approach is based on science and evidence, and has followed public health guidelines and advice every step of the way," the agency said in a statement responding to Zinger's report Tuesday.

"While there is always more work to do, CSC has adapted and learned a great deal about the challenges of preventing and containing the COVID-19 virus over the past 11 months. We will continue to make everyone's safety our top priority as we work to fulfill our mandate during this challenging time."

Advocates warned about the risks of a rising case count in November. The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies highlighted a lack of access to adequate health care, with executive director Emilie Coyle calling conditions at some institutions "atrocious."

Four federal inmates have died from COVID-19 – two in the first wave and two in the second – according to the correctional investigator.

Last March, Blair asked the federal prison service and the parole board to consider releasing some inmates early to lower the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

The federal prison population fell by only 2% to about 13,700 between March and April, while the number of Canadians incarcerated at provincial and territorial institutions dropped by 25% to roughly 18,200 between February and April, according to Statistics Canada.

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

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

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

Zinger credited the Correctional Service with continuing to develop its pandemic response, deploying PCR tests starting in November and allowing virtual visits.

Active cases are now down to about a dozen, suggesting the worst of the second wave has ebbed, he said.

Nonetheless, correctional programs continue to run at half capacity, and access to libraries and legal resources is sharply curtailed, he said.

"With fewer and shorter sessions and more time in between programs, an inmate's ability to make meaningful and measurable progress on their correctional plan is severely compromised."

He also highlighted "extreme" controls such as "near-total cellular isolation, fresh-air exercise once every two or three days, 20 minutes of out-of-cell time every other day to shower or use the telephone."

"Through no fault of their own, inmate access to programs is shaping up to become an emergent human rights concern in Canadian corrections."

Christopher Reynolds
The Canadian Press
Feb 23, 2021

Untitled

1, 2 – Mommy's coming for you

Doing what I gotta do

I will see this through

3, 4 – Close the door

My babies won't be leavin' me no more

5, 6 – Them bad habits I kick

Now I can look forward to Christmas

Presents from ole Saint Nick

7, 8 – Walking through the success gate

Save the date

Don't be late

9, 10 – Welcome to the new family den

Mommy isn't letting you down again

Karrissa Z.

Untitled

Fly little birdie.

It is time for you to go.

I don't know how to fly,

I've never done this before.

You have wings,

Perfectly built to help you soar.

What if I make a mistake

And fall to the ground?

Then you will pick yourself up

And try again.

I'm afraid to try,

Afraid to let go.

Then you will never know

The ecstasy of soaring

High in the sky.

What does that feel like?

It is nothing that can be described,

It can only be experienced.

Where will you go?

Will I be alone?

I will be right beside you,

Helping you find your way.

I'm still afraid.

I know little birdie.

It is time for you to go.

Clare Gallagher

Sit down and read.

Educate yourself for the coming conflicts.

- Mother Jones

You can stand tall without standing on someone.

You can be a victor without having victims.

- Harriet Woods

How can one not speak about war, poverty, and inequality when people who suffer from these afflictions don't have a voice to speak?

- Isabel Allende

One isn't necessarily born with courage, but one is born with potential.

Without courage, we cannot practice any other virtue with consistency.

We can't be kind, true, merciful, generous, or honest.

- Maya Angelou

Federal prisons still use solitary confinement

Nearly two years after Ottawa declared an end to unlawful prisoner isolation tactics, federal prisons continue to practise solitary confinement and torture, according to the latest report from two government-appointed researchers.

Using data supplied by the Correctional Service of Canada, or CSC, criminologists Anthony Doob and Jane Sprott have examined how well the penitentiary system is conforming with new laws that grant isolated prisoners more time outside their cells to align with court decisions and international standards.

The findings offer a bleak assessment of progress at the national jailer as it struggles to comply with prison legislation that many civil liberties advocates consider inadequate to protect the Charter rights of inmates.

"We think that the time has come for Canada to acknowledge that it still has solitary confinement and torture by another name," the authors state. CSC spokeswoman Isabelle Robitaille said the agency is still reviewing the report and remains committed to the new housing units created under the legislation, called Structured Intervention Units, or SIUs. "Not a day goes by that we do not think of SIUs and the impact they are having on offenders' lives," she said.

In 2019, the federal government passed legislation abolishing a long-standing prisoner isolation practice called administrative segregation, which had been rendered unlawful by courts in British Columbia and Ontario. Ottawa appointed Dr. Doob to chair an advisory panel that would monitor a new prisoner isolation regime, called structured intervention, that was intended to minimize a prisoner's time in isolation and grant them at least four hours every day outside their cells.

The four-hour threshold was chosen to exceed the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, known as the Mandela Rules. The guidelines define solitary confinement as imprisonment for 22 or more hours a day without meaningful human contact. If those conditions stretch beyond 15 days, the UN considers it "prolonged" solitary confinement, a practice that amounts to "torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

But SIU placements in Canada regularly run longer than 15 days and the four-hour rule is routinely broken, according to Dr. Doob and Dr. Sprott.

Their latest report states that 28.4% of SIU placements qualify as solitary confinement under the UN definition. A smaller portion, 9.9%, could fall under the torture definition, the report states. The researchers even devised a "torture rate" as a way of measuring how many inmates are subjected to prolonged solitary confinement as compared with the total CSC population. For all institutions, the "torture rate" is 15.5 per 1,000 prisoners, based on December, 2020, population figures.

The rate is subject to regional fluctuations. It goes from a high of 39.1 for Pacific Region institutions to a low of 1.73 for Ontario facilities.

Most indicators in the report show CSC compliance with the Mandela Rules has remained stagnant or worsened over time. From the launch of the SIUs on Nov. 30, 2019, until Feb. 14 of the following year, 25.8% of SIU prisoners missed all of their allotted four-hour releases. Over a more recent period last year, July 18 to Sept. 30, 45.2% of prisoners missed all their four-hour entitlements.

"I don't think you can argue that they had growing pains with SIUs and now they've got it under control," Dr. Doob said. "What worries me is the opposite: that what they're doing now becomes the way they continue to do it."

An important caveat to the research is prisoner refusal. The union representing correctional officers told *The Globe and Mail* last year that many prisoners refuse to take their four hours of outside time, giving staff little choice but to keep them locked up. The researchers found that roughly 20% of the prisoners held in solitary confinement refused to leave their cells on most days. A majority of 61% "never or only once" refused.

Jennifer Metcalfe, executive director of Prisoners' Legal Services, a B.C.-based legal aid clinic, said fault for refusals should lie with the institutions rather than individual prisoners. "A lot of the clients we're helping have really severe mental-health disabilities, including PTSD," she said. "When they're not offered a safe way to leave the cell to be with other people, they won't accept."

The CSC says the SIUs have been monitored closely by independent external decision makers, who review placements and provide recommendations and decisions on whether a prisoner should be transferred out.

The agency is conducting its own audit of SIU operations, but continues to co-operate with Dr. Doob and Dr. Spratt, even though the advisory panel's term ended seven months ago. "This work is important and we take all input very seriously," said Ms. Robitaille of CSC.

Patrick White
Globe and Mail
Feb 24, 2021

Untitled

Blocked from the world
Just these 4 walls and me
Far from reality
Feeling like my only stress is
What my next meal from the cart going to be?

I got the hottest wardrobe on the 2-Block
Dressed in green from head to toe
Everything 'cept my undies and my socks.

Wondering when I'ma breathe that fresh air
For now it's Vanier Centre
Getting treated like an animal
Decent care is very rare.

Got the toilet to the right
Paper towel on the light
Beggin' for new underwear every night
It's not right, going crazy, I might!

Locked up 22 hrs a day 'cause COVID in the way
Canteen gettin' traded for meals like a damn luxury
It's the only thing that don't suck for me
Who's offering what today
Hmm wonder what my luck gonna be?

My charges got me in PC
Not normally where you wanna be
But I'ma sit back and do my time like an OG
– They can't keep me here forever, you'll see.

KZeb

Do You Remember Me?

Will you remember me?
When I'm not there
To make you laugh
To hold you when you cry.
Do you remember me?
When you hear our song
The one we danced to
And sang along.
Sitting alone in this cell
I remember you.
How you made me laugh
How you'd hold me when I cry
I hear our song on the radio
And sing along imagining
You're singing it too,
While I cry
Just because I'm in prison
Doesn't mean I'm gone
I won't be here forever
No matter how long
But will you remember me
When I'm outside these walls
Will you only see me as my crime,
Instead of who I am?
You forget everything
We used to be
What do you see
When you're staring back at me
You don't remember these things
But never forget what I did
Maybe it's for the better
That I start to forget
Our song, our laughs
Holding each other, the regrets
You don't see me anymore
So maybe it's for the best

Samanda Ritch

Nothing in life is to be feared.
It is only to be understood.
- Marie Curie

The world has improved mostly because unorthodox people did unorthodox things. Not surprisingly, they had the courage and daring to think they could make a difference.
- Ruby Dee

These Durham College students are taking one of their classes inside a prison

Classes are back in session for the winter semester at Durham College - and for eight students, one of their classes is taking place inside a prison.

The school recently became the first college in Canada to take part in the Walls to Bridges program, which sees incarcerated students and non-incarcerated students take a course together, inside a jail or prison.

Every Wednesday morning, Durham College professor Dale Burt and eight students in her "Resiliency in Society: The Barriers and Bridges," course travel to a federal men's prison for a three-hour class - prison officials have asked that the specific location not be identified.

"It brings people together that normally would not have the opportunity to learn with, and from, each other," Burt says. "We can learn things from a textbook, but with Walls to Bridges, the learning that happens is on a completely different level."

A key principle of the program is that outside students are not 'mentoring' or 'helping' incarcerated students - they're all peers learning together.

In Burt's class, there is no formal lecture. No Wi-Fi and no tech.

The eight inside students and eight outside students sit in a circle and discuss material they have been assigned to read.

The Durham College students say their incarcerated classmates have vital perspectives to offer on resiliency.

"The men we're working with really embody that," says student Vanessa Slater. "To stay mentally and physically healthy inside a prison you need to tap into that resiliency."

Slater "jumped at the chance" to take the course, which is offered as optional credit in two graduate certificate programs at Durham College.

She has a social justice background and has worked with people who were formerly incarcerated.

"This is such a rare opportunity," says Slater, who looks forward to the class every week.

Durham College student Meaghan O'Hara says she was "very nervous" driving up to the prison on the first day of class.

Outside of portrayals on TV shows and movies, she had no idea what to expect from a federal penitentiary.

Inside the classroom, that anxiety fell away.

"When we're talking and sharing our reactions to readings, everyone has a different life experience.

But it comes together with this beautiful common humanity," she says. "You forget where you are."

Walls to Bridges is currently a pilot program at Durham College, but Burt is hoping it can be offered on an ongoing basis.

The program is offered at several Canadian universities, with the national hub based out of the Lyle S. Hallman Faculty of Social Work at Wilfrid Laurier University, in partnership with Grand Valley Institution for Women in Kitchener.

A description of the program says it offers a chance to "understand the complexities of criminalization and punishment through lived experiences," and "challenges the artificial boundaries between people experiencing imprisonment and those who are not."

Jillian Follert

DurhamRegion.com - Jan 29, 2020

To My Daughter

"Sorry" is far too short a word
It doesn't do justice
To the injustice I committed

"I apologize" is no better
It just sounds like "Sorry",
Playing grown-up

"I have remorse" ... "I have regret"
"I'm sorry for the pain I caused"

There are no words
For the feeling I have
Only a time machine
Or some cosmic rewind button
Could take away the hurt

But still I search for the words
I multiply the "I'm sorry's"
But zero times zero is still zero
I can't go back
I'm sorry. Again & again, I'm sorry.

Jennifer DeKievit

Former inmate taps into her prison experience for 'ground-breaking' PhD research

While crime rates in Canada are among the lowest they've been in 50 years, the number of women in federal prisons continues to rise.

PhD student Rachel Fayter hopes her work will contribute to shifting that trend.

Fayter spent just over three years serving time at the Grand Valley Institution for Women (GVI) for breach of bail and possession for the purpose of trafficking charges. During her time in prison from 2014 to 2017, she got to know dozens of her fellow inmates. Her experience with them inspired her criminology PhD work at the University of Ottawa. Her research focuses on how women in prison build the resilience they need to survive.

"I want to show that criminalized women, despite all the trauma and negative things that we've been through, we have a lot to offer," says Fayter.

"I want to shift public consciousness about who we are."

The vast majority of women who receive federal prison sentences are victims of abuse and poverty. According to a 2003 Canadian Commission of Human Rights report, 85 per cent have suffered physical abuse and 70 per cent have suffered sexual abuse. Indigenous women are vastly over-represented — they're just 4 per cent of the female Canadian population, but they constitute nearly 40 per cent of incarcerated women in federal prisons.

"If you're taking somebody who's been traumatized and grown up in horrible circumstances, many times they commit a crime out of just survival," says Fayter.

"And many of these women are single mothers too. They're losing their children. So all of this trauma on top of trauma. And then they're going back out to the community and then we don't have enough support. It ends up being a revolving door."

Focus on women's resilience

Fayter, who will soon start her official field research, will be looking at how friendship bonds among incarcerated women help them survive their sentences and even thrive outside the prison walls after serving their time.

"Relationships are central to surviving prison and trauma," says Fayter. "Having the connection and support of people who have been through similar traumas in challenging circumstances, it really gives us strength. It can give our lives meaning and purpose and is a form of healing."

Fayter plans to analyze how these relationships grow and what benefit they provide, as well as looking at how systems and policies within correctional institutions can threaten these bonds. Fran Chaisson served 18 years at P4W. She tells IDEAS it was her friends that helped her get through her time in prison.

"Most women who end up behind bars are mentally abused, sexually abused, physically abused, or all of the above. Most women you're dealing with are broken before they even get behind the wall," says Chaisson.

"What people don't understand is that women don't need to be punished, women need to be healed."

Chaisson is one of the founders of the P4W memorial collective. Since the prison for women closed in 2000, former prisoners have been fighting to create a memorial garden and a gallery within the former prison to share art, poetry, and testimony from prison survivors.

'Nothing About Us, Without Us'

Jennifer Kilty is a professor of criminology at the University of Ottawa. She met Rachel Fayter inside GVI in 2015 as part of a "Walls to Bridges" course, which brings university students together with inmates to study in the same classroom.

Kilty is now Fayter's PhD supervisor.

"It's absolutely central to involve individuals [in research] who have lived experience," says Kilty.

"It's this idea of 'nothing about us without us.'"

She says that by focusing on community relationships and resilience, Fayter's work will be "groundbreaking in Canada."

"Our ability to empathize with people is a source of strength," says Kilty. "Especially when you're thinking about criminology in the context of the prison, developing relationships can be a survival technique on the inside."

CBC Radio
Sep 24, 2020

Book Clubs for Inmates (BCFI)

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

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

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

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

✎ PEN PALS ✎

Send in your ad: 25 Words or Less.
We use Code #'s for Personal Safety.
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Participants agree that by using this service, it is at their own risk, and by accessing this service all users agree that WPN is not to be held liable in any way for harms suffered as a result of this service.

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

None for this Issue!

What we accept, what we honour, who we choose to honour, says a lot about what we value as a society.
- Irene Moore Davis

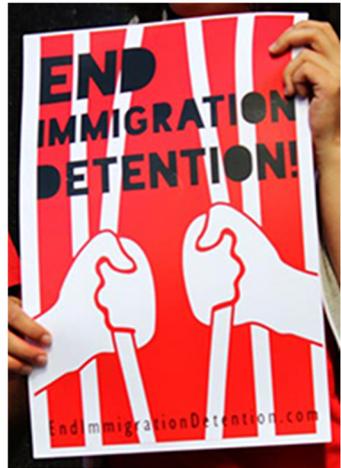
**Incarcerated in Canada?
Need Information?**

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

General legal info, prison rules & policies, resources, programs, services, etc.

Write to us at:

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



Prison Visiting Rideshare Project

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

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

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

Children of Inmates Reading Program (ChIRP)

"Reading aloud is the single most important thing a parent or caregiver can do to help a child prepare for reading and learning"

"Reading is the gateway to future success in life and in school"

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

For the past 10 years, Carla Veitch, a children's educator, has been successfully developing and operating a parent/child reading initiative. Twice a month, Carla, along with another volunteer, enter the institution and offer men the opportunity to select a book for their child and then read that book into a recording device. The book and recording are then mailed to the child. This initiative provides a direct connection for the child with his or her incarcerated parent. In addition to the opportunity of hearing a parent's voice, the reading initiative underscores the value of reading and the importance of books. For a number of the participants, reading aloud to their child has not been part of their pattern of parenting, nor was it modeled for them as part of their early childhood years.

Children are never responsible for their parents' choices. At the same time, they are the hidden victims not only in the justice and correctional system, but also within our larger community.

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

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

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 Nov. 20, an international event commemorating people killed due to anti-trans violence. In the last year, 369 trans or non-binary people have been killed globally. And it's a Canadian problem too: 74% of trans youth in Canada have been harassed at school, and 37% have experienced physical violence.

Facts about HIV and HCV

With some exceptions, HIV and HCV infection is generally more prevalent among women than men in prison, particularly among those who have a history of injection drug use.

In a study of provincial prisons in Quebec, the HIV and HCV rate among incarcerated women was, respectively, 8.8 and 29.2 percent, compared to 2.4 and 16.6 percent among male prisoners.

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

In a 2007 nationwide survey by CSC, the HIV and HCV rate among federally incarcerated women was 5.5 and 30.3 percent, compared to 4.5 and 30.8 percent among federally incarcerated men. Aboriginal women reported the highest rates of HIV and HCV, at 11.7 and 49.1 percent, respectively.

While the majority of women in prison are voluntarily tested for both HIV and HCV, the provision of pre- and post-test counselling has been reported to be poor, and in some cases, non-existent.

Women in prison are more likely than women in the general population to have faced violence and abuse; therefore, counselling accompanying HIV diagnosis is particularly important. Women in prison have concerns about the privacy and confidentiality of their HIV status.

Women have reported being forced to draw unwanted attention. Women (37.0%) reported being HCV-positive. Aboriginal women were identified as a particularly high-risk group because they reported the highest rates of HIV (11.7%) and HCV infections (49.1%).

These data highlight the need to ensure that culturally appropriate, effective interventions that decrease risk-behaviours and increase utilization of harm-reduction measures are offered to meet the needs of Aboriginal women.

Important Hep C Update!

New treatments with excellent success rates are now available!

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

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

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

Provincial/Territorial Prisoners: *Only BC & ON provide treatment. Elsewhere, you will have to wait till you get out.*

- When released, get right on welfare or disability.
- Federal health care programs like NIHB & IFH may cover costs.
- Go to a Clinic and get your blood test done so you can get into a Treatment Program at no cost to you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

BLEACH DOES NOT
KILL HEP C



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 ~ 416-505-5333

Prison Radio

- Halifax – CKDU 88.1 FM
Black Power Hour – Fri 1:30-3 pm
Youth Now! – Mon 5-6:30 pm
- Montreal – CKUT 90.3 FM
PRS – 2nd Thurs 5-6 pm & 4th Fri 11-noon
- Guelph – CFRU 93.3 FM
Prison Radio – Thurs 10-11 am
Call-in 519-837-2378
- Vancouver – CFRO 100.5 FM
Stark Raven – 1st Mon 7-8 pm
- Kingston – CFRC 101.9 FM
Prison Radio – Wed 7-8 pm

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

The last Wednesday of each month, CPR features 'Calls From Home', sharing letters, emails, voice messages and music requests by and for prisoners and their loved ones.

Prisoners and their loved ones are invited to contribute music requests, messages and suggestions for the program.

Write: CPR c/o CFRC, Lower Carruthers Hall, Queen's University, Kingston, ON, K7L 3N6
Email: CFRCprisonradio@riseup.net
Call: 613-329-2693 to record a message or music request to be broadcast on-air.

PRISONERS JUSTICE DAY

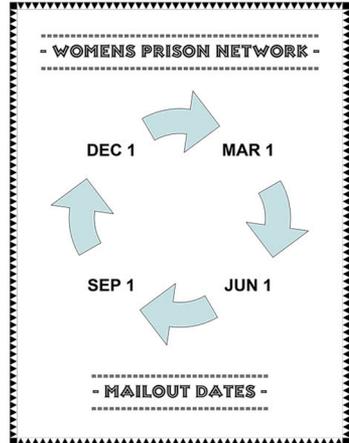
☞ In Remembrance ☞
- August 10 -

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

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

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

PJD@PrisonFreePress.org



Women's Prison Network
Summer 2021 - Issue #23

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

info@WomensPrisonNetwork.org

visit, download, print, donate!
WomensPrisonNetwork.org

Fall Issue #24 mailed out:
Sep 1, 2021
Send in your work before:
Aug 1, 2021

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