

Womens Prison Network



Issue #22 ~ Spring 2021

Editor's Note:

Welcome to Issue #22 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

Contents:

Letters/News	3-10
Poems	11
Resources.....	12-16

Cover Artwork:

Callie Curry

Artists:

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

Writers:

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

< Funding for this Issue >

Very, very special thanks out to:
Groundswell Community Justice Trust Fund!

< Donations for this Issue >

Very special thanks to:
David W. & Olga T.!

Ancestral Territorial Acknowledgment:

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

≈ 'Dish With One Spoon' Wampum ≈

'Women's Prison Network' is 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!!!

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

Circulation: 300+
Recirculation: ?,???

info@WomensPrisonNetwork.org

All original artwork, poems & writings are the sole/soul property of the artist & author.

Fair Dealing & the Canadian Copyright Act Sections 29, 29.1, 29.2:
"Fair dealing for the purpose of research, private study, education, parody, satire, criticism, review, and news reporting does not infringe copyright."

LETTERSLETTERSLETTERSLETTERSLETTERS

(S)heros Behind Bars

Every night I turn on the tv news and the top stories are all about the COVID-19 pandemic. Often the news anchor tells the stories of the 'healthcare heroes' that are going 'above and beyond' to help protect and save lives.

In BC, CSC operates the Pacific Inst'n & Regional Treatment Center for men. Located within is a Specialized Unit known as the National Psych-Geriatric Unit (NPGU). This Unit houses some of the most elderly and medically compromised prisoners from all areas of the country.

Along with the medical professionals and social workers, there is a group of women and men prisoners known as Peer Caregivers. This group is hired to offer support to prisoners in the NPGU. These Caregivers have undergone rigorous security screening for job approval. They then receive ongoing training to teach them the skills needed to provide support to the men in their care.

These prisoners are essentially doing the same work as Care Aides/ PSWs that work in Long Term Care on the outside. The work can include companionship, assisting with meals, escorting to activities, and many more tasks as they come up. During the COVID-19 pandemic these Peer Caregivers are acutely aware, even anxious, of the potentially devastating consequences should this virus be introduced into the NPGU.

In addition to the measures that the prison has undertaken in order to minimize risks, the Peer Caregivers work to keep the Unit as clean and sterile as possible. Peer Caregivers have been working tirelessly and often long hours to do their part to protect the vulnerable men in their care.

In addition, these caregivers are role modelling for their peer's behaviours, such as: consistent mask wearing, hand washing and social distancing in order to help reduce the chance of spread in this place.

These Peer Caregivers do all of this work for less than \$6.00 a day.

Plus, Peer Caregivers live in the same Unit as their clients so there really is no 'off time' for them because they are together 24 hours a day. When asked, Peer Caregivers will tell you that they certainly don't do this job for the money.

They do this job in order to support and care for the men in their care. To bring a sense of safety and well-being to them.

They do this job in order to try and make a positive difference in the lives of their clients.

So these Peer Caregivers should also be added to the growing list of all the (s)heroes that are going above and beyond to help care for and protect the some of the most vulnerable in Canada.

Megan Maines

Feb 2021

Raw Vs. The Law:

Our Fight for Vegetables at OCDC

I was incarcerated on May 10, 2020 at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre (OCDC). To my surprise, a lot has changed due to COVID-19. Many changes I agree with, while others I do not. In response to the jail failing to meet many of our most basic rights during the COVID-19 pandemic, I went on a hunger strike on July 22, 2020 along with over 70 prisoners on both the men's and women's sides of the jail. On the women's side, we demanded an end to strip searches, increased access to hygiene products and food that meets the Canada Food Guide requirements, which the jail is supposed to provide. For me, one of the most important demands was that the jail provides us with fresh fruits and vegetables, which they had failed to do for weeks.

We need fruits and vegetables in order to maintain a healthy diet, which will help our bodies produce serotonin and raise dopamine levels to keep us emotionally well. Usually in jail, I have been able to get a lot of raw vegetables, but this time around I did not get any. We did get the odd serving of carrots, potatoes and peas, but they had been frozen, cooked, and/ or steamed using the "cook chill" preparation method, which leaves the vegetables depleted of their nutrients.

For many of us, the importance of eating our fruits and vegetables has been engrained in us since childhood. Most of our parents would not let us leave the dinner table if we did not eat them or take away our dessert. I never imagined I would be in the position of going 10 weeks without one raw vegetable. This left me begging

for vegetables. I jokingly tried to make trades with the guards to see if they could find me some vegetables, but to no avail. They kept blaming the lack of fruits and vegetables on COVID-19 because the people in the institution who are normally allowed to prepare trays are no longer allowed to touch the food. This did not make any sense to me because prisoners continue to help out with putting together breakfast trays.

Not being able to eat fresh fruits vegetables week after week created a toxic environment. In the women's dorms, there were many more arguments and girls had issues using the washroom - people felt sick, including myself. From my perspective, if the jail is really trying to keep everyone COVID-19 free, they should not be letting us become malnourished because diet is important for health. Being malnourished puts us at greater risk of illness and disease. During this time, everyone became on edge and was acting moody because we were not eating properly. I feel that prisoners should be allowed to cultivate and maintain a garden to provide essential vegetables rather than feeding us highly processed and nutritionally void food. The food often comes soggy, frozen and/ or too spicy. When we got wind that other prisoners were planning a hunger strike, I decided to get on board from the inside. Unfortunately, it was a disaster and it still bothers me to write about it. Our supporters from the community were rallying outside of the jail to show their support to us. Those of us in the dorms were trying to look out the windows and see what was going on outside. As punishment for watching the protest, the guards took our away our television access and the women I was incarcerated with had their methadone put on hold. The guards held their access to methadone over their heads for watching the protest and teased them like circus animals.

This made me really upset so I stood up for them and they ended up getting their methadone. When they returned, I resumed the protest and asked the guards, "How about you guys try to go ten weeks without vegetables?" They responded, "Brazeau, shut up or we are moving you". While I understood that the guards could not change things, I expected that they should at least go to their superiors so that they could get the word out. In the end, I

was threatened with misconduct. They told me to pack up my stuff and go to maximum security.

It really hurt me having to beg for something that my body needs and getting punished for it, to be treated like my problems were a joke when they were serious. I have moved on to GVI now, but I still wonder how the people are doing at OCDC.

Thankfully, now that I am away from OCDC, I have access to a garden with fruits and vegetables, and I feel so much better after only being at GVI for a month. In provincial jails, the prisoners are being treated poorly, especially considering they have not even been sentenced yet. Prisoners need support and a balanced diet in order to have a good state of mind for release.

Erica Brazeau

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.

NEWSNEWSNEWSNEWSNEWSNEWSNEWS

Stop the Prison Industrial Goat Farm!

Beginning in 2021, Corrections Canada will establish prison farms as a for-profit institutional agribusiness in the form of an intensive livestock operation. Prisoners will factory farm thousands of goats to produce milk for the private sector, reportedly for Feihe International's infant formula exports to China, which goes against domestic and international human rights and trade laws.

What is a prison farm?

Many of Canada's prisons have large tracts of farmland, acquired over the course of Canada's colonial history. Until 2010, Canada had six federally funded prison farms producing food for prisoners. These were mixed operations of crops, vegetables, and animal agriculture (meat, milk, egg production) before they were shut down by the Harper Conservative government.

Why were prison farms closed?

Canada's longstanding federal prison farm program was shut down by the Harper Conservative government between 2009-2011 because the program was not financially sustainable, losing \$4 million annually, and the traditional agricultural model did not teach employable skills. Fewer than 1% of released offenders went on to gain employment in agriculture.

Why are prison farms reopening?

In 2015, the Trudeau Liberals made a campaign promise to reopen prison farms. After election in 2016, the new government began a public consultation to determine what model the new prison farms would adopt, while at the same time investing millions of dollars into the construction of a Chinese infant formula factory between the two Kingston prisons (Collins Bay and Joyville) where the prison farms would be located. In 2018, it was announced that the new prison farms would be industrial goat dairy, reportedly to supply this facility.

Why infant formula?

Canada has invested millions of dollars at the federal and provincial level to attract the Chinese company Feihe International to build an infant

formula factory in Kingston, Ontario under the name Canada Royal Milk. The facility is situated between the two prisons where the prison farm operations are being established. Since prison farms can no longer feed prisoners due to the new Food Service Modernization initiative adopted by Correctional Service of Canada, prison farms must now supply external markets. The government is building up Canada's goat dairy industry to supply the Feihe facility, which will ship 85-100% of its product to China. Using the prison farms for this purpose presented a solution to the paired problems of reintroducing prison dairy operations for external markets and supporting a multi-million-dollar infant formula investment.

Why goats?

Goats were selected as the core operation for the reopened prison farms in Kingston Ontario because of the "looming demand" for goat's milk to supply the Feihe International infant formula factory, and because goat dairy is not restricted by the same quota system as cow dairy. Feihe needs 75 million litres of goat milk from approximately 140,000 or 150,000 goats to make their plant operate, which vastly exceeds Canada's entire nationwide supply (55 million litres). If Feihe is unable to source a sufficient supply of goat milk, the company intends to build its own 70,000-head milking unit in Ontario.

Why a factory farm?

The definition of a factory farm is "a system of rearing livestock using intensive methods, by which poultry, pigs, or cattle are confined indoors under strictly controlled conditions." This is an exact description of the central component of the new prison farm model: up to 2000 goats intensively farmed in a fully indoor operation. Goats are not suited to Canadian climates (their natural environment would be hot and dry) and are susceptible to a wide range of disease, making a controlled indoor facility the only viable option for an operation of this magnitude. The magnitude of the operation is an effort to gain an "economy of scale" advantage since goat dairy is otherwise not profitable; according to government statistics, a litre of goat's milk costs \$1.30 to produce and sells for \$1.09.

www.EvolveOurPrisonFarms.ca

Nova Scotia to ban practice of 'dry celling' in jails

Nova Scotia is banning "dry celling" in its jails, doing away with a practice that places prisoners suspected of hiding contraband inside their bodies under strict surveillance at all times.

Justice Minister Mark Furey said Thursday the province believes that body scanning technology has reduced the need for it and the practice will be eliminated in provincial correctional facilities.

The move comes two months after Lisa Adams, a Saint John woman incarcerated in a federal prison in Nova Scotia, spoke out against the practice and launched a court case attempting to have it banned across the country in federal institutions. Her lawyers argued it was unconstitutional and inhumane.

The dry cell is used when an inmate is suspected of ingesting drugs, weapons or other contraband or inserting it into a body cavity. The cell has round-the-clock lighting and no flushing toilet or running water. The inmate is watched by guards 24 hours a day, on the expectation the item will come out in the person's bodily waste.

Days after CBC and other media reported on Adams' case, Furey announced that he was initiating a review of the provincial policy. Provincial jails in Nova Scotia use dry cells in a similar manner to federal prisons.

"As a result of the review and the work we've done, Correctional Services here in the province is in the process of updating our policies and we will actually eliminate the use of dry cells in provincial correctional facilities," Furey said after a cabinet meeting Thursday.

In 2018, the province started buying body scanners for its adult facilities, with the first five scanners budgeted at a cost of about \$1 million.

"These body scanners have been found to significantly reduce the number of incidents of contraband coming into the facility," Furey said.

He cited the scanners as "one of the biggest contributing factors" to the decision to ban dry cells.

"We believe within the environment of the facility we can isolate those individuals without utilizing the dry cell approach," he said.

The ban on dry cells will only cover jails in Nova Scotia such as the Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility in Burnside or the Cape Breton Correctional Facility in Sydney.

It will not cover federal facilities such as Nova Institution for Women in Truro, where Adams was serving a two-year sentence for drug trafficking.

However, the Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia, which backed Adams' legal challenge to federal dry cells, is hopeful the provincial change will add strength to the organization's case.

"There were many things raised in our case that would be applicable to the context of someone being dry celled here in this province," said executive director Emma Halpern, noting that a provincial government lawyer was in court to watch the Adams case.

"In our minds, [that] certainly had some bearing on this decision that came out today."

Halpern worries that the use of body scanners is not perfect and it's not clear to her exactly how the province plans to remove contraband from inmates if it is found.

"That said, in this moment we can feel pleased. And we can feel excited and motivated and hopeful, that we can see a turning of the tides in terms of the use of extraordinarily oppressive practices within our correctional systems," she said.

In 2012, the former federal correctional investigator recommended an "absolute prohibition" on putting people in dry cells beyond 72 hours. The recommendation was reissued in 2019-2020. At the federal level, the Correctional Service of Canada declined to fully institute the recommendation.

Shaina Luck
CBC News
Jan 07, 2021



Mass solitary confinement in prisons is illegal, even in a pandemic

In an effort to keep COVID-19 out of Canada's prisons, Correctional Services Canada is breaking Canadian and international law. For months, it kept Canada's prison inmates in isolated lockdown, with little human contact, natural light or fresh air. As the second wave breaches our prison walls, we need to pay attention.

These conditions mirror solitary confinement, which Bill C-83 abolished last year. That is why a coalition of Canadians - academics, lawyers, and rights advocates - is calling for a commission of inquiry. Correctional Services should be held accountable for these persistent violations of Canadians' rights. This won't be our last pandemic, and Correctional Services can and should do better.

Most of us know what it's like to feel trapped in our homes. Some of us have not seen or touched another person for weeks or months on end.

Now imagine being indefinitely locked in a seven-by-seven-foot room, without any structured activity, minimal communication with loved ones, and no end in sight. How long would it take for your mental health to deteriorate? Scholars have documented the effects of isolation. They include psychosis, rage, cognitive dysfunction, depression and suicide. The scars are often permanent.

This practice serves no one - not the public who will deal with offenders on their release, not Correctional Services which must deal with the anger and deteriorating behaviour of inmates, and certainly not the offenders themselves.

The law states that Correctional Services must use the "least restrictive measures" for enforcing sentences and that offenders "retain the rights of all members of society except those that are, as a consequence of the sentence, lawfully and necessarily removed or restricted." The United Nations Mandela Rules, which Canada has signed, state that any more than 22 hours a day without meaningful human contact, for more than 15 days constitutes a form of torture. Many of our offenders were locked down for 23 hours or more - for months. Whatever euphemism we may use, the black letter of the law calls this torture.

It's true we've been under provincial states of emergency. And it is critical to keep COVID-19 out of our prisons and keep correctional workers

and offenders safe. Judges sentenced them to lose their liberty, not their lives. Despite five outbreaks early in the pandemic and the deaths of two prisoners, Canada's prisons until recently, COVID free. This was a good outcome.

But we don't torture people to achieve good outcomes. I have studied states of emergency for nearly two decades and have yet to come across an emergency legal framework that allows torture as a means to a good end, even in a crisis. International law on emergencies explicitly forbids it.

Even if you call mass solitary confinement by some other name, emergency frameworks, including Canada's, allow only strictly necessary limits on rights. This is why the World Health Organization called on states early in the pandemic to continue to observe the Mandela Rules.

Correctional Services does have some alternatives. First, prisoners need something to do. We've moved everything else online. Why can't rehabilitative programming, libraries and education opportunities in prison move online too? We have the technology.

Second, other countries, including the United States, have expedited the release of non-violent offenders nearing the end of their sentence. We said we'd do the same, then didn't. Less crowded prisons, coupled with effective but humane quarantine measures should mean offenders could be out of their cells more, safely masked and distanced. Where programming can be restored, it must.

Such steps in the context of COVID, may help Correctional Services address Canada's more general and persistent problems with illegal isolation of prisoners.

Doubtless, there would be challenges. Prisons are complicated places. But they must also be accountable places. That is why we are calling for a commission of inquiry. States often overstep their legal bounds in an emergency. Only when accountability follows can we learn from our mistakes. We expect this of our prisoners; why expect less from our government?

Nomi Claire Lazar
The Star
Nov 24, 2020

Where is the justice in sending an abuse victim to prison for 18 years?

There is nothing new about finding injustice in the justice system, but occasionally it is so stark it can function to send the whole system into disrepute.

Justice was not served in the case of Helen Naslund, who was sentenced last month to 18 years in prison for killing her abusive husband and covering up her crime. After enduring 27 years of physical and mental torment - and after one particular day in 2011 when her husband, Miles Naslund, hurled wrenches at her and told her she'd "pay dearly" after farm equipment she was operating broke down - the Alberta woman retrieved a .22-caliber revolver and shot Mr. Naslund twice in the back of his head while he slept. Ms. Naslund dumped her husband's body with the help of her son, Neil, and both got away with the crime for nearly six years.

Ms. Naslund pleaded guilty to manslaughter in March after her husband's remains were found in September 2017. She was sentenced to 18 years in prison (and Neil to three) based on a joint submission from her defence counsel and the Crown, who said the "battered woman syndrome" defence did not apply, even though the facts stated Ms. Naslund was abused for years.

"Most people who are charged with criminal offences aren't evil people," Court of Queen's Bench Justice Sterling Sanderman said as he handed down the sentences. "They're not bad people. They react poorly, when other options are open to them."

Those other options may seem straightforward from the perch of the Queen's Bench, but to a victim who has tried or contemplated leaving her abusive partner, they are not really options at all. As victims' advocates repeat ad nauseam, the most dangerous time for a victim of abuse is when he or she tries to leave, as is illustrated in the cases of Dr. Elana Fric-Shamji, Roxanne Biglow, Jenny McKay and other women who were killed as they tried to escape. Involving the police can mean later retribution from a violent partner, as well as the risk that authorities won't take claims seriously, which is why the vast majority of incidences of intimate partner violence go unreported. The other escape "option" for abused spouses is suicide, which Ms. Naslund

attempted unsuccessfully several times before she killed her husband.

The landmark *R. v. Lavallée* decision 30 years ago debunked the notion of a plethora of options available to individuals in abusive relationships, and it represented the first time the Supreme Court of Canada recognized that the psychological torment of a history of abuse could be used as a defence for women who kill their partners. In that case, a jury acquitted Angelique Lyn Lavallée - who, like Ms. Naslund, also shot her abusive partner in the back of the head - based on expert testimony upheld by the Supreme Court, which recognized that "the mental state of an accused at the critical moment she pulls the trigger cannot be understood except in terms of the cumulative effect of months or years of brutality." Of course, this sort of defence only works when and if it is invoked by counsel, and in the case of Ms. Naslund, it was not on the table.

Ms. Naslund thus joins a colony of women sentenced to decades or more behind bars for making what they perceive as a decision between killing and being killed. Wendy Maldonado, who was tortured daily by her husband, spent 10 years in an Oregon prison after killing her husband, also with the help of her son. Nicole Addimando was recently sentenced to 19 years in prison for killing her live-in boyfriend following what the defence described as years of physical and sexual abuse. Catina Curley spent 11 years in prison on a life sentence for second-degree murder, until Louisiana's Supreme Court acquitted her, ruling that she acted in self-defence. Each of these women, along with countless unnamed others, was failed by the structures that were supposed to keep them safe: first by communities where abused women do not have the resources to safely escape violence, and second by judicial systems that fail to adequately address and account for the first.

Ms. Naslund was trapped in an abusive relationship for nearly three decades, and now she will be trapped in a prison cell for nearly two more. There is no moral justification for taking another human life, but there is a legal precedent for considering the psychological effect of abuse. That doesn't appear to have happened here. Ms. Naslund went from someone with no freedom and few options to a different type of

person with no freedom and few options. Where is the justice in that?

Robyn Urback
Globe and Mail
Nov 20, 2020

More than 5,000 COVID-19 Cases Linked to Canadian Prisons

Overall:
Prisoners = 3,968
Staff = 1,100
Contractors = 3
Total = 5,071

Canadian Jurisdictions with Reported COVID-19 Cases Linked to their Prisons as of Jan 25 2021:

Federal | CSC = 1,529 (1,233 prisoners | 296 staff)
NS = 1 (1 prisoner | 0 staff)
QC = 466 (252 prisoners | 214 staff)
ON = 604 (496 prisoners | 107 staff | 1 contractor)
MB = 569 (451 prisoners | 118 staff)
SK = 538 (426 prisoners | 112 staff)
AB = 1,217 (1,006 prisoners | 209 staff | 2 contractors)
BC = 147 (103 prisoners | 44 staff)

Canadian Jurisdictions without Reported COVID-19 Cases Linked to their Provincial-Territorial Jails and Prisons as of Jan 25 2021:
NL, PE, NB, NU, NT, YK

Note on Method:

The preliminary findings presented above were compiled from figures included media reports and publicly available government data sets. Due to the quality of the data available, it is possible that there fewer or additional laboratory confirmed cases of COVID-19 linked to prisoners and/or staff of Canadian carceral institutions than those compiled above as many jurisdictions do not report both types of cases online on a proactive basis like the Ministère de la Sécurité publique du Québec and Manitoba Corrections. Correctional Service Canada and the Ontario Ministry of the Solicitor General release prisoner COVID-19 case figures on a regular

basis through tables accessible through a single web link, but not those of their institutional staff. All other Canadian human caging authorities do not make such data sets available online, including the Saskatchewan Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety and the Alberta Correctional Services Division that have had several large outbreaks linked to their provincial jails and prisons, as well as the Nova Scotia Correctional Services Division and British Columbia Corrections that have had fewer outbreaks linked to their provincial sites of confinement.

Kevin Walby, Justin Piché
Criminalization & Punishment Education
Project
Jan 26, 2021

Bell Canada Prison Calls: Class Action!

This case alleges that the defendant breached Ontario consumer protection and other laws by extracting exorbitant fees from individuals placing and accepting telephone calls from correctional facilities in Ontario since 2013.

The defendant is the exclusive provider of telephone services for incarcerated persons in Ontario correctional facilities. The defendant charged unconscionable telephone service rates and made misrepresentations concerning the cost of telephone calls placed from correctional facilities in Ontario.

The Court will decide at a later date if the case will proceed as a class action.

The case seeks to represent all persons currently or formerly incarcerated in an Ontario correctional facility and all persons in Canada who accepted and paid for a collect call originating from a person incarcerated in an Ontario correctional facility.

[Will update as the case progresses]

Just because everything's different doesn't mean anything's changed.

- Irene Porter

One accurate measurement is worth a thousand expert opinions.

- Grace Hopper

Thirteen people have died in the Thunder Bay jail since 2002, here's why

The Thunder Bay jail has been called, "a hellhole" and "a factory that produces broken Indigenous people."

It's a place where addictions fester; where potentially life-saving information about inmate health gets lost.

It's also a place where 13 people have died since 2002.

Twelve of those people were in remand, waiting for their futures to be decided.

At least seven were Indigenous.

And more than half died before reaching the age of 30.

Under the Ontario Coroner's Act, a public inquest is mandatory when a person dies while in custody or being detained - unless the death is deemed to have occurred naturally.

Inquests are held "for the purpose of informing the public about the circumstances of the death," and recommendations are suggested with the hope they "will prevent further deaths," according to the Ministry of the Solicitor General's website.

But a CBC News review of the eight completed inquests since 2002 reveals that several of those recommendations to make jails a safer place for inmates have gone unheeded over the last 18 years.

Suicide and overdoses main causes of death

Of the 13 people, inquests have been completed into eight of the deaths, four are considered "pending," and one is not subject to an inquest, as per provincial regulations.

Four deaths were ruled a suicide after their bodies were found hanging in a number of places in the jail - including a shower and cells used for solitary confinement.

At least three were caused by overdoses on methadone.

Another was the result of untreated, severe symptoms of alcohol withdrawal.

Communication within the jail a persistent issue

In 2006, one man's body was discovered "suspended from the end of his bunk by a noose made of torn bed sheet material."

The man was placed on "suicide watch on a number of occasions" throughout his

incarceration, but he was not on suicide watch the day his body was found.

But the inquest later found that days before he died, the man moved cells, and during his relocation, "a noose type ligature was found in his cell."

A memo providing details of the "bed sheet noose ... seems to have been lost in the system and the potential upgrading of his watch status did not occur," according to the inquest.

In another instance, a man's death was ruled to be caused by methadone toxicity, but the inquest suggested that "information about [the man's] intoxication and another inmate's suspected diversion of methadone did not reach the healthcare providers in a timely manner."

Seven of the eight inquests suggest that improved information flow could have potentially saved the lives of the inmates, with half of them specifically recommending the creation of an electronic medical record system.

Brent Ross, a spokesperson with the Ministry of the Solicitor General, would not say if or when an electronic medical record system would be implemented across correctional facilities.

But in a written statement, Ross said "progress continues to be made across the correctional system, including ... ongoing work to update information management and ... gaining access to the Provincial Electronic Health Care Record."

More training to deal with alcohol and drug use, and more space is needed

Six of the inquests called for more and improved training and programming to deal with alcohol and drug use and withdrawal, including better options to treat addictions and withdrawal.

After a man died by suicide in 2003 in the jail, the coroner presiding over the resulting inquest wrote "there was evidence that staff awareness of the many aspects of drug use and management syndromes could use improvement."

In another inquest following the death of a man from severe symptoms of alcohol withdrawal, the coroner wrote that symptoms of withdrawal from either drug or alcohol consumption "was not fully appreciated by all staff."

Three-quarters of the inquests have also referenced the need for more space, with five of them explicitly calling for the construction of a new facility.

An inquest from 2015 noted that "medical segregation cells" are so far from the medical station and so poorly designed they actually "hamper effective medical observation of inmates including determining whether they are in fact alive."

The construction of a new jail in Thunder Bay has been promised and re-promised a number of times in recent years. The current provincial government has committed to build a new facility, but has not provided a timeline for it's expected completion.

Additional supports needed for Indigenous inmates

And three inquests cite the lack of programming and supports for Indigenous inmates as a possible cause of their deaths.

The inquest into the death of an 18-year-old man states that he suffered from "spiritual emptiness," possibly leading to his "drug-seeking behaviour." The inquest adds the man did not have sufficient access to Indigenous-specific supports.

The inquest calls on the jail to "ensure Indigenous inmates have access to both programming and private, one-on-one counselling," which could be provided by a Native Inmate Liaison Officer (NILO) or an elder.

Another recommendation calls for "at least one full-time Native Inmate Liaison Officer," who could facilitate access to ceremony, Indigenous healers and elders.

But the office of Ontario's Solicitor General confirmed the jail "is currently without NILO services." Ross did not respond to a question about how often inmates have access to meet with Indigenous elders.

Ross said 39 per cent of the inmates currently in the Thunder Bay jail self-identified as Indigenous at the time of admission.

But others estimate the proportion of Indigenous inmates in the Thunder Bay jail is closer to 75 per cent.

Leaders across the northwest are saying enough. The NDP Member of Provincial Parliament for the Kiiwetinoong riding called on the province to shut down the Thunder Bay jail after his nephew was the latest person to be found dead in his cell earlier this year.

Sol Mamakwa called the jail "a factory that produces broken Indigenous people."

And in an interview with the *Globe and Mail*, Nishnawbe Aski Nation Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler called the place "a hellhole," and asked "how many people have to die in that facility before it's closed?"

It's a question that has yet to be answered.

Logan Turner
CBC News
Nov 24, 2020

Change

They try to walk the walk
Or try to talk the talk
But they should stay in their own lane
That's why they invented sidewalks
Because I'm here to make a change
Make Nova a better place
To fight for a Black Liaison Officer
For my kind of face
For my kind of race
They expect us to change
Yet, we have no support
In this kind of place
No Programs, no Re-integration Plans
We've seen this before
You watch us get out
But old habits make this our revolving door
That's why we need change
And I'm ready to fight
Systemic Racism
Does not support Blacks
Mostly Whites
Sorry to be blunt
Or if you think I am rude
But if you were Black
In my shoes
What would you do?

Samanda Ritch

Women will not simply be mainstreamed into the polluted stream.

Women are changing the stream, making it clean and green and safe for all - every gender, race, creed, sexual orientation, age, and ability.

- Bella Abzug

Book Clubs for Inmates (BCFI)

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

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

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

Book Clubs for Inmates

720 Bathurst St.

Toronto, ON, M5S 2R4

✂ PEN PALS ✂

Send in your ad: 25 Words or Less.

We use Code #'s for Personal Safety.

When mail contact has been made, it is up to you to exchange your name & address, ... but only, if that is what you choose to do.

Please Print Your Name & Address on
All Letters and Photos.

All Envelopes are Destroyed !!!

Participants agree that by using this service, it is at their own risk, and by accessing this service all users agree that WPN is not to be held liable in any way for harms suffered as a result of this service.

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

None for this Issue!

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!

234-110 Cumberland St,

Toronto, ON, M5R 3V5



Prison Visiting Rideshare Project

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

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

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

Children of Inmates Reading Program (ChIRP)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nov. 20 is Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDoR), an international event commemorating people killed due to anti-trans violence. In the last year, 369 trans or non-binary people have been killed globally.

And it's a Canadian problem too: 74% of trans youth in Canada have been harassed at school, and 37% have experienced physical violence.

Facts about HIV and HCV

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Important Hep C Update!

New treatments with excellent success rates are now available!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BLEACH DOES NOT
KILL HEP C



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

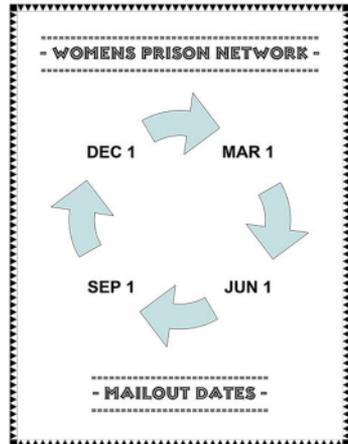
☞ In Remembrance ☞
- August 10 -

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
Spring 2021 - Issue #22

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

info@WomensPrisonNetwork.org

visit, download, print, donate!
WomensPrisonNetwork.org

Summer Issue #23 mailed out:

Jun 1, 2021

Send in your work before:

May 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!
