

PRISONERS JUSTICE DAY



CLASS ACTION! NEWS
ISSUE 14: SUMMER 2019

< Editor's Note >

It is Summer & Issue #14 of 'Class Action News'. This magazine is by & for the Prisoner Class in Canada.



In every Issue we provide a safe space for creative expression and literacy development. These zines feature art, poetry, stories, news, observations, concerns, and anything of interest to share. Health & Harm Reduction info will always be provided - Yes, Be Safe!

Quality & Quantity:

Items printed are those that are common for diverse readers, so no religious items please. Artwork: Black pen (tat-style) works the best. Cover Artist will receive a \$25 donation. Writings: only short poems, news, stories, ... Items selected are those that fit nicely & allow space for others (1/2 page = 325 words max). For author protection, letters & story credits will all be 'Anonymous'.

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< Contents >

News 3-6, 10-12
Book Review 7
Feature Story 8-9
Health & Harm Reduction 13
Resources 14-16

< Artists in this Issue >

Cover: Rocky Dobey - 13 1/2
(12 Jurors, 1 Judge, & 1/2 a Fucken Chance)

Page 5: Gord Hill - Prison Justice Day



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Canadian Charter of Rights & Freedoms

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

Those who say it can't be done are usually interrupted by others doing it.
- James Baldwin

< News >

'It's a heavy load': Former prison babies demand apology, recognition

Robert Burke, 68, was born inside the notorious Andrew Mercer Reformatory, the first penitentiary for women in Canada, after his mother was jailed for becoming pregnant out of wedlock.

Despite having no memories of the prison, Burke nevertheless continues to suffer from vivid nightmares of abuse and abandonment by the matrons who once staffed the foreboding building on Toronto's King Street, which opened its doors in 1872.

Burke's Ottawa-born mother, Muriel Joan Walker, a promising ballerina, was one of hundreds of young women labelled "incurrigible" and sent to the prison to learn "feminine virtues."

"I spent the first eight months of my life incarcerated with her," said Burke, who obtained his mother's records after a year-long legal battle. "It was pretty horrific. There was a lot of beatings and torture that went on."

Allegations of abuse

The prison was eventually investigated over allegations of abuse including the use of experimental drugs on inmates - all of which his mother experienced after her arrival in 1951, Burke said.

Burke said his mother, initially labelled by court officials as being "temperate and abstinent," developed a drug addiction and mental health issues after leaving the prison with her son more than a year later. Burke was eventually taken from her by the province and adopted by another family.

A fight for recognition

For years, former Andrew Mercer inmates and their children have fought for official acknowledgement of the illegality of their imprisonment, as well as recognition of the abuse, torture and trauma they experienced at the Toronto prison.

Burke said he wants an official apology, and wants the children of those women to have better access to the documents detailing their incarceration.

"I could have saved myself so much grief because I had all these nightmares [growing up] and all these strange feelings, and I was so withdrawn," he said. "If I had known my past, I would have had a way better understanding of where I was coming from."

Velma Demerson, who died last week at the age of 98, is the one of the only women in Canada to get a public apology and compensation from the federal and provincial governments for her time at the reformatory.

At 19, after her parents tipped off authorities, Demerson was jailed and stripped of her citizenship for falling in love with a Chinese man and having a child out of wedlock. Her child, also born at the prison, was taken from her when he was three months old.

She received an apology for her incarceration, for the abuse she experienced and for several medical procedures performed on her by a doctor at the reformatory.

Trauma continues

Kim Pate, an independent senator and long-standing prisoner rights advocate, told Ottawa Morning she's also calling on the federal and provincial governments to apologize to the women sent to the reformatory, and to their children.

Pate said the children, many now approaching old age, continue to suffer trauma due to their experiences at the prison, which closed its doors in 1969.

"It would mean a great deal [to get an apology]," Pate said. "I'm hopeful that some small comfort would come from [the] recognition that what was done was wrong and that it wasn't their fault, nor was it their mothers' faults."

Burke said he's forgiven those who harmed him and his mother, but an apology would go a long way to alleviate the load he's carried all these years.

"You can't just carry this hate around," he said. "It's a heavy load."

CBC News
May 26, 2019

The real thieves, sir, are those who keep us in here.

- Prisoner Anon

Prisoner's Justice Day - A Short History

On August 10th 1974, prisoner Eddie Nalon slashed himself in a segregation cell of Ontario's Millhaven prison. When other prisoners in solitary realized something was wrong they hit their emergency buttons, apparently all of them broken, and the guards failed to respond in time to save Nalon's life. A year later, the scene repeated itself in the same Seg Unit. Prisoner Bobby Landers died, the emergency system remained broken. Outraged, fellow prisoners staged hunger and work strikes in memory of Nalon, Landers and all those who had lost their lives to and in prison. Since that day, Prisoner's Justice Day (PJD) has grown into a nationwide day of mourning and action on which folks inside and out make prison injustices visible and fight for prisoners' rights. For some, PJD is also a day to agitate for an end to prisons and their replacement with community-based alternatives. For the last 44 years the Canadian prison system has banned and punished PJD activities. Prisons are inherently violent, a fact highlighted by Nalon and Landers' preventable deaths. The 1970s were an era of prison reform in Canada - bread and water diets, capital & corporal (physical) punishment were abolished and new rehabilitative programming were rolled in. At the same time, a prisoner movement emerged in North America - the American Indian Movement, the Black Panthers, and other groups fought for racial justice, sovereignty, and cultural freedom inside, pointing to the continued use of prisons in a process of colonial control and genocide. Women and LGBTQ2-S+ prisoners exposed the gendered and sexualized violence that marked their confinement. Prisoners rioted, occupied, formed empowerment groups and unions, wrote, launched legal cases and disrupted the everyday reality of imprisonment in every way they could. A conservative law-and-order backlash grew in response. Judges, politicians, prison guards, and others pushed for reforms to be repealed and succeeded in gaining tougher sentencing. The recent tough-on-crime agenda in Canada carries on in the spirit of this 1970s right-wing backlash.

Solitary Confinement

In the 1970s, guards were banned from giving prisoners the paddle, and so they fell back on

the use of solitary confinement and other abusive practices to punish and control prisoners, as in the case of Nalon and Landers. Seeing this, prisoners and their allies argued that reform had not gone far enough. Some rallied for an end to prisons entirely, while others focused on ridding the system of its most abusive practices. They argued that solitary confinement, 23½ hours a day in a cell with no meaningful human contact and a ½ hour of solitary exercise in another cage was cruel and unusual punishment. Their legal challenges won some ground but Corrections Canada continued the practice by drawing up new policies with new language. The reality of solitary remained the same.

Advocates also challenged involuntary transfer, which is when a prisoner is moved between prisons, sometimes cross-country. Transfers sever ties to other prisoners, nearby family, and friends and interrupt life and routine. It is important to note that involuntary transfers and solitary confinement have been used in Canadian prisons to fracture prisoner protest by isolating, intimidating, and removing key prisoner organizers.

Grieving and fighting back

Powerlessness led Nalon and Landers to take their lives, just as it did in the high profile case of 18-year old Ashley Smith in 2007, and as it has for countless others. The latest stats show that one in five unnatural deaths in Canadian prison are due to suicide; half of those in solitary. This is to say nothing of life lost due to negligence, inadequate medical care, and violence, on which there is little statistical documentation. Given its history, PJD has often focused on these forms of abusive prison practice. However, it is more than that.

PJD began, as have so many social movements, from a place of grief. Like Black Lives Matter, or those organizing around Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls, grief calls for action against systematized violence and oppression in its many forms: death in custody, police brutality, racist, gendered, homophobic, and transphobic violence, homelessness, poverty, marginalization, attacks on homes, lands, persons, communities, and cultures. Just like life outside, this violence shapes the prison system and people's experiences of it in multiple ways. PJD is a day to acknowledge and combat the

role of the prison and legal systems in sustaining systemic violence and inequality. It is a day to consider how we might build healthier communities and redress those actions that do actual harm, whether or not they are deemed criminal by the Canadian legal system.

- TheVolcano.org (BC)



Federal government ordered to pay \$20M for placing mentally ill inmates in solitary confinement

An Ontario judge has ordered the federal government to pay \$20 million for placing mentally ill inmates in solitary confinement, with the money earmarked to boost mental health supports in correctional facilities.

In a ruling issued this week, Ontario Superior Court Justice Paul Perell says the Correctional Service of Canada violated the charter rights of thousands of inmates who filed a class-action lawsuit against the agency over its use of administrative segregation.

Perell found those who were involuntarily placed in administrative segregation for more than 30 days, or voluntarily for more than 60, experienced a systemic breach of their rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Those who were in segregation for less than 30 days can still make claims later in the case. Compensation for individual members of the class has also not yet been determined and submissions will be heard at a future date.

\$20M to go to additional resources

The judge says the \$20 million will go to "additional mental health or program resources" in the penal system as well as legal fees.

"The funds are to remedy to the harm caused to society which has suffered from the correctional service's failure to comply with the charter and also its failure to comply with the spirit of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and its purpose of rehabilitating mentally ill inmates to return to society rather than worsening their capacity to do so by the harm caused by prolonged solitary confinement," Perell wrote in his ruling.

The Correctional Service of Canada did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Administrative segregation is used to maintain security when inmates pose a risk to themselves or others and no reasonable alternative is available.

The practice has faced legal challenges in Ontario and British Columbia, both of which found extended solitary confinement to be unconstitutional.

Ontario's top court has given federal government until April 30 to fix its solitary confinement law, while B.C.'s has extended the deadline to June 17.

The government has pointed to Bill C-83, now before the Senate, which eliminates administrative segregation and replaces it with "structured intervention units" meant to emphasize "meaningful human contact" for inmates and improve their access to programs and services.

However, the bill does not include hard caps on how many days or months inmates can be isolated from the general prison population, and civil liberties organizations have said it does not go far enough.

The Canadian Press
Mar 26, 2019

Another world is not only possible, she is on her way.

On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.

- Arundhati Roy

This is the precept by which I have lived:

Prepare for the worst; expect the best; and take what comes.

- Hannah Arendt

Families who lost loved ones to overdose inside local jails press solicitor general

For more than an hour families who have lost loved ones to overdoses inside local jails met with Ontario's solicitor general and "they didn't hold back."

The meeting involved 10 loved ones left behind after deaths at the Hamilton-Wentworth Detention Centre and Niagara Detention Centre. They met Monday afternoon in solicitor general Sylvia Jones' office where they demanded answers and action to prevent more overdose deaths inside provincial jails.

In Hamilton families say the number of deaths and non-fatal overdoses is an epidemic.

Jones told the families that 80 per cent of the recommendations that came out of an inquest that examined eight overdose deaths at Hamilton's Barton Street jail last year have or are being implemented. Her press secretary told *The Spectator* the same thing Friday.

Yet when pressed for specifics, Jones was able to offer few details, said Amy McKechnie, who organized the meeting and whose brother Ryan McKechnie died June 2017. An inquest has been called into his death, but no dates have been set.

The Spectator has also asked for details of the "80 per cent," but has yet to receive more information. Coroner's inquest recommendations are not mandatory, but the agencies have to give official responses - the government and jail have yet to release official responses in the super inquest. Some changes have happened in recent years including the addition of full-body scanners. However, the inquest last year heard that inmates believe they can trick the scanner by wrapping packages in carbon paper and hiding them in body cavities. When pressed for a response a staff sergeant from the jail explained the issue was actually staff error as the scanner screens can be difficult to read.

McKechnie said she and other families pressed Jones about this, but claims Jones repeatedly insisted staff were all adequately trained.

McKechnie said the meeting began with her reading a three-page letter, which she said Jones called powerful and asked for a copy.

Overall the families said Jones said she was committed to bringing changes and wanted to stop contraband being brought into jails, but appeared to know few specifics.

"If we brought up something specific to HWDC, she couldn't comment," McKechnie said.

The super inquest last year examined eight overdose deaths between 2012 and 2016. Since then there have been at least seven other overdose deaths. Before the super inquest there was also a death in 2007.

"There needs to be preventative measures put in place," McKechnie said, adding that they're "never going to stop all drugs from coming in."

Many of the 62 recommendations centred on better access to healthcare, adding recreation and counselling services and better supervision, including continuous monitoring of security cameras.

The continuous monitoring is one recommendation that the families specifically asked about, but did not get a clear answer.

April Tykoliz, whose brother Marty Tykoliz died May 7, 2014, said she doesn't believe 80 per cent of recommendations have actually been implemented.

"Stop wasting hundreds of thousands of dollars on inquests if they won't use the recommendations ... it hurts the families (and is) disrespectful to the juries."

She said she also told Jones that she appreciated the opportunity to speak and knew the meeting was not easy for her.

The families also met with NDP MPP Kevin Yarde, the party's corrections critic, who both McKechnie and Tykoliz said appeared far more sympathetic. The NDP have been calling for reform and transparency around how the Province of Ontario is implementing any inquest recommendations.

Many of the inmates who died struggled to access help inside and inmates do not have access to the opioid overdose antidote naloxone, which is free outside of jails.

The families say they want rehabilitation to be part of incarceration, care they and advocates say could not only save lives but prepare inmates to better reintegrate into society when they're released.

"We're not going away," McKechnie said.

Nicole O'Reilly
Hamilton Spectator
May 07, 2019

The biggest sin is sitting on your ass.
- Florynce Kennedy

< *Book Review* >

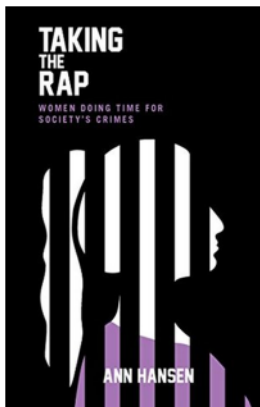
Taking the Rap: Women Doing Time for Society's Crimes

Through the lens of Ann Hansen's experiences in multiple Canadian jails and prisons, which span nearly 30 years, readers are taken inside these institutions for a close-up view of the dynamics that permeate daily prison life.

By weaving together personal stories and political context, Hansen presents three related themes throughout the book: the marginalisation and criminalisation of poor and minority groups, the dehumanisation and infantilisation of prisoners resulting from the nature of prison power dynamics, and the social and economic circumstances that perpetuate the cycle of victimisation and crime.

A self-proclaimed anarchist, Hansen's political activism before her arrest included involvement with groups that worked for prison abolition, women's rights, Indigenous rights, and environmental causes. Hansen's activism and opposition to capitalism as an economic and political form of governance are highlighted throughout the book, and readers are invited to see events through this frame of reference. Yet one need not adopt these perspectives to find this book useful in gaining a deeper understanding of the social, political, and economic forces that drive events both within, and outside, the prison walls.

Hansen's involvement with the group Direct Action, and its activities, comprises much of Part One of the book. Hansen, along with four of her confederates, dubbed the 'Squamish Five' by the media, were arrested on 20 January 1983 for their involvement in the bombing of the Litton Systems Canada, a manufacturing site for cruise missiles in Ontario. In 1984, Hansen was sentenced to life in prison for her involvement in: the Litton bombing; a bombing of the Cheekeye-



Dunsmuir plant, part of a hydroelectric project on Vancouver Island; and bombing of three Red Hot Video Stores, a chain that sold adult videos. The remainder of Part One of the book comprises the criminal trial and Hansen's early days in confinement at the Prison for Women (P4W) in Kingston, Ontario.

Parts Two and Three cover Hansen's time in various women's institutions, her eventual release in 1991, and her eventual return to prison for about two months in 2006. Part Four details Hansen's brief stay at Quinte Detention Center, a provincial prison in Napanee, Ontario, a few days at the Central East Correctional Centre located in Lindsay, Ontario, and finally a stint at the Grand Valley Institution for Women (GVI). Part Five covers the period of Hansen's release in 2006 through her re-incarceration in 2012 at GVI. Part Six covers the changes that had taken place at Grand Valley between 2006 and 2012, and the ongoing expansion of the prison system via new and existing prison facilities throughout Canada during that time.

Although the book is written as a memoir, it is infused throughout with glimpses into the broader social and economic forces that were shaping the growth of prisons and incarceration rates of women throughout North America over the past two decades. Yet, it is the personal stories of the women with whom Hansen was incarcerated that highlight the disproportionate effects on minorities, the uneducated, the drug-addicted, and the poor of various law and order policies.

Hansen has taken on a difficult task in attempting to weave together her own experience in penal institutions, the experiences of other women, and the political and economic forces that have contributed to the rapid expansion of prisons in North America. To a certain extent, some of the impact is lost in the statistics, and the later parts of the book become a bit bogged down and repetitive with numbers. Nevertheless, the parts where this book is at its best is when Hansen steps outside the role of spectator and political activist and relates the daily struggles and deprivations that the women in prisons endure before, during, and after their time in incarceration.

J.L. Kamorowski
Howard Journal of Crime & Justice
Jun 03, 2019

< *Feature Story* >

Convicted But Not Convinced:

A memory - a theatre group called 'Convicted But Not Convinced'.

We were convicted, but we were not convinced that life in prison was conducive to reconstruction of lives. How could we demonstrate these convictions? It was the theatre - portray the life within the prisons to the people 'outside'. And our company would consist of those who had been in prison.

Our leader was a veteran of Russian prisons - five years for narcotic smuggling before his father managed to spring him. Solitary confinement, he could not speak Russian. He did his time before it did him though it was only a reprieve.

A variety of offenders. He did a political crime. Dick was recently released after ten years for manslaughter.

I was an actor, but found myself repeating the same roles in different plays. The imposters who masqueraded as theatre directors had missed out on their true calling as headwaiters as they continued to serve half-baked puddings to a warmed-over audience. A talentless clique which hired each other, some armed with a foreign accent.

Films were worse. Cattle calls I attended featured a variety of Deliverance creeps as Hollywood North emulated Hollywood South. My rugged looks brought me work where talent didn't count and I suffered from receiving money for catering to an appetite for violence, greed and exploitation. I clung to the idea that there was hope for Canadian theatre but my idealism was rapidly fading.

I had written a thesis on drama in prisons and had toured shows in prisons and asylums. I believed that a sympathetic portrayal of parallel emotions acted out and the channelling of aggression in a controlled forum would relieve hostility. As we portrayed the uselessness of life inside, we would build an adjustment to life outside. We would leave the past behind by exorcising it through make believe. Theatre would be the bridge to the so called 'normal' life. Part of this process was the public declaration of being a convict. Thus exposed, one could get on with facing reality rather than obfuscation and shame.

While our director was visionary, he lacked practicality, and I became producer and stage manager. My factotum was a reformed car thief who had found rehabilitation through my theatre school. I introduced him to Chekhov, and he seized on this discovery like a rabid ferret.

We were the core. Others drifted in and out, appeared or disappeared depending on their visions of time or police detainment - mostly peaceful offenders with a predilection for drugs, alcohol, gambling, and occasional thievery.

Our set and props were simple and claustrophobic - an iron bar cage in which the main action took place, props only as in prison. Stark, meagre lighting heightened the drabness which was part of our message and suited our resources.

I was also the musician and songwriter. We illustrated tales that our ex-cons brought us - the night Bobby Landers died of a heart attack screaming for help while two guards sat and played cards. Such a scene would be enacted while I sang the song I had written; 'Bobby Landers Tonight'. Sometimes we sang songs such as 'Go Down You Murderers', an English folk ballad, sometimes we sang of dangerous men such as John Hardy or an original number such as 'Joyceville Hotel'.

Occasionally there was virtual reality. The unfamiliarity with theatrical convention in our company would enable real emotions to get the upper hand. Fists would fly, eyes might be blackened, once an arm was broken. After that, the perpetrator would break down, and end up sobbing: 'I'm really sorry man, I love you man ...'

The audience did not know how to react, was it real or make believe? Often it was both. This reinstated my belief that exciting theatre was still possible. Sometimes events were aided by the presence of police who had been tipped off that 'a group of cons were gathering for a rally'.

When we illustrated a jailbreak and a convict escaped, the audience would cheer. When we hunted him down in stylized fashion, often chasing him around the theatre, they would also cheer. The show was never the same, depending on where we were, which actors showed, and the audience reaction. Our leader's dog would join in the fray, barking and bounding throughout the theatre and joining the fights.

Our company, flexible, adaptive, was used to living on the edge. We began to relate in a

similar way to the outside, civilized smugness. Although now we were all 'outside', we lived our lives somewhat as though we were still 'inside'.

Convicted but not convinced? We preached to the sympathetic converted, and only occasionally planted a seed of understanding. One of these blossoms turned out to be one of the spectator cops, who had originally come to observe and control if necessary - he went on to work with street people. Our borrowed station wagon, strapped down with the prison bars, would arrive at the backdoor of a church basement. Volunteers would help move us in. Occasionally, we arrived at the front door of a three story coffee house, and here there were hangers-on and street people who were anxious to help, especially if they were invited to see the 'show' or play a small part.

Our 'rolling convict review' carried on throughout the summer, replacing members with recruits from the street and bars. We rolled along like a snowball down the hill, gaining momentum and gaining size. Word of our show spread slowly, but it spread.

One night, walking home from the 'Silver Dollar', we stumbled over an inert form. It was a native and we decided that Walter would be the native quotient to our show.

'The Trial of the Dene' was included - I will never forget when Walter appeared in front of the Judge, Jackie Burroughs, my friend the movie star.

When I first showed Walter the script he glanced at it and said 'I know all that . . .' and handed it back to me. I surmised that he could not read, it would be best to let him improvise.

When Walter appeared on the charge of vagrancy he pleaded guilty: 'Of course I have nothing. You took my land, you took my kids, you took my animals, then you took my life, eh? Now we don't live in this world and our world is gone. Now you move my life inside so you take the thing that was left - I belong outside. You have all now, the law is powerful and right and strong, and we are weak and lost, with no one to show us to the saving path'.

He let out a Hollywood style war whoop grabbing a fiddle and shouting: 'Let's dance, let's dance one more time'. We broke into a ragtime two-step, then two guards grabbed him and dragged him towards the cell. The audience stood up and yelled: 'Let him go, let him go!' This is one of the highlights that I remember.

Near the end of the summer, the rolling snowball began to melt, and grew smaller as it neared the bottom.

Dick, our star, decided he was a boxer. He was not successful, but he carved out a niche for himself coaching street kids in the manly art. Score one for us.

Some of our best players, natural con men who had been convicted for fraud or dope dealing, found safer and more lucrative ways to break the law.

Our dene star grew tired of his role - it was too painful to recite the horrors of his life night after night - he gradually disappeared into the back alleys.

Our director discovered he had dementia. In a lucid moment he disappeared. His body was never found, but on the riverbank not far from the Don Jail where the last executions in Canada took place around the time I had first come to Toronto, his faithful dog was discovered whimpering by the shore in starved condition.

My right-hand man started his own theatre, 'socially relevant drama' dealing with abuse, mental incompetence and victims of circumstance and poverty.

I returned to a disgruntled acting career. I had sipped absinthe with the theatre gods, and now draft beer?

That fall at the 'Festival of Festivals', I received tickets for five films in which I appeared. I saw the first, and although it starred Richard Burton in one of his final roles, it was so abysmal I returned to the street without watching the others or hanging out at the reception with the beautiful people. I walked home thinking things over.

Unlike Pierre, I did not have the state of the entire country to consider, I only had the rest of my life.

I thought of Walter, our leader, the ferret, the boxer - that summer the theatre had lived.

They, the players in life's production, had all made decisions for themselves, I suppose, and had moved on.

What was wrong with me?

- and so ended my theatre and film career.

Larry Ewashen (2001)
www.larrysdesk.com

Write what should not be forgotten.

- Isabel Allende

Audit flags risk of 'food-related health event' in Canadian prisons

A new federal audit raises quality and safety concerns regarding Canada's prison food system, warning of food being wasted, substandard meal portions and the risk of a "food-related health event" behind the wire.

Federal government auditors scrutinized kitchens and food preparation rules in federal institutions that feed more than 14,000 inmates daily. It found that the Correctional Service Canada (CSC) is failing to meet Canada Food Guide's nutrition guidelines, to provide quality assurance oversight and to take consistent steps to avoid contamination.

"By not meeting these required standards for food production, there is a risk that CSC could have a food-related health event at an individual site," the audit warns.

The issue of food quality has been a source of tension - and even violence - since CSC moved to a centralized production and "cook-chill" system in 2014. Auditors noted a "culture of resistance to change" with the Food Services Modernization Initiative, along with significant oversight and compliance failures.

The audit cites hygiene breaches by kitchen staff, including instances when hairnets weren't worn.

The audit also reported problems with the inspection of food deliveries. CSC policy calls for checks on quality and quantity and requires that goods be sent back if perishables aren't fresh, canned foods are leaking or frozen foods are thawing.

The audit, however, found that three of the 12 sites visited did not carry out such inspections or count the goods. At one site, they discovered metal shards embedded in a large sack of brown sugar after it hit the side of the delivery truck.

Weak controls, wasted resources

"Weak controls in the reception of goods can lead to potential health and safety issues and wasted resources if goods are spoiled or otherwise unusable and need to be disposed of," the audit says.

Auditors also found expired or spoiled goods in storage rooms, fridges and freezers, despite a "first in, first out" inventory rule.

Correctional Investigator Ivan Zinger wrote to CSC Commissioner Anne Kelly to raise concerns

about both the scope of the audit and the persistent problems with prison food quality.

In his letter, obtained through Access to Information, Zinger warns of health and security concerns associated with small portions and bad food.

"Food has gradually become another highly valued and dangerous commodity in the parallel or underground inmate economies," he wrote.

"Muscling, bullying and extortion for food is a common and pervasive problem, especially at higher security institutions."

Deadly riot over food

A deadly Saskatchewan riot in 2016 linked food shortages, poor meal quality and inadequate portion sizes to an organized protest and inmate strike that ended in violence. One person was killed and eight others injured.

But while the audit flagged problems with too-small portions, it also found a major problem with waste.

In one location, all leftovers - about one third of total production - were "needlessly thrown away" at the end of the meal, the audit said.

Zinger, who has been raising concerns about chronic food service problems at CSC, said the audit falls short on various fronts. He urged CSC to order a comprehensive, external review.

Healthier, cheaper food possible

Zinger said research has shown that serving wholesome and appetizing food in institutionalized settings is cheaper, healthier and safer in the long run.

"Scrimping on food may not be providing value for money or be worth the problems or exposure to risk that a single large-scale food safety event would entail," he warned.

Zinger also noted that the audit was based on the old food guide and questioned how CSC will comply with the new guide's emphasis on plant-based protein, fresh fruits and vegetables.

"The long-term health consequences of serving more highly processed meals to a population that is known to have higher incidence of diet-related illness and disease, such as obesity, hypertension and diabetes, was not acknowledged or probed in this audit," he said.

The audit also found CSC did not always respect religious dietary requirements for certain inmates. CSC says it is moving to adopt new policies, expected this fall, that will address gaps in previous policies.

Spokeswoman Christina Tricomi said CSC is committed to meeting with food services staff to review their roles and responsibilities.

"CSC will make sure there is more oversight and that an effective monitoring program is implemented to ensure compliance of policies. This will help achieve the overall desired outcomes," she said.

Kathleen Harris

CBC News - Jun 08, 2019

Half of Canada's prisoners were abused as children, McMaster study suggests

About half of Canada's inmates were abused as children, suggests a new study out of McMaster University.

Medical student Claire Bodkin led a team that studied data from 30 years of research into Canadian inmates. Their work was published in the March issue of the American Journal of Public Health (AJPH).

The researchers found 65% of female inmates experienced abuse in general, and half of them were sexually abused.

Bodkin said only one study in the data evaluated reported the prevalence of abuse among men. The researchers found abuse rates involving male inmates were at 35.5%, with 21.9% of them having experienced sexual abuse.

The team did a statistical analysis of the results to reach the conclusion that half of inmates had been abused, Bodkin said.

"That's an alarmingly high number."

These are the other researchers involved in the work, which included going over 34 studies from territorial, federal and provincial prisons and jails:

- Fiona Kouyoumdjian and Lucie Pivnick, both McMaster.
- Susan Bondy of the University of Toronto.
- Carolyn Ziegler of Toronto's St. Michael's Hospital.
- Ruth Elwood Martin of the University of British Columbia.

Bodkin said understanding people who have been incarcerated - including reoffenders - will go a long way in helping prevent crime.

Prisons need to take trauma into account in how they deal with inmates, Bodkin said.

"Regardless of where you stand politically, I think everyone can agree that prison is not a

healthy place for people, and that it's a symptom of multiple other things that have gone wrong."

So "how do we need to think about the impact of childhood trauma? How do we prevent childhood abuse from happening in the first place?"

The findings aren't surprising to Ruth Greenspan, executive director of the John Howard Society of Hamilton, Burlington and area in Ontario.

"Many resort to their own abuse of themselves," she said. "There's a lot of addiction, self-mutilation, self-harm, and suicide, which again, are all indications of having suffered a lot of trauma. PTSD is something you see when you work with this population."

There have been some great programs over the years to address trauma among people who commit crimes, she said. But the funding comes and goes.

On the whole, there aren't enough free resources for individuals - before, during or after prison, said Greenspan.

Prevention 'would just save so much money'

- "If we had more resources at the preventative level, before people got in conflict with the law, that would be really amazing," she said.
- "If we prevented it, we would just save so much money in the criminal justice system. And I don't think we're there yet."
- For her part, Bodkin has done some clinical training with men during and after prison. Some have "really expansive trauma histories," including severe abuse as children, she said.
- "We suspected it was high, but there wasn't good research out there that led to a national perspective in Canada."
- As for what constitutes abuse, Bodkin and her team used a World Health Organization definition, which means attendance at a residential school wasn't considered, although that research would be useful too, Bodkin said.
- At any given time, 41,000 people are incarcerated in Canada, and a disproportionate number are Indigenous.

Samantha Craggs

CBC News

Feb 20, 2019

Canada's prisons not meeting health, end-of-life needs of older inmates, report says

Older, long-serving inmates are being "warehoused" in Canadian prisons not equipped to handle end-of-life care, Canada's prison watchdog says.

The federal correctional investigator and the Canadian Human Rights Commission on Thursday called on the Correctional Service of Canada to meet the unique needs of older people behind bars, whose numbers are going up - along with government costs for holding them.

The two bodies said the country needs a national strategy to address the care and needs of people over 50 in federal custody.

They said the corrections service should find ways to release older inmates who don't pose undue risks to public safety into the community, long-term-care facilities, or hospices to outsource their care.

Many aged inmates remain in prison well past their parole eligibility dates even though they have completed almost all of their correctional plans and pose little risk to the public, the report says.

"Every person in Canada, including those in federal custody, has a right to live their final moments with dignity and safety. Prisons are not equipped to provide end-of-life care," Marie-Claude Landry, head of the human rights commission, said in a release. "Correctional Service Canada must do more to ensure inmates can return to the community and so that end-of-life care is humane and dignified. This starts with encouraging and facilitating inmates to maintain meaningful connections within their community."

Older inmates account for one-quarter of the inmate population in federal institutions, with their numbers increasing by 50 per cent over the last decade.

Those over age 65 are more likely to have chronic diseases than seniors who aren't in prison, which has helped driven up correctional health-care costs.

Interviews with more than 250 older inmates and dozens of staff also unearthed reports that older offenders were victims of "muscling" and bullying. There were also accessibility issues at every prison officials visited as part of their work.

"Older offenders are one of the most costly cohorts to incarcerate, yet they pose the least risk," said correctional investigator Ivan Zinger. "More responsive and humane models of care exist in the community that would better support the reintegration needs of older offenders at a significantly lower cost. These alternatives could be funded through savings generated by unnecessary incarceration."

The Canadian Press - Feb 28, 2019

How many incarcerated youth are placed in segregation?

Canada is missing swathes of information about young people in the justice system - such as the number who are in segregation (also called secure isolation, or solitary confinement).

More than 7,600 young people aged 12 to 17 were in correctional services on an average day in 2016-17, according to Statscan (even this number is a fragment; it excludes Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick due to the unavailability of data).

But it's difficult to know how those youth are faring within those facilities, and whether some provinces are more apt to put them in solitary or use restraining devices than others, said Alan Markwart, British Columbia's deputy representative for children and youth.

"We're dealing with young people with quite a disadvantage in the first place. And then to deprive them of any kind of mental stimulation and social contact for any prolonged period of time is probably not effective and can be quite detrimental."

The limited data available are troubling - a Manitoba study this year found 957 incidents of segregation in the province in a recent year, citing one youth who was kept in solitary for 400 straight days "in a cell smaller than a parking stall."

"We certainly have very significant gaps in [youth justice] data," says Nicholas Bala, a law professor at Queen's University and global expert in youth justice. This includes data on the lengths of sentences youth receive, how many get adult-like sentences and the number in segregation. "It makes policy making difficult," he said.

Tavia Grant & Eric Andrew-Gee
Globe and Mail - May 6, 2019

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% in prison
HIV = 1-5% in prison

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

BLEACH DOES NOT KILL HEP C

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.

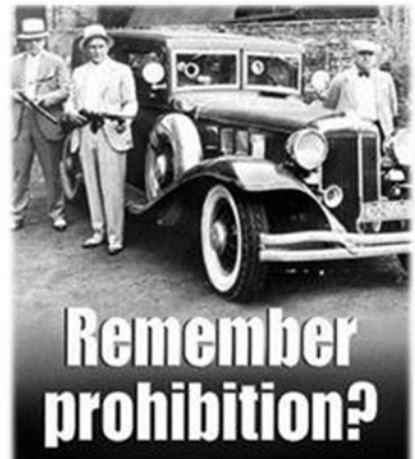
Incarcerated in Ontario? Need Information?

Write On! is a new volunteer group whose goal is to support Ontario prisoners 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



Remember prohibition?

It still doesn't work.



Nov 20 is Transgender Day of Remembrance

November 20 marks 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 per cent of trans youth in Canada have been harassed at school, and 37 per cent have experienced physical violence.

☞ Respect ☜

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

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 in Canada
- Over 5000 children are impacted by parental imprisonment in the GTA
- The number of children affected by parental incarceration only increases 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



F.E.A.T. - Family Visitation

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

F.E.A.T.'s Family Visitation Program provides weekend transportation from Toronto to correctional facilities in Southern Ontario for children and families to visit imprisoned loved ones.

During our trips, F.E.A.T provides free snacks and refreshments, offers a variety of games and activities, and plays movies.

Our bus is a place where youth and families have a chance to talk about their experiences of having a loved one inside and receive support from mentors and other riders.

Our Family Visitation Program is free for anyone 18 years old and younger. If you are interested in participating in our program, please call or email F.E.A.T. to register today.

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

info@featforchildren.org

or by phone at: 416-505-5333



PRISON RADIO

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

CPR: This program features content produced by CFRC volunteers and by other campus and community radio broadcasters, including CKUT Montreal's Prison Radio & 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.

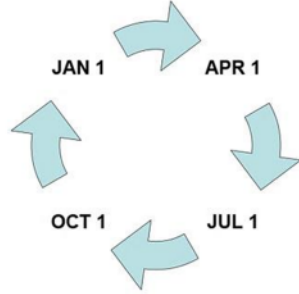
Prisoners and their loved ones are invited to contribute music requests, messages and suggestions for the program.

*Write: CPR c/o CFRC, Lwr 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 is Aug 10** ☞

- CLASS ACTION! NEWS -



- MAILOUT DATES -

☞ **Issue #14 - Summer 2019** ☞

Class Action News
PO Box 39, Stn P
Toronto, ON, M5S 2S6

download, print, contact:
www.ClassActionNews.org

*Next Issue: #15 - Fall 2019
Deadline: Sep 1, 2019
Mail-out: Oct 1, 2019*

If you don't like the news ...

... make some of your own !!!

Whatcha got in there that's gotta get out?

... Hmm ... ?

Art, Poems, Stories, News, Whatever !

