

# CLASS ACTION! NEWS



ISSUE 41 ~ SPRING 2026

< Editor's Note >

It is Spring & Issue #41 of 'Class Action News'. This zine is by & for the 'Prisoner Class' on Treaty Lands with Canada.



Every Issue provides a safe space for creative expression, informative news & support resources. These zines feature art, poetry, stories, news, observations, concerns, & anything of sincere value to share. Health & Harm Reduction info will always be provided, of course - Yes, Do Be Safe!

Quality & Quantity:

Items printed are those that are common for diverse readers, so no religious items please. Artwork: Black pen (tat-style) works the best. Cover Artist (CDN) 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' unless requested.

'Class Action News' is published 4 times a year & is free for prisoners in Canada. If you are on the outside r an organization, please do consider a donation. It really, really does help to get this inside!

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Very special thanks out to: Charles K. !

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).

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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' Treaty ≈

A month-long stay:  
in a hospital can cost more than \$13,500;  
in a prison, more than \$4,000;  
in a shelter, more than \$2,000;  
in supportive housing, just \$600.

## B.C. guidance on youth involuntary care criticized by two independent officers

Two independent provincial officers in British Columbia have separately criticized a recent decision to release guidelines aimed at increasing involuntary care among youth.

B.C. Human Rights Commissioner Kasari Govender says she has “serious concerns” about the new guidelines, which she describes as “ignoring important evidence on the ineffectiveness of involuntary care” especially when robust voluntary services are absent.

Meanwhile, B.C. Representative for Children and Youth Jennifer Charlesworth says in a report that the province should modernize the Mental Health Act to better address the unique needs of young people living with mental health challenges.

Charlesworth says in the report that almost 3,000 B.C. youths are involuntarily detained under the Mental Health Act each year.

The criticisms come after the province last week announced it is issuing guidance to physicians on providing involuntary care to youth, directing them to connect with parents as soon as the patient shows up with an impaired ability to engage in care.

Dr. Daniel Vigo, B.C.’s chief scientific adviser for psychiatry, toxic drugs and concurrent disorders, said during the announcement that intervention is needed to prevent brain damage and death, and involuntary care with parental consent minimizes the disruption to a child’s life.

Charlesworth says the new guidelines along with possible expansion of involuntary care “underscores the need for strengthened legal safeguards” for youth, and a “robust network” of voluntary support is also needed.

“Current legislation is woefully inadequate for the challenges we face now,” she says in the report. “While I recognize the need for involuntary care in specific situations, I am extremely concerned that young people and their families are not being provided with the services they need both before and after this extreme measure.

She adds that “government’s assertion that services are standing at the ready is simply not true.”

Govender, who had previously criticized the province’s shift toward expanding involuntary care, says in her statement that while she does

not oppose the measure as a “last resort in appropriate circumstances where it can actually help people,” overreliance on involuntary detentions puts youths at further risk.

“Involuntary care can be an important tool when urgently required to prevent serious harms, where the evidence shows that a particular mental disorder may be alleviated through such care,” she says.

“However, it is irresponsible to encourage further reliance on this already greatly used system when the government has not pointed to strong evidence supporting the involuntary detention of young people dealing with substance use and dependence.”

Govender also says some “noteworthy” evidence from previous reports shows youth may be at a higher risk of harm and death post-release from involuntary care.

She says she is open to discussing the Mental Health Act with Vigo and provincial ministries, and she also supports Charlesworth’s recommendations that attention needs to be paid on modernizing the Mental Health Act to make sure youths are protected.

A comprehensive review of the Mental Health Act was announced last spring.

The Canadian Press  
Dec 12, 2025

**Q. What’s the difference between a prisoner of war and a homeless person?**



**A. Under the Geneva Convention, a prisoner of war is entitled to food, shelter and medical care.**

A PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE FROM GUERRILLA GIRLS CONCISENESS OF THE ART WORLD

The largest youth jail in Ontario is routinely strip searching children:

'A systemic violation'

*The largest youth detention centre in Ontario is still routinely strip searching boys in their custody, the Star has learned, despite a court ruling declaring them unconstitutional.*

*The revelation was made earlier this month in a Newmarket courtroom, where a 17-year-old boy, charged in an alleged carjacking incident, is now at the centre of the latest public case to see a young person challenging that treatment in custody. The boy was stripped completely naked three times in a single day at the Roy McMurtry Youth Centre.*

*Three staff from the Brampton jail testified in a pretrial hearing earlier this month, according to a transcript obtained by the Star, that not only was this type of search standard procedure for the time, but since new provincial regulations were put in place this past summer, youth continue to be subjected to routine strip searches without any specific suspicion that the youth is concealing contraband, like drugs or weapons.*

*That appeared to shock a veteran criminal defence lawyer, Leora Shemesh, who is representing the young person.*

*"What I didn't envision, and I'll be quite frank with the Court, was that there is - there continues to be, at least my understanding of the new regulations and the new law - a systemic violation that is currently ongoing," she said in court.*

*It follows a Superior Court ruling in May 2025 in the so-called girl swarm case that both being subjected to routine strip searches and being made to strip completely naked in provincial custody was unconstitutional and stating that the law authorizing it was unreasonable.*

*"Strip searches should be recognized as exceptional and consequential, not routine," Justice Philip Campbell wrote. "This is especially true when they are performed on young persons who, because of their circumstances, are extremely vulnerable."*

*Youth detention is the responsibility of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services in Ontario. The province directly operates five jails, including the Roy, but the majority of young people in custody are held in*

*what are called "transfer payment" facilities run by organizations contracted by the government.*

*In July, the province updated the regulations to "clearly define rules and procedures for searches of staff and visitors and youth in these facilities," an unnamed ministry spokesperson said in an emailed statement in response to the Star's questions for this story.*

*The statement also said that the ministry is installing X-ray body scanners, a less intrusive search method, as a pilot project in two youth facilities, including the Roy, with plans to have them operational "in the coming months."*

*The ministry said it is unable to provide further details on matters before the court.*

#### Boys strip searched even after being in police custody

*The workers at the Roy took the stand Jan. 6 to answer questions about the treatment of the boy accused in the carjacking incident after he filed a motion saying his charter rights had been violated. The Crown attorney assigned to the case has conceded that the teen's right to not be subject to unreasonable search and seizure was violated. The boy cannot be identified under the Youth Criminal Justice Act. Neither the challenge or the charges against him have been resolved.*

*During the workers' testimony the court also heard about how the jail is still performing routine searches under the new regulations, with some modifications.*

*The new rules continue to permit strip searching under certain circumstances but say youth should not be completely undressed at any time. The updated procedures require the head of a facility to authorize a search when less intrusive methods "would not be effective at locating contraband or is not operationally feasible" or if the person in charge "believes on reasonable grounds that the young person is carrying contraband." The facility must also record the less intrusive search methods that were "used or contemplated" and a description of the reasonable grounds that led to the search.*

*In one exchange, Shemesh challenged longtime youth service worker Steven Bowes about these ongoing searches.*

*"As far as searching everyone for quote-unquote, contraband, there doesn't have to be grounds for it. It's just a standard policy. That's how it was when you learned about it in 1997.*

That's how it is now," Shemesh said.

"There's rules surrounding it," Bowes replied. "That's why you read the local operating policies and procedures, so you make sure you're following the policy."

"Right. But that's what I'm asking you. So when someone comes back from court ... it doesn't matter if you think they may or may not have contraband, they're being searched."

"Correct."

She pressed him further: "So when you say the grounds, there's no real grounds. It's just policy. The policy is, they're going to be searched - strip searched."

"Fair. Yes."

Bowes also confirmed that boys are also still searched when being admitted to the facility, even if they are coming from police custody.

Shemesh later questioned Charlene Tardiel, the youth centre administrator at the Roy who said she was responsible for oversight of how the jail operates in accordance with ministry policies and legislation. She confirmed the ongoing practice.

"You believe there are still routine searches being conducted at the Roy as we sit here today?" Shemesh asked.

"Yes," Tardiel replied.

The Roy staff testified that the teen in the carjacking case was made to strip down as an officer searched each piece of clothing, told to expose his genitals, lift them up and then turn around and bend over before he was allowed to redress.

That, the court heard, was part of the Roy's standard practice prior to July 2025. All three staff who testified acknowledged that the new regulations now prevent total nudity and said their practice has changed.

"So if (my client) was to go back to Roy McMurtry right now, leave court, go with you back to Roy McMurtry, he'd be strip searched?" Shemesh asked Bowes.

"Correct."

"And the only difference would be, you'd make sure he was wearing his T-shirt when you looked at his penis and genitals and rectum?"

"Correct and that's following the policy."

Strip searches challenged in girl swarm case  
The issue of routine strip searching in Ontario youth detention facilities became a central issue in the girl swarm case after the practice was

discovered during one of the girls' bail hearings. It led to two separate charter challenges in both the Ontario Court of Justice and Superior Court of Justice, ultimately leading to a reduction in sentences for each of the eight girls who were involved in the 2022 swarming death of Kenneth Lee.

In his decision, Justice Campbell put the ministry and youth detention facilities on notice, saying a "constitutionally compliant strip search" going forward would involve "articulating to a manager information that gives rise to a reasonable suspicion that a detained youth possesses contraband, or that a strip search is otherwise necessary, and securing the manager's approval."

Routine strip searching is also being challenged in civil court with a yet-to-be certified class action filed on behalf of young people who have undergone similar treatment.

As part of that case, a legal team from Sotos LLP that is representing the youth plaintiffs submitted expert evidence about the effectiveness and psychological impact of strip searches.

Kelly Hannah-Moffat, a criminology professor at the University of Toronto, wrote in an affidavit that the new regulations "do not adequately address the core concerns surrounding routine strip searches, nor do they offer sufficient protection for youth against unwarranted or unnecessary intrusions."

"Without a clear ban or stronger safeguards, the practice of routine strip searches is likely to persist under the guise of operational necessity or vague justifications such as 'risk' or feasibility," she wrote.

Further, she said strip searches "can inflict significant psychological harm and directly undermine the rehabilitative objectives of youth custody."

"Despite this, institutions typically justify strip searches on the grounds of safety and security, claiming they are necessary to prevent the smuggling of contraband (e.g., weapons or drugs) and to protect detainees, staff, and visitors. However, there is no clear evidence that strip searches are effective in achieving these goals."

Jennifer Pagliaro  
The Star  
Jan. 28, 2026

This former inmate says he was assaulted by guards. Maplehurst lost the security camera footage that could corroborate his claims

*In what one former inmate's lawyer described as a suspicious pattern, the Maplehurst Correctional Complex has lost critical video footage in another case of alleged inmate abuse. Jail officials admitted in court proceedings that staff saved the wrong surveillance camera footage in relation to a 2021 incident, meaning there is nothing to corroborate an inmate's claims that he was assaulted by correctional officers.*

*The former inmate, Christopher Vance, sued the province and four unnamed correctional officers in September 2023 for \$445,000, alleging he was assaulted by jail guards on two occasions - once at Maplehurst and once at the Stratford Jail - leading to physical and mental injuries.*

*Maplehurst officials infamously lost some audio and video footage of a December 2023 incident when nearly 200 inmates were violently strip-searched two days after an inmate punched a guard.*

*A judge recently concluded that someone at Maplehurst "likely" destroyed the footage as part of an overall attempt by jail officials to cover up what happened. The missing footage and the lack of accountability for its inexplicable disappearance were factors in the judge's decision to throw out first-degree murder charges.*

*Vance's lawyer, Lydia Dobson, said in an interview with the Star in early October that the fact Maplehurst has lost potentially incriminating video footage in multiple cases is "very, very concerning."*

*The jail's admission that it had lost surveillance camera footage in Vance's case emerged during the October 2024 pretrial examination of one of Maplehurst's deputy superintendents, who explained that a staff member tasked with collecting and preserving video of Vance's alleged assault mistakenly saved video from an adjacent wing of the jail. (Video from the correct wing was subsequently deleted when the 59-day retention period expired.)*

*Dobson said she and Vance have "some skepticism" of the jail's explanation that it was an honest mistake.*

*"It's very obviously the wrong wing," Dobson said, adding that video footage disclosed to them*

*from other surveillance cameras is of the correct wing, which raises questions about how such a mistake could be made.*

*"Seeing this pattern at Maplehurst where critical video footage ... is missing or unavailable, it's just very, very concerning from our perspective."*

*The Star has not viewed any video footage related to Vance's case. The footage that does exist was shared confidentially with Vance and his lawyer as part of the lawsuit's disclosure process, but the video is not publicly accessible. Contacted by the Star in November, Vance's lawyer said she could no longer comment on the case.*

*A spokesperson for the Ministry of the Solicitor General, which is responsible for the province's jails, did not respond to questions for this story, writing via email in October it would be "inappropriate" to do so while the matter remained "before the court."*

*Vance, who has anxiety and Autism Spectrum Disorder, was in a cell on a specialized mental health range at Maplehurst in September 2021 when he was ordered by jail staff to move to a general population cell.*

*He refused to leave, he said, because he believed he needed more treatment. After being ordered again by jail staff to leave the cell, Vance took a rope he had made from torn bedsheets and tied it around his neck and then locked himself inside the cell. His statement of claim describes these actions as a "cry for help." "I panicked," Vance said in an interview with the Star in October.*

*Two guards then entered his cell and one of them, according to Vance's claim, grabbed him by his shirt collar, at which point Vance pulled away. One of the guards then punched Vance in the face, knocking his glasses off and stomping on them, Vance claims. He said both guards then repeatedly punched and kicked him until other guards arrived and placed Vance in handcuffs.*

*In its statement of defence, the province denied that correctional officers used excessive force, claiming Vance "repeatedly refused to comply with the directions of the correctional officers" and was "verbally abusive and physically assaultive" towards the staff.*

*"In an attempt to maintain order, protect themselves and the plaintiff from harm, correctional officers utilized necessary force to resolve the situation caused by the plaintiff,"*

reads the statement of defence. “Ontario pleads that any use of force employed by the officers and staff at (Maplehurst) was reasonable and necessary, as the plaintiff was refusing to follow orders, was a danger to himself and was a danger to staff.”

There are no surveillance cameras inside the cells, where the alleged assault occurred, but there is a camera pointed at Vance’s cell door and could have theoretically captured some of what took place inside the cell. That’s the footage that is missing.

Vance, who later pleaded guilty to arson and other offences and spent three-and-a-half years in custody, also claims guards “smashed” his head against each doorframe they passed through after taking him from his cell. The videos disclosed to them exclude those alleged incidents, he claims, by cutting to a new camera angle just as he and the guards approach a doorframe, rather than showing them pass through.

Brendan Kennedy  
The Star  
Dec 11, 2025



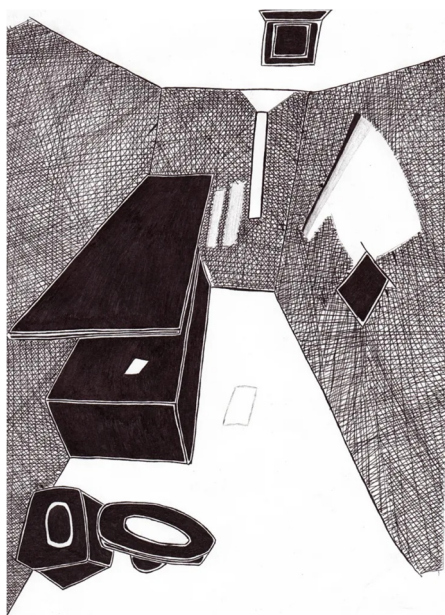
By threatening to get rid of prison librarians, Canada is not going by the book

Nelson Mandela was wrongly imprisoned in a South African jail cell for 27 years. Once released, Mr. Mandela became the president of South Africa and a voice for fair treatment of the incarcerated. So he knew a thing or two about the prison system - and how the way we treat prisoners reflects the broader society. As he said: “No one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails.”

In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Nelson Mandela Rules, aimed at bringing humane principles to the system that governs the shunned and forgotten in our prisons. Canada’s federal and provincial governments apparently haven’t bothered to read these rules, since our prisons and jails frequently break them.

Rule 12 calls for each cell to house just one prisoner overnight; in Canada, inmates are reportedly stacked three or four to a two-person cell. Rule 43 prohibits prolonged solitary confinement of more than 15 consecutive days; in Thunder Bay District Jail, where nearly all inmates are Indigenous, Adam Capay spent more than 1,500 days in solitary.

And now, Canada may be set to defy Rule 64: “Every prison shall have a library for the use of all categories of prisoners, adequately stocked with both recreational and instructional books, and prisoners shall be encouraged to make full use of it.” Earlier this month, a decades-old program to allow incarcerated people in Quebec to pursue postsecondary education was slashed.



And after Ottawa announced a 15% operating budget cut in 2025 for Correctional Services Canada over the next three years, the CSC has told stakeholders that it is preparing to eliminate all librarian positions.

There are at least 31 CSC librarians working in 38 federal prison libraries, said Tom Best, executive director of the Book Club for Inmates, a national volunteer-run charity. Librarians are trained educators and information specialists whose work in ensuring equitable access to books is particularly important for prisoners, for whom books can represent a lifeline, and a way to better themselves in preparation for reintegration. In maximum-security institutions, librarians are the ones who push the book carts down the halls, and they also provide crucial structured support around literacy; because inmate literacy rates are lower than in the general population, some struggle with simply picking up a book.

Mr. Best accompanied me when I visited the Grand Valley Institution for Women in Kitchener, Ont., last year as part of the Book Club program. About 30 women and support staff were in attendance that night, seated in a giant circle. All of them had received and read *The Knowing*, my third book about Indian Residential Schools and my hunt for my missing family members. We had a moving discussion about belonging, about where we come from, and about the strength of mothers.

In the past several years, the Book Club has donated around 200,000 books to federal prisons. A selection of Canadian authors have visited the clubs, such as Lawrence Hill, David Chariandy, Ian Williams, Carol Off and Linden MacIntyre. This is an amazing, volunteer-led effort to restock prisons' barren library shelves; for context, most federal prison libraries have budgets of under \$1,000 a year, Mr. Best said.

The Book Club will persist. But eliminating the jobs of people who help rally others around the importance of reading will make things grimmer all the same.

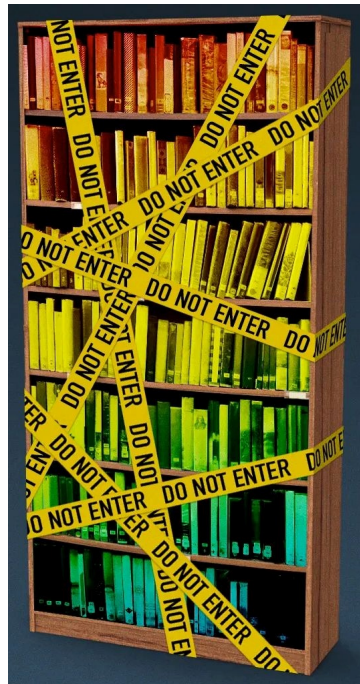
What's more, prison librarians are already among the lowest-paid workers in the federal system. So the government savings from cutting these positions will be marginal - but the damage to inmates' potential rehabilitation, to institutional stability and to the mental health of those who may never see visitors will be huge.

Librarians offer simple, human interactions that steer inmates toward healing, and that matters to all Canadians. After all, these inmates will one day be released into your cities and towns - they won't just disappear into crevices somewhere. "We want them to be productive. If we don't give them the tools to change their lives, they'll be back in prison and we'll blame the system," said Mr. Best.

Currently, "tough on crime" sentiments are popular, and bail reform efforts, such as the recently introduced Bill C-14, will lead to harsher punishments. In the context of these trends and the further diminishment of already paltry prison budgets, more inmates are likely to reoffend. "I just wish someone would ask: what did we do for that person when they were incarcerated?" said Mr. Best. "What did we do to make a difference so the crime wouldn't be committed again?"

Libraries without librarians are just rooms. And they aren't just a perk for prisoners: they benefit all of us.

Tanya Talaga  
Globe and Mail  
Feb 26, 2026



## 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

## Book Clubs for Inmates (BCFI)

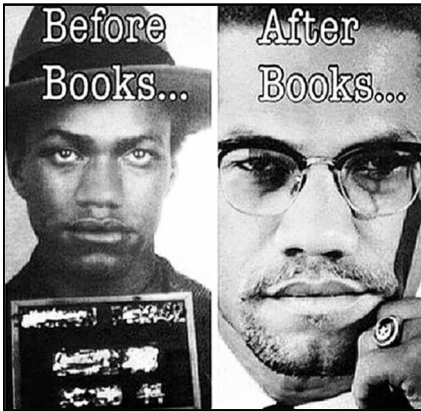
*Book Clubs for Inmates (BCFI)* is a registered charity that organizes volunteer-led book clubs within federal penitentiaries across Canada. Currently, BCFI is facilitating 30 book clubs from Nova Scotia to British Columbia.

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

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

### Book Clubs for Inmates

720 Bathurst St, Toronto, ON, M5S 2R4



*I have often reflected upon the new vistas that reading has opened to me.*

*I knew right there in prison that reading had changed forever the course of my life.*

*As I see it today, the ability to read awoke inside me some long dormant craving to be mentally alive.*

- Malcolm X

*There is a saying in prison that prisoners are the cousins of death because family and society forgets about them.*

- Anon

## Trans+ People in Canadian Prisons Project

In 2017, “gender identity or expression” was added to the Canadian Human Rights Act as prohibited grounds for discrimination.

There are two ways for people to get involved in this research:

- (1) talk to us in a 1-hour private, confidential interview about their thoughts and experiences,
- (2) answer similar questions in writing using the mail.

We are hoping to connect with:

- (1) Current Trans+ prisoners in Canadian federal prisons, AND
- (2) Current cisgender (non-Trans+) prisoners who have ever lived in a Canadian federal correctional institution with Trans+ prisoners.

If you chose to participate, no guards or administrators will be present or observing in any way. Each institution will have a CSC Staff person who can help arrange participation and has promised to keep your involvement confidential. We will use a pseudonym (fake name) when quoting people or mentioning the stories that are shared with us.

This project is being conducted by the University of Victoria with funding from the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC).

If people have questions, or would like to volunteer to be interviewed, or participate by mail, they can contact us at 1-800-516-3083 (on the common access list) or at:

### Trans+ Prison Project

Chair in Transgender Studies, UVic

PO Box 3050 STN CSC

Victoria BC V8W 3P5

*We work on ourselves in order to help others, but also we help others in order to work on ourselves.*

*The truth you believe and cling to makes you unavailable to hear anything new.*

- Pema Chödrön

*The general population doesn't know what's happening, and it doesn't even know that it doesn't know.*

*Nobody is going to pour truth into your brain.*

*It's something you have to find out for yourself.*

- Noam Chomsky

**Prison Health is Public Health:**

*The Right to Hepatitis C Prevention, Diagnosis, and Care in Canada's Correctional Settings*

**About Hepatitis C**

*Hepatitis C (HCV) is a preventable and curable liver infection. It is the leading cause of liver disease and transplantation, and one of the most burdensome infectious diseases in Canada. HCV spreads through contact with infected blood, but symptoms may be delayed for years, so many people who are infected are unaware. The only way to confirm a chronic HCV infection is through a blood test.*

*Hep C Elimination is Within Canada's Reach*  
*Progress in treating HCV is one of the great medical breakthroughs of our time, making elimination possible. Direct Acting Antivirals (DAAs) are a new generation of medications for treating HCV infection. These new therapies are highly effective, curing HCV infection in more than 95% of people treated with daily pills in as little as 8-12 weeks, with minimal side effects.*

**Canada's Promise**

*In May 2016, the first-ever Global Viral Hepatitis Strategy was endorsed by the 194 Member States of the World Health Organization (WHO), with the goal of eliminating viral hepatitis as a public health threat by 2030. As a Member State, Canada signed onto this strategy and endorsed the targets contained within it. The WHO strategy includes specific targets, and all countries were tasked with developing a National Action Plan to meet these targets. The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) responded by publishing the Pan-Canadian framework for action to reduce the health impact of Sexually Transmitted and Blood-Borne Infections (STBBIs) in 2018 and the Government of Canada five-year action plan on STBBIs in 2019.*

**Why Focus on Correctional Settings?**

*People who are incarcerated (PWA) are 40 times more likely to be exposed to HCV than Canada's general population. In addition, people who are released from incarceration often face barriers to accessing health care in the community. The delivery of HCV care to people in correctional settings in Canada is essential to HCV elimination.*

**Current State:****Federal - YES !!!**

*Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) could be well-positioned to achieve HCV elimination in people incarcerated within federal Canadian correctional institutions by 2030, with best practices such as universal HCV screening, universal access to treatment, and some harm reduction services available.*

**Provincial/Territorial - NO !!!**

*The same standard of health care is not available to people in correctional centres as in the community in any province, and significant disparities in HCV care exist across provincial correctional centres. HCV elimination is unlikely to occur in the Canadian provincial/ territorial prison system by 2030.*

[www.actionhepatitiscanada.ca/prisonhealth](http://www.actionhepatitiscanada.ca/prisonhealth)

**Doing 2yrs less? So, when you get out:**

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

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**

**Toll-Free Support Line for SK Prisoners**

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

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

☎ 1-866-949-0074 ☎

**Phone Line for Disabled Prisoners who Experience Ableism and Racism in Ont.**  
www.djno.ca

**OUT of PRISON: 905-973-4332**  
**TRAPP Phone Numbers (Toll Free):**

**Hamilton - 905-631-4084**  
**Kenora - 807-548-4312**  
**Kingston - 613-881-0050**  
**London - 519-690-0836**  
**Milton - 416-775-7983**  
**Niagara - 905-227-5066**  
**Ottawa - 613-768-9951**

**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 - Wed 9 pm*
- Kingston - CFRC 101.9 FM  
*CPR: Prison Radio - Wed 7-8 pm*
- Montreal - CKUT 90.3 FM  
*PRS - 2<sup>nd</sup> Thurs 5-6 pm & 4<sup>th</sup> 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.*

*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.*

*2025 dates: Feb 19, Mar 19, Apr 16, May 14, Jun 11, Jul 9, Aug 6, Sep 3, Oct 1, Oct 29, Nov 26, Dec 24.*

*Write: CPR c/o CFRC, Lwr Carruthers Hall,  
Queen's University,  
Kingston, ON, K7L 3N6*

*Email: CFRCprisonradio@riseup.net*  
*Call: 613-917-1390 to record a message or music request to be broadcast on-air.*

**Free Jail Hotline for MCC, OCI, TEDC, TSDC & VCW**

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

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

☎ 416-775-9239 ☎

**Why a Jail Hotline?**

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

**Who Should Call This Hotline?**

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

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

*TorontoPrisonersRightsProject@gmail.com*

**Free Jail Hotline for EMDC**

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

☎ 519-642-9289 ☎

**Penpal Program for Gay, Queer,  
Trans Prisoners**

*The Prisoner Correspondence Project runs a penpal program for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, and queer prisoners in Canada, pairing them up with gay and queer and trans people outside of prison for friendship and support. We also coordinate a resource library of information and resources related to health, sexuality, and prisons - get in touch with us for a list of resources we have, or for details.*

*If you want to be paired up with a penpal, please send a short description of yourself & interests to:*

Prisoner Correspondence Project  
c/o QPIRG Concordia  
1455 de Maisonneuve W.  
Montreal, QC, H3G 1M8

*Please indicate French or in English. Veuillez svp nous indiquer anglais ou en français.*



**Nov 20 is Transgender Day  
of Remembrance**

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

☞ Respect ☞

**Incarcerated in Canada?  
Need Information?**

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

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

*Write to us at:*

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

**Prison Visiting Rideshare Project**

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

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

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

**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

[www.kipcanada.org](http://www.kipcanada.org) ~ 416-505-5333



### 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.

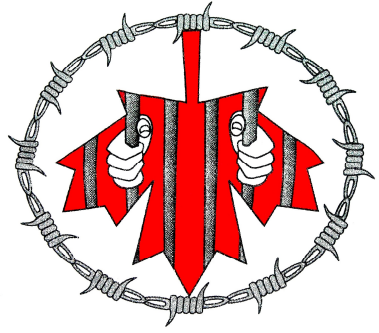
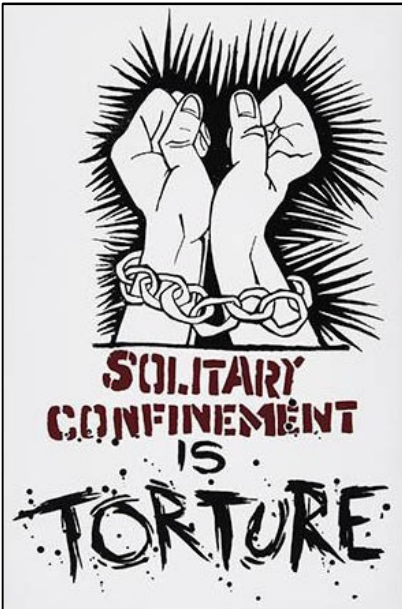
Our Family Visitation Program is free for anyone 18 years old and younger. If you are interested in participating in our program, please call or email K.I.P. to register today.

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

[info.kipcanada@gmail.com](mailto:info.kipcanada@gmail.com)

or by phone at: 416-505-5333

# SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IS TORTURE



Issue #41 - Spring 2026

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

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> Jan > Apr > Jul > Oct >

Next Issue: #42 - Summer 2026

Deadline: Jun 1, 2026  
Mail-out: Jul 1, 2026

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If you don't like the news ...

... make some of your own !!!

Whatcha got in there that needs gettin' out?

... Hmm ... ?

Art, Poems, Stories, News, Whatever !

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