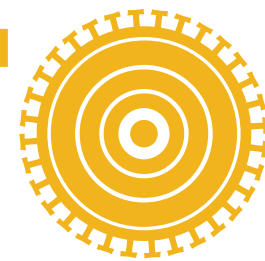


CELL COUNT



YOUR PRISON HEALTH RESOURCE SINCE 1995

FREE - FOR PRISONERS, EX-PRISONERS & THEIR FAMILIES

THE VACCINATION ISSUE - #93



#FreeTheYouth

By Nolan R. Turcotte

I was asked by a friend of mine to write a piece on "Abolition". To be completely honest, I'm not that well-informed on the whole concept of abolition, aside from the obvious; putting an end to incarceration. Since my friend's request, I've spent much of my time considering the possibilities, and trying to

understand exactly where abolitionists are coming from. I appreciate where their hearts are at, but with all due respect, I'm not quite sure they even fully understand how to achieve their goal. Maybe, my opinion is premature, due to my lack of knowledge on the subject, but I stand by it, since everything I have read regarding abolition favors the adult prison system. Has anybody every considered

putting an end to youth custody, or am I the first? Allow me to paint a picture for you. Let my experiences be the brushstrokes that lead to the completion of a masterpiece we can title, "Abolition".

My Indigenous father grew up in a violent household that practiced alcoholism and lacked culture. His intergenerational impacts became mine, which momentarily

damaged our relationship and affected my upbringing. I vividly recall the kind of child I was, and my parents had more than their hands full. Nothing they did worked, so they sought "professional help" from psychologists and psychiatrists when I was four years old. According to the doctors I was hyper-active and defiant, but what toddler isn't? I was then prescribed medication such as Ritalin

and Risperdal to calm my ass down. It didn't work, though, because I found the medication crushed up in my peanut butter-jam sandwiches. Lol! My parents continued to struggle with me, but little did they know their first-born son was being molested, which only enhanced my acting out. A few years pass and things only got worse, to say the least. In grade three I began

cont'd as "Turcotte" on pg 9

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WORKSHEET REQUESTS

It has been over a year since PASAN has been able to bring workshops and trainings to prisons in Ontario. In response to this, we have put together short worksheets that touch on some of the topics we would have talked about in our workshops. These worksheets also include fun activities like word searches and crossword puzzles. If you are in an institution in Ontario and are interested in receiving these worksheets, call us at 416-920-9567/ 1-866-224-9978 or send us a letter at 526 Richmond Street E., Toronto, ON, M5A 1R3 to let us know and we will send them out to you.

SPECIAL ISSUE THEME

The Journal of Prisoners on Prisons (JPP) invites submissions for a special issue on the theme of prison labour. Work and labour are central to the history and current practices of imprisonment. Prison labour has been lauded as a key component of rehabilitation by its supporters, while decried as slavery and exploitation by prison abolitionists and those otherwise critical of incarceration practices. In recent years, several major corporations have faced controversy due to their sourcing of prison-made products, and issues related to prison labour have been central to prison protests and strikes in the United States, as well as in other jurisdictions.

This issue of JPP seeks perspectives on prison labour from current and former prisoners. Submissions related but not limited to the following are welcome:

Prison labour in a time of pandemic
Prison work and vocational programs
Culturally-specific vocational training
Prison industry, Prison labour and animal programs, Unemployment and underemployment, Work and re-entry, Prison labour organizing, Prison labour stoppages and/or strikes, Prison labour at the nexus of colonialism, slavery, gender and/or ability
Important Dates

Submissions by authors: 1 May 2021
Editorial decision and reviewer comments to authors: 1 July 2021
Revised manuscripts: 1 November 2021

Final editorial decision to authors: 1 January 2022

Publication date: 2022

PASAN 30TH ANNIVERSARY

PASAN's 30th Anniversary is coming up and we want to hear from you! Please call or write to us and let us know:

- 1) What has PASAN meant to you?
 - 2) Why do you think PASAN is important to have around?
 - 3) What is/are your fondest memories of PASAN?
 - 4) What would you like to see from PASAN in the next 30 years?
- We will use your answers to your questions in our 30th anniversary celebration and feature them in an upcoming issue of Cell Count!

APPLY FOR A TORONTO GOOD FOOD

Box!

With the support of FoodShare Toronto, Toronto Prisoners' Rights Project is offering a limited supply of fresh fruit and vegetable boxes to people impacted by incarceration in Toronto (recently released prisoners and prisoners' family members).

Register online: <https://www.toronto-prisonersrightsproject.org/mutual-aid/good-food-box>

Call within the GTA: (416) 775-9239 on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday from 9-11 am EST and 2-4 pm EST.

SUBMIT YOUR ART TO THE TPRP MURAL PROJECT!

We are looking for prisoners to submit visual and written mural ideas that imagine a future where all life is precious and where we keep each other safe without police and prisons.

Over the course of 2021-2022, Toronto Prisoners Rights Project (TPRP) is creating a series of permanent, large-scale murals titled (This is How) We Keep Each Other Safe. The murals will be erected in heavily policed, underserved, resilient and vibrant Indigenous and racialized communities in Toronto, including: Moss Park, Eglinton West, Scarborough/Malvern, and Rexdale/Jane and Finch. Every step of the project is a collaboration with grassroots groups, artists, community members, and prisoners who are imagining, living, and actively organizing towards an abolitionist future.

Each artist will receive \$50 for submissions (up to a maximum of 40 applicants). If your art is selected to be in a mural, we will let you know, and you will be eligible to receive part of a \$5000 artist fee (distributed equally amongst artists).

Submit via email to dreamabolition@gmail.com or by mail to: Toronto Prisoners' Rights Project, PO Box 291 Toronto P, Toronto, ON M5S 2S8.

Please include the following information: (1) Your full name and mailing address. (2) An email or phone number to reach you or a loved one (if possible). (3) How we can pay you (e-transfer or money order). (4) Title of artwork. (5) Name that you want connected to your work (or indicate 'anonymous'). (6) Do you want your work returned to you by mail or should we keep it? (7) Can we display your artwork online if it is not used for a mural? (8) If there is an opportunity for sale, do you want your work to be sold, with 50% of the funds given to you and 50% donated to the Prisoner Emergency Support Fund? If so, please indicate the price that it should be listed at.

Q&A ABOUT THE COVID-19 VACCINES

Breanne: Dr. Nazari my friends were telling me that COVID-19 vaccines changes the DNA of our cells, is this true? Are these vaccines even safe?

Dr. Nazari: Yes, COVID-19 vaccines are safe. The methods used in these vaccines is relatively new, so I understand your concerns Breanne. When a person recovers from COVID-19 it's because their body developed an immune response by creating antibodies.

Vaccines work similarly to help our bodies develop antibodies without us coming in contact with the virus. During this entire process the DNA of our cells remains unaffected and unchanged because it's stored within a protected bubble called the nucleus. So to answer your question my dear, no, COVID-19 vaccines will not change the DNA of our cells.

Breanne: But what if I take the vaccine and get coronavirus?

Dr. Nazari: There is a lot of information out there, I can see how this can be confusing. The vaccines do not contain the live coronavirus, so we can't get COVID-19 from them. Vaccines are designed to prevent or minimize the effects of COVID-19. They work to reduce our chances of becoming severely ill or dying if we do get infected.

Breanne: But I've read the newspaper articles about people getting vaccinated but still getting the virus.

Dr. Nazari: It takes time for the body to build an immune response. If we came in contact with the virus before our bodies developed a response, we can contract the virus. The vaccines are designed to protect us from getting sick, they don't prevent us from coming in contact with the virus. Safety measures such as physical distancing, wearing face coverings and regular hand washing will help with that.

Breanne: Oh! I had no idea. I also want to know your thoughts about chips and other tracking technology used in these vaccines

Dr. Nazari: While there have been many rumours circulating about microchips being planted into COVID-19 vaccines, there are no chips in the COVID-19 vaccine. Health Canada along with the FDA has published ingredient lists of COVID-19 vaccines for the public to read.

Breanne: I also want to ask you about the COVID-19 vaccines and fertility. Does the COVID-19 vaccine affect your ability to make or have babies in any way?

Dr. Nazari: We understand that many people are concerned about their health, especially since the pandemic started. However, to date there is no evidence or data to suggest that COVID-19 vaccines affect fertility.

Breanne: Dr. Nazari, thank you so much. You've been so helpful. Thank you for answering my questions.

Dr. Nazari: You're welcome Breanne. If you have any other questions don't hesitate to reach out.

Brought to you by: CACVO/ACCHO, TAIBU Community Health Centre, Black CAP, St. Michael's Unity Health Toronto, High Impact Field-Based Interventions

CALLING ALL PRISONERS FROM AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN AND BLACK (ACB) COMMUNITIES!

We want to hear from you so we can better serve and support you during your incarceration.

- 1) How can we support you better? What kind of resources or groups would be helpful for you?
- 2) Does programming provided by the institutions

or your correctional plan feel relevant or helpful to you? 3) Do you experience racism or discrimination?

4) How has your mental health been affected while inside? 5) What is accessing health care or other services like for you? 6) Are you given access to culturally relevant items, supports, resources, groups, etc? 7) Have you had an experience inside that you felt was racist or discriminatory? 8) How (much) do you think race plays into how you are treated by others (CSC, peers, etc.)? 9) What are some issues that you face that you think people of other races do not? 10) What have your experiences around the parole process looked like for you? 11) Anything else you would like to share?

Please call us at 1-866-224-9978 or send us a letter: PASAN, 526 Richmond St E, Toronto, ON M5A 1R3

A LETTER FROM PASAN REGARDING THE COVID-19 VACCINES

To our dear readers inside, We want you to know that we at PASAN have been working hard to find ways to support you and find creative solutions to the limitations placed on the work we're able to do with you because of the pandemic. We care a lot about you all, and will continue to work in the best ways we can for you. We also want to acknowledge how devastating, stressful, scary, unsettling, infuriating and sad this pandemic has been for you. As well, how resilient, courageous, creative and patient you have been in dealing with it all. You have called and written to us about your experiences, and we are shocked and saddened to learn of them. We believe that you all should have access to the same level of protection against COVID-19 as many of us on the outside have. Just as this virus has greatly impacted other congregate settings like long-term care homes, warehouses and factories, it has also disproportionately affected those of you in prisons, jails and detention centres across this country. We understand that vaccinations are taking place for those of you who are incarcerated, and we want to make sure you have all the facts about the vaccines so you can make an informed choice. There are a lot of rumours making their rounds about these vaccines, but we at PASAN agree with the overall scientific consensus: that if you do not have underlying health conditions or are taking medications that prevent you from getting the vaccine, we strongly suggest you consider taking a vaccine. For almost 30 years, PASAN has worked alongside you to demand that you have access to the same level of healthcare and harm reduction supplies and programs that those of us on the outside have. We care so deeply about your health. We want you all to be safe and well. If you have any questions or concerns about the vaccines, please do not hesitate to call or write to us. We can be reached at our toll-free number at 1-866-224-9978, from Monday - Friday, 10am-5pm eastern standard time, 7am - 2pm PST, 8am - 3pm Mountain, 9am - 4pm Central, 11:30am - 6:30pm in Newfoundland or by mail at PASAN, 526 Richmond St E, Toronto, ON M5A 1R3

What People in Prison Need to Know About the COVID-19 Vaccine

Over 100 incarcerated people around the country told us their questions about the vaccine. Here's information about whether it's safe, when it could be available and more.

The Marshall Project: Nonprofit journalism about criminal justice
March 2, 2021

By Ariel Goodman [Edited by Cell Count to include Canadian-specific info]

Incarcerated people have been among the hardest hit by the coronavirus in the United States [and Canada]. At least one in every five people in state and federal prisons have caught the virus since the pandemic began, and over 2,000 have died [in Canada, according to the prison ombudsman: COVID-19 cases have more than doubled in federal prisons. Close to 70 percent of second-wave cases occurred at Sask Pen and Stony Mountain, with Indigenous prisoners disproportionately affected. As of March 31, there have been 1540 confirmed cases of COVID and five deaths in federal institutions out of a total population of around 14,000 people. In Ontario provincial institutions, as of April 26th, 2021, there have been 1970 cases of people who have had COVID and recovered. The Prison Pandemic Partnership estimates that there have been over 7000 COVID cases linked to prisons and jails, 5000 of which have been prisoners].

Since COVID-19 vaccines became available, incarcerated people and their families have been telling The Marshall Project that they're not getting key information. So we surveyed 136 imprisoned people to collect the most common questions. Then we got answers from vaccine experts, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) fact sheets and other reliable sources.

How does the vaccine work? There are two COVID-19 vaccine brands widely distributed in the U.S. [and Canada]: Pfizer-BioNTech, which requires two shots 21 days apart, and Moderna, which requires two shots 28 days apart [since the first dose is for immunity and the second dose is for longevity, and because of a slower vaccine rollout in Canada, the second dose has been extended to up for 4 months after the first dose]. Both work by injecting a small piece of genetic material called "messenger RNA" into your body. Messenger RNA teaches the body to make a harmless "spike protein" like the one found on the coronavirus. Your body learns to recognize the spike protein as something foreign and produces virus-fighting antibodies to protect you against it.

The Federal Drug Administration (FDA) authorized a Johnson & Johnson vaccine on February 27, and distribution will ramp up in March [in Canada, Johnson & Johnson is expected to arrive with 300,000 doses in the first

week of May 2021]. Unlike the other two vaccines, it only requires one shot. It works by injecting an inactive version of a common virus called an adenovirus into your body. The adenovirus carries instructions to your cells to create the spike protein, which sparks an immune response. All three vaccines are highly effective in preventing hospitalization and death from COVID-19. Because the vaccine supply is so scarce, most people in or outside of prisons can't choose which brand they get.

What are the most common side effects of the vaccine? All three vaccines can cause mild side effects one to three days after receiving a shot. Some common side effects are irritation, swelling, tenderness and muscle pain in the area of your arm where you got the shot. Some people have reported fever, chills, headache and tiredness, especially after the second dose. Experts suggest you plan for a day of rest and take a pain reliever.

Are there any serious side effects? A tiny percentage of people who received the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines had a severe allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. Most of these reactions occurred shortly after the shot, which is why you should wait about 15 minutes before you leave the place where you were vaccinated. Be sure to tell the person giving you the shot if you have a history of severe allergic reactions or if you've ever had to use an EpiPen. While no one who participated in the Johnson & Johnson clinical trial had an anaphylactic reaction after receiving the vaccine, a small percentage of people experienced blood clotting. Experts are still studying whether this was related to the vaccine. [From Health Canada's website: "In March 2021, there were European reports of rare blood clots associated with low levels of blood platelets (thrombocytopenia). Health Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, provincial and territorial public health authorities and the National Advisory Committee on Immunization have been closely monitoring the emerging evidence and taking appropriate action. Following an assessment of the evidence, Health Canada updated the product information and issued a public advisory on April 14, 2021. Health Canada will continue to monitor information from the manufacturers and international regulators about this and any other potential safety issues. Provincial public health authorities will continue to update their immunization strategies as new evidence arises."]

How do I know the vaccine is safe? Health officials have not reported any deaths caused by the COVID-19 vaccines. Compare this with over 500,000 people who have died of coronavirus in this country. "COVID is a very severe disease," said Larry Corey, a virus expert who leads the COVID-19 Prevention Network. "The vaccines are effective in preventing death, hospitalization and being on a ventilator." Some people who took our survey said they feared companies were

using prisoners as guinea pigs. More than 100,000 people participated in clinical trials for the Moderna, Pfizer-BioNTech or Johnson & Johnson vaccines before they were released to the public. The overwhelming majority of those participants were in the free world. The clinical trials for all the vaccines showed that they have an equal effect on people from different racial and ethnic groups.

At publication time, more than 75 million people—roughly 15 percent of the U.S. population—have received at least one dose. [In Canada, 9,199,769 people (24.21% of the population) have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. 8,299,823 people (21.84% of the population) have received only one dose. 899,946 people (2.37% of the population) have received two doses.]

How are prisons distributing the COVID-19 vaccine? [The original contents of this answer have been replaced with Canadian-specific info by Cell Count to reduce confusion with US info] CSC is in its second phase of rolling out the COVID-19 vaccine. The first phase started in January of this year, where approximately 600 older, medically vulnerable prisoners were administered the vaccine. Since April 15th of this year, the vaccine is being offered to the rest of the federal prison population and those incarcerated within the community. Those who are offered the vaccines must consent to receiving it. The vaccine rollout has been less clear and transparent at provincial prisons, jails, remand and detention centres. We have heard that Indigenous prisoners have been offered a first dose in Ontario provincial institutions. We have also read that Ontario, BC, New Brunswick, PEI and Nova Scotia, prisoners are scheduled to be vaccinated in the second round of vaccinations, sometime between May and June. Alberta, Manitoba and Quebec have not provided

timelines. Newfoundland and Labrador has said prisoners will be part of the second round, but has not specified dates. In the Northwest Territories and Yukon were supposed to have been offering shots in January of this year. Nunavut's dates are unclear as well (source for provincial info: Canadian Civil Liberties Association).

Should I take the vaccine if I've already had COVID-19? When you recover from COVID-19, your body begins to produce protective antibodies. If you are exposed to it again, these antibodies can identify and, in most cases, defeat the virus. This is called "natural immunity." But the amount of natural immunity that people build up varies, and experts are still studying how effective it is in preventing future COVID-19 infections. That's why the CDC advises that people wait to take the vaccine at least 90 days after recovering from the virus. "We don't know how long [natural] immunity is going to last," said Monica Gandhi, a professor of Medicine at the University of San Francisco. "It could be really long, but the current recommendations are still to get the vaccine. That's not because we don't think you're immune after you've gotten COVID, but because it could just boost your response so that you have lifelong immunity."

Does the vaccine prevent me from contracting the new strains of the coronavirus? Experts are still researching how well each vaccine protects against the new coronavirus strains that have emerged in differ

Cont'd on page 4

HOW THE COVID-19 VACCINES WORK UHN Social Medicine Program [SANCTUARY]

WE HAVE 4 COVID-19 VACCINES APPROVED IN CANADA:

- ✓ PFIZER
- ✓ MODERNA
- ✓ ASTRA ZENECA
- ✓ JOHNSON & JOHNSON

ALL 4 WORK BY TEACHING OUR IMMUNE SYSTEMS TO FIGHT THE SPIKY PART OF THE CORONA-VIRUS (CALLED THE "SPIKE PROTEIN") THAT SPIKE IS NOT THE DANGEROUS PART OF THE VIRUS

THE PFIZER & MODERNA VACCINES DO THAT BY SENDING INSTRUCTIONS TO SOME OF OUR CELLS WITH THE BLUEPRINTS TO MAKE THE SPIKE PROTEIN.

SO THOSE CELLS START A MINI "SPIKE PROTEIN FACTORY" THAT WORKS FOR A SHORT TIME BEFORE GOING OUT OF BUSINESS

ONCE THE SPIKE PROTEIN IS FLOATING AROUND IN OUR BODIES, OUR IMMUNE SYSTEMS SEE IT, & LEARN HOW TO ATTACK IT

THE OTHER TWO VACCINES ATTACH THE SPIKE PROTEIN TO A VIRUS THAT CAN'T HURT US

SO THEN, IF YOU COME INTO CONTACT WITH COVID-19 LATER, YOUR BODY ALREADY KNOWS HOW TO BEAT IT.

USUALLY, YOUR BODY'S DEFENCES WILL STOP YOU FROM CATCHING COVID-19 AT ALL, BUT IF YOU DO, YOUR BODY WILL BE READY TO WIN!

WENTING LI 2021 LAST UPDATED: MARCH 10, 2021

Cont'd from page 3

ent parts of the world. Though every strain is different, early studies have shown all three vaccines to be effective in preventing severe infection. "The only real tool we have to combat the virus, besides not acquiring COVID, is vaccination," said Corey, of the COVID-19 Prevention Network. **So if I get the vaccine can I still spread the coronavirus?** Maybe. Experts are still studying whether vaccinated people can carry and transmit the coronavirus to others. For that reason, the CDC still recommends using precautions such as masks, social distancing and frequent hand-washing even if you are vaccinated [Health Canada recommends this too].

MY COVID-19 EXPERIENCE AT KENT INST.**By Phoenix Poisson**

Being on COVID-19 lockdown at Kent is quite frustrating because if you say you have symptoms, you leave your living unit to stay on a quarantine unit. While you are on the quarantine unit, you get 1-hour for yard, 1-hour on the unit by yourself and access to the microwave and telephone (so you may call your family if you wish). However, if you stay on your living unit you only get 15-minutes out of your cell once a day to have a shower. You cannot use the microwave, get hot water, or use the telephone to call your family. The only way that you get on the telephone is to place a legal call, for which you have to place a request for it 24-hours in advance. And the Correctional Officers will sometimes listen to the first few minutes of your 'legal call' just to make sure you are not placing a call to your friends/family instead. We know that they do this because when we place a non-legal call when we are out for a legal call, the phone call gets cut off in the middle and the Guards at the front desk inform us to lock-up because of said call and that we will be receiving a charge sheet.

So what happens sometimes is that one or two Inmates will say they have symptoms just to get off the living unit and away from its decrepit system in order to go to a better unit (temporarily) and deal with the routine there that makes more sense than what they are being given on their Range at that time. But this ends up screwing the regular living unit up, because we then have to stay on 14-day quarantine from the day that Inmate leaves the unit until his 2nd COVID-19 test comes back negative 14-days later (or sooner)!

The Guards have used the excuse of COVID-19 outbreak several times and in quick succession. They have used it so much that one day my unit decided to demonstrate against it. It would have been a big one had all the Inmates stood together and participated, but as it stood, only 8 Inmates downstairs and 3 upstairs stood firm (myself included). The fact that only 11 inmates in total had participated was the breaking point for our unit,

as no one will stand together in whole or in part for anything now.

That was my experience so far with COVID-19 and the pursuing lockdowns that have followed as a result. As to COVID-19 outbreaks at Kent Institution, there have been a total of 2 Correctional Staff who had tested Positive for the Coronavirus in the last 3 Months of 2020 and (despite what the Acting Commissioner: Alain Tousignant has told us in his COVID-19 updates for all the Federal Prisons in BC). For January 2021 so far, roughly 8 Guards have had to leave due to being exposed to COVID-19.

The Guards and sometimes the Nursing Staff (and other CSC-SCC Staff) will stand around the Guard desk without Masks or Gloves on and they will literally hug and kiss, share food and share utensils, have inappropriate contact with one another, and not wash their hands. They will do their walk on a COVID-19 Restricted Unit, then come to my Unit and do their walk, all without washing their Black Gloves or changing their Blue Medical Gloves. Thus, they are potentially exposing the rest of the Inmates who have not had ANY contact with anyone with COVID-19 and putting our lives at risk!

The Guards will choose to follow their own rules instead of the National COVID-19 Guidelines, but they expect us to follow ALL of the National COVID-19 Guidelines at all times, lest we put their lives in jeopardy. When will they ever learn, that in order for the Inmates to potentially show them some Respect they first need to show us Respect! It is of my opinion that CSC-SCC NEVER learns until things reach a crisis point.

COVID-19**By Brian G. Kerr**

(A Great excuse or a tremendous disgrace?)

With the sudden increase of prices, GDP and price of living, it solemnly makes me wonder. Is this simply an opportune time to raise prices and make the rat-cat fatter or are we just at a fatally desperate era of life and forces greater than man are truly at work? Do you suppose this is nature's way of fighting back, as it has in times past, or are there other elements at play?

Sinister or not! I can say this, it sure is a disgraceful disappointment. There is next to nothing to do, particularly in a correctional institutional setting (completely contrary towards Correctional and National Parole Board standards and expectations). Even a simple well needed program appears to be practically impossible to acquire and for a large portion of today's incarcerated individuals, the consensus appears to be, "No Program, No Parole."

Even educational endeavors are at what appears to be a complete stand still.

So, in the meantime, what are we the inmates to do? I mean hypothetically speaking ~ our deviancy is continually in check, say mastication,

or for that matter, masturbation is considered a form of mutilation and hence worth of a misconduct.

I mean, let's get real, the majority of inmates are a) either Lifers or significant long-timers/sentences. All of whom, like good little circus acts, aka, ponies or performers, are required to jump through a barrage of unrelenting hoops; so as to obtain a lesser state of security, if even possible.

I've seen so many inmates waive their possible hearings, simply because they were not able to participate in a program in time for their hearing, despite being in an "assessment unit" for the past 8 plus months awaiting the inevitable impossibility. Or if I can recall, the numerous counts of inmates who have expressed to me their relentless attempts to participate in countless repetitive programs (prior to COVID), to reduce their security rating in hopes of a more sensible, less restrictive transfer.

So imagine what it must be like now! The monotony of having to put in a request, to inquire into a matter in which you may (and for that matter and for all intents and purposes...) never actually receive a response to, let alone a positively productive one. It is extremely discouraging to say the least, not to mention immensely maladaptive.

Some individuals I'm familiar with while being incarcerated have been doing programs for 16-20 years and have yet to be able to have their security rating lowered enough for a minimum-security placement. For them, perhaps a sudden dose of COVID-19 may be deemed a blessing, at least it would relieve them of the aimless monotony. No more clowns to contend with, an impossible cirque du soleil of fiery hoops that tend to burn you every time you attempt to go through them.

I guess my only questions are these: who deserves to die next to their family members and who does not? What's the threshold requirement in which determines one way or the other? Should this current path be followed, would it not serve as a convenient dumping ground for "societies undesirables?" Or more importantly, how long before our penal facilities

LEARN MORE ABOUT SAFE SUPPLY**By your drug using friend Perry**

What is Safe Supply?

Safe supply is a harm reduction concept designed to reduce the risks of using drugs by prescribing a safer option to what you would buy on the street like opioids (dilaudid, hydromorphone, morphine, and fentanyl patches) and stimulants (dexedrine) to people at risk of overdose. It does not include substitution programs like methadone, buprenorphine (suboxone), or slow-release oral morphine, as these treatments do not contain the mind/body altering properties that people seek when using drugs to get high for pleasure (Canadian Association of People who Use Drugs, 2019). Like other harm reduction

concepts, safe supply is founded on the idea that people who use drugs should not be criminalized or treated badly based on their decisions to do drugs.

Safe Supply during COVID19 Safe Supply programs have been around for a few years, but their funding and access has accelerated during the COVID19 pandemic for a few reasons. First, social distancing is important for people to avoid contracting the virus, so safe supply programs empower people who use drugs to access substances without coming into contact with a lot of people. Second, the Canadian government closed its borders during COVID19, which has prevented drugs coming into the country and increased the presence of a tainted drug supply - recent drug testing has shown the presence of fentanyl, benzos, as well as a range of dangerous chemicals including animal tranquilizers not meant for human consumption in drugs sold on the street. Safe supply prevents overdoses and other harmful side effects caused by the illegal drug market by providing pharmaceutical grade drugs to people enrolled in the program.

Where are these programs?

The federal government has increased the funding for safe supply initiatives until September 2021, so talk to your doctor about the possibility of getting a prescription. In Ontario, some health centres that provide this service are: Street Health, Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre, South Riverdale Community Health Centre, and St Stephan's Community House (Toronto); London Intercommunity Health Centre (London); Safer Supply Ottawa partners: Pathways to Recovery, Recovery Care, Ottawa Inner City Health, Respect RX Pharmacy, Somerset West Community Health Centre, Sandy Hill Community Health Centre, and Ottawa Public Health (Ottawa); Kingston Community Health Centres (Kingston).

Safe Supply might be good for you if:

- You do not want methadone or suboxone - you still want to get high
- You want to avoid contact with other people while accessing drugs like opioids or stimulants
- You are worried about the tainted drug supply and overdosing
- You want to measure and control your doses most accurately
- You are thinking about quitting drugs but not totally ready yet - you want to move away from street involvement or lower your tolerance
- Safe supply includes opioids (like dilaudid, morphine, hydromorphone, and sometimes fentanyl patches) and stimulants (dexedrine).

Remember: Doing drugs does not make you a bad person. You deserve to feel empowered about your choices with drugs and your body. People care about you and are here to support your choices.

Reference:

Canadian Association of People who Use Drugs. (2019). Safe supply: A Concept Paper. Available at: <http://capud.ca/concept>

HEP C TESTING AND TREATMENT TIPS

Getting Tested for Hepatitis C

Its important to get tested for Hep C if you fall under these categories:

- People who inject or use drugs.
- Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Inuit, Métis)
- People with experience in the federal or provincial prison system (if you have ever received tattoos or piercings while incarcerated, even once)
- Immigrants and newcomers from countries where HCV is common.
- Gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men.
- The 1945-1975 birth cohort: adults living with hepatitis C.

There Are Two Common Tests to Determine if You Have Hepatitis C

- **HCV Antibody Test:** A positive tests means at some point you contracted hepatitis C, and there is detection of Hep C antibodies, in your system. This test is very accurate but may not detect if you are still infected (25% of people can naturally fight Hep C off). To confirm your result, ask your doctor for an RNA test
- **HCV RNA/Diagnostic Test:** This confirms if you are currently living with hepatitis C by detecting the virus in your blood. These results are reported as undetectable or detectable. A detectable result means you have chronic (long-term) hepatitis C.

If you test negative, **GREAT**, and you can continue to take steps to reduce your risk of contracting the virus. If you test positive, **IT'S OK**, you can take steps to avoid passing the virus onto others, learn ways to care for your liver, and talk to your doctor about treatment options.

Treatment for Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C Treatment: Things to Consider

- There is a 95% chance treatment can cure hepatitis C.
- If you are cured, you can no longer pass the virus onto others, but it's important to take steps to prevent getting re-infected.
- You are no longer a passer of the HepC, but your body will always have the antibodies, therefore any Hep C testing you get done in the future, will always come back positive.
- Treatment works best when you take all the pills on schedule. If you skip or miss some pills, treatment may not cure you.
- If you are HIV-positive, getting treated for hepatitis C can improve your overall health, make your HIV medications more effective, and increase HIV treatment options.

If you have any questions or want to chat further call **Lindsay Jennings, Provincial Hep C Program Coordinator** at **1-866-224-9978 ext 231.**

Call for Submissions:

We are putting a call out for art, poetry, or written submissions around experiences of prisoners who have been affected by Hep C and/or who

has gone through the Hep C treatment, and would like to share their experience with us. We would like to incorporate prisoners experiences with Hep C into our work at PASAN. Please send your art work or written submissions to Lindsay Jennings, Provincial Hep C Program Coordinator at 526 Richmond St E, Toronto, Ontario, M5A 1R3 or call 1-866-224-9978 ext 231.

A LETTER FROM OAHAS

Hey Folks,

My name is Marie, I am Nehiyaw (First Nations Cree) from Saskatchewan. I have been a resident in Toronto for over 30 years.

For many years I struggled with homelessness and addiction. My choices led to being incarcerated and I was terrified. I had no idea what to expect. I heard many horror stories about the penitentiary. I cried hysterically, the fear was intense.

However, after the initial intake process, I realized we all shared the same sense of loss and fears. I managed to find an outlet to deal with the feeling that I was in this alone. I have been out for almost 11 years. Got a grip on my addiction, and continue to move forward. I now live a productive life and am no longer ashamed of myself for my lack of making healthy choices. Every day is a challenge, but it's worth the effort.

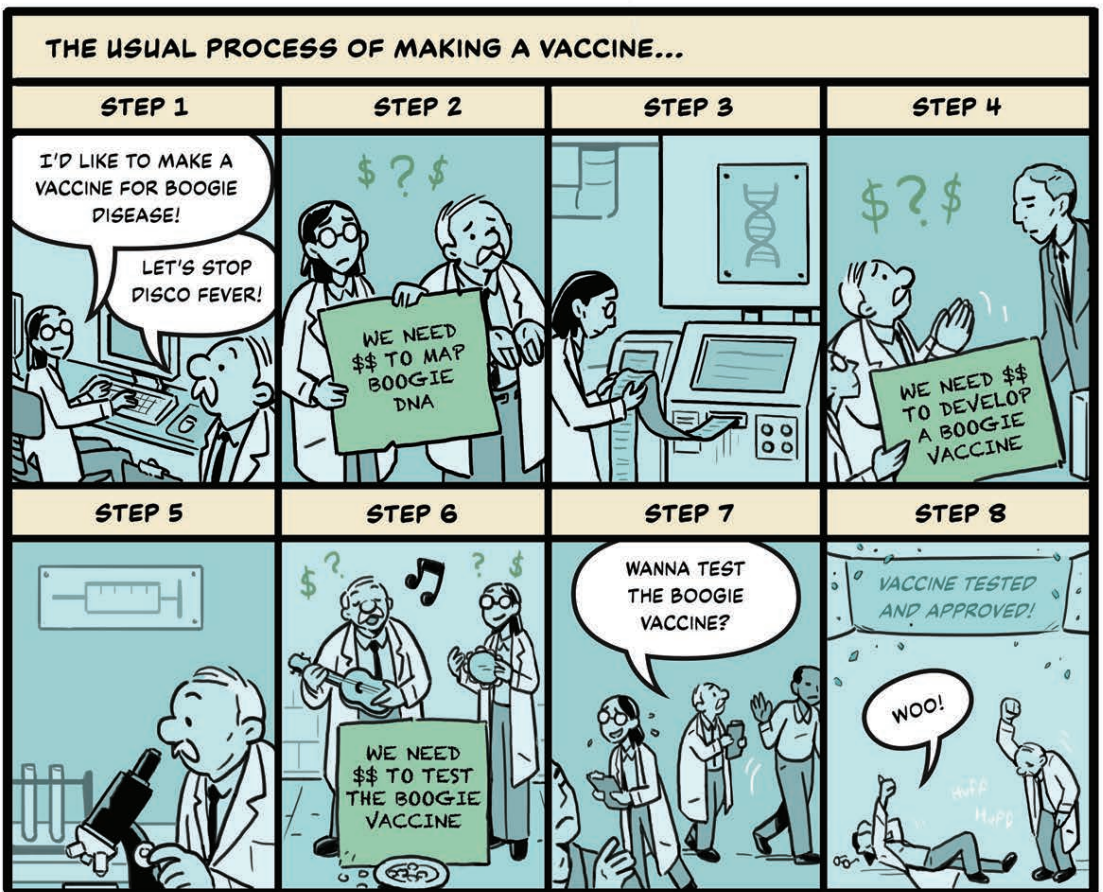
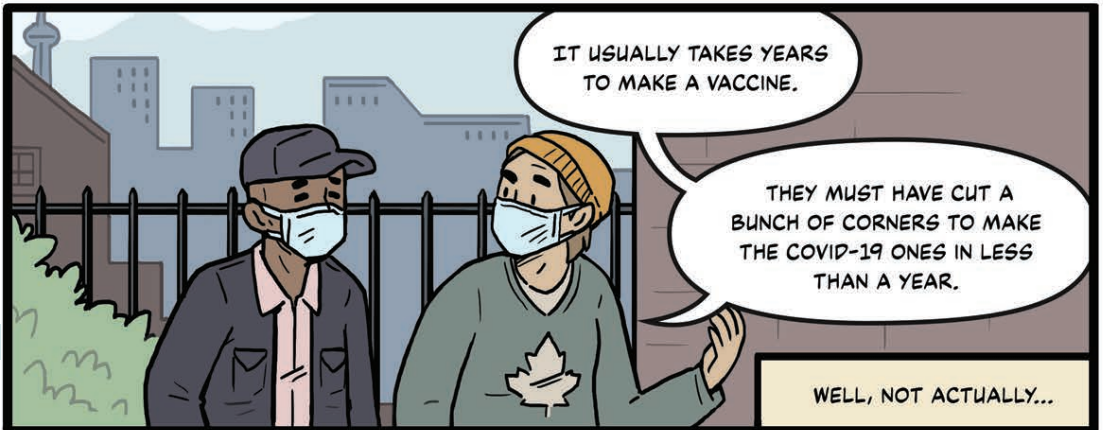
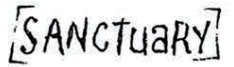
Hi, my name is Alison Bray. I am an Indigenous woman from Toronto. My family comes from Alderville First Nations. It is a little community by Rice lake.

I was in GVI or Grand Valley Institute for women in 2016. I did 10 months out of my 2-year sentence. I was in for violent offences. I was a very angry person and the alcohol and drugs allowed me to behave in a matter that was unacceptable. If you have been a part of the drug culture you know what I am talking about.

I would like to share a bit about my experience in GVI. I was in for violence but was tagged as a "person of interest" in drugs because of who I hung out with. I asked the SIO why I was categorized as such and they told me because of who I chose to hang out with. Told me they heard from the grapevine I had drugs.

I asked why they would take one person's word over mine when we are all inmates. Does not make sense. I told them who am I supposed to hang out with? They told me to make better choices. I laughed and said if I made better choices, I would not be here now would I? Who really should I be hanging with in prison? It did not make sense to me.

HOW DID THEY MAKE THE VACCINE SO FAST?



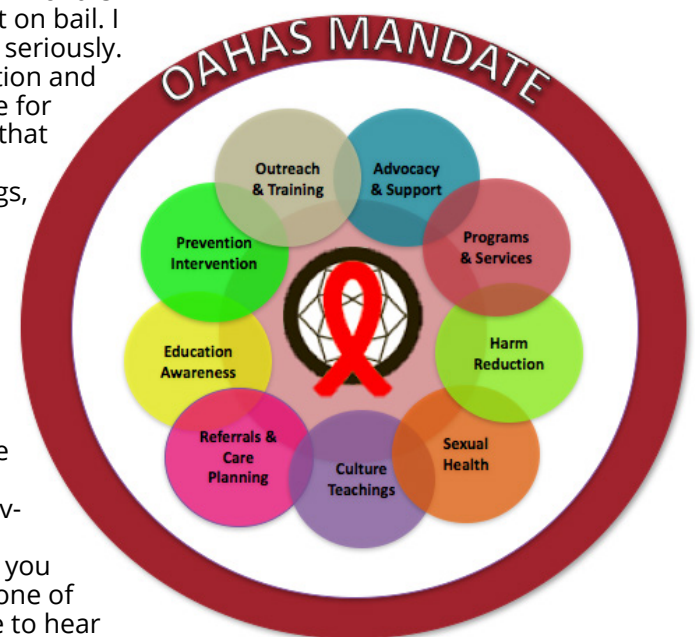
Basically, anyone can say whatever they want about you and it is documented. They do not need clear findings to put you on a naughty list. They want you to make better choices on your peers, but hello, we are in prison.

I had been sober for 22 months prior to my sentence out on bail. I take my healing journey seriously. I believe in Harm Reduction and people having the choice for themselves. My point is that when I was told I am a high-risk inmate for drugs, it did not make any sense. I was nervous to be honest just because I wanted to get parole. I can do the time, but my mother needed me. And if I was dealing drugs or doing drugs, why not search me more than they already did or take urine samples? I never once took a sample.

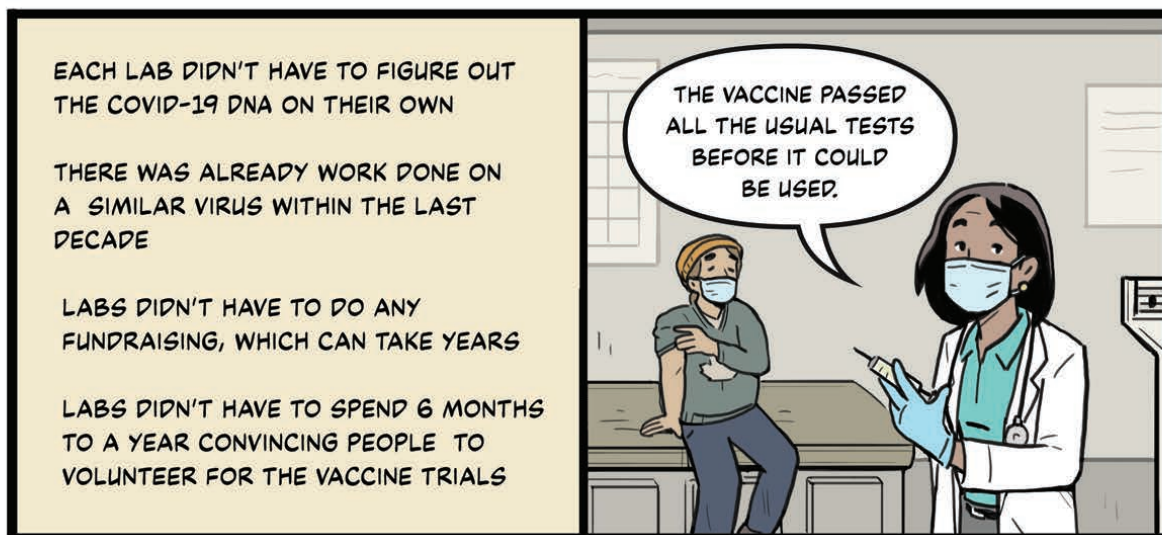
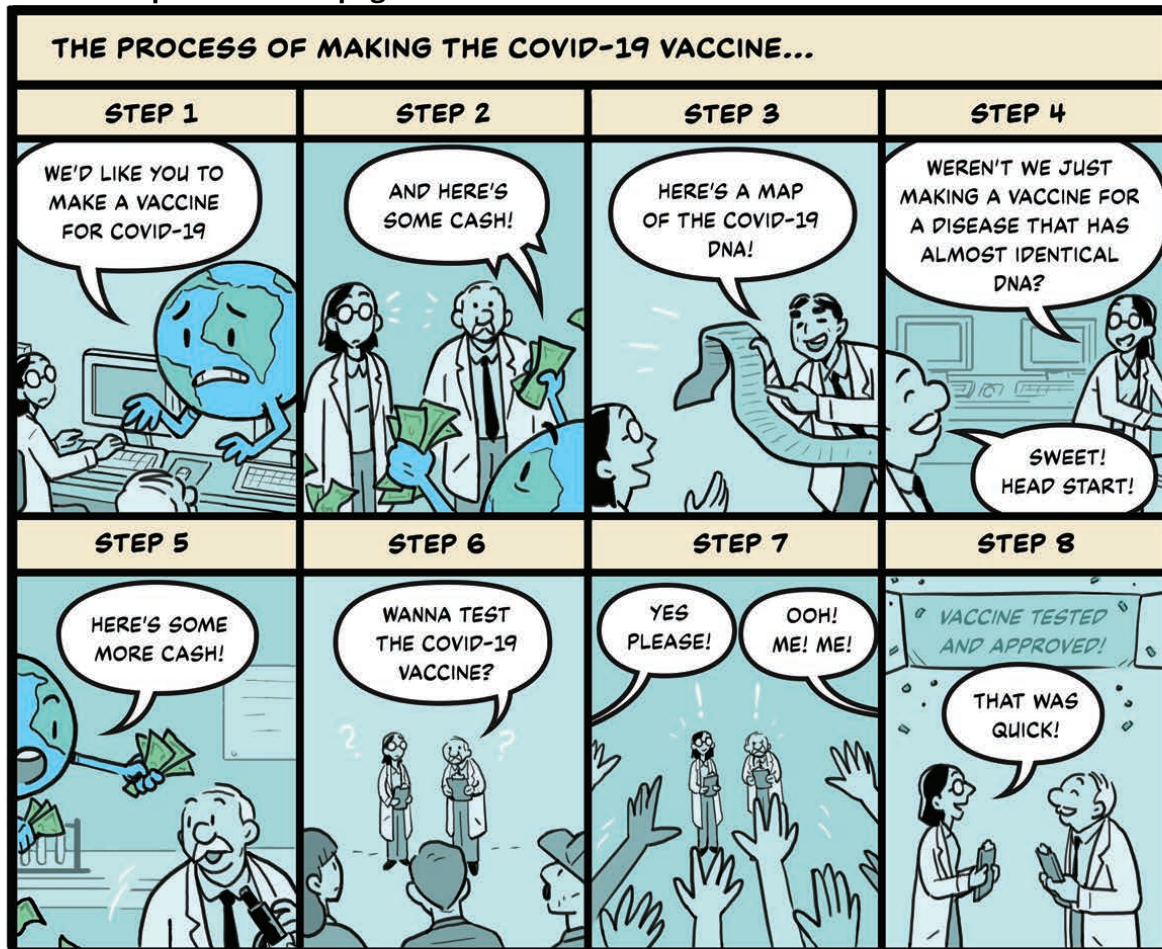
If you are reading this, you know far too well that none of this makes sense. I hope to hear

Comic strip cont'd on page 6

from people who are reading this. There is hope and there is support. We got you! Write to us at: Alison and Marie, OAHAS, 282 Parliament St, Toronto, ON, M5A 3A4



Comic strip cont'd from page 5



ART BY JOSH ROSEN

LAST UPDATED MARCH 23RD, 2021

DETAINED MIGRANTS GET A PANDEMIC LIFELINE

By Amelia Williams, The Tyee, May 12, 2021

Small changes to the way Canada's immigration tribunals make decisions during the pandemic could mean a world of difference for migrants in detention centres and prisons, a recent study finds.

The study's authors, Dr. Efrat Arbel and Molly Joeck from the University of British Columbia's Allard School of Law, analyzed 17 decisions made by the Immigration Division — the tribunal in charge of deciding whether or not migrants should be held in detention — between March and May 2020.

They found that for the first time, the tribunal considered the conditions of deten-

tion, namely, the threat of COVID-19 in crowded facilities, when deciding whether a migrant should be released.

What may sound like a minor technicality could be a significant step towards reforming Canada's immigration detention system, the authors say. Now immigrants seeking release may be able to present as evidence a range of hardships they are enduring while incarcerated and do so in a hearing process less cumbersome and hostile than before, say the authors.

Already the result has been freedom for many. After hearing the experiences of migrants being held by the Canada Border Services Agency and considering the impacts of detention on their health, the Immigration Division had released 206 people

by April 2020, leaving 127 people in detention, less than half the number of pre-pandemic detainees.

Detention's harsh effects Advocates have long raised the alarm about the harsh conditions that migrants face in detention, and the well-documented impacts of these conditions on migrants' well-being. One study found that after only 18 days in detention, 78 per cent of detained asylum seekers suffered from clinical depression and 32 per cent suffered from PTSD. Detainees are sometimes held in solitary confinement, which is recognized as a form of torture by a number of international treaties.

Detained migrants are also often held among people convicted of crimes in maximum-security jails, despite

facing no criminal charges.

In prisons, migrants often have limited access to translators, lawyers, internet and phones and have the same limitations on their mobility as criminal detainees. Since 2000, at least 16 migrants have died in these conditions.

But the Immigration Division has never considered these experiences in weighing releases, because it does not have the independence of a regular court.

Canada is one of the only western countries with no maximum time limit on how long an immigrant can be incarcerated, meaning detainees often go through years of Immigration Division hearings with no idea of when they might be released.

"I've watched detainees build up a lot of anger and frustration feeling like there's nothing they can do to have their liberty rights recognized," said Joeck, a practising immigration lawyer, in an interview with The Tyee.

The only way a migrant has been able to appeal the conditions of detention, other than a costly judicial review at a federal court, is to file a complaint with the Canada Border Services Agency — "the very agency that has ordered their detention and set its terms," write Arbel and Joeck in the study. They call the CBSA "an adverse party to the proceedings" and "not sufficiently independent" to make such rulings.

But now detained migrants can make legal arguments based on their experiences in detention to the tribunal, a shift that "empowers detainees, allowing them to more effectively advocate for their release," the authors write.

The changes create an avenue for migrants that is independent of the CBSA, but the authors say more needs to be done. The CBSA is still the only public safety agency in Canada with no independent oversight.

The federal government introduced a bill that would create a body of oversight for the CBSA, but it has stalled due to the pandemic. Experts and advocates argue that the proposed body in the bill is not sufficiently independent and falls short in terms of its jurisdiction. In Arbel's words, "it lacks teeth."

'A real human rights violation' Arbel and Joeck join other advocates in opposing Canada's closing of its border to refugee claimants during the pandemic. The closure violates legal obligations to protect asylum-seekers under

the Refugee Convention, they said.

The Washington Post has found that the CBSA has directed asylum-seekers who have arrived at the southern border back to American officials, where a number were detained and deported by Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

"People are operating in the shadows," Maureen Silcoff, president of the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers, told The Tyee. "That's the worst of it, I think, because we don't even know how many people are detained and we don't know if people have been sent back home by the U.S."

"So that's what makes Canada's policy even more problematic because, from the situations we know about, they're of grave concern, and what about the people that haven't come to light?"

Her organization recently announced it is filing a legal challenge against the federal government for the border closure, on the basis that the Supreme Court ruled that refugees have the right to a hearing in Canada, which would not be fulfilled if they are turned back to the U.S.

The challenge also claims that the government did not consider the impact closing the border would have on refugee claimants. Canada needs "a more systemic solution to what is a real human rights violation," said Silcoff.

Arbel and Joeck say their study is just a preliminary first step in a bigger project. They are gathering a much larger dataset and hope to gain a more comprehensive overview of the way decisions about refugee detention have been made throughout the entirety of the pandemic.

PRISONER ADVOCATE CALLS FOR POLICY CHANGE AFTER SASK. PENITENTIARY SENDS BACK SUDOKU PUZZLES

Kendall Latimer, CBC News, May 4, 2021

Zoë Christmas was shocked when the Saskatchewan Penitentiary rejected her package of puzzles and literature.

The contents destined for an inmate in search of literature included sudokus, one short story and a few newsletters — all printed on individual sheets of paper.

Correctional Service of Canada returned the contents with a list of "seemingly harmless" items it won't accept by mail, saying this is in an effort to keep drugs and contraband out of secure prisons.

"I don't think it's right," said Christmas on Thursday. "I don't think sudokus printed off from the Internet are going to be used as a means of trafficking drugs into prison. I don't think sparkles are either."

Christmas is a McGill law student and prisoner advocate who helps run a books-to-prisoners organization called Open Door Books in Montreal. The organization provides Canadian and American prisoners with books and resources.

"I think it's just an excuse or a pretext from the institution to not allow any sort of joy experienced by prisoners," Christmas said.

A spokesperson for Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) said in an emailed statement on Tuesday that CSC is still "looking into" why the printed sheets of paper were returned to Open Door Books instead of given to the inmate after a 72-hour quarantine which is required for mail.

The document of "inappropriate mail content" sent to Christmas listed a series of objects not welcome by mail. There were more obvious items on the list, like bodily fluids and sharp objects, but it also listed items such as stickers, crosswords, arts and crafts items, sparkles, maps and Polaroid photos. Christmas said the Saskatchewan prisoner first reached out to the organization in March because he said he didn't have access to the literature.

"He said that he's been under 23-hour a day lock down and that the library at Sask. Pen has been closed, so he's alone in a cell for 23 hours a day and has nothing to read." He asked if she could send some things to help pass the time. Christmas said Open Door Books typically funnels material through prison libraries, but they haven't worked with the Saskatchewan Penitentiary and the inmate indicated the library wasn't operating so she wrote to him directly.

She said the prison should allow inmates to receive puzzles, and at the very least she hopes the Saskatchewan prison staff will find a way to make literature accessible to all inmates for the remainder of the pandemic.

"I think people would be shocked to hear that Saskatchewan inmates are already locked down and they have no access to books and they aren't able to receive harmless items like sudokus, word searches and photo-

graphs or things like that."

The CSC media spokesperson said the library has been closed temporarily for residents in the medium-security unit because of a COVID-19 outbreak.

"This decision was made based on evidence indicating that books or printed material pose a risk of transmission of the COVID-19 virus when passed from one person to another as they are considered high touch surfaces and are difficult to sanitize," he wrote. "To this effect, inmates in the medium-security unit are not able to borrow books from the Saskatchewan Penitentiary institutional library at this time."

He said normal library operations will resume once health officials give them the go ahead and that internally staff can make copies of sudokus and crosswords for inmates. The Saskatchewan Penitentiary is located about one kilometre west of Prince Albert, Sask. According to CSC data, there are 11 active COVID-19 cases in the medium security unit and there has been 284 positive cases to date.

GRAND VALLEY INMATES FACE 'RESTRICTIVE CONDITIONS' UNDER PANDEMIC MEASURES: ADVOCATE

Hala Ghonaim, CBC News, Mar 23, 2021

The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies says it is concerned as inmates at the Grand Valley Institution for Women continue to live under a "modified routine" for five straight months — despite no new COVID-19 cases among inmates since Spring 2020.

Like many other prisons across the country, Grand Valley Institution in Kitchener has been operating under a modified routine for health purposes since November 2020.

The conditions limit some movements within the prison through a cohorting system to ensure physical distancing is maintained.

"Part of this modified routine means that inmates may be moved one at a time or in small groups to maintain physical distancing measures and keep staff and inmates as safe as possible," according to a statement from Correctional Service of Canada (CSC).

It noted in-person visits have also been suspended. The measure was implemented in consultation with public health authorities and CSC due to increasing community COVID-19 transmission rates.

However, Emilie Coyle, executive director of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, said this has had a significant impact on the physical and mental health of inmates.

"We are worried about the mental health of people inside subjected to even more restrictive conditions within an already restrictive prison system, but on top of that, we don't think the system itself is working to keep people as safe as it should," she told CBC Kitchener-Waterloo.

Coyle said cohorting has limited access to programming, which has implications for the mental health of inmates — and possibly their release dates.

"Programming is essential to people receiving their release dates and completing their correctional plans ... inside the institution. So, if they're unable to complete their correctional plans on time, then they're not going to be able to go before the parole board on time and released as quickly. And so that's a really big problem," she said.

Coyle said the suspension of in-person visits is also concerning for several reasons: "That means you can't see your loved ones, you can't see your children ... they're not able to see their other family members. We can't go in. We're not able to monitor the conditions of confinement within the institutions ... Without us being able to go in, without the office of the correctional investigator going in, that should be concerning to everyone."

Additionally, Coyle said she's heard of appointments with doctors and mental health care providers being cancelled — though not specifically at Grand Valley Institution.

"It's increasing the tension in the institutions and incidents of egregious use of force from the staff because everyone has this mental health burden which is increased by this cohorting system and everyone is exhausted. We can't underscore the isolation and the impact of isolation that has on people," she said.

Coyle said while prisoners are cohorting, staff members have been moving between cohorts, which she says puts inmates at risk.

A subsequent request to CSC for comment about these concerns was not received in time for publication.

CSC said institutions, including Grand Valley, screen

anyone entering the facility and test on site — including asymptomatic testing.

During a modified routine, the CSC website said inmates are informed of their rights including the right to a legal counsel, to contact organizations such as Elizabeth Fry Societies and submit complaints of grievances.

"All reasonable efforts will be made to provide inmates with opportunities to be out of their cell to attend activities of daily living (e.g., opportunity to shower), yard time, access to telephone calls, interaction with others on the range with appropriate infection and control measures in place," explains CSC on its website, noting inmates are seen regularly to identify their needs to facilitate referrals to services such as health care.

"We also have an extensive colour-coded risk management process in place where we work with unions, partners, experts and elders to make decisions related to our sites, based on community transmission rates, to ensure we are taking all possible measures to mitigate risk in all of our operations," a CSC spokesperson said in an email to CBC K-W.

The institution's health care officials and CSC officials determine the termination of a modified routine, a decision that is reviewed weekly.

Grand Valley Institution was previously under a modified routine between March and July 2020. In that time, eight inmates had tested positive for COVID-19 and have since recovered.

There are no positive cases at the institution. To date, there has been 404 COVID-19 tests administered to inmates at Grand Valley.

ONTARIO LOSES BID TO QUASH \$30M SEGREGATION RULING; IMMUNITY ARGUMENT REJECTED

By Colin Perkel, The Canadian Press, Mar 31, 2021

A \$30-million class-action award against Ontario for its mistreatment of inmates in solitary confinement will stand, the Court of Appeal ruled on Wednesday.

In its decision, the court dismissed the province's challenge to an earlier finding that its system of administrative segregation was negligent and violated the prisoners' constitutional rights.

The court also rejected Ontario's arguments that it could not be held liable for what it described as a policy decision, and that legislation passed in 2019 made it immune to claims of negligence.

"Ontario cannot turn a blind

eye to overwhelming evidence of the unconstitutionality of its actions," the Appeal Court said. "Damages for the charter breaches were an 'appropriate and just' remedy."

Administrative segregation in Ontario is used when inmates pose a safety risk to themselves or others, or have committed a serious breach of the rules. Evidence was that 43 per cent of inmates placed in solitary had mental health alerts on file.

"Administrative segregation in Ontario consists of isolation in a small cell for 22 hours or more with no meaningful human contact," the court noted. "Evidence shows that the cells are often filthy and covered in bodily fluids." Conrey Francis, an inmate with serious mental illness, launched the class action in 2017. Francis spent more than two years at the Toronto South Detention Centre before being acquitted of bank-robbery charges.

Francis was placed in isolation twice for refusing to take medication he said had nasty side-effects. Authorities decided doing so amounted to a "refusal to follow an order."

The solitary experience, the court said, was "excruciating," leaving Francis feeling "terrorized" and in a "state of delirium and shock." His mental health worsened to the point where he had suicidal thoughts and auditory hallucinations.

The class action was certified with Ontario's agreement in September 2018 and applied to situations between April 20, 2015, and Sept. 18, 2018. The class comprised inmates with serious mental illness placed in solitary as well as those left in segregation for at least 15 days.

In April 2020, Superior Court Justice Paul Perell awarded \$30 million in damages after finding segregation violated principles of fundamental justice. The province had been "systemically and routinely" negligent in running the solitary confinement regime, he ruled.

Solitary confinement, Perell noted, is widely known to cause serious mental harm, and its effects are grossly disproportionate to the purposes. As such, he ruled it to be cruel and unusual punishment.

The appellate court agreed with Perell, also rejecting Ontario's claim that it was immune from liability for what it characterized as policy decisions. Instead, the court said segregation could be characterized as "operational."

GHOSTS OF THE PAST

By Mark Zammit

It seems that this is the chosen path my life had in store for me. At 50 yrs old, I am still doing time, I still fight an addiction and am losing, as well as still struggling w/ mental health issues, depression, PTSD, night terrors that stem from childhood sexual abuse.

A career criminal, a violent offender and a typical street thug. At least that's how the court and correctional systems describe me, and quite frankly I do not care. Regardless of their hurtful words, comments and reviews, they do not know the real me, the me that could have been, nor have they tried to, and they sure as hell have not ever attempted to take the steps to try and fix or heal what made me fit their inadequate descriptions.

In 30 years of doing time, only a very minute handful of the correctional systems staff has truly ever stepped out to try and help me guide through the trauma that swells my head. The drugs, the sexual abuse, the hunger and homelessness, not to mention my own self sabotage. To DEANNA Roberts, Angela Kingston, Mary Jo Mckinnon-Simms, Natasha Wakfer and Joe Demasco, thank you and God Bless you all for attempting to do what the correctional system promises to do, but does not deliver. At 12 years old, I was introduced to hard drugs, specifically cocaine, more specifically freebase, now labelled as crack. The 2 men that introduced me to cocaine were the First 2 to sexually abuse me. Would I have dabbled in hard drugs had I not been lured and fed them? Maybe, or Maybe not, I myself, my family, or those two predators will never know the answer to that question.

Then there was lucky number 3, the man I asked for help, the man who re-victimized me, the Roman Catholic Priest whos service my entire family went to every single week, the same Priest my entire Family trusted and loved. In my heart that was when I gave up on life. I was no longer a child, My childhood was robbed from me and replaced w/ a shattered disgusted and a total mistrust of human nature. From that moment forward, it was all about the street and all that goes along w/ surviving

on the streets. Regent Park, Parkdale, Landsdowne and Bloor and Barton Street. All over, same drug, same sense of no self-worth, like the Metallica song says, "Nothing else Matters", and it didn't, my life was mapped out for me the minute a Scouts Canada Leader, a cocaine dealer and a Catholic Priest stole my childhood and innocence.

I was not born bad, nor was I evil in the womb, I was lured, used, mis-treated and abused by "Pillars of the community" and that just didn't happen or was more so "unreported" in the 1980's, and my situations were not either. I was ashamed, guilt-ridden and felt worthless so I didn't say a word, until in the early 2000's I have landed in Collins Bay Penitentiary, Millhaven Max and Joyceville Pen.

In a nutshell, my life has not and does not equate to much, but when I weed through pain, block out nightmares and sober myself to look forward, I can see and I can feel, the real me, the me that was meant to be, the me that could have and should have been. The me that could have made, should have made, would have made, my awesome and amazing Mother proud.

I am a kind person, a giving person, and a compassionate person. I am an active advocate and activist for "Prison Reform and Harm Reduction", the "LGBTQ-2S Community", "Black and Indigenous Rights", and "Human Rights" in general. I fight and stand for the internal peace, and freedom promised us as Canadians and human beings. I am that stand alone homeless guy that will give his coat, meal or last dollar to someone that needs it more, I will go w/ out to show compassion to another person no matter their colour, gender, gender identity, orientation or beliefs. But so, so many do, can't or will not see that in me, especially not courts and correctional systems, Provincial and Federal.

I care about others, about what happens on our streets. I will forever ride for the poor, the addicted, the homeless and the abused, and that is a character I am most proud of. But always, in the end my skull fills of ghosts past, what those men did to me, and I run and run and run to the same bag of dope that has always blocked the evil from seeping in. And then I lose myself, quickly, I fall. That is where I need the guidance, strength and support to soberly move forward. At

the worst I need someone, a babysitter if you will, to slap me senseless.

I have done some work for or w/ "PASAN", my favorite non-profit organization for cons, and I have some good friends there past and present who I love very much and who love me. I am extremely proud of my stories/articles in "Cellcount Magazine" and I am uber proud of my public speaking engagements they have sent me on. I want to make a change, I want to change myself. I love to write and to speak publicly and I adore sharing the truth to the public who are fed lies upon lies.

Advocacy and my friends I have made through it is my new drug of choice, but I am no fool, I need to learn how to use that feeling to curb the urge and cravings I have for cocaine. No longer should I hide my fears, I should share them, but I am far from perfect and perfectly far.

I have made some steps in my pursuit of advocacy and making a difference. I have brought, fought and gotten "Truvada", the HIV prep pill in, approved and paid for in all federal institutions across Canada. I stood hard and fast beside a 2-Spirited girl as she fought w/ the Prison and inmates to start Fenbrooks (BeaverCreek) first LGBTQ group. I have started a class action suit against a Provincial Institution of which I cannot mention. I have helped Michael Tomkiw start a malpractice suit worth over a million dollars against a Provincial Jails Doctor for a botched surgery and lazy diagnosis and I will forever stand for anyone whos human rights have been or are being breached or violated. But I want more, I want to raise awareness for the cons and ex-cons across Canada because I know first-hand that we/they have no voice. Men and women that have suffered the same fate, worse or less than I have. Men and women that have suffered childhood trauma need real help behind the walls and after release

because the courts, the police and the correctional systems do not care.

The mental health, addictions and harm reduction aspect in jails, prisons and courtrooms must blow up and start to take top priority. Real councilors, facilitators and more psychiatrists and psychologists. Ex-guards or grounds crew should not be able to facilitate a program of any sort after a simple 2-week course. Most guards are already tainted and simply want a higher pay and regular hours, and that is the sad truth...programs need to be run by professionals who understand a care about mental health, addictions and convicts.

The federal government has so many people believing that we as convicts are getting and gaining the tools and knowledge to fix ourselves and better ourselves, but nothing can be further from the truth. Upon release from a Federal Pen, we are given \$50 to \$80 and a bus ticket. That's it, that's all. It is basically a "see you soon" promise.

The Provincial system is far worse yet very easy to explain. Zero groups, zero programs, next to zero spiritual guidance and the one or two drug or violence programs that do squeeze through are ran by guards and last a total of an hour after of which you get a certificate. Absolutely worthless and beyond useless.

Amazing organizations such as "PASAN", "The Forgiveness Project" or "The Toronto Prisoners Rights Project" constantly try to schedule and run, proper tooling, learning and properly facilitated programs only to get turned away at the door. It takes 6-10 weeks to see mental health or even what I

like to call health scare. These are the issues that Judges, Crowns, Superintendents, Wardens and Politicians need to learn about, focus on and change, then maybe the crime rate they constantly use against us may go down.

Yes there are simply "bad people" bad or evil for the sake of being bad or evil, but over 75% of the prison population has suffered childhood trauma, sexual abuse as well as addiction issues. Many of us did not choose this life, some of us were led there. These courts need to start looking at the whys, not the whats and because.

In closing I leave you w/ this. I was just expelled from a so-called Treatment Facility (read my interview in the Toronto Star w/ Alysha Hasham) in Brampton who says they specialize in addictions and sexual deviancy. I am here to say, "They do not" and no one should try their avenue. You cannot house a bunch of men who were sexually abused as children and turn to drugs, w/ a bunch of sexual offenders of all types. It does not work and does more harm than good.

The 8 months I spent there set me back at least 2 yrs mentally and emotionally and some of what I heard there only brought to the forefront my own nightmares and fears back. Follow my side page on FB called "Corruption Service Canada" to learn more of the truth.

To all my fellow addicts, stay safe and strong because you are loved.

To my fellow friends and enemies suffering from mental health and abuse issues, "we will win" I promise.



#FreeTheYouth

Turcotte cont'd from cover to get bullied, and was constantly a victim of racism. My behaviour in school deteriorated and I was in trouble every day of the week. When I was pressed by my parents my truth was never believed, and my father began to discipline me through physical abuse. I got sick of getting my ass beat, so I chose to run away every chance I could to avoid the physical pain, but the mental and emotional pain followed me everywhere I went. I felt unloved and unwanted, so I distanced myself from my family. In turn, I was introduced to the system. I was in and out of group homes and foster care, meeting like-minded peers I could relate to and bond with through similar interests and misbehaving.

As a child I played Ring & Run, threw rocks at cars and houses hoping to get chased, and stole candy from the convenience stores. My life of crime really began at the age of 13 after my first arrest in 2003. A group of classmates surrounded me after school, so I pulled out a Swiss Army knife and fought back. The knife wasn't used in the altercation, but I ended up getting charged with assault causing bodily harm and weapon concealing. I remember being court ordered to participate in a Healing Circle with my "victims", and the charges were subsequently withdrawn.

The ceremony was facilitated by an Indigenous organization, and we were to discuss the event that took place, what we were thinking, feeling, and what we've learnt from the incident. It was an extra-judicial sanction that took a couple hours to complete, and wasn't taken seriously by those involved. I learned nothing, and continued on my immature path of defiance.

As time went on my involvement in criminal activity and drug abuse became a regular pattern. I was absorbed by the streets, disregarded the importance of education and developed an obsession with establishing a reputation that's both feared and respected. I entered the Paul Dojack Youth Centre (PDYC) for the first time at the age of 14. My five day stay was sad and lonely, but for some obscured reason I returned eight more times. During every stay I became more familiar with the staff. Some were kind while others were

assholes, and there wasn't much mentoring between the staff and the youth. There was structure such as designated times for school, meals, chores, physical activity, showers, laundry and leisure time, but there wasn't much effort put into rehabilitation. While in the PDYC the youth offenders were expected to write essays on their anger, drug abuse and family relationships, and were to present them to their peers and staff. This didn't necessarily help the youth gain insight; rather it gave them the opportunity to boast about their violence, gang involvement, what drugs they've used, and the crimes they've committed. On a spiritual aspect, interactions with the Elder were sporadic, and it didn't seem like facilitating ceremonies was a top priority for the PDYC. Furthermore, when it came to programming, the only youth permitted to participate were the ones serving a secure sentence, which excluded the remanded youth from receiving any benefits the programming had the potential of providing them.

In addition, as I was going in and out of the PDYC, I had multiple youth workers and continued to meet with doctors for pre-sentence reports and other assessments. The diagnoses kept adding up and before I knew it I was diagnosed with the entire alphabet, had anti-social personality disorder, and was a Level 5 risk of reoffending. As a youth I was misunderstood more than I am today, and nobody took the time to understand me. All those so-called professionals chose to scold me, blame me, and tell me how wrong I was. Their initial impression of me was blinded by prejudice, which caused our rapport to be built on distrust, rather than trust. When questioned, it didn't matter how I replied, because when I told the truth they assumed I was being dishonest, and when I decided to exaggerate to sound cool they took me at face value and labelled me callous and unremorseful. I never stood a chance against such a corrupt system.

In 2006, at the age of 16 I was arrested for accidentally stabbing a 28-year-old man to death. I've always held myself accountable for my mistake, and I've maintained that my intention was never to kill him. Given the unfortunate circumstances, I was remanded to the PDYC for the ninth and final time, tried as an adult, found guilty

of second-degree murder, sentenced to Life, and transferred to the Saskatchewan Penitentiary at the age of 18. But, while on remand, upon my admission to the PDYC, I was placed in solitary confinement. I sat there for 6 months, before the Director, Al Manning, decided to let me integrate into the population. He claimed my involuntary placement in administrative segregation was due to my security concerns. Apparently, one of the young offenders was scheduled to attend my victims' funeral, therefore I was forced to remain in solitary confinement until the youth completed his sentence, even though there were four other units I could have had the option of integrating.

Finally, in the summer of 2007, I was released from solitary confinement and housed in a unit designated for sentenced youth. Due to the severity of my index offence I was considered a long-term remand case which meant I was able to earn some of the same privileges the sentenced youths could, by displaying consistent positive behaviour and leadership. I earned the privileges such as wearing my own clothing, having a radio in my cell, and playing the PlayStation 2. Since I know my good behaviour equaled better living conditions I tried my best to refrain from trouble. For the first time in my life I was focused on changing my lifestyle, and I even approached one of the program facilitators and inquired about participating in her group. She informed me that only sentenced young offenders can be referred to programming. No matter how much interest I showed, nor the fact I explained how I would soon be sentenced, I got rejected. Nobody wanted to help me when I needed it the most, which is such a disgusting thought, but the worst part of it all is that when I went to trial, there were multiple reports stating I have apathy towards programming and refused to participate in it while on remand at the PDYC. The prosecution ate that up and emphasized those reports at trial to prove I am a high risk and an unlikely candidate to receive a youth sentence. My fate was sealed based on outrageous lies. Anyways, I'm just trying to give you a taste of what I endured while incarcerated in youth custody, so you can somewhat weigh the

injustices for yourself. How can the PDYC rehabilitate youth when they place them in solitary confinement and deny them programming? Now, when I think about the abolition of the prison system I can't help but picture the majority of society ripping their hair out, screaming, "Are you fucking nuts!?", because who really wants murderers, rapists and drug dealers roaming free after committing such offences? Sounds insane, right? Even I find it to be a little extreme and I'm currently imprisoned, suffered from many injustices, and endured too much oppression throughout the past 14 years, so you'd think I'd be all for it, but I believe in a way, the prison system does aid in public safety. I don't mean to sound like I'm on CSC's side, because I'm not. I just prefer to keep an open mind and consider both sides, because I always want our side to be considered by others, rather than overlooked.

As I sit here weighing the pros and cons, and imagining a country where prisons cease to exist, I can't stop thinking of a more reason-

able solution. Why aim for adult prisons to be abolished, when we can target the youth? It makes more sense to focus our time and energy on freeing up the youth, because they will gain more from our investment, which will be beneficial to society and the future well-being of humanity, or at the very least Canada. We adults are responsible for protecting and guiding the youth, which is why I feel it is necessary for us to concentrate our efforts and abilities on the abolition of youth custody. If we target at-risk youth and create relatable programming to fit their mental, emotional, physical and spiritual needs, we can ultimately preclude them from becoming hardened career criminals.

In a perfect world, wouldn't that mean there would eventually be no use for penitentiaries in Canada if we can successfully stop the youth from offending before they are declared adults? It would seem that if we went this route, in time, prisons will slowly but surely become irrelevant, unnecessary, and a thing of the past.





Our Quotidian Quandary

By Shane Tym

When we were kids, parents would incessantly tell us not to tattle on our sibling. This nugget of wisdom was repeated – ad nauseum – throughout many a childhood. This is just good sense. Sound logic, if you will. On the street and in prison, this is referred to as, ‘ratting’ - to be colloquial – and as long as there has been prison there has been someone offering ‘reprieve’ for giving information on someone else. At what point was it decided that getting information on possible infractions in the institution was more important than a person’s rehabilitation? Moreover, what is fostering an environment of encouraging people to tattle on someone else to save themselves really creating? Rewarding the informant by repealing consequence is creating a paradigm by which an individual feels as though they can get away with anything so long as they give information on someone else, thereby impeding their own rehabilitation. It creates, for them, the potentiality to do the very things they are reporting to staff. Is this how we prepare people for release into the community? There must be a serious paradigmatic shift, not just for the community, but also for the sake of recidivism and rehabilitation.

Inter-personal dexterity is not an innate ability for some. It is well maintained that society is made up of both extroverts and introverts. The wherewithal to be able and willing to discuss matters openly with people takes time; it takes practice for some. When staff allows individuals to come to them with every complaint about

other individuals – no matter the severity – this impedes any progress that could have been made on behalf of the individual to deal with the situation judiciously, thereby negating the individual the opportunity to learn inter-personal skills. This does not align with CSC’s programming. Should they not be encouraging individuals to try to solve their own problems, or at least guide them to the IWC (Inmate Welfare Committee) where the committee can sit the two aggrieved parties down to discuss the matter? Is this preparing an individual for the community? One could argue that this is causing consequential existential damage. These people will not be able to communicate sufficiently when situations arise in the community. This must change for the benefit of not only the individual involved, but the community as well.

What is the cost of staff utilizing informants to gain knowledge of the goings on in the institution? I maintain that it allows the informant the ability to do whatever he or she wants as long as they inform on someone. However, the information given is not always the truth. Often the informant will fabricate situations because they know that if they do not, they will be penalized for their own sins. What is the point of punishing one whilst absolving another of the same or even worse? Worse yet, there are informants that are so solipsistic that they create worse problems than the original offender does. There are instances of informants feeling so ‘untouchable’ that they have no problem destroying something or having privileges taken away from everyone. This goes on and on as long as they just feed some information to the staff

regardless of reliability of the information. For those of us that have been introspectively diagnosing and restoring ourselves, it is creating the potential to exacerbate our ability to better ourselves. We sit back and we watch as these people get away with one thing after another whilst pissing all over our proverbial faces, getting more and more privileges taken away from us. I must clarify that I am well aware that this is not the only reason we lose privileges; there is no shortage of ignoramuses on either side of the ‘con line’, but I digress.

There are those of us that have spent our time in prison reflecting on and repairing bad habits, hurts, and hang-ups. This does not happen overnight. This does not even happen in a year. This takes years of hard work to renew our mind and work on what the virtuous man or woman is supposed to be. Enter informant. The informant cares not about introspection. The informant is inherently selfish. The informant does not try. The informant knows not the virtue of humankind nor does the informant care. The informant does whatever they want, often significantly affecting the reflection of the ‘attempted virtuous’ (because one does not simply become virtuous, instead, one spends the remainder of life deciding to make virtuous choices. The line still exists.) We the ‘attempted virtuous’ attempt to comprehend how staff exacerbates this dangerous enigmatic paradigm. We scratch the head that attempts comprehension.

What about the person who has just decided to try to be the ‘attempted virtuous’? It is a fragile mental state inasmuch as this existential “new born” has temptations constantly trying to pull them back to the depths of darkness. Staff may argue that, “If you really wanted to change then you would just do it!” We all have our perceptions of how things are ‘supposed’ to be. So often things are just assumed – a mistake of potentially egregious proportions. If you have ever attempted to make a change in your life then you know that it can be one of the hardest things you will ever do, especially when it is a complete overhaul of the way you think and the things you do. While staff keeps a record of all the negative things you do, they do not record the positive things you do in everyday life – even though, to a certain extent, they’re mandated to

record on our OMS any positive things they see from us. However, they keep record of all the informant’s informing, whilst expunging all the negative they do. We scratch the head that attempts comprehension.

The sad reality is that this will never change. It will go on ad infinitum. So much change expected of us while none is thought of as required by them. Many people struggle to accept this double standard. What can we do to change it? Nothing. We can however, being the ‘attempted virtuous’, attempt to look at this as a test in patience or forgiveness. It does not accept or condone the behavior, nor does it allow the person to get away with it. It simply allows us to move on and not let it anchor or aggravate us to the point of being that person we do not want to be. It does not mean we cannot shed light on the situation however. This is a catharsis. This cannot be compared to the days of men being forced to run gauntlets – naked – of fierce foaming dogs and batons. The days when a luxury consisted of a hot meal. This does not compare to the third world and the dilapidated, apocalyptic prisons therein. This cannot be compared to the myriad of injustices endured daily in for-profit prisons with rent-a-con ideals. On the scale of injustice, this certainly rates well below the aforementioned. It does not mean that we should turn a blind eye to it. Hence why there exists a scale, right?

The solution for this is exponentially easier to obtain compared to all those other fundamental and existential threats. There is a solution on both sides and on both sides lay roadblocks. The con line could refrain from sub-culture activities, but this is not a comedy, and it is meant only for those of us attempting to renew our minds, the ‘attempted virtuous’, it is not for those that choose to live by the sword. If you live that life, then you know the consequences and accept them. That is your choice as it once was mine. Choosing altruism does not mean choosing to be an informant. You do not have to rat to live a good life. If anything, I believe that will just keep you from making any real progress. Forget what everybody else is doing and worry about your own progress. Especially for those with extremely sordid backgrounds. How can you worry about everyone else

and fix your own problems? You can’t. Staff should stop allowing it, however, as I said, this is not a comedy, and that is a divine pipe dream.

William Head is just one of the many places that one must earn the right to be transferred. I know I can say I worked quite hard for years to be classified minimum security. It took hard work; it took dedication and discipline. Upon arrival at William Head, I could truly say that I had earned my spot here. Enter the informant. The informant did not work hard to get there. The informant “ratted” his way to minimum where he had no respect for it nor was he grateful for a chance to earn trust. Those of us that have been in for years all know many people who deserve to be in a minimum. These people – many of them lifers – work and work and continually are denied the opportunity. However, the informant has done nothing but squeal his way to minimum. Is that what they are teaching people? “Don’t worry, you don’t have to try to address your negative behavior because you told us that this guy over here is smoking cigarettes!” This is wildly unconscionable.

Furthermore, this quotidian quandary is setting a precedent that one need not worry about trying to rehabilitate oneself, simply rat your way to minimum! Are these people we should be rewarding? What would the community have to say about that? I am sure, given the choice, they would greatly prefer to reward the person desperately trying to gain trust and maintain integrity in an environment of disreputably disaffected dishonesty (forgive the over-effusive alliterations).

In conclusion, remember that we always have a choice; in fact, I believe that life is nothing more than endurance of choice. We can choose to live the virtuous life without having to resort to the tattle. This is not a prisoner political manifesto. Let me be clear that this affects everyone, inside or out. I say, with great circumspection, that this will never stop without first a great ethical war. If they change nothing, then there will be moral casualties: integrity, courage, self-respect. There has already been irreparable damage. Who will pay the price? I can tell you with great certitude that, whether in prison or in the community, in the end, we all do.

THE BUS RIDE. Not this Again.

By Gary "Gwiszy"

You would think half a lifetime of the up and down roller coast of addiction, anxiety, depression, and whatever types of storms and sunny days that may come your way; at some point, you would say you've had enough. From homelessness, couch surfing, institutions, to your own place, etc. Then for some back to rock bottom once again. And this is where I am once again. I call it the bus ride of life. We all have a destination, with all these stops in between. Many have the chance to take the express bus with only a few main stops in between before they reach where they gotta go. Then there are others that have to stop at every stop, and it may be slow but you still make it to where you want to go. Then there is me and I'm sure I am not the only one. I'm on the detour, sightsee, stop at every bus stop. I know at any time I could just get off at the next stop and catch the right bus. Which I have done many times. But the power of mental health, life issues, and addiction causes people to get off at the wrong stop at any time, any place, with anyone, anywhere. And even to the sad known truth some never even have the chance to get back on the bus ever again. My name is Gary, and I grew up in lower class, below poverty level neighborhoods of Toronto which is no excuse to why I'm right back to my rock bottom once again. I'm going to be open and honest, I have ADHD, anxiety, depression and worst of all I am an addict. My addictions have taken control on and off throughout my life in a way that I seem to have this winsome, lose-some battle with myself. And end up back at square one. I let my pride or overthinking, fear and my run to problem of addictions get the best of me, then before I know it, I'm in jail. I'm really not a bad guy, I don't have bad intentions, I don't hate on people and I really am sorry for the bad choices and judgements.

I not only hurt myself, but hurt and drag along the people I love and who love me and want the best for me. I just got out on Day Parole back in Oct 2020 after being in jail and prison since April 2018. I did all the right things to get out on a chance of freedom. I was back on the

bus again. Met a very nice, beautiful woman, had my family back, my son in my life. People of support in my every corner, how could I ever fail? Well, the power of a disease called addiction, which can kick you off the bus real fast. It wasn't even 3 months later that I first relapsed. I was going through some of my clothes I had that were packed up from when I was first incarcerated. Right as I pull out a pair of jeans that were one of my favorites, I check the pockets and in the back pocket I find a capsule that I must have put in there years ago. If I remember correctly, which I was wrong, I thought it was molly or MDMA. But stupid me takes the tablet and hides it in my backpack. And this is how addiction can out-of-the-blue steal your life. 2 weeks pass by. I even forget I still had the damn thing. I was already having a bad week. I was told I could no longer communicate with my girlfriend because she had a criminal record. I was tired and overwhelmed of all the programs I had to do, I was just overall stressed and depressed, broken. I go to open and dig in my backpack for smoke money on my way to the half-way house and there it was. The pill I had forgot in there and without even a thought I took it. Not even a split second and I took it. Why? I don't even have a better excuse than the honest truth of I actually didn't even think. And took it, I was like, "FUCK! WTF did I just do?" I even tried to throw up just to get it out of me. Now my mind was like, "not this again." What if I get a urine test? I felt so bad. I felt I let myself down. Along with everyone else. Sure, just my luck I got a urine test and find out it was crystal meth. I told my P.O. exactly what had happened, and I told my sponsor and everyone but my mom at the time. I could not bear to tell my mom and break her heart. So, I got another chance.

I lasted till March after that. I will say this much is, I relapsed again and here I am going to be fighting for my chance to get back on the right bus. I know this is rock bottom again. I'm back in jail and the worst part is, in jail we actually get no help to beat mental health and addiction. We really don't. I personally think it actually makes it worse, so I am trying to get into a rehab or CAMH or any place but jail in hopes of getting real help. So I don't

go back into the lost world of addiction. Jail is not rehab nor does it really fix your problems. I need my family and community supports as well as a proper doctor and programs where I can relate with others. I want back on the bus and know where I went wrong. So, I guess I will wait and see if I get another chance. You are not alone. Thank you for reading this. And I'm sorry to everyone I let down.

Surviving the Dark Night of the Soul

By Zakaria Amara

It's been called the Void, the Abyss, the Cave, the Womb, the Dark Night of the Soul. Those who never experienced it can never fathom its reality, while most of those who are in its depths have no idea where they are. I was once trapped there for many years, but now I am slowly emerging. Oh! how dark it's been!... I wrote this message because someone that I care deeply about has just descended into its depths. I hope that she and others like her will find it and use it to make their way out. I often stop to look back towards the center, towards a massive whirling cloud of menacing darkness, hoping to see a sign of her.

The void is not an evil place; it is a universal human experience. It sometimes manifests itself physically in the form of a prison, a cave, a belly of a whale, or a serious injury or illness. At other times it manifests itself socially in the form of an unhappy relationship, loss of a loved one, broken dreams, or the feeling of permanent entrapment beneath the rubble of bad life choices. However, in all cases, the void is a psychological and spiritual struggle; an inner state that forces us to transform our inner selves or be forever condemned to languish in its depths.

In it, all the lies we lived are exposed, the games we played no longer function, and the stories we told ourselves are challenged. The void's main tool to achieve all of this is simple: pain in the form of a near constant depressive state that ebbs and flows. At its peak, your head feels like it is weighed down by a heavy invisible hand; as if you are being forced to look deep down within your soul.

Despite how horrendous all of this seems, this experience is actually an opportunity of a lifetime. Carol Osborn eloquently writes: "However you refer to it, one experiences it as the period that comes

between what was and what's next. Within its darkness, it has no boundaries and no landmarks. When you are inside it, it feels that there will be no end. Fortunately, there are many 'survivors' who have journeyed through the void and emerged more vital, more integrated, more connected to life's possibilities, not despite of, but because of the experience. The void is, after all, perhaps the most effective place of reordering of one's cognitive processes to take place, for that is where one is least invested in the structure that once circumscribed meaning in one's life."

In the beginning, this place was so dark that I could not even see myself. We all intuitively know that in the midst of darkness only light can save us, and so I began searching within my soul for torches to set alight. After years of searching, I found ten torches whose collective light could pierce through even the darkest core of the void. These torches exist within you as well; all you have to do is find them.

The Torch of Surrender: The void is like a physician who is attempting to save our lives Our unwillingness to cooperate with him could lead to death or serious harm. We have to peacefully surrender to the process rather than try to fight it or escape it.

The Torch of Painful Embrace: We naturally guard against physical and emotional pain. Yet emotional pain is somehow regarded as Taboo; we are often ashamed of displaying it because we've been taught to see it as a sign or failure and personal weakness. Since pain is unavoidable in life, this attitude only makes it worse by adding layers of guilt, shame, and frustration. Ironically, pain is actually a well-meaning, misunderstood friend that we must embrace if we ever hope to heal. Pain is sometimes a warner that is standing at the frontlines of a looming disaster, yelling at the top of her voice, hoping that we would heed the alarm and make a course change in our lives. At other times, pain is simply inviting us to heal from old open wounds that are buried beneath the sands of time.

The Torch of Divine Friendship: The darkness of the void is overwhelming. We simply cannot face it by ourselves. The only being who can give us company in its loneliness is our Maker. Most of us don't realize that we are worthy

enough to speak to Him directly without the need for intermediaries and saints. The prayers of a sincere heart can echo beyond the limits of the Universe itself. Unfortunately, many people are unable to have this spiritual connection because 'God' is simply a projection of their Egos. Being vainly self-righteous and following our self-serving desires at the expense of doing what is right, is a sign of this disease.

In the Qur'an, God is called "The Ever-Subtle One", therefore as you embark on building this relationship, do not expect a grand vision or a thundering voice, but rather learn the subtle art of reading between the lines. Rabi'a, the 8th century female mystic said:

O God,
Whenever I listen to the voice of anything you have made
The rustling of the trees,
The trickling of water,
The cries of birds,
The flickering of shadow,
The roar of the wind,
The song of the thunder,
I hear it saying:
God is One!
Nothing can be compared with God!

The Torch of Truth: We enter the void as impostors but only our true selves can emerge. For many of us, our true selves are buried alive beneath a mountain of lies and broken promises. They are suffocating, gasping for the air of truth, trying to dig their way out from beneath the dirt of deceit. They wail, weep, and call out to no avail. Every time an opening is made revealing the rays of truth, a lie snuffs it out. Therefore, no more lies, manipulations, broken promises, unfulfilled commitments, two-faced deceit, and false claims of love.

Be truthful with our Maker, with yourself, and with everyone else. Only then will you find yourself, and only then will you be able to see the path ahead with crystal clarity. Only then will you be able to distinguish right from wrong. When we lie, it is our own spiritual vision that we damage.

Emerson once wrote, "Any attempt to make a good impression or a favourable appearance will instantly vitiate (spoil) the effect. But speak the truth, and all things alive or brute are vouchers, and the very roots of the grass underground there do seem to stir and move to bear witness."

The Torch of Hope: This is

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the most illuminating, when there is absolutely no hint of light anywhere else. You must never give up the hope that beyond the seemingly infinite ocean of hardship the land of relief awaits.

I remain hopeful,
Even when I see no reason to be
The walls are high as heaven
The doors are sealed shut
Darkness envelopes me in layers
Yet the Sapling of Hope is in my right,
And I dare to plant it
Knowing the world might end tonight.

The Torch of Humility: Humility means having a modest view of our own importance. Our Ego is the Dragon that keeps us locked up in the prison of our self-centeredness. An indication of our progress in lighting this torch is how often we place the needs of others over our own needs.

The Torch of Integrity: In the void, you will be tested by many situations that will pit your personal desires directly against what is right. Every time you make the right choice, you will move forward, while every time you choose wrongly, you will violently be tossed many miles backwards. Hidden motives and self-serving actions are the vipers that lurk in the darkness of the void. *The fourth Torch of Truth can help expose them.*

The Torch of Meaning: There comes a point in many people's lives when they realize that what makes life rich and meaningful is being strongly connected to everyone from their Maker to their neighbor. The Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him), summed it all up when he said: "The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your mind and with all your strength. And love your neighbor as you love yourself. There is no commandment greater than these."

The Torch of Myth: The most important story is the story we tell ourselves about ourselves. Our lives came to a grounding halt because our story could no longer sail us forward. Yet we fearfully cling on to it, like passengers refusing to jump off a sinking ship. The truth is that there is nothing to fear. We may still hold on to parts of our story that continue to be valuable. We can still honour the story that we wrote as children for despite its dysfunctional elements, it was the best story we could tell

in order to survive. However, now that we are beginning a new phase in our journey, we have to realize that only the adult storyteller within us is fit to be the narrator.

The Torch of Patience and Flow: The Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), said: "Victory is intertwined with patience, relief is intertwined with hardship, and with every difficulty there is ease."

If hope and divine love are what move us forward, then patience and flow are what saves us from sliding backwards when faced with obstacles, setbacks, and provocations. To be patient is to hold ourselves back from acting out of frustration and instead choosing to remain calm until the storm passes. Flow on the other hand stems from the realization that our control over what happens to us is an illusion, and therefore like a river, we gracefully flow over and around obstacles instead of allowing them to hold us back. Those who do not flow with the river of destiny are always stuck in the stagnant waters of frustration, anger, and resentment. They are like a hissing cat that is being dragged, while its nails are dug deep into the ever-moving carpet of life.

Flow, Flow, Flow ...
Through every hardship and delight
Flow, Flow, Flow ...
Through the darkness and the light
Flow, Flow, Flow ...
Like a Monarch in its flight
Flow, Flow, Flow ...
Like a river in the night

What I have just described is the enriching and noble inner work that you will need to embark on. If it seems overwhelming, then remember that "a journey of a thousand miles always begins with one step." You are fully capable of completing this journey. Why else would you be called on to undertake it at this moment in your life?

Whether you realize it or not, you are a hero in the making. Joseph Campbell taught us that every hero that ever came before us, whether they were a noble Prophet or a mythical adventurer, had to go through the phases of Separation, Initiation, and Return. In Separation, they were physically or psychologically separated from their people. In Initiation, they were internally transformed by the knowledge, wisdom, and special powers they gained. Finally, in Return, they went back to their people and

shared with them the gifts they were granted.
O Night of my soul, ever so dark
Into your darkest corners I shall embark
Swimming through the deepest oceans of tears
Withstanding the howling winds of my fears
Seeking what every noble soul has sought
A treasure that is neither sold or bought



My thoughts on COVID-19

By Keith M.

A lot of inmates are taking it As a joke, not wearing masks, not social distancing and 10 to 15 guys crowd in to one little common room. Yes there are signs up all over the institution but a lot of inmates just laugh at them and the guards don't enforce it. And for guys with mental health issues it's even harder, all the loud noise, stress levels are very high and then this new routine we are locked down in our cell longer daily. We used to get out at 7:00 + 7:10 every morning, now we are lucky if we get out by 8:30, sometime later. And lunch counts from 15 mins to 20 mins to sometimes one hour or longer. When all this started we were told we would be given a bottle of hand sanitizer, to this day that has never happened either. They gave us masks for a few months then stopped. Homemade masks were given to some inmates, but not all wanted one because they were being given out by CX, not healthcare workers, and once you wash them a few times they start falling apart. For those inmates who are coming up for their parole dates, there are delays due to COVID-19, some halfway houses are taking inmates now, but no ETAs or UTAs, which is discouraging. We are losing our support networks or ability to build new ones. PO's are shutting us down and running them off. There are many lifers that are more than ready to be released passed their dates and would do well in the community, but they are being held back by PO's who will not give them a chance or believe they are not ready yet. They believe lifers should never be released until they're almost dead. The public and the community need to know what lifers have had to go through and are ready

to come out and be back in the community, following the laws of the community. Lifers are victims of CSC and what they are put through, you will never know what happens inside institutions because the truth hardly ever gets out, only what CSC wants you to hear that's all their truth.

GIRL TALK



Photo by @sarkastico

By Moka Dawkins

Hey y'all it's your girl Moka! And I'm back with the final issue of Girl Talk!! I've been praying for y'all inside right now dealing with all this pandemic bullshit. I know it's rough in there for y'all so hopefully this can give you all a bit of a distraction from whatever you're going through.

Well you already know I keep you informed about what's going on in my life so here is the next chronicle for you.

This has been my first summer out on road in the past 4+ years and it was the most socio-tramatic thing ever! Remember how I told you about my situation with my ex? Well it gets deeper and darker! So after I left my ex for cheating and lying, I went on a imma fuck whoever tip cause I was hurting and didn't know how to deal with it. (Y'all ever been on a mood swing like that?)

Anyways I ended up meeting my most recent ex and boy oh boy did I not see this hurricane of a twist coming! At first, of course, in every relationship we were head over heels about each other. We would be talking on the phone all day and night and

even fall asleep on the phone together. He made me so happy (at first of course). The first time we meet in person I had sex with him cause he just felt so right even though he came looking a bit scruffy he was still such a cutie. I couldn't resist myself from kissing him and touching on his juicy arms! (I can't lie, writing about him brings up good memories.) Before I carry on, Male identified readers, I want to know why is it hard for some men to accept true commitment? I find the act of commitment signifies one of the strongest elements of love and loyalty and yet men in these days and ages seem to shoot it out with no regard for themselves first and foremost and then the person who is loving them. Why do you guys do that?

Moving on, I fell in love again. We spent pretty much everyday today together. He was practically living with me which at first, I loved having him around. I love the sense of security a man can provide. Now this is where it gets dark, maybe juicy for y'all. Sparing a lot of in depth emotional trauma, Tell me how my ex goes, fuck it! Just know my ex goes!!

Sometimes I just don't know what to write cause I go through so many emotions when I'm reliving these memories.

I am going to end this early as I mainly wanted to check-in and let everyone know that I'm alive, praying and striving. And I am still fighting the prison abolition fight on these sides of the walls so don't feel like you've been forgotten about cause the community really gets together out here and takes to the streets for your freedom.

As this is the final Girl Talk as I have been blessed with starting my own not-for-profit business T-TimeTips Productions. Reallocating financial support back into BIPOC Trans/Non-binary/Queer communities and striving in the succession in economic growth and development for Trans/Queer/Non-binary communities is our objective. It feels great to start something meaningful for the protection and growth of community and I pray we grow to be able to help with appeal court cases and the freedom of you my brothers, sisters and siblings.

Stay strong and know God is with you,
Your Girl,
Moka Dawkins

PHOENIX POISSON**Pretty Ugly**

Originally written by Abdullah Shoaib and shared by Phoenix
I'm very ugly
So don't try to convince me that
I am a very beautiful person
Because at the end of the day
I hate myself in every single way
And I'm not going to lie to myself by saying
There is beauty inside of me that matters
So rest assured I will remind myself
That I am a worthless, terrible person
And nothing you say will make me believe
I still deserve love
Because no matter what
I am not good enough to be loved
And I am in no position to believe that
Beauty does exist within me
Because whenever I look in the mirror I always think
Am I as ugly as people say?
Now read each line from the bottom up

Today was the absolute worst day ever

And don't try to convince me that
There's something good in every day
Because, when you take a closer look,
This world is a pretty evil place.
Even if,
Some goodness does shine through once in awhile
Satisfaction and happiness don't last.
And it's not true that
It's all in the mind and heart
Because
True happiness can't be obtained
Only if one's surroundings are good
It's not true that good exists
I'm sure you can agree that
The reality
Creates
My attitude
It's all beyond my control
And you'll never in a million years hear me say that
Today was a good day
NOW READ FROM THE BOTTOM TO THE TOP

TRAVIS STOUT**Behind Walls**

- 1) Stand together
We will never fall
 - 2) Serving time
behind these prison walls
 - 3) All our cells
are twelve by eight
 - 4) Our choices
Sealed by fate
- Eyes Full of Tears**
- 1) How far will I go
Before it's too late
 - 2) For all my time is

- Sealed by fate
- 3) My life is full of crime
It's consumed by time (fueled by anger, so much hate)
 - 4) It started when I was a young child
I never used to be so wild
 - 5) I've been through so much
That's why I'm so hard to touch
 - 6) I sped away from cops in a car
I made it pretty far
But due to my actions
I'm back behind bars
Not knowin' when the next time
I will be able to see the stars
 - 7) They want 4 years
Filled my eyes, full of tears
 - 8) In this poem
I really want
To go home
 - 5) Life of crime
I will never change
 - 6) New inmates find
Our ways so strange
 - 7) All our rules
Not meant to be broken
 - 8) Anything happens
it goes unspoken
- Free**
- 1) Behind these bars
We never see the nightly stars
 - 2) Home, so far away
I try to make it, day by day
 - 3) I hear some men, cry at night
Wanting to die, not willing to fight
 - 4) Being in prison, you live by a code
within these walls, made of stone
 - 5) for all my crimes, I pay with time
trust my friends won't drop a dime
 - 6) These small cells are 12 by 8
first timers are given a taste
 - 7) many nights, spent in cold
Jail house stories, go untold
 - 8) when the time comes
Where I am set free
 - 9) my family will be happy
 - 10) grateful, I'm finally out
my name is Travis Stout

ZAKARIA AMARA

To Gordon... forever.

Mystery

Mystery: A religious truth known by revelation alone. (Merriam Webster dictionary)
Here I stand,
Between the two eternities,
Of past and future tense
In a spec of time
Sublime.
What to do with this life of mine?
Like an hourglass;
I wonder how much sand is left?
Bereft.
I breathe my soul away
To the afterlife

Wherein my deeds await
Their fate
I fear a bitter harvest
So I stay awake at night
Planting seeds of every kind
Am I behind?
What is the purpose of our lives?
Think.
Is it to gather all the toys?
And he who has the most ones wins?
Or is it to build a house of cards,
Then see it scattered by the winds?
Whims.
So here I stand,
Wondering,
Pondering,
Questioning,
Looking to my origins
In search of my destination
Who am I?
What am I?
And who is it that I shall be?
Mystery...

ROB SURRIDGESO**Casually Extent**

Always started out with greatest of intent
Really wishing things were truly different
paired within separate myself accepting blame
Time goes on releasing this shame
Evading this virus was Heaven sent
Figuring out what all this meant
Deleted memory of last outside frame
My life definitely not the same
Accepting this fate forever so permanent
Although seeming so far very distant
Taken away leaving memories and name
Remembering all as an eternal flame
Wisely guided prospering peaceful immaculately content
Planning departure at night they came
Above among angels fully did claim
Happening fast all that time went
Once again days ahead becoming confident
Divinely planned life is no-body's game
Confined inside vision beyond remaining tame
Could never dream was so ignorant
Never settling down staying anyone's gent
Swiftly acting I have taken aim
Finding this heart it's matching dame
Making sense of every past vent
Always wondered where right one went

MMXVIII**- SIMPLE TRUTH -**

Stuck in a system with no chance of change.
Correctional plan finished, yet support out of range.
Empty promises made that get further pushed away, and it is the con who is left to shoulder the blame.
So the con who really wanted to change, now feels betrayed and just plays the game.
Cause the moment your honest you failed yourself, we all know correctional services only care for them self.
Written by:

LINE WE TAKE

One day I find myself thinking of the past
in the days I was young living life so fast.
With no cares in the world full of love and trust, then the day had come like Christmas past
A reflection of me plunged into crimes and drugs.

Before I knew it I was a selfish thing, with emotions so cold full of hate and lust.
As months and years began to pass, I found myself in some kind of trance.

Flooded with emotions knowing this is my last chance, time to slow things down and take the slow dance.

Realizing in that moment life is not that bad, it depend on ourselves and the line we take, will it be up our nose? or will we walk straight?

This will determine the outcome and our fate, will you land in hot water with regrets and mistakes, a recipe for disaster leaving you in a bad state.

Or will you finally grow up and decide to walk straight
Written by - MMXVIII

BRIAN G. KERR**"Rot or Die?"**

It's been a while since my last ~ so called trial

I think they figure, they got me where they want me.

They take pride in the fact ~ they can now...

Haunt and deliberately taunt me.

"Pretty sad for a human existence..."

But I give them credit for their relentless persistence.

I write poetry and draw the odd picture.

They trump up charges and suppress the resister.

If I do nothing, they get someone to say the differ.

One glimpse of freedom and it all got even stiffer.

They call us criminals, but do they even really know the difference?

I mean ~ If they were us,

would there be any true significance?

Would they come to know our pain? Or would it all be the same?

Would they lessen the heart-arche undergone?

Or would things just simply linger on?

I hate to be the one to prone or pry,

But I can't help to wonder...
If they were us, would they...

Rot or die?

COLONEL SANDERS (LOL)**Changes**

I wish that the end was coming sooner rather than later.

I've read all of the prophecies and predictions.
Things are definitely winding down.

Time has sped up; innovations jump out like hungry squirrels, sleek, agile but short lived.

Flashes of cognitive, chain lightening.

Billions of people like neurons, subconsciously on course.

It could be any day.

A rainy, sweet, clean day.
It's a gentle feeling to imagine the waves of eternity.

Electric jolts as the pineal gland flashes out of my essence.

Know thyself, know the things that we are created to know.

The things that make you ready to go.

I loved, cried and ran away, then put my face down.

Closest to my creator and begged.

Synapses popping like balloons.

Prayers to make it all smooth,

The ride down life's sewer
The will to go, leaving here.

I believe Einstein

"Energy just changes states."

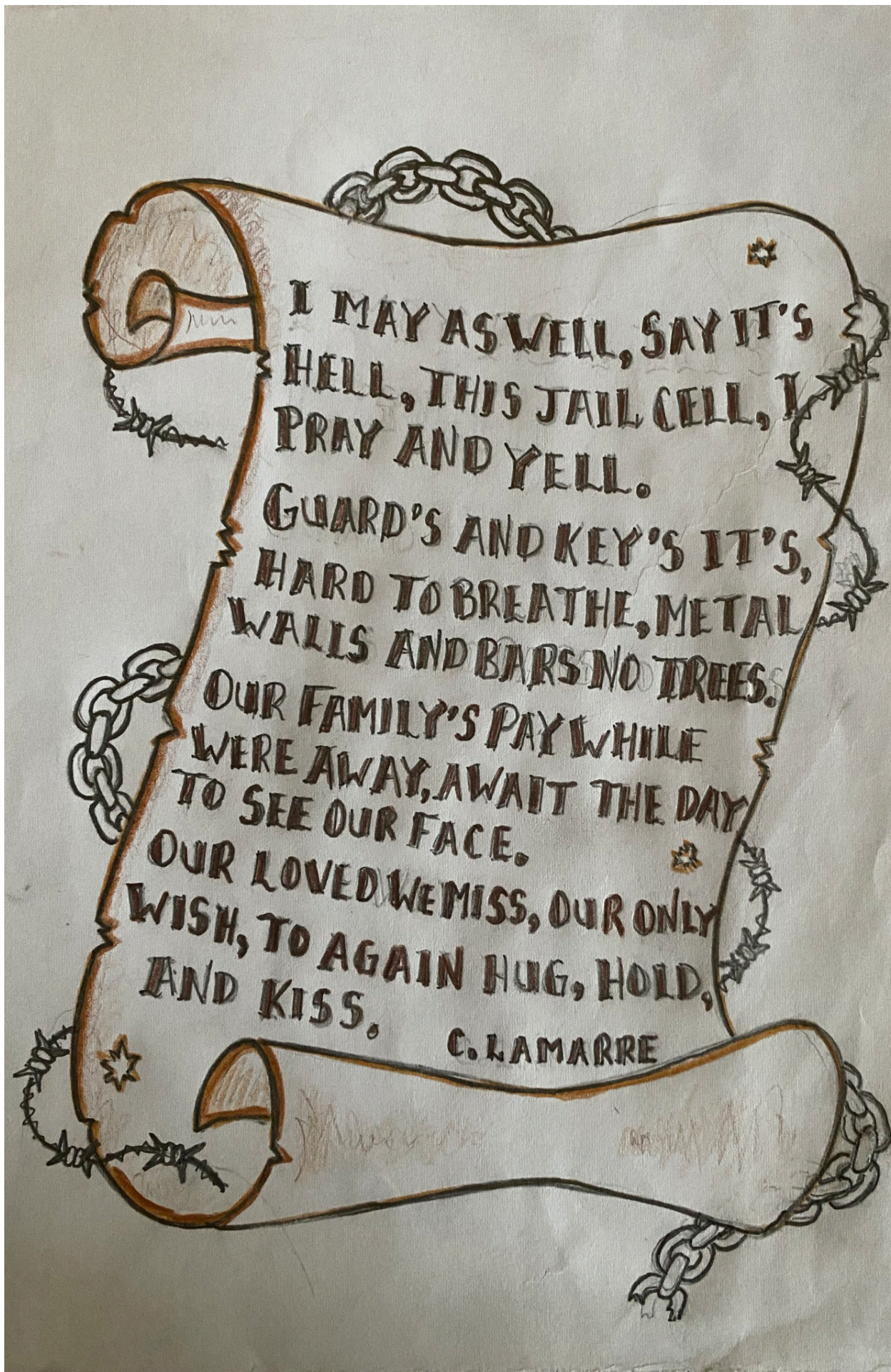
We change, then are gone forever.

On course to imagine new worlds then live them like altruistic nomads.

By Colonel Sanders LOL

OBITUARIES

I was hoping you can do a shout out for those who I have lost while locked up these last three years, My Dad Patrick Dowdell Sr. the mother of two of my kids Sophia Fairweather, two of my good friends Jeremy Little and Matt Carlsson and just recently my Uncle Kenny Lambert may you all R.I.P. and we will keep you alive by always sharing our memory with you. Love you all - Patrick - SDK - Dowdell Jr.



CALL FOR ART AND ARTICLES – CERTAIN DAYS: FREEDOM FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS CALENDAR 2022: CREATING A NEW WORLD IN THE SHELL OF THE OLD.

The Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners Calendar collective (certaindays.org) will be releasing our 21st calendar this coming autumn. The 2022 theme is “Creating a New World in the Shell of the Old,” looking at collective approaches at creating a more inclusive and fulfilling world through mutual effort.

We are looking for 12 pieces of art

and 12 short essays to feature in the calendar, which hangs in more than 6,000 homes, workplaces, prison cells, and community spaces around the world. We encourage contributors to submit both new and existing work. We especially seek submissions from people in prison or jail, so please forward to any prison-based artists and writers.

THEME GUIDELINES

The Certain Days project has been intergenerational from the beginning. The inside members and many of

the prisoners featured were involved in the freedom struggles of the 1960s and 70s. Most of us in the outside collective were in our twenties when the project began, eager to learn from our elders and to provide concrete solidarity across prison walls. Now, more than two decades later, the world has changed but the need for that connection and support remains as strong as ever. As new movements have risen up to confront forces of repression, we have seen an increase in political prisoners from Indigenous struggles and Earth and Animal liberation movements, to anarchists, anti-fascists, Grand Jury resisters, and hacktivists.

With COVID-19 and a growing and dangerous fascism vying to destroy the world as we know it, this year we were inspired to focus our attention on mutual aid to build new and stronger communities, and collective efforts to assist and free those freedom fighters locked behind the bars.

*Topics may include, but are not limited to the following:

From defense campaigns to prison book programs community bail funds to phone lines, mutual aid has been at the heart of prison support throughout the history of our movements. In what ways has mutual aid benefitted us? In what ways have we failed to engage it effectively? What does mutual aid look like behind the bars? For those incarcerated, power dynamics and violent hierarchies are the norm, and actively

confronting them risks very real and harmful repercussions. However, mutual aid has in fact blossomed in such conditions—peer support during pandemics; inside-outside projects like Victory Gardens and Certain Days. What are other ways in which mutual aid is utilized by those locked away?

In what ways can mutual aid help us in creating transformative and healing spaces for those returning from prison? What about for those about to go to prison for the first time?

What is the future of mutual aid in the ongoing abolitionist struggle against the prison industrial complex?

FORMAT GUIDELINES

ARTICLES:

- 400-500 words max. If you submit a longer piece, we will have to edit for length.
- Poetry is also welcome but needs to be significantly shorter than 400 words to accommodate layout.
- Please include a suggested title.

Due to time and space limitations, submissions may be lightly edited for clarity, with no change to the original intent.

ART:

1. The calendar is 11" tall by 8.5" wide, so art with a 'portrait' orientation is preferred. Some pieces may be printed with a border, so it need not fit those dimensions exactly.
2. We are interested in a diversity of media (paintings, drawings, photographs, prints, computer-designed graphics, collage, etc).
3. The calendar is printed in colour and we prefer colour images.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

1. You may send as many submissions as you like. Chosen artists and authors will receive a free copy of the calendar and promotional postcards. Because the calendar is a fundraiser, we cannot offer money to contributors.

2. Prisoner submissions are due July 1, 2021 and can be mailed to: Certain Days c/o Burning Books 420 Connecticut Street Buffalo, NY 14213 USA

The Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners Calendar is a joint fundraising and educational project between outside organizers in Montreal, Hamilton, New York, and Baltimore, with two political prisoners being held in maximum-security prisons: David Gilbert in New York and Xinachtli (s/n Alvaro Luna Hernandez) in Texas. We were happy to welcome founding members Herman Bell and Robert Seth Hayes (Rest in Power) home from prison in 2018, after serving over forty years each. All of the current members of the outside collective are grounded in day-to-day organizing work other than the calendar, on issues ranging from migrant justice to community media to prisoner solidarity. We work from an anti-imperialist, anti-racist, anti-capitalist, feminist, queer- and trans-liberationist position. All proceeds from the calendar go to abolitionist organizations working for a better world.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

PASAN's office, where we publish Cell Count, is on the historical territory of the Huron-Wendat, Petun, Seneca and, most recently, the Mississaugas of the New Credit Indigenous peoples. This territory is covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Haudenosaunee and the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the lands and resources around the Great Lakes.

OUTREACH AND SUPPORT SCHEDULE

Currently, we are not offering programming inside of prisons due to COVID-19. We are working with and waiting for word from the various Ontario federal and provincial institutions on when we will be returning inside to do our groups and 1 on 1s. This may change by the time the next issue comes out, so please contact us directly for the most up-to-date information on outreach and support inside at: **1-866-224-9978**

We have also reduced the number of staff in our office to allow for physical distancing as a safety precaution against COVID-19. Our office schedules will be available in our voicemail greetings. We are still available Mon - Fri 9am - 5pm EST (to reach a staff member or find out their schedule, please look them up in the back of Cell Count and dial their extension.

HIV+ CLIENT SERVICES

In order to be a client & access these services you need to have confirmed HIV+ status and be a prisoner or ex-prisoner (all times Eastern Standard time)

- Phone Hours: Mon - Fri from 9-5, except Tuesday mornings
- Workshops and Programming - Scheduled usually on Mondays or Thursdays, give us a call or check out our website for a complete list of events we have scheduled.
- ID Clinic - cancelled for now
- Release Funds - \$50 (twice a year max)
- TTC Tokens - 2 each for clients who attend workshops
- Harm Reduction Materials - Mon - Fri from 9-5, except Tuesday AM (Safer-Crack-Use-Kits, Safer-Needle-Use-Kits, Piercing Needles, Condoms, etc.) - for everyone.

Sometimes we and the phones are very busy so please keep trying!

ABOUT CELL COUNT

PASAN publishes 'Cell Count', a minimum of 4 issues per year. We are based in Toronto on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of New Credit First Nation, the Haudenosaunee, the Huron-Wendat and home to many diverse Indigenous peoples. It is sent out for **FREE** to Clients & Prisoners in Canada. If you are on the outside or part of an organization, please consider a donation @ \$20 per year. We are proud to release our 91st issue to you. We are also grateful for all the wonderful feedback we have been receiving from our readers, and encourage you to keep putting your two cents in. Our goal is to have most of our content written and produced by prisoners and ex-prisoners, so we highly encourage you to get in touch with us if you're interested in being part of the Cell

Count team.
 Publisher: PASAN
 526 Richmond St E, Toronto, ON
 M5A 1R3
 Circulation: 700+ - Recirculation: ???

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

Fair Dealing in the Canadian Copyright Act:

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

A NOTE ABOUT PEN PALS:

Here is a list of correspondence services for people inside (alternatives to pen pals, which is, sadly, no longer a part of Cell Count):

Canadian Inmates Connect: Currently, there is a \$35/year subscription. Your ad will be placed on a website, and people with internet access browse through to decide who to connect with. A point of caution: you are asked to say what you have been convicted for, and your full name will be published online. Melissa is the person to contact for more information. Write or call her at: Canadian Inmates Connect Inc. 3085 Kingston Rd, Suite 267, Toronto, Ontario, M1M 1P1 - (647) 344-3404

Black and Pink: Specifically for queer and trans prisoners. They are based in the United States, it does not cost anything to be part of the list, and you don't have to tell them your conviction. Here is how to reach them: Black and Pink National Office, 614 Columbia Rd, Dorchester, MA 02125 617.519.4387

Prison Fellowship Canada: This is a faith-based, Christian organization that connects prisoners with volunteers of either the same gender, or where there is a 15-20 year age difference. The point is for you to have an outlet to express yourself to someone who will listen. If you are of the Christian faith, this may be a great option for you. You can reach them for more info at: Prison Fellowship Canada - National Office, 5945 Airport Road, Suite 144, Mississauga, ON L4V 1R9 905.673.5867

Prisoner Correspondence Project: "...a solidarity project for gay, lesbian, transsexual, transgender, gendervariant, two-spirit, intersex, bisexual and queer prisoners in Canada and the United States, linking them with people who are part of these same communities outside of prison." - From their website.

Write to them here: QPIRG Concordia c/o Concordia University 1455 de Maisonneuve Ouest, Montreal, QC H3G 1M8

If you have had success using a pen pal service (other than ours) and would like to share it with other Cell Count subscribers, please write to us or call. We can list it in a future issue.

Moving?

We were getting about 75 Cell Counts sent back to us each mail-out labelled, 'Not Here'. Please help us reduce our mailing expenses by letting us know of any address change, ASAP! Thank you for taking care with this.

CALLING ALL ARTISTS, WRITERS (FICTION, NON-FICTION), ILLUSTRATORS, CARTOONISTS, POETS, JOURNALISTS (ASPIRING OR OTHERWISE), AND OTHER CREATIVE TYPES:

We want your submissions! We get lots of letters from our readers telling us how much they love seeing all your work and they're hungry for more. Send us your stuff and get published in Cell Count. When you send us stuff, please make sure you write a line in that gives us permission to publish your work. Also, let us know if you would like your work returned to you or sent on to someone else! Please also type your work or write clearly if you can!

Writers: We get a lot of great work sent in that we are unable to use because of very limited space. Apologies. Please consider the column width & keep articles/poems tight & to the point. Honestly, the first items to go in are the ones that fit nicely and leave space for others - quality and quantity! Also, let us know in writing if it's ok to edit your work for grammar, spelling and so we can fit it in.

Please note: If you do send something to us, please give us a call if you can so we can look out for it in the mail. Also, call us again at least a week after you send it to make sure we got it. If not, if you're sending in a piece of writing, we can transcribe it over the phone for you, so keep a copy of everything you send us!

Women are the fastest-growing prisoner population in Canada, but often their experiences are marginalized in conversations about the prison system. We want to hear your take on prison, life, family, or anything else you're interested in writing about. We can guarantee confidentiality, and can publish your pieces under a pseudonym if you want! Please submit your articles, poetry, art, or letters to the Cell Count editor at 526 Richmond St E, Toronto, ON M5A 1R3.

WHEN SUBSCRIBING TO CELL COUNT

We have been notified by a few different institutions that if you'd like your subscription of Cell Count to make it into your hands, you have to register at the library to receive it first. Please do this before requesting a subscription from us just to make sure! Also, if you are interested in subscribing please contact: Cell Count, 526 Richmond St E, Toronto, ON, M5A 1R3 or call Sena at: 1-866-224-9978 ext 228

NEXT CELL COUNT DEADLINE

To our valued Cell Count contributors: our next issue will be for Prisoners Justice Day - which as many of you know, falls on August 10th. Cell Count will be themed around PJD - so please send us your writings, poems, thoughts and/or illustrations about this important day. We will be accepting submissions until July 13th - if you need more time, please call us on Wednesday or Thursday between 10a-5p EST and ask for Sena so we can figure something out!

CONTACT NUMBERS

If you are in any Federal/Provincial Institution or Detention Centre call us only with this #: Toll-free 1-866-224-9978

CSC'S NEW PRISON NEEDLE EXCHANGE PROGRAM (PNEP)

In 2018, CSC announced the roll-out of its "Prison Needle Exchange Program" in federal prisons across the country. To date, CSC says that the PNEP has been implemented at 11 institutions: Grand Valley Institution, Atlantic Institution, Fraser Valley Institution, Edmonton Institution for Women, Nova Institution, Joliette

Institution, Joyceville Institution (minimum security), Mission Institution (medium security), Dorchester Penitentiary, Bowden Institution, and Warkworth Institution. We want to hear how the program is going. If you are in a prison with a PNEP and have seen how it is working, please let us know. You can reach us at Sandra Chu at the HIV Legal Network, 1240 Bay Street, Suite 600, Toronto, ON, M5R 2A7

HOW PASAN AND CELL COUNT ARE OPERATING DURING COVID-19

During the COVID-19 outbreak, PASAN is still open, but in a more limited capacity. Our staff are in the office two days/week, which is when we can read and reply to mail we receive from inside, and answer calls. Currently, we are only allowing staff in our office to help limit the potential spread of the virus, but we are brainstorming ways to slowly start offering services to our clients in office again. We are also waiting for federal and provincial institutions to start allowing outside organizations back inside so we can start delivering groups and one-on-ones with you again.

Cell Count is still running and accepting submissions. We are currently low on submissions and need more sent from you inside to produce Cell Count. If you are interested in submitting but are experiencing issues trying to get your work to us, please give Sena a call at ext 228. Thank you for your patience during this difficult time!

ONTARIO PRISONER EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUND

PASAN staff are no longer completing phone applications for the fund. Families, loved ones or support workers can help you fill out the form at their website: www.tiny.cc/prisonerfund

If you've already applied and have follow up questions, ask the person who filled out the application on your behalf to email: prisonerfund@gmail.com. The money takes about a month to a month and a half to receive. Email transfers are the best way to receive money.

If you don't have anyone with internet access that can help, PASAN can mail an application to you, but we can't help if you have any follow up questions.

CELL COUNT EVALUATIONS

Please take a few minutes to complete the evaluation form we've included with this issue and mail it back to us. We use these evaluations to make sure that Cell Count is useful to you and so our funders know we're on the right track. Call us if you would like to do your evaluation over the phone instead! **1-866-224-9978**

TRRP JAIL HOTLINE

Toronto Prisoners' Rights project is currently taking calls from the Toronto South Detention Center, Toronto East Detention Centre, Maplehurst Correctional Complex, Ontario Correctional Institute, and the Vanier Centre for Women. Through the line, we provide prisoners with free links to advocacy, referrals, information, and support. Call us at (416) 775-9239. We are currently operating Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday from 9-11 am EST and 2-4 pm EST.

EAST COAST

ALLY CENTRE

Take collect calls
150 Bentinck St, Sydney, NS, B1P
1G6 902-567-1766

AIDS COALITION OF NOVA SCOTIA

Accept collect calls
1675 Bedford Row, Halifax, NS, B3J
1T11-800-566-2437, 902-425-4882

AIDS COMMITTEE OF NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

Take collect calls
47 Janeway Place, St. John's, NL, A1A
1R7 1-800-563-1575

AIDS NEW BRUNSWICK

65 Brunswick St, Fredericton, NB, E3B
1G51-800-561-4009, 506-459-7518

AIDS PEI

Take collect calls
2-375 University Ave, Charlottetown, PE, C1A 4N4 902-566-2437

AIDS SAINT JOHN

Don't accept collect calls
115 Hazen St, NB, E2L 3L3 506-652-2437

BOOKS BEYOND BARS

P.O. Box 33129
Halifax, NS
B3L 4T6

HEALING OUR NATIONS:

1-800 565 4255
3-15 Alderney Dr, Dartmouth, NS, B2Y
2N21-800-565-4255, 902-492-4255

MAINLINE NEEDLE EXCHANGE

Calls from within Nova Scotia are free
Don't accept collect calls
5511 Cornwallis St, Halifax, NS, B3K
1B3 902-423-9991

SHARP ADVICE NEEDLE EXCHANGE

Accept collect calls
150 Bentinck St, Sydney, NS, B1P
6H1 902-539-5556 (Collect)
SIDA/AIDS MONCTON
Accept collect calls as long as they're HIV related
80 Weldon St, Moncton, NB, E1C
5V8 506-859-9616

EAST COAST PRISON JUSTICE SOCIETY

6061 University Ave, PO Box 15000
Halifax, NS, B3H 4R2

QUEBEC

CACTUS

Accept collect calls
1300 rue Sanguinet, Montreal, H2X
3E7 514-847-0067

CENTRE FOR AIDS SERVICES MONTREAL (Women)

Accept collect calls
1750 Rue Saint-Andre, 3rd Flr, Montreal, H2L 3T8 1-877-847-3636, 514-495-0990

COALITION des ORGANISMES COMMUNAUTAIRES QUEBECOIS de LUTTE-CONTRE le SIDA (COCQSIDA)

Accept collect calls
1 est, rue Sherbrooke, Montréal, H2X
3V8 514-844-2477

COMITÉ des PERSONNES ATTEINTES du VIH du QUEBEC (CPAVIH)

1-800-927-2844
2075 rue Plessis bureau 310, Montreal, H2L 2Y4 1-800-927-2844

ONTARIO

2-SPIRITED PEOPLE of the 1ST NATIONS

Accept collect calls
145 Front Street East Suite 105 Toronto, Ontario M5A 1E3 416-944-9300

AFRICANS IN PARTNERSHIP AGAINST AIDS

No collect calls, call PASAN
526 Richmond St E, Toronto, M5A
1R3 416-924-5256

AIDS COMMITTEE of CAMBRIDGE, KITCHENER, WATERLOO & AREA

Accept collect calls
Have a toll-free number
2B-625 King St E, Kitchener, N2G
4V4 519-570-3687 (Collect), 1-877-770-3687

AIDS COMMITTEE OF GUELPH

Accept collect calls, prefer that people use their
89 Dawson Rd, Unit 113, Guelph, N1H
3X2 1-800-282-4505; 519-763-2255 (Collect)

AIDS COMMITTEE of NORTH BAY and AREA

Accept collect calls
201-269 Main St W, North Bay, P1B
2T8 705-497-3560 (Collect)

AIDS COMMITTEE of OTTAWA

700-251 Bank St, Ottawa, K2P 1X3 613-238-5014 (Collect) or Toll Free (ON & QC only) 1-800-461-2182

AIDS COMMITTEE of THUNDER BAY

574 Memorial Ave, Thunder Bay, P7B 3Z2 1-800-488-5840, 807-345-1516 (Collect)

POSITIVE LIVING NIAGARA

Accept collect calls from registered clients
(Recommend that you get a case manager to get registered with them)
111 Church St, St Catharines, L2R
3C9 905-984-8684 or toll free 1-800-773-9843

ANISHNAWBE HEALTH AIDS PROGRAM

No collect calls
255 Queen St E, Toronto, M5A 1S4 416-360-0486

ASIAN COMMUNITY AIDS SERVICE

When prisoners call, they offer them small bursaries to cover their calling fees
107-33 Isabella St, Toronto, M4Y
2P7 416-963-4300 (Collect)

BLACK COALITION for AIDS PREVENTION

Accept collect calls
20 Victoria St, 4th Flr, Toronto, M5C
2N8 416-977-9955 (Collect)

CANADIAN HIV/AIDS LEGAL NETWORK

Accept collect calls
1240 Bay St #600, Toronto, M5R 2A7 416-595-1666 (Collect)

FIFE HOUSE

Accepts collect calls
490 Sherbourne St, 2nd Flr, Toronto, M4X 1K9
416-205-9888

HIV & AIDS LEGAL CLINIC OF ON. (HALCO)

Accept collect calls
55 University Avenue, Suite 1400
Toronto, ON, M5J 2H7 1-888-705-8889

HIV/AIDS REGIONAL SERVICES (HARS)

Accept collect calls
844-A Princess St, Kingston, K7L
1G5 613-545-3698 (Collect)

ONTARIO ABORIGINAL HIV/AIDS STRATEGY

Accept collect calls
844-A Princess St, Kingston, K7L
1G5 613-549-7540 (Collect)

PEEL HIV/AIDS NETWORK

Accept collect calls
160 Traders Blvd, Unit 1, Mississauga, L4Z 3K7
1-866-896-8700, 905-361-0523 (Collect)

PETERBOROUGH AIDS RESOURCE NETWORK (PARN)

Accept collect calls
302-159 King St, Peterborough, K9J
2R81-800-361-2895, 705-932-9110 (Collect)

STREET HEALTH CENTRE

Accept collect calls
Hepatitis C Treatment Program 235
Wellington St, Kingston, K7K 0B5 613-549-1440 (Collect)

THE AIDS NETWORK (TAN)

Don't accept collect calls
101-140 King St E, Hamilton, L8N
1B2 905-528-0854 toll free 1-866-563-0563

THE WORKS

Accept collect calls
277 Victoria St, Toronto, 416-392-0520 (Collect)

TORONTO PWA FOUNDATION

Accept collect calls from clients
200 Gerrard St E, 2nd Flr, Toronto, M5A
2E6 416-506-1400

200 Gerrard St E, 2nd Flr, Toronto, M5A
2E6 416-506-1400

Toronto Community Hep C Program

Accept collect calls
955 Queen Street East, Toronto, M4M
3P3

416-461-1925 (Collect only on Tuesday & Friday, 11am-5pm)
Once out, please call 416-417-6135

PRAIRIES

HIV COMMUNITY LINK

Accept collect calls
110-1603 10th Ave SW, Calgary, AB, T3C
0J7 403-508-2500

AIDS SASKATOON

1143 Ave F N, Saskatoon, SK, S7L 1X1306-242-5005 1-800-667-6876

CENTRAL ALBERTA AIDS NETWORK SOCIETY

No collect calls
4611 50th Ave, Red Deer, AB, T4N 3Z9
403-346-8858

HIV EDMONTON

9702 111 Ave NW, Edmonton, AB,
T5G 0B1 1-877-388-5742

KIMAMOW ATOSKANOW FOUNDATION

Accept collect calls
RR 1, Site 1, Box 133, Onoway, AB, T0E
1V01-866-971-7233, 780-913-9036

NINE CIRCLES COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

705 Broadway, Winnipeg, MB, R3G 0X2
1-888-305-8647

PLWA NETWORK OF SASKATCHEWAN

No collect calls
Box 7123, Saskatoon, SK, S7K 4I1 306-373-7766

OUT SASKATOON

320 21 St W, Saskatoon, SK S7M 4E6
1-800-358-1833

PRINCE ALBERT METIS WOMEN'S ASSOC.

No collect calls
54 10th St E, Prince Albert, SK, S6V
0Y5 306-763-5356

RED RIBBON PLACE (ALL NATIONS HOPE AIDS NETWORK)

2735 5th Ave, Regina, SK, S4T
0L2 1-877-210-7622

STREET CONNECTIONS

No collect calls
705 Broadway Ave, Winnipeg, MB,
R3G 0X2 204-940-2504 WOMEN: 50
Argyle, Winnipeg, MB, R3B 0H6 204-943-6379

WEST COAST

AIDS VANCOUVER ISLAND

Accepts collect calls. 713 Johnson St,
3rd Flr, Victoria, V8W 1M8 250-384-

2366 or 1-800-665-2437

PLBC - PRISON OUTREACH PROJECT

1107 Seymour St, Vancouver, V6B
5S8 Toll Free: PROV - 604-525-8646
FED - 1-877-900-2437 (#'s approved by institutions and are NOT Collect Calls)

Positive Living Society of BC

Leita McInnis, Prison Outreach
Worker
1101 Seymour St, 4th Floor, Vancouver, BC V6R 0R1 Fed: 1-877-900-2437 Prov: 604-525-8646

LINC
33270 14th Ave, Mission, BC, V2V 4Z7
1-877-424-4242 (BC only)

NATIONAL

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF ELIZABETH FRY SOCIETIES (Women)

701-151 Slater St.
Ottawa, ON
K1P 5H3
(613) 238-2422

BRAIN INJURY ASSOC OF CANADA

440 Laurier Ave. West, Suite 200
Ottawa, ON K1R 7X6 Toll-free: 1-866-977-2492

CATIE

1-800-263-1638
555 Richmond St W #505, Toronto, ON
M5V 3B1

NEW LIFE PRISON MINISTRIES

P.O. Box 123
Arva, ON
NOM 1C0
Aftercare support: 1-888-842-6898

PRISONER-SPECIFIC

TORONTO PRISONERS' RIGHTS PROJECT (Runs the Prisoner Emergency Support Fund)

PO Box 291 Toronto P Toronto, ON
M5S 2S8

PRISONERS UNITED ORGANIZATION

PO Box 30009, Greenbank North PO,
Ottawa, ON, K2H 1A3

BLACK INMATES & FRIENDS ASSEMBLY

2518 Eglinton Avenue W, Toronto, ON,
M6M 1T1 ph (416) 652-3131

OUT OF BOUNDS MAGAZINE

6000 William Head Rd, Victoria, BC
V9C 0B5

JOURNAL OF PRISONERS ON PRISONS

c/o Justin Piché, PhD, Dept of Criminology
University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON,
K1N 6N5

PRISON FREE PRESS

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



PASAN is a community-based harm reduction/HIV/HCV organization that provides support, education and advocacy to prisoners and ex-prisoners. PASAN formed in 1991 as a grassroots response to the HIV crisis in the Canadian prison system. We strive to provide community development, education and support to prisoners and ex-prisoners in Ontario on HIV, Hepatitis C (HCV), overdose prevention and other harm reduction issues. Today, PASAN is the only community-based organization in Canada exclusively providing HIV and HCV prevention, education and support services to prisoners, ex-prisoners and their families.

SUPPORT SERVICES

- Individual support, informal counselling, case management, pre-release

planning, and referrals for those in custody living with HIV and/or HCV

- We assist our clients in accessing adequate medical care and support while incarcerated

- You can reach us via our toll free number at 1-866-224-9978. If you can't get through to us from our toll-free number, we also accept collect calls from prisoners across Canada at 416-920-9567, but we prefer people use our toll-free number
- Provide ongoing support, community development, resources and training for community groups across Ontario.

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

- Conducts HIV/HCV and harm reduction workshops inside many of the provincial and federal adult institutions in Ontario
- Produces a newsletter, Cell Count, which contains article, poetry and art produced by current and ex-prisoners
- Facilitates Prison Life 101, HIV/HCV prevention and harm reduction/overdose prevention trainings for agencies

working with prison populations

- Assist agencies to start prison in-reach and support and act as a referral "hub" for HIV/HCV positive prisoners who are transferred from one region to another, to ensure continuity of support
- Peer health/harm reduction workers where ex-prisoners assist those who are currently incarcerated, about to be released, or already released to get medical and health needs met.

CONTACT INFO

526 Richmond St E,
Toronto, ON M5A 1R3
Call us toll free at:
1-866-224-9978

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