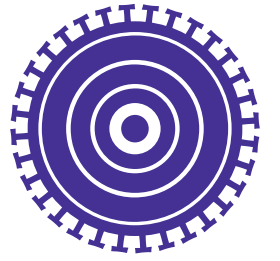


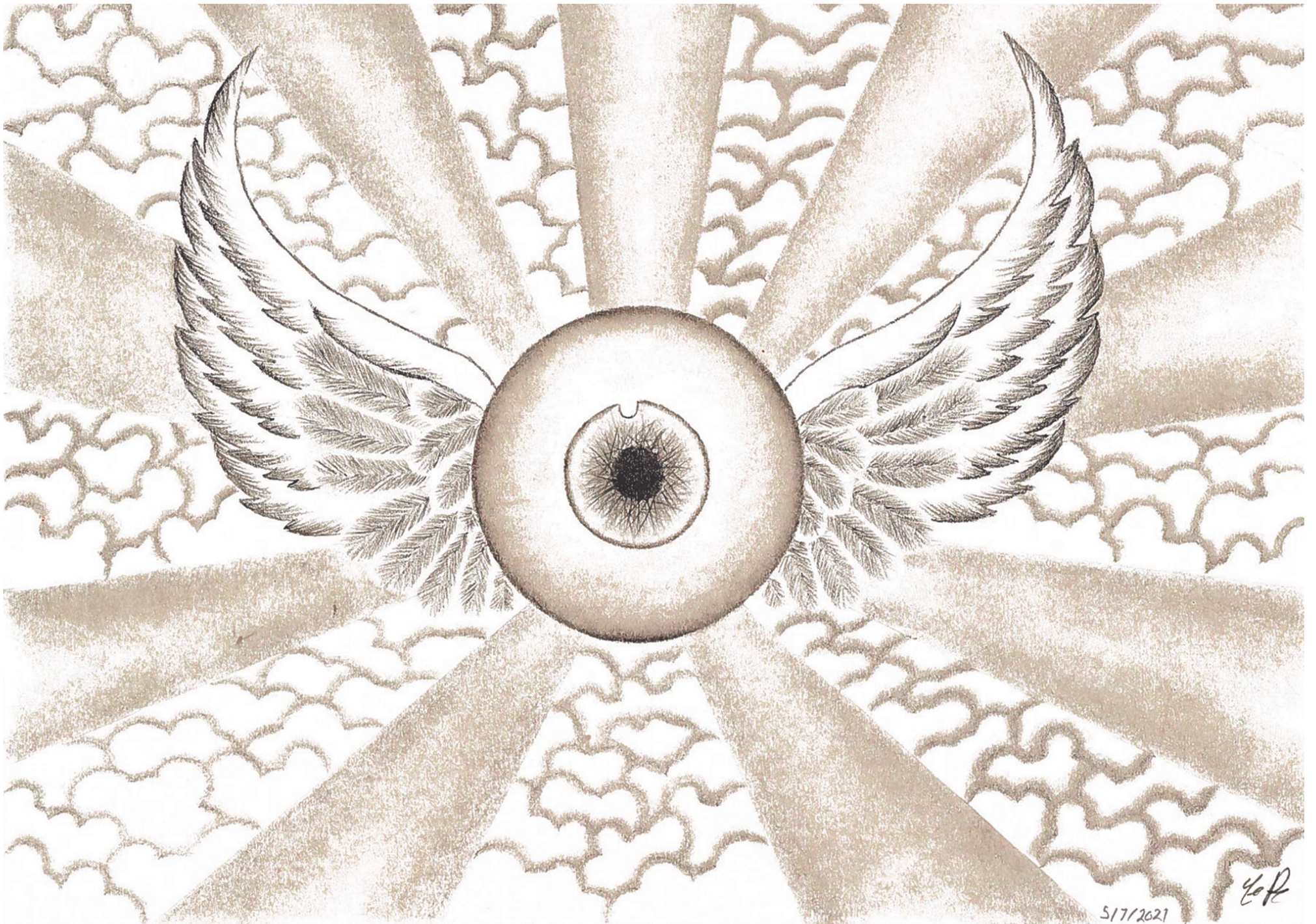
CELL COUNT



YOUR PRISON HEALTH RESOURCE SINCE 1995

FREE - FOR PRISONERS, EX-PRISONERS & THEIR FAMILIES

THE COMPASSION ISSUE, NOVEMBER 2021 - #94



PRISONER JUSTICE DAY ORIGINZ

By Forgotten Warrior

The experiencez of a group of prisonerz, who in 1974 - challenged the conditionz of their Solitary Confinement in the Notorious "Penthouse" of the BC Penitentiary - They had been in the hole for yearz at a time - That challenge took the form of a statement of claim filed in the federal court - In the name of "Jack McCann - and 6 otherz - Donald Oaq - Andy Bruce - Tommy McCaulley - Jacques Bellemaire.

Filed June 4th 1974 (NO-T-2343-74)

It asserted that the Condition of their Confinement in "ADMINISTRATIVE SEGREGATION" constituted "cruel and unusual punishment under Section 2(B) of the Canadian bill of rightz" (RSC1960.C.44) and that their Solitary Confinement without notice of any chargez laid against em and without a hearing before an impartial decision maker, deprived em of their right to a fair hearing in accordance with the principle of fundamental justice guaranteed to em under Section 1(A) and 2(E) of the bill of rightz.

To Begin

The Conditionz in the Penthouse were appalling - cellz measured 11 feet by 6.5 - 3 solid concrete wallz with a solid steel door with a 5 inch square window, which could be only opened from the outside - Inside the cell, there was no proper bed, prisonerz slept on a cement slab 4 inchez off the floor - the cement slab was covered by a sheet of plywood upon which was laid a 4-inch-thick foam pad - prisonerz were provided with blanketz, 2 sheetz, foam rubber pillowz - 2 feet from the end of the sleeping platform, against the back wall, was a combination

shitter and sinkz.

Rule was that you had to sleep with your head beside the shitter. Failure to comply and the Screwz would either throw water on you or kick your door - 100-watt light blasting 24/7 dimmed at night to 25 wattz - Cellz had only cold water, one razor shared among all prisonerz on the tier, locked down 23.5 hourz a day - out briefly to pick up their mealz at the entrance to the tier. Exercise was just walking up and down the 25-foot corridor in front of their cellz - exercise was taken under the continuous supervision of an armed guard

who patrolled on the elevated catwalk - the rest of the day the prisonerz were kept locked up in their cellz.

Conz spoke with visitorz through a screen and all conversation was monitored by guardz - Prisonerz had to wear a bodybelt attached to the handcuffz, leg ironz were also used, once visit was done - Conz were skin searched even though they may never have left the sight of the officer or had any physical contact with their visitorz.

Harsh as it was, it was not just the physical conditionz in the solitary confinement unit that

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A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Cell Count reader,

First off I want to thank you all for your patience in the time it took to send this issue to you. Many of you called and wrote asking when it would come out and for good reason. This has been the longest time that has passed between issues since I took over as the editor of Cell Count 5 years ago.

So why did it take so long? Well, I experienced a personal loss recently where I had to take some time off for a couple months, which set us back quite a bit.

When I came back to work, I thought I could hit the ground running and produce another issue like before. I have since learned that it wasn't possible for me to work in the same way. Cell Count is a big job, and it's really important that I do the work behind it well. I tried to coax myself in many different ways to just get it done, but forcing myself didn't seem to work either. My grieving process has forced me to slow down in a way that doesn't align well with the way I'm used to working.

Some of our contributors have experienced something called "writer's block" in the past, which Wikipedia defines as when "an author is unable to produce new work or experiences a creative slowdown." Although I don't write much for Cell Count, I do edit and do the layout for it. I guess I experienced a form of "writer's block."

Reading through the contributions and seeing the art sent to me for this issue, honestly is what helped carry me through the end of the process of making this issue. I never cease to be amazed at the work that comes into my mailbox. In my opinion, Cell Count is one of the most incredible publications out there, not because of me specifically, but because of the contributors who are incarcerated.

The experiences you so generously share, the creativity you allow the readers to see, the honesty and rawness with which you relay your messages, the

courage you have to speak out under the conditions you're in, I can't think of another group of content creators that have more courage, strength and determination than you.

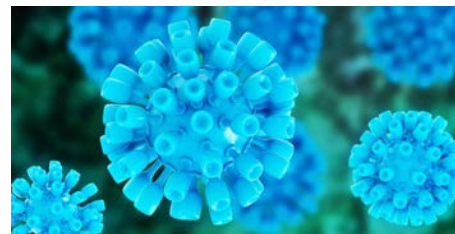
Thank you for inspiring me and continuing to put your trust in me to keep being the editor of this awesome publication, you keep me going, even through really hard times. You keep each other going too, by sharing your experiences so others inside know they're not alone in what they're dealing with.

If you want to join the Cell Count team by contributing writing, art or poetry, please do not hesitate to get in touch. As your editor, I will assist you with your creative process to the best of my ability, so you won't be alone when you're working on your submission. I will also help with grammar, spelling, research and sending you resources if you need it. You can send your submission(s) to: Cell Count, 526 Richmond St E, Toronto, ON M5A 1R3 or call me at 1-866-224-9978

MYTH VS. REALITY: BREAKING DOWN EIGHT COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS OF HEPATITIS C

By Olivia Gemma, Provincial HepC Program Coordinator

World Hepatitis Day is July 28, but at



PASAN, we continue to build awareness every day for those living with or at risk of Hepatitis C, their family and friends, and the community. Perhaps you have heard stories about Hepatitis C and wonder if they are true. Below are eight common misconceptions about Hepatitis C.

Myth #1: "Hepatitis C is a rare virus."

Reality: In actuality, Hepatitis C is not a rare disease – quite the opposite, it is a growing public health concern in Canada. Due to numerous barriers within the healthcare system, along with other institutions, most people living with acute Hepatitis C are unable to clear the virus, resulting in chronic infection and further complications.

Myth #2: "Hepatitis C was started by people who use drugs."

Reality: Despite what some would like you to believe, the widespread of Hepatitis C began in the 1960s due to unscreened blood supplies. All that to say, people who use drugs were and continue to be easy targets for blame.

Myth #3: "Hepatitis C spreads through breastmilk."

Reality: Jump to the next myth to see why people living with Hepatitis C can breastfeed and kiss others!

Myth #4: "Hepatitis C spreads through holding hands and kissing."

Reality: This is the most widespread myth about Hepatitis C (though the breastfeeding one is a close contender). The only way someone will contract the virus is if they come in contact with blood from another person who already has Hepatitis C. This typically happens through shared drug and tattoo equipment, and sometimes birth and sexual activity.

Myth #5: "Hepatitis C always appears through the yellowing of skin (jaundice)."

Reality: While chronic Hepatitis C may cause liver problems, jaundice is not a tell-tale sign of the virus. Most people living with Hepatitis C are unaware they have the virus until decades later, when symptoms are more likely to manifest on the body. This is why it is a good idea to get tested if you use drugs regularly or other activities involving needles like tattooing.

Myth #6: "Hepatitis C is not something you can contract twice."

Reality: Unlike Hepatitis A and B, there

is no vaccine for Hepatitis C, meaning antibodies from the initial infection do not protect you from contracting the virus again. This is why practicing safe drug use and tattooing is important to avoid reinfection.

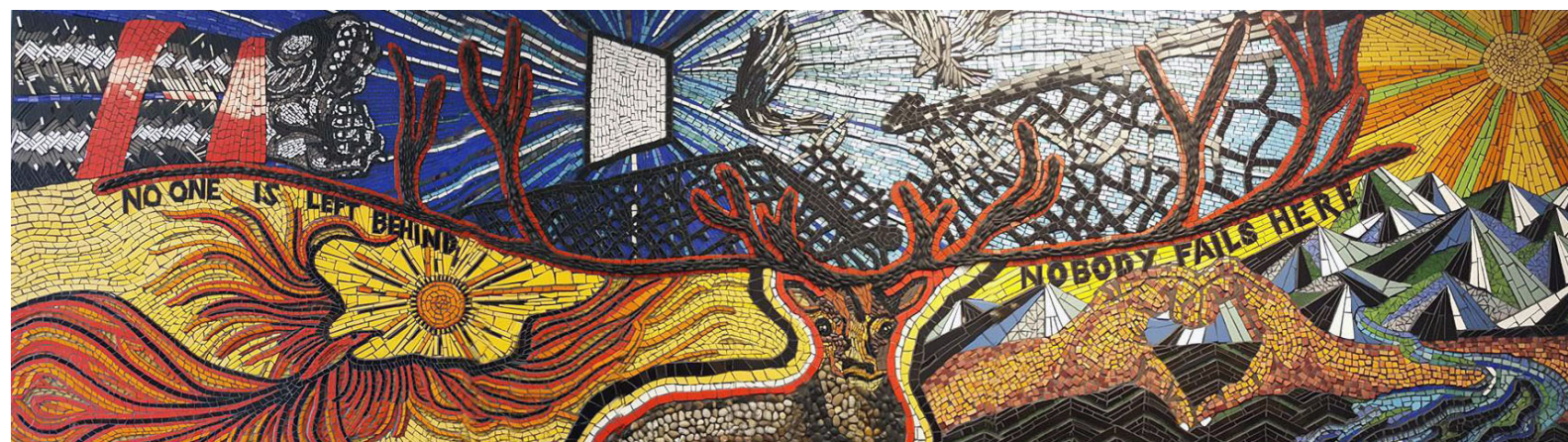
Myth #7: "Hepatitis C has no cure."

Reality: There is, and it is promising. The current treatments on the market have a 95% success rate! Treatment takes approximately 8 to 12 weeks to complete and is administered through oral medication.

Myth #8: And lastly, "Hepatitis C treatment causes awful side effects."

Reality: Good news - the antiviral medications on the market are very effective and cause fewer side effects compared to the past ones. If you have started treatment, have a conversation with your doctor about what to expect.

If you want to chat further, or are someone who is living with HepC/got treatment for it while inside and would like to join the HCV Advisory Committee (gain experience, \$50 honorarium, certificate and letter included), you are welcome to call Olivia Gemma, the new Provincial Hep C Community Development Coordinator, at 1-800-224-9978 ext. 236. Olivia (she/her) is a white, queer settler on the stolen homelands of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Huron-Wendat, and Haudenosaunee Peoples. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a Master of Arts in Criminology and Social Justice, where she focused on Canadian drug policy and the decriminalization of simple possession. In the past, Olivia has been involved in facilitating workshops inside provincial institutions around safe drug use, as well as providing transitional support for folks exiting the prison system. Olivia's passion for harm reduction and prisoner justice is fueled by her commitment to (un)learn in community-based settings. In her downtime, Olivia gets herself lost in books and music, and enjoys hiking and cooking.



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 coun-

selling, 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.

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A WORD FROM OAHAS

I am sending love, support and solidarity to the people who are doing time.

My name is Alison Bray and I have written about some of my experiences in the last couple of articles. I want to thank everyone for making space for me.

I would like to share my experience around people dying inside the prison walls. While I was in GVI (Grand Valley Institute for Women), there was a death of an inmate. I would prefer not to state her name. I am sure most will know who this beautiful soul is.

Over several months she had attempted to harm herself with the intention to commit suicide. I remember seeing her after coming back from the hospital after slicing her own throat. During the time she was struggling, I did not see much support for her or the women who were her friends.

Eventually, CSC put her in solitary confinement, their way of 'helping' with mental health. As we all know, solitary is supposed to be monitored 24/7. She was able to bash her head multiple times and go unconscious before staff noticed and went into her cell to help her.

This is not the first death at GVI in solitary confinement with similar nature and circumstances.

The whole prison was mortified that this happened. This also brought up strong emotions around the young woman who had died almost 10 years early in solitary by hanging herself.

There was no support for any of the women that I can remember. We did do ceremony for her and feasted her spirit. I felt it gave some of the women the chance to grieve, but there was nothing that CSC did to prevent and to support this woman before her death, or any of the women after her death.

This still makes me very sad to think about. It also makes me sad for everyone that has experienced this within their prisons.

Please, if you are feeling lonely, hopeless, unworthy and just done with shit, please reach out. We are here for you outside. You matter, you are worthy, you have purpose, you are loved and appreciated. OAHAS toll-free: 1-800-743-8851

MANAGING YOUR HEALTH DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: INFORMATION FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV

Source: CATIE

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a disease caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2. The virus can affect people differently.

Common symptoms of COVID-19 are:

fever
dry cough
tiredness
Less common symptoms include:
aches and pains
sore throat
diarrhea
headache
loss of taste or smell

Most individuals are infectious for several days before they develop symptoms. Some people who get COVID-19 never develop symptoms, but they can still transmit the virus to others.

Most people will experience mild to moderate illness and will recover on their own. However, about 20% of people diagnosed with COVID-19 will go on to develop severe illness. Some of these people may require hospitalization, and a few may require intensive care. A small

number may die from COVID-19 infection.

While anyone can experience severe illness from COVID-19, certain risk factors significantly increase the chance that a person will have severe illness.

What are the risk factors for serious illness for people living with HIV?

For people living with HIV, there are three main risk factors that can increase the risk of serious illness from COVID-19: a weakened immune system, underlying health conditions and older age.

Weakened immune system

A person with HIV who is on HIV treatment with an undetectable viral load and a strong immune system (CD4 count above 200) is not expected to be at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. However, a person who is not on HIV treatment and/or has a low CD4 count may be at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

Underlying health conditions

Some people living with HIV may have other underlying health conditions that are known to increase the risk of serious illness from COVID-19. These health conditions include:

cancer, dementia, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, kidney disease, liver disease, lung disease, obesity
Older age

The risk of serious illness from COVID-19 increases for everyone with age (regardless of HIV status).

How is COVID-19 transmitted?

SARS-CoV-2 is the virus that causes COVID-19. It is transmitted through small droplets (aerosols) from the mouth, throat and nose of a person who is infected with the virus. Transmission occurs mainly through contact with the droplets from a person who has the virus either directly or indirectly. It can also be transmitted through contact with contaminated objects or surfaces.

Direct contact with people

The virus is transmitted through small droplets from the mouth, throat and nose of people when they breathe, talk, sing, laugh, cough or sneeze. When an individual is in contact with someone who has the virus, these droplets containing the virus can enter their body through viral receptors in their eyes, nose or mouth. The virus cannot enter the body through skin. The closer and more prolonged the contact, the greater the chance of transmission.

Indirect contact with aerosols

Very small droplets of the virus (aerosols) may remain suspended in the air for longer periods of time, similar to the way cigarette smoke can linger in the air. This means there is an increased risk of transmission when aerosols are present, particularly in indoor spaces and crowded outdoor spaces.

Contact with surfaces

Although most transmission happens through small droplets in the air, objects and surfaces can become contaminated when someone with the virus has been near them. Transmission can happen if someone touches a contaminated surface or object and then touches their eyes, nose or mouth without washing their hands first.

How can transmission of the virus be prevented?

The best way to avoid getting sick with COVID-19 is to avoid exposure to the virus. Try to avoid close contact with anyone who may have been exposed to the virus or has symptoms of COVID-19, such as a fever or cough.

The following methods should be combined to help prevent transmission:

Wear a new or clean face mask or face

covering when you are in public and you may come into contact with others. You should also wear a new or clean face mask or face covering when you are in an indoor space with people not in your household or social circle. Social circles, sometimes called "bubbles", are the limited groups of people that you have close physical contact with, including the members of your household and those outside your home. Some jurisdictions have made it mandatory to wear face masks or coverings in public areas.

Avoid or reduce your time in indoor spaces with people outside of your household or social circle and avoid crowded outdoor spaces.

Maintain a distance of at least two meters from people outside your household or social circle to help prevent transmission of the virus.

Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use hand sanitizer to prevent transmission from contact with contaminated surfaces. Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands and regularly clean frequently touched surfaces with disinfectant.

Get vaccinated for COVID-19 as the vaccine becomes available. Vaccination greatly reduces the risk of severe illness from COVID-19 and it may also help to prevent transmission. People who have been vaccinated should still follow the prevention methods listed above.

Community transmission of COVID-19 will vary with time and between regions as the number of active cases rises and falls. When community transmission is very high, additional prevention measures may be recommended. Consult local public health authorities for the latest guidance on how to prevent transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19.

Should I get vaccinated against COVID-19 if I have HIV?

It is important to consider getting vaccinated against COVID-19 if you have HIV. Many people with HIV have or are at an increased risk for developing the underlying conditions that increase their chances of developing COVID-19 or severe disease if they become infected with the virus that causes COVID-19.

Experts consider COVID vaccines to be safe and effective for people with HIV. Clinical trials of the vaccines have included a relatively small number of people with HIV, all of whom were taking ART and who were healthy and well. Further studies are needed to determine if the vaccine works as well for people with HIV as it does for the general population.

There is no information yet on how well the vaccine works in people living with HIV who have a compromised immune system. If you are not on treatment and have a very low CD4 count, discuss vaccination with your healthcare provider. Some experts recommend starting HIV treatment first to prevent HIV-related complications and to potentially improve vaccine effectiveness.

What else can I do to protect my health during the COVID-19 pandemic? It is important for people living with HIV to stay engaged in healthcare to remain healthy and minimize their risk of serious illness from COVID-19.

Early HIV diagnosis and ongoing treatment are important for everyone living with HIV to improve and maintain their health. People with untreated HIV may experience additional complications with COVID-19. If you are not already on HIV treatment, consider starting treatment as soon as possible. If you are on treatment, ongoing adherence is also important. This means taking your medications regularly as prescribed without missing doses. If

you are having trouble sticking to your treatment schedule, be sure to discuss this with your healthcare provider so that together you can find solutions.

It's important to stay engaged with your HIV care team and manage any related health conditions, as these may increase the risk for serious illness from COVID-19. The list of what health conditions increase the risk of more severe illness with COVID-19 may change as we learn more about the disease.

It's also important to stay up to date on vaccinations, including the annual influenza vaccine, as these can help to prevent complications if you become ill with COVID-19.

There are many other ways to look after your physical and mental health during the pandemic. Make sure to try to get fresh air and regular exercise outside your home if you are permitted to. It can also be helpful to establish a routine, whether you are working or not. It's important to regularly connect with others, especially if you live alone; try using video or phone calls to stay in touch with friends or family. If you find yourself feeling depressed or anxious, talk to your healthcare provider.

Consider preparing for the possibility that you may be asked to self-isolate because you have been in contact with someone with COVID-19 or because you yourself have become infected with COVID-19. Discuss with your network of family, friends and support workers how you can get food, medications or other support during self-isolation.

Will COVID-19 affect my HIV care?

Because of physical distancing measures during the COVID-19 pandemic, there may be some changes to your HIV care. Your regular monitoring appointments with your healthcare provider or lab tests may be less frequent. Video and phone calls may replace face-to-face appointments with your healthcare team. You may notice some healthcare workers wearing glasses or face shields — they do this to reduce the risk of droplets entering their eyes. Despite these changes, it is very important to stay engaged in HIV care.

There may be some changes to the way your medications are dispensed. It is recommended that people with HIV be given enough medication to last three months or more to avoid unnecessary trips to the pharmacy. Discuss your options with your healthcare provider and your pharmacist to make sure you always have enough medication on hand.

What should I do if I think I have COVID-19?

Call the Public Health Agency of Canada COVID-19 information line at: 1-833-784-4397 or give PASAN a call at 1-866-224-9978

If you suspect you have been exposed to COVID-19, you should isolate yourself and follow recommendations from your province or territory. If you are diagnosed with COVID-19, you may be contacted by a public health worker who will ask for details about anyone you may have come into contact with. These people should also be tested for COVID-19 and self-isolate until they receive the results.

If you have COVID-19, follow the advice of your local public health authorities regarding how long you should self-isolate. Usually it is recommended that you stay isolated for at least 14 days, or until 7 days after the last day of symptoms. Remember to drink plenty of fluids and rest well. If you have a fever, take painkillers to help bring it down.

Seek immediate medical attention if your symptoms become severe, such as if you have shortness of breath, chest pain or a persistent high fever.

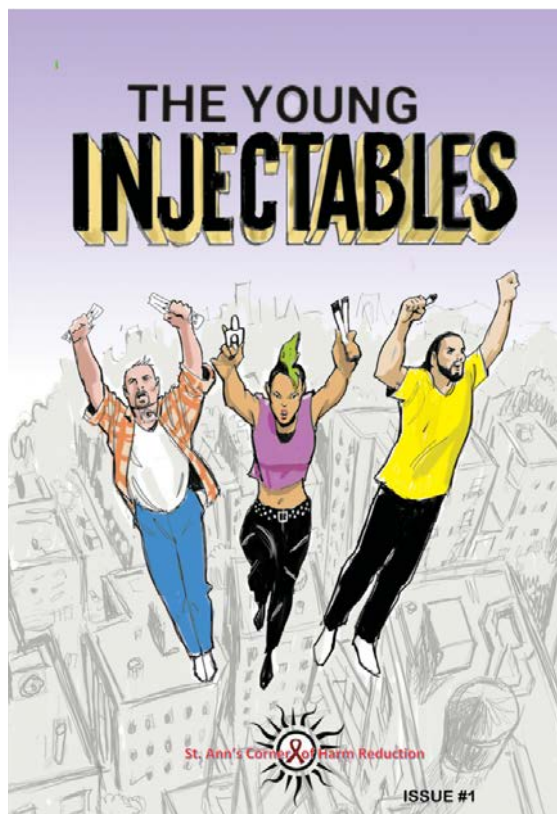
Research has found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, some people are not seeking medical care to address health problems other than COVID-19. To stay on top of these issues during the pandemic, it is important to remain engaged in your healthcare and to discuss all of your symptoms with your healthcare provider.

The information on this page is based on available research related to the transmission and prevention of COVID-19. This resource will be updated as new evidence emerges. Last updated April 14, 2021.

THIS ARTICLE WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED BY FILTER—AN ONLINE MAGAZINE COVERING DRUG USE, DRUG POLICY AND HUMAN RIGHTS AT FILTERMAG.ORG.

Kastalia Medrano, March 23, 2021

A couple of months ago, I was cleaning off a table in what used to be the drop-in center—before the pandemic—at the syringe service program (SSP) where I work. I still don't know who left it there, so I never got the chance to thank



them, but on the end behind some canned goods and a pile of naloxone that was technically expired but still good was a stapled, black-and-white printout called The Young Injectables. I opened it to find a comic book featuring a trio of harm reductionist superheroes who patrol New York City fighting overdose and stigma and promoting safer use. It came complete with safer injection tips and a tribute to Dan Bigg.

Coworkers eventually helped me contact author Van Asher, who gave me a color copy. Asher, 51, is currently the harm reduction coordinator at Housing Works' Cylar House. For decades he's been on the frontlines of harm reduction work around Manhattan's Lower East Side, the neighborhood where I live and where I first started learning about harm reduction a few years ago through the Lower East Side Harm Reduction Center.

With St. Ann's Corner of Harm Reduction, Asher has made

1,500 copies of The Young Injectables since it came out in 2019. It's illustrated by his frequent collaborator U.A. Morrison, one of the original guitarists in NYC punk band Murphy's Law who now lives down in Brazil. Asher's own artwork is prolific, ranging from professionally cut video to Scotch-taped zines of HIV and hep C info for SSP participants.

A personal favorite of mine is a post-card circa 2000 of a Barbie doll injecting her arm captioned "This Woman is a Role Model / She's Using a Sterile Syringe." If you turn it over, it reads: "There has never been one documented case of HIV from a sterile syringe / If you inject, please contact your nearest needle exchange," followed by the contact info for the handful of SSPs that existed around the city at the time. He's produced some 150,000 copies.

The Young Injectables has been reprinted in part below, along with excerpts from his stories as we took a long walk around the neighborhood and he talked about the ways it—and harm reduction—has changed.

'PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS': CANADA'S PRISON CONDITIONS DURING PANDEMIC BEING INVESTIGATED**Jeremiah Rodriguez, CTV News**

TORONTO -- After repeated COVID-19 outbreaks in Canada's prisons, advocates have begun investigating the inmates' living conditions during the pandemic.

The Prison Transparency Project -- led by researchers from Canada, Argentina and Spain -- is trying to lift the veil on the conditions many inmates in their respective countries are subjected to.

"We have seen since the beginning of the pandemic that the conditions in our prisons and detention centres... have deteriorated rapidly," Dawn Moore, Carleton University law professor and the primary investigator for the project, told CTV's Your Morning last week.

"We've got a massive public health crisis on our hands and it's not being adequately addressed," she said, referring to an inability to physically distance, and a lack of adequate access to personal protective equipment and proper ventilation.

The project's first phase, which finished in 2019, asked former inmates the conditions they were kept in and if they were subjected to abuse. And because of the pandemic, the second phase was refocused to look at how prisons in Canada and the other, Spanish-speaking countries were responding to the pandemic.

There are approximately 40,000 people within Canada's federal and provincial prisons, 15,000 of whom haven't been convicted of a crime, according to Statistics Canada and the advocacy group John Howard Society of Canada.

COVID-19 cases have more than doubled in federal prisons during the second wave of the pandemic, according to a report last month from Canada's prison ombudsman. Around 70 per cent of second-wave cases occurred at two Prairie facilities -- the Saskatchewan Penitentiary and Manitoba's Stony Mountain Institution -- with Indigenous inmates being disproportionately affected.

As of March 31, there have been a total of 1,540 confirmed COVID-19 cases and five deaths among Canada's federal inmate population, which averages around 14,000 people; and 14 active cases currently. **CALL FOR RELEASE OF NON-VIOLENT INMATES**

"One of the gravest concerns of the Prison Transparency Project is to ask why aren't we releasing people in the context in which their health is deeply, deeply jeopardized," Moore said.

She noted that inmates' health was already poor before the pandemic and they are now more at risk of developing COVID-19 as they live in facilities that can have poor ventilation.

Moore, like many other prisoner advocates, is calling for the release of non-violent or elderly federal and provincial inmates, as well as those awaiting trial. The practice is not unheard of, as it was done quietly in provincial and territorial institutions early last year but has since stopped. However, this practice wasn't done on the same scale on the federal level, according to Statistics Canada.

"This has happened across the world, where they have done mass releases of people who have either been convicted of non-violent offences," Moore said.

"Mass release has been common in the United States and Europe and South America and this is something Canada hasn't even considered even in our immigrant detention facilities," Moore said. Last month, the advocacy group Human Rights Watch reported on the "dire" conditions for some who are held in a Montreal-area detention facility.

QUESTIONS ABOUT VACCINATION PROGRAM

Later this month, the feds will be rolling out COVID-19 vaccines to the remaining federal inmate population in 43 correctional institutions and 14 community correctional centres across Canada. But there could be delays based on trends happening already.

Some provinces such as Ontario have recently been offering the vaccine to inmates, with the feds doing the same for older federal inmates since January. But Moore said agencies such as Correctional Service of Canada and the Ministry of the Solicitor General in Ontario, need to do more to tackle vaccine hesitancy in the inmate population, which echoes segments of the general public, and among some racialized groups.

Some reports found that only 37 per cent of inmates received vaccines at the Ontario-run Maplehurst Correctional Complex in Milton, Ont. last month.

Moore said far too often inmates "weren't actually given adequate information" about their health care to make informed choices as to why they should take the vaccine. So Moore said the Prison Transparency Project will also endeavour to examine what has been happening on that front.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING 'IMPOSSIBLE'

She also said the project will look at how COVID-19 measures such as physical distancing can't be followed by many incarcerated Canadians, particularly those housed in cells that can be double and even triple-bunked.

"So, the idea of being able to keep social distanced is that cell is impossible." Moore also criticized the lack of safe flow of regular visits from family, friends and even lawyers, which she and others say has been cut off for many inmates for months, prompting dozens of hunger strikes as a way to draw attention to the issue.

And this ties into the broader group of isolation policies inside the prisons, which her project hopes to look into.

Last month, Public Safety Minister Bill Blair asked Parliament for an additional \$135 million to better build structured intervention units -- a form of solitary confinement -- in Canadian prisons, with Correctional Service of Canada already being given \$300 million to do this. But fellow advocates have heavily criticized both the use of solitary-like confinement during the pandemic as a means to punish or isolate inmates.

In February, a new report found excessive isolation in Canada's prisons amounts to torture and inhuman treatment, with many federal inmates not receiving a few hours a day out of their cells.

"Show me the criminological literature that says locking down people for weeks and sometimes months subjecting them to segregation-like conditions... doesn't damage people," Justin Piché, a criminology professor at the University of Ottawa, told CTVNews.ca in a phone interview earlier this year.

"Show me the criminological literature that says that as communities we'll be safer once folks who've endured the violence of COVID and the violence of lockdown incarceration eventually return to our communities," said Piché, an organizer for the Criminalization and Punishment Education Project, who's also been tracking the biggest outbreaks of federal and provincial institutions throughout the pandemic.

The Prison Transparency Project aims to address questions like these in its next phase.

B.C. CIVIL RIGHTS ASSOCIATION SUING FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OVER PROLONGED CONFINEMENT IN PRISONS**CBC News · Posted: Oct 13, 2021**

The B.C. Civil Liberties Association has filed a lawsuit claiming wardens at federal prisons across Canada continue to effectively place inmates in solitary confinement, years after the government said it had eliminated the use of segregation.

The lawsuit, filed Monday against the Attorney General of Canada, alleges thousands of inmates are still being isolated in their cells for 22 hours a day, with little access to human contact, for weeks or months at a time.

"With this lawsuit, we're calling on the government to respect the human rights of dignity of all people and reject the use of torture once and for all," Grace Pastine, the BCCLA's litigation director, said at a news conference Wednesday.

Isolating inmates for long periods of time was standard practice for decades in Canadian prisons, then known as "administrative segregation." The federal government stopped the practice in 2019, but at least two reports have since found isolation is still occurring.

"We know this is a matter of thousands of people," said the BCCLA's lead counsel, Megan Tweedie.

The BCCLA's claim said lockdowns are still frequent in prisons across the country, leaving inmates locked in their cells. Wardens also use restricted movement routines, which suspend prisoners' normal movement throughout the prison.

The practices are meant to be used to address security incidents or allow for an emergency response, but the association said they're often used for administrative reasons like accommodating staffing shortages, worker training, wardens' meal breaks or to save on overtime.

Several studies have shown prolonged isolation can lead to depression, deteriorated cognitive skills, hallucinations and suicidal or self-harming thoughts and behaviour. Keeping an inmate isolated for 22 hours a day without meaningful human contact for more than 15 days amounts to torture, according to the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

The civil liberties group challenged the practice of administrative segregation and won in a 2019 decision when the B.C. Court of Appeal ruled unanimously that prolonged, indefinite segregation deprives inmates of life, liberty and security of the person as guaranteed in the charter.

However, the civil liberties group said reforms introduced by the federal government don't go far enough and could still cause permanent harm to inmates.

The association is asking the court to issue a declaration saying prolonged, indefinite lockdowns and restrictive movement routines are illegal and unauthorized, as well as an infringement on prisoner's charter rights.

Corrections Canada says it's aware of the lawsuit and takes such claims "very seriously."

"[Corrections Services Canada] follows the law and policies in how it conducts all of its operations," a Corrections Canada representative said in an emailed statement to CBC.

"Lockdowns are a measure that can be used in federal correctional facilities, either in a unit within the institution or the entire institution itself. They often relate to matters of safety and security."

Corrections Canada said they cannot comment on specific allegations right now, and will file a response "in due

course."

The Attorney General of Canada has yet to file a response.

THE HIDDEN LIVES AND UNCERTAIN FUTURE OF TRANS PRISONERS

For decades, trans people in Canadian prisons fought for their right to be housed safely and humanely. Despite some victories, new policy proposals could set their rights back even more

By Simon Rolston, Oct 6, 2021, Xtra Magazine

Content warning: This story discusses physical and sexual violence against trans people and suicide.

In 1989, 27-year-old Synthia Kavanagh, a trans woman, was convicted of second-degree murder and sent to Millhaven Institution, a men's maximum-security prison in Bath, Ontario, some two hours east of Toronto. There, doctors discontinued the hormone therapy she had been undergoing since she was 13 years old. Years later, she would describe to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal the "pain" and "panic" she felt as she watched her body slowly revert to physical and sexual characteristics she had escaped through great effort and hardship. Her anguish was likely compounded by the emotional turmoil that happens when the hormones that had been introduced into her body—likened to a second puberty, with all the attendant feelings of that metamorphosis—were suddenly reversed.

At the time Correctional Service Canada (CSC) officially prohibited people from transitioning from one gender to another while incarcerated, so Kavanagh's experience wasn't unique. Deprived of hormones, trans prisoners often felt existential despair, and they rarely had the support they needed to manage the enormity of those feelings. Some attacked their own bodies. Some attempted suicide.

Katherine Johnson, another trans woman incarcerated in a men's prison during that period, tried to take her life on multiple occasions because the institution didn't acknowledge her gender identity or take seriously her pleas for gender-affirming surgery. She tried to cut off her penis twice. Once, she successfully castrated herself, walked down the range using a folded towel to staunch the blood pooling between her legs and flushed both testicles down the toilet.

In her autobiography *Prisoner of Gender*, Johnson describes how men beat her because she was trans, and, aware that she had little recourse to official protection from the prison system, they frequently raped her. When she'd find strongmen to protect her, they too would be attacked. A man named Cliff served as her guardian for a time, but he was beaten by several men who wanted access to Johnson's body; his head was cracked open by a metal bar, and his face was mutilated by multiple stab wounds. When another man offered to look after her, he was speared in the back with a sharpened steel rod while crouched, tying his shoelaces. I've written extensively about prisoners' autobiographies, and Johnson's depictions of her victimization in Canadian prisons are some of the most troubling accounts of violence I've read.

Trans people's lives have been marked by unrepentant brutality in Canadian prisons. Trans men also struggle to live in a criminal justice system that has refused to acknowledge them according to their gender identity. (Boyd Kodak, for instance, was forced into women's clothing when he was imprisoned in 2012.) Fearing violence and harassment if they were to be placed

in men's prisons, many trans men choose not to disclose their identities to officials after their incarceration and serve their time in women's facilities. These trans men are often forced into an impossible choice: either live in an institution that reinforces their misgendering or live in an institution where their lives are at risk. Perhaps because trans women are compelled to live in the gladiatorial world of men's prisons and so experience more frequent and direct violence, they have played a more visible role in the fight for trans rights behind bars.

"It's a story about trans people fighting for their rights in some of the most dehumanizing places in the world."

Data about trans people in federal custody is hard to obtain, including statistics about how many trans people are incarcerated. That's a feature of a secretive federal agency that is aggressively resistant to oversight or outsider intervention. But an unpublished report from 2016 archived at the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) notes that the commission has seen complaints from trans prisoners double over a decade and a half, reflecting the violence experienced by trans people behind bars.

Recent years have seen changes to Canadian laws around gender identity and expression, and those laws have shifted the legal and cultural landscape of Canadian prisons, transforming the lives of prisoners like Kavanagh and Johnson. But how trans prisoners' rights have changed—and what laws and policies still need changing—is a story that has profound consequences for Canadians. It's a controversial story about the disruption of our legal understanding of gender and sex, and about contentious reforms to our criminal justice system. It's also a recent story—one that's still unfolding in our prisons and policies and laws. Most importantly, it's a story about trans people fighting for their rights in some of the most dehumanizing places in the world.

In the late 1980s and early '90s, trans prisoners like Johnson and Kavanagh feared for their lives. They could never rely on the institution for protection, even though it was mandated to be their guardian. Like Johnson, Kavanagh was routinely pursued and harassed for sex by members of the all-male prison population. She became a catalyst for violent conflict, and she was frequently beaten and raped. So, in 1993, Kavanagh fought back. She brought three human rights complaints against CSC (Kavanagh v. Canada). With the support of her lawyer, Barbara Findlay, Kavanagh argued that CSC's decisions to place her in a men's institution, halt her hormone treatment and ban her from receiving gender-affirming surgery were discriminatory.

Two kinds of discrimination were the basis for her case: sex

and disability. Kavanagh claimed that CSC's decisions constituted discrimination on the basis of disability because she had been diagnosed with Gender Identity Disorder (GID). First defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, GID was a term that denoted a feeling of incongruence between one's birth sex and the gender with which one identified, and a consistent discomfort, or "dysphoria," that accompanied those feelings.

The disability argument illuminates a conundrum for trans prisoners like Kavanagh in a highly conservative system like CSC. For the prison to recognize them according to their gender, trans people first needed to have their identities authenticated by the psychomedical establishment, by doctors or psychiatrists—a powerful system that was crucial to trans self-determination through medical or surgical intervention but that had also pathologized transness and categorized trans people as abnormal, sick or mentally ill.

At the time, trans people who wanted to access medical services in support of their transition, like hormones or surgery, or even to access government documentation to support their gender identity, needed a GID diagnosis. To receive this diagnosis, they had to meet a set of criteria called the "Harry Benjamin Standard of Care," established by the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association in 1979. These criteria included living as a trans person in the community for at least a year (called "the real-life experience"), receiving a full year of continuous hormone therapy and undergoing a psychological evaluation.

"The Kavanagh decision was something of a double-edged sword for trans people, especially trans women."

For Kavanagh, the GID diagnosis was a necessary precondition for her to access the care she needed while incarcerated, including gender-affirming surgery. But the Standard of Care criteria was a problem: during the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal hearings, some specialists argued that "real-life experience" could not be met in prison since prison was not like real life. An expert on gender identity who regularly consulted with CSC argued that the "facultative homosexuality" of the prison environment—what some prisoners objectionably call being "gay for the stay"—meant that trans people were more accepted within the prison than they were on the outside, an argument that disregards the high levels of violence experienced by trans prisoners. Trans people, the expert suggested, could encounter hostility upon their release and regret their decision to transition during incarceration, which could be quite damaging. And it could result in litigation for CSC.

Ultimately, despite this concern and other objections, the Tribu-

nal concluded that CSC's denial of Kavanagh's hormone therapy and gender-affirming surgery, and its refusal to allow Kavanagh to serve her time in a women's institution, was discriminatory on the basis of sex and disability. Kavanagh v. Canada made it possible for some trans people to undergo hormone therapy and gender-affirming surgery while incarcerated, and it made it more likely that a trans person could serve time in the institution that best suited their gender identity (although the process was hardly straightforward or easily accessible). In 2008, with the legal guidance of Jennifer Metcalfe at Prisoners' Legal Services (PLS), Katherine Johnson used the Kavanagh decision as a precedent in a human rights complaint against CSC that ultimately allowed Johnson to have gender-affirming surgery and transfer to a women's prison, Fraser Valley Institution, where she remained until her death in 2014.

And yet, the Kavanagh decision was something of a double-edged sword for trans people, especially trans women. The Tribunal concluded—and counsel for CSC conceded—that the prison system's policy that pre-operative trans people be held in prisons that accorded with their birth sex rather than their gender identity was *prima facie* discriminatory. Nevertheless, the Tribunal decided that trans women who don't undergo gender-affirming surgeries shouldn't serve time in women's prisons because, wrote the Tribunal in their decision, "pre-operative male to female transsexuals pose a potential risk to female inmates."

The Tribunal noted that a majority of imprisoned women had experienced abuse, including sexual abuse, perpetrated by men. They worried that having what it called "an anatomically male inmate" in a female prison population could be dangerous. Or, at the very least, they could frighten women who had experienced sexual violence at the hands of men outside prison. "Like transsexuals," the Tribunal wrote in their decision, "female inmates are a vulnerable group, who are entitled to have their needs recognized and respected."

The Tribunal's thinking was entangled with a damaging myth. In discussing trans women who have not undergone gender-affirming surgeries, they use the aforementioned term "anatomically male inmate," then shifts to discussing men. Of course, in their decision, they are not addressing men but trans women. And so, quite subtly, the Tribunal represents trans women not as women but as men passing as women. Representing trans women as disguised men fits a narrative that circulates widely outside prisons—a story about trans people that justifies their exclusion from the social sphere, from gendered spaces like bathrooms and locker rooms:

a story that authorizes violence against trans people who dare overstep gendered boundaries by behaving as though their chosen identities are normal. It's an anti-trans story about a wolf-in-sheep's clothing.

"Crimes that give credence to the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing story are attributed to trans women as a group rather than individual offenders."

A cursory Google search shows that women's prisons have become an ideal proving ground for this wolf-in-sheep's-clothing story. News headlines, some grossly sensationalist, hype the threat of trans women to cisgender women prisoners: "Trans Killers, Baby Rapists Terrifying Female Inmates"; "Seven Sex Attacks by 'Transgender' Inmates in Women's Prisons"; "Male-Bodied Rapists Are Being Imprisoned With Women. Why Do So Few People Care?" Normally, it would be unconscionable to suggest that someone's minority identity plays a causal role in a crime (although this does happen frequently, as with the criminalization of Black masculinity or Indigenous femininity). Yet, repeatedly, crimes that seem to give credence to the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing story, especially crimes involving predatory sex, are openly attributed to trans women as a group rather than to individual offenders.

Although it should go without saying, incarcerated trans women are no more likely than any other women to act violently in prison. There is no reason—and no statistical data—to suggest that trans women should be treated differently. Fears about cis male prisoners pretending to be trans women so they can serve time in women's institutions are worth addressing, but a 2018-2019 report by the Office of the Correctional Investigator found that "malingerer does not appear to be a sizeable problem." And if "malingerer" was an issue, it would be an issue with men and not trans women.

By comparison, as Kavanagh and Johnson's stories show, trans women prisoners are at high risk of violence in men's prisons. A Two-Spirit, non-binary prisoner serving time in a men's prison recently told me that they found an anonymous note in their cell announcing that they were "transgender" and were "getting breasts and a pussy" and so should "be treated" as a "little bitchy woman." "If anyone sees [them]," the note continued, that person should give them the "dick" pictured below. Underneath the message was a crude illustration of a penis that someone had made on a prison computer. The prisoner explained to me that the note, which they said meant "gimme dick," was menacingly ambiguous: it could mean that they were missing a penis that needed to be returned to them, or it could mean that they needed to be sexually assaulted. Since they've been raped and assaulted in prison multiple times before, they took the letter's

veiled threat very seriously.

On June 19, 2017, Canada passed Bill C-16, which amended the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code to include gender identity or expression in the list of prohibited discriminatory practices. The amendment led to important gender policy changes in Canadian prisons. It even allowed some trans women to serve time in women's prisons: in July 2017, a trans woman named Fallon Aube transferred from Matsqui Institution, a men's prison, to Fraser Valley Institution, a women's prison.

As anyone fighting for social justice will tell you, however, the rights of disadvantaged groups need continuous attention. People in power and the systems within which those people operate will, if left alone, almost certainly revert to the discrimination and inequality of business as usual. PLS and the Canadian Bar Association (CBA) have expressed concern that a draft policy document—Commissioner's Directive 100, Management of Offenders with Gender Identity or Expression Considerations (CD-100)—signals that CSC is slowing or even reversing its progress toward ensuring trans prisoners' rights.

Both PLS and CBA explain that many of CD-100's subsections don't accord with the guidelines set out in CSC's early efforts to align with the requirements of Bill C-16. For one thing, the policy is premised on the "incorrect assumption that people are fundamentally men or women (or intersex) based on biology at birth," according to the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Community Section of the CBA. This assumption appears throughout the document, often in ways that directly contravene CSC's previous policies and public statements about gender identity and expression made after the passage of Bill C-16. For example, a draft response to CD-100 that PLS executive director Jennifer Metcalfe shared with me notes that elements of the revised policy would place a trans person in prison "by sex by default," and require them to "go through a special process to have their human rights respected." That contradicts CSC's interim policy of placing a prisoner in the institution that accords with their gender, which CSC had publicized in a joint news conference with PLS and the Canadian Human Rights Commission in 2018.

Moreover, PLS and CBA point to language in the policy that contravenes CSC's earlier statements and interim policies about gender identity and expression made after Bill C-16 became law. Specific phrases create loopholes that would discriminate against, withhold basic rights from or endanger trans people. For example, CSC's interim policy states that "offenders' needs related to gender considerations must be met without delay, barring overriding health or safety concerns that cannot be resolved." Met-

calfe says this "health or safety" loophole (which appears elsewhere in CSC policies) provides an opening for delaying "gender considerations"—that is, denying trans prisoners' rights.

"For trans women incarcerated in men's prisons, every day, every interaction is tainted with discrimination."

Meanwhile, imprisoned trans people are reporting to their lawyers and advocates that their rights within Canadian prisons are only haphazardly defended by CSC, despite policy changes related to gender identity. For instance, the aforementioned Two-Spirit, non-binary prisoner explained to me that they have been provided with women's institutional clothes, but guards on their range frequently order them to be "properly dressed"—meaning they should be wearing men's prison clothing. Staff consistently and pointedly address them by male pronouns despite their official and unofficial requests to be addressed by gender-neutral pronouns. And often guards ignore when other prisoners harass them—calling them "Frankenstein" or "tranny," making lewd or threatening gestures or pestering them, sometimes for sex. Staff have also harassed them and encouraged a culture of transphobia.

For trans women incarcerated in men's prisons, "every day, every interaction is tainted with discrimination," says Metcalfe. They are misgendered and denied women's clothing and personal effects. They are called offensive names by officers and sexually harassed by prisoners. They are not safe. By contrast, "trans women who have been transferred to prisons designated for women report much fewer instances of harassment and discrimination," Metcalfe writes by email.

Effective and ongoing education about trans rights is crucial to ensuring the safety and dignity of incarcerated trans people. Educating prisoners in men's and women's institutions about gender identity would help manage the ever-present transphobia and homophobia. And educating prison staff about trans rights is essential for CSC to ensure the safety of the people in their care. If staff are already transphobic, Metcalfe says, their intolerance carries over into their work. Changing how CSC staff recognize trans people matters because ensuring trans rights in prison means that staff must be proactive and vigilant; complacency is the enemy of social justice, and it means trans prisoners will continue to be at risk.

There are other changes that need to be implemented in Canadian prisons: ensuring that trans and non-binary prisoners' Individualized Protocols, which establish correct practices for security-related issues like strip searches or urinalysis collection, are implemented and followed by staff; safeguarding information related to prisoners' gender identity; allowing prisoners to be

placed in facilities that suit their gender. And there is the bureaucracy equation: the less power someone has, the more bureaucracy they face. Trans people, who are arguably the most disempowered people in prisons, have reportedly been frustrated in their efforts to access their rights because their paperwork has been trapped somewhere in the knotted pneumatic tubing of prison bureaucratic systems. "We're at an important inflection point regarding gender identity and expression, but prisons are often overlooked in discussions about cultural values."

Ultimately, correctional facilities that are organized into two ostensibly distinct genders will fail trans and gender non-binary prisoners. Given how prisons have historically tied rehabilitation to narrow conventions of men and women—and men and women whose values largely conform to the white, middle class—these institutions are undoubtedly failing non-trans people too. So what should we do? Establish co-ed prisons, like some provincial jails? Create special units within prisons for LGBTQ2S+ prisoners? Abolish prisons altogether?

I can't pretend to know the answers. But these questions matter. We're at an important inflection point in our culture regarding gender identity and expression, but prisons are often overlooked in discussions about cultural values because they're believed to be separate and apart from normal society—they're secretive spaces by design. And yet prisons, like schools, are supposed to change people so that they're better suited to the world outside. In a very real way, they're determining the future of many Canadians and helping to define the cultural future of the country.

CSC has a motto that we should take seriously: Futura Recipere, "to grasp the future." As CSC outlines its future gender identity policies, we should keep in mind the past: what the stories of trans people like Synthia Kavanagh and Katherine Johnson tell us about our values—and what it takes to define and defend them.

MELISSA MBARKI: OUT OF THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS, INTO THE PRISON AND FOSTER CARE SYSTEMS

National Post Staff · Postmedia News - Sept. 30, 2021

Today has been designated as a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, but it's hard to reconcile the injustices faced by Indigenous communities in the past when the effects of that trauma are still being felt so acutely.

Take the survivors of residential schools. The last residential school closed in 1997 and if the youngest survivors were between six and 10 years old at the time, they would now range in age from 30-35. Many of them are living in First Nations communities, which have some of the highest crime rates in the

country and are plagued by high rates of incarceration, suicide and large numbers of children placed into foster care.

These are inter-related, as we transitioned our children out of residential schools and into federal and provincial institutions, such as prisons and foster homes. There was no transition or support services in place for children going from residential schools back to their homes. Not only did children face abrupt life changes, they were also coping with the abuses and neglect they endured at the schools.

As a result of these traumas, Indigenous people now account for more than 30 per cent of inmates in Canadian prisons. The numbers are even higher on the Prairies — Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta — where Indigenous-Canadians make up 54 per cent of the prison population. This is alarming given that Indigenous people make up just five per cent of the country's population.

Factors contributing to high incarceration rates include poverty and systemic inequities. Indigenous offenders are more likely to be sentenced to maximum terms. They are also more likely to be placed in maximum-security facilities and to serve more of their sentences before they are granted parole.

Female Indigenous prisoners currently represent 42 per cent of the inmates in Canadian prisons. They face some of the harshest parole conditions, which makes it more challenging for them to return to their lives on the outside. And even when they are released, they often end up on reserves with limited social services and mental health supports, which is why we see so many repeat offenders.

Just as residential schools fell under the radar for so many decades, there is no accountability from the federal government about the over-representation of Indigenous people in the prison system and the harms that stem from it.

Another sad statistic is the number of Indigenous children in foster care. In Canada, 52.2 per cent of children in the foster care system — around 15,000 kids — are Indigenous. It's hard to see how this is all that much different from a system that took children away from their families and placed them into residential schools.

Governments need to create clear and transparent systems for family reunification, to make it easier for parents to reunite with their children. We cannot continue to be over-represented in these systems. We have seen the trauma caused by residential schools and it did not get better, it got worse.

One of the biggest contributors to these statistics is poverty. Thirty-eight per cent of Indigenous children live in poverty. If we do not start addressing poverty on and off reserves, we are going to have even bigger issues in the future. Jobs and

training opportunities for Indigenous people should be part of a national plan to stimulate the economy and get Canadians back to work, not siloed under an Indigenous affairs department.

Flags at half-mast are not going to change the situation. Taking pictures at an Indigenous grave site is not going to bring the 15,000 displaced children home. Concrete actions are needed to reduce the number of Indigenous people in the prison and foster care systems.

Today, I will be honouring and remembering my grandmother and every child who stepped into a residential school. I will be telling my grandmother's story in hopes that my message will connect the government's past failures to the issues we are facing today.

We cannot create a better future if we do not acknowledge that our current problems stem from one single event in our history: residential schools. We must not allow history to repeat itself. Perhaps this is the true meaning of reconciliation.

HOW A LOCAL CHARITY HELPS INMATES IN CANADA AND THE U.S., ONE BOOK AT A TIME

Anchal Sharma · CBC News · Posted: Oct 23, 2021

For nearly two decades, Books 2 Prisoners Ottawa has sent free books to incarcerated people across Canada and their impact has reached the U.S.

The initiative began in 2003 out of the Ontario Public Interest Research Group at Carleton University with students collecting book donations and mailing them out to correctional facilities.

According to Jeffrey Bradley, a PhD student in legal studies at Carleton, who also co-chairs the group, it works like a penal system.

"They send us a letter and basically they'll have a description of what types of books they like," Bradley told CBC Radio's Ottawa Morning.

"From there, we will look into our library or book supply and see how we can best match that request and then we will send it out to them and we also usually respond back with a letter," he said.

Bradley said he wanted to get involved because he "thought that this would be a very tangible way to be able to support people that are incarcerated and help them meet their objectives to eventually be reintegrated back into society."

U.S. inmates can have more books

The challenge arises when it comes to figuring out different policies and restrictions around book programs at different institutions.

Bradley said restrictions in the U.S. are looser, with some institutions allowing prisoners to receive two books per month, which is how they are able to send books to inmates in California and Texas.

It wasn't until last fall, however, that the group was able to get

books to the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre.

While Bradley says the organization did drop off boxes of books at the Ottawa jail when they started out, factors like staff changeover made it harder for them to keep going. When he joined the group two years ago, the goal was to re-establish the relationship between Books 2 Prisoners and the jail.

"One of our volunteers was ... a retired probation officer and he had kind of helped me connect and the group connect with the librarian at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre," he explained.

Now, after having gone through the proper approvals, the librarian emails the group with requests for different types of books, which volunteers then drop off in the security area of the detention centre.

Books 2 Prisoners helped inmate learn to read

Jane Crosby, who also co-chairs the group, said the most common book requests from inmates include dictionaries, nutrition books, and a variety of fiction genres such as romance and mystery.

Crosby, who has been with the group for 10 years, says she can see the impact of the book donations.

"What really caught me was that people were waiting for my mail," she said.

Growing up as the daughter of a chaplain at the Springhill Penitentiary in Nova Scotia, she said she understands how important it is for inmates to connect with someone on the outside.

"When I joined ... there were people that were writing [to us] like every month. So you got to know the people because they got really personal with you through letters ... they would write to people specifically saying how they appreciated our books."

Curtis Copeland was a prisoner in Texas who used Books 2 Prisoners for years. Crosby said she remembers getting letters from Copeland over the years and she noticed the change in his tone.

"I really enjoyed [the books]. They kept me from losing my mind. I learned how to read and educate myself," he said.

"I know prisoners who don't have anything to read. They have no money or family to buy them anything. So these organizations are a great blessing and a great help to all the prisoners across the world."

In California, Crosby says there's an old man who they've been sending books to "forever."

"He's blind. He's in a wheelchair. He's like 80 years old ... so I always make sure that he gets books," she said.

Four years ago, Crosby started sending inmates Christmas cards along with the books.

"The letters we got back were always, 'Oh, that's the only Christmas card I got,' and 'thank you so much for remembering me,'" she said.

"The personal connection to me is what really is important when you're serving your time."

con't from cover

constituted the principal basis for pain and suffering – upon climbing the stairz of the unit and entering the doorz that isolated it from the rest of the prison, both literally and symbolically, entered a different world.

The frustration, the despair, the loneliness and the deep sense of antagonism between prisonerz and the guardz – was intensified.

After a con in solitary had slashed himself, an officer offered the next man a razor blade, so he too could “slash up” – evidence was given of mentally unstable conz being goaded by guardz.

In the Penthouse, both literally and symbolically – the worst thingz about prison – the humiliation and degradation, the frustration, the despair and loneliness – the deep sense of antagonism between conz and screwz – were intensified.

There is a perverse symbiotic relationship between guardz-n-prisonerz in the penthouse. The guardz, by perceiving the prisonerz as the most dangerous-n-violent men.

The terror of life in the Solitary confinement unit of the BC Pen was explained to Mr. Justice Heald how Tommy McCaulleyz insanity and Jacques Bellemairez' Suicide was the living and dying proof to other prisonerz of their vulnerability. Between 1970 to 1974 the 7 prisonerz in the McCann case had spent a total of 11.5 yearz in Solitary – Jack McCann had spent 1,471 dayz in solitary himself – the longest continuous periodz of that total were 754 and 342 dayz – Donald Oaq was in solitary for 6882 dayz, including a period of 573 dayz – Andy Bruce had been locked up for 493 dayz including a period of 338 dayz and another 258 dayz, locked up 23.5 hourz a day for yearz on end.

The plaintiffz maintained that the injustice of their confinement was not limited to itz physical and psychological dimensionz, it included the process by which they had been placed in solitary on through which they were, in some cases yearz later, released.

At the time of the McCann case and up until the enactment of the “Correctionz and Conditional Release Act” in 1992.

In McCann, prisonerz gave evidence of being placed in dissociation without notice of the groundz and without a hearing at which they could challenge the case against em or make representationz.

The evidence given by the BC Penitentiaryz warden and itz head of Secretary regarding their interpretations of “the importance of good order and discipline” revealed no consistent standardz for determining what constituted sufficient groundz for dissociation, rather, it suggested that decisionz to place conz on dissociation were made of the basis of rumorz, hunchez and intangible feelingz, grounded on a prisonerz past reputation or his present attitude.



THE REAL REASONS CSC DON'T WANT INMATES HAVING PERSONAL COMPUTERS IN THEIR CELLS

By a Lifer

I purchased my personal computer and the software I needed to help me back in 1998 because of my learning disability with reading and writing. I knew without my personal computer, I could not function very well, my time would be very hard to do and I couldn't do anything without help from others. Going without a computer was not going to work for me because of my mental health issues and it is the best tool to help me with everything I need to do. However, in 2002 CSC put a moratorium in place prohibiting offenders from bringing personal computers into a Federal Institution. In 2011, CSC outright rejected the office of the correctional investigator's recommendation to lift this ban, because inmates' rights to digital technology was being denied. The only inmates that

still have computers are lifers who had them before the moratorium. But when we need to do repairs on them, CSC makes it very hard because they want to see them all gone. Why? Because when inmates don't have access to personal computers, the number of complaints and grievances, letters to the office of the correctional investigator, letters to other government offices, etc. goes down. Letters to Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Human Rights and to the courts have dropped over 55% because that's what a lot of inmates use their computers for besides gaming, learning and writing letters to family and loved ones. Around mid-2000, CSC took away all inmates personal computers, and when they did, there were two inmates who committed suicide over it. They depended on their computers so much, for one of those inmates, his computer was all he had, so when they took it away, he just gave up on life. He

stopped eating, just sat in his cell and gave up on life. He died a few months later and CSC wrote it off as natural causes. It was actually depression after CSC took his computer, I know the feeling because I felt the same way. And if it was not for a friend I call, that could have been me. If the public only knew a quarter of what some inmates have gone through at the hands of the CSC, yes I'm talking about cruel and unusual treatment or punishment. Yes, we live in Canada and we have this little thing called the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, maybe you have heard of it? Because I don't believe CSC has. I'll tell you they're great at telling you what you want to hear just to fix something at the moment. However, in the long run it isn't really fixed, there is only a Band-Aid put on the problem until next time, when it happens again. I wrote to CSC Regional Headquarters and to my surprise, they wrote back.

I wrote a four-page letter laying out my concerns about inmate personal computers and mental health and the Commissioners Directives need to be updated with the times. The response I got back was “The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) is committed to ensuring that our policies, including Commissioners Directives, are current and up to date including CD566-12. I am aware the Management team and particularly the Assistant Warden of Operations, is willing to meet with you on a regular basis in an effort to resolve your concerns at the Institutional level. And I can assure you that CSC and the Ontario Regional and the Management Team at Warkworth Institution reviews CSC policy in an effort to ensure that it is current and in line with the law.” It was signed Curtis Jackson, Assistant Deputy Commissioner, Correctional Operations Ontario Region. At no time did he address any of my concerns I wrote to CSC Regional Headquarters about being stonewalled by staff. Are you aware that in 2014 there was a pilot project set-up for Lifers? They were allowed to purchase tablets and laptops with updated software like Windows XP, Windows 7, Microsoft office 2013 Encarta encyclopaedia 2013 and a Musicmatch Jukebox or Winamp for a music player. Everything was a go, purchase order filled out, bulks signed, orders came in; but we were never given them, why? No one seems to know. Some even say, ‘well it should have never got that far because there was no approval for it by CSC.’ But the approval came from National and the Minister office. Now we are in 2021 and the Office of Correctional Investigator has recommended that the Minister of Public Safety establish an independent expert-working group to guide implementation of the office's current and past recommendations on inmate personal computers, tablets and laptops within federal corrections and this work should include timelines and clear deliverables. Most staff are very open-minded and believe inmates should have their own tablets and laptops, because it would cut down on paper, books, music CDs and games in their cells. Everything would be on their tablets and laptops. There are so many positive and good thing that can come from these new ways of digital learning those with learning disabilities, school up grading. Teachers reported wanting to see this for teaching and it would be a great teaching aid. Mental health doctors have said that this would be good for inmates with mental health problems and other disabilities. But it is limited for inmates and its unfair and in some cases also violates their Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Human Rights too. So we really need to address this, all inmates need to start writing to National and the Minister of Public Safety and ask what's going on with this.

A NEED FOR RELIEVE

By Brian G. Kerr

It's been a long year and a half thus far for Institutional programs and operations have been significantly delayed within the Correctional Milieu, as with the community. Many loved ones have grown ill and deceased, others are still holding on by a thread. The need for prayer has been stronger in these last 515 days since COVID-19 made its appearance, than it has been since the holocaust of the Second World War.

As many are too aware, over these last 16 months, being confined to your homes is a lot like being imprisoned (add to that the everyday suppression of a watchful eye impressing upon you the strict rules and regulations in which you are to comply). This in conjunction with the inability to participate in well-needed programs in time for your eligibility date for Parole and possible release, which are hindered by this. It's a constant reminder that you may continue to be a prisoner, possibly for many more months to come.

I understand your pain, your suffering and the idle isolation in which you are feeling, and experiencing. I've been doing this since 2013 (not to subtract from your discord in these troubling times, I'm in absolute concordance with you in this.) However, despite a complete acquittal involving my first three charges, I was forced to remain in prison for an additional three years past the Dec 14th, 2015 acquittal date, due to a fabrication made by someone I do time with. I was convicted of his allegations in Oct, 2018 and ultimately sentenced in the following year of 2019. It will be a total of 8 years come Oct 31st, 2021. (Five of those years I was allegedly presumed to be innocent in accordance to Canadian law and legislation). Trust me, I know; "Where is the relief? Where is the relieve?"

For all those many months you have been incarcerated within your own homes, for all those years I have been confined to a 4x8 foot cell while under the presumption of innocence, (not to mention the past 16 months to date with no control over who shall enter or who shall go to and from my cell). The impossible inability to maintain a 6 foot distance from your fellow inmate, let alone cell partner is a threatening burden of complete uncertainty of its own.

The Ontario Government has been handing out relief packages for those who have suffered loss of income and endured pain and suffering; and for this I am grateful. But I have to ask, aside from a few \$5.00 increments on the inmate telephone account and a \$4.00 raise in food purchasing accounts for some Federal Institutions, what exactly have they done for Provincial and Federal inmates? Particularly those who have been held against their will while presumed to be legally



"innocent"?

Many people, loved ones, friends and associates have died due to this unfortunate pandemic. Many inmates have also died during the onslaught of this horrendous caricature, leaped upon them in the midst of their all too close confinements.

Trust me folks, I truly resonate with your grievance and loss, I too have lost a couple of friends and an aunt due to COVID. And I truly do appreciate everything Prime Minister Trudeau and his Cabinet has done for us, so far to date!

But I can't help to feel that there is a resounding need for more relief, for more to be done, particularly for those who are disadvantaged. Whether it be due to a disability or due to forces completely out of our control.

To be detained in such close confinements without an adequate ability to properly distance oneself from others, should an epidemic or pandemic arise is inhumane, despotic and arbitrary in every sense of the law. And I strongly believe holding an individual against his/her will without an adequate case proven against them is in itself arbitrary in concordance to the same.

With our communities parading in the streets, organizing for Abolition of prisons, articles written in relation to #CriminalLivesMatter...All of this is indicative of a dire need for relief.

We are undoubtedly in need of a higher dedication towards those who are suppressed, arbitrarily confined, detained without conviction, deprived of their constitutional rights and who are disproportionately oppressed without the adequate ability to defend, protect, or guard themselves against life threatening impediments, viruses and infectious diseases.

We are undoubtedly in a desperate need for relieve.

In memory of all those who have passed due to circumstantial factors indicated in this writing.

My heart goes out to you all.
- Members of the Community
- Prisoners and detainees and
- Long Term Care Residents alike

THE ADVOCATE

By Brian G. Kerr

There's a new movement in the world today, the stepping stones have already been introduced.

A wise man once said "in order to prevent a good tree from producing bad fruit you must just consider where it is planted, then you must get to the root of the problem, otherwise it will continue to grow and it may corrupt everything around it"

This has been the problematic situation in the nation of policing and with lawmakers who for all intents and purposes appear to be contributing decisions in and out of good faith, but are not the enriched breeding ground they portray to be. There are many totalitarian aspects involved in their direction of prosperity and they are very prejudiced in relation to the path in which they choose to follow.

The courts profoundly referred to as the "Justice System" are the tillers of a soil wall worn by the troopers; who are often forced to tread upon its surface. They are the distorters who twist out of shape the true meaning of the word in which they conceal themselves.

The police are the gatherers who harvest the crops of the plantation in which they were given birth. They take it upon themselves to either store or put an end to the collection of their gold.

With a license to kill, they have the option to weed out the taxes

that share the fields in which the young and the old, both live and hope alike.

"Every rising sun holds a promise of prosperity, rejuvenation and the turning over of an entirely new day, but the pests who often devour the vitality of the blood in which they depend, tend to chew off the branches of their own mortality."

"Sometimes a man's sins are not realized until he comes to the grips of his reality. It's when that reality begins to jade that he suddenly acknowledges the mighty, which brought him to the discovery of his fate!"

It is for these reasons that I bring to you the proceeding factors which are currently taking place in our society today. Police defunding and prison abolition are just the tip of the iceberg.

The way in which your brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, nieces and nephews are being treated in the depths of a system broken by corruption, bent on deception, hidden and protected by deliberate disregard and infidelity, are far more pressing.

When a man is kicked or treated like an animal considered to be less in nature to you, any good intention or achievement in which he/she ought to be praised, he/she is rejected and is subjected to a state of dilapidation, deterioration and devastation. When no good deed is longer sufficient enough to be awarded by the housekeeper, handler or head of the estate, the subject becomes unsuitable, unfitting, and unequal to the laws which gave in the protective constitution of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms Act of Canada, particularly Section 15 of the Equality Rights; where it states that "every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law

without discrimination."

Despite myself not having any positive urinalysis, attempted escapes, institutional infractions or misconducts, continued employment within the institution, having completed three college courses in business administration and one in psychology, lifespan development with an overall average of 90%, completing 27 courses in cognitive rehabilitative programs and an additional 99 courses in Christian Studies consistent of a 96.8% average I am not closer or better off then a drug dependent, rule breaking, non responsive far from a model inmate perspective, as far as Corrections Canada is concerned with a low accountability, low motivation, hence low reintegration potential.

"Just a dog kicked to the corner for his good deeds of endearment."

However, in fairness, we should look at the statement made by the Human Rights Commission of Ontario in accordance with their Analysis Section 8.5, and how this might relate to the pending decision upon my July 2021 Parole Hearing.

"The Parole Board of Canada can not be obligated to make a decision on the basis of an accountability contract and certainly not one developed by a case management team or officer during the first few weeks of the sentence.

Even if we ignore the serious problem of the accountability contract, conflicting criteria of the CCRA, it would put a substantial responsibility on CSC to provide the required programs with sufficient timelines and quality to make it possible for the prisoner to complete their obligations prior to the Parole Eligibility Date. It would be both unfair and a violation of CSCs end of the contract, if an offender is detained because programs are not available."

"Well it's safe to say COVID certainly put a damper on this one."

Despite my inquiries into such availability of programs % my Corr Plan, I was to date told various different things. First, that a program would be ready for me come summer, now I hear it's fall. However, I'm expecting to hear sometime next year!"

"Oh and remember when I said there's a new movement in the world today? Well there is, it's called 'Criminal Lives Matter.'" To read more I encourage you to subscribe to PASAN - Cell Count unless you have already!

"Don't forget to ask for issue #92 and keep watch for upcoming articles."

"Get involved online. (Your family and loved ones may depend on it!)"



PRISON ETIQUETTE

By: Phoenix Mercury

This has been a sensitive topic of discussion for me as I was raised with old school values instilled in me from an early age but, I am also Autistic so, I can't always see the line between what is old school and what is new school; New School being what is okay and not okay to do nowadays. At 29 yrs of age, I am still defining old from new and attempting to stand on the line at the right place and time. RESPECT!

The most obvious etiquette to me is the issue of ratting = You go to the Guards for help with an issue when it concerns another inmate = you're ratting! Take it to the cell, get help from the range representative, peer counsellor or another Inmate but, don't go to the Guards! RESPECT!

One of my biggest pet-peeves is Peeping Toms! You know, the guy that walks by your window (inside or out) and rubbernecks your cell; or the guy who knocks once before pressing their nose to your door window! Whatever happened to asking permission to look into one's cell or, wait for the person to respond in the affirmative before looking in?! And then when they catch you in an indecent state, THEY give YOU shit for not having your blocker up! NEWS FLASH Your blocker/curtain need only be up when the cell doors are open; NOT when they're CLOSED!!! It's called RESPECT FOR PRIVACY!!

Another pet-peeve is when someone walks into your cell without first asking your permission! Even after someone tells me I don't need to ask permission in the future, the habit is so far ingrained into my core value of Respect that I still ask out of habit! RESPECT!

Another pet-peeve: Table Manners! I admit that I sometimes forget to wipe up after myself but not intentionally. You make a mess, you clean it up! Other Inmates are not your Mothers & Fathers! RESPECT!

When you're sitting at a table with someone else = Chew with your mouth closed! I hate eating next to someone and sounds like I'm sharing a trough with a sow! For those not knowing: a sow is Female pig! RESPECT!

And another pet-peeve: Don't touch it if it's not yours! It's okay to move something out of the way so you can use the space as long as you put it back when you're done. And it's okay to switch a load of wash to the dryer, the dryer to a bag on a shelf, as long as that load in question is finished in said machine. The only real exception is when someone places a DO NOT TOUCH! Sign with their load of laundry and/or personal item, such as food/drink! RESPECT!

Another: NO STEALING FROM ANOTHER INMATE! Inmates have very little as is. Why try to make your time better by stealing from a fellow Prisoner? Karma is Real! It'll catch up to you! RESPECT!

Lastly: Do your own time! If you're doing something that can possibly annoy another Inmate, then you're doing that inmate's time for them! Show Respect and do your own time! RESPECT!

I do my own time by following all my own pet-peeves! Do you do your own time? Take a moment of self-reflection before moving to the next article. RESPECT!

CONTRACTED BREACH OF RESPECT AND FAIRITY (DIGNITY AND EQUALITY)

By Brian G. Kerr

According to the Inmate Handbook revised Sept 21, 2018 under the heading "Rights and Responsibilities c/o The Beaver Creek Medium Institution. CSC is allegedly committed and legally obligated to respect your rights as an inmate and Canadian citizen throughout your sentence and are allegedly committed to the duty to act fairly with both dignity and equality towards the inmate. This includes any and all values enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Human Rights act, CSC's law guiding CCRA and CCRR, as well as CSC's mission statement and alleged Care Values which enlist the following:

- To be treated with openness, fairness, respect and dignity.
- The ability to live with freedom from discrimination and harassment.
- To be provided with fair, ethical and forthright decision-making with the opportunity to respond to decisions that may further

restrict the liberty of the inmate.

- To have reasonable access to legal counsel and the Police.
- To have access to an effective and credible complaint and grievance procedure.
- To have open access to agencies that oversee the protection of Human Rights.
- The right to a safe, secure and humane custody with the least restrictive measures consistent with the protection of the public, staff members and inmates.
- The opportunity to participate in programs and cultural activities that respect gender, ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences, which are responsive to the special needs of women and Aboriginal Peoples, as well as to the needs of other groups of inmates with special requirements.
- The opportunity to participate in meaningful work as appropriate.
- The right to physical and mental health services, including proper medical care to the same standards as those available in the community.
- Not to be treated in an adverse differential manner based on race, colour, national/ethnic origin, religion, disability (physical or mental), age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status and or a pardon or acquittal of a conviction.

Well, that was exciting... However, there are a number of issues I'd like to bring to the public's attention, which highly suggests a wanton neglect and disregard to a duty of care, CSC has not only for their own so-called values, but for the values and laws governed by the exact agencies obligated to protect those same rights as were just aforementioned.

Issue #1

Re: To be treated with openness, fairness, respect and dignity.

Case and Point:

On June 17th, 2021 c/o Beaver Creek Medium Institution, Unit Edgewood, range "A". A particular inmate had to be extracted from his cell. However, another inmates' personal belongings and cell effects were completely damaged and permanently put out of commission, by means of contamination, via O.C Spray. "Where is the fairness and

respect, let alone the dignity in this?"

These effects could have been extracted from the non-involved inmate's cell prior to the tactical mediation. Consequently, a result in damage of property was committed; due to entry into the non-involved inmate's cell, so as to extract the inmate of concern.

Issue #2

Re: "The ability to live with freedom from discrimination and harassment."

Currently there are at least two operative running ICPM High Intensity programs at Beaver Creek Medium Institution, which have commenced approximately March/May 2021. However, the High Intensity Indigenous ICPM appears to be unavailable.

COVID related setbacks have undoubtedly slowed the process. None the less, programs have continued to run throughout the pandemic. The troubling issue here for many Indigenous offenders/ inmates is the fact that, despite such a high population of Indigenous offenders/inmates currently residing at Beaver Creek Medium Institution, it appears no program specified to Indigenous offenders, particularly the High Intensity ICPM, nor has been available since at least December, 2019, which just concluded in May, 2021.

The following allegedly committed legal obligations and duties to act fairly with dignity and equality towards the inmate, contrary to any alleged committed values and or legal guidelines are two more examples of systemic violation currently being committed by the Beaver Creek Medium Institutional Federal Facility.

- The opportunity to participate in programs and cultural activities that respect gender, ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences; which are responsive to the special needs of Women and Aboriginal Peoples, as well as to the needs of other groups of inmates with special requirements, and
- Not to be created in an adverse differentiated manner, based on race, colour, national/ethnic origin, religion, marital status, family status or a pardon of conviction.

Issue #3

Re: To have reasonable access to an effective and credible complaint and grievance procedure.

The problem with this is the fact that not all grievances are properly addressed, if addressed at all!

Depending on whom the complaint is made against and the strength of the complaint – for instance, against the Warden him/herself – the complaint may be simply ignored in the hopes it will miraculously disappear. Or perhaps the warden will approve a particular request in which the complainant was contesting to have approved in the past; so as to appease the complainant into over-looking the avoidance. "Such instances are more common than non-existent within

the correctional milieu."

Issue #4

Re: To have open access to agencies that oversee the protection of human rights.

As with the grievance system, complaints are deflected, except in instances of privileged sealed correspondences – as are Human Rights complaints, Ombudsman correspondences, Tribunal Ontario, etc. Such complaints are sometimes intercepted by V&C staff members or other correctional staff members, opened and or simply discarded prior to a) leaving the Institution and or b) arriving at its intended destination.

(ie) Blue letters to the Ontario Ombudsman have reportedly been seen in the presence of officers amidst their breaks within the staff lounge/ lunch room, held over the team of a staff coffee maker, so as to easily re-open the correspondents and review its contents.

Issue #5

Re: A safe, secure and humane custody with the least restrictive measure consistent with the protection of the public, staff members and inmates.

Well, if excluding an inmate the right to a Community Strategy Assessment, due to a noting of low motivation and low accountability is in some way humane. (Depriving the inmate of the ample opportunity to secure a suitable residency within the community c/o a Correctional Residency Facility or Correctional Community Centre). If this is in anyway deemed to be a "least restrictive" measure as opposed to... say killing the inmate...!

Then, I suppose I stand corrected, but personally – I strongly feel that the CD Protocol 712-1 para. 13 seriously needs to be reconsidered.

It reminds me of when fascist regimes in the past executed disabled individuals for being much of the same. I suppose they too would have been deemed to be (quote) of "low reintegrational potential."

I am hopeful you are understanding and grasping my point in these respects. And with any luck you will agree that much, if not all, of the so-called "rights and responsibilities" and alleged "Core Values" are in fact a major contravention of the respect, fairness, dignity and equality corrections Canada professes to have towards their (unreasonably oppressed and often suppressed) inmate population.

You don't need me to tell you this appears to be an ongoing scenario of contractual breach, a Tort Duty of Care and a seemingly wanton display of neglect. I mean any idiot can read between the lines, right? Well, evidently this is wrong, because the problem continues to persist.

"Please help change the current course of our present penal system. Either abolish the current correctional domain or seriously reinstate the rehabilitative aspect to its full potential."

Most importantly, "Don't ignore it!"

"DEPUTY MINISTER OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES FAILS INMATES IN THEIR DUTY TO ENSURE CORRECTIONAL EMPLOYEES DO NOT MAKE THEIR OWN RULES – A CHARTER VIOLATION"



By Kenneth Whitman
(all statements are the writer's sole opinion and are in accordance with the rules governing freedom of speech)

It goes without saying that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected a staggering number of lives as people, families, and communities around the world continue to struggle with this surreal and traumatic time in history, as medical leaders and governments combine forces to respond effectively to this deadly virus, COVID-19 safety protocols have had to be put in place everywhere. They are in place to protect us, not hurt us.

For inmates and their loved ones, it has been exceptionally difficult as institutions have been forced to shutdown visits, systematically lockdown inmates and limit communication. It is an unfortunate

but necessary measure to protect us. It has been a hardship nobody would have ever imagined.

However, this pandemic has also had some residual affects in this writer's opinion. Many of the rights and freedoms we expect as Canadians as guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms have been dismissed by the very government that is sworn to uphold it.

In particular, the Deputy Minister of Correctional Services is at the top of the hierarchy when it comes to investigating and resolving complaints made by inmates who have exhausted all avenues of appeal. As with all elected government officials, they have a sworn duty to protect and enforce the regulations as set in the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (Inmate Information Guides

for Adult Institutions). One can reasonably conclude that these regulations are universal to all provincial institutions in Ontario to maintain order. Imagine that chaos if each institution were allowed to make up their own rules.

As the information guide itself states, the Charter is there to protect us: it makes sure that the government (including government actors, like police officers, correctional officers, immigration officers, etc) do not pass laws or act in ways that abuse the rights and freedoms of individuals. This writer had the unpleasant, and shocking experience of having reached out to the Deputy Minister of Correctional Services following an internal complaint at an institution (which I will not name because it may violate the Charter in regard

to freedom of speech). As a writer, I must be careful not make slanderous or libel-like statements. That being said, the as of yet unnamed institution was given a free pass on a violation that has essentially put me in imminent danger of homelessness.

While I was in their custody, an unknown ministry employee accessed my personal property and removed a money order bearing a substantial amount of money and without my consent (as is required according to the regulations). It was returned to my former address, a motel that has since been closed down. The money order has never been found.

Though, the superintendent of the unnamed institution admitted to receiving the money order has never accepted responsi-

bility or been held accountable for allowing someone to access and remove the one thing in my property that I had secured as a safety net and defense against homelessness.

In closing, it is a sad state of affairs when the leaders of our government fail in their duty to manage institutions according to the rules, policies, and procedures they have in place which they are tasked to uphold to maintain order in response to institutional security, safety and well-being of both inmate and staff member alike.

The most disturbing is that a superintendent of a provincial institution would use COVID-19 safety protocols as an excuse for a blatant and direct violation of his own rules and expectations. It's absolutely deplorable, insulting and incredibly dishonest.

THE LEGAL NETWORK, ON POINT & PASAN IS RECRUITING PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN RELEASED FOR A COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH PROJECT

entitled "Former prisoners' experiences with the PNEP: Advancing knowledge and practice on prison harm reduction in Canada."

The goal is to learn more about how the "Prison Needle Exchange Program" (PNEP) has been working in federal prisons.

We are looking for people who are **18 years or older, speak English, and have been incarcerated in a federal prison with a PNEP:**

- 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**
- Warkworth Institution**

If eligible, you will need access to a phone or computer (this could be made available at a local community agency) for a 1-hour phone, Zoom, or Skype interview held in fall 2021.

\$50 honorarium will be provided
(plus a \$10 transit subsidy if needed)

OnPoint@ryerson.ca or 1-800-399-1923

The study is led by Emily van der Meulen (Ryerson University) and Sandra Ka Hon Chu (HIV Legal Network), in collaboration with PASAN. It has been reviewed and approved by Ryerson's Research Ethics Board (#2021-260).

BRIAN G. KERR

~ Quote of the Day ~

Keep in mind...
One cannot harvest the wind without just blocking its path or altering its direction. Sure, attempts may appear fine in their intention...
Howbeit, amidst its invisible prowess; one could inadvertently conjure an unsurmountable insurrection.

~ Quote from a Friend ~

You will continue to suffer; if you have an emotional reaction to everything that is said to you. The power is sitting back and observing things with logic. "Your power is restraint..."
If words control you, that means everyone can control you. "Just breathe and allow things to pass!"

Dedicated to Amanda and reader.

CORY J. LAMARRE

Chains Broken

I may as well, say it's hell, this jail cell,
I pray and yell,
Guards and keys, it's hard to breathe, mental walls and Bars, no trees,
Our families pay, while we're away, await the day
To see our face
Our loved we miss, our only wish, to again Hug, Hold and Kiss.

ROB SURRIDGE JR.

An Evening Stroll With An Unlikely Toll

On a quiet afternoon a family of five walk openly that Sunday
Unknowing the tragic outcome to follow taking four of them away
An unfortunate time in this world to accept this loss, urging prayer and vigil at many a local steeple.
This terrible act of senseless ignorance instilled terror among Islamic people
Keeping stronger together for this young boy's surviving their dignity to reclaim.
To bring yet another target they take very personally we all look with shame
Grandmother, mother, father and daughter tragically lose their lives that day.
A nine year old critically injured outlives his family alone the only member to stay
Their people skeptical to walk in aftermath that brought many a tear
A shocking day in London for all a devastating memory of everlasting fear
The thoughtlessness this individual chose to live having this weight on his conscience
Most likely to have this haunting him in confinement to think with challenged self innocence.
Senseless rants, meaningless attacks, Mosques vandalized and trespassed.
This unjust mentality must vanish in our society today, enforced and fast.

MICHAEL RJ MARLEAC

Angel Eyes

From the ground, we built our-

selves up
Just as a flower once was a seed
We broke through the surface and fate brought you near
Though at times it seems far, my love for you is clear

We ride the waves of life, not knowing what lies ahead
Floating through space, a start burning so bright
You shared yourself so openly and selflessly
Your love is an umbrella shielding me

The soothing warmth of the sun blended with a summer's rain
Light from a fire gives comfort in a dark place
Dreaming of you I don't want to wake
Each day a reminder of my mistakes

Our minds & bodies merge, and two hearts become one
The thought of you pushes me, when I can no longer stand
With you I feel alive, courage to face the day
I shall fight for you my love, let none stand in our way

Long blonde hair rests upon my girl's shoulders
Without you my heart cannot be whole
Some love money, some love gold
But it's my Angel's Eyes that captivate my soul

Within Us All

Simmering, cursing, destructing regret.
I didn't mean to, I am sorry again and again.

I can't remove it, it's like a bad weed,
Emotions, erupting, jealousy and greed

Must find a way to remove it quick
This emotion is swift tick, tick, tick.

Like a volcano arching to erupt
The people we love have had enough

Cherish it, embrace it, respect it's power,
Assess it, process it, in a second, not an hour

If harnessed, restrained, calmness
Maintained, the anger within us all
May always remain

Bottomless Thoughts

10.) With every hardship keep your cool:
Stay true to the redpath or lose your shit
Like any fool & come right back to wrath

#9.) Religion can a weapon be; to tear
The world apart it's not in writing you will see true
Faith is in the heart
#8.) Secure yourself a safety net; and put away

Some cash; and don't hook up with anyone who'll leave
You with a rash.

#7.) Never go and tell a secret; what I say here is a fact;
Throw the cheese when you should keep it; and you'll only feed the rats.

#6.) Don't lend your money lend a hand; when your poor shirt is off the rack
And don't expect your closest friend: is ever going to pay you back

#5.) Be kind to everyone you meet: assholes are of no concern; while friendliness
Is often cheap: true respect is always earned

#4.) Be careful of the offered hand; that hides a shady shake;
Those first impressions in the can; are more than likely fake.

#3.) Never trust a word you hear; believe in your own eyes;
Words are blind and prone to fear; and everybody lies.

#2.) Do not give your heart away; or leave someone to keep it;
Ignorance will tear it apart; and toss it back not keep it.

#1.) Never fully trust another; goes bottomless thought
Number one; Oh, but if you did I wonder; what made you think
That was fun

Just a few bottomless thought's I came up with while being in the federal prison system.

ZAKARIA AMARA

Life Surfer's Anthem

I shall ride the waves of life;
The rough and the smooth,
till the very end.

I shall not despair when I crash,
nor be exuberant when I find myself upon the highest tide.

I shall ride through the storms,
through the vicious winds,
through the overwhelming darkness.

I shall ride through the sunny days,
Beneath the open sea-blue skies,
As the gentle breath of God renews my soul.

I shall ride the waves of life,
Always moving forward.
My destiny propels me to the finish line,
Who can stop the hands of time?

A Cure for Anxiety

Learn to hold your fear...
A thousand speared warriors are marching toward you;
Do not run,
Do not hide,
Do not fight,
Just sit on the side of the road and let them pass.

If uncertainty breeds anxiety,
And if nothing in life is certain,
Then why not just surrender your illusion of control?
A man scrambles on a beach

To keep the bad waves at bay,
And to keep the good waves coming.
Utterly frustrated and exhausted,
He finally sits down and surrenders:
Peace!

A never healing wound on a man's heal
Once turned him into the best of archers.
In every wound there is a gift, and in every gift there is a curse.
Tread carefully and learn to sit squarely at the centre of your fears,

For it is there that you shall find safety.

Her Voice

Her voice
Was like an ancient,
Wise,
And sad,
Musical instrument.
God only knows how long she'd traveled for,
And where she'd been.
Tears falling in the dark,
Unheard and unnoticed.
I know nothing about her,
Yet her voice still speaks to me,
And tells me things she cannot say.
I hear her pain,
But I also hear her strength.
I see her in my mind,
Somewhere far away,
On a green and blessed hill.
Taking everything that life has thrown her way,
And then turning it...
Into her sad and beautiful melody.

Mystery

To Gordon... forever.

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...

What if?

What if each day was a test?
What if each day was a chance?
What if you lived to be a hundred years old?
That's three hundred and sixty five thousand chances
Minus your baby time, of course
To count how many hearts you shattered
And how many hearts you pieced together again
To tally how many times you sided
With your demons against your better angels
And how many times you took the road less traveled
What if each day was a test?
What if each day was a chance?
To prove to us all...
Who you really really are

How to Cross a Sea

Tonight I sat on a lonely shore
In hopes of healing from the wounds of war
With somber eyes, I stared into the water
And saw my face upon it slowly gather
Along with stars and comets passing by,
I saw my tears swimming in the sky

I wondered how I'll ever cross this sea
That stands between my life and destiny
And keeps my loved ones ever far away;
I long for them every night and day

Then suddenly I heard a saintly voice
That told me I should instantly rejoice
And gather up my courage and my strength
And cross the sea regardless of its length
Upon a raft made up of solid layers
Constructed by sincere and sacred prayers
Sent up towards the heavens in the night
When creatures of the day are out of sight
When lovers of the One achieve ascension
While lovers of the many find dissension

Indeed, every prayer is a seed
That you must nurture and must feed
Until it grows and reaches for the skys
And all its fruits are witnessed by the eyes
Indeed my friend, all of this is true
Yet sadly those who practice it are few!

Afterwards
"For 20 years I've been praying to God for a need that he has yet to grant, and yet I have not given up on asking" - Imam Al Ajali



By JOEY TOUTSAINT



SHIRT DESIGNED BY REGULAR CELL COUNT ARTIST JEREMY HALL FOR DEADTIME COLLECTIONS

Outreach & Support Schedule

Currently, as places are opening up slowly, we are also starting to do some one-on-one visits and limited capacity programs at a small number of provincial and federal institutions. Please keep an eye out for posters or call us at: **1-866-224-9978 for up-to-date information about when and where we are coming in.**

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 voice-mail greetings. We are still available Mon - Fri 9am - 5pm EST (to reach a staff member or find out their schedule, please dial **1-866-224-9978** followed by the extension):

Amina Mohamed ext 236
Women's Community Program Coordinator
Arpa Azmila ext 235
Harm Reduction Manager

Aniqa Mazumder ext 222
Office Manager
Arpa Azmila ext 235
Harm Reduction Program Manager
Cherisa Shivcharran ext 233
Provincial Community Development Coordinator
Chris McNab ext 230
Federal In-Reach Community Development Coordinator
Claudia Medina ext 227
Program Manager
Eveline Allen ext 238
Regional Prison In-Reach Coordinator
Janet Rowe ext 225
Executive Director
Olivia Gemma ext 231
Provincial HepC Program

Coordinator
TBA
Federal In-Reach Community Development Coordinator
Sena Hussain ext 228
Communications & Resource Dev Coordinator
Jennifer Porter ext 223
Harm Reduction Program Coordinator
Tanya Yerashotis
Harm Reduction Community Care Coordinator
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You can also still reach us by mail at: PASAN, 526 Richmond St E, Toronto, ON M5A 1R3
We will also be closed for the holidays from Dec 24th - Jan 4th, 2021

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.

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

CONTACT NUMBERS

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

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 Mon - Thurs, 9am - 5pm EST, which is when we can read and reply to mail we receive from inside, and answer calls. Currently, we are wearing masks, asking people to fill out COVID screening forms and social distancing to help limit the potential spread of the virus, and are offering services to our clients in office 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!

NEW 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**

NEW CELL COUNT PEER LIAISONS

Cell Count is looking for peer liaisons who are currently incarcerated to be a representative for Cell Count inside. You would be responsible for gathering subscribers, letting us know when subscribers have moved, encouraging people to submit their work, helping with evaluations, and answering general questions. Call Sena if you're interested! 1-866-224-9978x228



CELL COUNT DEADLINE!

JANUARY 17TH, 2022

Adele the dog says "Please get your next submission in soon - woof!" The theme of issue #95 is: Surviving Inside.

Share your stories and art with this theme in mind or about any other topic! If you need someone to bounce ideas off of, call Sena at 1-866-224-9978 ext 228 from Mon

- Thurs, 10am - 5pm EST.

