

# CELL COUNT



YOUR PRISON HEALTH RESOURCE SINCE 1995

FREE FOR PRISONERS, EX-PRISONERS & THEIR FAMILIES

THE SOLIDARITY ISSUE - #89



DEADTIME . COLLECTIONS . VOL . 003

Illustration by Jeremy Hall

## To the Powers that Be

By Mark Zammit & Cary Taylor

I hope this letter finds its way to people who wish to help or at the very least, truly care about justice.

The Provincial Jailing system is nothing less than a warehouse of flesh. There is a little to zero of anything that allows us what at some times may simply be classified as basic human rights. Guilty or innocent, if you are housed in any of the Provincial Jails for anything, you may as well get comfortable, unless you wish to plea your way out and beg for a Federal sentence. The health care, mental health care and dentistry is nothing short of a joke. Here are some

rather disgusting examples:

1. If your eyesight is failing or just simply worsening by age, an inmate "must" have a minimum of \$300 in their jail account before they can ask for an eye test or glasses. If not, they can order \$4.07 glasses from Dollarama off canteen. Truth be told, if someone's eyes are failing and they use cheap and wrongly prescribed glasses, it does more harm than good. Now, I am sure I speak for more than 50% of inmates when I say most of us do not have access to \$300, so must we suffer by default? Hardly fair.

2. If an inmate needs dental care, the provincial jail protocols are very blunt in saying "pull or fill". An inmate may need a root canal, a small cap or bridge or to have a molar simply

built back up, but the system will not help with those matters. They will simply rip them from an inmate's mouth with no consideration of what a toothless smile could do to an ex-con's self-esteem or even their chances of employment.

God forbid an inmate needs full or partial dentures. If that is the case, then said inmate must have no less than \$1000 in their jail account. Now if \$300 is unattainable, what about \$1000? Pure, unadulterated ridiculousness.

3. If you are like me and have a 28-year-old knee replacement, a bad limp and one leg shorter than the other, you must have no less than \$600 in your account just to book an orthopedist appointment. How on God's green

earth is that fair or logical?

The provincial health care system should be deemed "health scare" because in my opinion they do not care.

Moving on. Our present government (provincial), our judges and so many others think that once a convict is securely locked away, they will be counselled, treated, sent to programs, educated and rehabilitated. Allow me to tell you that this is 110% NOT the case.

A general day in a provincial bucket, not locked up in cells due to short staffing issues, renders little to no rehabilitation, education or programming. 99% of the days are spent inside, revolve around card games like bridge,

Cont'd on page 9

INSIDE THE SOLIDARITY ISSUE

2 BULLETIN BOARD

3 HEALTH & HARM REDUCTION

4 - 5 NEWS ON THE BLOCK

6 - 9 WRITINGS ON THE WALL

10 GENERAL INFO

11 - 12 FROM INSIDE

13 - 15 ART

16 RESOURCES & ABOUT PASAN



## Outreach & Support Schedule

If you want to see a worker or attend a program put in a request to the Volunteer Coordinator, the Social Work Dept, or call us toll-free at 1-866-224-9978

### Ontario Provincial institutions:

**CECC:** monthly visits, phone to request 1-1 visit, sign up sheet for workshops

**CNCC:** Phone to request 1-1 visit, sign up sheet for workshops

**HWDC & Maplehurst:** Groups/1on1: Call PASAN

**TEDC & TSDC:** Groups/1on1: Call for a program on your unit or a 1on1 educational

### Ontario Provincial & Federal institutions for women:

**VCW & GVI:** Call PASAN [no regular programming]

### Ontario Federal institutions for men:

We try to visit each prison at least 3 times a year. We visit: Bath, Beaver Creek, Collins Bay, Joyceville, Millhaven, Pittsburgh & Warkworth. We see people individually or in group settings and talk about health, harm reduction and other topics you might request. If you wish to know more or are living with HIV/HCV, please contact us to find out when we will be at your facility.

### 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

**Inmate Ink:** "Help us bring Hope to a prisoner one letter at a time. Offers memberships from \$20 - \$40. Your completed ad will be published on our website for anyone in the general public to view and contact you directly. For an application or more info, please contact Tasha Brown at: P.O. Box 53222 Marborough CRO, Calgary AB. T2A 7L9 or www.InmateInk.ca"

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!

We're especially looking for submissions from women-identified folks! 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 - in the meantime, check out Concrete Blossoms on page 5.

### WHEN SUBSCRIBING TO CELL COUNT

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

### NEXT CELL COUNT DEADLINE

We are realizing that setting a deadline date is difficult because sometimes it takes a long time for Cell Count to get to our readers, and then people who would like to submit don't have enough time to write/draw their submissions. We are going to try something new: We will create a new issue once we receive enough submissions to make one. So just write/draw your submission and send it in! If it doesn't make it in the next issue, it will be prioritized for the issue after.

### OBITUARY SECTION

With this section, we hope to give you an outlet to express your grief so you don't have to experience it alone. You can send in an obituary about someone you may have lost in prison or on the outside. We will start with a limit of 125 words per obituary and expand based on your feedback.

### BRING PASAN TO YOUR GROUP

Are you a PEC/APEC worker or part of a Prisoner run group? PASAN regularly visits and holds workshops at prisons, if you would like to request us to come and be a part of your work give us a call at 1-866-224-9978. It is a free call from any phone and we would love to hear from you!

### CONTACT NUMBERS

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

### CELL COUNT FEEDBACK

Many of our subscribers ask us if there's a way they can donate money to Cell Count, and since we want the newspaper to remain free for people inside, we are so grateful for the offers, but we don't think you should have to pay to get it. A way you can help us out though is by giving us your feedback about Cell Count!

Cell Count is partially funded by the Public

Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), and part of receiving this funding involves evaluating the effectiveness of Cell Count. If you could take a minute after reading this issue to let us know:

- 1) How did you hear about Cell Count?
- 2) Why did you subscribe to Cell Count?
- 3) Is Cell Count an important resource for you and if so, why? If not, why?
- 4) In what ways has reading Cell Count affected you? Mentally? Emotionally? Please elaborate.
- 5) If you have submitted work to Cell Count, what has that meant to you?

You can call or write to us with answers to these questions, which we will then forward to PHAC! You can ask to remain anonymous as well. Thank you! We really appreciate your help with this :)

### ABOLITION CONVERGENCE 2020

May 4-6, 2020 - Toronto (aka Toronto, Canada) Territories of the Wendat, Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee // Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation Treaty Territory // Dish With One Spoon Treaty Territory

The organizing committee for the 2020 Abolition Convergence invites you to dream about decolonizing and abolition futures with us! The 2-day meet up will include workshops, art, presentation, skillshares, and much more. Participants will include artists, activists, academics, and people with direct experience with the carceral system from all across the world. This convergence is an inclusive space for anyone who wishes to participate, regardless of race, gender, background or sexual orientation. We prioritize submissions from formerly and currently incarcerated people. We welcome written submissions, recorded audio, video conferencing, and art. Possible topics include: alternatives to prison; political organizing on the inside; art and poetry as a way to heal from violence. **The deadline for people inside is January 15th, 2019, with the absolute last day of February 1st, 2019.** If you're interested in submitting a proposal for a presentation, artwork, panel discussion, or for an opportunity to sell items/artwork to vendors at the convergence, please send us a 300 word (flexible) proposal that includes your contact information, information about yourself and your idea, and what you think you might need in order to participate in the convergence. If you have questions please contact us at: c/o OPIRG Toronto 563 Spadina Crescent, room 101, North Borden Bldg, Toronto, ON M5S 2J7 In solidarity, The Abolition 2020 Collective

**CSC'S NEW PRISON NEEDLE EXCHANGE PROGRAM (PNEP)**

We want to hear from you! After refusing for more than 20 years, the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) announced last year the introduction of its "prison needle exchange program" or PNEP in federal prisons. This is the result of an ongoing court case by the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, PASAN and others. The PNEP began in Summer 2018 at two prisons: Grand Valley Institution for Women in Kitchener, Ontario and Atlantic Institution in Renou, New Brunswick. Beginning in January 2019, CSC has said it will start phasing in PNEP across the federal prison system. The Legal Network and PASAN are continuing with our legal case to make sure all prisoners who need it can access the PNEP, and we want to hear from you. If you are in a prison with a PNEP, we are interested in learning about your observations and experiences of the PNEP: \* Are people using the program? \* Do you think the program works? \* Are there any problems for those who wish to participate? If you are able to share your thoughts with us, please contact: Zachary Grant or Aanya Wood at PASAN (toll free: 1-866-224-9978) or Sandra Chu at the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network at 416-595-1666 ext. 232. Both PASAN and the Legal Network accept collect calls from prisoners.

**WE HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW THE PHONES ARE INSIDE!**

1. What affects does the prison phone system have on your mental health/finances?
2. What barriers have you had in accessing phones in your institution?
3. Are you aware of Bell's "Let's Talk" campaign? If not: Bell, which has a monopoly on the phone systems in prison, has a campaign around mental health, where they invite people to discuss mental health, thoughts on this?

### 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 - 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday 1:00-2:00 every month - for everyone.
- 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 86th 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.

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## SHUNNED BY HOSPITALS AND GIVEN SUB-STANDARD TREATMENT, PRISONERS NEED BETTER HEALTH CARE: GOVERNMENT REPORT

By Tom Blackwell - National Post

They arrive in the throes of a mental-health crisis, typically accompanied by two jail guards.

And quite often, those Ontario inmates are refused a bed by outside hospitals, either because of stigma or a mistaken belief they'll get the help they need behind bars, an internal government report indicates.

The surprising phenomenon is just one example of the sub-standard health care prisoners in the province receive, despite suffering from sky-high rates of physical and mental ailments, says the document, obtained under freedom of information legislation.

As Ontario's Conservative government proposes a \$36-million cut to the overall corrections budget, the review by a panel of outside experts urges spending millions more to bring about "profound" changes in inmate health care.

Doing so would lessen the strain that sick prisoners impose on the outside medical and criminal-justice systems, and take advantage of a "unique opportunity" to treat marginalized members of society, says the panel.

"In Ontario, we seem to be reaching a tipping point," says the 57-page document. "We can further reduce the burden on our already stretched hospital capacity by providing proper care in custody ... (and) avoid costly future interactions with police, courts and the correctional system."

The report's specific, detailed recommendations were censored out before the government released it to the John Howard Society of Ontario. But unredacted parts laud decisions in Alberta and other provinces to put jail health care under health ministries, rather than corrections departments.

Though the review was commissioned by the previous Liberal government, the current administration is talking to members of the expert group about the issue, said Marion Ringuette, press secretary to Solicitor General Sylvia Jones. The minister recently visited the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health to that end, she said.

"We are working on a correctional health care strategy, in consultation with the (Health Ministry) and other health system partners that will

improve the quality of care within correctional institutions and bring corrections in line with the broader health care system in Ontario," Ringuette said.

Still, it seems unlikely the Conservatives will make the kind of cash commitment recommended by the report. It suggests at least a 40-per-cent hike in the system's current \$62-million budget for inmate health care is needed to make real change.

Yet spending estimates just issued by the government forecast a \$36-million cut in overall operating expenses for correctional services, part of the four-per-cent government-wide reduction promised by the Tories to tackle a ballooning deficit.

Safiyah Husein, a John Howard policy analyst, argued that improving the health of inmates — one of the sickest segments of society — would be good for the whole province.

"This can really create a more efficient health care system," she said.

Ontario jails handle 35,000 different inmates a year, a number that has shrunk by almost 20,000 since 2006. Most are on remand, waiting for court appearances, while only 28 per cent serve actual sentences of less than two years. Offenders handed longer terms do the time in federal prisons.

The report notes that various human-rights decisions, inquests, reviews and ombudsman's reports have previously raised concerns about jail health care.

Inmates are up to five times more likely than the general population to have serious psychiatric problems, have 20 times the rate of HIV, and close to 100 times the incidence of Hepatitis C.

But the province's 25 jails tend to provide a minimal level of care, responding to health crises and emergencies with little follow-up or prevention, says the committee. In the first six days after getting out of jail, inmates are 58 times more likely than Ontarians overall to end up in a psychiatric facility.

Individual corrections health workers are dedicated, but tend to be under-staffed and isolated from the broader health-care system, it said.

The committee says it's "not unusual" for hospitals to refuse to admit or to quickly discharge those mentally ill inmates who show up with their guards, partly because they're convinced the jail will look after them.

But, the report says, "the reality is that correctional facilities are not

designed, staffed or equipped to provide a full continuum of health care services."

Compounding the problem, said the document, some hospitals refuse to share health records when they discharge inmates, believing jail health workers are "correctional" staff and shouldn't see the private information.

### MUST WE DIE TO GET CARE?

By Mark Zammit

Michael Tomkiw, unfortunately, at this time is incarcerated at one of Ontario's infamous and dishonourable Provincial remand centers, and it is with great respect and loyalty that I write this article for my friend and fellow old school convict, who at this time is forced to live in pain with an infection and now because of lack of treatment, a hematoma for 5 months and counting.

Mike had a simple and routine hernia surgery in May of 2019. The surgery went well, and was considered a success. He was returned to the jail to await his sentencing and to heal, as well as to recuperate. This is when a routine and basic surgery turns bad and a human being is treated like an animal in a cage with no compassion and/or professionals.

The surgeon's orders were simple, blunt and point blank. Jail healthcare staff were to change his dressings and clean his wound no less than once a day, watch and record the wound for infection and bleeding while the stitches dissolved. Simple, right? Apparently not.

Five plus months later his wound was bleeding and seeping pus regularly. His boxer shorts held the proof, soiled with blood and pus. Now, in 1991, I broke 90 percent of the bones on the right side of my body. I endured 25 or more hours of life-threatening surgery, was stapled shut with over 175 staples, complete with knee, elbow and jaw replacements, and I was most definitely not still bleeding after 5 months. Truth be told, my wounds were healed and sealed, staples removed by that mark. So why was Mike still bleeding? Hmm...

Dozens of request forms, grievances and inmate statements were filled out properly, politely and by proper protocol over the months after his surgery. Every single one went ignored and unanswered. Over and over again, Mike showed staff his blood and pus stained boxers a minimum of twice a day and was belittled by nursing staff with responses such

as "It's not my job", "That's it, grow up", and "Ask the next shift, I'm too busy", just to name a few.

Eventually, line staff on his range stepped up and directed him to a more professional nurse. She gasped at the condition of his wound and sent him directly to emergency. They took one look at the wound and stated out loud so that the guards could hear—as well as in writing—"This man needs to see the original surgeon at once".

Once again, weeks passed with Mike in constant pain. No doctor, no nurse, no dressing changes, no pain or antibiotic meds and not a drop of human compassion. Mike at one point said to a nurse on staff, "Do I have to get an infection and die to get some help?", and she so unprofessionally answered, "If you so desire". Now, to my readers I ask: Where is the care in healthcare? Why do men and women take jobs in the healthcare field when they simply and obviously do not care?

Or are Mike's pain, life and discomfort simply unimportant because he has a criminal record?

No matter how they twist it or what anyone tries to say to defend it, it is simply and pathetically wrong, unprofessional, degrading and life-threatening. If the healthcare in this or any other facility wish to step up to the plate and change, then it is Management's job to revamp, fire, re-hire or at the very least acknowledge the lack of care in their healthcare department.

But it gets even worse!

Time moves on, but Mike's pain still remains the same. But finally, he gets a pass for the doctor—not for the surgeon like was ordered, but for another jailhouse doctor.

Once again, he is escorted down to healthcare, bloody boxers in one hand and a three-week-old filthy blood- and pus-stained dressing in the other, and his wound still bleeding and oozing pus. Now I am not a doctor, but I also am not simple. This doctor (who has now been subpoenaed to court) tells Mike, and I quote, "It is only the dissolving stitches pushing their way out of the wound". Wow! Two questions, readers. 1) What dissolving stitches take over 5 months to dissolve? 2) IF the stitches are dissolving, what exactly is pushing their way out? Mike states that the emergency doctor told him there is most likely an internal infection festering and he needs to see the surgeon. At that, the jail's doctor says, "They are wrong. I am

right. You are fine, now stop whining and get the fuck out of my office." Thankfully, a guard was posted outside the door and heard the exchange. Once again, Mike left healthcare untreated with no wound wash and no new dressing.

Finally, Mike's lawyers had had enough. A judge's order was processed, sent and handed down to the facility for Mike's immediate treatment by an outside doctor. Once again, this was ignored and forgotten. Now! Dare I say, I am not a lawyer, but I am a practicing human rights advocate and activist, and if you or I were to ignore a judge's order, a criminal charge of

obstruction of justice would surely follow. But I suppose that this facility can allow this man to suffer and get sick without consequence.

About three weeks later, Mike was escorted to an outside doctor and—lo and behold!—Mike was told of a furious internal infection festering beneath the wound. Not only that, after an ultrasound, he was told that he now had a hematoma. He was prescribed a strong antibiotic, daily gauze changes and washes, but soon thereafter the jail enforced a five-and-a-half day short staff lockdown where Mike saw NO clean bandage changes or wound washes. Seven days later, Mike was escorted to healthcare, where he was told that the wound was even more infected and an even stronger antibiotic needed to be ordered.

During all of this unnecessary chaos and malpractice, Mike's lawyers subpoenaed the facility's healthcare staff, doctor and Mike's medical files, but the files magically disappeared.

This facility is run like a travelling carnival. No class, no care and absolutely no compassion or professionalism. An infection and surgery, no matter the type, can kill a person. But when a man reaches out for help, provides proof and follows protocol, the doctor and his staff should work in a professional matter and disburse the proper healthcare needed.

If this story does not show a perfect example of malpractice and lack of human compassion, then I don't know what does. Mike is not even convicted or sentenced, and this system's healthcare had already tried to administer a death sentence. It's time to stand solid and proud and fight for ourselves because no one else will.

### HARM REDUCTION MEANS THAT

Everyone is deserving of health, connection and well-being SO...

1. We remove our judgement - work to minimize harmful effects of actions rather than simply ignore or condemn them. Remember our medicines are all different and what works for one does not work for all.

2. We are complex, multi-faceted people that will not share the same goals- or have the same needs - the best expert is the self. Our healing is unique to our experience and who we are, it cannot be done without our whole selves involved.

3. We focus on what's possible and not on what's out of our control. That means what's possible in my situation, environment, relationships, etc.

4. We acknowledge that there are systemic and institutional factors that take away choice and cause harm in peoples lives, relationships, communities. We work to bring choice and self direction back into focus.

5. All things are connected, we work from their intersections- a whole person approach to a whole person problem.

6. The who, what, why, where, when is important- the best results come when the people who are impacted are involved in the solution. With listening and consultation, we find the right directions.

7. We believe that there is a better, more compassionate, kind and effective way to practice justice in our communities. Our current system punishes and isolates, harm reduction finds common ground and restores relationships.

## TOUCH DOESN'T KILL

TOUCHING FENTANYL CANNOT CAUSE AN OVERDOSE



#FENTANYLFACTSNOTFEAR

CENTRAL ARKANSAS HARM REDUCTION PROJECT  
MATT ADAMS FOUNDATION

## HOW TO FEEL YOUR FEELINGS:

A THING THAT SOUNDS OBVIOUS BUT TOTALLY ISN'T.

1. AN UNPLEASANT FEELING ARISES.
2. YOUR MIND LAUNCHES INTO WHATEVER INNER STORY ACCOMPANIES THIS FEELING

"I'M UNLOVABLE... I'M A LOSER... I RESENT MY FACE" (JUST FOR EXAMPLE)

### STOP! YOU ARE THINKING YOUR FEELINGS.

3. REDIRECT your MIND AWAY FROM THESE THOUGHTS & INTO THE SENSATIONS in your BODY. MENTALLY NAME THEM (My chest is TIGHT etc.)
4. BREATHE INTO the FEELING/SENSATION & ALLOW IT. (RY, SHAKE, etc. (if you're not, like, in Target.)
5. YOUR MIND WILL REALLY WANT TO GO BACK INTO THOUGHT-STORY-MODE. When THIS HAPPENS, REDIRECT your AWARENESS BACK INTO YOUR BODY.
6. TAKE DEEP BREATHS. KEEP FEELING INTO your BODY. Let the FEELING EXIST and TRUST that IT WILL LEAVE. OBSERVE IT CHANGING. WATCH IT Move. NOTICE that YOU HAVE SURVIVED.

EMILY MCDONNELL @EMILYINLIFE



### HALF OF CANADA'S PRISONERS WERE ABUSED AS CHILDREN, MC-MASTER STUDY SUGGESTS

By Samantha Craggs, CBC

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

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

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

"That's an alarmingly high number."

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

- Fiona Kouyoumdjian and Lucie Pivnick, both McMaster.

- Susan Bondy of the University of Toronto.

- Carolyn Ziegler of Toronto's St. Michael's Hospital.

- Ruth Elwood Martin of the University of British Columbia.

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

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

"Regardless of where you stand politically, I think everyone can agree that prison is not a healthy place for people, and that it's a symptom of multiple other things that have gone wrong."

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

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

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

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

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

"If we had more resources at the preventative level, before people got in conflict with the law, that would be really amazing," she said.

"If we prevented it, we would just save so much money in the criminal justice system. And I don't think we're there yet."

For her part, Bodkin has done some clinical training with men during and after prison. Some have "really expansive trauma histories," including severe abuse as children, she said.

"We suspected it was high, but there wasn't good research out there that led to a national perspective in Canada."

As for what constitutes abuse, Bodkin and her team used a World Health Organization definition, which means attendance at a residential school wasn't considered, although that research would be useful too,

Bodkin said.

At any given time, 41,000 people are incarcerated in Canada, and a disproportionate number are Indigenous.

### ON INMATE VOTING DAY, PRISONERS PLAN LEGAL CASE OVER 2018 ONTARIO VOTE

By Julianne Hazlewood, CBC News

Seven women in maximum security at Grand Valley Institution in Kitchener, Ont. did not vote in the 2018 provincial election because of an "administrative error" at the prison, according to Correctional Service Canada (CSC).

The prison staff member who was supposed to hand out registration forms and special ballots failed to do so in time, CSC told CBC News.

Inmates with Canadian citizenship and who are over age 18 have the right to vote in federal, provincial and some municipal elections.

A Supreme Court decision in 2002 ensures offenders have the right to vote under Section Three of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Prison apologized

After the women in maximum security were not able to vote, the Elizabeth Fry Society started receiving calls from them.

Jessica Hutchison, who works for the inmate advocacy group in Waterloo region, was one of the people who responded to the messages.

"The women in maximum security are literally the most segregated and most vulnerable women in the prison ... they are dependent on the staff there," said Hutchison.

"I just find it disconcerting that communication and processes were not in place in the months leading up to the election."

Next came an apology. Staff at the prison admitted their mistake to the women.

"[They] explained the error to the seven inmates and apologized for the error," said a statement from the correctional service.

Despite the prison's attempt to make amends, six of the women moved forward with legal action.

According to their lawyer Christopher Fleury, no claim has been filed yet but he expects to do so by the end of the year.

Fleury believes the case is the first of its kind since the court decision 17 years ago.

"As far as I'm aware, there hasn't been a case [of inmates] being denied the right to vote."

Correctional service responds

CBC requested an interview with the warden at Grand Valley Institution and the liaison officer, who would have overseen the 2018 voting, but the request was denied.

Correctional Service Canada said in a statement, "Grand Valley Institution has taken extra steps to ensure that the elections processes and deadline at the federal and provincial level are communicated to staff responsible for overseeing voting at the institution, as well as each inmate."

All offenders in all security levels have been provided a briefing on voting in the federal election."

A spokesperson for Elections Ontario also said it's confident the prison has identified the problem and is hopeful "the issue will not be repeated in future elections."

It added "we fulfilled our mandate

of supplying special ballot application forms to all penal institutions in the province."

Voting day for inmates

It's unclear how many Canadian inmates will vote Wednesday but in the 2015 federal election, 44,296 inmates were eligible to vote and 20,673 cast a valid ballot, according to Elections Canada. That is a voter turnout of 46.6 percent, while the overall national voter turnout was 68.5 per cent.

Inmates have to select one of four options on where their vote will be counted:

- The residence where they were living before they were incarcerated.
- The residence of a partner or dependant who they would have lived with if not incarcerated.
- The location of their most recent arrest.
- The court address where the inmate was convicted and sentenced.

"[Inmates] have to choose where they're going to vote and fill out the registration forms accordingly. Then they're going to get a special ballot and they have to write in the name of a candidate," said Réjean Grenier, a regional media adviser with Elections Canada.

Special ballots are always scheduled before the federal election voting date, and the results are supposed to be counted in Ottawa at least five days before the election, according to Elections Canada. Unlike normal ballots, inmates have to indicate in writing the name of the candidate they would like to vote for.

Elections Canada will train a staff member at the correctional facility to handle voting day. That person is given a booklet showing all the candidates in every federal riding, and inmate voters will select a name from the appropriate riding list.

Jessica Hutchison takes Grand Valley Institution at its word and has faith voting will run smoothly there today.

As for other institutions, Hutchison thinks voting violations in prisons could be a much wider issue — particularly for maximum security inmates.

"I wouldn't be surprised to hear if there were some other institutions across Canada where this takes place," said Hutchison.

### PRISONERS SAY THEY WERE DENIED THEIR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO VOTE

By El Jones, Halifax Examiner

On Monday, Canadians voted in the federal election. Voting is a right for all Canadians, and this includes people who are incarcerated. Despite being able to vote, prisoners report that they experienced barriers to casting their ballot.

Prisoners in the Atlantic Institution, a federal men's maximum security facility in Renous, New Brunswick allege that they were prevented from voting. They say that while some prisoners were able to vote, other prisoners were informed that due to their range being partially locked down (where prisoners are confined to their cells), they could not have access.

Corrections Canada has not responded to a request for comment.

Many Canadians are not aware that all prisoners have the right to vote. The *Sauvé* decision in 2002

established that prisoners could not be excluded from voting. After that decision, Elections Canada provided prisoners access to the vote, but the legislation that prevented incarcerated electors from voting was not actually removed until Bill C-76 was passed in 2018.

Matthew McKenna, a spokesperson for Elections Canada, confirmed in an interview with the Halifax Examiner that there are no restrictions on voting for prisoners. Prisoners cannot be prevented from voting for security reasons, nor because of confinement, lockdown, or any other status.

"Every Canadian has the right to vote except for the Chief Electoral Officer," McKenna told the Examiner.

However, having the right to vote and having access to the vote are two very different things. Prisoners in the Atlantic Institution are not the first or only prisoners to report being prevented from voting.

Prisoners rely upon correctional staff to facilitate their vote, and if they are prevented from voting, they are faced with complaining to the staff who are responsible for their freedom. They fear retaliation from staff if they attempt to exercise their rights when they are barred from voting.

How exactly do prisoners vote anyway?

McKenna explains that all incarcerated people vote on the same day. Historically, that day was the Friday before Thanksgiving, but Elections Canada staff discovered problems with administering the vote on that day. Elections Canada staff co-ordinate with the staff at correctional facilities to facilitate the vote. Because voting day for prisoners took place before the long weekend, staff were often taking the day off, which led to problems with access. Another problem, McKenna says, is that once the vote has been taken they use courier services to get the ballots back to Ottawa. Since the courier services don't work over the long weekend, this made collecting the vote more difficult.

This year, following a recommendation to parliament to change the voting day, voting for prisoners was moved to 12 days before the election.

Incarcerated people already face barriers to voting. Many people may not have access to information about how and when to vote. Prisoners may not know when the voting date is, or even be aware that they are able to vote. They may expect to vote on election night. Many prisoners are not aware that it is their right to vote, or that they can complain if they are prevented from doing so. Prisoners may not have access to media about the election, and they cannot go online to find out information or to register.

Along with these problems, McKenna says there are unique challenges for voting in the prisoner population.

Because prisoners, particularly those in federal prisons, may be serving time away from their communities, incarcerated people vote by special ballot. Rather than getting a ballot with the names of candidates, prisoners write in the name of the candidate they want to vote for. Because there are people from many different electoral districts in each institution, this process can be more complicated.

Prisoners are given four different options, in descending order of preference, for choosing where they vote: residence before incarceration; the residence of a spouse, relative, or dependent; the place where they were arrested; or the place where they attended court. For prisoners who were homeless before incarceration, for example, they may not have a former residence.

Staff are given a big book of all the candidates, and when someone goes to vote, the book is opened to the district the person is voting in so that they can see the list of candidates. Incarcerated people are registered at the same time as they vote.

All of this means that voting for prisoners is already challenging. Even when prisoners are not being prevented by the facility from voting, the difficulties of providing the vote mean that, practically, prisoners who can vote may not be participating.

McKenna told the Examiner that he was aware of another facility where Elections Canada staff faced difficulties in administering the vote. He says that in that case, they were told that there was a lockdown. Elections Canada staff waited at the facility and eventually were able to get the vote.

Senator Kim Pate, a member of the Senate human rights committee, expressed her extreme concern about reports of the prisoner vote being suppressed:

I hope that Elections Canada is doing a thorough investigation and will sanction the Correctional Service of Canada if prisoners have been prevented from voting. Prisoner enfranchisement was hard won not by just one, but two court cases that had to be fought all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. Concerns are raised every election. Correctional interference with the right to vote is a serious problem and I trust that it will be remedied.

Given the high rates of Indigenous and Black incarceration in Canada, denial of the prisoner vote also worryingly suppresses the vote of racialized populations. Indigenous people make up 5% of the population in Canada, yet 2016-2017 numbers show they represent 27% of the incarcerated population. Indigenous women make up nearly 40% of all federal facilities. Black people at 3% of the population are 8.6% of the federal prison population, a number that increased 90% between 2003 and 2013. These communities are already marginalized, and are most affected by and vulnerable to laws and policies passed by governments. It is troubling that they are being denied a say in the outcome of elections.

Correctional facilities frequently place "safety and security" above the rights of prisoners. In many cases, the security of the institution trumps other considerations: for example, prisoners can be locked down for long periods, denied access to visitors, prevented from attending programming, denied access to medication or health care, searched, involuntarily transferred, and placed into solitary confinement. However, security does not override the right to vote, and it is illegal to prevent prisoners from voting.

Prisoners are punished for not following the law; surely the institutions that house them should be held to similar standards.



It should be worrying to all Canadians when basic rights are denied to anybody. We go to the ballot box, we are told, to participate in the most important act of upholding our democracy. Preventing prisoners from exercising their right undermines the very thing we are told we are voting for: a free, fair, and democratic Canada.

#### WE NEED TO STOP INCARCERATING PREGNANT PEOPLE

**By Martha Paynter, Halifax Examiner**

How many infant deaths, stillbirths and untreated miscarriages will incarcerated people have to experience before we recognize prison is an unacceptable place for pregnant people and end the practice entirely?

Yesterday, the BBC reported a baby was born and died at Bronzefield, Europe's largest prison for women, located in Ashford, England. Exactly a month ago we learned Diana Sanchez gave birth alone in a Denver, Colorado jail cell after labouring unattended for six hours.

I began working as an advocate and researcher in reproductive justice for incarcerated women in 2012, when I first heard about Julie Bilotta, a young woman who gave birth alone to a baby boy at the Ottawa Carleton Detention Centre. I had already started discussions with the local jail about providing clearance to volunteer doulas when we learned Julie's baby, Gionni Garlow, had died.

In the seven years since, there have been steady reports of unconscionable harm of incarcerated pregnant people in Canada, the United States, and in Australia, in countries so wealthy it is unfathomable how such neglect could be possible.

In response to the death at Bronzefield, some supporters of prisoners say "this is a powerful reminder of the need for us to all ensure that pregnant and postnatal women have access to high-quality physical and mental healthcare in custody."

But have we not yet learned that it is impossible to provide such assurances? Prisons are inherently isolated and isolating. It is not just that prisoners are so dehumanized through the criminal justice system that their cries for help are not answered, it's that even when they are, clinical care is simply not close enough, not comprehensive enough, and not enough at all to ensure their wellbeing.

In relation to these horrifying cases, people often refer to how the vast majority of women are incarcerated for non-violent offences, as if that is the strongest argument for why their ill-treatment is unfair.

Or people note, correctly, that most incarcerated people in Canada are in pretrial custody, and currently presumed innocent despite being inside.

Or they cite the rates of sexual and physical trauma incarcerated women have endured, usually starting as children.

These are all true facts and I too refer to them daily. But these are not why we should not incarcerate pregnant people. Women prisoners are not deserving of humanity for somehow skirting our expectations of criminality. We should not incarcerate pregnant people because a just society does not deliberately harm and abuse pregnant people and their future children. Prisoners' human

rights to security of the person, to protection from torture, and to freedom from gender discrimination do not stop at the prison gates, yet we have ample evidence that these rights cannot be upheld in prison contexts.

Almost 30 years ago, the Corrections Service of Canada published *Creating Choices*, a remarkably progressive document that recognized the corrections system's failures and called for significant change. This change has not come.

Instead, we have seen women's imprisonment multiply. Ever-increasing populations of incarcerated women and transgender individuals clearly correlates with an ever-increasing risk of harm to reproductive wellbeing.

We have to stop thinking we are going to achieve adequate health care for incarcerated pregnant people.

This is especially true in Canada. Our country is geographically enormous. Our prisons are rural and dispersed. Incarcerated women are tiny populations, often located in a small separate unit within large men's jails. Prison health services are understaffed and overwhelmed by the needs of populations with incomparably complex health histories including trauma, substance use disorders, mental illness, infectious disease and chronic pain. In this context adequate pregnancy care is impossible. The registered nurse who was disciplined for failing to call for help for Julie Bilotta did not know the signs of labour and was reportedly caring for 200 prisoners by herself.

We need to stop incarcerating pregnant people, period.

To turn the tide, police can recognize the potential harm of placing pregnant people in their custody and choose to release them on their own recognisance. Reasonable bail can be used in lieu of pretrial custody. Defence counsel must raise issues of maternal health and family caregiving responsibilities in bail hearings and sentencing.

A recent analysis of published sentencing decisions in Canada in 2016 found not one referred to the Best Interests of the Child or the Bangkok Rules, United Nation rules for the treatment of women prisoners, which recommend imprisonment of women as a last resort.

Health care providers in prisons and everywhere need to recognize reproductive health concerns are universal, ageless and occur in any setting- the emergency department, the oncology ward, and psychiatry, for instance. We must all be comfortable with basics and aware of our limitations, and place patient comfort, safety and rights above all.

#### BARRING INMATES ACCESS TO CLEAN NEEDLES UNCONSTITUTIONAL, ACTIVISTS TO ARGUE

**By Colin Perkel, The Canadian Press**

Barring drug-using federal prisoners from access to clean syringes puts them at risk for serious diseases and violates their rights, an Ontario court is set to hear.

For two days starting Monday, prison and other activists are expected to make the case that Ottawa's rules and policies around needles in prisons are unconstitutional.

"The absolute prohibition on sterile injection equipment is arbitrary, overbroad and grossly disproportionate," the applicants say in their filings in Superior Court.

"Prisoners are particularly vulnerable to infringement of their (constitutional) rights because the government has total control over every aspect of their daily lives, including their access to health care."

The case was initially launched in 2012 by Steven Simons, who was imprisoned from 1998 to 2010. Court documents show Simons became infected with the hepatitis C virus and was potentially exposed to HIV, the virus that can lead to AIDS, while behind bars. He says another prisoner used his injection materials, and that they had no access to sterile equipment.

The problem, the applicants say, is that prison authorities regard syringes as contraband, making inmates found with them subject to punishment. The tough approach comes despite mounting evidence that in-prison access to sterile needles helps prevent the spread of serious illnesses.

"The sharing of drug-injection equipment poses a high risk for transmitting blood-borne infections," the applicants state.

"The prevalence of HIV and (hepatitis C) among Canadian prisoners, including those in federal penitentiaries, is significantly higher than among the population as a whole."

Activists note that more than 90 per cent of prisoners are eventually released. Like Simons, some will have become infected with serious illnesses from sharing needles and syringes behind bars.

"Correctional authorities' refusal to ensure access to sterile injection equipment inside prisons not only jeopardizes the health and lives of prisoners, it also contributes to a public health problem beyond prisons."

Statistics suggest Indigenous and female inmates are most at risk, making Ottawa's approach discriminatory, the applicants say.

In recognition of the problem, the federal government recently began a pilot needle-exchange program in which inmates are given access to sterile equipment. However, the pilot has only been implemented in half a dozen of Canada's 43 federal prisons, according to court filings.

One intervener in the case, the B.C. Civil Liberties Association, says the response is not enough given that widespread drug use is an acknowledged fact of prison life in Canada.

"As the vast majority of prisoners have no access to safe injection equipment, those who use drugs have no choice but to inject them in unsafe ways," the association says in its factum.

Correctional Service of Canada has long tried to keep drugs out of prisons, but recognizes that contraband inevitably finds its way to inmates.

Prison guards oppose making needles available to inmates, citing the risk of accidental or intentional injury. However, their union says in-prison safe injection sites, in which inmates get access to needles for use in a supervised setting with nursing staff, are preferential to needle-exchange programs that offer injection kits for in-cell use.

The court is expected to hear that other countries offer needle and syringe programs with positive health benefits. It's also expected to hear from the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal

Network about the drug situation in prisons.

#### PAMELA ANDERSON CALLS ON CANADIAN PRISONS TO GO VEGAN AS COST-CUTTING MEASURE

**By The Canadian Press**

Actress Pamela Anderson is asking Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to take meat and milk off prison menus to help the planet and the health of federal inmates – and save taxpayers some cash, to boot.

The former Baywatch star makes the pitch in a letter to Trudeau part of her work with the animal-rights group PETA, writing that she hopes Canada embraces what she calls a "simple but effective way to reduce costs and improve lives."

She wants Canada's federal penitentiaries to serve vegan meals of beans, rice, lentils, pasta, vegetables and fruits, which she bills as sources of all the nutrients one would need, "at a fraction of the cost of meats and cheeses," since most vegan ingredients don't need to be refrigerated.

In its most recent departmental plan, Correctional Service Canada says it provides nutrition "sufficient in quality and quantity" and in line with the Canada Food guide.

Anderson says the newly retooled food guide put less of an emphasis on eating meat and dairy, instead suggesting more plant-based proteins in Canadians' diets.

Her letter also points out a UN climate panel report calling for a dietary shift to help combat climate change – another interest for the actress who backed the Greens and their leader Elizabeth May in the just-concluded federal election.

Four years ago, Anderson travelled to Arizona to serve vegetarian meals to the approximately 8,000 inmates at the Maricopa County Jail alongside Joe Arpaio, the controversial local sheriff who made the decision.

Arpaio estimated the move would save US\$100,000 a year. Anderson says the jail reduced costs by \$273,000 when it switched to vegetarian meals, although reported savings vary widely.

She says the savings could be even higher for Canada's almost 40,000 inmates – a number that includes inmates in provincial jails, which fall outside federal jurisdiction.

A report in May from Statistics Canada said that in the fiscal year 2017-18, there were on average 24,657 adult inmates in provincial or territorial jails, while the federal portion was 14,129.

#### WHY A FEDERAL BILL ABOUT TO TAKE EFFECT WON'T BE THE END OF SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IN CANADA

**By Anita Grace, Toronto Star**

As of Dec. 1, inmates in Canada's federal prisons can no longer be legally held in solitary confinement. Sort of.

Bill C-83, an amendment to the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, received royal assent in June and will be fully enforced by Nov. 30.

The act eliminates administrative and disciplinary segregation, also known as solitary confinement. According to Ralph Goodale, the former minister of public safety who lost his seat in the recent election, this amounts to a "fundamental" change in the way prisons deal with inmates who are considered a risk to others or themselves.

According to Independent Sen. Kim Pate, however, it's simply an exercise in "rebranding."

Why rebranding? Segregation units are being replaced by "structured intervention units" (SIUs) that even Goodale admitted look essentially the same as segregation cells (10-by-six-foot rooms with concrete walls and solid metal doors).

However, Goodale pointed out that SIUs will offer inmates four hours outside of their cells, opportunities for "meaningful human contact," more programming and more health-care interventions

Critics question the value of the proposed changes, which the Parliamentary Budget Office estimates will have an annual operating cost of \$58 million. Will the new SIU model go far enough to address the harms associated with solitary confinement? How different will it be if inmates are still isolated for 20 hours a day in much the same environment? 'Onerous and depriving'

The practice of solitary confinement is described by Ivan Zinger, the Correctional Investigator of Canada, as "the most onerous and depriving experience that the state can legitimately administer in Canada."

Indeed, segregation has long been criticized by advocates of prisoners' rights, who insist it causes severe mental distress, including paranoia and psychosis. It also increases risks of self-harm and suicide.

In 2010, 24-year-old Edward Snowshoe committed suicide after spending 162 days in segregation.

In 2007, 19-year-old Ashley Smith strangled herself in her segregation cell. She had been held in segregation units for more than 1,000 days.

An inquest into her death said prisoners should not be segregated, and those with mental health issues should be in community-based mental-health facilities, not prison.

If solitary confinement is so bad for inmates, why is it used? Correctional Service Canada provides three reasons for which inmates can be placed in segregation: if they jeopardize the security of the institution and/or safety of other individuals; if it's necessary for an investigation that could lead to a criminal or serious disciplinary charge; or, if the inmate's own safety is at risk.

However, given the serious harms associated with segregation, are these reasons sufficient? Are adequate safeguards in place to ensure that the application of rules relating to segregation complies with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

Prisoners have some Charter rights. Although prisoners lose certain rights when they receive criminal convictions, such as freedom of mobility, they do not lose all their rights.

Section 7 of the Charter requires that an individual is only deprived of their right to life, liberty and security of person according to principles of fundamental justice. In recent legal battles, the courts had to determine if solitary confinement restricts people's freedoms in a way that complies with such principles.

In December 2017, the Ontario Superior Court ruled that Canada's segregation laws violate Section 7 rights due to the increased risk of

cont'd on page 6



## NEWS ON THE BLOCK CONTINUED

self-harm and suicide, and to the associated psychological and physical harms.

In January 2018, the B.C. Supreme Court also ruled segregation is unconstitutional because it discriminates against those who experience mental illness and disability and against Indigenous prisoners.

It's important to recognize that in these decisions, the courts did not rule that holding individuals in isolation cells is unconstitutional, but they focused instead on certain aspects of solitary confinement, such as lack of oversight and the use of segregation with specific populations.

One year to change laws

Nonetheless, given that aspects of the legislation were deemed unconstitutional, the federal government had one year to change the laws in order to bring them into compliance.

So in June 2018, the Liberal government tabled Bill C-83. Because this legislation ostensibly eliminates segregation, Goodale claimed that the B.C. and Ontario court findings, which were ruling on the "old system" of segregation, are not "equally applicable" to the new SIU system.

In other words, the constitutionality of the SIU model will be the subject of future debates, and possibly future legal challenges.

Practices such as solitary confinement, or the use of "structured intervention units," raise questions about how to respond to those who have committed criminal offences.

The vast majority of people who are held in prison will eventually be released back to the community. It is in the best interest of public safety to ensure that during their incarceration, they receive adequate and meaningful opportunities to address the factors that led to their offences, such as substance abuse or their own experiences of trauma and violence.

The newly developed SIUs are intended to provide increased intervention and programming in order to address the specific risks and needs of individuals. If Correctional Service Canada is able to deliver this, Bill C-83 could indeed signal a fundamental change in how the most challenging inmates are dealt with.

But if adequate, rehabilitative programming is not put in place to support the new units, this will indeed be nothing more than a multi-million-dollar exercise in rebranding a harmful, unconstitutional practice.

**'COMMUNICATION IS A RIGHT': REPORT URGES FREE PHONE CALLS FOR INMATES AT OTTAWA JAIL**

By Blair Crawford, Ottawa Citizen

Expensive and inadequate phone service in Ontario's jails is isolating inmates from their families, cutting them off from desperately needed health and social services, and can even lead to miscarriages of justice, according to a report issued this week by a group of inmate advocates that say jailhouse calls should be free.

Phones at the Ottawa jail are operated by Bell Canada under contract to the Ministry of the Solicitor General and only allow inmates to make collect calls to a landline. They can't be used to call cellphones or automated switchboards where there is no one who can answer and accept the charges.

Each collect call to an Ottawa number costs \$1 — still too expensive for some low-income families, said Souheil Benslimane, lead co-ordinator for the Jail Accountability and Information Line, a volunteer organization that fields complaints from inside the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre. Long distance charges to family members around Eastern Ontario or even further away, can be exorbitant, he said.

"Not allowing people to call directly, it's trying to isolate people. And the ministry states its goal is rehabilitation," Benslimane said. "If that's really the goal, then they should change it so you can call a cellphone. Communication is a right."

The report, entitled *Will You Accept the Charges?*, includes a copy of the phone bill for

a woman living in a Montreal retirement home who was shocked to receive a phone bill for \$6,079 in collect and long-distance charges for the three months this year that her son was an inmate at OCDC. The woman had been told by staff at the jail that each collect call would cost \$1. The bill includes \$837.72 for 36 collect long-distance calls over a six-day period in July. Some charges were as much as \$2.55 a minute and many 20-minute calls cost more than \$30 each. The son was eventually acquitted and released.

The report also cites the case of Cleve Geddes, a paranoid schizophrenic who was ordered into hospital by a judge in 2017 for a psychiatric assessment, but ended up at the OCDC because no hospital beds were open. Geddes's sister only owned a cellphone so he was unable to call her to say where he was. The family only learned he'd been in jail when they were called by the hospital and told he'd hanged himself in his cell. Changing the jail phone service was one of the recommendations from the inquest into his death.

"We hear about that quite frequently: People whose family doesn't even know they're in jail," said Sarah Speight, a PhD candidate at uOttawa and one of the report's authors.

The phone situation is especially difficult for Indigenous inmates since calls to services such as Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health and the Odawa Native Friendship Centre go to automated switchboards that can't accept collect calls, she said. The families of Inuit inmates often face enormous long distance costs for collect calls to the Arctic.

"People who need to call a hospital to find out how their parent is doing. People who are Indigenous and want to call Wabano of Odawa and can't call them because they have a switchboard. People who want to call Recovery Ottawa because they want to get on methadone. People who can't call their doctor when they're calling about a prescription. It's a challenge across the board," Speight said.

The contract between the Ministry and Bell expires in 2020, and the reports authors urge the province to replace its existing Offender Telephone Management System with one that allows free calling to any number. Free calling is available in several U.S. jurisdictions, including New York, San Francisco and Connecticut, the authors note.

"Clearly, the telephone system as it is right now is contributing to the isolation of people," Benslimane said. "If people are able to call their family, their support providers, their community services, then we know that there are improved outcomes for their integration in their community. We know that our communities are safer if we allow people to maintain that connection with the outside."

Two-thirds of the inmates at OCDC are awaiting trial and have not been convicted of any crime. Many inmates can't afford lawyers and are representing themselves in court, Benslimane said. They're unable to phone witnesses or experts needed for their defence.

"That leads to the sorts of miscarriages of justice that happen routinely and the telephone situation plays a role in that," he said.

The province says improvements are coming, but gave few details.

"The ministry is working towards modernizing the inmate telephone system in order to allow inmates to call cellular phones and international numbers," Andrew Morrison, a spokesman for the Ministry of the Solicitor General, said in an email.

**WE HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW THE PHONES ARE INSIDE!**

1. What affects does the prison phone system have on your mental health/finances?
2. What barriers have you had in accessing phones in your institution?
3. Are you aware of Bell's "Let's Talk" campaign? If not: Bell, which has a monopoly on the phone systems in prison, has a campaign around mental health, where they invite people to discuss mental health, thoughts on this?

## The Arabian Night: The Golden Nut



By Zakaria Amara

clinkclinkclinkclinkDUFF!

I woke up startled and looked ahead to see a blurry vision of a man resembling Officer Hadfield standing at my cell door.

"Good morning Amara. Sorry to wake you up this early, but the Warden wants to see you in the yard"

Still alarmed and half-asleep, I looked towards my digital clock, which indicated that it was 4:00 A.M.

"Am I in trouble?" I asked nervously

"Not that I'm aware of"

"Alright, just give me a minute please"

"Take your time"

I put on my clothes, brushed my teeth, and then walked out with him.

"When are you getting out of here Amara?" he asked as we walked through the empty corridors.

"I don't know. When are you getting out of here? Serving Life on the installment plan?" I asked teasingly, as the anxious adult in me went to sleep and my inner child was back in charge.

He chuckled and asked, "What would you do if you ever got out?"

"I would go back to the desert, marry 22 wives, and live off camel meat and goat milk for the rest of my life. Every year I would father 11 boys and 11 girls; each batch of kids would form a soccer team that would train together until they're good enough to compete in the Olympics.

Then..."

"Seriously?" He interjected, barely containing his laughter.

"I don't know! I don't even know what I'll do tomorrow"

"Fair enough." Sometimes you have to verbalize people's cartoonish stereotype to make them realize just how ridiculous they really are. We finally approached the door that led to the yard; Mrs. Collins was standing there waiting for us.

"Good morning Mr. Amara!" she said with an orchestrated smile that struggled to maintain its form.

"Good morning. What's this about?" I asked.

"Follow me" she said as she opened the door and I followed her out to the yard. What I saw next was beyond incredible. Imagine a prison yard as big as a football field, illuminated by floodlights, with a soaring mountain at its centre, made up entirely of millions and millions of chestnuts.

"Are you okay Mr. Amara?" she asked as I stood there in sheer awe of what I saw before me.

"What is this?" I whispered with wonder.

"At the head of every millennium, a portal opens up in the upper stratosphere and rains down millions of chestnuts on a single location. A golden nut is hidden in one of these chestnuts; whoever has it in their possession can never die." She said, sounding more like a witch

than a warden.

"Cool. So why did you call me?"

"Because these chestnuts won't crack open unless the one doing the cracking is of Middle Eastern descent."

"Why am I not surprised? I thought to myself.

"So you want me to crack nuts!" I said with a big grin.

"Not everything is a joke, Mr. Amara."

"Sorry, I just can't help myself sometimes. So what will I get out of this? I mean, this could potentially take a very long time."

"Freedom," she whispered, as if casting a spell.

The choice before me was obvious, so I accepted.

"Excellent" she said as she handed me a nutcracker and wished me good luck.

I then walked towards the bottom of the mountain where a stool was waiting for me. I can't lie. I still thought that this entire exercise was hilarious. I imagined the headline: "Zakaria Amara, the man who cracked a billion nuts to earn his freedom" as I sat down and began cracking away.

But after a while it wasn't so funny anymore. My mood grew sombre as memories of my past along with hopes of my future flashed before me. I went on labouring for a long time, barely taking any breaks to eat or sleep. Seasons changed; rain, wind, snow and scorching heat. Days turned into weeks, weeks into months, months into years, and years into nothing. All the while, the night endured as it always does behind these walls.

I could sense myself growing old as my hair and beard grew long and grey. My hands began to tremble and my body ached with pain. God only knows how much time had passed.

Everything has an end, even time itself.

One day, I finally collapsed to the ground and laid there knowing that I was only a few breaths away from the world to come. As I laid there, a nightingale landed near my head and stood by looking at me as if waiting to hear my final words.

I have always wondered what a man thinks about in his final moments. I was not afraid of God, for I have always longed to meet him. I felt comforted by the fact that my family knew that I loved them all with everything that I had; that I had given them the greatest gift that one human being could give to another in this life. But there was one person that I had let down in ways that I could not mend. In my final moments, I wished that I could tell my first love that I have never stopped loving her, even now, as my heart was beating for the last time. And with that wish, I uttered the words that every Muslim is taught to say before leaving this world:

There is no god but God and Muhammad was His slave and messenger  
What does a teardrop mean at the end of a man's life?... I felt my soul depart as the nightingale fluttered its tiny wings and flew towards the heavens singing its sacred song.



## The Arabian Night: Operation Camel Jockey



By Zakaria Amara

Previously on *The Arab Night* series: *The Golden Nut*

8:15 P.M. – TOSA Headquarters, North Virginia  
 “Colonel, we have positive identification of our target, but there is a problem, Sir.” A drone operator spoke into his headset as he stared at his computer screen.

“What’s the problem Sargent?” the colonel’s voice crackled through.

“Sir, the target appears to be riding a camel!”

“A camel?!”

“Yes, Sir.”

“They have camels in Canadian prisons?! Are you sure about this Sargent?”

“Yes, Sir; the target has been circling the empty prison yard on a camel for the last 30 minutes.”

“Hmm...”

“Colonel?”

“Proceed with the strike Sargent.”

“But Sir, nothing in the WWDYWWFY protocols allows us to target animals; killing the camel might spark an international incident.”

“Fair enough. Let me consult with the chain of command and get back to you. In the meantime, if the target separates himself from the camel, strike him immediately.”

“Yes Sir! Copy!”

8:15 P.M. – Millhaven Prison Yard

“The world looks so different when you’re sitting on top of a camel”, I thought to myself as I meditatively swayed from side to side, staring into the distance, feeling utterly intoxicated by the sheer beauty of our universe.

Coming out at night and seeing my camel waiting for me was my favorite part of the day. Once I mounted him, he would suddenly rise and I would feel as if I’m being catapulted up to the heavens, leaving behind all my worries and troubles, feeling the heavy yoke of prison slide off me like water. The experience was mystical.

His name was Hump... Donald Hump.

I got him a few months ago after winning a lawsuit against the government for illegally placing me in solitary confinement for years. I’ve always been a reasonable man, so when the judge ruled in my favour and asked me what I wanted for compensation, I stood up, and without hesitation, reasonably asked for either a trillion dollars or a camel. Reasonable men always provide options.

The judge immediately applauded me for my reasonableness and turned towards the Crown for his response, but before he could fully turn, the Crown had already stood up and almost tripped over his words as he quickly said: “We’ll Give Him The Camel Your Honour! The Camel! He Can Have The Camel!”

Everyone was happy with this outcome, except, of course, for Corrections Canada, which had to airlift a camel from the deserts of Arabia and house it in a maximum-security prison. In the days before the arrival of Donald, I was so ecstatic that I could hardly sleep. (Even when I did catch a nap, all I dreamt about was camels). Finally, one day as I was pacing in my cell with anxious anticipation, ... clinkclinkclinkclinkDUFF!

My cell door opened as I simultaneously heard these heavenly words get announced over the P.A. system: “Mr Amara. Head to the yard, please. Your camel is here. Your camel is here.”

I quickly put on my clothes and practically ran to the yard.

When I first locked eyes with Donald, I felt an instant connection. I could sense that he felt relieved to see a fellow desert dweller. Standing beside Donald was a camel expert wearing a Safari hat. He was there to teach me how to take care of him, but to both my surprise and his, I needed no training! Everything came to me naturally! The expert mused that I was genetically predisposed to handling camels, and with sincere sadness, said that I missed my calling in life.

At first, I wanted to call my camel Al Jamal Al Kabeer, “The Great Camel”, but I feared that such a name would hamper his assimilation into Canadian society. I didn’t want him to be one of those guys who always had to introduce himself by saying, “My name is Al Jamal Al Kabeer, but you can call me Al”, so I just called him “Donald”. The “Hump” part came later, when I told my friend Herb what his name was, and he instantly blurted out: “Donald Hump!”. When the other prisoners standing nearby heard this, they all began chanting, “Donald Hump! Donald Hump!”

Instantly, Donald became the center of our attention, the number one reason why we went outside. In fact, some men who never used to come out before began doing so when Donald arrived. One thing that struck me was the instant calming effect that being with Donald had on them. They all seemed to turn into innocent children when he was around.

Donald had many skills and talents, the most surprising of which was his ability to run towards a football and kick it. Sometimes he would kick it so far and high, that it would go beyond the fence. Soon after discovering this talent, prisoners began to place bets on where the ball would land. This betting game usually started with the customary: “Donald Hump! Donald Hump!”

Which would soon be followed by,

“Kick that ball! Kick that ball!”

Upon hearing this, Donald’s ears would perk up and he would begin to strut with pride towards the center of the yard where the ball was waiting for him.

Whenever a new prisoner arrived, Donald had a funny habit of groaning with surprise upon seeing them; he would then quickly walk over to the nearest fence and look up at the razor wire,

cont’d on page 9

## My Transfer to GVI



By Dawna Brown

Hi my dear friends! It’s me, Dawna, with a new story to tell you all about my new residence at GVI-W in Kitchener, Ontario! I was very worried and downright scared about how people here would look at me. To my surprise, they were quite nice and friendly. I was also shocked with the way that security & CSC staff treated me upon my arrival at GVI. I was very pleased!!!

I got a pass to go and meet with my Parole officer on the second day of my arrival. It was just a meet and greet and she was really nice and intelligent. She told me we would meet again and I should start to work with the chapel programs here at GVI-W.

My correctional plan is complete, and I have had a hard time dealing with my anger and other issues. Those are the issues I struggle with every day. I have been diagnosed with a few psychological issues such as paranoid personality, borderline personality, gender identity disorder and attention deficit disorder (ADD). I strongly disagree with CSC about these diagnoses and really wish I could redo a psychological assessment for the Parole Board of Canada so I can have a better outcome at my hearing.

The first few weeks went well until I had

a couple of rough rides. I have been here at GVI, and I have almost lost my shit a few times over a full array of issues relating to the way people treated me or other people in general. I will not put up with straight-up bullshit. I will speak my mind and I do not care what they think anymore! I am a force to be reckoned with, and I will stand up for those who cannot fight for themselves or cannot speak for themselves. People make me cry and it really hurts my soul that anyone could be so mean to someone that is very kind and nice to everyone she meets. The way that people treat each other in this world is so discouraging, but I keep on my journey in this life.

I have been working with Health Care to get me prepared for my big day on the operation table. I’m scared to death, but I want to have the proper lady parts and get rid of all signs that I was a male, EVER!!! Then, there will be a lot of cleaning up and taking care of my new lady part. The hormone treatment has been going pretty good. I feel great transitioning to a lady, because I’ve always felt like one! Take care and I will write soon in the next issue.

xoxo :)

## IN RESPONSE TO ISSUE 88 ARTICLE “DEAR PASAN” BY ‘MICHAEL’

Submitted to Cell Count by John Mark Lee Jr.

*I provide to you the legal case that won that sex change surgery is essential health care. There should be no problem. You need to include the article so everyone knows. Also, legal aid must now pay for Habeas Corpus. Find enclosed the news article. It makes C.S.C. pay for sex change surgery & hormone treatment because they're essential health services. It also speaks to gender-affirming clothing.*

Vancouver Sun, Feb 7, 2003

By Janice Tibbetts

OTTAWA – Canada’s federal prisons will be forced to allow sex-change surgery for transsexual inmates as a result of a court ruling that concluded a blanket ban is discriminatory.

“If the medical opinion is that sex reassignment surgery is an essential service for a particular inmate, it follows that it should be paid for by Correctional Services Canada, as would any other essential medical service,” wrote Justice Carolyn Layden-Stevenson of the Federal Court of Canada.

Corrections Canada will revise its policy because of the decision, said spokeswoman Michele Pilon-Santilli.

But she warned that sex-change operations will not be available for all transsexual inmates.

The decision upholds a 2001 decision from the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal in the case of convicted murderer Synthia Kavanagh.

The Tribunal said that it was discriminatory for prisons to have a blanket ban on sex-change operations but not on ‘non-essential’ services such as the removal of tattoos. The corrections and Conditional Release Act requires prisons to provide essential health care to inmates.

Kavanagh, a 41-year-old transsexual, alleged discrimination based on sex and disability after prison officials refused to allow her to undergo

a sex-change operation that had been pre-approved before she was imprisoned for the 1989 Toronto murder of her transvestite friend, Lisa (Leo) Black.

Kavanagh, who began life as Ricky Chaperon, began hormone therapy and lived as a woman as a teenager.

When she was convicted, she had been been [sic] conditionally approved for sex reassignment surgery.

She ended up paying the \$14,000 for her operation because of the prisons’ ban. After spending more than a decade in various men’s prisons, she was transferred more than two years ago to Joliette Institution, a medium-security women’s prison north of Montreal.

The ruling is expected to affect less than a dozen transsexuals in Canadian prisons.

In 2000, the most recent year for which statistics are available, 10 of the 2,500 inmates in federal penitentiaries were ‘pre-operative’ transsexuals, but not all of them wanted surgery.

Sex-change surgery is considered an essential service that is covered by Medicare in most provinces when a patient has been diagnosed with gender dysphoria, the medical term for people who believe they are the wrong sex.

It should be no different in Canadian prisons, said Justice Laden-Stevenson.

“The right of government to allocated resources as it sees fit is not unlimited,” said the judgement, released Thursday.

“A human rights tribunal enjoys a broad discretionary power to award remedies to redress a discriminatory practice.”

Pilon-Santilli said that Corrections Canada allowed the operations decades ago – often with sad results.

“There have been a lot of tragedies of people who went through it but just could not adjust,” said Pilon-Santilli.

Prisoners are permitted to dress as women and take hormone replacement drugs.



# Programs Needed for Black Prisoners **Double - Bunked**

By Michael G. Brown



By Frank Dorsey

*This original letter was addressed to Canadian Members of Parliament and the Senate. It has been edited into an article format.*

I would first like to start this letter by saying that I am a Black inmate at Warkworth Institution in Ontario. For the past four years I have been reading CD-767 (Commissioner's Directive - concerning "Ethnocultural Prisoners: Services and Interventions") and trying to work with Regional Ethnocultural Advisory Committees (REAC). I have run across different people who have been in charge, Donavon Blair, Mrs. D. Anthony and now Mrs. J. Edwards. In January 2019, I was part of a meeting with various committee chairs, CSC administrators and a program manager, to discuss ethno-cultural programming. I have been in a federal institution for 33 of the past 36 years of my incarceration. Myself, and Mr. Don Head (former commissioner of CSC), started the first multicultural group in the early 90's. It has come to my attention that over the past 10 years, the growing number of Black prisoners in Ontario has been on the rise, but there are no programs for Black prisoners in Ontario, Quebec or Nova Scotia. In the GTA, the violence with young Black men is out of control. The number of shootings and killings are turning into an epidemic. This violence will continue to happen unless you provide Black ethno-cultural programming at the penitentiary level.

The programs in place at the federal level do not consider the identities of ethno-cultural and in particular, Black prisoners. These programs in place have no bearing on the upbringing and the segregation of Black people in low-income and impoverished areas but most of all the reliance on anti-social activities and behaviours. In laymen terms there are young Black men and other ethno-cultural men that are dependent on the hustle. These young men are taken out of society for five-to-ten years and then they are put back in their previous neighbourhoods, where they must carry a gun to survive. The cycle will always continue because young kids, who were 8-to-10 years old at the time that these young men were incarcerated, take over the gangs when they become teenagers/young adults. In my opinion, if you don't start proper ethno-cultural programming in CSC, you are not protecting the community and the neighbourhoods where all this violence is taking place. The current system in place, REAC, has a volunteer advisory committee that reports back to the chair of REAC, Mrs. J. Edwards. Through the whole CD-767 they talk about programs that the

program manager and institutional head should provide. These programs are not happening at the institutional level. To take this a step further, the only funding that REAC provides to the institutions is for motivational speakers during Black History Month and Black history books. In addition, the previous REAC hired a group called AUDMAX, which provided apprenticeship programs and seminars that only lasted a couple of days - this is not a program. The current Chairperson of REAC has a contract with TABONO Institute that expires at the end of March 2019. They offer a resilience and mental toughness seminar with an Afrocentric approach. The problem is that REAC asked Mrs. D. Thomas and Nene Kwasi Kafele from TABONO, to ask the prisoners that showed up for the seminar, "what do you want your program to look like?" They also asked, "what should go into the program?" Excuse me your honourable members of the cabinet, but how can inmates prescribe their own treatment program? What REAC is doing is asking inmates to run the asylum. CD-767 is a waste of tax dollars, if the current funding does not provide these young Black men with proper facilitated programs similar to Indigenous programs, then REAC is failing the ethno-cultural prisoners in Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia. I believe that REAC is using smoke and mirrors to appear as if they are providing programming that is helping incarcerated young Black men. I would tell the Senators that these young, violent men whom are incarcerated, will be coming back to society soon. They will be angrier because the current system has failed them and has not provided them the proper programming that they should have had in the beginning. CSC thinks that the current program delivery is adequate for Black men in Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia. The programs that CSC currently runs have no substance to change the mindset of many Black prisoners.

Young Black men are dependent on the game, which consists of components like drug dealing, pimping, hustling, and gang life. This becomes an everyday part of their lifestyle. How can a program, not run by people from our community, persuade young Black men to put their guns down and not kill - it hasn't happened yet! This lifestyle mentioned above called "the game" is what I call an addictive personality disorder. This is a real disorder. How do I know this? Because I was that young man 33 years ago. The biggest problem is that you can't catch these men until they enter the system, and you can't persuade somebody to take a program if they

don't need to. The provincial system has minimal program opportunities, but at the federal level, programs can be provided. We need qualified doctors and ethno-cultural facilitators. Again, all you can do is possibly save the lives of future victims. CSC has a mandate to rehabilitate and reintegrate, so if you are sending these young Black men without proper programming back into society, then how are you protecting the community from future violence? The regional ethnocultural chairperson, Mrs. J. Edwards, told me at the January 2019 meeting, that REAC is just an advisory committee and all they do is advise her. She also said that this committee doesn't have to provide special programming for Black prisoners. Mrs. D. Anthony, the previous chair, told me that an ethno-cultural prisoner could be from Germany and be a neo-Nazi, and that they are bound under CD-767 to provide for all ethno-cultural prisoners including them; this is a travesty of equality. CD-767 discriminates against Black prisoners by not giving them treatment programs that fit their dynamic factors of ethnicity, the same opportunity that Indigenous prisoners get. CSC at the institutional level harasses and discriminates against groups like Think Twice who Mrs. Z. Brown oversees. They constantly cancel Think Twice from coming into the institution, where she brings kids to steer them away from the criminal lifestyle. This type of program makes kids think twice about getting involved in this type of behaviour. She also helps Black prisoners by talking to them, so they don't become recidivist and by trying to get treatment programs, employment or to help deal with their mental health issues.

In closing, these things that I am talking about are just my opinion, which is shared by other Black prisoners I've spoken with. I'm not a doctor, a psychologist or a psychiatrist, and I am not qualified to run any type of treatment program. These people that need to be hired must come from society. The major problem in the GTA is that police chiefs and politicians can't solve these problems. To solve these problems, you will need education and treatment to reduce the violence. This endless cycle of violence must stop, and this is where you, the honourable members of parliament, must step in and do something, or you could just throw this letter away. Do I need to remind you that young kids' lives matter too? Communities in the GTA just want to stop burying their young children from the senseless violence that is happening in their neighbourhoods. And they are tired of their children just becoming a statistic.

Here at the institution I'm in, it has just come down to a battle over double-bunking prisoners. This institution is a nice one and from what I can see has less stress and tension than Joyceville, where they double bunk. For the safety of the guards, the safety of the prisoners and to avoid unnecessary fire hazards, double-bunking was eliminated by a stay in court. But as far as I'm aware, it has given the system a foothold to attempt this inhumane practice over again. If we are to truly solve the overcrowding issue, then we should try to start awarding full parole before day parole first. We should run programs with better coordination so that prisoners on short sentences can actually be paroled day-to-day as they become eligible.

And truly, we should stop allowing self-serving crown attorneys and biased judges to convict innocent people and incarcerate those people for lengthy sentences. I know that double-bunking is financially beneficial to the institutions, but at what cost? Imagine how the average prisoner is feeling after his loss of freedom, the right to see his loved ones, dignity and more. Some are angry. Some are afraid or paranoid. Some are anxious and depressed and suffer from mental illnesses that go unseen. Diagnosed and undiagnosed, we are stressed to say the very least. Placing two prisoners in a vulnerable and volatile state can lead to injury, loss of life, extra charges or even repeating the original offence. They might even need to validate their need on funding and "programming".

For these reasons and from a mental health point of view, prisoners should not be placed together in such small confined cells. The argument can be raised that if two people cannot cohabitate in the same cell together, how can they go outside into society and not pose a threat? This argument is futile. In society, two human beings will never be forcibly confined under the same conditions to endure the same mental torture that they are subjected to on the inside of prison. If they were, it would be illegal unless this torture is implemented by Corrections Canada. If we want prisoners to heal, become better people, and reintegrate into society then we cannot subject them to inhumane torture tactics - and placing them in a situation where they are forced to fail. Two grown adults who are imprisoned - or not - should not be forced to live together inside of small prison cells like animals.

Double-bunking prisoners deprives them of privacy and dignity. How do we create mature, hard-working, law-abiding citizens by depriving them of their basic dignity and subjecting them to the degrading act of using the toilet in front of others? How do we show people trust and confidence by leaving the privacy and safety of their loved ones open to the prying eyes of cell mates? The prisons are to secure the "offenders of society" and rehabilitate them, but why should the safety of their family members be compromised? Because of contact addresses, personal information, and photos can easily be stolen and shared with others? Again, the prisons are to secure the "offenders of society" and rehabilitate them but I say that idea fails when the prisons decide to double-bunk. They are not keeping our spouses, children and families safe by double-bunking. By double-bunking, the justice system will have failed its main purpose in keeping the public safe. For prisoners to correct themselves, they need dignity, support and safe living conditions. Thank you to the guards for doing the right thing and fighting against double-bunking. At least they care about the safety of those incarcerated in and outside of prison.



## GirlTalk

By Moka Dawkins

Hey y'all, and welcome back to another issue of Girl Talk. Before I begin, I just want to personally thank my invested readers who corresponded with me and opened their hearts and thought with me. I admire your bravery, respect and appreciate your trust. I love you all.

The topic of this cell count issue is on relationships and love. So, let's jump right into it.

Have you ever been in a relationship and felt undervalued in your supposed partner's life? When do you know when to say enough is enough? And how do you find the strength to pick up the last piece of your beat-up-heart and give it back to yourself?

These are some of the thoughts I currently have about my relationship with my boyfriend and funnily enough some of my readers who write to *Girl Talk* are going through similar yet different situations.

My boyfriend and I started off as friends and we were friends for a good while until one night he decided to confess that he was in love with me. At first, I was really scared because I loved our friendship and didn't want to do anything that would risk it.

I can't lie, I also had feelings for him and I was suppressing them because, again, I didn't want to ruin a good friendship. Also, this was new territory for me because in all my past relationships there was an attraction to one another from the beginning. I was never friends with someone first and then later involved in a romantic relationship with them. It was so weird for me, I would sit beside him and not know if I should hold his hand and cuddle up, or if I should sit there like how I always used to before.

Anyways, moving on. At first everything was great, I fell, so hard so fast. My man has this way of really making me feel like I'm the only girl in the world. Like, my man slapped up one guy and another time busted open this guys head with one punch just because these people said something bad about me behind my back.

When he got out of jail and I would call, he would pull over the car and switch from the driver's seat with whoever he was with just to talk to me. Or if he was in the shower and I would call, he would jump out with conditioner dripping out of his hair and get water all over the place just to hear my voice.

That's real love, right? I don't know anymore but it sure felt like it during those times.

My man and I have been together for 7 months, going on 8. Lately I've been feeling a major pull back from him and it's hurting me. When I tell him how I feel he just makes excuses or turns it on me, instead of listening to what I'm saying and working on solutions. Here's a recent example.

Lately, it's been hard for me to get a hold of him and when I do, I'm lucky if I get him to talk to me for a full 20 minutes. When I ask where he was and why he didn't answer my calls I get, "I was with my family" or "I went paintballing." I

told him I feel him pulling back and asked him straight up if he still wants this relationship. He says he does...

I told him it doesn't feel like he does and gave him suggestions. Like when he's out at the CNE or whatever, he could take pics or selfies with what's going on and send them to me so I could feel included in his day.

You want to know what he turned around and said? The nerve of this man, I tell you!! He said he doesn't take selfies, and to stop trying to mold him into something he is not!!

How am I trying to mold him? I am not asking him to take selfies post it all over social media and the internet. I am asking him to love me the way he says he does!

Ok you guys, so I start laying into him and reminding him of sacrifices I've made for him. And trust me there are many. And he again, with the same fucking nerve, goes and asks - what sacrifices am I or have I ever made for him? Just writing this makes me angry still, and sometimes I could just punch him right between the eyes. He gets me so mad.

Listen you girls and guys, my man is on the road and has been on the road for months now. I'm still in jail ok. I called my mom and lied and asked for money for my canteen, but a mother always knows so she called me out on it right away - LMAO! She told me she knows it's for the trapline, so I could talk to my boo. OMG! I couldn't even hold in my laughter. She was killing me on how she called me out so quickly LOL. I love you so much mommy.

Continuing my little rant. My mom being the best as always sent him \$100 for the line and an extra \$50 for him to put in my canteen. I told him to keep the whole \$150 for the line so we would be good for a minute.

Let me give you guys this understanding right now about my situation. I have been brushing my teeth with jail toothpaste and washing my body with jail body-wash just so I could talk to this man because I love him. I can't order nothing on canteen because I put the little I have into my relationship. And mind you this man is on the road.

The man, still jumping on the same nerve, goes on to say that the money was for me anyways. THE MONEY WAS FOR US!! If the money was for me, I would have my toothbrush and bodywash.

He's so unappreciative sometimes that it's disgusting.

Anyways, this is what I want to leave you guys with this issue. Love can only come in your life in two ways. A moment in time, or, a moment that lasts a lifetime. There is no in-between. What we must learn is how to only accept a moment in time for what it is - "a moment." Learn to not try to force that moment to be something it's not meant to be. 'Cause when we try to force it, we lose out on the appreciation of the experience of love and seem to only dwell on the hurt and pain.

Thank you for taking the time to chill with and read *Girl Talk*. If you have any advice, positive or negative, future topic ideas you would like to see, or even if you just wanna have a Girl talk, you can write to me addressed to: Girl Talk, 526 Richmond Street East, Toronto, Ontario, M5A 1R3.

Until next time. Stay Strong.

almighty first in order to see through this fog! I encourage myself along this path. I shall not fear. Well time is valuable to me and love is one of the greatest commandments. It covers your entire law. Well, I thought to reach out today to say to those incarcerated in Canada or in society: we are powerful beyond measure, and our fear is not darkness. It's our light, our strength. The tide we all bear is a tide despite being incarcerated. Despite our colour we are human beings, our power is limitless, our mind is not to be wasted. It is important to be cultivated with positivity. Connected to the world around us! We exist to be heard, loved. Supported and cared for, despite any judgements.

I'm a beautiful transgender without any secret agendas, who never accepted defeat. Still we rise, you may write me down in history with your bitter twisted lies. You may tread me in the very dirt. But still like dust we rise. Does my sassiness upset you? Why are you best with gloom?

Cause I walk like I've got oil wells pumping in my living room. Just like moons and like suns with the certainty of tides, just like hopes, springing high, still we rise. Did you want to see me broken? Bowed down and lowered eyes? Stressing, worrying, crying! With swollen eyes, does my haughtiness offend you. Don't you take it awful hard cause my beauty is deep within and outer appearance rings like gold mines! You may shoot me with your words, you may cut me with your eyes, you may kill me with your hatefulness but still we rise. My motivation from your girl Bree-Bree. International to all humankind.

I love you.

We still rise.

Sincerely,

Brandon J. Thomas (with words from Maya Angelou's Poem, *Still I rise*)

### DO DREAMS AFFECT REAL LIFE?

By Philippe Poisson

I am a dream fighter! Yes, you read that right. I fight in my sleep when having nightmares. I have bloodied my hands, feet, elbows, knees and face/head from hitting the walls in my sleep. I've even head-butted the wall so hard a few times that I have woken myself up from the impact, only to head-butt the wall again before I could stop myself, thus knocking myself out and right back into the nightmare I was in.

And, unfortunately, some of my exes have learned the hard way to not sleep in the same bed as me because of my violent sleep fighting (although I had warned each of them beforehand). I felt so bad after I awoke to my exes' bloodied faces/bruised bodies. Thanks to my unheeded forewarning before we had gone to bed together, I was forgiven, albeit reluctantly. Needless to say, my exes never slept in the same bed as me again. LOL!

And when I am not fighting in my sleep or sleeping peacefully, I am sleepwalking. The last time I became aware that I was sleepwalking was in the winter of 2017 when two police officers woke me up at the back of a Hull, Quebec, city bus at 1 AM. I was so embarrassed once I realized I was only dressed in my pajamas, (albeit with a winter coat that wasn't mine and I had never seen before that night) which consisted of a pair of boxer-briefs and a t-shirt. After about twenty minutes of using my limited French vocabulary to explain what had happened, I was finally believed and even given a ride home.

Although I didn't have any identification on me at the time, I found \$25 in the coat I had picked up somewhere and was able to buy myself a badly-needed pack of Pall-Malls and two 2-litre bottles of beer from the corner Shell gas station! And, luckily for me, my buddy was on shift then! I call that an overall win, despite an embarrassing one! Wouldn't you agree?

So... Yeah. I KNOW that dreams really can and do affect real life.

## Issues in Provincial

Zammit & Carey cont'd from cover

or bidwiz games such as dice or lootie, and the good old TV shows like 'The Price is Right' and 'Family Feud'. So, if you are one of the poor suckers that believe your tax dollars are being used to rehabilitate criminals, think again because most of us leave these places with nothing more than a better knowledge of 'how to commit crimes.'

Even more so, whether innocent, guilty, not criminally responsible or insane, a speedy trial in lower court takes no less than 18 months to get to. Speedy trial within 6 months used to be a right, but now it is 18 months minimum. God forbid an inmate needs to go to the high court, because that takes about 30-36 months. Now, if you or a loved one is innocent or deemed innocent, that is 1.5 to 3 years of life that can and will not ever be replaced. So many innocent folks get racked up on trumped up or fictitious charges and are offered nothing when proven innocent, even though families, jobs and homes have been lost.

To simply arrange a preliminary hearing, it takes 12 to 18 months. Regardless of the charges, be it murder or shoplifting food to feed your family, those are the numbers and those are the hurdles of our judicial and so called "justice" system. I sit here today with my colleagues and co-writer Cary. As you read this, do you feel all I have said here is fair? And would you call it Justice? If so, please explain it to over 10,000 convicts, some locked up for less than nothing.



Z. AMARA CONT'D FROM PAGE 7

look back at me, and then look back up at the wire again. You see, in his mind, Donald thought that the fence was there to prevent people from coming in, yet in they came each day. This absolutely baffled him!

Tonight was a good night.

It was time for me to pray, so I softly tapped Donald on his side and he gracefully knelt down as I dismounted him. While gently patting him on the head, I smiled as I watched him eat dates from my hand. I then walked over to a grassy patch and began to pray.

As I prostrated my face on the ground, I asked God to take care of my beautiful daughter and to forgive me for my shortcomings, especially the mess I left behind as a younger man.

The world can be a painful place to live in. It's only here, between the hands of my Maker, that I have ever felt most accepted, most loved. A serene feeling overcame me and my tears began to flow, as did my buried pain. Suddenly, my vision was filled with light that enveloped everything. Time seemed to pause and move swiftly all at once: I saw flowers of all kinds bursting forth in slow and fast motion; blue, yellow, and crimson red...

8:20 P.M. - TOSA Headquarters, North Virginia

"Colonel, the target has been hit."

"Is that animal still alive?"

"Uh, are you referring to the camel Sir?"

"Yes, Sargent."

"The camel is unharmed, Sir?"

"Good work! Fly the drone back to home base and prepare for debriefing."

"Yes, Sir. Copy."

### LETTER FROM BREE-BREE

Foremost, my name is Brandon J. Thomas. I'm a transgender who goes by Bree-Bree. I am incarcerated here at VSP and I would like to connect with Aanya! Today is foremostly vital. As I am able to correspond without any inconveniences, I'm just going to share a brief story about myself. There is no good, there is no bad, only circumstances and events. Life is full of uniqueness and diversity. Nothing is perfect. But all beautiful. Life is about

learning, growing, prospering, and moving forward. It is not about what we take with us, it's about what we leave behind us. As I go through transition therapy, I've lost the majority of my family. But they did leave me sweet memories. My joy to solely exist and to share it with someone. A friend one day! Supporting and caring. I'm a lifer who doesn't have a friend or someone to write to or assist me. Aid me, or for moral support within.

Through my incarceration, I just put the





## NEW telephone Legal Information Clinic



**Do you have legal questions about:**

- How to file certain reports or concerns?
- The role of the Ombudsman?

*Call us for specific info on what kind of legal issues we can cover!*

**Law students will be available to answer your questions on Tuesdays between 1:00pm - 4:00pm on these dates:**

January 7	February 4	March 3
January 14	February 11	March 10
January 21	February 18	March 17
January 28	February 25	March 24 & 31

**Call: 1-866-224-9978**

Note: This is a legal information service only. There will not be lawyers available who can take your case or represent you. The law students can only provide you with information about the topics listed above. [Students are bound by confidentiality and have signed confidentiality forms with PASAN]



### A NOTE FROM SENA

Hello Cell Count readers! I would like to take a moment to thank you for your patience for the time it has taken for you to receive this issue. As you know, it takes a lot of work to put this publication together, and my time has been a bit split between this and being part of the Federal Team.

As many of you may know, Zachary Grant and Aanya Wood have moved on from PASAN this past summer. That means that I was the only member of the Federal team for a couple months (with help from Claudia Medina and my placement student, Alannah Fricker) and played a big role in updating our funders on our progress as well as being involved in the recruitment and hiring process to fill the two spots on our team.

I have not been able to focus as much of my energy on Cell Count as I normally do, which is why I have not been as available to discuss it over the phone or through written correspondence with you. However, once our new Federal team members are fully trained, I will re-focus my energy back onto Cell Count again.

I know many of you miss Zachary and Aanya and that they both did really great and important work with many of you. I know, from my own conversations with them, that they very much miss you all as well. Working with you helped them both grow not only professionally, but also as human beings. They are both still deeply and passionately connected to prisoner justice and always will be. I also very much miss doing this work alongside them as well.

That being said, I am very excited for you to meet/talk/write with Nicole and Chris, our new Federal team members! I was personally involved in their hiring process, and I am very confident that they will pick up where Zachary and Aanya left off. I understand that some of you will need time to build trust with them, but I think you will be pleased with who we've chosen!

### WELCOME NICOLE ANGLIN TO PASAN!

I was a Harm Reduction Outreach Coordinator in the Durham Region and now I am a Federal In-Reach Community Development Coordinator at PASAN. I'm in this field because I have a passion for intersectionality and equity in all aspects of life. As a Federal In-Reach Community Development Coordinator, I hope

to work to strengthen the bridge between the various agencies that do prison work because I want to continue the work that is being done to advocate for prisoner health all over Canada. I am super excited to be working at PASAN because I understand how important the work is and I know that advocacy for people inside is not done enough.

Since I started, I have attended the health fairs at 9 of the federal institutions in Ontario, which was great because it not only allowed people to meet me and get to know me a little, but it also gave me the opportunity to really connect with people inside and ask you in what ways we can work together. In my spare time, I enjoy doing makeup, reading and learning to care for plants.

Take a moment to welcome Nicole to PASAN: 1-866-224-9978 ext 234

### WELCOME CHRIS McNAB TO PASAN!

Before joining PASAN, I worked for multiple support service agencies in the capacity of delivering health education, harm reduction, and life-skills training workshops. As a Federal In-Reach Community Development Coordinator at PASAN, I strive to break down barriers to the access of services. I am passionate about health and wellness and I strongly believe that a little empathy goes a long way when supporting people through day-to-day challenges.

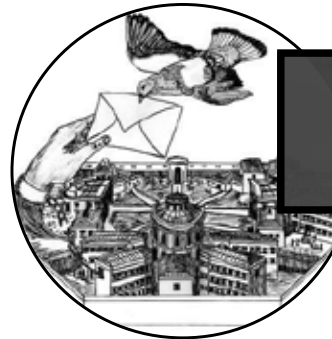
I am happy to be a part of the PASAN family, because I am looking forward to working with those of you reading this from inside federal institutions in Ontario. This work will include one-on-one sessions when we visit, phone and written correspondence support (this is available to all federal prisoners in Canada) and collaborating on various projects, workshops and groups that are meaningful, informative and useful to you. I've spent the last month at PASAN familiarizing myself with the amazing work that was done by my predecessors, Zach and Aanya, and I hope that I can build on their amazing work while also continuing to deliver the great service that PASAN is known for.

In my spare time, I am either off somewhere camping, watching the latest superhero movie, or ruining friendships at karaoke. I look forward to meeting you all at PASAN's next round of institution tours.

Take a moment to welcome Chris to PASAN: 1-866-224-9978 ext 230

## Write ON!

Supporting prisoners through correspondence



**INCARCERATED IN CANADA? NEED INFORMATION?**

**WRITE ON!** is an all-volunteer group whose goal is to help and support prisoners in Canada, through correspondence.

### WE CAN:

- Research general information you need, such as:
  - general legal information
  - info on prison rules and policies
  - info on resources, programs and services
  - and possibly other kinds of information you need.

### WE CANNOT:

- Give any kind of professional advice, legal or otherwise.
- be a pen-pal service (though we could refer you to one)
- promise to adequately respond to all requests for information.

### PALS

**PEERS ASSISTING & LENDING SUPPORT**



**PALS is a Peer Support Program that helps people who use substances.**

**If you or a loved one are going through the Provincial Prison system. We can help! Call 902-210-6004 for more information!**



### CONTACT US:

Write ON!  
Suite # 234  
110 Cumberland Street  
Toronto, On M5R 3V5





**ANONYMOUS****Wasted Youth**

A wasted youth and shattered dreams, Life is never what it seems. The time for change is drawing near. Don't be afraid; you have nothing to fear. "Life and Death, Golden Door." Sands of the hourglass from the ocean floor. Look in the mirror, and what do you see? A frightful sight, makes you want to flee. The eyes are sparkling; a phony smile. Look closer friend, you'll see the denial.

"A lonely existence in this cell I call home." No friends or family, I'm still all alone. Some turn to religion, but most lose hope. Neither one is wrong, it's hope how we cope. That is the reality that belongs to the day. As the night wears on, I dream away. I think of the stars and moon in the sky. Will I ever see them again before I die? Of women on beaches wearing, "Dental Floss." My dogs and horses, "Oh, what a loss."

Sooner or later from this nightmare I awake. Another day of, "My Life" for the system to take. The, "Shadow of a Man" from a boy I once knew. This isn't a story. Every word written is true. Two years after my death is when I'll be free. Two years too late! No chance to be me. I hide behind a smile, and eyes cold as steel. Believe me though, this isn't me. It isn't real. I'm alone and afraid with no one to care. Please open your heart, I've so much to share.

A passing glance is all you'll need to see a hateful man. Maybe there's a reason for this, "Imagine, if you can?" Working with a hand of cards that he never got to deal. Drawing to a bicycle flush; it's tough to catch the wheel. Playing against a bunch of tights, and aces, (four of a kind). Sitting through the long night hours, and future into the day. They took the joker out of the deck, as soon as I sat to play. I've blown my cache, and borrowed some; into debt I've gone. Still waiting on the ace to catch, the one I've never drawn.

Fighting for a fantasy that I long ago lost. A memory that faded, at such a great cost. A night on the beach holding hands as we walk. Sand sifting through our toes, a confidential talk. The sounds of the frogs and crickets in song. The moon's silhouette on our backs, "Oh, how I long." Morning light finds the birds leaving their trees. Butterflies on the flowers, a gently flowing breeze. The fresh smell of the grass, bent from the dew. Your soft lips on mine letting me know that it's true. I feel your breath as you whisper, so softly in my ear, Something so touching, to my eye comes a tear. This is just a fantasy, which I know I'll never share. The fear of your rejections, my heart in two would tear.

I went to visit him again today, not knowing if he'd let me in. From the door I saw him; his legs propped up; on his knees was placed his chin. They've told me that he talks to no one and gets worse with each passing day. Destructive beyond belief; a raging sea of anger, with chilling screams of anger, he never goes out to play. As always, I wondered what his dreams were; and I asked him what he'd really like to do?

For the very first time, I saw his empty, emotionless eyes look up, and through a fearless voice, he whispered, "I hate you!" With my heart shattered into a million pieces, I stepped inside, though I knew it only too well. Breaking his law. I drew the blinds to a beautiful sunny day; an unforgivable sin; I'd stepped into his private Hell! He begged me, "Please sir, make the light go away?" Curled up in the corner he began to scream. I closed the blinds as I know I was at fault. Deja vu? Perhaps I'd been here before? Praying it was only a dream. He went from enraged to lifeless, and asked why he had to endure such a horrible pain?

Explaining how it overwhelmed him, and how the anger helped him to forget his shame. He told me that he hated the world for what it had done, and nobody

would ever get close. Then with a soul chilling scream, came a mighty shout, "but you're the one I hate the most!" He said that I should go now, because he wants to be alone. Without another word, he cut his throat saying, "It was time for him to go home."

"Stop, please, child!?", I screamed, as I saw the blood streaming down the wall. I tried to stop the bleeding and caught him as he started to fall. He whispered, "I'll be free soon." And I tried to comfort him as I slowly watched him die. With the end so near, and nothing left I couldn't or wouldn't cry. Still, I looked down into his lifeless eyes, knowing there was nothing there to see. I sat and held him for many more hours, as I realized, "That little boy was me..."

**H. DOWDELL, AGE 9****I am**

I am a kitten lost and alone.  
I wonder what happened to my mom?  
I hear water whooshing towards me.  
I see the stars, night is coming.  
I want my mom by my side.  
I am a kitten lost and alone.  
I pretend my mom is with me.  
I feel my mother's embrace.  
I cry and I go to my grandma. I ask, "where is my mom?";  
She's dead!

I worry, who am I going to live with?  
I am a kitten lost and alone.  
I understand my mom is dead.  
I say to myself I should get some sleep.  
I dream of my mom... I wake up.  
I try to forget about it.  
I hope I live with my grandma.  
I am H., and I am a kitten lost and alone.

**D. DOWDELL, AGE 8****I am...**

I am compassionate and empathetic  
I wonder why my mom did not want to take care of us  
I hear my cat's meow  
I see turtles flying in my head  
I want my dad to get out of jail  
I am compassionate and empathetic  
I pretend to be a turtle flying  
I feel happy  
I touch a rainbow dragon  
I worry about my dad being in jail  
I cry because my cat has died  
I am compassionate and empathetic  
I understand that if you plant a tree it will grow  
I say God is real  
I dream about cats flying to space  
I hope my whole family has a very happy life  
I am compassionate and empathetic

**NOLAN TURCOTTE****Reflection.**

When I look into the mirror, I see the crook that I fear  
2 wolves have been battling within him over the years  
He wants the Good to win, but gets influenced by sin  
He struggles to walk right, like he's got a broken shin  
His heart is like a soldier's grenade, with a pulled pin  
The betrayal he's endured, makes the brain in his skull spin  
Traumatized to the point of emotional homicide  
Trust issues leave him too uncomfortable to confide  
Desensitized to violence, that's connected to pride  
War wounds open wide, luckily he never died  
When his image appears in the mirror, I notice the scars  
They tell the story of his unfortunate life behind bars  
I know his eyes have seen a lot, they flow like a river  
Adapted to the cold environment, he no longer shivers  
As I peek into his pupils, I catch a glimpse of his pain

Aboriginal Social History, hits me like a train  
Molestation, Incarceration, Heritage slain  
Unable to handle Semma\*, can't even offer a grain  
His spirituality restricted, and wrongfully convicted  
He's a victim of the oppression the Government's inflicted!!!

\*Semma is Tobacco

**BRIAN G. KERR****Manner of Fashion**

Long ago we made a deal,  
you brought us weapons,  
We helped you heal.  
Then you took our children,  
even our wives.  
When we fought back,  
it cost us our lives.  
We were confused  
and didn't understand,  
then you pressed forward  
and proceeded to take our land.  
You put us in schools  
and trained us how to use your tools.  
If we didn't succeed,  
you caused us to bleed.

The more we cried,  
the more we were tortured  
and often died.  
You lock us up and defame  
us of our glory.  
You put us in jail  
and deprive us of bail.

You declare us dangerous  
like some sort of wild animal.  
Even your sense of reasoning  
isn't so tangible.  
Please come to your senses  
Open up your doors,  
and lower your fences.  
We deserve your compassion  
and not to be treated  
in this manner of fashion.

**ZAKARIA AMARA****Anthem of the Dark Night**

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

**End of the Dark Night**

The dragon has been slain  
My head is bowed  
And on my knees I stand  
The colour of my tears is red  
I see the break of dawn  
My heart weeps for what it lost  
Yet my soul is full of joy  
For all the wisdom that it gained  
For all the lessons learnt

**TL****Prisoner of my Environment**

Locked up, cops knocked. Handcuffs, shackles. Prison bars, mind racing in circles like NASCAR. Jail-bars, steel shanks, politics, gang membership. Tattoos, guns, wounds, enclosed in a small room. Prisoner of my own mind destined to my own doom. Blood pool, slit wrist, cut throat. Marked man, green light. Outta bounds, outta sight. Body count. Bent down. Curb stomped won't be my fate. Stat release date. Will I ever see it? Friends I thought I had, hard to believe in. Lost souls screaming, daydreaming. Call home pay phone, calls not accepted. PPI disrespectin'. Attitude, stab wounds. Fuck the system. Struggle really existing, stressing, suicidal depression. Hard life lessons, self-inflicted mental condition. Anger one letter short of danger. Ambition. Broken promises, hopeless wishes. These are the types of conditions I live in.

**GEORGE FOBERT****The Man We Will Never Know**

There is a voice that begs us to listen,  
And it comes from across the sea.

Though you've never met the caller,  
Will you listen to his plea.  
Will you pause for a moment,  
Whisper soft a prayer or two.  
Will you bow your head in silence,  
For the man you never knew?  
We know not what his name was,  
Nor the colour of his skin.  
We know not of his virtues,  
Of his weakness or his sins.  
But we know he died in battle,  
Though he never cared for fight.  
For his country's call has reached him,  
And he died for what was right.  
Was he from the teaming city,  
From the village, farm, or town?  
Did he thrill to every sunrise,  
Count his joy as night went down.  
Was the breath of life sweet for him,  
As it is to me and you?  
Was he awed by nature's wonders,  
This man we never knew?  
He knew not what his thoughts were,  
As the end so swiftly came.  
Did he ask his God's forgiveness,  
Did he breathe his mother's name?  
Did he think of home and laughter,  
Of sweethearts, a wife, or a friend?  
Did he yearn to stay that moment,  
As alone as he hailed to the very end?  
He is asleep across the ocean,  
With a hundred thousand more.  
Who, for Canada and freedom,  
He died on foreign shore.  
Yes, there is a voice that begs us to listen,  
And the message is very plain.  
We have paid the price for freedom,  
Let it not be in vain.  
Will you pause for just a moment,  
In your very busy day?  
Will you bow your head in silence,  
And a few words softly pray?  
Will you wear the blood red poppy,  
And with feelings that are true?  
Give thanks to God for our freedom,  
And the man we never knew.

**"THE SUNDANCE KID" MR. PATRICK J.M. DOWDELL****Pin Prick**

That little pin prick you stick in your vein,  
You'll start to feel sick and then boom, no more pain.  
You try to run and hide to forget,  
But then look around with nowhere to step.  
Once the addiction has taken all control,  
You don't like what you see with emotions so cold.  
Before it's too late and you have grown too old,  
Remember all those who you must love and hold.  
So next time you got to prick your vein,  
Just take a deep breath to keep your mind sane.

**Deal Done**

Another sleepless night for this mother's fright as she continues to worry thinking of her son's fight.  
He is constantly in a battle with the demon on his back always whispering to him, let's do another hit, before "we rage out" and have a fit.  
But that wasn't the case on this particular night, because after that hit there was no more light.  
This is the risk when taking that chance, you don't dance with the devil without making a deal. So next time you're looking to feel all swell, you're taking that chance of landing in hell!

**DAVID ALLAN MARTELL A.K.A. WINDSOR DAVE****Guilty in Every Way**

When I think about love I see an image of your face, I carry it in my heart's most sacred place.  
To choose another lover would be a waste, when I crave your lips, crave their taste.  
All I want to do is breathe in your air, to hold you close, to know you're there.  
When my heart beats, yours beats back



against mine, when I'm holding you so close, our hearts intertwine. There's no place else I'd rather be than holding onto you while you're holding onto me.

I think about you every other second of the day.

It's obvious that I love you more than words can say, with just one kiss you steal my breath away.

When it comes to love what more could I say, if love were a crime, I'd be guilty in every way.

### World Too Far Away

I never knew true love until you came into my heart, it's too bad we were from two worlds so far apart.

You never seemed to be able to reach me in any given way, just as I couldn't reach you on any given day.

I tried to build a bridge from your heart to mine, little did I know, it'd be a waste of time.

Still, I'd seen so much pain in your face that day, that day I stood up and chose to walk away.

I wanted to let you know I was sorry, but I had to go, that if our love was true it would continue to grow.

Still you gave me that look that said "please stay", that look in your eyes that said "don't walk away".

It broke my heart every step of the way, I'll never forget those tears for the rest of my days.

I wanted to, but I couldn't stay. I'm so sorry it had to end this way.

We were from two worlds too far apart, and we could never build a bridge from heart to heart.

Still I think about you every day, the girl I loved from a world too far away.

### Memories

When I close my eyes, it's your face I see, it reminds me of fond memories.

Fond memories of days that have come and passed, of times that sailed by all too fast.

The most precious moments were spent

with you, my mind wanders thinking of all the things we used to do.

Whispered words of love shared in the dark, as your hand rested on my chest above my heart.

All those days and nights spent by your side, moments of laughter shared that can't be denied.

Moments of passion shared from heart to heart, when we made love, baby, we made art.

Leaving my heart craving you again, like the memories of a long-lost friend.

Loving another heart I could never do, after knowing your heart and a love so true.

### ANONYMOUS

#### What Can You Do With An Imagination?

- Build a crazy invention and take it with you on a wild adventure with anyone you want (or go alone).

- Build new places, crazy places, your own place, ancient places, new worlds, new creatures.

- Invent a new sport, activity, event, etc.

- Be the world's greatest musician, athlete, hero, etc.

- Win any prize you want.

- Have any animal or alien as your pet, servant, friend, or spouse.

- Have the world's largest collection of anything.

- Have a conversation with anyone.

- Be the ruler of the world or your own world or galaxy.

- Visit anywhere.

- Get married to anyone.

- Go to any prison or escape from any prison (even your own).

### VICTOR VANEMBEN

#### Cleverly Stupid

Have you ever been cleverly stupid or stupidly clever?

Or do you live in denial and still say never?

Just like fish through water they go,

Never truly knowing the meaning of H2O.

As we live in a hypocritical society,

That pedals liquor but preaches sobriety.

So go ahead 'n' lock me up you keys

This mofo will always be free!!

### BRANDON COTE

#### My Promise to You

The struggles in life are truly real,

There is no denying how I truly feel.

Even though you're the apple to my eye, This hell on earth makes me wanna die.

But instead I just sit alone and cry, But to be deserving of you, I will truly try! I will forever love and cherish you, and embrace all the hell you've been through.

And if there is one thing I truly know, I will never ever let you go! You are my prayer sent from above, I'll forever love you like a dove.

You are so beautiful like a priceless treasure, you make me so happy and bring me much pleasure. And as I sit in this lonely cell, there is no denying how hard I've fell.

You make me forget about every ex, There is no doubt, baby girl you're the best! And everything that is yet to come, remember baby you're my number one.

And if you hadn't given me so much hope, I'd probably be at the end of a rope. Now the thought doesn't even cross my mind, 'cause I have someone in my life that is so divine!

Even though I'm not a poet, I love you baby girl, I hope you know it!

You make me so much better, I can't wait to be together forever.

And even you I can't change overnight, I promise to give it my greatest fight!

### FORGOTTEN WARRIOR

(201)

What he feared was regret.

Why didn't we do better with what we feel for each other?

Why didn't we enjoy what was in our hearts instead of hiding it away?

What he feared was being told it was too late, even though he already knew it was.

(201)

She wasn't the first woman to say she

loved him,

But she was the first he was afraid to lose.

The first he knew his life would be empty without,

The first he thought he might love after the fierce heat was gone.

### (NOTHING BUT)

I have nothing but you my sweet hatred, you're my sense, my sanity, my very fuck-en soul.

Go from me now and I am lost in the great darkness,

Lost between the stars and cannot even perish there.

For I must live until you still my heart and let my suffering cease.

### Untitled

if we're meant 2 be 2gether then we will be

### Untitled

He decided one night that he'd just overdose and slip away,

It would be easier that way - he had no love, no partner to

hold on for, no children to watch grow old - he only had,

the emptiness and loneliness to hold.

### (TRUST)

I never really trusted anybody, thatz the truth of it

I've wanted to many timez but I was always afraid

Of being disappointed - I know I've cheated myself

of a lot of feelingz, maybe even love, but it was what I

chose and it kept me from being hurt, I could never trust

anyone enough 2 love em, and now itz 2 late

### (DEAD MEMORIEZ)

Had you been with me, we might have

changed 2gether

And found new reasonz 4 love, but therez nothing left of you

4 me 2 want except the dead memoriez

You know you want 2 run

Sooner or later, you need 2 start trusting someone

You start small, take that 1st tiny step TRUST ME xxx

The worst kind of loneliness in the world Is the isolation

That comez from being MIZZUNDERSTOOD!

Love

Remember 2night

4 itz the beginning of forever xxx

### PRISON TWEETS

"When in doubt, say nothing."

"Be you, be real, always."

"Life is a trip so enjoy the journey."

"Bad choices make great stories."

"Stay humble, stay strong."

"Have faith not only in God but also his timing."

"After the storm comes the rainbow."

- Victor VanEmben

There's too many yesterdays and not enough tomorrows. Too many tears shed, so much sorrow.

- David Allan Martell

### SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR SUBMISSIONS TO THE NEXT ISSUE OF CELL COUNT!

- Post-Elections thoughts and feelings
- What harm reduction should look like in prison

- Targeted vs. universal harm reduction
- Black History and Futures

- Have you tried organizing a Black History Month event inside of a prison, and if so, what have your experiences been like?
- What are your thoughts on the reform of segregation?

- For people who have been out and are now back inside, what was the hardest part of staying out of prison? What is the hardest part about being outside of prison?
- What are your thoughts on youth custody?

- Women are the fastest growing prison population in the world. Why do you think this might be?



Illustration by Steve Zehr



Illustration by Joey Toutsaint



Joey Toutsaint  
2019 / 08 / 23rd







*Illustration by Jeremy Hall*



13 1/4



## EAST COAST

### ALLY CENTRE

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

### AIDS COALITION of NOVA SCOTIA

Accept collect calls  
1675 Bedford Row, Halifax, NS, B3J  
1T1 1-800-566-2437, 902-425-4882

### AIDS COMMITTEE of NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

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

### AIDS NEW BRUNSWICK

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

### AIDS PEI

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

### AIDS SAINT JOHN

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

### BOOKS BEYOND BARS

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

### HEALING OUR NATIONS:

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

### MAINLINE NEEDLE EXCHANGE

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

### SHARP ADVICE NEEDLE EXCHANGE

Accept collect calls  
150 Bentinck St, Sydney, NS, B1P  
6H1 902-539-5556 (Collect)

### SIDA/AIDS MONCTON

Accept collect calls as long as they're  
HIV related  
80 Weldon St, Moncton, NB, E1C  
5V8 506-859-9616

### EAST COAST PRISON JUSTICE SOCIETY

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

## QUEBEC

### CACTUS

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

### CENTRE for AIDS SERVICES MONTREAL (Women)

Accept collect calls  
1750 Rue Saint-Andre, 3rd Flr, Montre-  
al, H2L 3T81-877-847-3636, 514-495-0990

### COALITION des ORGANISMESCOM- MUNAUTAIRES QUEBECOIS de LUTTE- CONTRE le SIDA (COCQSIDA)

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

### COMITÉ des PERSONNES ATTEINTES du VIH du QUEBEC (CPAIVH)

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

## ONTARIO

### 2-SPIRITED PEOPLE of the 1ST NA- TIONS

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

### AFRICANS in PARTNERSHIP AGAINST AIDS

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

### AIDS COMMITTEE of CAMBRIDGE, KITCHENER, WATERLOO & AREA

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

### AIDS COMMITTEE OF GUELPH

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

### AIDS COMMITTEE of NORTH BAY and AREA

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

### AIDS COMMITTEE of OTTAWA

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

### AIDS COMMITTEE of THUNDER BAY

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

### POSITIVE LIVING NIAGARA

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

### ANISHNAWBE HEALTH AIDS PRO- GRAM

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

### ASIAN COMMUNITY AIDS SERVICE

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

### BLACK COALITION for AIDS PREVEN- TION

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

### CANADIAN HIV/AIDS LEGAL NET- WORK

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

### FIFE HOUSE

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

### HIV & AIDS LEGAL CLINIC OF ON. (HALCO)

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

### HIV/AIDS REGIONAL SERVICES (HARS)

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

### ONTARIO ABORIGINAL HIV/AIDS STRATEGY

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

### PEEL HIV/AIDS NETWORK

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

### PETERBOROUGH AIDS RESOURCE NETWORK (PARN)

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

### STREET HEALTH CENTRE

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

### THE AIDS NETWORK (TAN)

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

### THE WORKS

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

### TORONTO PWA FOUNDATION

Accept collect calls from clients

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

### Toronto Community Hep C Program

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

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

## PRAIRIES

### HIV COMMUNITY LINK

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

### AIDS SASKATOON

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

### CENTRAL ALBERTA AIDS NET- WORK SOCIETY

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

### HIV EDMONTON

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

### KIMAMOW ATOSKANOW FOUNDA- TION

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

### NINE CIRCLES COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

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

### PLWA NETWORK OF SASKATCHEWAN

No collect calls  
Box 7123, Saskatoon, SK, S7K 4H1 306-  
373-7766

### OUT SASKATOON

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

### PRINCE ALBERT METIS WOMEN'S ASSOC.

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

### RED RIBBON PLACE

(ALL NATIONS HOPE AIDS NETWORK)  
2735 5th Ave, Regina, SK, S4T  
0L2 1-877-210-7622

### STREET CONNECTIONS

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

## WEST COAST

### AIDS VANCOUVER ISLAND

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

2366 or 1-800-665-2437

### PLBC - PRISON OUTREACH PROJECT

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

### Positive Living Society of BC

Leita McInnis, Prison Outreach  
Worker  
1101 Seymour St, 4th Floor, Vancou-  
ver, BC V6H 0R1 Fed: 1-877-900-2437  
Prov: 604-525-8646

### LINC

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

## NATIONAL

### CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF ELIZA- BETH FRY SOCIETIES (Women)

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

### BRAIN INJURY ASSOC OF CANADA

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

### CATIE

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

### NEW LIFE PRISON MINISTRIES

P.O. Box 123  
Arva, ON  
N0M 1C0  
Aftercare support: 1-888-842-6898

## PRISONER-SPECIFIC

### PRISONERS UNITED ORGANIZATION

Created by and for prisoners in the Can-  
adian federal system. We encourage  
you to share your stories to shed light  
on the current practices and problems  
within the correctional system. PO Box  
30009, Greenbank North PO, Ottawa,  
ON, K2H 1A3

### BLACK INMATES & FRIENDS ASSEM- BLY

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

### OUT OF BOUNDS MAGAZINE

6000 William Head Rd, Victoria, BC  
V9C 0B5

### JOURNAL OF PRISONERS ON PRIS- ONS

c/o Justin Piché, PhD, Dept of Criminol-  
ogy University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON,  
K1N 6N5

### PRISON FREE PRESS

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



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

## SUPPORT SERVICES

- Individual support, informal 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.

## CURRENT STAFF AT PASAN

**Amina Mohamed ext 236**  
Women's Community Program Coordi-  
nator

**Chaman R Vashishtha ext 222**  
Finance & Office Manager

**Cherisa Shivcharran ext 233**  
Provincial Community Development  
Coordinator

**Chris McNab ext 230**  
Federal In-Reach Community Develop-  
ment Coordinator

**Claudia Medina ext 227**

Program Manager  
**Eveline Allen ext 238**  
Regional Prison In-Reach Coordinator

**Janet Rowe ext 225**  
Executive Director

**Kayla Kendall ext 237**  
Peer Health Navigator Coordinator

**Lindsay Jennings ext 231**  
Provincial HepC Program Coordinator

**Nicole Anglin ext 234**  
Federal In-Reach Community Develop-  
ment Coordinator

**Sena Hussain ext 228**  
Communications & Resource Dev Coor-  
dinator

**Stephanie Moulton ext 235**  
Harm Reduction Outreach Coordinator

**Trevor Gray ext 232**  
Community Programs Coordinator

## CONTACT INFO

526 Richmond St E,

Toronto, ON M5A 1R3

Call us toll free at:

1-866-224-9978

## Cell Count Team

### Lead Editor

**Sena Hussain**

**Assistant Editor**

**Alannah Fricker**

**Supervisors**

**Janet Rowe & Claudia Medina**

### Cell Count Contributors to this issue (in order of appearance):

**Jeremy Hall**

**Mark Zammit**

**Cary Taylor**

**Zakaria Amara**

**Dawna Brown**

**John Mark Lee Jr.**

**Frank Dorsey**

**Michael G. Brown**

**Moka Dawkins**

**Bree-Bree Thomas**

**Philippe Poisson**

**H & D Dowdell**

**Nolan Turcotte**

**Brian G. Kerr**

**TL**

**Patrick JM Dowdell**

**David Allan Martell**

**Victor VanEmbden**