

Re-Storying Justice Within *Tightwire* and the Native Sisterhood

by

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Abstract

Even though Indigenous women are the fastest growing prison population in Canada and around the world, scholarship regarding the storytelling of incarcerated Indigenous women is extremely limited. My dissertation centers the stories of Indigenous women within *Tightwire*, a prisoner produced newsletter that was published between 1972 and 1995 within the former Prison for Women (P4W) in Kingston, Ontario. I aim to document Indigenous women's storied truths and lived experiences within Canada's prison system which include, for example, the criminalization process as it relates to Indigenous women, the solidarity expressed by the Native Sisterhood that resulted from their experiences of inequality at P4W, as well as their dreams for Indigenous and social justice. Importantly, I balance my analyses between instances of colonial trauma (including experiences of incarceration) with stories of hope and imagination (such as ideas for achieving Indigenous justice). This practice enables me to avoid damage-centered research while still considering the very real effects of intergenerational trauma and ongoing colonialism. As an interdisciplinary criminologist, I integrate critical feminist criminology, Indigenous studies, women's and gender studies, cultural studies, and the sociology of punishment to explore Indigenous women's experiences of criminalization and victimization as well as their resistance and resilience. By bringing incarcerated Indigenous women's knowledges and perspectives to the fore, my work endeavours to combat the negative effects of stereotypical representations of Indigenous and criminalized peoples – especially incarcerated Indigenous women. To this extent, my dissertation aims to create positive change that helps improve Indigenous lives. It also supports ongoing calls of Indigenous communities for settler accountability, reconciliation, and decolonization.

Preface

I believe it is imperative for researchers to situate themselves in their projects to give relationality and reciprocity back to the communities that have gifted their insights and knowledges (Wilson, 2008; Kovach 2009). This is especially important for settler-researchers working with Indigenous communities and knowledge structures, as past realities have shown a disconnect and failure to acknowledge privileges (see, for instance, Smith, 2012). Due to the settler colonial and academic contexts within which research processes are undertaken within places such as Canada, Indigenous peoples are susceptible to their knowledges being abstracted and extracted not only from their lived experiences as individuals but also from their collective experience as community members (Smith, 1990; Tuck, 2009). Some ways that researchers attempt to reduce or eliminate these abstracted and extracted harms caused by their research is by committing to an ongoing respectful learning journey that involves meaningful and consistent engagement with as well as centering and application of critical Indigenous perspectives, being actively engaged with and advancing anti-colonial perspectives within the spaces of privilege they occupy (e.g., the academy), as well as openly considering their role as a researcher and identifying themselves in the research process. Of course, these practices are related to one another and do not occur in isolation.

In my work, I undertake these practices in a variety of ways. First, I center Indigenous voices – such as those in the field of Indigenous Studies as well as those in the prison system whose stories are published in *Tightwire*. From Indigenous thinkers, I have learned a great deal

about colonialization and decolonization¹ which deeply affect their experiences as women, as Indigenous peoples, and as federally sentenced prisoners. Thinking through these concepts also significantly contributes to my experiences as a settler researcher. By “sitting with”, learning from, and applying the knowledges carried within Indigenous women’s stories, my work is necessarily accountable, anti-racist, and anti-colonial. Moreover, I engage in decolonization in my research by employing Indigenous perspectives as a guide to make methodological decisions. As a white middle-class settler scholar informed by and engaged with Indigenous feminisms, I am also dedicated to enacting my responsibilities to my research community whom I consider in the broadest sense to be Indigenous peoples, women, and prisoners – and more specifically, the women who were previously incarcerated at the Prison for Women (P4W). While some of these women are no longer alive, many still are – and I am accountable to both those who have died and those who are still living.

Vital to my research is the fact that my commitments to my research community are deeply personal. Indeed, I come to this research topic with my own complicated and experienced background regarding the criminal justice system, beginning from a very young age. Moreover, although my relatives are white on both sides of my family (German and French on my Mom’s side; British and Scottish on my Dad’s side), I also have immediate kin who are Indigenous. These are my brother and sister, as well as their mother (my Dad’s partner). They are Quw’utsun and live on their unceded traditional territory in Cowichan Bay, British Columbia. This part of my family has been both directly and intergenerationally impacted by the residential school

¹ In my work, I engage with Huron, Métis, Algonquin, French, and Scottish Indigenous criminologist Lisa Monchalin’s (2016) conceptualization of decolonization. For Monchalin, decolonization is both a process and a goal that involves unlearning and undoing colonialism. I go into more detail about decolonization within chapter seven.

system. I am humbled and proud that my siblings' mother calls herself a “residential school thriver”; and I am incredibly proud of my brother and sister who are university students that live with open minds and hearts. Given the settler colonial context within which we live, it would be so easy for them to lead with anger – a rational response shared by many Indigenous peoples – but instead, I see them lead with love, determination, and curiosity. For this, I am incredibly grateful and feel a tremendous responsibility as a settler to follow their lead as the First People of this land.

Crucially, like settler scholar in Indigenous literatures, Adar Charlton (2018), I also believe that my kinship to my Cowichan family members “resides in these individual relationships, responsibilities, and obligations, and I cannot claim an overall kinship to Indigenous peoples” (p. 19). Here, I am acknowledging my kinship ties in accordance with Indigenous practice, which include introducing oneself in terms of one's relations (Bear, 2017, February 14); I am not disclosing them as a “settler move to innocence” in which some settlers perceive their familial relations to Indigenous peoples as mechanisms to justify their complacency and/or inaction (Charlton, 2018). Indeed, my Quw'utsun kin deeply inform and inspire me to take action and remain committed to a lifelong learning journey, acknowledging the role I play in co-resistance which is central to the co-existence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples (Irlbacher-Fox 2014).

In accordance with the University of Alberta's policies, I would also like to disclose that I have previously published some of the work in chapters six and seven of my dissertation. This work is located in Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, and Kidd (2021) and is part of a larger edited book – *Building Abolition: Decarceration and Social Justice* – by critical feminist scholars Kelly Struthers Montford and Chloë Taylor. For this publication, Fran Chaisson, Bobbie Kidd, and I

had a planned discussion over the phone which I recorded and transcribed verbatim – with permission. I guided the conversation by posing questions to both women; while Chaisson and Kidd spoke about their lived experiences within P4W and hopes for the future. This three-way conversation represents the vast majority of our publication. I wrote the opening and closing remarks to our publication which I submitted to Chaisson and Kidd for review prior to submitting them to editors Struthers Montford and Taylor. All parts of the published work in chapters six and seven have been appropriately cited so that readers are aware of where they are within each chapter. The only parts of this work that were not explicitly disclosed were the parts that I wrote on my own – from the introductory and concluding remarks of our co-authored piece. To be clear, the entire chapter that I co-authored with Chaisson and Kidd is not reproduced in my dissertation – only certain parts that connect with the points that other women made in *Tightwire*.

Dedication

To my family, and to the Sisters who were incarcerated in the Prison for Women.

I see you. I hear you. I stand with you.

Acknowledgments

Vitally, I would like to acknowledge that this work was primarily completed on Treaty 6 Territory, the traditional home of the Cree, Dene, Blackfoot, Saulteaux, and many others. Parts of this project were also produced on the unceded ancestral lands of the Katzie, Semiahmoo, Kwantlen, Tsawwassen, and other First Nations.

Deserving of my deepest gratitude is my supervisor, Michelle Meagher, who has supported my development in countless ways. With your encouragement, I've become a more thoughtful researcher, a better writer, more intentional, and increasingly prepared for my future. I especially appreciate your confident and solution-focused approach to tackling challenges. There are not enough words to convey how grateful I am that you were my supervisor.

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Deep gratitude must also be expressed to Nancy Van Styvendale and Vicki Chartrand who served as external committee members. Nancy – I am incredibly grateful for your kindness and thoughtfulness. You helped push my critical thinking deeper and expanded my horizons in the field of Indigenous Studies. Vicki – thank you for recognizing and validating the value of my work. I appreciate the carefulness and specificity you encouraged from me.

Gratitude must also be given to my former committee members Savage (Tracy) Bear and Sara Dorow. Tracy, your teachings about Indigenous feminisms and your enthusiasm for my project meant a lot to me. Sara, thank you for encouraging me to push myself further, and for supporting me in your role as Department Chair. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge Jana Grekul, Bryan Hogeveen, and Ken Caine who provided support in the early years of my PhD.

Endless appreciation must be expressed to the Prison For Women Memorial Collective. Fran Chaisson, Bobbie Kidd, and Ann Hansen – we've shared frustrations, challenges, hopes,

and dreams. You shaped my work, understandings, and commitments. I hope that you see yourselves and your Sisters reflected and honoured in this project. Moreover, I am thankful to Yvonne Johnson – another woman who was formerly incarcerated at P4W. Your talk deeply informed the development of my research.

Additionally, I would like to acknowledge the staff at Queens University and Canada's Penitentiary Museum who digitized issues of *Tightwire* for me – Jacques Talbot, Kimberley Bell, Debbie Jardine, and Cameron Willis. Thanks also to Felice Yuen who shared with me a digital copy of the Native Sisterhood Constitution; and to Melissa Munn for sharing an early copy of her book with me.

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A mountain of gratitude must also be expressed to Jennifer Kilty. Although not directly involved in the project, you have offered ongoing mentorship, guidance, and encouragement. You inspire me to be my best self and I am forever grateful for your support.

Endless thanks to my Quw'utsun family members – know that you are the driving force behind my research, my commitments, and my growth as a scholar who will forever learn from and be indebted to Indigenous ways of knowing. Thank you for being you, and for loving me. I hope my work makes you proud.

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CHAPTER ONE – Introduction

Introduction

Cree storyteller² Fran Sugar (1988³), in the Native Section of *Tightwire*, explains how some people do not understand the lived experiences of incarcerated Indigenous women. While her story is about guards, it can easily be generalized to the “dominating” public as well because they also are not likely to share the lived experiences of incarcerated Indigenous women. The problem with this lack of understanding has political and personal ramifications – topics that I return to throughout my dissertation. Of her story, Sugar writes:

THIS IS A FICTIONAL PROFILE, BUT IT CLOSELY RESEMBLES⁴ PERCEIVED REALITY ON THE PART OF THE BUREAUCRACY WHO ASSESS THE NATIVE WOMAN AS SHE ENTERS THE PRISON. THOSE WHO ASSESS US COME FROM AN OPPOSITE LIFE-EXPERIENCE. THE AVERAGE CASE MANAGEMENT PERSON IS CAUCASIAN, MARRIED, HAS 1-2 CHILDREN, A UNIVERSITY DEGREE, IS FROM AN UPPER-MIDDLE-CLASS BACKGROUND WITH NO COMPARABLE EXPERIENCES TO A NATIVE WOMAN (Sugar, 1988, p. 26, emphasis in original).

In her story, Sugar also points out that the vast differences between Indigenous women who are incarcerated and the case management staff of the prison who assess them – differences which exasperate the cultural inappropriateness of carceral logics for Indigenous peoples⁵. Importantly, while the profile of Sugar’s character in her story is fictional, it could easily be real because it is

² What I mean by storyteller in the context of my research is someone who published a story in *Tightwire*. Of course, storytellers also exist beyond *Tightwire*. Throughout my dissertation, I address how various storytellers – such as Indigenous women in chapters two, three, and five and Elders in chapters five and seven – impact how stories tend to be received by Indigenous community members.

³ See Appendix 1.

⁴ One of my methodological decisions was to preserve all stories as they were originally told and/or typed – including typos. Readers can see my methodology chapter for more details.

⁵ Indigenous peoples in Canada are a very diverse group that include First Nation, Métis, and Inuit.

applicable to many criminalized Indigenous women's lives. Indeed, Sugar's fictional profile highlights some of the very real social issues that many Indigenous women experience firsthand as well as her perception of how employees of the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) interpret them. Vitally, she makes connections between her experiences within and outside of the prison system:

PROFILE: // MS. CREE IS EIGHTEEN YEARS OLD, A SINGLE PARENT WITH 2 CHILDREN. SHE LIVES IN THE CITY OF _____ WHERE THE OFFENCE TOOK PLACE. SHE WAS CONVICTED OF MANSLAUGHTER AND SENTENCED TO 4 YEARS. HER PARENTS ARE DECEASED. SHE HAS 2 SISTERS AND 2 BROTHERS. MS. CREE WAS A HOUSEWIFE WHOSE SOLE INCOME WAS SOCIAL ASSISTANCE. // MS. CREE ENTERED THE [PRISON] INSTITUTION WITH A GRADE 4 LEVEL OF EDUCATION. SHE QUIT SCHOOL DUE TO PROBLEMS IN HER FOSTER HOME. MS. CREE HAS NOT BEEN INVOLVED IN AN EDUCATION UPGRADING PROGRAM. SHE HAS BEEN OFFERED A JOB CLEANING YET HAS REFUSED THIS PLACEMENT BECAUSE SHE FEELS THE SCHOOL SUPERVISOR DOES NOT TREAT HER OR OTHER NATIVE STUDENTS PROPERLY. AS A RESULT SHE WILL NOT WORK ANYWHERE IN THE INSTITUTION. // MS. CREE WAS FIRST ARRESTED AT AGE 16 [...] THE SUBJECT DISPLAYS NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR HER CRIMINAL INVOLVEMENT. THE SUBJECT CLEARLY HAS A DRUG AND ALCOHOL PROBLEM. HER INSTITUTIONAL PARTICIPATION IS LIMITED TO NATIVE SISTERHOOD. THE WRITER STRONGLY SUGGEST THAT MS. CREE REMAIN A MAXIMUM SECURITY INMATE. THE WRITER IS NOT IN SUPPORT OF COMMUNITY RELEASE AT THIS TIME. DAY PAROLE DENIED. FULL PAROLE DENIED. ESCORTED TEMPORARY ABSENCE DENIED FOR ONE YEAR. MS. CREE WAS INVOLVED WITH A WOULD-BE SERIOUS INCIDENT WITH A NUMBER OF HER FRIENDS ON MAY 1, 19__ WHEN SECURITY STAFF WERE PROCEEDING TO DISPEL AN INCIDENT IN ANOTHER PART OF THE BUILDING. AS A RESULT OF MS. CREE NOT BEING ABLE TO REMAIN CHARGE FREE FOR ANY LENGTH OF TIME, HER CAVALIER ATTITUDE, HER ACTIVITIES AND FRIENDSHIPS WITH MANY KNOWN DRUG DEALERS IN THE INSTITUTION, IT IS THE WRITER'S OPINION THAT MS. CREE MEETS #2 & #3 CRITERIA UNDER BILL C67-68. // MS. CREE IS A DANGER TO SOCIETY, TO HERSELF AND THE STAFF MEMBERS OF THE INSTITUTION. MS. CREE IS BEING REFERRED UNDER BILL C-67-68. MS. CREE'S SENTENCE EXPIRES JANUARY, 199_. NEXT CASE MANAGEMENT REVIEW SCHEDULED DECEMBER, 198_. (Sugar, 1988, p. 26, emphasis in original).

While acknowledging Ms. Cree's single parent status, low income and educational attainment, and use of (presumably illicit) substances, this excerpt of a fictional case file demonstrates Sugar's perception of CSC's profound ignorance of the connections between settler colonialism, Indigenous women's life circumstances and experiences, and the criminalization process as it pertains to federally incarcerated Indigenous women. Relatedly, it highlights the power of CSC to formulate official assessments and classifications of each prisoner with little to no critical consideration of the intersection between the effects of colonial patriarchal violence and the carceral system.

Indeed, one of the crucial factors that ought to be considered in women's stories such as these is the context of incarceration itself – that is, the environment that CSC creates through imprisonment. For instance, the fact that Ms. Cree's participation in prison life is characterized by staff as "limited" to the Native Sisterhood suggests that prison administration is unsatisfied with her activities. Indeed, the imaginary staff member writing the profile recommends that Ms. Cree remains in maximum security and is not released on parole. This story supports the fact that when Indigenous women refuse "helping" services offered by prison administration who are typically white, they are further punished due to the perception that they are failing to seek "treatment" (Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women – TFFSW, 1990). Vitally, Sugar's (1988) story is not simply imaginary, but rather reflects reality for many federally incarcerated Indigenous women. For example, one Indigenous woman who was paroled and spoke to the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women, said: "Prison offered me nothing! The Sisterhood offered me everything, but the Parole Board didn't understand what the Sisterhood had meant to me" (TFFSW, 1990, p. 14). This points to the difficulty that non-Indigenous people have in

understanding the significance and incredible functions of the Sisterhood for (incarcerated) Indigenous women – especially in the colonial carceral context.

Indigenous women, their communities, and allies have concerns regarding the hyper-criminalization and incarceration of Indigenous women as well as the treatment of these women within Canada's criminal justice system (Comack, 2018; Monture, 2006; Scheuneman Scott, 2019; Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021). These groups also have doubts about the capacity of CSC to ethically and appropriately respond to their concerns – an example of which is the indigenization of prisons (Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Hayman, 2006; Monchalin, 2016; Monture, 2006; Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021). Though these concerns are increasingly entering the public sphere, they are in fact longstanding.

My research centers the stories of incarcerated Indigenous women that were produced in a prison newsletter, *Tightwire*, within the Prison For Women (P4W) in Kingston, Ontario between 1972 and 1995. Vitally, throughout this project, I worked with stories – including, for instance, editorials, poems, drawings, re-printed reports – that were produced by incarcerated women for readers of a newsletter that was circulated amongst incarcerated women, their allies, and other people who were interested in their work. That is, these stories were not created as part of a research process that was driven and determined by researchers' questions – they were created by the women for their own purposes. They are stories that shed light on the lived experiences of incarceration; they reveal a range of concerns that women expressed about the imprisonment of Indigenous peoples; and they provide alternative ideas to creating a more just Canada. In this introduction chapter, I briefly explain the background of my project, the problems that my work addresses, as well as my research aims, objectives, and questions. I also

touch on the significance of my work and provide a succinct overview of each dissertation chapter.

Research Context, Aims, and Questions

Despite the significantly increasing numbers of people – particularly Indigenous women – entering Canada’s prison system (Comack, 2018), researchers, policy makers, and much of the general public do not know much about experiences of incarceration from the perspectives of those who have actually experienced it (Chen & Fiander, 2017). Related to this general lack of understanding is the fact that CSC officials believe that (inclusive) “indigenization” represents a “culturally appropriate” solution to the longstanding mistreatment of Indigenous peoples in Canada’s carceral system (Bird, 2021; Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Hayman, 2006; Monture, 2006; Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021). One way that researchers can “get at” the important, yet neglected, perspectives of prisoners is through an examination of prison storytelling. For the purpose of my research, I defined prison storytelling as prisoners’ self-expressions within prison newsletters – readers can learn more about my definition of “story” in the methodological chapter. For now, it is important to note that prison storytelling, for me, includes both textual and visual creations⁶.

Throughout my dissertation, readers will notice that I use specific language to describe certain concepts. To reflect and respect prisoners’ lived experiences and personal choices regarding language, I employ the terms “prisoner” and “prison” rather than the more commonly used terms in public discourse such as “inmates”, “offenders”, and “correctional institutions”. I

⁶ It is critical to include not only textual/written, but visual creations, because many prisoners express themselves visually. Thus, if visual self-expressions were not included in my definition of prison storytelling, a large portion of stories from the *Tightwire* newsletter would have been excluded from analysis.

also use “incarcerated”. I employ these terms intentionally and in solidarity with the storytellers in *Tightwire*, as well as with the radical prisoner movement expressed in journals such as the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*. To exemplify the importance of language, one previously incarcerated woman from P4W, Gayle Horii (2000), explains that the words CSC uses are euphemisms that disguise the realities of prisoners. Horii (2000) argues that: “*Prisoner* is the only correct term⁷ to describe a person locked into a cage or cell within a facility not of one’s choice and whose quality of existence therein depends upon the keeper(s)” (p. 108).

While the prisoner demographic has been changing across Turtle Island (North America), the rates of Indigenous women’s incarceration is particularly concerning (Landertinger, 2015; Monchalin, 2016; Nichols, 2014). For political theorist Robert Nichols (2014) however, it is not a matter of the “disproportionate” incarceration of Indigenous peoples; rather, he argues that while the imprisonment of Indigenous peoples relates to the experiences of other racialized groups, it is distinct in terms of Indigenous sovereignty. That is, Indigenous sovereignty challenges not just the racialized organization and operation of the prison system, but its very existence given that it is foreign to Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island (Nichols, 2014). Despite growing concerns of incarceration and the changing demographics of prisoners, there is only some research on prison writing⁸ (Adema, 2015; 2016; Gaucher, 1989; 1999; Jackson, 2019;

⁷ Even though this source is not from *Tightwire*, I still chose to prioritize the exact wording of Horii’s story.

⁸ Prison literature as a genre has multiple forms, styles, and intents; moreover, it includes a variety of other genres such as biography, fiction, poetry, drama, sociopolitical commentary, and analysis (Santos, 2005). Prison writing is especially significant in light of its differences from “the accounts and representations found in academic studies, state reports, dominant political discourse and ideology, and the mass media” (Santos, 2005, p. 734). In this way, the genre of prison literature provides a history from below and functions to expose inequalities relating to gender, race, and class – among others – that “dominate the composition of prison populations” (Santos, 2005, p. 734). While focusing on prison writing as a literary genre is outside the scope of my research, it is nonetheless part of my approach in terms of contemplating narratives from

Rymhs, 2008). Specifically, there is a dearth of research when it comes to various forms of prisoners' stories as well as stories by incarcerated women (Chen & Fiander, 2017; Gaucher, 1989), Indigenous peoples (Adema, 2015; 2016; Rymhs, 2008), and incarcerated Indigenous women (Jackson, 2019). This gap in knowledge is concerning given several things. First, Indigenous women represent the fastest growing prison population in Canada and around the world (Landertinger, 2015; Monchalin, 2016; Nichols, 2014) which indicates a significant problem given that Indigenous women only represent four percent of the population (Comack, 2018). While many people from the general public as well as criminal justice agents attribute these numbers to "the crime problem" concerning Indigenous peoples and communities, Indigenous peoples and their allies argue that this is representative of "the colonial problem" (Chartrand, 2019; Monchalin, 2016; Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021). Second, while incarcerated Indigenous women are subjected to very real carceral, colonial, and patriarchal power, they also possess immense power in terms of their abilities to critically analyze and strategically navigate the criminal justice system. That is, by sharing their stories – both within and beyond the prison system – that critiqued the very system that held them captive, the women show their individual and collective strength. Indeed, incarcerated Indigenous women have crucial knowledges to contribute to their communities, as well as to the fields of criminology, women's and gender studies, Indigenous studies, and related fields. However, the potential reach of their contributions is diminished when, for instance, researchers, journalists, prison officials, and criminal justice agents do not sufficiently center their stories. Throughout my work, I demonstrate that the women in *Tightwire* act as cultural critics (LaRocque, 2009) whose stories

both dominating and oppressed perspectives. That is, thinking about these differences is vital to understand the significance of Indigenous and prisoners' truths in a colonial and carceral context that is considered by the dominating majority as "the authority" on (prison) history.

shed light on the realities of incarcerated Indigenous women's lives – which relates to the third problem. The third issue of this research gap is that every day criminal justice policies and practices, as well as attitudes and beliefs that underpin them, are not reflective of the lived experiences of prisoners. Instead of being grounded in the women's lived experiences – as well as research that centers their stories – policies and practices are partially characterized by assumptions and stereotypical biases that are (re)presented in media and other forms of dominating culture⁹ (Chen & Fiander, 2017). These stereotypes and misrepresentations are often grounded in racism and sexism, and function to uphold social practices and cultural institutions of colonialism¹⁰ and patriarchy¹¹ by predominantly advancing dominant narratives while neglecting (and silencing) counter narratives (Dell et al., 2014; Green, 2007; Kilty & Frigon, 2016), such as those put forward in prison storytelling.

My research aims to understand the stories incarcerated Indigenous women told in the prisoner-produced newsletter *Tightwire* between 1972 and 1995. Specifically, my analysis of these newsletters illuminates how select incarcerated Indigenous women perceived the

⁹ I take up sociologists Robert Brym and John Lie's (2015) definition of culture which they described as "the sum of practices, languages, symbols, beliefs, values, ideologies, and material objects that people create" and socially transmit to one another (p. 29). They also define popular culture or mass culture as "culture consumed by all classes", as opposed to, for example, only by "lower class" (Brym & Lie, 2015, p. 30).

¹⁰ Colonialism is a board term that takes various forms (for more information, see Monchalin, 2016). In my work, I often use the term colonialism and settler colonialism interchangeably. Although it is important to note that settler colonialism is a specific form of colonialism that occurs when a group of people arrive on a territory or land and seek to invasively replace the original (Indigenous) population with a new society. Over time, that group of people (settlers) develop a distinct identity and an authoritative government (Arvin et al., 2013; Monchalin, 2016) – hence we have the development of Canada. Rather than a one-time historical event, colonialism is an ongoing systematic process that has both practices and effects in the present day (Arvin et al., 2013).

¹¹ Patriarchy is a societal or state system whereby men hold power over women, particularly political and economical power from which women are largely excluded (Chesney-Lind, 2006).

relationships between colonialism, patriarchy, criminalization, and incarceration, and how these particular women responded to intersecting institutional oppressions through their storytelling. My research also explores aspects of women's stories that demonstrate the strength of incarcerated Indigenous women such as solidarity and Sisterhood as well as Indigenous kinship within and beyond the prison. While my work addresses all the stories published in *Tightwire*, I place special emphasis on Indigenous women's stories to reflect my commitment to center those whose narratives have continually been denied, minimized, and silenced in dominant Canadian culture and academic research. Crucially, this commitment is related to my responsibility as a settler to reconcile with Indigenous peoples and to support their calls for decolonization across Turtle Island – which readers can learn more about in my methodological chapter.

Throughout my dissertation, I respond to questions such as “What stories are Indigenous women telling in *Tightwire* about their experiences of and responses to Canada's criminal justice system?” I also pose questions regarding narratives of identity and how certain narratives are disrupted, challenged, and/or upheld such as “How do Indigenous women's stories in *Tightwire* engage with narratives about womanhood, Indigeneity, and criminality?” Moreover, I pay particular attention to how and what Indigenous women's stories contribute to knowledge regarding the intersections of colonial patriarchy and the impact of these broad systems of domination on the incarceration of Indigenous women. Finally, I emphasize the women's stories that highlight their ideas for achieving justice in Canada.

In answering these questions and responding to these issues, my work has important objectives. My first objective is to address gaps in research by centering stories told for non-research related purposes from the perspectives of those who are incarcerated, women, and Indigenous – but especially incarcerated Indigenous women. A second objective of my

dissertation is to position women's stories in *Tightwire* as valuable knowledges that, when centered, contribute to the discussions of women's criminalization and incarceration in Canada. Finally, my third research objective is to illuminate opportunities for meaningful social and political change for criminalized and incarcerated Indigenous women, as told throughout the women's stories in *Tightwire*.

Given that Indigenous peoples are Canada's fastest growing population (Nichols, 2014), Indigenous women are its fastest growing prison population (Comack, 2018), and the Canadian government makes explicit statements about the importance of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples¹² (Suzack, 2015), it is an ethical and moral imperative to highlight incarcerated Indigenous women's stories. Doing this can provide deeper understandings of their knowledges and experiences which have continually been erased and subjugated within dominant Canadian culture as well as academic research (Chen & Fiander, 2017; Pollack, 2014; Rymhs, 2008). By filling gaps in scholarship and hegemonic knowledge about the stories of those who are incarcerated, my research is beneficial to the academy and to the various communities to whom my research is accountable. Specifically, since most people do not have firsthand experience of Canada's prison system, my research is beneficial to Indigenous women, Indigenous communities, as well as (previously) incarcerated women and people, and their supporting communities. That is, my project highlights new understandings of the historical incarceration of Indigenous women in Canada as well as the surrounding contexts. Thinking through Canada's carceral past in relation to the federal imprisonment of Indigenous women sheds further light on

¹² Two examples of Canada's attempts at reconciliation are: the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that launched in 2008 in order to reveal the "complete" story of Canada's residential school system; and former Prime Minister Stephen Harper's formal apology on behalf of all Canadians to the survivors of Canada's residential school system (Suzack, 2015).

how Indigenous women are currently federally incarcerated in Canada. This is critical given the rising rates of incarceration for Indigenous women (Comack, 2018) as well as the Canadian government's preferred response to Indigenous concerns – which is inclusion “indigenization” that simply works within, rather than transforming, the confines of colonial institutions (Bird, 2021; Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Monchalin, 2016; Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021). Informed by the women in *Tightwire* as well as by my relationships with some of the women who were previously incarcerated at P4W, my work is not only socially relevant but also has relevance to policy and CSC management. That is, my research prioritizes and makes space for the women in *Tightwire* who are cultural critics – armed with lived experiences of colonial patriarchy and incarceration – and inform readers of what has not worked for them, as well as what they believe will work for them in the context of justice.

Outline of Dissertation

In this introduction, I briefly introduced the background and context of my research. I also outlined my research aims, objectives, and questions. Here, I provide readers with the general orientation and structure of the remainder of my dissertation. In my literature review chapter, I identify themes as well as gaps in existing scholarship, and provide more background and contextual information regarding Indigenous women's incarceration. This chapter delves into storytelling in popular culture as well as within the carceral setting both regarding Indigenous peoples and women – as such, I place my work in existing scholarship while also emphasizing its distinctions. This chapter also addresses the intersections of colonial and patriarchal violence within the criminal justice and related context. Importantly, these contexts help readers understand the nuanced injustices that Indigenous women are subject to and how/what they are resisting through their stories and storytelling practices within *Tightwire*. In

the chapter covering my theoretical framework, I provide a general overview of the three theoretical perspectives that I engage with throughout my work. These are critical feminisms, Indigenous feminisms, and critical feminist criminology. Together, these perspectives provide a framework for understanding prison policies and practices from an intersectional lens that highlights structural inequalities, such as colonial patriarchy, that are specific to the lived experiences of (criminalized) Indigenous women. These perspectives equip me with critical tools to analyze and explain the prison storytelling of Indigenous women. In my methodology chapter, I go over my research questions and objectives in more depth; and I detail my qualitative case study methods which include theoretical sampling as well as an amalgamation of content, thematic, and narrative analyses. Crucially, all of my methodologies are guided by Indigenous philosophies and ways of knowing, which include Indigenous feminisms and vital principles such as researcher accountability and truth telling.

In my first analysis chapter – chapter five – I orient readers to the Native Sisterhood, *Tightwire*, and the Native Sisterhood Section of *Tightwire*. This chapter provides information regarding the major components and stakeholders in my research that will be touched on throughout the remainder of my dissertation. It begins to provide information regarding the specific contexts from which the Native Sisterhood, *Tightwire*, and the Native Sisterhood Section of *Tightwire* developed. In this chapter, I advance several interrelated arguments pertaining to Indigenous women's strategic methods of resistance via their participation in *Tightwire* and the Native Sisterhood – both of which relate to cultural continuity and decolonization. For my sixth chapter, I turn readers' attention to the larger contexts surrounding the Native Sisterhood and *Tightwire*. That is, I examine the women's stories regarding the only federal women's prison at the time – P4W – as well as a monumental time in federal women's corrections – the Task Force

on Federally Sentenced Women and the *Creating Choices* report. In this chapter, I highlight the diverging opinions of the women in *Tightwire* regarding the closure of P4W as well as the development and opening of “new” federal women’s prisons across Canada. Here, I argue that, within these contexts, the women’s stories demonstrate how their pains of imprisonment relate to both their experiences and fears of separation – from the outside community, from their families, and from one another. Returning to some of the key ideas that were presented in chapter five, in my final analysis chapter – chapter seven – I examine the women’s critiques of “inclusion indigenization” (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018) within the justice context, and I forward their ideas for a shared decolonial future. By highlighting the women’s dreams, I make connections between our shared responsibility to critically educate – that is, to “carry” stories (Benson, 2020) – regarding the lived experiences of (incarcerated) Indigenous women and Indigenous desires for kinship – as well as allyship – and the idea of respectfully working together. In this final analysis chapter, I argue that *Tightwire* was a public square (Voyageur, 2005) in which Indigenous women advanced critiques of inclusion indigenization in favour of decolonial acts such as raising awareness and working together. Finally, in my conclusion chapter, I discuss my findings in terms of my research questions and objectives. I also identify several contributions of my work with the women’s stories in *Tightwire*.

CHAPTER TWO – Literature Review

Introduction

To adequately contextualize Indigenous women's prison storytelling, it is vital to engage with various scholarly fields. In my work, I drew on disciplines such as critical and feminist criminology, Indigenous studies, women's studies, and print culture studies. Upon reviewing literature in these areas, I noted several themes. First, storytelling tends to be placed within sociopolitical contexts, which include, for instance, various social movements both within and outside of the prison system such as Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood and women's rights groups (Gaucher, 1989, 1999; Jackson, 2019). Researchers also tend to place prison storytelling within the specific penal contexts within which they were produced because these contexts are seen as affecting how and why particular narratives are (re)produced within prisoners' stories (Gaucher, 1989, 1999; Lockwood, 2018; Walsh & Aarrestad, 2015; Wright, 2018, 2019). Prison contexts include, for example, penal reforms as well as prisoners' unique experiences of time and space within the prison (Gaucher, 1989, 1999 Wright, 2019).

Related to the placement of stories in their relevant contexts is the recurring argument in the literature that both prison and Indigenous storytelling¹³ are acts of resistance in and of themselves (Brabeck, 2004; Rymhs, 2008; Wright, 2018, 2019). Prison storytelling tends to be perceived as resistance due to the contexts of incarceration, such as the intersecting oppressions that function to hyper-criminalize certain groups of people, including Indigenous women

¹³ I define Indigenous storytelling very broadly – as stories told by Indigenous peoples. In my work specifically, these stories include all of those published within the Native Section of *Tightwire* – with the exception of if I know a storyteller in that section is not Indigenous (e.g., they explicitly identify as non-Indigenous). By noting the storytellers' names in the Native Sisterhood Section, I was also able to identify Indigenous storytelling outside of the Sisterhood Section.

(Jackson, 2019; Lockwood, 2017; Rymhs, 2008; Wright, 2019). An example of prison storytelling as resistance is when prisoners produce counter-narratives that sharply contrast with what are perceived by the general public as more objective knowledges. Through their counter-narratives, prisoners' stories have the capacity to challenge and resist so-called objective knowledges – what are sometimes referred to as “official truths” about (their) criminal acts (Piché & Major, 2015) as well as “textual facts” that mask the realities of those with lived experience of oppression (Smith, 1990). These official truths and textual facts are often produced and validated within institutional policies, reports, laws, and legal cases (Piché & Major, 2015; Smith, 1990). By contrast, prisoners' stories are not typically validated within or by the general public or academic research (Jackson, 2019; Rymhs, 2008). My research works towards resolving this issue as I center prisoners' stories relative to official truths and governmental reports. Moreover, I presume, rather than question, the validity of prisoners' stories.

Indigenous storytelling is similarly conceptualized as resistance in light of the colonial context within which it was and continues to be created (Brabeck, 2004; LaRocque, 2009, 2015; McCall, 2001; Walsh & Aarrestad, 2015). However, Métis scholar of Indigenous representations, Emma LaRocque (2009), cautions that while the contexts of colonial patriarchy are necessary to any adequate understandings of Indigenous women's stories, it is paramount that future scholarship pushes the boundaries of what is considered important – for instance, by highlighting Indigenous women's practices of agency, empowerment, resistance, resiliency, cultural

continuity¹⁴, and decolonization¹⁵. In this way, issues with damage-centered research – such as reinscribing and reinforcing Indigenous peoples as perpetual “victims” – can be avoided (Tuck, 2009). LaRocque (2009) pushes the boundaries in her own work by looking for “those crucial spaces of contemporaneity and agency that actually fill the pages of Native writing, as, of course, they fill the lives of Aboriginal people[s]” (p. 161). Relatedly, Indigenous Studies Unanga scholar Eve Tuck’s (2009) work effectively communicates the complex personhood of Indigenous peoples by not only acknowledging the oppression that impacts their lives, but by highlighting Indigenous acts of resistance.

One reason that Indigenous and prison storytelling are taken so seriously in select scholarship is because these stories are conceptualized as a form of knowledge. Indeed, many critical scholars perceive knowledge as politically and culturally produced and argue that stories – which hold or “carry” knowledges – the power to right and (re)write collective memories, create communities, and catalyze social change (Benson, 2020; Brabeck, 2004; Jackson, 2019; LaRocque, 2015; Wright, 2018, 2019). For prisoners, their stories are often silenced and ignored in research and the general public (Jackson, 2019; Rymhs, 2008); however, when their stories are more closely examined, rich knowledges that were once lost may be recovered. For example, Olivia Wright (2018), an interdisciplinary scholar whose research considers women’s prison

¹⁴ In their report on the suicide of Indigenous peoples in Canada, Kirmayer, Brass, Holton, Paul, Simpson, and Tait (2007) define cultural continuity as expressed in a variety of ways that “all depend on a notion of culture as something that is potentially enduring or continuously linked through processes of historical transformation with an identifiable past of tradition” (p. 77). Cultural traditions remain fluid however; and new identities – both individual and communal – form due to interactions with the larger world. For instance, they point out that: “Contemporary pan-Indian spirituality and other forms of collective identity are important responses to this new social and political landscape” (p. 78).

¹⁵ Decolonization is a process and a goal whereby Indigenous peoples reclaim their cultures and reassert their identities – both of which are associated with Indigenous well-being (Dell et al., 2014; Monchalin, 2016). I discuss decolonization in more depth in chapter seven.

zines in the United States, points out that incarcerated women's stories illuminate both individual and collective perspectives and contribute greatly to conversations around women's liberation. Similarly, trauma and mental health scholar Kalina Brabeck (2004) conceptualizes *testimonio* – an Indigenous literary genre in Latin America – as an emphasis on the importance of subjective experience as a basis for knowledge. For instance, *testimonio* is often employed by a witness who endeavours to express the realities of a whole community thereby representing a collective memory and identity (Brabeck, 2004). This memory and identity are, in part, what make up communal knowledges.

In addition to identifying themes in the literature, I have also noticed some significant gaps particularly around prison storytelling by women and Indigenous peoples – and especially by Indigenous women (Gaucher, 1989, 1999; Jackson, 2019; Rimstead & Rymhs, 2011; Rymhs, 2008). Relative to (non-Indigenous) men's prison storytelling, Indigenous women's prison storytelling is a vastly under-researched area. This is not surprising given that Indigenous women are one of the most silenced groups in dominant Canadian culture and research (Comack, 2018; Jackson, 2019). I have identified several exceptions to these gaps which I explore at the end of the first part of this chapter when discussing the works of Rymhs (2008), Adema (2015), Foran (1998), and Jackson (2019).

In the first half of the chapter, I focus on the storytelling of Indigenous peoples, and more specifically of Indigenous women. Here, I detail the importance and adaptive nature of storytelling within Indigenous communities. I also look at storytelling within the context of Canada's carceral system. At the end of this first section, I explore Indigenous peoples' prison storytelling, with a particular emphasis on prison stories that were produced by Indigenous women. In the second part of this chapter, I shift gears to explore the contextual background of

my research topic – especially the backdrop surrounding incarcerated (Indigenous) women storytellers whose stories were published in the prisoner produced newsletter *Tightwire* – which includes an examination of intersecting colonial patriarchal violence in Canada. Specifically, I touch on interpersonal violence, the violence expressed in dominant media and culture, as well as state violence. In this second half, I also explore the hyper criminalization and incarceration of Indigenous women in Canada. Together, this part of my literature review explains the foundation of my criminological perspective regarding prison storytelling of Indigenous women. Finally, I end the chapter with some concluding remarks regarding the gaps my research fills, the importance of engaging with and sharing incarcerated (Indigenous) women’s stories.

Part 1

Indigenous (Women’s) Storytelling

Storytelling is deeply relational and is one way that Indigenous peoples gather and share knowledge (Benson, 2020; Foran, 1998; Kovach, 2019). Plains Cree and Saulteaux education scholar Margaret Kovach (2009) explains that stories hold knowledge and signify relationships by tying us to the past while simultaneously providing a foundation for continuity for future generations. Indeed, Kovach (2009) argues that there is an “inseparable relationship between story and knowing” (p. 94). Similarly, Benson (2020) explains how storytelling can enable individuals to understand themselves in relation to their communities and that by exploring stories, as well as relations to one another, and the wisdoms that each confer, Indigenous peoples can establish the center of their decolonial work – knowing one’s home. Traditionally, women in Indigenous communities are largely responsible for transmitting knowledge through storytelling practices (Anderson, 2016; Dell et al., 2014; LaRocque, 2007; 2009). Responsibility is emphasized in the concept of “carrying stories” where the story carrier is responsible and

responsive to the needs and wisdom of storytellers whose stories they carry (Benson, 2020). In these ways, story is a culturally nuanced way of knowing (Kovach, 2009). While Indigenous stories are commonly told orally – through conversations, they are also told through visual symbols, songs, prayers (Kovach, 2009), and many other methods.

Despite Canada's ongoing exclusion of (criminalized) Indigenous women's self-representations in dominant popular culture, there are growing numbers of Indigenous women who are fighting (and writing) back (Beard, 2000; Foran, 1998; Grant, 1994; LaRocque, 2009; 2015; Pollack, 2014; Snyder, 2018). Indeed, Indigenous peoples and women catapulted into producing and publishing significant bodies of writing in the late 1960s, including fiction and non-fiction, drama, poetry, and (auto)biography (Foran, 1998; Highway, 2017; LaRocque, 2015). In the 1960s and 70s, Indigenous women's writing was primarily published in Indigenous newspapers, editorials, and essays in collections (LaRocque, 2015). In the 1980s, several well recognized novels were published by Indigenous women, such as *In Search of April Raintree* by Métis writer Beatrice Culleton in 1983 and *Slash* by Syilx Okanagan author Jeannette Armstrong in 1985 (LaRocque, 2015).

Regarding Indigenous peoples controlling their own media in the 1980s and 1990s, Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation scholar Cora Voyageur (2005) argues that this gave Indigenous peoples their own public square – a communal meeting ground where Indigenous peoples shared stories in both entertaining and powerful ways within newspapers. Specializing in Indigenous peoples' experiences in Canada, Voyageur (2005) discussed one Indigenous newspaper in Alberta during this era, *Windspeaker*, that demonstrated great ingenuity by “discovering and nurturing a niche” that was “dedicated to telling the Aboriginal story to both the Aboriginal community and mainstream society” (p. 118). This niche enabled the newspaper

to not only survive federal government budget cuts, but to then reinvent itself in ways in which the editors were able to exercise total financial and political independence (Voyageur, 2005). In the 1990s, Indigenous-authored writing occurred in almost every genre, including biographical and political essays as well as creative writing such as short stories, plays, reinterpretations of legends, and poetry (LaRocque, 2015). Poetry has especially resonated with and been a significant genre for Indigenous women since at least the 1960s. Indeed, LaRocque (2015) states that “the growing list of books of poetry by Native women is an indication of the significance of poetry in our cultures” (p. 159). Likewise, Indigenous scholars and scholarship are also increasing (LaRocque, 2015).

Inspired by cultural memories, myths, and mother languages, Indigenous women’s storytelling challenges colonialism and stereotypical (mis)representations of Indigenous peoples (Foran, 1998; Highway, 2017; Kovach, 2009; LaRocque, 2009). Voyageur (2005) agrees that Indigenous peoples publishing their own stories is beneficial in bridging understandings with non-Indigenous people. She argues that:

If Canadians want to better understand the basis of Aboriginal people’s culture, traditions, beliefs, grievances, or claims, they have an opportunity to learn more from the Aboriginal media, which present views in a way that mainstream media cannot. ... Although this could be said for coverage of any world events, Aboriginal issues are in our own backyards. These media give Aboriginals a voice to get their message across in their own words and from their own perspectives... It provides a “public square” in which Aboriginal people can express their views and tell their own story (Voyageur, 2005, p. 120).

Moreover, the growing body of Indigenous literature has been described by Tomson Highway (2017), a Cree, Dene, and Inuit playwright and author, as “a genuine movement, a genuine wave, a genuine phenomenon” due to the thousands of years of oral storytelling whereby Indigenous languages and stories (for the most part) were not written down but passed orally from one generation to the next (p. xii). Importantly, Indigenous peoples’ storytelling practices are being

reinvented such that the initial orality of Indigenous storytelling has not been lost, but rather is emerging into a form of literature that is based on the oral tradition (Highway, 2017; LaRocque, 2015). This storytelling adaptation is critical in today's society because, as Highway (2017) points out, for the first time in (Canadian) history, Indigenous peoples have:

literature that does not portray them as savages, as cannibals, as losers, as drunks, as perpetual victims. [Instead], they have a literature that gives them four-dimensional characters... that paints them in colours that are psychologically complex and sophisticated... that validates their existence, that gives them dignity, that tells them that they, and their culture, their ideas, their languages, are important if not downright essential to the long-term survival of the planet (p. xxx-xxxi).

Moreover, by telling their own stories in their own ways, Indigenous women's increased participation in writing is a positive step towards cultural continuity and decolonization (Kovach, 2009; LaRocque, 2009). Following this, all Indigenous storytelling, whether written, oral, visual, or other, can be a useful tool to highlight counter narratives that challenge stereotypical (mis)representations and beliefs about Indigeneity, gender, criminalization, and (state) violence (Fleras, 2011; Foran, 1998; LaRocque, 2009; 2015; Monture, 2011). LaRocque has much to say about cultural continuity and decolonization in the writings of Indigenous women. For instance, LaRocque (2009) argues that "the act of writing is an act of agency, and agency is cultural continuity in its articulation of our histories, our invasions, and our cultural values" (p. 163). For Kovach (2009), stories actively support cultural continuity by passing along teachings, medicines, and practices that can assist Indigenous community members. Given this, "by articulating our [Indigenous] histories, our [Indigenous] traumas, or our [Indigenous] cultures, writing becomes the process, the result, and the expression of decolonization" (LaRocque, 2009, p. 169). Kovach (2009) also discusses the decolonizing potential of stories and storytelling as they relate to cultural continuity as she argues that "stories of resistance inspire generations about the strength of the culture" (p. 103). In this way, cultural continuity – which, by definition,

resists colonial efforts to assimilate and destroy Indigenous cultures and is thus decolonial – also highlights current and promotes future communal strength.

In contemplating community and futurity, I draw parallels between cultural continuity and settler feminist scholar Alison Piepmeier's (2009) engagement with a "pedagogy of hope". Hope is linked to a history of feminism as well as political resistance. Although feminism tends to be known for its grounding in dissent and critique, Piepmeier (2009) points out that "the feminist impulse is ultimately a hopeful one" (p. 156). In other words, if people were not hopeful regarding their abilities to impact the world – whether to change it (such as the dismantling of colonial institutions) or to create ties between past and present generations (such as cultural continuity) – they would not produce stories such as those found in zines¹⁶. This sense of hopefulness is similarity expressed in the research of cultural sociologist Frances Foran (1998) who identifies the changing discourses in *Tightwire* that reflect the women's increased knowledge that their stories and words had/have power to create change via legal reforms. She argues that the fact that the women's stories in *Tightwire* addressed a general outside audience "was an act of faith that their voices would be heard, and that the discourses which constructed them would be reconstructed in light of their articulation of the effects of those discourses" (Foran, 1998, p. 5). Similarly, in her Master's thesis regarding the politics of *Tightwire* for Queens' University's Department of Sociology, Julie Jackson (2019) describes the meaningful connection that *Tightwire* storytellers were able to forge with their readers that contributed to the newsletters' capacity to serve "as a beacon of hope and source of community for many

¹⁶ According to Lisa Jervis and Andi Zeisler, creators of *Bitch* in 1996, zines are "more concerned with the personal expression of the author[s]"; whereas magazines want "to offer certain information for an audience" (Piepmeier, 2009, p. 174). While *Tightwire* is not a zine or a magazine, it holds likeness to both.

incarcerated people" (p. 38). Specializing in critical prison and Indigenous studies, Krista Benson (2020) argues that when incarcerated Indigenous women dream about and are hopeful of their futures, they resist the disciplining and separation of the prison. Benson (2020) points out that by articulating and sharing their hopes and dreams in their stories, Indigenous women enact a decolonial prison abolition ethic that refuses the prison's and state's limitations. That is, by exercising and finding their freedom and sovereignty via storytelling and story dissemination, incarcerated Indigenous women refuse the colonial imposition of imprisonment. Indeed, Benson (2020) conceptualizes incarcerated Indigenous women's stories as "key decolonial theories that offer tools to prison abolitionists not only for prison abolition but also to support decolonial efforts of Indigenous communities" more broadly (p. 145). In other words, their stories are crucial not only for incarcerated Indigenous peoples, but for non-incarcerated Indigenous peoples and greater communities (Benson, 2020; TFFSW, 1990).

Regardless of whether the goal of a storyteller is to produce change or continuities, Piepmeier (2009) argues that it is vital that activists know the history of social change movements so they can understand how the formation of communities and social change have been accomplished in the past. Speaking of an essay by Cindy Crabb that was published in a zine called *Doris*, Piepmeier (2009) contends that "they provide a glimpse of a new paradigm, a new set of possibilities. [...] altering her readers' sense of who they are and what is possible" (p. 157). In this way, Piepmeier (2009) argues that zines can invite readers "to be free to imagine a better world" (p. 157). This is certainly the case in *Tightwire* as I note in my chapter seven, and as Foran (1998) explores in her work. By giving readers a sense of their own power, zines and similar types of stories, such as those in *Tightwire*, can help change power structures (Foran,

1998; Piepmeier, 2009). Given this, feminist newsletters and zines are primers for “how to hope” and position hope as a political intervention (Piepmeier, 2009, p. 157).

Despite how many Indigenous peoples left home and did not often replicate the ways of their parents and grandparents, cultural continuity is nevertheless practiced by Indigenous writers (LaRocque, 2009). This is accomplished by Indigenous writers assuming their birthright to be whoever they want to be – for example, writers – thereby challenging the notion that Indigenous peoples are stagnant and forever wedded to “tradition”, such as (almost exclusive) oral storytelling (LaRocque, 2009). In contemplating Indigenous engagement with writing, I identify similarities to how women in the late sixties and seventies “took cultural materials and practices not necessarily intended for them and turned those materials to their own uses” (Flannery, 2005, p. 14). Similarly, Foran (1998) notes how the women in *Tightwire* “turned their sentences around to serve them” by demonstrating their increasing confidence in their first-hand knowledge of incarceration in conjunction with their incorporation of “useful parts of legitimate discourses” from (human and Indigenous) rights law and feminist thought (p. 50). To be clear, I am not suggesting that Indigenous writing is derived from feminist writing, but rather I advance Flannery’s perspective to showcase the value of writing for social movements.

Indeed, during the sixties and seventies, women were ambivalent about the role of literacy in their lives due to their recognition that “it comprises not simply a benign set of skills but also culturally loaded practices that had operated historically as class marker, sign of patriarchal power, or a means to exercise hierarchical authority” (Flannery, 2005, p. 3). Frequently, women were denied intellectual development on the basis of sex, race, and class which meant they had limited access to thought that encouraged critical analysis and understanding that was, and still is, necessary to liberation (Flannery, 2005). Like Indigenous

peoples, women at the time perceived spoken word as more present, authentic, and real relative to written word (Flannery, 2005). Despite this, women worked to reconceptualize “what literacy could be or do in feminist terms” (Flannery, 2005, p. 3). Part of this was the creation of alternative places – for example, women’s periodicals – “to accomplish what neither law, the ‘system,’ nor the ‘establishment’ seemed able or willing to do” (Flannery, 2005, p. 12).

Likewise, Indigenous peoples began considering what literacy could be or do for Indigenous endeavours. An example of this is discussed by LaRocque (2009) who argues that Indigenous “writers serve our cultures by assuming the role of cultural critics”, especially “when practised with social awareness, responsibility, and compassion” that aim to correct misrepresentations and stereotypes of “Native peoples as social problems” (p. 170). For instance, Leanne Sims (2020), a feminist justice scholar, found in her research with incarcerated Indigenous women that the women’s stories often represented “home” as a site of trauma as well as a site of desire, and occasionally as a site of healing. Sims (2020) identifies that “the desire for home and redemption, in spite of the horrors of home, filter through the words on the pages, illustrative of the proximity between pleasure, desire, and harm” (p. 209). Specific to Indigenous women’s stories is that their sites of desire “are inseparable from the marked site of trauma: collateral damage of colonization on the psyche” (p. 209) – meaning that, they often desire to be back in their homes, while also recognizing that their homeland is colonized. In this example, Indigenous women storytellers are cultural critics of the term “home” in that they explain the complexity of Indigenous experiences – thus centering Indigenous ways of knowing – which effectively pushes back on how home is perceived and felt by non-Indigenous people. Benson (2020) similarly identifies the key insights that are provided via multilayered facets of Indigenous histories and concerns. Indeed, Benson (2020) argues that “reconnecting with

memory, with the feelings of colonization and its impacts, and sharing those memories and feelings can be a vital part of Indigenous feminist interventions” (p. 148).

Crucially, LaRocque (2009) identifies that scholarship regarding Indigenous women writers often focuses on Indigenous life stories that emphasize the colonial experience, women’s oppression and disempowerment, and cultural *discontinuity*. Instead, LaRocque (2009) argues that scholars should be looking for instances of agency and the continuation of their distinct cultures. In other words, while the contexts of colonialism and patriarchy are necessary to any adequate understandings of Indigenous women’s writings, it is paramount that future scholarship pushes the boundaries of what is considered important– namely, by highlighting Indigenous women’s agency, empowerment, resistance, resiliency, cultural continuity, and decolonizing practices (LaRocque, 2009; Tuck, 2009) in the face of ongoing colonialism, patriarchy, and criminalization.

Prison Storytelling and the Penal Press

Like Indigenous communities, prisoners also have a long history of storytelling (Gaucher, 1999). The Canadian Penal Press developed during a time where people involved in prison justice were pressing for reforms that were more humane, progressive, and evidence-based (Munn as cited in Laube, 2020). The press was perceived by these individuals – prisoners as well as some prison administration – as giving prisoners a voice which allowed them to provide constructive feedback for the purpose of improving the prison system (Laube, 2020). In this way, some prisoners – such as the editor of *Telescope*, Gord Marr – believed the penal press would create productive conversations between prisoners and carceral staff (Clarkson & Munn, 2021). However, this did not happen, and prison administration perceived the press differently. By enabling prisoners to humanize themselves in penal newsletters, staff saw an opportunity to

improve public perceptions of the prison system and increase public support of prison reform (Clarkson & Munn, 2021) – meaning that more tax payer dollars would funnel into the system. Moreover, staff used prisoner produced newsletters to keep informed about the happenings within the prison, including prisoners’ “pleasures, pains, ‘beefs’, and aspirations” (Clarkson & Munn, 2021, p. 100). In this way, the penal press was used by carceral staff to further manage prisoners.

According to Robert Gaucher (1989), a leading Canadian criminologist in the field of prison writing, the penal press and prison writing were at their height of achievement in the 1950s and 1960s. The achievement of prison writing is exemplified by more than 250 penal press publications that reached an estimated readership of two million people across Canada and the United States (Gaucher, 1989). The rapid growth of the penal press related to its favourable portrayal in mainstream media during its early years; and its audience included “clergy, medical personnel, teachers, labour unions, parents’ groups, community-based service agencies, guards, public and university libraries, newspapers and magazines, corporations, politicians, lawyers, and housewives, among others” (Clarkson & Munn, 2021, p. 79). The international penal press was very important to prisoners as it provided direction, form, and encouragement for their stories; and receiving their official recognition was considered the ultimate sign of success to prison writers (Gaucher, 1989). In Canada, the penal press officially began on September 1st, 1950, with Kingston Penitentiary’s *Telescope* newsletter (1950-1968) (Clarkson & Munn, 2021; Gaucher, 1989). Since the inception of the Canadian penal press until the late 1980s, there have been more than 100 different publications throughout Canada’s federal prisons (Gaucher, 1989).

Prison newsletters (also referred to as magazines) often take one of two forms. The first is “outside directed magazines” which are intended to act as a communicative tool between

prisoners and the general public by featuring analyses of contemporary criminal (in)justice system issues as well as experiences of criminalization, incarceration, and recidivism (Gaucher, 1989). Topically, outside directed magazines include (but are not limited to) prison reform and expansion, changes in social control legislation and its implementation, as well as prisoner concerns (Gaucher, 1989). The second type is referred to as “inside directed magazines” which are intended to act as a communicative tool between prisoners *within* a particular prison (Gaucher, 1989). Topically, they commonly feature institutional activities such as sports, social events, and clubs, as well as new programs, legislation, news, and localized concerns (Gaucher, 1989). In my work, I identify characteristics of both outside and inside directed magazines within *Tightwire*. Indeed, *Tightwire* stories featured many analyses of Canada’s criminal justice system as well as specific happenings at the Prison for Women.

Prison writing has much to offer both researchers as well as prisoners. Gaucher (1989) argues that, despite their differences, both outside and inside directed magazines are “an exceedingly rich ethnographic source... [that] ... provide insight into the perspectives and understandings of prisoners and the everyday experience of prison life in Canada” (p. 1). In her Master’s research, Jackson (2019) points out that prison writing:

provides insights into the lived experience[s] of prison[er]s that cannot be conveyed through demographic information, statistical methodologies, or economic analyses of prisons. Instead, the study of prison writing is oriented towards an understanding of individual narratives and collective knowledge production that serve to highlight the historiographical context of penal discourse (p. 25).

In this way, Jackson identifies what prison writing, such as the stories in *Tightwire*, have to offer mainstream and/or quantitative criminology – that is, a much more in-depth analysis of individual and shared narratives that shed light onto the carceral system. Moreover, Canadian literature scholars Roxanne Rimstead and Deena Rymhs (2011) argue that prison newsletters are

useful for and representative of more than just everyday prisoner and prison life. Instead, they perceive prison storytelling as a liberatory gesture insofar as it offers an imaginative space that transcends the confines of the prison (Rimstead & Rymhs, 2011). Similarly, Foran (1998) argues that the women's writing in *Tightwire* "proves that the prison sentence had not fully contained them" (p. 4). Jackson (2019) also identifies this liberatory gesture in the pages of *Tightwire* and argues that, by publishing their stories, the women were able to share their experiences beyond the prison walls. Importantly, *Tightwire* even crossed international borders such as the United States, Mexico, England, Ireland, and Denmark – thus reaching a widespread and diverse readership (Foran, 1998; Jackson, 2019). This is significant because, as Jackson (2019) points out, "the ability of *Tightwire* authors to convey their lived experience in a way that is relatable and accessible to so many other prisoners, regardless of gender or even country, speaks to the value of their work" (p. 43). Part of what created this solidarity across diverse experiences and national borders was the use of shared language that countered the dishonest vocabulary that was produced in and circulated by CSC (Foran, 1998; Jackson, 2019). For instance, storytellers in *Tightwire* used the terms "hell", "government tomb", "medieval castle", "cage", "warehouse", among others to describe P4W (Foran, 1998).

In the 1950s and 1960s, there were several social movements (e.g., anti-colonial, black liberation, feminism, and the radical prison movement) that produced internationally recognized intellectuals and writers who were often imprisoned for their beliefs and work (Gaucher, 1999; Sims, 2020). With the increasing number of intellectuals being imprisoned, the prisoner climate shifted such that distinguishing between political activists and "common criminals" became increasingly difficult as both groups were simultaneously thrust into political action. This action

often occurred through prison writing and prisoners were often praised for their insights into the hidden world of prisons and prisoners (Gaucher, 1999; Sims, 2020).

During the 1980s and 1990s, the wider political climate also underwent changes that impacted and continue to impact prison writing. Neoliberal values and practices have led to the reduction of state spending on social services, such as welfare and employment benefits, as well as an increased culture of control and a “political appetite for incarceration” (Altamirano-Jiménez, 2018; Pollack, 2009, p. 113). This period is also known as the “punitive turn” and, despite the decrease in serious crime, it is associated with dramatic increases in prison rates – particularly for the most marginalized members of society such as Indigenous women (Pollack, 2009). As such, the prison has become a repository for those whom social services are no longer available to or have dramatically decreased for (e.g., those living with mental illness, drug addiction, poverty, and sickness). The fact that the most marginalized members of society are being imprisoned at staggering rates is significant in light of their relative inability to contribute to public narratives about their lived experiences. Additionally, the fact that they are imprisoned renders their ability to contribute to these narratives even less likely, and when they are able to contribute, their imprisonment creates the perception that their contributions are not legitimate sources of information (Pollack, 2014). However, as Foran (1998) notes, readers’ perceptions of *Tightwire* as a legitimate and trustworthy outlet increased when the women’s stories began regularly featuring important contributions from First Nations and feminist thinkers.

Emerging from the blurring of different types of prisoners (e.g., “traditional” criminals/prisoners and political prisoners) was the amalgamation of several genres of prison writing – relatively traditional collective perspectives of minority groups, focus on radical dissent and class struggle among those of European descent, and focus on the prisoner as a

subclass (Foran, 1998; Gaucher, 1999). This redefinition of prisoners and the prisons' relationship to society was especially apparent among Indigenous prisoners in Canada (Gaucher, 1999). Gaucher (1999) describes how "within the prison writing genre a rich mix of perspectives and styles mingled with the radical politics of resistance and rebellion that swept across the West and throughout its colonial properties" (p. 22). In this way, prison writing's traditional focus on penal custom and criminal justice gradually shifted towards increased political solidarity and association with revolutionary anti-colonial struggles that encouraged "domestic rage and resistance that was growing outside the prison walls" (Gaucher, 1999, p. 21). Foran (1998) similarly notes this shift in *Tightwire* specifically and argues that "both inside and outside writings feed off each other" (p. 17). As such, prison writing tends not only to reflect the injustices occurring inside of the prison, but also the injustices that occur outside of the prison. Moreover, not only do intellectual discourses from non-incarcerated people impact incarcerated storytellers, but the stories of prisoners affect outside intellectuals (Foran, 1998; Jackson, 2019).

Indeed, there are various ways of understanding prison storytelling. When engaging with prisoners' writings, literature and creative writing scholar Doran Larson (cited in Lyons, 2018) argues that it is important to read not just the individual essays (which may be very moving and inspiring), but rather the aggregate, which he claims is most valuable and instructive¹⁷. This is because, over the years, the same themes continue to emerge (e.g., violence, abuse, and addiction). Interestingly, although these experiences are written about at different times and in various geographical locations, the thematic similarities make them appear as though they have

¹⁷ The practice of reading newsletters in their entirety – as opposed to individual stories within the newsletter – aligns with the concept of intertextuality. Feminist print scholar Agatha Beins (2017) explains that analyzing entire bodies of texts emphasizes the ways in which they relate to one another.

all originated from within the same prison (Lyons, 2018). Together, these stories provide counter-narratives that sharply contrast with what is perceived by the dominant culture as objective knowledge, for instance that which is encapsulated within official policies, reports, laws, and legal cases that function to detail official truths about criminal acts (Piché & Major, 2015). These official documents are what Smith (1990) refers to as “textual facts” that function to mask the lived realities of those who are criminalized. Given this, it is not surprising that Sims (2020) states that:

It is easy to see why legislatures, penal administrators, and the criminal system at large are invested in disciplining and patrolling the incarcerated voice. Historically, the voices of the incarcerated, particularly in the radical prison movement of the 1960s, were voices of dissent against the state that threatened to expose state brutality and human rights violations. In their collectivity, they were a threatening presence on the national stage (p. 205-206).

That is, particularly when considered as a whole, prison stories have immense power in their abilities to shed light on prisoners’ valid concerns – and there were various dominant mainstream institutions that benefited from the silencing of prisoners’ voices. In her article regarding resistance in women’s prison writing in the Hawaiian context, Sims (2020) also discusses how critical literary praxis, such as those found in prisoner-produced newsletters like *Tightwire*, supports and sponsors incarcerated women’s contributions to their self-representations, builds critical literacy regarding prison conditions – both within and beyond the prison, accelerates the tactical redistribution of power, and works to create solidarity across privilege.

Given the exposure of power relations and privilege in prison writing, it is not surprising that mainstream institutions sought to silence prison storytellers. In Canada and the USA, the context of radical politics in the 1960s created state calls for increased censorship of (prison) writing – this vastly affected both the international penal press and national penal presses that were established in the 1950s and circulated prison writing to broad public audiences (Clarkson

& Munn, 2021; Foran, 1998; Gaucher, 1999; Jackson, 2019; Sims, 2020). Unfortunately, increased censorship led to the demise of the international penal press network and many of its publications (Clarkson & Munn, 2021; Gaucher, 1999). The Canadian Penal Press similarly struggled and almost ceased to exist in the mid-1960s; fortunately though, it had a resurgence in the 1980s that included some high quality, outside directed writing again, as well as a specific focus on criminal (in)justice system issues (Gaucher, 1989). Following this, in the late 1990s in Canada, there was a moral panic driven by punitively oriented victims of crime who pursued a bill that aimed to prevent criminalized and incarcerated individuals from publishing their writing. While the bill's stated focus was on "true crime" writing that depicted "gory details" and "heinous criminal acts", it was later revealed that it had a much broader focus that proposed banning all criminalized and imprisoned peoples from publishing their writing – which ultimately led to the rejection of the bill (Gaucher, 1999).

More recently, the Canadian Penal Press continues to exist despite enormous obstacles such as decreased funding, low prisoner literacy levels, constant prisoner transferring, and remaining almost entirely excluded from literary archives (Foran, 1998; Gaucher, 1989; Rimstead & Rymhs, 2011). Today, prison writing (including both outside and inside directed magazines among other types of publications) exists outside the prison walls in several contexts. For instance, in the United States, Doran Larson created the *American Prison Writing Archive* (APWA), an open-source digital archive with an ongoing call for prisoner-written essays (Lyons, 2018). The explicit goal of this archive is to "spread the voices of unheard populations" (Lyons, 2018, p. 17). In Canada, the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* (JPP) has been publishing prisoners' stories (including, primarily writing, but also some visual art) for over 25-years (Piché & Major, 2015). The JPP is an academic peer reviewed journal that is based on the tradition of

the penal press and aims to develop relationships and collaborations with prisoners in order to encourage their research and writing as well as helping to critically contextualize their knowledges (Piché & Major, 2015). Finally, the Penal Press website, run by critical criminologist Melissa Munn, is an online archive of prisoner-produced newsletters – primarily hosting Canadian, but also international, newsletters. I will return to this website in my methodology chapter as it is the primary source from which I obtained my sample of *Tightwire* newsletters.

Indigenous (Women's) Prison Storytelling

While prison writing research is relatively minimal, even smaller are examples of research regarding the storytelling practices of Indigenous prisoners. One example of work that concerns Indigenous prison writing is Deena Rymhs' book *From the Iron House* (2008). While Rymhs' (2008) work does not exclusively focus on the prison, but rather on imprisonment (which she argues occurs within a variety of spaces such as the prison and residential school systems), she draws on postcolonial, gender, and Indigenous studies to examine how Indigenous peoples write about the carceral. Rymhs' (2008) work highlights the political imaginations of Indigenous prisoners in Canada who have utilized the penal press to raise intellectual and political consciousness of other prisoners since the 1960s (Rimstead & Rymhs, 2011). While her book is vital because it represents one of the only sustained works on Indigenous writing within the carceral space, her work merits expansion in several areas. For instance, the majority of Rymhs' (2008) book focuses on Indigenous men's writings rather than Indigenous women's writings. Her work also does not include storytelling practices other than writing, which makes sense given her literary background but is nonetheless an area for expansion. Finally, her research topic would benefit from a critical feminist criminological perspective that is informed

by Indigenous *feminisms*. My work is like Rymhs' in that I draw from some of the same fields of study (most notably, gender and Indigenous studies). However, my work is distinct in that I draw from the fields of critical and feminist criminology and Indigenous feminisms which provide more depth and specificity to the unique experiences of criminalized Indigenous women. Furthermore, I focus exclusively on Indigenous *women's* stories that were produced within the *prison* setting – rather than on all Indigenous peoples' stories regarding imprisonment contexts, such as the residential school system. Lastly, my research includes not only textual, but visual, stories. In these ways, I draw on Rymhs' work while also expanding it, thereby addressing gaps in existing scholarship.

A second example of research that examines Indigenous prison writing is historian Seth Adema's (2015) doctoral dissertation. Adema (2015) examines Indigenous narratives about genocide in the Canadian prison system between 1980 and 1996. While his work exclusively explores Indigenous writing produced within the prison, it only details a relatively small amount of Indigenous *women's* prison writing. Similar to Rymhs (2008), Adema (2015) also only examines prison *writing* which excludes other types of storytelling practices that occur within the prison setting, such as drawing. Adema's (2015) focus is further narrowed by exclusively concentrating on narratives of genocidal survival which Emma LaRocque (2009) has critiqued because "Native women have moved far beyond survival" (p. 152). Finally, Adema's (2015) work stems from a historical framework, rather than a critical feminist criminological perspective that draws on Indigenous feminisms. Again, this is where my research fits into and addresses gaps within the current scholarship.

Research regarding incarcerated Indigenous women's stories about their firsthand experiences of Canada's prison system is largely non-existent. However, there is one particular

woman's story that represents an exception in terms of researchers' interests (Duek, 2001; Foran, 1998). This story is a published co-authored (auto)biography by Rudy Wiebe and Yvonne Johnson entitled *Stolen Life: The Journey of a Cree Woman* (1998). *Stolen Life* details Johnson's life story as well as her incarceration for the first-degree murder of a man she (and others) mistakenly believed had sexually assaulted children. This book was created with the use of various sources that Wiebe describes in the preface as Johnson's "seventeen black prison notebooks, her letters to me, her comments on official records and documents, her statements to police, my notes of our conversations in person and on the telephone, [and] numerous audiotapes" (Wiebe & Johnson, 1998, p. xi). However, much of the writing was by Wiebe. Indeed, Wiebe is listed as first author; Johnson is second author.

While *Stolen Life* is a work of great importance and is one-of-a-kind in terms of detailing an Indigenous woman's life who was convicted of murder in Canada, it is imperative to distinguish between *Stolen Life* and stories by women in *Tightwire*. While Johnson produced her personal stories in notebooks while she was incarcerated at P4W, these stories were heavily mediated and ultimately selected for inclusion by Wiebe – a non-incarcerated white man – whose idea it was to produce *Stolen Life*. In her talk at the University of Alberta on October 3, 2019, Yvonne noted how the book became more a reflection of Wiebe than her. By contrast, most stories in *Tightwire* were produced within the confines of P4W (and other prisons) – the purpose of which was for the women to express themselves and share their perspectives with *Tightwire* subscribers. The only mediator in *Tightwire*'s case were administrative staff at P4W which did not become increasingly prevalent until the newsletter was well established (Foran, 1998).

Although *Stolen Life* has received its fair share of scholarly critiques, particularly because of Wiebe's identity as a non-incarcerated white man (Duek, 2001), the stories of women like

Johnson – those who are Indigenous and incarcerated for violence – do not often exist in dominant Canadian culture (Chen & Fiander, 2017). Thus, everyone has a lot to learn from them. Specifically, (incarcerated) Indigenous women's stories often serve to challenge dominant popular cultural (re)presentations about them by providing an alternative framework of understanding that is based on their lived experiences of the intersections of colonial patriarchy (and criminalization). For instance, in her work with incarcerated women in Hawaii, Sims (2020) notes that the women's creative writing "signal histories and self-understandings far more complex than the polarizing labels of 'victim' or 'perpetrator' convey" (p. 203). The women's stories were overwhelmingly filled with trauma – related to and/or stemming from their childhoods and families as well as their experiences of living in poverty, committing crimes, arrest and incarceration. For Indigenous Hawaiians, Sims (2020) found that, in addition to disclosing the above experiences of trauma, they also experienced colonial trauma stemming from the American government's attempts to eliminate them.

Prison storytelling may be especially meaningful to Indigenous women because it includes them in the very discourses that help explain their criminalization, it aligns with their cultural traditions, and it encourages them to creatively reflect on their lives (George, 2010; Lucas, 2011). Such reflexive practice in prison storytelling is a pedagogical tool because it enables prison storytellers, as well as their readers, to better understand the intersectional workings of colonialism, patriarchy, and the criminal (in)justice system (Benson, 2020; Foran, 1998; Jackson, 2019; Sims, 2020). Furthermore, stories such as Yvonne Johnson's and those within *Tightwire* enable women to provide comments on and critique their own records – opportunities that rarely, if ever, otherwise occur. Crucially, this aspect of Yvonne Johnson's and, as readers will see in my chapter seven, Fran Sugar's storytelling have power to counteract

some of the issues that feminist Dorothy Smith (1990) illuminates regarding the discursive power of official documents, “textual realities”, and “objective truths”.

In terms of *Tightwire* specifically, I have identified two sustained studies on it. The first is a Master’s thesis in the Department of English at McGill University by Frances Foran (1998). In her work, Foran examines the development of women’s prison writing within *Tightwire*, as well as in *Stolen Life* (1998), to analyze connections between prisoners’ stories and legal discourse and practice. Overall, Foran (1998) argues that *Tightwire* was a vehicle from which incarcerated women were able to develop as a subject group and thus influence changes in legal and correctional discourses. While Foran’s research offers a critically important perspective regarding specific language and law reforms, my work is broader in that my primary focus was the overall meaning behind the women’s narratives and analytical connections that I identified in their stories regarding Canada’s carceral past and present.

The second longstanding project that focuses on *Tightwire* is another Master’s thesis – this one by Julie Jackson (2019) in the Department of Sociology at Queen’s University. Jackson examines *Tightwire* in relation to political discourse around collective experiences of incarceration. While Jackson (2019) provides invaluable contextual and structural details to my research, she analyzes only the pages she considers “politically relevant”, excludes visual art (despite noting its prevalence), and does not include the photographs she took of *Tightwire* as evidence of her arguments and/or as a measure of researcher transparency (p. 33). These issues are addressed in my work because I consider all stories in *Tightwire* as politically relevant and included as many of them as I could. I also included visual art in my analyses, and I provided readers with full copies of select *Tightwire* stories to maintain transparency and further center the

women's stories. To be clear, while my work draws on Foran (1998) and Jackson (2019), I ask different research questions and employ distinct methodological approaches.

Part 2

Intersections of Colonial and Patriarchal Violence

While there are various factors¹⁸ that influence Canadian culture as well as its criminal (in)justice system, I am particularly interested in contextualizing Indigenous women's experiences of incarceration by examining the intersections of colonial and patriarchal violence¹⁹. Cultural anthropologist M. Gabriela Torres (2018) defines violence as “the imposition of harm on individuals or communities through the use of force, intimidation or structural impediments by individuals and/or institutions” (p. 394). While violence is clearly multifaceted, perhaps one of its most common characterizations relates to interpersonal violence. In terms of interpersonal violence, colonialism and patriarchy not only create conditions in which Indigenous women are much more likely to be victims of violence than their non-Indigenous counterparts (Monchalin, 2016), but also those conditions in which (Indigenous) women perceive themselves as having little other options than to protect themselves from violence *with* violence (Comack, 2018; Neve & Pate, 2005; Renzetti, 1999; Swan, Gambone, Caldwell, Sullivan, & Snow, 2008). Lisa Monchalin (2016) an Algonquin, Métis, Huron, and Scottish Indigenous criminologist, paints an alarming picture of Indigenous women's experiences of

¹⁸ Two examples of factors that influence the Canadian criminal (in)justice system that I do not discuss in my work are capitalism and globalization. For more information on these aspects of Canadian culture, see Comack (2018).

¹⁹ Although many Indigenous peoples have more extreme, prolonged, and numerous experiences of many different types of violence than their non-Indigenous counterparts (Monchalin, 2016), in no way do I intend for my use of the term ‘violence’ to take away from the lived realities of other groups who have experienced similar or other atrocities.

violence. She states that “Indigenous women are almost three times more likely than non-Indigenous women to become a victim of a violent crime in Canada... Indigenous women are also more likely to be victims of spousal violence than are non-Indigenous women” (Monchalin, 2016, p. 16). Additionally, in 2014, Indigenous women were six-times more likely to be murdered than non-Indigenous women (3.64 per 100,000 Indigenous women relative to 0.65 per 100,000 non-Indigenous women) (Monchalin, 2016). In more recent studies, 26 percent of Indigenous women had experiences of childhood sexual abuse compared to 9.2 percent of non-Indigenous women (Perreault, 2022). Moreover, between 2015 and 2020, nearly half (47 percent) of Indigenous women aged 15 and older who were murdered were killed by an intimate partner – which, while similar in percentage relative to non-Indigenous women (49 percent), is much higher compared to Indigenous men (7.3 percent) and non-Indigenous men (4.6 percent) (Perreault, 2022).

When it comes to (Indigenous) women’s use of violence, it is often a response to men’s violence against them, thus their actions must be placed within this context²⁰ (Comack, 2018; Renzetti, 1999; Swan et al., 2008). The increasing rates of Indigenous women convicted of and imprisoned for violent offences (Comack 2014; 2018) are compounded by dual arrest policies in relation to domestic violence disputes whereby both partners are arrested (Neve & Tate, 2005; Brennan, 2014). This means that even when the majority of women’s acts of violence are in the name of self-preservation (Sheehy, Stubbs, & Tolmie, 2010), and have nothing to do with their children (except, in many cases, to protect them), Indigenous women tend to be perceived by service providers and authorities as “bad women” and “bad mothers” who are dangerous

²⁰ Of course, not all (Indigenous) women commit violence within this context; thus, all instances merit individual examination. However, for the purpose of this discussion, I focus on the many instances of violence that are committed within a context of survival.

(Brennan, 2014; Neve & Pate, 2005; Ross, 1998). In their groundbreaking research, two Indigenous women who were incarcerated at P4W – Fran Sugar and Lana Fox (1989) – similarly identify how being Indigenous, women, and convicted of violence contributed to how they were perceived by P4W administration. Sugar and Fox (1989) state:

The stories we heard [from Indigenous women incarcerated at P4W] are to a large extent about violence. In terms of the criminal justice system, many of us were convicted and sentenced to federal prison for crimes of violence. [...] From the viewpoint of criminal statistics, these facts mark us as an unusual group. Violent crimes are typically male crimes; women are usually the victims of violence. To be a woman and to be *seen* as violent is to be especially marked in the eyes of the administrations of the prisons where women do time, and in the eyes of the staff who guard them. [...] The label “violent” begets a self-perpetuating and descriptive cycle for Aboriginal women within prisons. In P4W, everything follows from this label. But the prison regimen that follows serves to re-enforce the violence that it is supposedly designed to manage (p. 470, emphasis in original).

For Sugar and Fox, the violence committed by Indigenous women who were eventually imprisoned in P4W reflects the violence they experienced prior to and during incarceration. In their report, they state that “for Aboriginal women, prison is an extension of life on the outside, and because of this it is impossible for us to heal there” (Sugar & Fox, 1989, p. 476). However, P4W staff did not share this perception. This is because the ways in which Indigenous women’s violence is often perceived are typically not grounded in the everyday realities of many Indigenous women’s lives and are drenched in colonial, patriarchal, and neoliberal stereotypes that imagine Indigenous women as “drunks” (Landertinger, 2015; Ross, 1998; Vowel, 2016) – and in the case of those experiencing domestic abuse – who should work things out with their male partners, and/or have the capability and choice (Brown & Bloom, 2009) of whether or not to leave the relationship. Moreover, these perceptions ignore the contexts within which women commit violence – under the threat and violence of male partners (Neve & Tate, 2005; Sheehy, Stubbs, & Tolmie, 2010; TFFSW, 1990), and the risk of serious injury or death if they try to

leave the relationship (Swan et al., 2008). For Indigenous women who were federally sentenced in the community, 34 out of 39 women had experiences of violence (TFFSW, 1990). Of these women, 25 of them experienced violence from a spouse, 12 from tricks who were (sexually) violent – in 9 of these cases, the women responded with violence towards their tricks – and some had also experienced violence at the hands of police and prison guards (TFFSW, 1990).

Problematically, service providers and authorities do not often try to understand why women commit violent acts in the first place, thus their violence is not contextualized and tends to be misunderstood (Neve & Pate, 2005). As Neve and Pate (2005) argue, “it is unrealistic to tell women and girls... that they must stop the behavior that allowed them to survive the multigenerational impacts of colonization, poverty, abuse, and disability without providing them with income, housing, and medical, educational, or other supports” (p. 32). All together then, many women learn that there are only two options when it comes to violence – to be the perpetrator or the victim; and for the women who choose the former, “gender-neutral” zero tolerance policies result in the criminalization of their survival skills (Neve & Pate, 2005). While many of these contexts are true for all women, it is imperative to note the unique experiences of Indigenous women. *Creating Choices* (1990) – the report of the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women – identified that Indigenous women “spoke of living with racism” and explained that “racism and oppression are the preconditions of the violence” experienced by Indigenous women throughout their lives (p. 42). Not only did the women experience violence while federally sentenced, but they also described “systematic violence throughout their lives by those they lived with, those they depended on and those they loved and trust”, including experiences of childhood sexual abuse, witnessing domestic violence and murder, and beatings by staff and other children in juvenile detention centres (TFFSW, 1990, p. 42). As one paroled

Indigenous woman who was a member of the Task Force Steering Committee as well as the Aboriginal Women's Caucus²¹ states in research for the *Creating Choices* (1990) report:

The critical difference [between Indigenous and non-Indigenous women in terms of lived experience] is racism. We are born to it and spend our lives facing it. Racism lies at the root of our life experiences. The effect is violence, violence against us, and in turn our own violence (p. 13).

That is, racism factors into all interpersonal experiences of violence for Indigenous women – whether it is violent acts committed against or by them.

In addition to interpersonal violence, we can also think more deeply through the intersections of colonial and patriarchal violence as being perpetrated by societal institutions. The exclusion of criminalized and Indigenous women from dominant media and culture is colonial and patriarchal violence. This is particularly the case when Indigenous women are excluded from narrating their own lived experiences, including their involvement in the criminal (in)justice system (Foran, 1998; Pollack, 2014; TFFSW, 1990) because, without these firsthand accounts, non-Indigenous people are likely to only have exposure to uncontextualized explanations of Indigenous women's lives which further entrench and strengthen stereotypical understandings. Similarly, when non-criminalized Indigenous peoples do not have access to firsthand accounts of criminalized Indigenous peoples, they will likely struggle to understand the criminalization process as it pertains to Indigenous peoples. Such exclusionary violence is what sociologist Gaye Tuchman (1978) refers to as “symbolic annihilation” which essentially refers to the underrepresentation of particular groups in dominant popular culture despite their existence in greater society, and when they are represented, it is in harmful and stereotypical manners. Tuchman (1978) argues that this lack of representation symbolizes to greater society that

²¹ The Aboriginal Women's Caucus' is a group focused on creating social justice for Indigenous women in conflict with the law (TFFSW, 1990).

particular groups are to be devalued, condemned, and trivialized. While Tuchman's (1978) argument refers to women as a whole, other scholars have made similar arguments in regard to specific groups of women such as criminalized and Indigenous women (Foran, 1998; Landertinger, 2015; Pollack, 2014; Voyageur, 2005).

The exclusion of criminalized Indigenous women's stories and knowledges from dominant culture typically occurs in tandem with – and is accomplished through – the perpetuation of racist and sexist stereotypes that influence public understanding of Indigenous women's acts of violence specifically as well as their criminalization more broadly (Dell et al., 2014; Kilty & Frigon, 2016; TFFSW, 1990). For instance, women who commit violence are often depicted as bad, mad, out of control, and dangerous (Kilty & Frigon, 2016; Scheuneman Scott & Kilty, 2016); while Indigenous women are similarly (re)presented as innately immoral, violent, dangerous, and uncontrollable (Landertinger, 2015). Furthermore, Indigenous peoples as a whole are stereotypically (mis)represented as broken, inferior, poor, uneducated, lazy, dirty, and excessive drinkers (Chartrand, 2019; Ross, 1998; Sangster, 2021; TFFSW, 1990; Vowel, 2016; Voyageur, 2005). Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation scholar Cora Voyageur (2005) provides some details about this issue, stating that:

Aboriginal people were not always in control of their stories or images as they are today. At the turn of the twentieth century, when it came to mass media Aboriginal people of Canada were at the mercy of those with the ability to write and access to the press. Whatever the writer's agenda—selling newspapers, titillating adventure-seeking settlers, quelling the fears of would-be pioneers, or rationalizing the taking of Indian land—Aboriginals were often objectified. They generally served merely as topics of mainstream writing, as neither active participants nor authors of their own stories. Furthermore, Aboriginals played diverse and, at times, contradictory roles within that media. Sometimes they were romanticized heroes, while at other times they were the embodiment of White angst – savage, unpredictable, and uncivilized (p. 101).

Indeed, Voyageur (2005) reports seeing little reflection of herself in Canadian media during the 1960s when she was growing up. When she did see depictions of Indigenous peoples on television, they were overwhelmingly negative, mythical, and/or inaccurate. During the same time period, in print media, depictions of Indigenous peoples were virtually non-existent (Voyageur, 2005). Moreover, dominant media typically (mis)represent Indigenous peoples as “little more than ‘problem people’ who are problems, who have problems, and who create problems” (Fleras, 2011, p. 189).

This type of colonial “logic” is violent in that it represses Indigenous peoples through its pervasive integration into the mainstream modern belief system to the point that non-Indigenous people struggle to recognize its patterns and/or challenge its structures (Chartrand, 2019). Contemporary colonial (mis)understandings of Indigenous peoples are linked to the myth of progress in that there is an overarching belief that as time passes, we progress as a society – hence the belief that stereotypes cease to exist as society progresses (Vowel, 2016). Moreover, stereotypes about Indigenous peoples are enforced by mainstream media’s referral to the “legacy” of colonialism which, critical criminologist and settler-Indigenous studies scholar Vicki Chartrand (2019) argues, frames colonialism as something that happened in the past – thus denying existing colonial relations as well as the relationship between incarceration, sovereignty, and the state. This combined exclusion and accompanying (re)characterization and (mis)representation is violent towards Indigenous women in that it aims to erase the experiences and knowledges of Indigenous peoples (as well as the effects of colonialism and patriarchy) and replace them with those of the dominant group that often depict racialized and gendered stereotypes that uphold racism, sexism, and misogyny (Dell et al., 2014; Green, 2007; Kilty & Frigon, 2016; Monchalin, 2016; Voyageur, 2005).

Beyond misinterpreting their acts of violence, stereotypes also play a role in the criminalization of Indigenous women, and thus the colonial patriarchal violence that they experience in the criminal justice system (Chartrand, 2019; Ross, 1998; Sangster, 2021; Scheuneman Scott, 2019; Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021; TFFSW, 1990). Indeed, Chartrand (2019) explains that “a logic of colonialism emerged within modern narratives of progress that made the containment, segregation, assimilation, and elimination of entire populations a central feature of its organizing practices” (p. 71). Similarly, in her article regarding incarcerated Indigenous women between 1920 and 1960, Joan Sangster (2021), a gender and social justice scholar, explains how Indigenous women’s convictions were part of a larger “web of gendered [and racialized] moral regulation articulated through the law” in that Indigenous women whose behaviours were considered unfeminine, unacceptable, abnormal, and/or threatening to society were disciplined (p. 388).

For Indigenous women and peoples, this discipline results in their disproportionate classification as “high risk” and their subsequent placement in maximum security, as well as the increased likelihood of guards’ use of extreme force against them (Chartrand, 2019; Comack, 2014; Landertinger, 2015; Nichols, 2014; Palmater, 2015; Ross, 1998). While all women in Sangster’s (2021) study were arrested primarily for crimes of public order and morality and came from impoverished and insecure backgrounds, Indigenous women’s experiences of criminalization and incarceration were profoundly different due to racist state policies that “overregulated” them, racialized constructions (i.e., stereotypes) regarding Indigenous women, as well as cultural differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. In these ways, the criminal justice system reproduced – and continues to reproduce – power relations based on stereotypes regarding gender, race, and economic marginality (Ross, 1998; Sangster, 2021).

Moving onto one final conceptualization of violence, I now turn to state violence – a term I believe helps make sense of Indigenous women’s experiences of criminalization. Torres (2018) defines state violence as “the use of force and/or other intimidation practices by state agents and state institutions typically for the purposes of state-building” (p. 394). When contemplating violence, an important consideration is asking what and who constitutes violence, as well as violent crime. The answer here is the state – it creates the definition of violent crime, and thus conveniently excludes itself from any implication of violence, instead targeting individuals (and select groups) for criminal accusation (Cunneen, 2007). These definitions and accompanying processes are not neutral but rather aim to disproportionately implicate certain people, such as Indigenous women. Indeed, some critical scholars, such as Chris Cunneen (2007) – a leading criminologist in the area of Indigenous and prison issues – argue that the modern political state is actually built on the human rights abuses of colonized peoples.

While the colonial state is impossible to deny in terms of Europeans’ arrival on, claiming and naming of Canada, and creation of a new government, patriarchy’s implications may be more difficult to articulate. This is because patriarchy is embedded within colonialism, and both of them were introduced to Indigenous cultures at the same time²²; thus, the effects of such phenomena may be difficult to tease apart independently and are best understood as intersectional. Their intersections are in part demonstrated by Europeans’ refusal to negotiate with Indigenous women who were often leaders of their communities and contributed to making important community decisions (Barman, 2010). The refusals of Europeans not only excluded

²² While the majority of Indigenous cultures were not believed to be patriarchal pre-contact with Europeans, there is some evidence to suggest that some Indigenous cultures actually had some patriarchal aspects to them (Barman, 2010). Therefore, it is important that we not romanticize or essentialize Indigenous cultures as never having patriarchal practices pre-contact.

Indigenous women from participating in negotiations with them, but also effectively removed Indigenous women from positions of power within Indigenous communities as they were increasingly filtered out of decision-making processes (Barman, 2010) – thus having enormous negative impacts on Indigenous communities and their methods of governance, many of which continue to have ripple effects today (Monchalin, 2016).

It is important to note that not only are Indigenous peoples likely to be targets of state violence due to colonialism and racism, but the intersections with patriarchy and sexism make it so that Indigenous women are more likely than Indigenous men to be targeted and affected by state violence. One example of the intersection of colonialism and patriarchy is when a status Indigenous woman lost her status if she married a non-status man²³ (Monchalin, 2016). In such cases, children of these marriages also lost their status along with any benefits that status provided. In this way, the Canadian government used the Indian Act to define “Indian” and “Indian status” in an attempt to control the Indigenous population, particularly women and children who were the most negatively affected by this law (Monchalin, 2016).

A more recent example of the intersections of colonialism and patriarchy within the state and its violence towards Indigenous peoples is the hyper-criminalization and incarceration of Indigenous peoples, particularly women (Comack, 2018; Nichols, 2014). Monchalin (2016) argues that today “Indigenous peoples are facing yet another form of injustice and crime. They are being criminalized by a system that is supposedly set up to achieve justice for all” (p. 143). Note that Monchalin uses the word “crime” here to describe the state’s power to criminalize Indigenous peoples. While incarceration harms all people, it is especially harmful and inappropriate to Indigenous communities who do not share imprisonment as a method of

²³ This law was later reversed in 1985 (Monchalin, 2016).

controlling harm (Monchalin, 2016; Nichols, 2014). The harm caused by the hyper-incarceration of Indigenous mothers is one prominent example of the changing yet ongoing nature of settler colonialism in Canada (Scheuneman Scott, 2019) – an example of which I return to in chapter six.

By putting the literature on colonialism, patriarchy, and state violence together conceptually, it is clear that these intersectional oppressions makeup the foundation of Canada's criminal (in)justice system – particularly as it pertains to the lives of Indigenous women²⁴. At the same time that colonial violence is informed by racist and sexist stereotypes, it also upholds them by frequently omitting social and political contexts surrounding narratives of (criminalized and incarcerated) Indigenous women (Pollack, 2014). This includes ignoring changing and diverse practices and effects of colonialism and patriarchy. For example, while residential schools and the 60s scoop are now perceived by many non-Indigenous people as obvious examples of colonialism, at the time they were characterized by dominant Canadian society as being in the best interests of Indigenous children (Monchalin, 2016). However, what remains to be commonly understood as colonial are the newer institutions that were put into place for the purpose of assimilating Indigenous peoples via coercive measures – again, by forced removal of Indigenous peoples, both adults and children, from their communities (Chartrand, 2019; Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021; Ross, 1998). Examples of contemporary colonial and patriarchal institutions are the prison and child welfare systems. Together, these systems implicate more Indigenous women and children than residential schools ever did (Landertinger,

²⁴ Importantly, the intersections of colonialism and patriarchy, both in the criminal (in)justice system and greater society, do not only affect Indigenous peoples, but also non-Indigenous people as well as the relations between these two groups.

2015), yet they are often perceived by dominant Canadian culture as not having a colonial influence or impact (Chartrand, 2019; Monchalin, 2016).

The Hyper Incarceration of Indigenous Women in Canada

In Canada, Indigenous peoples are incarcerated at a rate of approximately ten times higher than non-Indigenous peoples (Palmater, 2015). In fact, Indigenous peoples in Canada are more likely to be imprisoned than they are to attend university; this is especially true for Indigenous women (Monture, 2011). Between 1998 and 2008, there was a 131 percent increase in the rate of federally sentenced²⁵ Indigenous women (Monchalin, 2016); and between 2005 and 2015, the rate of incarcerated Indigenous women rose by almost 90 percent such that one in every three women in Canada's federal prisons are Indigenous (Comack, 2018; Landertinger, 2015). Recently, Indigenous women are the fastest growing segment of Canada's prison population (Landertinger, 2015; Monchalin, 2016; Nichols, 2014). These numbers are even more pronounced in Canada's prairie provinces, such as Manitoba and Saskatchewan, as well as in provincial prisons where Indigenous women makeup anywhere from 90-99 percent of prisoners (Landertinger, 2015). In Alberta, Indigenous women represent over 50 percent of federal prisoners at Edmonton Institution for Women (Comack, 2018; Palmater, 2015).

This is alarming for several reasons. First, Indigenous women make up only four percent of the general Canadian population (Comack, 2018). If the criminal (in)justice system was indeed 'blind' and impartial to power and all its relations, then Indigenous women's incarceration rates would reflect their percentage of the general population (i.e., four); however, this is clearly not the case. Second, Indigenous peoples never agreed to the laws, policies, or

²⁵ Federal institutions confine people who are sentenced to two years or more incarceration; while provincial institutions incarcerate people who are sentenced to two years less a day (Hayman, 2006).

practices that were forcefully implemented by Europeans; thus, Indigenous peoples' incarceration in and of itself can be interpreted as an Indigenous rights²⁶ violation (Chartrand, 2016). It is critical to differentiate between Indigenous rights and human rights because when Indigenous rights are not recognized, Indigenous peoples are wrongfully conceived of as simply another ethnic minority group who have no prior claims to sovereignty and whose claims may be overridden in the name of the greater Canadian good (Chartrand, 2016; Kulchyski, 2013). Third, the crimes that Indigenous women are most often convicted of are characterized by issues surrounding extreme (and feminized) poverty such as drug (ab)use²⁷ and sex work (Sangster, 2021; Snyder, 2018). Prison does little – if anything – to address poverty (Sugar & Fox, 1989); thus, we can expect that the same Indigenous women will be repeatedly imprisoned for these types of “crimes”.

Sangster (2021) notes in her study on the Mercer Reformatory for Women – the only provincial women's prison in Ontario at the time – that in the 1920s, only a few Indigenous women appeared in the prison registry. However, by the 1950s, Indigenous women were listed on virtually every page. Sangster (2021) also notes the increasing rates of Indigenous women's

²⁶ Kulchyski (2013) explains that human rights are “rights and freedoms that human beings enjoy inasmuch as they are human... everyone, on principle, has access to them”; whereas Indigenous rights belong to Indigenous peoples by virtue of them being Indigenous (p. 20). Furthermore, Kulchyski (2013) argues that Indigenous rights “exist for the protection of the cultural distinctiveness of indigenous peoples, in the recognition that such distinctiveness may be of value in a rapidly changing world... [Indigenous rights] therefore pull in a different direction than human rights” (p. 66-67). That is, human rights move towards what is considered common in humanity and express ideas that are predominantly believed to have universal value; whereas Indigenous rights value and support the distinct characterization of specific groups of people and emphasize the social collective of the group.

²⁷ The reason I put ‘ab’ in parentheses is because I take issue with the word ‘abuse’ as it relates to drug addiction/use. Who defines drug ‘abuse’? Where is the line between recreational use and ‘abuse’? This is the language that is commonly used throughout dominant Canadian culture as well as the criminal (in)justice system, therefore I purposefully challenge this language via the use of parentheses.

incarceration at the Mercer – two percent of the prison population in 1920s, four percent in the 1930s, seven percent in the 1940s, and over 10 percent in the 1950s – with the vast majority of repeat offences being related to alcohol. Specifically, 32 percent of Indigenous women incarcerated at the Mercer in the 1940s were convicted of alcohol related charges; this percentage jumped to 72 percent in the 1950s. To be clear, 50 percent of all women incarcerated at the Mercer were imprisoned for offences relating to alcohol; but for Indigenous women, this percentage was 70 percent (Sangster, 2021). Sangster (2021) explains these percentages by the fact that Indigenous women often lived in poverty which meant they were unable to pay alcohol-related fines and, in the absence of permanent and/or safe housing, they often drank in public spaces which was considered “distasteful to the dominant classes and culture” and increased the likelihood of arrest (p. 395). Because of Indigenous peoples’ increased likelihood of alcohol-related arrests and imprisonment, dangerous intoxicating behaviours such as “guzzling” alcohol as quickly as possible to avoid legal troubles increased – which, in the eyes of non-Indigenous people, justified racist beliefs around the stereotype of “the drunken Indian” (Vowel, 2016).

In comparison to charges relating to alcohol, Indigenous women’s charges of violence were extremely low. Indeed, in the 1940s and 1950s Indigenous women’s convictions for violence against people was only two percent (Sangster, 2021). Sangster (2021) explains that Indigenous women’s violence tended to result from anger and frustration; and was often “unsuccessful or half-hearted, desperate but not calculated” (p. 392). More recently, the number of Indigenous women convicted of violent crimes is increasing; however, as previously discussed, it is important to note that this increase may be more reflective of changing policing practices and/or an increase in the number of crimes reported as opposed to an increase in the actual number of violent acts committed (Comack, 2018). Regardless, Sangster (2021) argues

that “the legal regulation of these [Indigenous] women was an integral component of the material, social, and cultural dimensions of colonialism” (p. 389). Monture (2006) similarly states that there exists a “parallel between the social function of the prison and its impact on Aboriginal peoples and colonialism” (p. 28).

Not only are Indigenous peoples, especially women, hyper-represented across all levels of the criminal (in)justice system (Comack, 2018; Palmater, 2015), once they are incarcerated, they are disproportionately subject to the most extreme forms of incarceration, such as solitary confinement, ‘high risk’ classifications, and maximum security, all of which increase their likelihood of experiencing harsher uses of force by prison staff, acting violently towards others, as well as incidents of self-harm (Chartrand, 2019; Comack, 2014; Landertinger, 2015; Nichols, 2014; Palmater, 2015; Ross, 1998). Moreover, such carceral settings and experiences actively decrease Indigenous prisoners’ likelihood of receiving (early) parole (Landertinger, 2015; Palmater, 2015; Ross, 1998; Turnbull & Hannah-Moffat, 2009). When Indigenous women are granted parole, they are less likely to successfully complete it because they are more likely than their non-Indigenous counterparts to return to prison for even the most minor breaches (Landertinger, 2015; Palmater, 2015; Turnbull & Hannah-Moffat, 2009). For example, one of the most common parole conditions is not to associate with anyone who has a criminal record which unfairly places Indigenous peoples at greater risk of breaking this condition because many of their own community and family members also have criminal records (Baldry, 2009; Shantz et al., 2009; Turnbull & Hannah-Moffat, 2009). Ultimately, parole conditions tend to deepen all people’s re-occurring involvement within the criminal (in)justice system by creating a “revolving door”; however, this is experienced more acutely by Indigenous peoples (Comack, 2014; 2018).

Concluding Remarks

While there are some documents that provide first-hand-accounts of experiences of criminalization and incarceration in Canada (Chen & Fiander, 2017; Gaucher, 1989; Piché, 2008), they are not typically included in literary or academic canons, and scholars largely neglect those that do exist (Rymhs, 2008). This exclusion is strange given that one of the most internationally cited experts in prison writing is Canadian sociologist Ioan Davies' *Writers in Prison* (1990), which examines the narratives of male writers who are sent to prison for political reasons (Rimstead & Rymhs, 2011). In other words, Davies (1990) focuses on the most privileged prisoners – those who are literate and able to be politically active. While there is some research on prison writing, even more marginal is research that exclusively examines incarcerated Indigenous women's storytelling practices. My research helps to address these gaps.

It is imperative that researchers take up incarcerated Indigenous women's stories especially considering the shifting carceral contexts and prisoner demographics, extreme state interventions, and administrative control tactics that are rampant and aim to shut down stories of what happens behind prison walls (Piché, 2008; Rimstead & Rymhs, 2011). Moreover, when the rates of people entering the prison system, especially women, racial minorities, and those living in poverty, are at an all-time high (Comack, 2018; Comack & Balfour, 2004; Neve & Pate, 2005; Rimstead & Rymhs, 2011), Rimstead and Rymhs (2011) argue that prison writing has an "even more vital role to play in our discourses of nation" (p. 10). This is because prisoners' stories often speak to confinement, the carceral state, as well as prisoner identity and voice thereby having "much to tell us about the experience of incarceration and the changing identity of the prison author" (Rimstead & Rymhs, 2011, p. 10). In terms of Indigenous women's stories, they also tell readers about the intersecting oppressions of colonial patriarchy and how they play out in Canada's carceral system. Moreover, in the colonial context, incarcerated Indigenous

women's stories are often told for their own purposes – to disrupt colonial narratives and versions of history that are not reflective of or respectful to Indigenous women's lived experiences. This has even more potential impact within the carceral space where all stories, but especially Indigenous women's stories, continue to be silenced by prison officials, in mainstream research and media, as well as in politics (Foran, 1998; Gaucher, 1999; Jackson, 2019; Sims, 2020).

Over time, exposure to and active engagement with such stories, people who were once willfully ignorant to Indigenous struggles may better understand that, for instance, colonialism is an ongoing process, rather than a one-time historical event, and it is deeply embedded in Canada's prison system (Chartrand, 2019; Monchalin, 2016). As tools that have the potential to illuminate injustices, Indigenous women's stories of criminalization and incarceration are vital to explore as we endeavour towards justice for all people in Canada (TFFSW, 1990). Specifically, by advancing different perspectives and ways of living in their stories, incarcerated Indigenous women are cultural critics who challenge settler colonialism and western approaches to justice. In this way, their stories inform readers that there are alternative ways of knowing and being and can lead us towards a mutually beneficial journey of reconciliation and increasing decolonization.

CHAPTER THREE –Theoretical Framework

Introduction

As I began thinking about what theory to employ in undertaking my research, it became clear that there was no one theoretical position from which to understand and analyze my work. As a white settler Canadian scholar whose research involves Indigenous women's stories, it is my responsibility to conduct research that reflects the best interests of Indigenous peoples, especially Indigenous women. This is vital considering the repeated damage that has been, and continues to be, caused by some non-Indigenous researchers (Tuck, 2009). Similar care is required to avoid causing damage when non-incarcerated researchers, such as myself, examine prisoners' storytelling. While I am heavily drawn to my own orientation of critical feminist criminology – which, like Indigenous feminisms, is still commonly excluded from white and “malestream” criminology (Doyle & Moore, 2011) – I have a deep sense of accountability that requires me to move beyond what I know. For me, part of this is being ethical and critically reflexive about my positioning in relation to the women whose stories I am researching. This means paying attention to specific historical and contemporary contexts which is not possible to adequately carry out without drawing on Indigenous ways of knowing – specifically, Indigenous feminisms. However, as I explain in this chapter, by themselves, Indigenous feminisms do not provide the specificity to theorize my research topic – neither do critical feminisms or critical feminist criminology since both disciplines have traditionally excluded Indigenous ways of knowing and researching. By drawing on and amalgamating critical feminisms, Indigenous feminisms, and critical feminist criminology in my work, I was able to provide adequate breadth that is also specific to my research. Moreover, together these perspectives attend to both experiences of oppression and resistance that are characteristic of the women's stories in

Tightwire. Indeed, the complexity of their stories reflect incarcerated Indigenous women's unique standpoints which are both a source of oppression and power – particularly in terms of their ability to illuminate, critique, and resist matters of the settler colonial carceral system to which they are subject yet simultaneously transcend via *Tightwire*.

In the first part of this chapter, I briefly detail what each theoretical perspective consists of – as well as what they are missing and what they have to offer the others. In this way, I justify my interdisciplinary theoretical approach to research. In the second half of this chapter, I demonstrate my engagement with these theories as well as how I make sense of select conceptual relationships – that is, my interpretation of how these perspectives function together. Specifically, I identify connections between knowledge, power, and standpoint, as well as between storytelling and resistance – especially in the case of Indigenous women's prison storytelling. By engaging in these analytical relations, I put critical feminist, Indigenous feminist, and critical feminist criminological perspectives in conversation with one another in the context of my research.

Part 1

Critical Feminisms

Critical feminisms developed as a means of critiquing mainstream – or dominating – feminism. While the term “mainstream feminism” is somewhat contentious because there is not really an agreed upon perspective of feminism, I draw on critical feminist criminologists Elizabeth Whalley and Colleen Hackett's (2017) use of the term “dominating feminisms” to describe “a version of feminism that seeks to leverage formal institutional powers – including the carceral state – vis-à-vis a white supremacist state order with the hope of securing equality between (cis-gendered) men and women” (p. 457). Whalley and Hackett (2017) argue that this

type of feminism is dominating in that: 1) it fails to interrogate its own structures of oppression, and 2) it is complicit in state practices of oppression. Indeed, part of critical feminists' critique consists of identifying the ways in which some feminist perspectives have failed to eradicate the oppressions of all women. For instance, liberal feminism has been criticized for successfully elevating some groups of women, while ignoring the valid concerns of other groups of women. In the context of Turtle Island, this involves improving the lives of white women rather than other women, including those who are Indigenous (LaRocque, 2007; Whalley & Hackett, 2017). Mainstream feminism is often characterized as dominant, hegemonic, liberal, and white. Dominant – or dominating – feminism is considered liberal in its origin in that those who subscribe to it believe that all humans are created equally, and that, under the law, everyone is legitimized and recognized as being the same (Crenshaw, 1989; de Saxe, 2012; Whalley & Hackett, 2017). Because of this belief, liberal feminists tend to put forward reforms that uphold and reinforce the status quo, which fails to liberate or empower *all* women (bell hooks, 2015; Whalley & Hackett, 2017). One example of a reform put forth by dominating feminists is gender-responsive programming in the prison system. While this approach emerged from critiques of the application of male-centered penal interventions to women, gender-responsive programming nonetheless fails to respond to women's life histories, and it ignores both laws and state actors that criminalize marginalized women's crimes of survival (Whalley & Hackett, 2017). In this way, Whalley and Hackett (2017) argue that gender-responsive programming has an "implicit preference for white, middle-class, heterosexual cis-women populations" which ultimately renders certain marginalized populations as "dysfunctional" and legitimizes penal interventions into social issues such as poverty (p. 457).

Various scholars point to the problems inherent to this dominating feminist perspective. For instance, Kimberly Crenshaw (1989), known for coining the term “intersectionality”, discusses how court rulings have made it so that claims of discrimination are defined by the most privileged members of that group. Specifically, sexism is defined by white women, racism is defined by Black men, and neither of these oppressions are defined by the most marginalized group that experiences both sexism and racism – Black women. Crenshaw’s (1989) work demonstrates how this single-axis approach to understanding discrimination renders the sexist and racist experiences of Black women’s oppression as hybrid, or “impure”, claims under the law which essentially precludes them from legal protection. Given this, Crenshaw argues that only when Black women focus on one aspect of their experience – such as sexism *or* racism – that coincides with either white women’s or Black men’s experiences are their claims perceived in court as “pure” and legitimate. This fallacy of understanding discrimination from a single-axis framework points to the need for an intersectional understanding of social inequalities that has power to protect Black women under the law because it recognizes their experiences of discrimination as compounded (e.g., sexism *and* racism) and qualitatively distinct (e.g., racist sexism and sexist racism). Although Crenshaw’s (1989) work regards Black women, the same can be said for Indigenous women who similarly experience both racism and sexism, as well as racist sexism and sexist racism. For instance, Kim Anderson (2016), a Métis woman and Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Relationships, explains that:

Native females have been subjected not only to racist notions of the “savage,” but to the sexist notion of a debased womanhood. To be Native was uncivilized; to be female was inferior; but to be a combination of the two was particularly base (p. 117).

Here, Anderson identifies an example of Indigenous women's experiences of pain in relation to negative stereotypes about them – it is not simply a result of racism or sexism, but the interaction between racism and sexism.

In their book on intersectionality, Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge (2016) argue that intersectionality is a way to understand and analyze worldly complexities in a manner that analyzes multiple factors or axes in diverse and mutually influencing ways. Intersectionality consists of using a “both/and” lens as opposed to an “either/or” lens (e.g., both gender *and* race, rather than either gender *or* race) (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016). In this way, intersectionality is an analytic tool that enables us to think through social inequalities which are rarely caused by a single factor. That is, it provides the basis for understanding power as mutually constructed by gender, race, class, and other identity constructs. Intersectionality also encourages the analysis of power across structural, disciplinary, cultural, and interpersonal domains (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016). In terms of relationality, intersectional analyses reject binary thinking that, for example, can position women as either “good” or “bad” victims that are or are not worthy of protection.

This strongly relates to Indigenous women who live in a settler colonial context where they tend to be publicly perceived as perpetual victims (Tuck, 2009) whose (presumed) criminality precludes them from being “worthy victims”. For example, Sherene Razack (2000), a feminist critical race scholar, argues that Indigenous women sex workers, like Pamela George (Saulteaux, Ojibway, Nation), who are assaulted and/or murdered by white men are not considered legitimate victims. Specifically, Razack (2000) argues that:

the men's and the court's capacity to dehumanize Pamela George derived from their understanding of her as the (gendered) racial Other whose degradation confirmed their own identities as white – that is, as men entitled to the land and the full benefits of citizenship (p. 93).

That is, violence committed against women like George is often diminished by the court as well as by the men who kill them. This is because the women are Indigenous and “criminals” – engaged in sex work – and thus perceived as “less than”. Indeed, intersectionality also means grounding research in social contexts which helps add complexity by recognizing and analyzing factors as connected, rather than as separate (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016). In the case of Canada’s relations with Indigenous women, colonialism intertwines with patriarchy and can be conceptualized as colonial patriarchy. This is part of what Razack (2000) argues²⁸ – we cannot adequately conceptualize these acts without grounding them in colonial patriarchal violence. Finally, intersectionality is concerned with advancing and centering social justice goals (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016) which can begin, for instance, by illuminating sociopolitical contexts and issues regarding violence against Indigenous women which include not only cases like Pamela George, but also those of Indigenous women who are incarcerated.

In attempt to avoid the problems identified within liberal feminism, critical feminist researchers seek to improve the well-being of *all* women and to produce *critical* feminist knowledges (Reinharz, 1992). These goals become possible by upholding various critical feminist research ideals such as: centering (marginalized and Other) women’s experiences and interpretations (Armstead, 1995; Brabeck, 2004; Burgess-Proctor, 2015); recognizing that knowledge is situated within a particular standpoint (Bloom & Sawin, 2009; Moreton-Robinson,

²⁸ See Razack (2000) for a more nuanced understanding of her larger arguments which include positioning the trial regarding the murder of Pamela George in the context of racialized and spatialized justice. Overall, she accomplishes this by providing collective and geographical histories of both Pamela George and the men who murdered her which speak to the dispossession of and violence against Indigenous women that occur on “the Stroll” (Razack, 2000, p. 94). Although Razack’s work focuses on the law, her arguments can also be employed towards understanding the prisoning of Indigenous women – specifically, how women are removed from Indigenous communities and imprisoned which, in the eyes of settlers, tends to justify the violence that Indigenous women experience while incarcerated.

2013; Reinharz, 1992; Smith, 1990); repositioning what appear to be individual and/or personal issues as social problems set within particular contexts (Armstead, 1995; Bloom & Sawin, 2009; Mendis, 2009); pursuing outcomes that are meaningful to the research community (Armstead, 1995; Bloom & Sawin, 2009); reducing power differences and hierarchies between researchers and research communities (Armstead, 1995; Burgess-Proctor, 2015; Fonow & Cook, 2005); and advancing social justice and change (Burgess-Proctor, 2015; Leavy, 2012; 2015; Reinharz, 1992).

While critical feminisms provide great insight into the lives of women around the world, Indigenous feminist Joyce Green (2007) – who is of English, Ktunaxa, and Cree-Scots Métis descent – argues that Indigenous women require a more specific analytical framework to really “get at” their lived experiences. Although critical feminisms center traditionally marginalized experiences and knowledges, overall, it is still a very broad framework that would benefit from increased specificity, particularly when the lives of Indigenous women are concerned. Moreover, when researching criminalized Indigenous women, critical feminisms on their own are missing a criminological perspective that provides deeper understandings of criminalization and the criminal (in)justice system as they pertain to the lives of Indigenous women. Therefore, when researching the stories of incarcerated Indigenous women, researchers require theoretical frameworks that incorporate more than critical feminist perspectives.

Indigenous Feminisms

Despite the strides made in feminist theory and research, Indigenous women continue to be under-examined in feminist theory (Comack, 2014), and of the theoretical approaches I engage with, Indigenous feminisms is the only perspective that explicitly focuses on Indigenous women. Although the field is growing, the relatively small body of writing that theorizes

Indigenous feminisms demonstrates Indigenous women's comparable invisibility within the women's movement as well as within their full historical and contemporary contexts – that is, as simultaneously Indigenous and female, and as contemporary peoples living in colonial oppression (Green, 2007; Snyder, 2018). Indigenous women's relative invisibility and subjugation demonstrate the need for theories that have historical and sociopolitical specificity to Indigenous women within the Canadian context. Similar to Julie Jackson's (2019) master's work in sociology, I note throughout my dissertation that there are many instances where Indigenous feminist perspectives are expressed within the women's stories in *Tightwire* – however, the term “Indigenous feminisms” was not used. Importantly, Jackson (2019) states that “unlike the prominent feminisms of their time”, *Tightwire* stories reflect the fact that women were “astutely cognizant of the simultaneous experiences of multiple oppressions” thus creating a space in *Tightwire* “for networks of solidarity to be constructed on the basis of shared experience” (p. 55). In this way, the women who shared their stories in *Tightwire* offered complex, multilayered analyses of their experiences and expressed aspects of intersectional theory without taking up the terms “Indigenous feminisms” or “intersectionality”. This demonstrates the vital theoretical contributions of incarcerated (Indigenous) women. Indeed, referring to the women's proposals regarding alternatives – such as harm reduction – that much of correctional administration and the public were ignoring, Melissa Munn, a penal press scholar, states the “the women who wrote for *Tightwire* were politically conscious, what people would now call woke” (as cited in Ottenhof, 2021). Only when scholars deeply consider these stories can they begin to appreciate the theoretical power of uniquely situated knowledges stemming from the lived experiences of incarcerated (Indigenous) women (Moreton-Robinson, 2013; TFFSW, 1990). That is, if these women's stories were more readily centered in institutional policies and teaching – not just in

(damage centered) research – I believe, as a society, we would be much further along in our journey towards achieving justice for all people.

Although it is impossible to have *one* definition of Indigenous feminisms due to a wide variety of Indigenous cultures and lived experiences, Indigenous peoples share a common colonial history from which all forms of Indigenous feminism can draw from (Altamirano-Jiménez, 2010; Huhndorf & Suzack, 2010; Monchalin, 2016; Nicholls, 2009). Because of this, it may be more appropriate to refer to this approach in the plural form. Cheryl Suzack (2015), a scholar in Indigenous law and literature and member of the Batchewana First Nation, defines Indigenous feminisms particularly well. She perceives this critical paradigm as analyzing:

how gender injustice against Indigenous women emerges from colonial policies and patriarchal practices that inscribe gendered power dynamics to the detriment of Indigenous women. It focuses on the intersections between colonialism and patriarchy to examine how race and gender systems overlap to create conditions in which Indigenous women are subjected to forms of social disempowerment that arise out of historical and contemporary practices of colonialism, racism, sexism, and patriarchy leading to social patterns of “discrimination within discrimination” (Kirkness, 1987–1988, p. 13) that disproportionately affect Indigenous women (Suzack, 2015, p. 261).

Other scholars agree that Indigenous feminisms are concerned with issues of colonialism, racism, and sexism as well as the synergy between these three human rights violations (Altamirano-Jiménez, 2010; Green, 2007; Razack, 2008). Emily Snyder (2018), a settler scholar in Indigenous feminist and legal studies with strong relations with Indigenous communities, underscores this by arguing that “the interconnectedness of race, colonialism, gender, and patriarchy is key in Indigenous feminist theorizing” (p. 35). In this way, Indigenous feminisms are connected to decolonization and view sites of nationalism, white supremacy, patriarchy, race, culture, and gender as central relational categories of analysis through which the oppression of Indigenous women can be analyzed and understood (Altamirano-Jiménez, 2010; Razack, 2008; Snyder, 2018). Moreover, Green (2007) argues that Indigenous feminisms show how Indigenous peoples,

especially women, are affected by the intersection of colonialism and patriarchy and points to the fact that certain issues would likely not be raised at all if Indigenous feminisms did not exist. Generally speaking, some goals of Indigenous feminisms are to understand changing situations, commonalities, and specificities of Indigenous women and peoples across time and place, and to seek social justice along the lines of gender, race, class, and sexuality – all of which are seen as integral to the struggles of Indigenous peoples surrounding national liberation (Altamirano-Jiménez, 2010; Huhndorf & Suzack, 2010; Nicholls, 2009).

While there have been many positive strides made within Indigenous feminist theories, there are some Indigenous peoples who take issue with the amalgamation of feminist and Indigenous theories. For instance, some Indigenous women believe that feminisms were and are not needed because they were already integrated within their traditional matriarchal cultures (P. Johnson, personal communication, October 7, 2022; Monchalin, 2016). Other issues often result from beliefs about feminism that perceive it as exclusively white and “malestream” such that is undermines Indigenous autonomy (Altamirano-Jiménez, 2010; Huhndorf & Suzack, 2010; LaRocque, 2007; Snyder, 2018). For this reason, some Indigenous peoples believe that Indigenous women cannot be both Indigenous and feminist because mixing the two may be perceived as assimilation and/or adoption of whiteness (Altamirano-Jiménez, 2010; Snyder, 2018). However, this argument unfairly downplays internal diversity among Indigenous women, diminishes feminism to mainstream (white) theorists, does not account for critical feminists’ attempts to create more inclusive and specific sites of analysis, and ignores the important work that has been done by Indigenous feminists (Altamirano-Jiménez, 2010; Snyder, 2018).

One of the important Indigenous feminist works that I draw on is by Kim Anderson. In her book *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood*, Anderson (2016) centers

and reclaims the skills and strengths of Indigenous women. Vitaly, Anderson explains how Indigenous women's identities often relate to kinship and traditional kinship practices. As discussed in my literature review, Indigenous women's traditional role included teaching (Anderson, 2016); it also included nurturing the community's children – regardless of whether one was a mother (Anderson, 2016). By nurturing and teaching their communities' children, the honouring and/or reclamation of Indigenous women's roles has crucial implications for the future of Indigenous peoples – specifically the next seven generations – and plays a vital role in cultural continuity (Anderson, 2016; LaRocque, 2009). As my readers will see, Anderson's conceptualization of Indigenous kinship and Indigenous women's ways of being are central to understanding the relationships that formed via *Tightwire* and the Native Sisterhood.

Although I engage with Indigenous feminist perspectives, what I find problematic about Indigenous feminisms, like other forms of feminism, is that when (Indigenous) women's involvement in the criminal justice system is researched, it almost exclusively focuses on Indigenous women as “victims” rather than exploring their agency as “offenders” (Chesney-Lind, 2006; Tuck, 2009). This is demonstrated, in part, by the insistent spotlight on murdered and missing Indigenous women. This is also clear in the persistent centering of colonialism and patriarchy in the lives of Indigenous women (LaRocque, 2007). While the effects of colonial patriarchy and the examination of its relationship to missing and murdered Indigenous women are crucial to explore, there are other areas that merit further examination. For instance, although more recent Indigenous scholarship has increasingly shifted towards themes of cultural and self-affirmation (LaRocque, 2015), this scholarship does not tie into Indigenous women's experiences of imprisonment.

An example of this is that when I wrote this chapter, I was unable to locate Indigenous feminist literature that explicitly pertained to Indigenous women as “offenders” (except for sex workers who are often still primarily characterized as “victims”) or how Canadian law violations may be one way that Indigenous women resist settler colonial violence. One example of this is when Indigenous women steal to provide for themselves and/or their families due to the disproportionate number of them who live in poverty as a result of racist and sexist policies and practices that preclude Indigenous women and girls from acquiring the same educational and employment experiences as non-Indigenous people (Bird, 2021). Another example is when Indigenous women literally fight back against people who harm them – which, in the context of sex work for instance, are often white men (Razack, 2000). I perceive both examples – one property and one violent “crime” – as linked to Indigenous women’s agency and resistance because of the colonial patriarchal context in which these acts occur and the fact that these acts enable women to survive (Sheehy, Stubbs, & Tolmie, 2010). In other words, these acts are carried out in the name of self-preservation; therefore, I conceptualize them as examples of Indigenous women’s and communities’ cultural continuity.

To be clear, I see the limitation of Indigenous feminisms in terms of its lack of theorizing regarding criminalized Indigenous women as well as the criminalization process as it pertains to Indigenous women in the Canadian context. By bringing these examples to the forefront, in no way do I mean to undercut the importance of researching victimized, missing, and murdered Indigenous women. I simply wish to shift the focus towards the less researched areas of Indigenous women’s criminalization and its relation to resistance, resilience, and cultural continuity in the face of ongoing colonial patriarchy. Of course, this idea does not preclude a simultaneous examination of Indigenous women’s experiences of victimization as located within

the same context – which my research also addresses. If Indigenous (and other) feminisms continue to centralize Indigenous women’s role in the criminal (in)justice system as almost exclusively pertaining to victimhood, other areas of Indigenous women’s lives such as their agency, resistance, resiliency, and sovereignty – as they relate to gender and criminalization – will continue to be minimized, misunderstood, and/or silenced. This oversight is particularly problematic given that Indigenous women represent the fastest growing prison population in Canada and around the world (Landertinger, 2015; Monchalin, 2016; Nichols, 2014). Critical feminist criminology is an ideal place to begin remedying these issues as these researchers often examine the lives and experiences of not only victimized but criminalized (Indigenous) women, as well as the intersection of these experiences which ultimately challenge the popular dualism between “victims” and “offenders” and helps create a more nuanced understanding of Indigenous women’s lives within the context of criminal justice (Banwell, 2010; Chesney-Lind, 2006).

Critical Feminist Criminology

Like critical feminism more broadly, critical feminist criminology concerns itself with intersections of gender, race, and power, but differs in that it specifically analyzes these issues in relation to crime, as well as criminological research and theory and how they are shaped by understandings of sex and gender (Daly & Chesney-Lind, 2004; Crenshaw, 1989; Van Gundy & Kappeler, 2014; Whalley & Hackett, 2017). Feminist criminologists understand gender not as a fact but rather as a complex product of social, historical, and cultural factors that relate to social life, such as constructs and productions of femininity and masculinity as well as institutions such as the prison system (Van Gundy & Kappeler, 2014). To analyze power relations and actively challenge all forms of oppression, the most vulnerable groups of people tend to be at the center of critical feminist criminological research (Daly & Chesney-Lind, 2004; Van Gundy &

Kappeler, 2014). This centering is critical because it includes the people whose perspectives are traditionally excluded from policy creation and change which are the very same people who tend to be most affected by these policies (Daly & Chesney-Lind, 2004; Van Gundy & Kappeler, 2014; Whalley & Hackett, 2017).

More simply, critical feminist criminology adds a critical feminist perspective to the discipline of criminology, meaning that this research centers power and intersectionality – that is, the way that gender, race, class, and other sites of power combine to critique unique circumstances and oppressions as they relate to criminalization and victimization (Crenshaw, 1989). Critical feminist criminologists prioritize the theorizing of patriarchy and crime, for example, by analyzing the ways that the definition of “the crime problem” and criminal justice policies support patriarchal practices and perspectives (Chesney-Lind, 2006). Part of this requires understanding statistics regarding women in the criminal justice system within the context that they are created (e.g., patriarchy, colonialism, and neoliberalism to name a few) and asking questions that aim to challenge power and authority, rather than taking things, such as statistics, at face value (Doyle & Moore, 2011). As mentioned earlier, another aspect of this entails moving beyond focusing exclusively or predominantly on women’s victimization because it tends to lead to more mechanisms of crime control which increase the likelihood of both women’s and men’s criminalization and does little to challenge the notion of androcentric crime or (conservative) backlash responses to feminism (Chesney-Lind, 2006; Comack, 2014). My research draws heavily from critical feminist criminology in that: it aims to contextualize (Indigenous) women’s experiences of criminalization thereby challenging androcentric and ethnocentric analyses of crime; it examines the intersectional experiences of “victim” and “offender” that most criminalized (Indigenous) women experience; and it engages with counter-

narratives that are created by the traditionally marginalized group of incarcerated Indigenous women.

Similar to Indigenous women and Indigenous feminisms' exclusion within broader feminist theory, despite (critical) feminist criminology's inclusion within critical criminology, it is relatively marginalized within "malestream" critical criminological theory (Doyle & Moore, 2011). While things have been improving in recent years, there is much work to be done in diversifying the criminological discipline. This is demonstrated by the continued exclusion of scholars who are women of colour from theoretical analyses within the mainstream discipline. When women (of colour) are included, they tend to be (re)presented in very stereotypical sexist (and racist) manners and/or are included via the problematic "add and stir" approach which accomplishes little beyond the perception of inclusion²⁹ (Belknap, 2015; Chesney-Lind, 2006; Daly & Chesney-Lind, 2004; Van Gundy and Kappeler, 2014). For instance, although growing numbers of women are taking up leadership roles in academia, there are legitimate concerns about which women are advancing into these roles. Former president of the American Society of Criminology, Joanne Belknap, is just one scholar who has expressed her disappointment regarding the lack of diversity in the discipline of criminology. Belknap (2015) argues that while she is encouraged by more recent publications, she still sees that gender and race are frequently omitted from such publications. The fact that these lapses remain unacknowledged is even more

²⁹ The image of inclusion that is created by the add and stir approach is reminiscent of inclusion indigenization (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018). That is, they both focus on inclusion, rather than integration – the latter of which would support efforts towards reconciliation and/or decolonization. Problematically, inclusion indigenization policies effectively foreclose calls for change given that the dominating perception is that inclusion was the solution and it has already occurred (Altamirano-Jimenez, 2018).

problematic as it signals a lack of reflexivity, responsibility, and accountability in the field of criminology. Belknap (2015) states that:

it is difficult to imagine a field in which it is more essential than criminology to have a diverse and inclusive representation of scholars and intersectional approaches. Offending, victimization, law enforcement, court practices, incarceration, and basic human rights are so tightly bound within the intersections of oppression. And yet, the academy has been dominated by White men who have likely disproportionately come from class-privileged backgrounds... even with the paucity of African Americans, Latinoa/s, Native Americans, and Asian Americans represented as doctoral students, faculty, and researchers until recently (and arguably, still significantly lacking), criminology or criminology-related publications by scholars of color have been nonexistent in much criminology research and teaching (p. 6).

Moreover, Belknap (2015) argues that when scholars with diverse demographics and lived experiences are included in the discipline of criminology, it is often as “tokens” who are viewed by the dominant group as inherently biased which in turn leads to perceptions that their scholarship is not credible. Métis Indigenous governance scholar Adam Gaudry and education scholar Danielle Lorenz (2018) similarly describe the tokenism that is rampant in the academy – which they argue is representative of indigenization in the form of “Indigenous inclusion”, as opposed to indigenization that commits to reconciliation or decolonization. An interesting example of this token inclusion may be the sudden spike of women scholars who act as president to the American Society of Criminology (ASC). Taking up their roles in November of each year, between 2014 and 2024, women represented eight out eleven ASC presidents; by contrast, between its inception in 1939 and 2013, there were only five women who were ASC presidents (American Society of Criminology, 2023). Important to consider is that only one out of all 13 women presidents in the history of ASC appears to be a member of the BIPOC community, while the remaining 12 are – or pass as – white. Thus, while growing numbers of women and people of colour are entering the academy and the criminological discipline, the hostile and

oppressive climate of the university often continues to exclude – or only include “token” – marginalized perspectives which undermines the meaningful political and societal change that these scholars aim to accomplish (Belknap, 2015; Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018).

One reason for select groups’ exclusion – in academia and elsewhere – likely stems from the fact that critical feminist thinkers challenge some of the most powerful constructs of the state, such as academia and the prison system, which tend to have negative economic and political implications for those in power, such as white male scholars and policy makers (Martel, Hogeveen, & Woolford, 2006; Van Gundy & Kappeler, 2014). Critical feminists’ and women of colour’s relative marginalization within the discipline of criminology is problematic because, while interdisciplinary research can be very beneficial (Belknap, 2015; Snyder, 2018), it forces such scholars outside of their home discipline in order to better understand and analyze women’s experiences of the criminal justice system or else risk the typical criminological understandings of gender that are male-centered and premised upon liberalism (Daly & Chesney-Lind, 2004). As a result, some critical feminist criminologists – such as myself – are compelled to explicitly find and state points of congruence between criminological and feminist theories to demonstrate the importance and relevance of their work (Daly & Chesney-Lind, 2004).

While critical feminist criminologists recognize the hyper-representation of Indigenous women in Canada’s criminal (in)justice system, there nevertheless continues to be a dearth of critical feminist criminological research and theoretical analyses of Indigenous women’s experiences of criminalization and incarceration. Because of this, critical feminist criminology would benefit from the inclusion of Indigenous feminisms in that the latter approach exclusively centers Indigenous knowledges and lived experiences. Indeed, specializing in feminist, critical prison, and Indigenous studies, Krista Benson (2020) argues that incarcerated Indigenous

women's stories present "key decolonial theories that offer tools to prison abolitionists not only for prison abolition but also to support decolonial efforts of Indigenous communities on Turtle Island" (p. 145). Following this, the prison storytelling of Indigenous women is vital to the continued development of critical feminist criminology. Despite its limitations, critical feminist criminology is the only theoretical orientation that I draw on that explicitly and continually examines women's criminalization. While critical feminisms – and to a lesser extent, Indigenous feminisms – inform critical feminist criminological theories, neither of them can stand alone in their analyses of criminalized and incarcerated (Indigenous) women's stories. Given this, all three theoretical approaches – critical feminism, Indigenous feminisms, and critical feminist criminology – are necessary to my research.

Part 2

Knowledge, Power, and Standpoint

Drawing on my theoretical framework, knowledge, power, and standpoint are clearly intertwined. One prominent critical feminist sociologist, Dorothy Smith (1990) argues that women are often alienated from their own experiences, identities, and knowledges when academics turn women's lives into ideological concepts that are presented as textual facts. In other words, disciplines such as sociology tend to essentialize experiences, identities, and knowledges by subsuming them within concepts that are taken for granted as factual simply because they are written down. For example, Smith (1990) discusses how experts tend to use conceptual discourse, such as "suicide", as opposed to everyday language such as "killed themselves". Conceptual language is problematic because it creates standard "facts" that hide contextual circumstances as opposed to emphasizing the nuances of each case and/or what the experience means to people. It also erases the subjectivity of knowledge along with the people

who have personal experiences of the phenomena under study, thereby turning “knowing” into ideological knowledge that belongs to the institution/university. Reading texts as factual not only subordinates individuals’ experiences, but also has the effect of masking how texts become “objectified” knowledge. Smith (1990) sees the solution to problems with ideological knowledge as residing in women’s standpoints because they are able to expose the alienation between individuals’ experiences and what is expressed as factual textual/knowledge by the ruling relations. Together, these points help explain the disjuncture that Smith sees between women’s standpoints and sociological knowledge that upholds very limited understandings of lived realities rather than being grounded in and producing knowledge based on the everyday.

While the abstraction of women’s knowledge is undoubtedly problematic, both Smith (1990) and Patricia Hill Collins (2013), also see benefits inherent to women’s vantage (or stand-) points. Smith (1990) refers to this as the “bifurcated consciousness” in which women are able to navigate both what are often believed by the dominating majority to be “women’s worlds” (the private home), and men’s worlds (public paid labour), which allows them to better understand the relations of ruling. Hill Collins (2013), on the other hand, terms this position as “outsiders within” which specifically references Black women who not only understand both women’s and men’s worlds, but also Black people’s and white people’s worlds. Thus, while both Smith (1990) and Hill Collins (2013) emphasize the exclusion of (Black) women, they also see how vital these marginal positions are for understanding the workings of power.

Similarly, Shalene Jobin (2016), a Cree and Métis Indigenous governance scholar, draws on W.E.B. Dubois’ (1903) concept of “double consciousness” to examine Indigenous positionality and effects of residential schools on Indigenous peoples. Jobin (2016) argues that the residential school system resulted in not only the subjugating and erasing of Indigenous

knowledges, but also the creation of double consciousness. Jobin (2016) conceptualizes double consciousness as when Indigenous peoples see themselves through the eyes of white people which causes them to evaluate themselves against Euro-Canadians' standards. Because Indigenous and white standards are distinct and thus not comparable, some Indigenous peoples – especially those who were forced into residential schools – perceive themselves as incapable of “measuring up” to white peoples' expectations and cultural norms. Similar to Smith's (1990) and Hill Collins' (2013) respective terms, at first glance, double consciousness appears to be solely negative, but as Jobin (2016) points out, it can also represent a space to resist. For example, Indigenous women actively resist the negative effects of double consciousness by sharing and reclaiming their knowledges (Jobin, 2016; LaRocque, 2009). Often during storytelling, Indigenous peoples' knowledges create counter-narratives and memories that connect Indigenous peoples across generations while simultaneously resisting colonial tellings of history (Jobin, 2016; LaRocque, 2009). In other words, Indigenous women are in an ideal position to actively resist the colonial project precisely because, when compared to white people, they have a greater understanding of how colonial power functions.

While Goenpul Indigenous feminist scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2013) points out that feminist standpoint theory provides useful tools towards the development of an Indigenous women's standpoint theory – because it calls into question the power of patriarchal white knowledge to make truth claims – she also distinguishes between Indigenous women's standpoint and the standpoint put forward by critical feminist scholars such as Dorothy Smith and Patricia Hill Collins. For Moreton-Robinson (2013), Indigenous women's standpoint “is ascribed through inheritance and achieved through struggle” (p. 340). It is an embedded knowledge that acts as an entry point for analysis and is distinct in that it is not based on the

separation of people from countries, ancestors, Creator beings, and all living things. That is, Indigenous women's standpoint is not simply the aggregation of stories from lived experience; rather, it is informed by family, collective consciousness, as well as Indigenous knowledges, politics, and histories. In this way, it is a relational standpoint. For Moreton-Robinson (2013), Indigenous women's standpoint is one way that Indigenous women exercise their sovereignty

When it comes to the prison system, knowledge and power are deeply implicated in relation to one's standpoint. While Smith (1990) does not explicitly take up the notion of "risk" in her work, it nonetheless is an example of an abstract concept that she problematizes as illuminating "expert" (ideological) knowledge that obscures knowers' experiences, identities, and knowledges. This occurs because, once written by prison staff into a prisoner's file, the information gained during a risk assessment becomes perceived by staff as factual, despite all the nuances that are missed along the way. Lisa Neve's (Métis) story³⁰, is one example of issues with carceral "risk". For now, it is vital to point out that, as gender and social justice scholar Joan Sangster (2021) notes, case files are "strongly shaped by the recorder's reactions to the woman's narrative" (p. 388). For instance, when psy-experts³¹ ask Indigenous women about their "criminal associations", women's responses can elicit strong reactions and stereotypical beliefs from prison staff that prevent the full picture from being recorded. That is, because Indigenous peoples are more likely to have criminal records than their non-Indigenous counterparts (Turnbull & Hannah-Moffat, 2009), when asked about one's criminal associations, Indigenous women who associate with other Indigenous peoples are likely to measure "high risk" on this

³⁰ Neve was previously designated as "Canada's most dangerous woman". See Neve and Pate (2005).

³¹ Psy-experts are trained in the "psy" disciplines such as psychology, psychiatry, and social work (Kendall, 2000).

variable. The issue with this is that the colonial context that increases the likelihood of Indigenous criminalization is ignored and the fact that these associations are all or primarily familial is not officially recorded into their files. What is left is the written record that incarcerated Indigenous women are perceived by prison staff as high risk due to their criminal associations. Similar issues are discussed in Moreton-Robinson's (2013) work in which she explains how silencing is enabled by patriarchal power, embedded in colonial knowledge, and often has the ability to be the definitive measure of what constitutes knowledge and "truth".

This is demonstrative of the power that certain knowledges and standpoints have over others – in this case, the "expert" (typically an individual coming from a relatively privileged background and has studied in the psy-sciences) is perceived as possessing factual knowledge (Kendall, 2000), whereas the prisoner's knowledges (in this case, an Indigenous woman) is not similarly valued or recognized. As previously mentioned, Smith (1990) points out that the reading of texts as factual not only subordinates individuals' experiences, but also makes people oblivious to how texts become objectified. The solution to this problem, Smith (1990) argues, resides in women's standpoint because it is this perspective that is best able to expose the alienation between individuals' experiences and what is expressed as (factual textual) knowledge by the ruling relations. I discuss an example of how one Indigenous woman's standpoint plays out in practice in chapter seven when I explore Cree storyteller Fran Sugar's story in *Tightwire*. As discussed in my literature review chapter, the co-authored autobiography *Stolen Life* (1998) that details Yvonne Johnson's story – a Cree woman who was previously incarcerated at P4W – is another example of how knowing gets turned into knowledge through writing and how responding to one's own case files is an act of resistance. These, and other examples throughout

my dissertation, demonstrate that there are incarcerated Indigenous women who resist injustices and exert their (sovereign) power through storytelling.

Storytelling as Resistance?

Storytelling is one way that traditionally marginalized standpoints can expose and resist the relations of ruling. For Indigenous peoples, survival is often deemed the most basic form of Indigenous resistance, but they are also increasingly resisting through storytelling (Coburn, 2015; Jobin, 2016). Indigenous scholars such as Emma LaRocque (2015) and Shalene Jobin (2016) – both of whom are Cree and Métis – characterize Indigenous storytelling as an act of resistance in and of itself. In other words, the topical content of the story, while obviously not irrelevant, does not determine whether Indigenous storytelling is resistance; rather all Indigenous storytelling is perceived as resistance in the face of ongoing colonial oppression. This aligns with the work of feminist researcher Elaine Coburn (2015) who characterizes Indigenous resistance as a refusal of any given aspect of colonialism in its multiple forms. Given this, if Dorothy Smith (1990) is correct in that beginning from one's standpoint and sharing one's perspectives with the world provides a (partial) solution to the immense power differences between women and men, as well as between other marginalized and powerful groups, storytelling from one's standpoint takes on this meaning of resistance. This is especially true for those who are most marginalized such as women, Indigenous peoples, and those who are incarcerated because their stories are not often prominent in popular culture or mainstream research (Pollack, 2014; Chen & Fiander, 2017) – thus, through sharing their stories, women, Indigenous peoples, and criminalized people are able to resist the oppressive contexts to which they are subject

While much of the growing body of Indigenous literature has necessarily involved legitimizing Indigenous cultures, knowledges, and experiences, it has recently shifted to a more

proactive stance of cultural and self-affirmation (Anderson, 2016; LaRocque, 2015). This includes what Indigenous representation scholar Emma LaRocque (2015) explains as the deconstruction of (or resistance to) hegemonic knowledges, as well as the reconstruction (or re-invention) of Indigenous literatures and knowledges. Indeed, not only are the number of Indigenous scholars and literatures flourishing, but Indigenous peoples are reinventing different aspects of their storytelling (LaRocque, 2015). As discussed in my literature review, an example of this is how Indigenous peoples are increasingly writing stories down rather than, or in addition to, telling them orally (Anderson, 2016; Highway, 2017). Both Kim Anderson (2016) and Emma LaRocque (2015) perceive this adaptation as the righting and writing of Indigenous peoples' stories in ways that challenge hegemonic stereotypes by providing alternative perspectives. Coburn (2015) characterizes this movement (from deconstruction to reconstruction) as a marked shift from resistance towards resurgence which she defines as not only challenging colonialism, but transcending it by renewing, reimagining, and recreating relational responsibilities. Similarly, Anderson (2016) points to the importance of not only resisting – for instance, through writing – but reclaiming traditional ways of being – including the centering of kinship and women's roles within their respective communities.

Prisoners' storytelling can be similarly understood and analyzed because both prisoners and Indigenous peoples tend to share lived experiences such as poverty, abuse, and difficulty in the traditional Canadian school system (Monchalin, 2016). Moreover, both groups have an affinity for oral storytelling practices and various forms of resistance (Gaucher, 1999; Highway, 2017). Given these commonalities, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous prisoners are likely to benefit from stories that engage with counter narratives that directly challenge and resist hegemonic stereotypes (Rymhs, 2008). This is because it is through counter-narratives – rather

than dominant stereotypical (mis)understandings – that their experiences can be understood and validated. Similarly, scholarship can benefit from counter-narratives in stories. Indeed, feminist criminologist Kelly Lockwood (2017) argues that researchers should center opposing, contradicting, and challenging stories in their work so that theorizing can better evolve. Importantly, these types of stories have the capacity to demonstrate the inadequacy of dominant narrative frameworks as well as storytellers' rejection of them. This rejection is important because it opens up narrative possibilities and understandings that have potential to become the basis of new narratives if and when they are shared (Lockwood, 2017; Smith, 1990). In other words, when stories of resistance are widely disseminated, they are more likely to be taken up and eventually accepted in more dominant spaces – such as mainstream research, academia, and media – which helps catalyze social change.

However, not all marginalized stories actively resist or reject dominant narratives. Indeed, feminist scholars such as Joanna Woodwiss (2017), Kelly Lockwood (2017), and Elizabeth Comack (1999) point out that stories can only ever be partial, are constrained by (dominant) narratives that are available at the time of the telling, and are informed – as well as limited – by the circumstances and the contexts of telling. For example, in feminist social work scholar Pam Lister's (2003) research with women survivors of sexual abuse, she found that participants' storied memories were often heavily influenced by therapeutic discourses. With an increase in psy-sciences (Kendall, 2000), and an understanding of such discourses, Lister (2003) was able to decipher how and what (parts of) participants' stories may be products of cultural and discursive factors. Interestingly, Woodwiss (2017) argues that stories that take up hegemonic narratives may actually be more reflective of dominant culture than lived experiences – which is reminiscent of Smith's (1990) argument surrounding the power of dominant concepts' (such as

those in therapeutic discourses) to separate individuals from their experiences. Another example of this is how prisoners' storytelling may be affected by the prison context as a (not-so-) total institution³² that reflects the penal regime as well as its immediate host community and greater society (Farrington, 1992). What this means is that the preferred narratives of the local prison and outside community as well as society more broadly likely constrain what frameworks prisoners are able to draw from. For instance, some prisoners employ the Correctional Service of Canada's terminology in their stories within *Tightwire*, such as "offender" and/or "inmate". In order to legitimize their lived realities to the dominating class, Indigenous women may "over-contextualize" and forward similar narratives (P. Johnson, personal communication, October 7, 2022). To be clear, while some may actually subscribe to these narratives due to double consciousness (Jobin, 2016), other Indigenous women may engage in these narratives as a result of being gaslighted by professionals, administrators, and other "experts" (P. Johnson, personal communication, October 7, 2022).

In this way, Lockwood (2017) argues that (dominant) narratives function as an informal social control by silencing stories that do not fit the hegemonic framework of understanding. For example, stories about motherhood told by incarcerated mothers are often not taken seriously because, in the eyes of dominant Western culture, these tellers traverse not only the boundaries of what are considered "good women" (e.g., obedient and law abiding) but also what are considered "good mothers" (e.g., child-centered and expert-guided) (Lockwood, 2017; Ross, 1998; Scheuneman Scott, 2019). In other words, incarcerated mothers' stories about motherhood

³² Sociologist Keith Farrington (1992) argues that the prison is a not-so-total institution that is "enclosed within an identifiable-yet-permeable membrane of structures, mechanism and policies, all of which maintain, at most, a selective and imperfect degree of separation between what exists inside of an what lies beyond prison walls" (p. 7).

do not tend to make sense with dominant conceptualizations of (good) mothers, thus these stories (and the mothers telling them) are easily dismissed and remain on the outskirts of popular culture. Also harmed by the power of denial were Indigenous peoples who were forced into residential schools. For instance, Anderson (2016) explains how anything positive that the children shared about being Indigenous with the residential school staff was dismissed and turned into something negative. I perceive this type of denial as contributing to the formation of double consciousness in that the centering of white racist standards negatively affects the self-confidence of some Indigenous peoples regarding their distinct cultural identities (Jobin, 2016).

Another example of storytellers following set scripts are incarcerated mothers who often employ a multitude of frameworks – such as those encompassing being a “good mother”, a “victim” (of circumstance), and (amendable to) “reform” – in order to explain their lives (Lockwood, 2017). Despite competing constraints on and reasons for telling stories, storied constructions that take up multiple frameworks may result in what many perceive to be contradictions that are then misinterpreted as indications of falsehoods and/or misremembering (Lockwood, 2017). Put another way, incarcerated mothers feel pressure to conform to set scripts because otherwise they may not be believed (Woodwiss, 2017). This results in many incarcerated mothers being left without an “easy” (i.e., culturally prescribed) way to tell their stories which means they have to rethink, rewrite, or altogether reject them and, by consequence, their own lived experiences (Lockwood, 2017; Woodwiss, 2017). This is where we see some of the harm caused by dominant narrative frameworks in that they tend to repress certain stories and thus certain storytellers and their experiences (Lockwood, 2017). The stories that are typically repressed are those that are empowering to storytellers and/or explain complicated experiences in complex ways – meaning, the stories that are most likely to challenge hegemonic constructions

and redistribute power to (marginalized) storytellers are those that are most likely denied (Lockwood, 2017). This idea is similar to Smith's (1990) argument that abstract concepts (or dominant narratives) become taken for granted as factual despite their distance from the lived experiences that they attempt to explain. Thus, when marginalized narratives are taken up and shared by those who are oppressed, their standpoints have power to expose the relations of ruling.

Indeed, Indigenous women often identify their reason for writing is in response to their recognition of negative stereotypes and their desire – as well as their perceived responsibility – to “tell a better story” than the ones that non-Indigenous people tell about them (Jeannette Armstrong – Syilx, as quoted in Anderson, 2016, p. 118). Through their writing, Indigenous women reconstruct the world around them; as such, their “writing offers both a means to resist and an opportunity to reinvent” (Anderson, 2016, p. 119). In this way, Anderson (2016) explains Indigenous women's writing as a space to deal with negative emotions while simultaneously (re)kindling positive feelings about their identities as Indigenous peoples. By sharing their experiences of racism, sexism, and colonization in their writing, Indigenous women “fuel the healing process on both a personal and national level” (Anderson, 2016, p. 120). This process is vital as it benefits not only individual Indigenous women, but also Indigenous communities and nations – thereby leading to increased wellness for Indigenous peoples as a whole.

Concluding Remarks

Intersectional approaches to standpoint theory demonstrate how traditionally marginalized identities, such as criminalized Indigenous women, experience complex and multiple oppressions which simultaneously constrain and contribute to their knowledges and distinct standpoints thus exposing workings of power like colonial patriarchy (Crenshaw, 1989;

Hill Collins, 2013; Jobin, 2016; Moreton-Robinson, 2013). Following this train of thought, both Crenshaw (1989) and Hill Collins (2013) argue that Black women have a distinct vantage point from which they know about both Black men and white women because they are oppressed by both of these groups in different ways (via sexism and racism, respectively) yet they simultaneously (partially) belong to (and are excluded from) each group identity (as Black and as women) (Crenshaw, 1989; Hill Collins, 2013; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016). The same can be said for Indigenous women in that they are both Indigenous and women, and thus are excellently positioned to understand the workings of power as they relate to women and men (patriarchy), as well as white and Indigenous peoples (colonialism) (Jobin, 2016; Moreton-Robinson, 2013). Similarly, through their lived experiences, criminalized and incarcerated people understand the workings of punishment and the criminal justice system as well as non-criminalized spaces. Such positionality demonstrates connections between Smith's (1990) bifurcated consciousness, Hill Collins' (2013) outsider within, Jobin's (2016) employment of W.E.B. Du Bois' (1903) double consciousness, and Moreton-Robinson's (2013) Indigenous women's standpoint. Although oppressed, the positionality of traditionally marginalized identities demonstrates the immense power that they have in shedding light on dominant societal institutions such as the criminal justice system. Specific to Indigenous women's standpoint are the collective knowledge, politics, history, and relations that are centered which contribute to the value of their stories (Moreton-Robinson, 2013). As readers will see throughout my dissertation, and as Frances Foran (1998) identified in her master's thesis on *Tightwire*, the achievement of the women's stories in *Tightwire* excellently demonstrates the power of an explicitly located standpoint.

When we take colonial and patriarchal oppressions into account and acknowledge that they make up a foundational part of Canada's criminal justice system, the very act of Indigenous

women's prison storytelling is resistance. That is, the counter-narratives that are often produced within incarcerated people's and Indigenous women's stories help to disarm dominant stereotypes while validating their own, and others' related, experiences that are commonly dismissed, misunderstood, and/or unknown in mainstream culture. While adequately contextualizing injustices, we must also actively follow the lead of critical feminist and Indigenous feminist thinkers by highlighting the resistance and resiliency of Indigenous women, especially those who are most marginalized within this group – for instance, those who are criminalized. This approach is vital to avoid damage-centered research (Tuck, 2009) and misunderstandings of incarcerated Indigenous women's stories. At the same time, scholars must pay attention to the stories told by marginalized people that take up dominant narratives – which tend to tell us more about dominant societal understandings than lived experiences (Woodwiss, 2017). That is, it is crucial that we understand stories within their contexts, including dominant narratives, which help provide a more complex framework of analysis. Regardless, storytelling is a form of theory-building and those who “carry stories” must be attentive not only to practices of knowledge creation but the responsibility and practices of relational accountability (Benson, 2020) – ideas I attend to in the following chapter. Together, critical feminist, Indigenous feminist, and critical feminist criminological perspectives provide appropriate roots from which to base my analyses. Specifically, I employ Indigenous feminist perspectives to understand and analyze the complex and difficult ways that colonial patriarchy impacts the lived experiences of incarcerated Indigenous women who wrote about their lives in *Tightwire*. Moreover, I highlight women's stories that advance counter-narratives in order to engage with their critical analyses of the criminological topics under examination. Indeed, a critical feminist perspective embedded in Indigenous feminisms was vital to the project. Additionally, to attend to the specificity of

incarceration and to understand how there existed both a resistance to and oppression by colonial patriarchal violence within the Canadian criminal justice system in the women's stories, it was fundamental that I also included critical feminist criminological perspectives.

CHAPTER FOUR – Methodology

Introduction

I first came across *Tightwire*, a prisoner produced newsletter that was published within the Prison For Women (1972-1995), on the Penal Press website (www.penalpress.com). Based on my review of relevant literature (Foran, 1998; Gaucher 1989; Jackson, 2019) as well as my own initial review of *Tightwire* on the Penal Press website (2019), I knew *Tightwire* was filled with stories of carceral pain, colonial trauma, and violence against women as well as stories that documented women's responses and resistance to these intersecting oppressions. My research examines incarcerated women's storytelling within *Tightwire*. Specifically, I explore stories that respond to the intersections of colonialism and patriarchy – colonial patriarchy – within the carceral setting, as well as within Canada's criminal justice system more broadly. While it is well established that both prison and Indigenous storytelling should be conceptualized as resistance (Rymhs, 2008; Wright, 2019), Unangax̂ scholar in Indigenous and education studies Eve Tuck (2009) urges researchers to employ a desire-centered, as opposed to a damage-centered, approach. Damage-centered research documents peoples' pain for the purpose of holding others (i.e., those in power) accountable for oppression (Tuck, 2009). Although researchers may have the "best intentions", Tuck (2009) argues that such an approach operates on a flawed theory of change that reinforces and reinscribes simplistic one-dimensional notions of people as damaged rather than accounting for people's complex personhood. For instance, people can explicitly resist dominant representations of themselves that affect them negatively while at the same time wishing they fit into such representations. By contrast, a desire-centered approach entails fleshing out "that which has been hidden or what happens behind our backs"; this is an approach that functions to interrupt the dualistic belief that people either reproduce or resist social

inequalities (Tuck, 2009, p. 420). Tuck (2009) explains that “desire, because it is an assemblage of experiences, ideas, and ideologies, both subversive and dominant, necessarily complicates our understanding of human agency, complicity, and resistance” (p. 420). Reflecting my commitment to a desire-centered approach, my research analyzes not only stories about trauma, but also stories with instances of imagination and hope for the future of justice in Canada. Moreover, throughout my project, I remained cognizant that women’s stories could simultaneously demonstrate both their complicity and resistance. Many stories represent a complex combination of the two, complicating the notion that all prison and Indigenous storytelling is resistance in and of itself. Crucially, while my work examines all stories within *Tightwire*, I respectfully engage with and center Indigenous women’s stories to reflect my commitments, as a settler scholar, to reconciliation and decolonization. *Tightwire* is an ideal case study to analyze incarcerated Indigenous women’s stories because the majority of its storytellers are women and it has a specific section for Indigenous storytellers.

Case studies such as mine are excellently designed for adding depth to complex phenomena because they examine “data” from various angles and place it within pertinent contexts (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Thomas, 2011). This often consists of providing detailed contextualized descriptions of the data which include highlighting relevant histories and cultures (Stake, 1995). In my work, I add depth to scholarly understandings of incarcerated Indigenous women’s stories while placing them in their relevant sociopolitical contexts. Case studies are also “particularly useful when it comes to motivating research questions, inspiring new ideas, sharpening existing theory, and illustrating theoretical claims” (Weir, 2015, p. 71). As readers will learn throughout this chapter, *Tightwire* stories very much inspired the direction of my research; and in chapter seven, I explore the women’s stories in relation to social change.

Additionally, case studies can detail patterns and connections that exist between specific histories and the present day; in this way, they may illuminate other current phenomena that share similar characteristics and/or histories (Thomas, 2010). These connections are vital in my work because, for example, while colonial and patriarchal practices have shifted over time from more to less overt, such practices stem from the same histories and still have very real effects today (Chartrand, 2019; Vowel, 2016). Thus, despite changes to the prison system that many members of the public consider to be progressive, by putting Indigenous women's stories in *Tightwire* into conversation with both contemporary and historical literatures on the contexts of Canadian penalty, my research helps to show continuities between the old and "new" penal regimes which demonstrates that penal reforms have not served prisoners to the extent that some people may assume. I will pick these topics up again in my chapters six and seven where I discuss the monumental *Creating Choices* Report by the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women and its ongoing legacy at the first indigenized prison – the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge, respectively.

In this chapter, I begin by walking readers through some of my commitments to my research community such as ensuring that my research process and practices are respectful and accountable. I then discuss my research questions and objectives, which were heavily influenced by *Tightwire* storytellers as well as several Indigenous women that I met in the community who were previously incarcerated at the Prison For Women (P4W). Next, I outline how I collected issues of *Tightwire* and how I treated the stories and storytellers throughout my work. Then, I describe my analytic practices which include an amalgamation of content, thematic, and narrative analyses that I grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing which included both Indigenous feminist and decolonial frameworks. Finally, I end with some concluding remarks.

A Note on Reflexivity, Accountability, and Respect

As a researcher, one of my pressing concerns is ensuring that my research is accountable and respectful to my research community. Respectful research is particularly vital in the case of non-Indigenous researchers and Indigenous research communities. This is due to the longstanding practice of knowledge extraction from Indigenous communities by non-Indigenous researchers (Piper, Jacobe, Yazzie, and Calderon, 2019; Tuck, 2009). In my research, it is also paramount that I respect incarcerated people because I am not incarcerated and, in this way, I am privileged in comparison to my research community. While my research community is incredibly knowledgeable and powerful, because of their experiences of compounded oppressions, they may also be vulnerable as research participants. While I do not have participants per se, I believe that stories similarly deserve respect because they signify relationships and tie storytellers to their audience – often making connections between past, present, and future generations (Kovach, 2009). For instance, “old” stories remind us of those who came before us – to whom we are indebted and accountable (Benson, 2020). Thus, while my project did not require official university research ethics board approval, I continue to center an ethics of care and listening in my work.

Specifically, I am inspired by feminist narrative researcher Kelly Lockwood’s (2018) listening guide³³; Sto:lo First Nation Jo-Ann Archibald’s (2008) “listening with three ears”³⁴; critical prison scholar Krista Benson’s (2020) application of Chippewa of Thames community-based researcher Andrea Riley-Mukavetz’s (2016) term “carrying stories” to engage with

³³ Lockwood's (2009) listening guide entails four sequential listenings in which she attends to different features of stories in each listening.

³⁴ Christian (2017) explains listening with three ears as when researchers listen twice as much as they speak. The three ears include the two on either side of our head and the one inside our heart. The three ears can be invoked by looking through the stories multiple times (Archibald, 2008).

incarcerated Indigenous women's stories; and Floretta Boonzaier's (2019) decolonial and feminist approach to narratives. To this extent, I remained cognizant of my responsibility and responsivity to storytellers' needs (Benson, 2020). By continually returning to the women's stories in their original contexts of *Tightwire*, rather than only returning to my "quotable quotes"³⁵ and reflective summaries of the stories, I endeavoured to develop a deep understanding of the women's needs and wisdoms in order to affirm, or "carry", them in my research (Benson, 2020; Kovach, 2019). In this way, I trusted the women's vital expertise – as relayed in their stories – to guide my work and was attentive to the ways in which I "created knowledge" throughout the research process. At times, this "meant making room in methodology for life, for the unexpected, for the path that emerges rather than the one initially planned" (Kovach, 2009, p. 108). For instance, I did not set out to examine Indigenous spirituality, but upon reviewing the Native Sisterhood Sections and Indigenous stories, it became clear that – to reflect the women and my accountability to them – it needed to become part of my research. Together, these practices represent my commitment to relational accountability which is central to Indigenous methodologies (Benson, 2020; Kovach, 2009). By repeatedly and critically engaging with the stories in *Tightwire*, I demonstrate my respect for and commitment to incarcerated Indigenous women and the knowledge that they carry in their stories (Archibald, 2008; Benson, 2020; McKegney, 2008). By centering, for instance, Indigenous spirituality and worldviews, I am also accountable in my representation of the topics in the women stories.

³⁵ What I mean by quotable quotes is the passages or images that stood out to me. These included stories that were relevant to my original and developing research questions, as well as stories that surprised me, were unique, or helped me piece ideas together. Vitally, I endeavoured for the primary quote for each story to be reflective of the story's overall narrative telling – something I discuss more at length later in this chapter.

Another way that I respect my research community is by honouring and advancing Indigenous ways of knowing and researching – specifically the centering of stories (Benson, 2020; Kovach, 2009; 2019). As discussed in my literature review, prisoners similarly value and communicate through storytelling practices (Benson, 2020; Gaucher, 1999). By privileging stories and storytelling, I honour the specific and multiple ways that my research community expresses themselves (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000; Leavy, 2015; Snow, Hays, Caliwagan, Ford Jr, Mariotti, Mwendwa, and Scott, 2016). For me, this also means holding space for Indigenous and criminalized peoples’ stories and centering their experiences – which reflects my active engagement in decolonial practice. Unlike scholars before me (Foran 1998; Jackson, 2019), I included all genres of *Tightwire* stories – both textual and visual – in my analyses. Importantly, research involving both texts and images has significant capacity to communicate complex ideas and to propel audiences into action by unsettling assumptions and highlighting or creating counter-imagery that jars people into seeing, thinking, and feeling differently (Leavy, 2015). Thus, this decision is not only representative of my deep respect for my research community, but also my commitment to creating change that will help ameliorate their lives – both within and outside of the prison setting – by encouraging people to think beyond hegemonic stereotypes that function to harm women, Indigenous peoples, incarcerated people, and incarcerated Indigenous women. While I am deeply committed to pursuing change for these communities, it is imperative that my research does not appropriate or overplay my whiteness. These are not my stories, and I am not “saving” these communities – rather I am using my privilege to place Indigenous and criminalized voices in positions of power within the academic space I occupy. To help avoid these kinds of issues – and to further mobilize the power of women’s stories – I am transparent

with my readers and include full copies of all the *Tightwire* stories that I referenced within the appendices of my dissertation.

Sharing copies of the women's stories is explicitly welcomed by *Tightwire* editors as many of the newsletters include in the front matter that "the contents [of *Tightwire*] may be reproduced, provided that credit is given to the author and sources of publication" (Anonymous, but presumed to be Editors Beverly Whitney, Gay Wise, Daryl Dollan, and Lisa M. Knowles, 1980³⁶, p. 5PDF). Vitally, sharing the women's stories in their full form promotes them to new audiences – my readers – which aligns with one of *Tightwire*'s aims to educate the public about the realities of the prison system – a topic I return to in chapter seven. It also enables Indigenous readers to analyze and interpret the research results (Oguamanam, 2020) which plays a crucial role in supporting Indigenous data³⁷ needs which include having access to data (Walter, Lovett, Maher, Williamson, Prehn, Bodkin-Andrews, & Lee, 2021). Given that many hard copies of *Tightwire* have been damaged or otherwise lost over the years, without its digitization in my dissertation and on websites such as The Penal Press, thorough reader analysis of complete *Tightwire* stories is near impossible without physically visiting the archives in Kingston. Moreover, this sharing of stories is vital given that Indigenous and prisoner voices continue to be sidelined in many spaces of privilege. The fact that silencing is incredibly damaging to these communities informs my belief that the benefits of sharing their stories outweighs the potential harm caused – and thus is representative of my ethics. Moreover, recently, at least two women who were previously incarcerated at P4W – Heather Evans, who frequently published in

³⁶ See Appendix 2.

³⁷ Indigenous data is defined as "any data, in any format, that relate to Indigenous Peoples, lands, resources, communities, lifeways and cultures" (Walter, Lovett, Maher, Williamson, Prehn, Bodkin-Andrews, & Lee, 2021, p. 145).

Tightwire, and Ann Hansen, who is friends with many of the women who published in *Tightwire* – agree that they “are glad that people can look at issues of *Tightwire* and learn directly from their friends and fellow survivors of Prison for Women, in their own words” (as paraphrased in Ottenhof, 2021). In speaking with prisoners who produce the *Out of Bounds* newsletter and their positive reception to technological advances, penal press scholar Melissa Munn states:

They were actually excited that they had some of their content on CD-ROM, which is why I have had such an enthusiastic response to my website from current and past penal press writers and editors. They see this as an opportunity to make permanent, in some way, the work that they did (as cited in Laube, 2020).

In this way, the existence of the Penal Press website is perceived by current prisoner-editors as validating and significant to the lasting impact of their work. Vitaly, freelance reporter Luke Ottenhof (2021) states that “archived copies of *Tightwire* and other publications, maintained by former prisoners and their allies, remain important resources for learning about the experience of incarceration and the movement for prison abolition”. Prisoners’ stories are crucial for non-incarcerated people to learn from because, as Munn argues, “prisoners have always been the most accurate and effective writers and thinkers on prison systems” despite the fact they are commonly not given credit in mainstream spaces (as paraphrased in Ottenhof, 2021). Guided by these perspectives then, I provide full copies of the *Tightwire* stories that I quote in my dissertation which promotes transparency to my readers and centers the women’s stories in scholarly discussions in which they are frequently denied and/or minimized.

My sharing of *Tightwire* stories is also related to “open (access) data³⁸” which, while supported by many governmental funding agencies, is not without its tensions. For instance, law and governance scholar Chidi Oguamanam (2020) explains how Indigenous peoples around the

³⁸ “Open data” is described as “the idea that data should be available to be freely used, re-used, and redistributed” (Walter, Lovett, Maher, Williamson, Prehn, Bodkin-Andrews, & Lee, 2021, p. 146).

world are concerned with “how data concerning them is generated, accessed, shared, applied, and owned” – concerns that are representative of the Indigenous data sovereignty movement (p. 3). The movement also promotes research that is driven by Indigenous interests and goals (Walter et al., 2021). Overall, the idea underpinning Indigenous data sovereignty is the responsibility to ensure information is managed in ways that are consistent with the nations’ practices, customs, and laws in which it is located³⁹ (Oguamanam, 2020). While the term Indigenous data sovereignty is fairly novel, it is crucial to note that Indigenous dissatisfaction with research and data issues has been occurring since at least the mid-1980s (Walter et al., 2021). Moreover, Indigenous peoples “have always been data collectors and knowledge holders” (Global Indigenous Data Alliance, n.d., as cited in Oguamanam, 2020, p. 4); as such, misuse of Indigenous data – or stories – relates to the ability of Indigenous peoples to exercise their rights to self-determination. Thus, responsible researchers must ensure that their approaches to open data do not further marginalize or oppress Indigenous peoples and nations.

Given that intellectual property rights are one of the concerns of the Indigenous data sovereignty movement (Oguamanam, 2020), one of the ways that my research mitigates the potential harm of open access is by making clear which stories are by Indigenous storytellers – which is discussed in my “Research Objectives” and “Story(Teller) Treatment” sections. Moreover, by emphasizing that the findings in my dissertation are co-created between myself and the women whose stories I engage with, I do not make ownership claims of the knowledges that I learned from *Tightwire* storytellers. This supports political and cultural anthropologist

³⁹ Given that most Indigenous storytellers in *Tightwire* do not specify their nations and that the Native Sisterhood emphasizes a collective Indigenous voice, in many cases, I do not contextualize stories in this way.

Stephanie Irlbacher-Fox's (2014) conceptualization of co-resistance as a necessity for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to co-exist.

To analyze different kinds and aspects of stories – textual, visual, and narratives of resistance, I employed various kinds of analytic approaches and methods. For me, honouring Indigenous ways of knowing and research meant integrating inductive approaches to research despite my criminological tendency towards more deductive methods. This tendency is not surprising given the fact that criminology – among other disciplines – is rooted in colonial history (Boonzaier, 2019) and universities emphasize colonial research designs (Piper et al., 2019) by encouraging researchers to incorporate open access and “big data” – which are commonly done without grappling with questions regarding cultural sensitivity, sovereignty, and self-determination (Oguamanam, 2020). Despite my best efforts, it is important to note that, by virtue of my location⁴⁰, some people may not consider my work adequately decolonial. Rather, they may conceptualize my work as “de/colonial”. According to Brooke Madden (2019), an education scholar with Indigenous ancestry, the term de/colonizing:

underscores the complexity and, at times, incongruity of the material-discursive structures, commitments, and practices of educational institutions and the Indigenizing, decolonizing, and reconciliation initiatives they pursue. Such a notion suggests that decolonization need not be (and perhaps cannot be) constructed in neat opposition to colonization. Rather, de/colonizing calls for consistent examination of colonial logics and productions that seep into settings like Indigenous education and teacher education, which, our intentions and plans notwithstanding, often become hybrid experiences of colonizing and decolonizing (p. 287).

⁴⁰ By location, I am referring to my personal positionality as a white, middle-class, non-incarcerated, academic, 13th generation Canadian settler, as well as the spaces that I occupy such as the academy. In identifying the length of time my family has settled on Turtle Island, in no way am I saying that I have been here a long time relative to Indigenous peoples who have lived here since time immemorial. Rather, I am emphasizing that my family has deep rooted history in settler colonialism to which I feel a personal responsibility to remedy.

One way that de/colonizing initially played out in my research was regarding the competing expectations between the university and non-academic communities⁴¹. For instance, tension existed between what the academy and its funding agencies required of me – “output-focused” research and “timely” (i.e., rushed) publications – and what Indigenous and/or (previously) incarcerated communities require of me – “process-focused”, where meaningful time is spent creating and maintaining relationships, as well as deeply reflecting on one’s location and relationality to the research and research community (Benson, 2020; Farrell-Racette, 2017; Fraser, 2019; Kovach, 2009).

To be fair, my doctoral committee supported my development process which, in part, involved taking an additional course on “Advanced Indigenous Methodologies” in the Department of Native Studies. While this added to the time it took to complete my project, it helped me to acquire a more critical understanding of research regarding Indigenous peoples and communities. My committee also encouraged me to be relational and reflexive. Since 2019, I have fostered reciprocal personal and professional relationships with members of the Prison For Women Memorial Collective (P4WMC) and was invited onto the Collective as an honorary member in 2021. Currently, the P4WMC includes only women with lived experiences of federal incarceration. In 2022, I was invited to become a member of the P4WMC Advisory Board. The Advisory Board is comprised of the Collective as well as a variety of critical scholars and professionals who support and advance the P4WMC’s long standing goal of creating a memorial garden and outdoor gallery on the grounds of P4W. The purpose of the space is to honour the women who died in P4W – many of whom were Indigenous – and to have a communal healing

⁴¹ Importantly, these groups are not necessarily mutually exclusive in that community members can also be researchers and vice versa (Whetung & Wakefield, 2019).

space for people who were previously incarcerated (Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021). The space also serves pedagogical functions as members of the public can visit and learn about P4W from the stories of women whose lived experiences will be featured within the gallery. In this capacity, I hope my work will be employed towards the curation of outdoor gallery exhibits. For instance, by creating an archive of the stories, storytellers, and contents of *Tightwire*, my work acts as a starting point from which the Collective can select storytellers and/or topics that they want to highlight at the gallery. While the gallery space has not yet been created, I am committed to the Collective and will continue supporting their goals beyond the duration of my PhD.

It is important to mention that not all academics are comfortable forming relationships with the research community during the research process – I believe this is because Western researchers tend to view relationality as “biased” (Kovach, 2019), relational validity as “questionable” or “suspect”, and reciprocal relationships between researcher and the research community as “manipulative” (e.g., where researchers employ their relationships with participants in order to extract more knowledge from them). For these reasons, Western researchers do not typically ascribe to relational methodologies (Kovach, 2009). However, reciprocal and longstanding relationships are key to Indigenous and Indigenous feminist methodologies (Kovach, 2009, 2019) and I have worked to sustain and grow these meaningful connections throughout my research process. Indeed, I am indebted to these women who have helped me grow both personally and professionally.

One of the ways that I attempted to speak to both my academic and research communities was by balancing inductive and deductive approaches. My abductive approach enabled me meaningful time to “re-visit” with the women’s writings and drawings and to “listen” to their

stories which aligns with Indigenous feminist listening politics (Benson, 2020; Kovach, 2019). Another way that I found balance was by engaging with both Indigenous and Western research methodologies. While I employed several Western research methods – such as content, thematic, and narrative analyses, what I “took away from” and how I applied each method was mediated by Indigenous ways of knowing and an overall decolonial approach to research. In other words, I took inspiration from Western methods which I then grounded in and put into conversation with Indigenous perspectives – such as Indigenous feminisms – and methodological approaches.

Importantly, member of the Secwepemc and Syilx Nations Dorothy Christian (2017) – who specializes in Indigenous storytelling – argues that Indigenous and Western research can only walk together so far; however, like her, I aim to walk as far as I can to center Indigenous knowledges, methodologies, and methods within dominant understandings of critical qualitative research. This approach aligns with the perspective of Margaret Kovach (2019), a renowned Indigenous methodologist of Plains Cree and Saulteaux descent. In her work that combines Western (i.e., thematic content analysis) and Indigenous (i.e., the conversational method) methods, Kovach (2019) points out that “it is not the method, per se, that is the determining characteristic of Indigenous methodologies, but rather the interplay (the relationship) between the method and paradigm and the extent to which the method itself is congruent with an Indigenous worldview” (p. 124).

With my adaptable and flexible methodological approach, I validated how women chose to tell their stories, and was able to produce more nuanced findings which strengthen my research’s credibility, utility, and potential to resonate with diverse audiences (Call-Cummings & Martinez, 2016; Gatenby & Humphries, 2000; Leavy, 2012; 2015; McIntyre & Lykes, 2004; Reinharz, 1992). The ability of my work to resonate with a broad audience – including non-

academic communities – is vital to the shared goals of my research and *Tightwire* storytellers – that is, to create community and “set the record straight” through storytelling. In these ways, my innovation and integration of select Western methods with Indigenous ways of knowing protect the integrity and ethics of my project.

Research Questions

My work was guided by several related research questions. My major research question was:

- 1) What stories are Indigenous women telling in *Tightwire* about their experiences of and responses to Canada’s criminal justice system?

While I intentionally posed this question in the broadest sense to maximize the number of stories I engaged with, I emphasized women’s experiences of and responses to P4W – including the creation of *Tightwire* and the Native Sisterhood, as well as the prison system and criminalization process more generally.

Building on this question, my minor research questions were:

- 2) How do Indigenous women’s stories in *Tightwire* engage with narratives about womanhood, Indigeneity, and criminality?

Here, I was interested to identify which narratives about womanhood, Indigeneity, and criminality were disrupted, challenged, validated, and/or put forward in the women’s stories.

- 3) How do Indigenous women’s stories in *Tightwire* inform the sociopolitical and historical contexts surrounding the federal incarceration of women in Canada?

To contextualize the women’s standpoints and shed light onto their understandings of punishment, I examined stories regarding P4W and prison reforms, as well as the culture of punishment more broadly which includes colonial patriarchy.

- 4) How can Indigenous women's stories in *Tightwire* inform perspectives of and approaches to justice in Canada?

For this question, I emphasized both the women's critiques of the criminal justice system – such as the Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC) “indigenization” efforts – as well as the women's ideas regarding alternative and Indigenous approaches to justice, including calls for decolonization.

My research questions are informed by themes that I identified from several talks I attended by three Indigenous women who were previously incarcerated at the Prison for Women. The first talk was “The P4W Memorial Project” (Chaisson, Kidd, Davies, & Guenther, 2019, September 20) and included a documentary screening of a film called *A Memorial Garden*, followed by a conversation led by Fran Chaisson (Ojibwa) and Bobbie Kidd (Indigenous ancestry) at the Building Abolition: Decarceration and Social Justice Conference in Banff, Alberta. The second event was an untitled talk and discussion by Cree storyteller Yvonne Johnson (2019, October 3) at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta. Both Chaisson and Johnson published stories in *Tightwire*, while a news story about Kidd was reprinted in *Tightwire*. By structuring my work around what I learned from these talks, I ensured that my project was (and still is) relevant and meaningful to my research community which aligns with Indigenous (feminist) methodologies and is one way that I am in good relation with my research community.

The first theme that emerged from the talks was memory and remembering. To this extent, I developed my first research question that aimed to uncover topical content around P4W prisoners' stories about Canada's criminal justice system, thus setting the foundation for my remaining questions. The second theme was setting the record straight and truth-telling which

aligns with questions one, two, and three. Question two examines how *Tightwire* storytellers employ and respond to narratives about select identities (i.e., woman, Indigenous, and “criminal”) in their stories; while question three explores how *Tightwire* storytellers “think intersectionally” about their identities and how the sociopolitical contexts of the time (i.e., colonial patriarchy) interacted with and influenced their experiences of identity. The last theme that I identified in the talks was Sisterhood and its connection to meaningful change. This theme complements questions one, two, and four. Question four explores how women’s stories have contributed, are contributing, and/or can contribute to scholarly and criminal justice discussions regarding Indigenous justice. It is critical to note that my research questions changed over time in response to my deep and continued engagement with the themes from Chaisson’s, Kidd’s, and Johnson’s talks, as well as my developing relationships with Chaisson and Kidd and the stories in *Tightwire*.

Research Objectives

In addition to centering talks by Fran Chaisson, Bobbie Kidd, and Yvonne Johnson, another way that I helped ensure the relevance of my work was by aligning my research objectives with those of *Tightwire*. In her thesis, Julie Jackson (2019) summarizes the goals of *Tightwire*: “to transcend the physical barriers of imprisonment through human connection in writing and to inform the public on the realities of the ‘criminal justice system’” (p. 35). Specifically, *Tightwire*’s objective in its opening statement of earlier issues is to “dissolve the physical barriers of imprisonment by sharing [P4W prisoners’] attempts to free [themselves] from the mental bondages that engulf [them]” (Jackson, 2019, p. 38). These goals point to the value that *Tightwire* storytellers placed on connection and community formation both within and beyond the prison. These goals also speak to *Tightwire*’s commitment to “set the record straight”

in relation to public perceptions of women's criminalization as well as the continued colonization of Canada and its effects on the criminalization of Indigenous women. Taken together, I perceive these goals as aiming to increase complex and critical understandings of the prison – and broader criminal justice system – while building connections between prisoners and *Tightwire* subscribers through storytelling.

In response to these goals, I had several complementary research objectives that are relevant not only to the academy but also to Indigenous and imprisoned communities. First, my research addresses notable gaps in scholarship and public understandings surrounding stories produced by those who are incarcerated, women, or Indigenous, and specifically incarcerated Indigenous women (Chen & Fiander, 2017; Gaucher, 1989, 1999; Rimstead & Rymhs, 2011; Rymhs, 2008). By centering traditionally marginalized stories by incarcerated Indigenous women, my first objective aligns with critical feminist and critical criminological perspectives (Armstead, 1995; Arvin, Tuck, & Morrill, 2013; Benson, 2020; Brabeck, 2004; Burgess-Proctor, 2015). Given that the women's stories in *Tightwire* are not well-known, I reciprocate to Indigenous and prisoner communities by sharing and drawing attention to these women's stories. Moreover, it gives back to and validates the women – their stories and experiences – who published in *Tightwire* and were incarcerated at P4W. This also contributes to the stated goals of *Tightwire* and the themes I identified in Chaisson's, Kidd's, and Johnson's talks such as truth telling and "setting the record straight". Truth telling has been a major part of the reconciliation process in Canada (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). In making this point, it is vital for me to acknowledge the co-construction of truth and knowledge – the truths belong to the women who produced their stories in *Tightwire*, and my dissertation is a shared creation of knowledge with the women and their stories. As previously mentioned, the

recognition and explicit acknowledgement of this co-creation is part of how I respect Indigenous data sovereignty (Oguamanam, 2020).

Related to my first objective, my second objective was to position incarcerated (Indigenous) women's stories in *Tightwire* as criminological knowledges that ought to be considered in all discussions, both scholarly and otherwise, of (Indigenous) women's criminalization in Canada. This is vital given that Indigenous knowledges in Canada are often defined as practical and non-scientific (McAleese & Kilty, 2019) – as opposed to theoretical and scientific – which has dramatic implications for Indigenous peoples. For instance, sociologist Samantha McAleese and feminist criminologist Jennifer Kilty (2019) argue in their article that:

by dismissing Indigenous storytelling, we dismiss experiences of abuse, hardship, and injustice and therefore contribute to the ongoing oppression (which includes mass incarceration) of Indigenous people[s] across Canada through policies and programs that fail to address their *actual* needs and concerns (p. 827, emphasis in original).

Similarly, Christian (2017) identifies that, until recently, Indigenous knowledges have not been included in the knowledge production of Euro-Western educational institutions. To achieve this objective, my work challenges and disrupts dominantly held beliefs regarding what and whose knowledges “count”, exposes the subjectivity of knowledge, and reframes mass experiences of oppression as located at the societal rather than individual level. That is, by positioning and employing incarcerated Indigenous women's stories as theoretical and pedagogical tools, I help make them more difficult to dismiss. In this way, I use my privilege as a member of the academy to advance Indigenous ways of knowing. For instance, I employ Indigenous methodologies to analyze criminological inquiries – a field that does not traditionally incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing. This advances feminist, Indigenous, and Indigenous feminist perspectives that stories “carry” vital knowledges (Benson, 2020). Moreover, this research objective aligns with critical feminist, critical criminological, and Indigenous feminist theoretical approaches in that it

highlights the strengths and knowledges of communities that are widely perceived by dominant groups as damaged and not worthy of being listened to, and it emphasizes societal aspects of what are often considered individual problems (Armstead, 1995; Arvin et al., 2013; Bloom & Sawin, 2009; Mendis, 2009; Tuck, 2009). By doing this, I play a role in co-resistance which is crucial for the co-existence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples (Irlbacher-Fox 2014).

In accomplishing objectives one and two, my third research objective was, and still is, to pursue meaningful change for criminalized and Indigenous peoples. I perceive this change beginning at the individual level and eventually moving outwards into larger society through small but consistent changes that individuals bring with them out into the world. For instance, by sharing my work in daily conversations, public spaces, professional discussions, teaching, and publications, my research acts as an intermediary step from which these communities can work with in pursuing and creating change. Specifically, I work especially towards advancing Indigenous knowledges and decolonial perspectives about justice in my everyday life – for instance, I commonly have discussions regarding the residential school system, connections between “historical” and “contemporary” colonialism, and holidays like Thanksgiving and Halloween which are prone to celebrate settlers while dehumanizing and dismissing Indigenous peoples and experiences (Monchalin, 2016). By having these kinds of conversations, I have and will continue to carry out this objective in ways that far exceed the topics covered in my project. My commitment reflects my belief that issues of criminal justice begin with issues of social justice; and at the heart of social justice issues for Indigenous peoples is settler colonialism, reconciliation, and decolonization. In this way, I carefully consider and enact my responsibility to reconcile with Indigenous peoples. Because I am a member of several communities – white, settlers, and scholars – who have stakes in the continuation of colonialism, vital to this objective

is for me to engage them with critical knowledges in ways that increase their likelihood of not only listening to but acting on information tends to be difficult for them to hear and understand. This is one reason why I highlight visual, as well as textual stories – because visual stories have a higher capacity to make people feel something and then channel their emotions into action (Leavy, 2015).

While stories are typically dismissed in program and policy evaluation, they are becoming more accepted and powerful in traditionally dominating spaces. McAleese and Kilty (2019) point to the significance of personal testimony as evidence in judicial decision-making. For instance, when discussing changes to the *Criminal Records Act*⁴², McAleese and Kilty (2019) argue that “the inclusion of stories as evidence in a legal decision of this magnitude provides hope about the value of stories that provide a counter-narrative to the ‘tough-on-crime’ rhetoric present in political discussions about punishment and criminalization” (p. 831). Thus, through disseminating the women’s stories in academic, criminal justice, professional, and communal spaces, my work uplifts counter-narratives that put forward meaningful ideas for change. This goal compliments critical feminist, narrative, criminological, and Indigenous feminist perspectives in that it seeks to create positive change, particularly for those who are most marginalized, and perceives stories as a critical place from which such changes can arise (Arvin et al., 2013; Boonzaier, 2019; Burgess-Proctor, 2015; Leavy, 2012; 2015; McAleese & Kilty, 2019; Reinhartz, 1992). Important to note here is that while I hope to ease the labour required to explain Indigenous perspectives and experiences to dominating groups, my goal is not to “save” Indigenous peoples. Rather, I perceive achieving justice in a settler colonial context

⁴² The *Criminal Records Act* involves the pardon system in which people with criminal records can apply for a record suspension in Canada (McAleese & Kilty, 2019). Having a criminal record has implications, for instance, on where an individual can work and travel.

as a multi-pronged approach as well as a communal effort that requires both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Story Collection

Tightwire (1972-1995) is the “case” that my dissertation is concerned with. As previously mentioned, *Tightwire* was a prisoner-produced and published newsletter within Canada’s first and only federal women’s prison in operation at the time, the Prison for Women. I accessed *Tightwire* issues from three sources. The first source was an online open-access archive created by Melissa Munn (www.penalpress.com) that acts as a host for previously produced prisoner newsletters. The website credits another penal press scholar, Robert Gaucher, with its existence as it is his personal (physical) archive from which the website’s catalogue is comprised. On the homepage, the website states that it is “dedicated to providing an open-access archive of these important [prisoner produced] materials” by digitizing primarily Canadian, but also international, publications (Penal Press, 2019). Once Munn receives the hard copy of the newsletters, her research team digitalizes them and uploads them to the Penal Press website. Currently, there are thirty issues of *Tightwire* on the Penal Press website. Nineteen of these issues have been provisionally topically coded by Munn’s research team, which provides some information as to what readers can expect to encounter within each issue. This preliminary coding reveals, for instance, that there were consistent concerns put forth in *Tightwire* regarding “Aboriginal issues”, “battered women”, as well as the “abuse of power and violence” (Penal Press, 2019). Both Frances Foran’s (1998) and Julie Jackson’s (2019) master’s theses on *Tightwire* find similar topics. Eleven issues on the Penal Press website are not coded whatsoever. Of the thirty issues of *Tightwire* on the Penal Press website, two were published in the 1970s, nineteen were published in the 1980s, and nine were published in the 1990s (Penal Press, 2019).

The second source from which I acquired *Tightwire* issues was the W. D. Jordan Rare Books and Special Collections at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. During the first several months of the COVID-19 pandemic, flights between provinces were restricted and I was unable to fly from Edmonton to Kingston. Instead, at my request, several Queen's employees made digital copies of the newsletters for me. From this process, I received 14 issues of *Tightwire* – one issue from the 1970s, ten issues from the 1980s, and three issues from the 1990s. The last source from which I received copies of *Tightwire* was Canada's Penitentiary Museum in Kingston, Ontario. Because this collection phase also occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the museum's employees made digital copies for me. From this source, I acquired two issues of *Tightwire* – the first and last issues – 1972 and 1995, respectively. All together then, my sample of *Tightwire* consists of 45 issues with 2,576 pages total. Combining all three collection sources, my sample of *Tightwire* newsletters ranges between 31 and 117 pages, with the average page count being approximately 57 pages.

Story(teller) Treatment

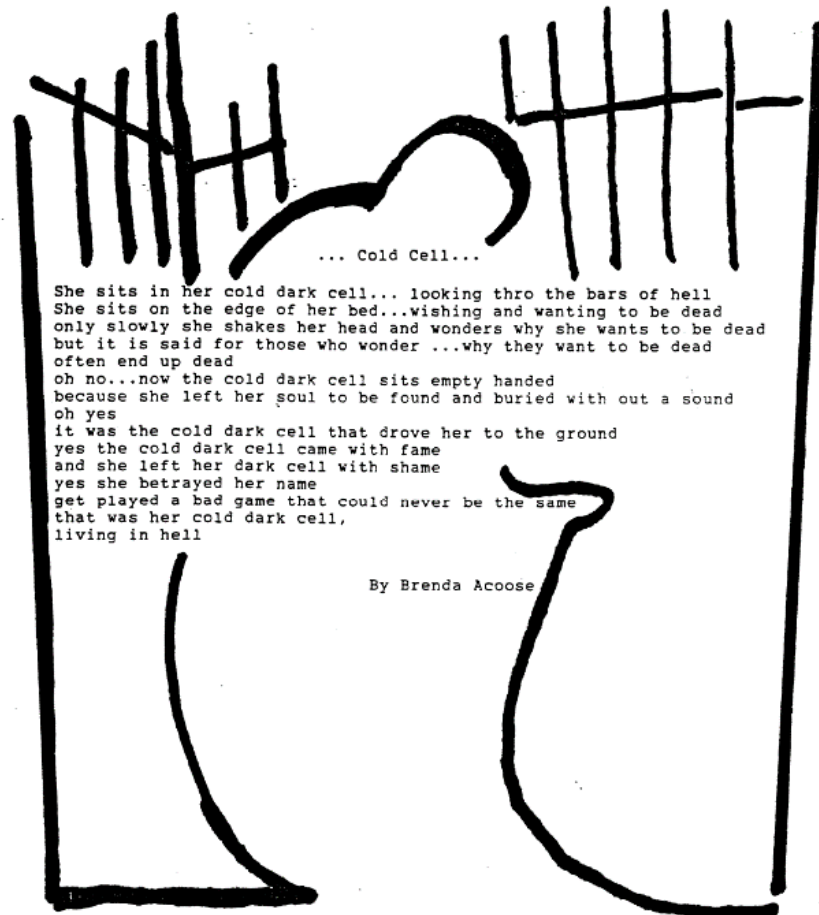
Given that my research involves stories and narratives, I provide the following brief definitions. Feminist narrative researcher Kelly Lockwood (2017) defines stories as accounts that people tell. McAleese and Kilty (2019) explain that “stories are used to reveal a particular experience (or combination thereof) that when taken together constitute an overarching narrative message” (p. 823). Often stories tell us the “what” and “who”; by contrast, narratives provide the storytellers' interpretation or “why” (Manuel, n.d.). In other words, narratives are the frameworks and/or resources that are available for people to draw upon from which their stories are constructed (Lockwood, 2017). Narratives help organize beliefs and views about particular issues and experiences, and assemble people's reasoning in part by summoning, rousing, and/or

rallying emotional and affective responses (McAleese & Kilty, 2019). Floretta Boonzaier (2019) – a critical feminist postcolonial scholar – argues that narratives can be strategic, functional, and purposeful in that they can rewrite past events, present particular perspectives, and advance certain arguments for change.

Patricia Leavy (2015), a renowned arts-based researcher, contends that narratives are important not only as research methods but as integral parts of our lives because, as humans, we constantly tell stories to give our lives meaning. Indeed, stories have become profoundly entrenched in our humanity (Leavy, 2015). Exploring stories complements my theoretical framework. As previously mentioned, stories have great significance to Indigenous peoples, particularly Indigenous women, because Indigenous communities traditionally transmit knowledges and learn through storytelling (LaRocque, 2009; Simonds & Christopher, 2013). Stories are also vital in prison communities (Gaucher, 1999). Stories and narratives are especially important due to their potential to highlight multiple contexts and complexities as well as to disrupt power relationships (Benson, 2020; Boonzaier, 2019; Kovach, 2009; LaRocque, 2009). This potential is vital to Indigenous peoples, women, prisoners, and especially incarcerated Indigenous women whose stories are often dismissed and, as, critical feminist Dorothy Smith (1990) points out (in the case of women specifically), are largely abstracted from the creation of knowledge that pertains to their lives. Narrative (criminological) research – or researching stories – thus has potential to make visible previously silenced experiences on storytellers' own terms (Boonzaier, 2019). By examining women's stories, I was able to gain nuanced understandings of their everyday lived experiences.

To determine if a story was produced by more than one person, groups of people must be identified by either names of individual group members (e.g., Fran and Gail) or a group name

(e.g., Editors and Native Sisterhood). When stories do not have an identified storyteller or their name is illegible, I refer to the storyteller as “Anonymous”. For anonymously published stories, I assumed that the story was produced by one person unless there was evidence to the contrary (e.g., when “we” is used as a pronoun). In instances where there are multiple types of stories on one page (e.g., a drawing and a poem), I use the relationship between the stories as a clue to determine whether they were created by one or more storytellers. For example, I counted expressions on the same page as one story if they are physically intertwined (e.g., when the drawing surrounds or otherwise physically interacts with the poem).



51

Figure 1 – Example of one story, where the text and image interact: Acoose, B. (1988). ... Cold

Cell... . *Tightwire* (V21, 5). p. 50.

By contrast, if the expressions did not physically interact on the page (e.g., the drawing and poem are physically separated by a considerable amount of blank space), I counted the expressions as separate stories.

Tales to Tell

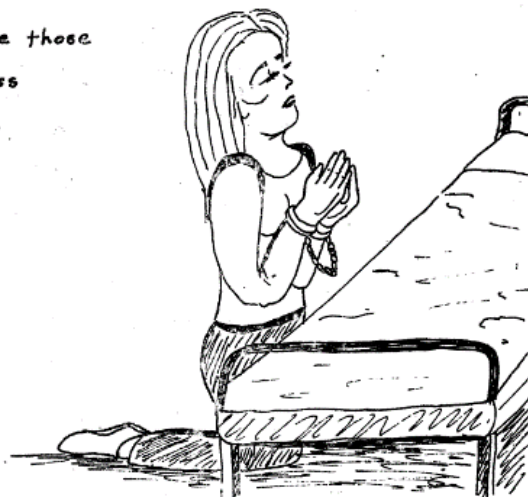
Heaven and Hell

A priest spoke with the Lord about heaven and hell. "I will show you hell," said the Lord, and they went into a room where a large pot of stew sat in the centre. The smell was delicious, but around the pot sat famished and desperate people. All were holding spoons with long handles that reached to the pot, but because the handles of the spoons were longer than their arms, it was impossible for them to feed themselves.

"Now I will show you heaven," said the Lord. They entered an identical room with a similar pot of stew. The people had identical spoons, but they were well-nourished and happy, talking to each other. At first, the priest did not understand. "It is simple," said the Lord. "You see, they have learned to feed each other."

(from The Anglican Digest, Pentecost A.D., 1984)

And forgive those
who trespass
Against me...



45

Figure 2 – Example of two stories, where the text above and image below do not interact: (1)

The Anglican Digest. (1985). Tales to tell: Heaven and hell; and (2) Anonymous (1985c).

Untitled. *Tightwire* (V20, 10) p. 45.

My commitment to a "listening" approach is reflected in several of my methodological practices in relation to stories and storytellers. For instance, when possible, I specify the nation and location of each storyteller in *Tightwire*; I also extend this practice to Indigenous scholars

whom I cite. This practice aligns with Indigenous philosophies in that I highlight the diversity of Indigenous peoples and the importance of place – both of which help demonstrate each individual storyteller’s standpoint (Benson, 2020; Moreton-Robinson, 2013). To maintain the authenticity of each story when quoting them, I retained all spelling, grammatical, and word choices of the storytellers. In some instances, these include typos as well as unconventional spelling and grammar; in other cases, this includes swearwords. Also practiced in research conducted for the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women, this decision respects “the experiences and understandings of First Nations’ women” as they are told unaltered which means that they have “not been edited to delete swear words or to soften the impact of their words” (Monture, as cited in Sugar & Fox, 1990, p. 467). I also prioritized the decisions of *Tightwire* editors. For instance, when I quoted a story without a page number, I cited the page number that corresponded to my digital (PDF) copies of the newsletters. For example, if a story was on page 6 of my PDF of *Tightwire*, my citation for the story included “p. 6PDF”. Of note is that sometimes the unavailability of page numbers was not an editorial choice but rather the ink faded over time, or the page number had been cut off during the photocopying/digitizing process – in both cases, the numbers were illegible. Moreover, in my direct quotes of the women’s stories, I used “/” to signify line changes in poems, and “//” to signify paragraph changes in poems and lengthy texts. In longer passages and/or passages that address various topics, there are times when I have shortened them. Readers can identify which passages are shortened by the “[...]” within the body of the quotes and are encouraged to read the stories in full within the appendices. These decisions demonstrate my respect for storytellers’ choices and agency.

Another vital aspect of my treatment of stories is that I took, and still take, the stories in *Tightwire* at face value⁴³. In other words, I do not question or critique stories regarding their truthfulness, accuracy, or “objectivity”. Nor do I question storytellers’ experiences, understandings, and worldviews. While there are many truths, my work prioritizes and upholds the truths and lived experiences of (Indigenous) women prisoners. This supports the work of the Indigenous women on the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women who state in the *Creating Choices* (1990) report that truth is “found within our experience[s]” (p. 19) that are “racially and culturally specific” (p. 20). Because Indigenous teachings are often invalidated and overlooked by dominating society – one example of what the Task Force identified as racism – centering Indigenous truths can help mitigate oppression (TFFSW, 1990). These ideas also align with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada (2015) which defines “truth” as “not only the truth revealed in government and church residential school documents, but also the truth of lived experiences as told to us by Survivors” (p. 12). Together, the TRC (2015) argues that survivors’ testimonies constitute a new historical record that is based on traditional Indigenous practices of witnessing. I acknowledge that official documents – such as those produced by CSC – have some truths to them; however, the truths and stories of women in *Tightwire* are the ones I prioritize and believe shed light onto a more complex and accurate understanding of women’s federal incarceration in Canada. My belief is shared by the Task Force on Federally Sentenced

⁴³ While narrative criminologists prioritize stories that have meaning to their storytellers, they do not take things at “face value” as I am suggesting (Presser, 2022, October 7). On the other hand, Indigenous and feminist scholars prioritize the truths of what storytellers convey is their lived experience – as such, this is the path I take in my own research. The fields of Indigenous and feminist studies, as well as their priorities, represent a vital contribution to narrative criminology in that they center Indigenous voices – an area that, renowned narrative criminologist Lois Presser (2022, October 7) agreed, when I asked her, is deserving of attention and expansion within the field of (narrative) criminology.

Women (TFFSW, 1990). Moreover, I follow the lead of critical feminists and Indigenous feminists in that I believe that we all have a specific standpoint from which we perceive our worlds (Moreton-Robinson, 2013; Smith, 1990); thus, in my view, “objectivity” does not exist. In this way, my approach to stories respects the valuable knowledges – and emancipation narratives – that storytellers carry.

My respect for the storytellers’ truths is also demonstrated by how I endeavour to let the women’s visual stories “speak for themselves”. Unlike textual stories which can more easily and accurately translate through quotable quotes that are cited in-text (with the entire story reproduced in the appendices), visual stories are more difficult to translate to readers. This is because there are often no quotable quotes in visual stories – thus I cannot reproduce the storytellers’ visual story in the same way as I could for textual stories where I use storytellers’ exact language to protect stories’ authenticity. To mitigate this issue, I show women’s visual stories in-text rather than include them in the appendices. Overall, my responsibility as a settler informs my commitment to centering Indigenous stories and is one of the ways my work takes up principles of Indigenous data governance (Walter et al., 2021). Another way that my work engages with Indigenous data sovereignty and governance is through a concentration on achieving equitable outcomes and justice (Walter et al., 2021). As such, my project focuses on elevating Indigenous and prisoner truths in order to support alternative and critical approaches to justice in Canada.

Story Analysis

My first analytic interaction with *Tightwire* stories involved methods of content analysis. To begin, I recorded bibliographic and descriptive information about each story in the Native Section of *Tightwire*. Bibliographic information included noting:

- the storyteller's name;
- newsletter year, issue, volume, and page number;
- type of story (e.g., editorial, essay, short story, poem, drawing, comic);
- location of the story (e.g., cover, front matter, Native Section, back matter); and
- whether or not the storyteller is Indigenous (communal affiliation provided when available).

Noting this information was vital for me to revisit the stories within their specific issue and page(s) of *Tightwire*. Revisiting stories in their original (digitalized) form enabled me to further clarify and contextualize stories throughout my analysis and dissertation writing process, thereby appropriately keeping them in their contextual relations (Kovach, 2019).

Descriptive information included a summary of what the story was about, and I wrote a separate but attached entry regarding my initial impressions of the story (Boonzaier, 2019; Kovach, 2019; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). I created a digital “archive” to house the bibliographic and descriptive information which I referred back to throughout the research process. In describing what I understand from the women's stories, I prioritized the storytellers' word choices, made note of passages that stood out to me by quoting them verbatim, and used “everyday” language to summarize my reflections about the stories. In carefully employing the language located within women's stories, I avoid critical feminist Dorothy Smith's (1990) critique of researchers who use abstract sociological concepts to explore women's lives, which, she argues, are typically incapable of capturing the nuances of lived experiences thus alienating individuals from their own experiential knowledge. After completing this pass for the stories in the Native Section, I repeated it for theoretically relevant stories outside of the Native Sections – discussed more below. Overall, I summarize my approach to content analysis as:

Methods of Content Analysis

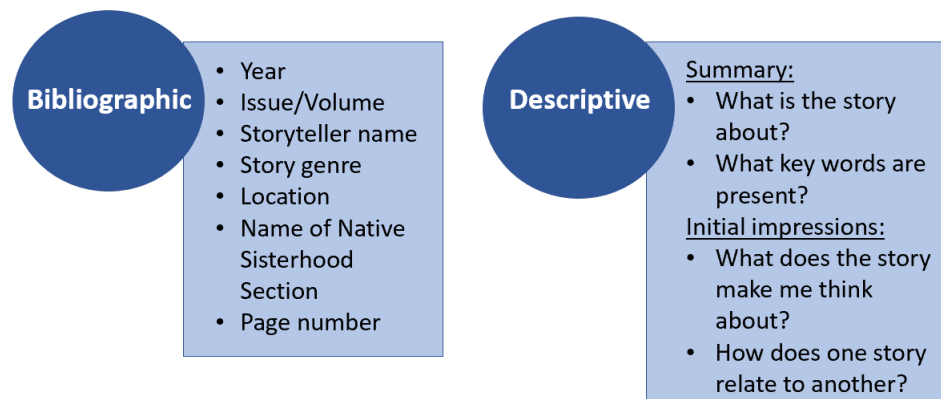


Figure 3 – Summary of My Content Analysis Methods

While recording descriptive details of stories, I was mindful not to permanently separate the stories from their contexts which would contradict with relationality – a key feature of Indigenous methodologies (Kovach, 2019; Wilson, 2008). To preserve stories' relationality, I was guided by Kovach (2019) who employed qualitative content analysis and thematic coding in her work with Indigenous peoples' stories. While the codes and themes temporarily separated the stories from their larger contexts, Kovach (2019) wrote descriptive stories and reflective narratives based on each of the participants' interview transcripts which enabled the stories to regain their relations to the various pieces in each story. Similarly, by writing descriptive and reflective pieces based on *Tightwire* stories, I kept stories in their relational contexts, thus aligning with Indigenous feminist methodologies (Boonzaier, 2019; Kovach, 2019) – specifically, the importance placed on kinship.

My approach also complements feminist print culture methodologies that prioritize intertextuality. The concept of intertextuality is that whole bodies of texts should be analyzed

together (Beins, 2017). It is based on the belief that people make sense of texts through other texts⁴⁴ – whether on the same page, in the same volume, or in the same publication as the text under examination (Beins, 2017). By keeping stories in their intertextual contexts, my research respects *Tightwire* editors’ design choices. Intertextuality reminds me of relationality in that, Indigenous peoples understand all people, ideas, and places as in relation to one another (Wilson, 2008). In other words, to demonstrate stories’ relational contexts (e.g., their relation to one another), stories must be kept together. In my research that not only entailed detailing bibliographic and descriptive information for each theoretically relevant story, but I also returned to the original story as well as the story within its intertextual context of the Native Sisterhood Section and the *Tightwire* newsletter as a whole. By emphasizing the relational aspect of stories, feminist print culture and Indigenous scholarships align.

In addition to content analysis, I also employed methods of thematic analysis. Specifically, I used two observational techniques and one processing technique. The first observational technique involved examining the stories in relation to one another by noting their similarities and differences (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). For example, throughout my analysis chapters, readers will not only learn about the solidarity of the Native Sisterhood, but also the heterogeneity that was expressed via *Tightwire* stories. By observing how newsletter issues and stories changed and/or stayed the same over time in terms of what and how certain topics were discussed, I am able to demonstrate which stories in *Tightwire* are not simply anecdotal but rather point to larger significant trends – making it harder to deny *Tightwire*’s overall story and narrative (McAleese & Kilty, 2019; Voyageur, 2005). For instance, as quoted in Gila Lyons’ (2018) article “The American Prison Writing Archive”, Doran Larson notes that, when taken

⁴⁴ Popular culture also contributes to understandings of all texts (Beins, 2017).

together, prison stories across different times and geographical locations often have thematic similarities to the point that they are mistakenly perceived as originating from the same time and same prison. By contrast, seeking out differences enabled me to demonstrate and account for more individualized stories that, while not necessarily belonging to the grand narrative of *Tightwire*, are important in terms of showcasing women's breadth of stories, lived experiences, and perspectives. Identifying differences also plays a significant role in the rejection of pan-Indigenous perspectives that flattens the heterogeneity of Indigenous peoples in the interest of assimilation and elimination (Benson, 2020). Moreover, although Indigenous peoples share many social, political, and historical conditions, their experiences of intersecting oppressions differ based on cultural and other differences (Monchalin, 2016; Moreton-Robinson, 2013).

The second observational technique that inspired my methods was seeking out and engaging with stories that were related to my theoretical framework and research questions (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). To do this, I employed theory-based sampling with sensitizing concepts. Theory-based sampling involves identifying theoretical constructs to examine and selecting a sample that corresponds to these constructs (Creswell, 2013). Here, sensitizing concepts are useful to case study designs in that they, according to feminist criminologist Charissa Weir (2015), "allow the researcher to start out with a few loosely defined concepts as 'things to look for', which are then further defined and shaped as the data is analyzed" (p. 69). Sensitizing concepts complement abductive reasoning⁴⁵ in that "theoretical development and data analysis [are...] reflexive and reinforcing" (Weir 2015, p. 70). In my research, stories add complexity to and ground my theoretical approach as well as highlight new areas of exploration.

⁴⁵ Abductive reasoning combines inductive and deductive reasoning (Creswell, 2013; Weir, 2015).

Guided by my theoretical framework and research questions that emphasize intersectionality, my sensitizing concepts included womanhood, Indigeneity, and criminality. These concepts helped me select which stories to include in my analysis. Over time, with the help of *Tightwire* storytellers' language (i.e., words and phrases that I made note of during my descriptive content analysis), I adapted these broad concepts into more specific Key Words In Context (KWIC). The KWIC strategy is the basis of how I began grouping *Tightwire* stories and represents my “processing” approach to thematic analysis (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Some examples of my KWIC are:

- empower/empowered/empowering;
- heal/healing;
- hope/hopeful;
- hurt/hurting;
- sister/sisters/sisterhood; and
- reform/reformation.

Searching for variations of my keywords – specifically the base word (e.g., empower) – was a critical part of my process as it enabled me to gather more stories than if I had only searched for the full word (e.g., empowering). I also searched for synonyms of each KWIC to maximize the number of stories I engaged with. To group stories pertaining to each keyword, I systematically searched within the archive that I created of summarized *Tightwire* stories and their quotable quotes. While grouping the stories that discussed a particular keyword, I allowed the stories to “take the lead” which resulted in my creation of more KWIC. I repeated the process several times to ensure that I had as many stories as possible. By employing abductive methods of thematic analysis – one that balances inductive similarities and differences and KWIC with

deductive theoretical sampling – I help ensure the validity of my analyses. In summary, my methods of thematic analysis included:

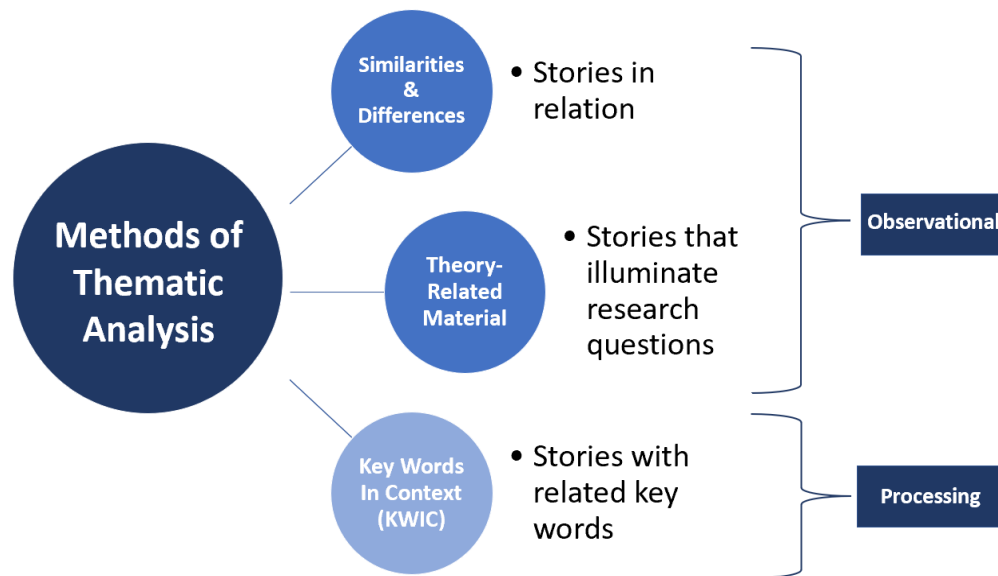


Figure 4 – Summary of My Thematic Analysis Methods

There are some perceived limitations to methods of thematic analysis. For instance, when deductive researchers assign a theoretical framework to their “data” prior to examining it, theoretical sampling may serve solely to reaffirm rather than challenge researchers’ understanding of a case under study (Weir, 2015). However, given that my research objectives include highlighting traditionally marginalized voices about particular topics (e.g., Indigenous women’s experiences of and responses to the prison system) and that such topics were previously identified in *Tightwire* (Gaucher, 1989; Foran, 1998; Jackson, 2019; Rymhs, 2008), it makes sense to sample in this way because otherwise I would likely not have these stories in my sample. Thus, it was only through theoretical sampling that I was able to achieve a sample that enabled me to answer my research questions and achieve my research objectives.

Another potential issue is the lack of congruence between the deductive strategy of theoretical sampling and more traditional Indigenous research paradigms that favour inductive research methods (Simonds & Christopher, 2013). I was able to avoid both this and the former issue by employing an abductive approach that was guided by Creswell's (2013) analysis spiral. An analysis spiral is when the researcher moves back and forth between the data – for me, the stories in *Tightwire*, and the preliminary research findings (Creswell, 2013). Member of the Secwepemc and Syilx Nations Dorothy Christian (2017), as well as Patricia Leavy (2007), and Shulamit Reinharz (1992) discuss similar abductive strategies to re-visiting “data”. Vitrally, this movement and “re-visiting” enabled me to adapt my research as new analytic reflections occurred. In other words, by remaining open to the guidance of *Tightwire* storytellers, I mitigated the confirmation bias that can occur in purely deductive theoretical sampling. An example of *Tightwire* stories taking the lead is that I allowed my work to take shape and change directions based on my understanding of the stories. For instance, while my research questions were not directly related to Indigenous healing, this was a recurring theme in Indigenous women's stories; and as a responsible researcher who deeply respects the women's perspectives, it was necessary for me to include some of these stories in my analyses. Readers will learn more about Indigenous healing in chapter five. Because each pass through *Tightwire* stories is an inductive approach and demonstrates respectful engagement with Indigenous stories as well as the potential to catalyze new insights about the stories (Christian, 2017; Gaudet, 2019; McKegney, 2008; Simonds & Christopher, 2013), analysis spirals align with Indigenous feminist and decolonial methodologies that emphasize story-driven, or “data”-driven, methods.

In addition to content and thematic analyses, I employed narrative analysis. While the “narrative turn” occurred a long time ago in other non-literary disciplines, criminology has only

recently undergone such change. Sociologist Lois Presser coined the term “narrative criminology” in 2009; as such, this sub-discipline is still undergoing changes and is expanding its topics, analytical perspectives, and methodological options (Fleetwood, Presser, Sandberg, & Ugelvik, 2019). While my work does not fit neatly into traditional areas of narrative criminology such as studies involving drugs, victimology, and narratives of criminal justice professionals (Fleetwood et al. 2019; Presser & Sandberg, 2019), it aligns with Presser and Sandberg’s (2019) point that:

narrative criminology has critical potential inasmuch as it (1) is foundationally concerned with harm and not just illegal action; (2) underscores collective involvement in patterns of harm; (3) illuminates the dynamism of harm and therefore the possibilities for resistance; and (4) compels researcher reflexivity (p. 132).

These characteristics demonstrate narrative criminology’s connection to critical criminology and were an inspiration for my project. First, both narrative and critical criminology identify harm as existing within as well as outside of laws and individuals – meaning that there are legal – not just illegal – harms that are caused by institutions – not just individuals. For instance, I, along with Indigenous and feminist scholars, recognize colonial patriarchy as a form of legal harm (Monchalin, 2016) – thus aligning with narrative criminologists’ foundational concerns with harm.

In terms of patterns of harm, I sought stories that depicted dominant as well as counter narratives. By examining recurring dominant cultural tropes in the women’s stories, I illuminated their larger socio-political contexts and how institutions, such as the prison, affect different narratives via soliciting, enabling, and constraining them (Lockwood, 2017; McAleese & Kilty, 2019). Moreover, by seeking out stories that exemplify dominant stereotypical narratives (oppression) and counter-narratives (resistance), my work highlights Indigenous women’s autonomy and acts of agency within context – thus avoiding what Tuck (2009) refers to as

damage-centered research. That is, by showcasing different types of stories and narratives, my project honours the complexity of incarcerated (Indigenous) women's perspectives and lived experiences, as expressed in their stories.

Specifically, with the groupings of stories that I made during my theoretical sampling and KWIC, I began by examining narratives that women advanced in their stories regarding womanhood, Indigeneity, and criminality. Relatedly, I sought narratives that demonstrated how women understood the contexts of their lives – and identities – as Indigenous women who were incarcerated at P4W. As I examined *Tightwire* in more depth and over time, these narratives became more specific. For instance, I identified narratives concerning:

- motherhood – which included a unique combination of dominant and counter-narratives regarding experiences of Indigenous carceral motherhood;
- sisterhood – specifically narratives of both solidarity and heterogeneity of the Native Sisterhood in P4W; and
- reform – which included narratives of both hope and uncertainty regarding the report by the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women, *Creating Choices*.

While I respect women's complexity, my project centers the resistance of Indigenous women which aligns with narrative criminology. Similarly, this decision aligns with Lockwood (2017) who argues that researchers should prioritize counter-narratives – or stories that oppose, contradict, and challenge mainstream perspectives – so that theorizing can better evolve. By demonstrating their inadequacy, storytellers disrupt and reject hegemonic scripts which showcases storyteller resistance and illuminates their truths – thus holding incredible pedagogical and transformative potential (Boonzaier, 2019; Lockwood, 2017). Aligning with my research objective pertaining to change, while I examined the women's engagement with

dominant narratives pertaining to identity, I paid closest attention to instances of resistance in their stories.

Finally, to remain reflexive throughout my project, I was inspired by Floretta Boonzaier (2019) to employ an intersectional, decolonial, feminist approach to narrative criminological research. Guided by Boonzaier's (2019) analytical questions, I created a list of questions that I continually asked myself as I revisited the women's stories in *Tightwire*. These questions demonstrate connections between my methods of content, thematic, and narrative analyses. I asked questions such as:

- “What are the narratives being told?” (Boonzaier, 2019, p. 486); What are the themes of *Tightwire*?
- “What kinds of identities are being constructed?” (Boonzaier, 2019, p. 486);
“What are the possibilities for collective identification and resistance?”
(Boonzaier, 2019, p. 490)
- What are the sociopolitical, historical, and penal contexts in which the story is being told? In which ways does the story engage with sociopolitical, historical, and penal contexts?
- Why am I electing to tell particular stories from *Tightwire*? What stories am I not telling?
- Who am I producing my dissertation for? What commitments can I make to my research community?

These types of questions helped keep me grounded and reflexive throughout the research process. Overall, my approach to narrative analysis can be described as:

Methods of Narrative Analysis

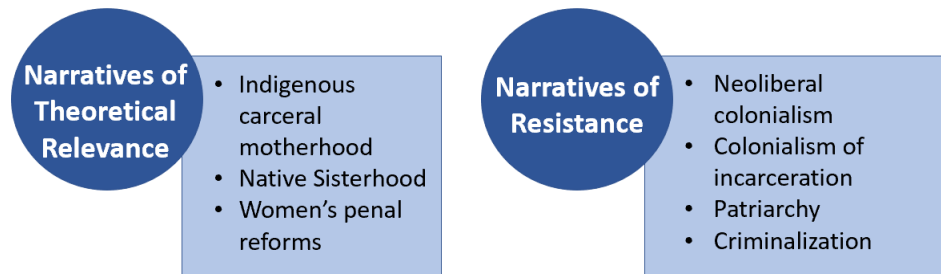


Figure 5 – Summary of My Narrative Analysis Methods

It is important to note that more traditional narrative approaches, such as those that focus on structural analyses – for example, by highlighting summary, time, place, characters, event sequence, plot, and outcome (Riessman, 2005) – are not well suited to my research in that they privilege the structure of narratives over other ways of theorizing experiences (Boonzaier, 2019). The privileging of structure over experience in sociolinguistic narrative analyses is problematic because it tends to bracket off people's lived realities which risks obscuring material and embodied experiences as well as how power functions in people's lives. Instead, Boonzaier (2019) argues that narrative approaches should allow researchers to link larger oppressions and lived experiences. To avoid these issues, my work does not draw on traditional sociolinguistic or structural narrative approaches, but rather is inspired by a combination of narrative analyses relating to themes – focusing on the “what”, and interactions – focusing on the co-construction of meaning (Riessman, 2005).

Concluding Remarks

By exploring women's stories in *Tightwire*, my work sheds light on a significant gap in prison storytelling scholarship. Moreover, by highlighting the Native Sisterhood Sections and Indigenous storytellers of *Tightwire*, my research makes significant scholarly contributions regarding Indigenous women's prison storytelling. Filling these gaps matters not only to the academy but to the women whose lives are often not well understood and tend to be dismissed and/or stereotyped by those in power. By centering Indigenous women's prison stories, I help ensure that other communities – such as those who are non-incarcerated and/or non-Indigenous – come to know and better understand their collective stories about experiences of and responses to intersecting injustices (Gaucher, 1989, 1999; Jackson, 2019; and Rymhs, 2008). Crucially, my work also sheds light onto how Indigenous women made sense of carceral reforms which is vital to the historical documentation of P4W, the expansion of Canada's federal prison system for women, and the “indigenization” tactics of CSC. By exploring prison storytelling in *Tightwire*, my work honours the criminological knowledge that Indigenous women carry in their stories which helps, for instance, destabilize stereotypes about these groups that contribute to their criminalization. In this way, my research benefits women, prisoners, and Indigenous peoples more broadly, and specifically incarcerated Indigenous women.

By bringing incarcerated Indigenous women's stories into conversation with scholarly discussions, I intentionally align my work with the goal of *Tightwire* to transcend the prison by building connections through storytelling. In this way, my work fits within the longstanding tradition in both Indigenous and feminist studies that involves drawing women's voices and stories into the production of knowledge (LaRocque, 2009, 2015; Smith, 1990). By sharing the women's stories both within and outside of the academy, I also contribute to *Tightwire*'s second goal of informing the public about the criminal justice system and the realities of Indigenous

women's lived experiences within it. Together, *Tightwire*'s goals point to the importance of human connection and learning both inside and beyond the prison – topics that I take up again in chapter seven. My work takes on a complementary approach as I have shared and will continue to share my research widely with diverse audiences – including the members of the P4WMC and the P4WMC Advisory Board to whom *Tightwire* stories are extremely important. In this way, my work brings stories of the past into contemporary scholarly and public discussions of criminalized Indigenous women. Sharing excerpts as well as women's entire stories within and beyond academia aligns with Indigenous ways of knowing, teaching, and learning, and enables connections to form between the audience and storytellers that may otherwise be out of reach (Simonds & Christopher, 2013). Following *Tightwire*'s lead, my research goals also relate to P4W survivors' talks by Fran Chaisson, Bobbie Kidd, and Yvonne Johnson from which I identified three interrelated themes – memory and remembering; setting the record straight and truth telling; and Sisterhood and social change. By studying *Tightwire*, I help ensure that my audience comes to know and remembers these women and their stories; I make scholarly and analytic space for the women's stories to set the record straight and tell their own truths; and, in sharing my work, I help expand the field of criminology which has long denied criminalized Indigenous women the respect they deserve.

CHAPTER FIVE – “A time to share and love to make each other strong”: The Native Sisterhood and *Tightwire*

Introduction

Representation matters – especially to those whose stories are most often dismissed and denied. In scenarios where people are commonly misrepresented and misunderstood, the ability to represent oneself is vital. Incarcerated women, Indigenous peoples, and especially incarcerated Indigenous women represent some of the groups that are negatively impacted by issues of representation. Throughout my dissertation, I argue that *Tightwire* was a critical tool in which incarcerated Indigenous women could widely circulate their stories – containing ideas, experiences, perspectives, and much more – in manners that helped to counteract mainstream misrepresentations about them. In my literature review chapter, I discussed how scholarship regarding Indigenous women storytellers often focuses on stories that emphasize the colonial experience, women’s oppression and disempowerment, as well as cultural discontinuity (LaRoque, 2009). In damage-centered work, significant aspects of Indigenous women’s lives are lost (Tuck, 2009) including, as Cree and Métis Indigenous representation scholar Emma LaRocque (2009) explains, their agency, empowerment, resistance, resiliency, cultural continuity, and decolonizing practices. To have a more accurate understanding of Indigenous women’s lives, researchers must highlight not only the negative but also the positive aspects of Indigenous women’s experiences – especially those of whom are incarcerated. To avoid damage centered research (Tuck, 2009), I analyze not only stories involving colonial experiences and narratives, but also identify, for example, decolonial perspectives and actions within the women’s stories. My work fills critical gaps in scholarly knowledge by focusing on what

incarcerated Indigenous women contributed to their communities – women, Indigenous peoples, and prisoners – through the formation of the Native Sisterhood as well as their meaningful and consistent contributions within *Tightwire* – all in the face of ongoing colonialism, patriarchy, and criminalization.

Guided by an intertextual analysis of *Tightwire*, as well as an analysis of the Native Sisterhood Section of the newsletter and the *Creating Choices* (1990) report by the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women, in this chapter I argue that the *Tightwire* newsletter and the Native Sisterhood group operated as resistant forces within the Prison for Women (P4W). Acting in opportunistic and strategic manners from highly disadvantageous and ultimately powerless positions as Indigenous women imprisoned within a colonial patriarchal prison, I argue that both *Tightwire* and the Native Sisterhood engaged in resistance to the confines of the prison. That is, by building relationships with one another, *Tightwire* storytellers and the Native Sisterhood advanced their goals both within and beyond the prison.

Indeed, prisoners, then and now, understand their position of relative disadvantage compared to guards, and know that to exist as a group and advance their anti- colonial, patriarchal, and carceral goals, they must strategically position themselves. For *Tightwire*, I argue that this was accomplished by emphasizing the newsletter as a form of prisoner expression; and for the Native Sisterhood, they positioned the group as a religious organization. While these positionings are strategic, it is important to note that they are not inaccurate. That is, *Tightwire* did in fact provide prisoners with an avenue for artistic expression, and the Native Sisterhood provided spiritual guidance and support to Indigenous prisoners. However, as my research shows, this is not all *Tightwire* and the Native Sisterhood accomplished.

The purpose of this chapter is to orient my readers to the Native Sisterhood, the *Tightwire* newsletter, and the Native Sisterhood Section of *Tightwire*. I hope that my readers find this chapter helpful as it anchors the upcoming chapters. This chapter has three sections. In the first, I examine the development of the Native Sisterhood in the Prison for Women. Here, I employ the women's stories to shed light onto the creation and importance of the Sisterhood. Specifically, I argue that the Sisterhood was a response to Indigenous women's experiences of incarceration – particularly the experience of great familial and cultural loss for Indigenous peoples within the prison system. I also advance cultural anthropologist James Waldram's (1997) concept of symbolic healing to understand recurring narratives in the women's stories. In the second part of this chapter, I explore the *Tightwire* newsletter in terms of its relationships. Specifically, with the women's stories I show the relationships that were cultivated between editors, and editors and readers – which are often characterized as mutually appreciative, supportive, reciprocal, and transparent – as well as between editors and P4W staff – which are characterized as mutually threatening. In the final section, I delve into the Native Sisterhood Section of *Tightwire*. Here, I explore ways in which this section changed over time and offer explanations for why these changes occurred. Specifically, the Native Sisterhood Section began by affirming the oppression of Indigenous peoples, and blossomed into a source of Indigenous strength, pride, and guidance. In this way, the Native Sisterhood Section in *Tightwire* is a significant body of stories that align with broader trends in Indigenous storytelling (LaRocque, 2015).

“She is the heart beat of her people”: The Native Sisterhood in P4W

There are competing accounts of when the Native Sisterhood was initially founded. According to Seth Adema (2016), a historian of Indigenous prison movements in Canada, the Native Sisterhood was founded in 1972 in response to intertwined histories of racial and

gendered violence. Indeed, one Indigenous woman who was a parolee, member of the Task Force Steering Committee, and member of the Aboriginal Women's Caucus stated in research conducted for the *Creating Choices* report (1990) that: "It is racism, past in our memories and present in our surroundings that negates non-native attempts to reconstruct our lives" (p. 13). This statement points to the vitality for Indigenous women to be the driving force behind creating change for (incarcerated) Indigenous women's lives. Another account of the Native Sisterhood – this one by leisure scholar Felice Yuen (2011) – explains that the Native Sisterhood was founded in 1979. In *Tightwire*, an anonymous storyteller writes in 1987 that the "Native Sisterhood has been in existence over the past ten years" (Anonymous, 1987⁴⁶, p. 29) – meaning that the Sisterhood would have been in operation since at least 1977. All accounts state that the Sisterhood was formed by Indigenous women who were incarcerated within the Prison for Women (Adema, 2016; Anonymous, 1987; Yuen, 2011). Many Indigenous nations were and are still represented in the Sisterhood; in Yuen's (2011) study, Nations included Ojibwa, Cree, Mi'kmaq, Mohawk, and Dene. All group members are federally imprisoned women; and the group is comprised of both full members – including women who are status-Indian, Inuit, and Métis (Anonymous, 1987; Native Sisterhood, 2003), as well as honorary members – women who may or may not have Indigenous ancestry, including Indigenous women without status (Native Sisterhood, 2003).

The importance of solidarity between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous people is discussed in Betty's (1985⁴⁷) story in the Native Section of *Tightwire*:

As we all know we are Brother's and Sister's in this creation! Native or non-Native we should all help each other! But dure [due] to the hatred going on in this world it is more important that the Native people should be more close as Brothers

⁴⁶ See Appendix 3.

⁴⁷ See Appendix 4.

and Sister's. That is what Sisterhood is there for, to help one another through the struggles and to grow (p. 31PDF).

In this excerpt, Betty explains how, although it is crucial for all people to support one another, “the hatred going on in this world” – much of it grounded in racism and settler colonialism – makes it even more vital for Indigenous peoples to stick together “through the struggles” to help one another grow. For Betty, this is what the Sisterhood accomplishes. Solidarity between Indigenous peoples is similarly expressed in the North American Indian Travelling College's (1985⁴⁸) Thanksgiving Address, reprinted in the Native Section of *Tightwire*: “Since we are all a part of the same creation, then we must all acknowledge each other as brother and sister” (p. 30). This excerpt demonstrates the immense kinship ties between Indigenous peoples. The power of kinship is also discussed within Judy Geehan's (1983a⁴⁹) story in the Native Section of *Tightwire*:

The power within the sisterhood can be made to move any obstacle that may come in the path of our beliefs and solidarity. We have proved this fact many times. Without one another, we have only a surface. With each other, we could say we have a little nation within the system. It's all because we are united as one group, not to be divided from one another (p. 40).

Again, this excerpt demonstrates solidarity in Sisterhood. Geehan also explains the importance of Indigenous women's unity within the prison in that the women “have a little nation within the system” from which they can “move any obstacle that may come in the path” of Indigenous “beliefs and solidarity”.

By comparing Anonymous' (1987) story in *Tightwire* and the *Native Sisterhood Constitution* (2003⁵⁰), I identified that the composition of the Sisterhood changed over time. For

⁴⁸ See Appendix 5.

⁴⁹ See Appendix 6.

⁵⁰ The *Native Sisterhood Constitution* (2003) was kindly passed on to me by Felice Yuen to whom I reached out to in search of this document which was otherwise unavailable. Importantly, this *Constitution* was originally written within P4W, has changed throughout the years, and

instance, in 1987, Anonymous (1987) explains that the members of the Sisterhood as “Status, Non Status and Metis women who are actively involved in the struggle to be recognized as Native people behind prison walls” and that “the women are of Native ancestry” (p. 29). However, by 2003, the *Native Sisterhood Constitution* permitted non-Indigenous women to become honorary members. Vital to the group is that, while honorary members do not have to be Indigenous, they had to “have expressed a sincere interest in learning and practicing Native Spirituality, culture, [and] traditions” as well as actively support Native Sisterhood activities (Native Sisterhood, 2003, p. 4). The need for respect is also apparent in Anonymous’ (1987) story in which they explain that: “All that is required [for membership] is that respect is shown to the cultural and spiritual aspects of Native life” (p. 29). This shows that throughout the years – as demonstrated in Anonymous (1987) and the *Native Sisterhood Constitution* (2003), respect remained a key characteristic and requirement of the Sisterhood. This comparison is also evidence that the ideas expressed in the *Constitution* – although not published until 2003 – were at play much earlier.

Given that P4W was the only federal women’s prison in Canada at the time – thus geographically separating women from their families, cultures, and communities more often than men who were federally imprisoned across the country – the Native Sisterhood represented an even more critical support community to Indigenous women than the Native Brotherhood was and is to Indigenous men (Adema, 2016; Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021). Consider,

moved with the Sisterhood to the Grand Valley Institution when P4W was closed (F. Yuen, personal communication, September 28, 2021). Given this, I employ this version cautiously as I do not have access to the original copy of the *Constitution*. That said, because the original version originated within P4W, and clearly a lot of thought went into its creation, I strongly believe that the statements within it were in practice prior to the *Constitution*’s official production in 2003.

for instance, one Indigenous woman who was incarcerated at P4W and stated in research conducted for the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women: “If my little brother had died in a big city in Ontario rather than on a reserve in Saskatchewan I know I would have been allowed to go to his funeral” (TFFSW, 1990, p. 11). While this statement speaks to pains of imprisonment (e.g., the loss of family and the inability for this woman to attend her brother’s funeral), it also contextualizes how isolation was experienced by Indigenous women in P4W more broadly. That is, federally incarcerated (Indigenous) women’s geographical dislocation was far greater and more likely to be experienced relative to (Indigenous) men who were federally incarcerated (TFFSW, 1990). Another Indigenous parolee stated for the same research project that: “When I went to prison I lost everything I ever had, not just the material things, but all the relationships I ever had in my life” (TFFSW, 1990, p. 12). Indeed, interviews with 39 federally sentenced Indigenous women indicated that they experienced loss in terms of their relationships with people outside of prison who they believed could help them heal (TFFSW, 1990). Given these contexts, it is not hard to imagine why members of the Sisterhood bonded over their shared loss of family and culture.

Adema (2016) similarly notes that separation from and loss of family are evident in the penal press where Indigenous women shared stories of losing their children, families, and communities due to incarceration. This separation and loss are also evident when speaking with women who were previously incarcerated at P4W and the reasons for this are not as straightforward as families not being able to visit for financial reasons. For instance, even when women were able to arrange for their families to visit, Fran Chaisson (Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021), a member of the Ojibwa nation and a former prisoner at P4W, explains how the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) can put an end to the visit before it has even begun:

maybe a week before her family comes, she might have got busted for maybe something stupid like refusing a direct order [from CSC staff] and that could cover anything okay, even swearing. Now here's the game they [CSC staff] play, they will charge her so she won't get that visit, and you know that's going to drive her fucking insane when she's waiting for her family to come and they've got her in segregation on a fucking charge like that?! And they wonder why she's slashing when she comes out [of segregation]?! (p. 138).

In these ways, the women in the Sisterhood were similarly motivated to support one another and considered each other family (Adema, 2016; Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021). In chapter six, I provide a more detailed analysis of family and kinship as expressed in the women's stories.

Related to their loss of family, the women also bonded through an examination of their life histories in which they recognized that they lost their traditional cultural values – one of which is the honouring and reverence of women (Adema, 2016; Duhamel, 2013; Monchalin, 2016). Traditionally, many Indigenous communities, such as the Stó:lō, Mi'kmaw, and Onondaga Nations, were matriarchal and women were among the key decision makers (Monchalin, 2016). Colonialism deeply disrupted the traditional roles of Indigenous women which eventually led to the erosion of many communities (Monchalin, 2016). While this part of the story must be told, it is crucial that colonial harms are not the sole focus when it comes to the analysis of Indigenous stories (Tuck, 2009; Vowel, 2016); thus, this section details the women's cultural engagement and related activism. In their work, Duhamel (2013) points out that it is often through this type of engagement that Indigenous women remember and/or recognize their value to their communities and how they can improve all Indigenous lives. Indeed, resurgence for many Indigenous cultures⁵¹ involves the revaluing of Indigenous women. Ojibwe Elder and

⁵¹ Indigenous cultures are often assumed by non-Indigenous to be one culture; however, it is important to note that Indigenous cultures are multifaceted, complex, and heterogeneous (Monchalin, 2016; Waldram, 1997). For example, there are many Indigenous languages that have less similarities than those that exist between English and French (Waldram, 1997).

prisoner rights activist, Art Solomon (1984⁵²) – who was frequently published in the Native Sections of *Tightwire* – explains the importance of Indigenous women: “She is the heart beat of her people, like the indian drum is the heart beat of our earth mother, and without a heart beat there is no life” (p. 18). Solomon’s statement reflects Indigenous scholarship regarding the value that Indigenous women bring to and have in their communities. For instance, in her work, Indigenous feminist and Métis scholar, Kim Anderson (2016) identifies the nurturing role that Indigenous women often play towards children in their communities and how this role benefits the future seven generations.

In the Native Section of *Tightwire*, Irma Scarff (1983b⁵³) explains her take on both the present and the past regarding Indigenous ways of living which helps shed light onto why the Native Sisterhood was so important to her and other Indigenous women incarcerated at P4W:

Many days past when we use to be proud people. But today the women’s hearts are on the ground. The pride of our men lay with the women. Our children of today do not know the meaning of harmony. [...] Today as I sit behind these bars. I think a great deal of the way we use to live. I compare today with yesterday, and what I see today makes my heart bleed. I remember the stories of yesterday from my grandfather, and I cry for those days to come back to my people. There was no hate, frustration and anger inside of us. We all walked as one upon the earth, and the children could really smile. The men were proud and strong. The women were happy and content. Today I can feel the anger and hate within. As I look at my sister, I can feel her shame. As I look at my brother, I can feel the hurt. [...] What comforts me today is the little bit of knowledge I have of our Spiritual Religion

Critically, Indigenous cultures, like all cultures, adapt and change over time (Monchalin, 2016; Waldram, 1997). For Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island, some of these changes may be characterized by acculturation (when two cultures meet and coexist), as well as assimilation (a “directed” process of cultural change) (Waldram, 1997). Many changes in Indigenous cultures also occur naturally through adaptation (Monchalin, 2016). Despite the vast differences between distinct Indigenous cultures, there are also similarities such as “ethics” or “rules of behaviour” that emphasize harmony, emotional restraint, and peaceful coexistence between all living beings (including nonhuman beings such as trees and animals) (Waldram, 1997, p. 27). Other commonly shared values include reciprocity, kind heartedness, respect, and autonomy (Monchalin, 2016).

⁵² See Appendix 7.

⁵³ See Appendix 8.

and of our old ways of living. I can whisper the words 'I am an Indian', but that is not enough because I would like to shout them. When that time comes, I know we will once again be a strong, proud people and walk in harmony. But I want that so much for today instead of tomorrow. For I may not be here [tomorrow] (p. 46PDF).

Here, Scarff speaks to the need for returning to traditional ways of being and living; and while some may perceive her story as “religious” and/or slightly romanticized, I nevertheless prioritize how she chose to represent her perspectives. Specifically, she points to the importance of spirituality for Indigenous peoples and regaining a sense of pride regarding their cultural identities within the colonial context. While she briefly mentions some effects of colonialism – feelings of hate, frustration, anger, shame, and hurt, as well as not knowing the meaning of harmony – she points to decolonization as the way forward – to return to traditional ways, to walk on the earth as one, to feel proud, strong, happy, and content, and to live a spiritual life. The Native Sisterhood aimed to do just that for its members.

According to the *Native Sisterhood Constitution* (2003), the objectives of the Sisterhood include:

- ensuring Sisters have equal opportunity to practice their cultures, traditions, and Indigenous healing practices without discrimination;
- recognizing and respecting that Indigenous cultures and traditional practices play a role in holistic healing and contribute to Sisters’ reintegration⁵⁴ into society;

⁵⁴ The so-called “reintegration” of Indigenous prisoners back into the community is contentious as Indigenous peoples were never integrated within (dominant Canadian) society in the first place – thus, they cannot “re”integrate. Others argue that reintegration is impossible within the prison context. For instance, Bobbie Kidd (as cited in Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021), an Indigenous woman who was previously incarcerated at P4W, argues that “there is no healing in prison and there is no reintegration in prison either, that’s why people end up always going back because there’s nothing in there [prison] to really help you” with the exception of spiritual groups (p. 128), such as the Native Sisterhood.

- recognizing that Sisters have both collective and individual rights to maintain their distinct identities;
- recognizing and ensuring that Sisters have rights to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs; and
- ensuring that Sisters' needs are identified and that prison programs and services are developed and maintained to meet those needs.

Importantly, all stated objectives included not only the Native Sisterhood but also the prison within which this version of the *Constitution* operated – Grand Valley Institution (Native Sisterhood, 2003). In other words, the prison was also held accountable in achieving the objectives of the Sisterhood. This is crucial as it signals the need and women's desires for reconciliation within the carceral context.

In summary, Yuen (2011) describes how the Native Sisterhood's primary goal was to come together to advocate for access to traditional medicines and ceremonies, such as those involving Sweat Lodges and spiritual fasts, within P4W. The Native Sisterhood also used traditional methods of decision making – determined by cooperation and consensus among group members (Anderson, 2016; Monchalin, 2016) – to decide who will hold special roles within the Sisterhood, such as the Drum Keeper and the Fire Keeper (Native Sisterhood, 2003). Moreover, Betty (1985), an Indigenous storyteller in the Native Section of *Tightwire*, explains that "Sisterhood helps us to get Sweatlodges, Sweetgrass, these things are brought in to us for a purpose: to help us grow Spirituality and to give us the strength in our Beliefs" (p. 31PDF). In this way, the Sisterhood's mandate was to help maintain distinct Indigenous identities and exercise Indigenous rights to practice their cultures and traditions (Native Sisterhood, 2003; Yuen, 2011). A marker of their success is that all the Indigenous ceremonies within the prison in Yuen's (2011) study

were organized by the Native Sisterhood. According to Yuen, the mandate of the Native Sisterhood was still in practice at the time she wrote her article in 2011.

While I argue alongside two Indigenous women who were previously incarcerated at P4W, Fran Chaisson and Bobbie Kidd, that prisons are impossible to decolonize (Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021), based on my doctoral work, I argue here that the Native Sisterhood nevertheless worked towards decolonial indigenization within P4W through their publications in *Tightwire*. Decolonial indigenization, as described by Indigenous scholar and ally participants in Adam Gaudry's (Métis) and Danielle Lorenz's (2018) study of the academy, is the reorientation of "knowledge production based on balancing power relations between Indigenous peoples" and non-Indigenous people (p. 219). I argue this because the Native Sisterhood's objectives – described above – as well as their mission statement "to maintain our distinct identity and exercise our rights to practice Aboriginal culture and traditions" (Native Sisterhood, 2003, p. 3), and the content of the Native Sisterhood Section in *Tightwire* – discussed shortly – align with cultural resurgence and decolonization. As mentioned above, although the Native Sisterhood Constitution was published in 2003, it was initially developed in P4W prior to its closure in 2000 (F. Yuen, personal communication, September 28, 2021). Decolonial acts of resurgence include, for instance, Indigenous spirituality, ceremony, language, music, feasts, (Dell et al., 2014; Monchalin, 2016; Park, 2016) and the "centering of Indigenous knowledge[s] and experiences in the discussion of Indigenous issues" (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, p. 224). These acts are decolonial because they resist ongoing colonialism; and in the prison setting specifically, they resist the colonialism of incarceration.

In *Tightwire*, Indigenous stories often discussed spirituality. While spirituality remains prevalent in many Indigenous peoples' lives, at the same time, due to colonialism, much of it has

been stripped from Indigenous communities (Monchalin, 2016; Vowel, 2016). One Cree woman, Fran Sugar (1983⁵⁵) who was a former Native Sisterhood Section editor of *Tightwire*, explains her take on spirituality:

Native spirituality to me is seeing life through the eyes of the soul and heart. It is a way of harmony with the rhythm of this creation that we live in. It is a way of life based on respect for all living things (p. 41).

Sugar's explanation resonates deeply with Indigenous scholarship on the subject. For instance, it is crucial to perceive life holistically to determine if an individual has a good heart – which suggests the degree to which their intentions are pure (Archibald & Parent, 2019; Wilson, 2008). For Indigenous peoples, the body, mind, heart, and spirit are connected; thus, one must listen with three ears – the two ears on the sides of our head, as well as the ear inside one's heart (Archibald & Parent, 2019); and relationships must be respectful, balanced, and reciprocal, with hearts checked to ensure one's motives are good (Wilson, 2008).

One important part of Indigenous spirituality, and thus the Sisterhood's acts of decolonization, is ceremony. Indeed, "healing through traditional ceremonies" as well as experiencing support, understanding, and compassion were identified as solutions to violence by a paroled Indigenous woman who was a member of both the Task Force Steering Committee and Aboriginal Women's Caucus (TFFSW, 1990, p. 13). Moreover, an Elder who was also on the Aboriginal Women's Caucus similarly identified how many of the prisoners they encountered "lost their sense of who they are and for this reason spiritual guidance is necessary" (TFFSW, 1990, p. 24). These perspectives are not surprising given that traditional ceremonies are particularly significant to Indigenous communities as they intertwine with social, political, cultural, and physical aspects of Indigenous peoples' lives (Wilson, 2008; Yuen, 2011). For

⁵⁵ See Appendix 9.

example, a Pow Wow is a ceremony with a political function to maintain social order (Monchalin, 2016; Yuen, 2011). Pow Wows accomplish social order, in part, by requiring participants to have clear minds – meaning that they must abstain from drugs and alcohol while engaging in ceremony (Monchalin, 2016; Waldram, 1997). An Anonymous (1987) storyteller in *Tightwire* explains Pow Wows in the context of P4W. They state that:

The Native Sisterhood holds two Pow Wows a year inside the prison. Sacred sweats are performed every so often when an Elder is available to attend a sweat inside the prison. Sweetgrass is provided for the women which they burn at their own discretion in their cells by themselves, or with other women (p. 29).

By engaging in traditional Indigenous ceremony and medicines, the Native Sisterhood practiced decolonial acts within P4W.

While Indigenous ceremony is generally decolonizing because it reclaims Indigenous cultures, when considered in the context of how alcohol was introduced to Indigenous communities, it also has specific decolonizing potential. One of the ways in which alcohol was deliberately introduced to Indigenous communities by colonizers was by single men who continually enacted violence against Indigenous women and girls (Vowel, 2016). In her story in the Native Section of *Tightwire*, Indigenous storyteller Irma Scarff (1983b) discusses dramatic differences between Indigenous and colonial communities – specifically, the fact that alcohol was not part of Indigenous communities before the arrival of colonizers. Scarff (1983b) states that “in the past days we never heard of prisons, alcohol and chemical drugs” (p. 46PDF).

Another Indigenous storyteller in the Native Section of *Tightwire*, Judy Geehan (1983a), agrees: “we had no wine and no beer and no whisky” prior to colonization (p. 37). In these examples, both Scarff and Geehan act as truth tellers who, through their stories, “set the record straight” by reminding readers where alcoholism in Indigenous communities stemmed from – racialized and sexualized colonial violence. This fact is critical as, today, both alcohol and drugs play a

prevalent role in the ways in which violence is enacted against Indigenous peoples, particularly women and girls (Vowel, 2016).

The association between alcohol, drugs, and violence against Indigenous women and girls is not only related to Indigenous women's and girls' victimization, but also to their criminalization in that they are often imprisoned for crimes related to addiction such as drug use, sex work, and property crimes (Comack, 2018; Foran, 1998; Monchalin, 2016). In this way, the decolonizing potential of Indigenous ceremony is both broad stroke (e.g., practicing cultural traditions) as well as specific in its opposition to colonial effects (e.g., alcoholism and alcohol-related issues, such as violence, in Indigenous communities). To this extent, ceremony supports healing from addictions that were first catalyzed in the early days of colonization and now continue to be maintained by the current colonial problem. Importantly, by discussing such issues within the context of the Native Sisterhood and *Tightwire*, Indigenous women act as cultural critics that push back on commonly held stereotypes about Indigenous peoples (LaRocque, 2009).

In the prison setting, Yuen (2011) argues that Indigenous ceremony creates a space that is safe and emotionally secure in which women can collectively reveal their vulnerabilities and begin to heal from colonial (and other) trauma. In these ways, Indigenous ceremony in prison has potential to catalyze healing and represents a point of transformation – both in terms of action and reflection (Yuen, 2011; Waldram, 1997). For instance, the Sisterhood – specifically its focus on returning to traditional cultural practices alongside the support of other Indigenous women – was perceived by group members as encouraging their individual strength and courage (Yuen, 2011). In speaking of her experience as past president of the Native Sisterhood, Judy Geehan (1983a) wrote:

Many times I have been the president of the Native Sisterhood. You have all put faith in my leadership abilities. I tried to fulfill my office to the best of my ability and I have only my sisters to thank for their support. Without it I know it would have been a difficult job. [...] There were many times when I doubted myself. There were many times I questioned my ability to be able to do what I had been elected to do. I had to ask for strength from our Grandfather. And, my sisters I had to take my strength from all of you. There have been times when I didn't know where to turn. I turned to my sisters for my advice. For all of this, I thank you. Meegwetch (p. 40).

In this passage, Geehan (1983a) demonstrates the importance of collaboration between members of the Native Sisterhood such that even she, a leader of the group, was able to gain strength from non-leading group members. This supports an Indigenous belief that is commonly shared across nations whereby everyone has a role and is a valued member of the community – it is not just the leaders who carry the group, the entire community plays a supportive role in maintaining social harmony (Monchalin, 2016; Vowel, 2016).

James Waldram (1997), a cultural anthropologist specializing in Indigenous health and healing, points to how Indigenous spirituality is resistance within the context of colonialism – especially within the prison setting. Although Waldram's (1997) study is based on interviews with Elders employed by CSC, Indigenous liaison personnel, and over 300 incarcerated Indigenous men in Manitoba's and Saskatchewan's federal and provincial prisons, I believe that much of what he argues can be adapted to think more deeply about incarcerated Indigenous women's experiences – particularly as they relate to the creation and functions of the Native Sisterhood at P4W. To explore my argument further, I first describe Waldram's (1997) study and main points.

One of Waldram's (1997) fundamental arguments is that he perceives Indigenous spirituality as "symbolic healing" – that is, healing through engagement with symbols⁵⁶. Specifically, Waldram (1997) explains that symbolic healing occurs through the use, interpretation, negotiation, and manipulation of cultural symbols such as the Sweat Lodge, the sacred pipe, as well as tobacco and sweetgrass. In other words, a symbol acts as a vehicle for conception in which specific social and cultural experiences are generalized by engaging with symbols for the purpose of healing (Waldram, 1997). Participants in Waldram's (1997) study explain the significance of some Indigenous cultural symbols:

- the Sweat Lodge represents Mother Earth's womb and woman's womb;
- the Sacred Fires represent life and spirit as well as the Seven Council Fires of the clans (i.e., Loon, Crane, Fish, Bear, Martin, Bird, and Deer – all of which represent their own unique concepts⁵⁷);
- "the sacred pipe represents wholeness, completeness, creation and togetherness" and is symbolic of the harmony between human beings and creation;
- tobacco represents unity between humans and the Creator and is used as a gift and sign of respect; and
- sweetgrass represents unity between mind, body, and spirit (p. 95).

For symbolic healing to function, the goal of the communication between the healer and the person seeking healing is to transform the latter individual's understanding of the problem at hand. In Waldram's (1997) study, healers are Elders and people seeking healing are Indigenous

⁵⁶ The term symbolic healing should not be confused with healing that is merely symbolic – in other words, symbolic healing is not healing that represents important change but has little practical effect.

⁵⁷ See Waldram (1997) for descriptions of the clans' representations as discussed by the participants in his study.

male prisoners, otherwise known as Brothers. In the context of P4W, the Native Sisterhood included both individuals who were healers as well as people seeking healing, which represents a reciprocal relationship. Storyteller Toni Brooker (1991⁵⁸) similarly expresses this idea in her poem published in the Native Section of *Tightwire*:

That natural, spiritual healing / I knew was happening to me / My body inside a prison / My spirit was set free // A sense of direction was / given along with knowledge too / it was then at that moment / I knew what I had to do. // We all gathered together to / join a circle in prayer / All our thoughts and concerns / A feeling someone cared. // A time to be humble and / realize where we went wrong / A time to share and love / to make each other strong // [...] A time to respect our Elders / Listen to what they say / A time to forgive one another / In our sweats we pray (p. 26).

Here, Brooker (1991) explains communal healing within the Native Sisterhood which, for her, included having a sense of direction, knowledge, circle prayer, caring, sharing, loving, strength, and forgiveness. Another Indigenous woman who was formerly incarcerated at P4W stated in research for the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women that:

Because of the Native Sisterhood I finally knew the meaning of spirituality. I learned how to pray in a sweat and with sweet grass. I learned the meaning of the Eagle feather and colours. With that I was even more proud of who I was in my identity (TFFSW, 1990, p. 14).

In this way, the learning process that Indigenous women experienced within the Native Sisterhood was also a catalyst for self-esteem regarding their identities as Indigenous peoples.

A vital part of symbolic healing is that it locates the problem in social aspects of illness and focuses on coping with – rather than “curing” – that problem (Waldram, 1997). This perspective is reminiscent of both feminist and Indigenous scholarship that similarly position what are often perceived to be individual problems as social problems (Reeves & Stewarts,

⁵⁸ See Appendix 10.

(2017). By understanding the problem in a new light, the healer can help the person seeking healing to either:

accept or transcend their predicaments – to show that afflictions make sense, even if they are terrible; to show how illness can be mastered, controlled, or transformed; or, when neither understanding nor control can be achieved, to demonstrate to the survivors that there is a way to continue with life (Kirmayer, 1993, p. 163).

For example, at Anishnawbe Health Toronto (AHT), Indigenous service providers – including Elders, healers, and counsellors – locate Indigenous men’s experiences of sexual trauma within the context of colonialism (Reeves & Stewart (2017). By contextualizing Indigenous peoples’ experiences of trauma, AHT service providers utilize education and traditional teachings to normalize survivors’ feelings – an approach that effectively helps those seeking healing to heal within a community of healers as well as with others seeking healing (Reeves & Stewart, 2017). That is, by putting a magnifying glass on colonization and r(e)introducing participants to Indigenous spiritual healing and ceremony, those seeking healing at AHT are better able to understand their experiences of trauma while simultaneously beginning to work towards (re)connecting with their traditional Indigenous cultures (Reeves & Stewart, 2017).

This type of work is mirrored in the Native Sisterhood – the group works together to contextualize, better understand, and humanize their unique experiences as Indigenous women who are incarcerated. An example of the importance of contextualizing Indigenous trauma is discussed within the Native Sisterhood Section in an anonymous storyteller’s commentary entitled “1992 – A Time to Heal”. In it, Anonymous (1992a⁵⁹) lists various colonial traumas experienced by Indigenous peoples before discussing the relevance of history:

Let’s look at the facts. Since the arrival of the Europeans, the Indigenous people of this hemisphere have survived terrible atrocities. We have been captured and

⁵⁹ See Appendix 11.

taken to Spain and other parts of Europe, we have been forced into slavery and murdered. More recently, we were kidnapped from our homes and sent many miles away to Boarding Schools, we were denied the practice of our own spiritual communication and Christianized, we were given small pox blankets, our diet was drastically changed with serious health problems as a result, our hunting grounds were significantly reduced, we had to give up living like Crees, or Souix, or Seminoles, or Ojibways and live like white people, and we were introduced to alcohol. // Maybe not many of us has thought about it. Homework, work and the kids occupy our daily lives with our mind only daring to venture far enough to worry about the next payday. [...] // We have to stop thinking of our own historical importance as prehistory. Our history is as relevant now as it was then. [...] // We have to take what we have learned in this process, and salvage what our people have saved for us and hand it over to our young as their legacy, as their survival skills and defense in the public school system, universities, and life! (p. 27)

Near the end of this passage, Anonymous (1992a) talks about reclaiming Indigenous traditions and the recognition that these practices are not “prehistory” (i.e., prior to the colonization of Turtle Island) and are still relevant in today’s world. Another take on this part of the passage is that it is important not to forget the many ways in which colonialism has impacted and continues to impact the lives of Indigenous peoples such that any understanding of Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island requires an acknowledgment of these facts.

Another important aspect of symbolic healing is the existence of common cultural ground between healers and those seeking healing. The significance of this commonality is identified in one paroled Indigenous woman’s statement to researchers for the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women: “Native women must help other Native women. You have not lived the life so you cannot say you understand” (TFFSW, 1990, p. 14). That is, it is difficult for non-Indigenous people to understand and “help” Indigenous women because they do not share the same lived experiences. Given the enormity of Indigenous cultural groups, it can be difficult to achieve a common cultural ground in Canadian prisons where many peoples from distinct Indigenous cultures are imprisoned (Adema, 2016; Monchalin, 2016; Waldram, 1997). However, like Indigenous social movements more broadly, Indigenous movements within prison were

often guided by a pan-Indigenous approach (Duhamel, 2013). In other words, the Native Sisterhood operated as an all-inclusive group (i.e., all Sisters are welcome) that employed highly recognizable markers of Indigeneity, such as the Sweat Lodge. This approach is perceived as valid because it includes all Indigenous peoples regardless of their nation which has the effect of increasing the group's strength in numbers. For instance, Indigenous storyteller Betty (1985) argues in the Native Section of *Tightwire* that

We must all pray to Grandfather and ask him to bring a tighter bond to Sisterhood for US Sisters and for the ones to come with in the future. We must make a decision very soon. To reunite. Or all our strengths will parish..... (p. 31PDF).

As Betty's (1985) story indicates, she perceives Indigenous peoples as most strong when they stay together. Importantly, while commonalities across cultural teachings were espoused by Elders within the prison setting, prisoners tended to respect cultural variations between themselves and others (Adema, 2014). In a panel session entitled "Heartwork in W2B [Walls to Bridges]: A Conversation with Elders on Incarceration and Education", Florence Blois (2021, October 12), a knowledge keeper and spiritual advisor at the Edmonton Institution for Women (EIFW) – a federal women's prison in Alberta – agrees that prisoners respect gathering spaces despite vast cultural differences. Savage (Tracy) Bear, a Nehiyawiskwew and member of the Montreal Lake Cree Nation in Saskatchewan, taught Walls to Bridges courses inside EIFW and similarly recounts how receptive Indigenous prisoners were to Elders' various cultural teachings (S. Bear, personal communication, April 27, 2021). Vitally, in her experience as a W2B instructor, Bear said that Elders "were always very upfront about where they got their teachings from" so that everyone "always knew who and where the story, song, or teaching came from" (S. Bear, personal communication, April 27, 2021). Being explicit about the origins of one's teachings contributes to the respect demonstrated by prisoners to Elders.

Regarding the establishment of common cultural ground, there are two scenarios that Waldram (1997) discusses – 1) those who have little to no prior exposure to Indigenous cultures, and 2) those who have prior Indigenous cultural knowledge. For the former group, the construction of a “pan-Indian” culture functions to provide highly visible symbols that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples recognize as quintessentially Indigenous (Waldram, 1997). In this scenario, pan-Indigenous culture is highly significant because it encourages prisoners to adopt an Indigenous culture – or piece together different aspects of various Indigenous cultures – of their choice (Waldram, 1997). As Indigenous storyteller Irma Scarff (1983a⁶⁰) explains in *Tightwire*, having spiritual meetings in prison functions as a tool for learning:

Starting April 1/[19]83 the Sisters are going to be having an hour each Sunday to burn Tobacco and Sweetgrass. [...] It will help many of us who are having trouble with-in ourselves. It will also help a number of the Sisters to understand a bit more of our Spiritual Religion. [...] It is a beginning (p. 47PDF).

The fact that Scarff states that the spiritual hour is a beginning implies that she was pleased that CSC was starting to recognize Indigenous spirituality, but that there is still a long journey forward in recognizing Indigenous rights, particularly within the prison system. Judy Geehan (1983a), another Indigenous *Tightwire* storyteller, also points to the importance of learning about Indigenous spirituality by stating that the Creator:

taught us which [sacred plants] were to be used as medicine and which ones to use when we prayed to him, like the sacred tobacco, the sweet grass, the cedar and the sage and the other plants. [...] It was the creator who gave us the sacred pipe to pray with, and he was the one who taught us the sacred purifying way of the sweat lodge (p. 36).

⁶⁰ See Appendix 12.

Taken together, Scarff (1983a) and Geehan (1983a) make several points – there are sacred plants that have important functions in Indigenous spirituality and that their meanings are critical to learn for Indigenous peoples seeking to lead “the good life” (Monchalin, 2016, p. 304).

By contrast, those with prior cultural knowledge must work with healers to find common cultural ground⁶¹. This involves negotiating and redefining symbolic meanings (Waldram, 1997) and is reminiscent of a component of oral storytelling – prefiguration. In her book on Indigenous writing about imprisonment, Deena Rymhs (2008) explains prefiguration as allowing the imagination of informed listeners, such as those with prior cultural knowledge, to reshape the outcome of a story. In this scenario, the outcome of a known story (or symbol) may be changed in a manner that enables both tellers and listeners (or healers and those seeking healing) to adapt the story/symbol to their specific contexts. This means that the use and understanding of symbols vary because they are dependent on one’s unique interpretation (Rymhs, 2008). While prefiguration represents one possible aspect of stories for literary critics, for Indigenous storytellers, I understand it as an essential feature of stories. In her work with Indigenous stories, historical and feminist literary scholar Lynette Hunter (2016) explains how Indigenous stories are intentionally created in an open manner that promotes listeners’ own interpretations and applications of stories to one’s own life. Narrative criminologist Lois Presser (2022, October 7) also addresses gaps in stories and argues that the audience is drawn to them because they can better integrate their own lives and experiences into the story. Given this, Indigenous peoples *with* prior cultural knowledge may still be able to find meaning in and interact with familiar

⁶¹ It is important to note that not all incarcerated Indigenous peoples participate in symbolic healing. There are several reasons for this that Waldram (1997) discusses; however, for the purpose of my research, I am interested in those who choose to participate in Indigenous prison groups because these individuals represent the women who were involved with *Tightwire* – the focus of my research.

stories and symbols that, while not specific to their individual nation, are shared across multiple Indigenous cultures. In this way, familiar symbols invite their audience into an interpersonal transaction – that is, to reshape the narrative and adapt it to their circumstances (Rymhs, 2008).

An example of a symbolic story in *Tightwire* that involves prior cultural knowledge – and thus holds potential for prefiguration – are those that invoke feminist and Indigenous narratives. By pairing together elements of traditionally marginalized cultural groups – the first culture being broadly feminist, the second culture being broadly Indigenous – within the strength of the Native Sisterhood Section, these stories reinforce the belief that there is potential to gain in disadvantageous situations. Indeed, it is vital to place Indigenous women’s contributions in *Tightwire* in the context of Indigenous cultural and feminist practices. As previously discussed in my literature review, Indigenous storytelling was traditionally communicated orally (LaRocque, 2009), and – especially historically – women were often denied opportunities to develop intellectually through writing (Flannery, 2005). When considering this in the specific contexts of *Tightwire* and the Native Sisterhood, writing in and of itself is a resistant approach that was practiced by Indigenous women within P4W. That is, Indigenous women in P4W claimed the practice of writing in *Tightwire* to advance their own perspectives and concerns. In this way, *Tightwire* was a vehicle in which Indigenous women mobilized their unequal positions in society as a source of collective and individual strength. Crucially, Anderson (2016) identifies that “writing offers both a means to resist and an opportunity to reinvent” – which are characteristic of Indigenous storytelling in the colonial context (p. 119). In this way, Anderson (2016) argues that resistance expressed in storytelling is both a courageous and liberating act for Indigenous women – and I believe this is especially so in the carceral context. Following this, I argue that the storytellers who invoked (Indigenous) feminist narratives within *Tightwire* stories

encouraged their audience to explore potential gains of their unique position as women in a patriarchal prison. The facilitation of collective action among the prison population was not unique to the women who published in *Tightwire*, but rather, as historian Chris Clarkson and sociologist Melissa Munn (2021) explain, was a feature of the penal press – one that wardens did not appreciate. For example, Warden Hall from Saskatchewan Penitentiary declared at the warden’s conference in 1957 that: “I find the Penal Press one of the biggest headaches we have to deal with” (as cited in Clarkson & Munn, 2021, p. 202). This statement was made specifically in reference to prisoners’ organization and communication of their interests via the penal press which wardens perceived as prisoner resistance.

Moreover, as readers will see below, because some of the invoked symbols were Indigenous, these storytellers were specifically encouraging their fellow incarcerated Indigenous women to resist colonialism – specifically the colonialism of incarceration. My argument aligns with Anderson (2016) who similarly explains that Indigenous women’s strength to resist often stems from “the voices of other Indigenous peoples” who resist (p. 116). Indeed, the women who drew on Indigenous feminist narratives in their stories led by example, for instance, through their membership in the Native Sisterhood as well as their contributions to *Tightwire* – positions from which they exercised their powerful standpoints as incarcerated Indigenous women who resist colonial patriarchal criminalization and imprisonment. As previously discussed, some Indigenous women who wrote in *Tightwire* also participated in the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women both through their own research – in the case of Fran Sugar and Lana Fox – as well as their participation in research commissioned for the Task Force (TFFSW, 1990). Indigenous feminist thought was also a current throughout the *Creating Choices* (1990) report – with one Indigenous woman who was incarcerated at P4W stating: “We should have the same

opportunities as men. Why can't we be nearer to our people and still have the programs we need too?" (p. 14). This speaks to the women's need for equality with: a) imprisoned men who were in closer proximity to their families, and b) white prisoners who had access to culturally appropriate programming.

Throughout *Tightwire*, there were many references to Indigenous feminisms. Perhaps a more subtle example is one of the Native Sisterhood Section covers on which there is a drawing of a raven and elderly person – by an anonymous storyteller (Anonymous, 1989b):

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Native Sisterhood


 33

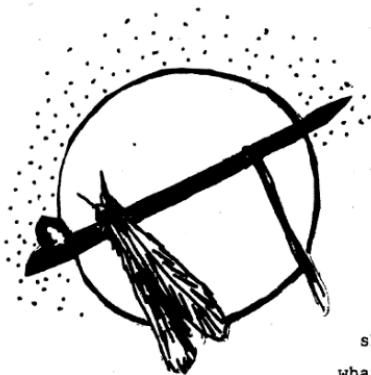
 TIGHTWIRE

Figure 6 – Anonymous. (1989b). Native Sisterhood. *Tightwire* (23, 1). p. 33.

As previously mentioned, stories connect past, present, and future generations. Knowing this, when I see this drawing of an elderly person, I wonder if Anonymous' (1989b) drawing represents an Elder. Moreover, the raven is one of the ways that the trickster is depicted –

specifically by the Haida nation (Robinson, 2018). In this context, Anonymous (1989b) makes important connections between the cultural knowledge shared through Elders' storytelling, the trickster who – in this case – employs knowledge to their favour, and the Native Sisterhood that “carries” such stories – and thus the women's (cultural) knowledges – to *Tightwire* readers. Importantly, this drawing is likely to have prefiguration potential as Indigenous viewers with prior cultural knowledge may make the above associations and be alerted to the fact that the Native Section specifically, and *Tightwire* more broadly, were safe and liberatory spaces for Indigenous women – and thus be more likely to relate to the content and subscribe to the newsletter.

Another story in the Native Sisterhood Section that portrays Indigenous feminist narratives is a drawing by Betty (1985) that depicts “Sisterhood Unity” written on a bird inside a female gender symbol on the bottom right corner of the page:



December 5th, 1984

To my Coppertone Sister:

As we all know we are Brother's and Sister's in this creation! Native or non-Native we should all help each other! But due to the hatred going on in this world it is most important that the Native people should be more close as Brothers and Sister's. That is what Sisterhood is there for, to help one another through the struggles and to grow... We have been wiped out all over through the passing of time but we cannot dwell on that!!!! That has past, it is time to forget what happened to our people in the past. Now it is important to think of what will happen to our next coming generation. We do not want to see our next generation in our shoes or worse! Right?!

Sister hood helps us to get Sweatlodges, Sweetgrass, these things are brought in to us for a purpose: to help us grow Spiritually and to give us the strength in our Beliefs.

We must all pray to Grandfather and ask him to bring a tighter bond to Sisterhood for US Sisters and for the ones to come with in the future. we must make a decision very soon. To reunite. Or all our strengths will parish.....

BETTY



Figure 7 – Betty. (1985) To my Coppertone Sister. *Tightwire* (V20, 8). p. 31PDF.

This bird resembles a thunderbird which is a powerful figure who represents protection and strength (Spirits of the West Coast Art Gallery, 2022). The way “Sisterhood Unity” is placed within the thunderbird symbolizes Betty’s perspective regarding the strength and solidarity of the

Native Sisterhood. Moreover, it represents Betty's explicit awareness of the interactions between feminist and Indigenous issues – thereby demonstrating her engagement with Indigenous feminisms even before the concept gained currency in the late 1990s through the work of Stó:lō author and cultural critic Lee Maracle (Nickel & Snyder, 2019). Taken together then, these drawings – and many other stories throughout *Tightwire* – indicate that the women were aware that the Sisterhood was drawing on Indigenous feminist characteristics and principles to advance their stories and goals. While Anonymous' (1989b) and Betty's (1985) stories have potential to resonate with all prisoners within P4W in that they are all incarcerated women in positions of relative disadvantage, they resonate particularly well with Indigenous prisoners who recognize the stories' cultural significance and thus can decipher the underlying meanings (Rymhs, 2008).

Indeed, to exist as Indigenous feminists, I argue that the Native Sisterhood strategically positioned itself as a spiritual group. I believe this is the case not only because of the aforementioned drawings, but also because, according to Yuen (2011), the Sisterhood was successful in diverting the gaze of CSC which ultimately permitted them to continue resisting the colonial carceral system unbeknownst to the prison administration who wrongfully believed that the Sisterhood was nothing more than a religious affiliation. For example, I believe that by not explicitly mentioning decolonization as an objective in the *Native Sisterhood Constitution* (2003), the Native Sisterhood strategically positioned itself as less threatening to the colonial prison system.

Waldram's (1997) study offers evidence of a parallel example to my argument in that some of the Indigenous male prisoners told him that they initially became involved in Indigenous prison programming for political, rather than spiritual or healing-seeking, reasons. Political reasons for joining Indigenous prison groups included demonstrating solidarity with Indigenous

peoples (i.e., their Brothers), separating themselves from the white majority within prisons (both prisoners and prison administrators), and using the rhetoric of freedom of religion to “bully”⁶² prison administrators (Waldram, 1997, p. 217). Other stated reasons for joining Indigenous prisoner groups included interest in sorting out identity conflicts and learning more about Indigenous cultures and histories. Interestingly, Waldram (1997) points out that many of those who initially joined Indigenous spiritual groups for political reasons eventually developed commitments to the spiritual path and specified that healing was their primary goal for their continued spiritual engagement. This finding makes sense given the relationship between decolonization, cultural resurgence, and healing.

As previously discussed in Reeves’ and Stewarts’ (2017) study regarding Anishnawbe health, by simultaneously framing violence experienced by Indigenous peoples in the colonial context and learning to employ culturally specific approaches to healing, decolonial understandings and actions take place. Indeed, considering that political- and cultural-neutral therapy does not exist, the persistence of Indigenous systems of healing represents a form of political and cultural resistance to colonialism (Waldram, 1997). In the context of the prison, by engaging with Indigenous spirituality, Waldram (1997) argues that Indigenous prisoners:

are seeking to repossess an aspect of their lives and heritages that was once discouraged and even criminalized. Their re-spiritualization is a highly effective rehabilitative measure that also serves to define and energize their resistance. This is done constructively, however, since the teachings promote understanding, forgiveness, racial harmony, and nonviolence. It allows [... Indigenous prisoners] to deal with the collective trauma that has befallen their people at the same time as it offers them a new life. It also gives them a highly visible and significant method of opposing the prison system and the criminalization of their people in a way that institutions must grudgingly accept. In effect, it empowers the ultimate

⁶² While Waldram (1997) uses the term “bully” to describe the motivations behind prisoners’ joining Indigenous prison programming, I believe it is more accurate to describe their motivation as gaining a sense of control and ownership over their own lives, in addition to exercising their *very* limited control over prison administrators.

disenfranchised group, [... Indigenous prisoners]. It is a form of reaction and resistance to oppression (p. 216-217).

The notion of Indigenous spirituality for Waldram (1997) is a form of symbolic healing that is best understood within the context of oppression, liberation, and cultural reparation where the solutions to contemporary problems are framed as a continuation of (or return to) Indigenous traditions. For instance, Yuen (2011) argues that the Sisterhood ceremonies were direct resistance to the effects of the Indian Act which systematically banned Indigenous cultural traditions and practices. One example of this is how the Indian Act specifically targeted Indigenous women prior to its amendments in 1985 (Comack, 2018). Before the amendments in 1985, Indigenous women (as well as their current and future children) who married non-Indigenous men lost their Indian status (Comack, 2018). This had grave implications for matriarchal Indigenous cultures such as the Stó:lō whose women members were no longer able to pass on their ancestral names – an important part of their cultural traditions (Monchalin, 2016). In this way, I agree with Yuen's (2008) argument that the Sisterhood's goal – that is, the resurgence of Indigenous cultures, including the reverence of women – is in direct opposition to the wide spanning effects of the Indian Act. Moreover, Indigenous spirituality also actively resists assimilatory discourses inherent within Western medical science – the philosophy that underpins CSC's "rehabilitative" efforts (Comack, 2018; Waldram, 1997). Through their inclusion of all Indigenous women within P4W – regardless of their (prior) cultural knowledge – as well as their engagement with Indigenous feminist symbols, and their objectives surrounding holistic healing, the Sisterhood engaged in aspects of symbolic healing both within their group as well as *Tightwire*.

“A new wave of female writers is ascending”: *Tightwire*, A Prison Newsletter

Although *Tightwire* does not appear to have been initially created as an expressive outlet for Indigenous women prisoners at P4W, soon after its inception, the Native Sisterhood became involved. Prior to detailing the Native Sisterhood’s involvement with *Tightwire*, it is essential that I describe the development, goals, and general contents of *Tightwire*. Before the opening of the Prison for Women, women were confined within Kingston Penitentiary – a federal men’s prison (Gaucher, 1989). There, they contributed to *Telescope*, the male prisoners’ newsletter. In January 1951, the women’s contributions to *Telescope* included providing columns, articles, and poetry (Gaucher, 1989). Beginning in May 1952 until the mid-1960s, the women also provided editorial staff to *Telescope* (Gaucher, 1989). In 1972, women at P4W began their own newsletter entitled *Tightwire* which was published continuously until 1995. According to one Anonymous (1990⁶³) storyteller in the front matter of *Tightwire*: “Over 90% of content within this publication together with all typesetting, layout and design work – including the printing is done within the walls of P4W by the [prisoner] population" (p. 1). This is especially remarkable given what we know regarding the disproportionate number of incarcerated women who did not graduate high school, participate in professional training, or have employment (Bird, 2021). While the production of *Tightwire* within P4W remained consistent, the contents of the newsletter changed depending on submissions. In the front matter of *Tightwire*, Anonymous (1980) – presumably editors of this issue who were listed on another page, Beverly Whitney, Gay Wise, Daryl Dollan, and Lisa M. Knowles – explain that: "The contents [of *Tightwire*] are compiled by the inmates’ staff from a variety of sources: their own writing, those of other prisoners (both from the Prison For Women and other jails), newspaper and magazine articles, and submissions from outside

⁶³ See Appendix 13.

contributions” (p. 5PDF). While most stories published within *Tightwire* were produced by incarcerated women at P4W, it is telling to note which stories were (re)produced elsewhere as it marks what was important to the women of *Tightwire*. As described by historical penal press scholars Chris Clarkson and Melissa Munn (2021), prisoners – including prisoner-editors – commonly subscribed to other penal press newsletters outside of the institution within which they were incarcerated and “routinely reprinted noteworthy pieces in their own publications” (p. 199).

Like other penal press publications of the time (Clarkson & Munn, 2021), during its production, *Tightwire* served several purposes. *Tightwire* editor(s) (1985b⁶⁴) – assumed to be Fran and Gail because their names are listed as editors on another page of this issue – wrote on the back matter⁶⁵ subscription page that: “The *Tightwire* serves many functions. Primarily, it offers a platform for artistic expression to the incarcerated women in Canada’s only female federal penitentiary. It also informs the readers of current proposals in law reform” (p. 46). Like my argument regarding how the Native Sisterhood strategically positioned itself as a spiritual group, I argue that the description of *Tightwire* as “a platform for artistic expression” may have been a strategic choice by *Tightwire* editors that functioned to divert CSC’s attention from the highly political and resistant nature of the women’s stories within *Tightwire*. While some prison administration were supportive of the broader penal press due to its initial conceptualization as a mechanism to enhance prisoners’ skillsets, as the press evolved, its content became increasingly critical of the prison system – and thus more difficult for staff to support (Clarkson & Munn,

⁶⁴ See Appendix 14.

⁶⁵ Front and back matter are the front and back pages of a newsletter (Meagher & Burton, 2021). In the case of *Tightwire*, these pages typically include letters from and to the editors as well as calls for subscriptions.

2021). As my research shows, *Tightwire* storytellers did not simply inform readers of (proposed) law reforms; at times, the women heavily critiqued reforms as well as the criminal justice system more broadly, and they also offered their own suggestions for ways forward – discussed in chapters six and seven, respectively. While critique of the criminal justice system and the provision of alternative methods for achieving justice were not unique to *Tightwire* (Clarkson & Munn, 2021), it was one of the longest running newsletters and, as previously mentioned, is noted for its sustained and high-quality critiques (Gaucher, 1989; Jackson, 2019; Rymhs, 2008). This again points to the longstanding interest in and impact of *Tightwire*.

Editor of *Tightwire*, Jo-Ann Mayhew (1987b⁶⁶) identifies another important function of *Tightwire*: “In part, *Tightwire* attempts to translate the prison experience in a manner that can be more readily understood by the outside reader” (p. 17). That is, *Tightwire* acted as a pedagogical tool from which non-incarcerated subscribers could learn more about women’s experiences of incarceration from the stories of the women themselves. This educational aspect of the penal press was discussed, for instance, by assistant editor from Maclean’s magazine, Sidney Katz, in their correspondence with the Commissioner of Penitentiaries, General Ralph, in 1955 (Clarkson & Munn, 2021). Even prison administration identified shifts in the emphasis of penal press publications regarding public education. For instance, regarding the prisoner-produced newsletter *C.B. Diamond*, members of the prison administration stated that they welcomed “public relations”, constructive criticism, news, entertainment, and education (Clarkson & Munn, 2021). As discussed in my literature review chapter, public and financial support were important to carceral staff to maintain and reform the prison system. Also crucial was staff’s ability to

⁶⁶ See Appendix 15.

manage prisoners by learning about the happenings at the prison via the penal press. In these ways, carceral administration also used *Tightwire* as a pedagogical tool to meet their own needs.

One example of *Tightwire*'s educational nature is apparent in editors' Fran and Gail's (1985⁶⁷) editorial which discusses how that issue of *Tightwire* is built around specific changes to the criminal justice system:

There are a lot of major issues being dealt with lately by the Justice Dept. and the Parole Board. The most crucial of these is the Violent Offender's Act. I've included highlights of this Act in this [issue] along with various comments that have appeared in newspapers. A complete reading of the Parole Act and it's amendments remains in the Tightwire office and is available to any who wish to read it (p.2PDF).

Importantly, the educational aspects of *Tightwire* did not simply end with one's reading of the newsletter. In this case, the editors offered P4W prisoner-readers the opportunity to access more information about changes to the Parole Act by visiting *Tightwire*'s office and reading the Act in its entirety. The visiting component of this offering also presents an opportunity to create and/or maintain relations between P4W prisoners – thus demonstrating the importance of kinship to *Tightwire* editors and aligning with the relationality aspects of (Indigenous) feminisms.

In another story, Jo-Ann Mayhew (1986⁶⁸) provided more insight into the newsletter production in the wake of the *Tightwire* office being shut down for unknown reasons:

Tightwire will continue in its on-going effort to provide a forum for the women of P4W to express their views, opinions and sentiments. The daily, living oppression of this penal system on individuals is agonizing, the courage with which it is born is amazing. We hope Tightwire can reflect these pits and pinnacles of life as well as the more light-hearted moments (p. 4PDF).

⁶⁷ See Appendix 16.

⁶⁸ See Appendix 17.

In this passage, we see that *Tightwire* is complex and multifaceted – just like the women who produced and published in *Tightwire* which reflects a desire-centered approach (Tuck, 2009). A couple years later, Mayhew (1988d⁶⁹) expresses the enjoyment she receives from *Tightwire*:

One of the subtly unfolding pleasures I am discovering is a profound delight and appreciation for women's writing. A new wave of female writers is ascending, believing in themselves, unfurling powerful talent. For me, the hallmark of these writers is the sensitivity with which words are chosen. I am reminded of women selecting pieces of perfect fruit from crowded bins. Each chosen with an inner view of color, texture and higher purpose of a waiting lover. The choice must stimulate the appetite of the mind. It will bite with invigorating sharpness, the tang of new ideas or it may be smoothly mellow, the sweetness of fond romance, tender moments. Possibly, it may blend both to stir memories of the past into visions of tomorrow. These words of women are my sustaining food for to-day (p. 42).

As seen here, for Mayhew (1988d) as an editor, storyteller, and reader of *Tightwire*, the pleasure of *Tightwire* resides in the relations she builds with its storytellers – not only in her deep appreciation of the storytellers' self-confidence, but in the capacity of their stories to get her through her daily life. In these ways, Mayhew forms connections to the storytellers of *Tightwire*.

Relative to other prisoner newsletters, *Tightwire* was consistent in terms of its policy, format, and quality (Gaucher, 1989; Jackson, 2019; Rymhs, 2008). Robert Gaucher (1989), a leading Canadian scholar on prison writing, attributes *Tightwire*'s stability and consistent high quality to the fact that P4W was the only federal women's prison in Canada at the time. This meant that there were no possibilities for prisoner-transfer, thus editorial staff remained relatively consistent and were able to develop their skills over time. Interestingly, Gord Marr, the first prisoner-editor of *Telescope*, wrote to Warden Allan within Kingston Penitentiary about what skills he believed the penal press could help prisoners develop. Marr argued that the penal press would provide opportunities for prisoners "to learn to express themselves in a constructive, orderly and appreciative manner" (Clarkson & Munn, 2021, p. 70). I believe the skills identified

⁶⁹ See Appendix 18.

by Marr were communicated to the Warden for the purpose of appealing to prison administration; however, there were many other skills developed by prisoners through their work on the penal press. Critically, even when editors left their positions at *Tightwire*, their skills were remembered and valued; and incoming editors' skills were also appreciated and acknowledged.

For instance, Indigenous storyteller Fran Smith (1986b⁷⁰), editor of *Tightwire*, said that:

We had to say good-bye to my co-editor, Gail, back in February. No one could operate the machines like she could. Linda has taken her place and brings with her a creative and artistic ability along with nimble typing fingers. Both are greatly appreciated (p. 2PDF).

Again, this passage helps demonstrate the importance *Tightwire* editors placed on relationships and the value that each community member contributes. Fran Smith was not the only *Tightwire* editor to openly discuss Gail's editorial skills; indeed, Kris (1985⁷¹) also spoke fondly of Gail and the work entailed in printing *Tightwire*:

Before putting out the last issue we wondered how any editor could allow a paper to go out with a spot on the page or with the print not even. Two weeks of coaxing a machine that hated us changed all that. The first week I watched, amused, as Gail stood like an outfielder trying to catch the stream of pages that were rapidly spit from the machine. Sometimes in groups, and often dripping with ink she tried to reach for an adjustment button. Then she would step aside and somehow the ink that was all over her hands and arms would have gotten on her shoe and would be attracting every paper on the floor. I did a lot less laughing when Gail took a leave of absence, so to speak. Each time I figured out why something was going wrong, a new hornet's nest was discovered. Usually at this time, someone would pop their head through the door and joke "How's it going?" It took 24 hours to get someone to fix the machine after I tried to change the ink. And too much design on a page will stick to the stencil. So there I was poised on my toes, snatching pages while waiting for a chance to switch it to manual. By the last page I realized it was not the machine at all. Then came the easy part, getting it in the mail. What I was thinking of the person that dreamt up the postal code system was probably cause for conspiracy charges. For days I tried to attach little pieces of paper with the mysterious code to the aging *Tightwire* (p. 1).

⁷⁰ See Appendix 19.

⁷¹ See Appendix 20.

Kris' passage not only demonstrates how seriously the editors of *Tightwire* took their positions, but also the reliance they expressed for one another's skill sets, as well as their ability to switch positions and tasks when necessary. It also shows Kris' humour and resiliency regarding *Tightwire*'s production issues – which are characteristic of many of the storytellers in *Tightwire*. Another example whereby editors moved on from their positions and were thanked was in editor Jo-Ann Mayhew's (1986) editorial. Interestingly, this excerpt also speaks of a random closure of the *Tightwire* office – presumably, a decision made by CSC administrators⁷². Mayhew (1986) writes:

Once again the tides of personal fortune and the winds of suspicion have swept through the office of *Tightwire*. Due to the closure of the magazine office for reasons?, there once again arose the double dilemma of a new editor trying to assemble the unfamiliar material and to rush an overdue issue to the printer. Fortunately the former editorial team left behind a healthy framework to build from. Both Di and Fran have happily packed their pencils, pens and brushes and have rejoined 'Another World'. We extended a big thank you to them for their efforts and contributions over the past months. We wish them good luck as they move towards future goals (p. 4PDF).

Here again, despite Mayhew's stress in regard to being a new editor who was unfamiliar with publishing at the time, she was thankful for the previous editors' contributions. As I came to better "know" the storytellers of *Tightwire*, Mayhew's passage becomes increasingly ironic given her consistently honed editorial and writing skills. Indeed, it was during Mayhew's time as editor that the newsletter became what it is well known for amongst its subscribers and prison writing scholars – such as Frances Foran (1998), Robert Gaucher (1989; 1999), Julie Jackson (2019), and Deena Rymhs (2008) – a critical examination and critique of Canada's criminal justice system and surrounding structures. Mirroring Mayhew's own evolution, the changes to

⁷² While I cannot say for certain why the office was closed, it is important to note Clarkson and Munn's (2021) discussion of prison administrators' suppression of the penal press in various capacities, which could have included office closure – a topic that is picked up again at the end of this section.

Tightwire are similarly evident and are discussed in Mayhew's (1988c⁷³) editorial in which she states:

This edition of TIGHTWIRE marks the beginning of my third year as editor. During this period, readers have commented on the evolving nature of this publication. It reflects my own passage through the painful, maze-like channels of Corrections with a deepening awareness of the tragic waste of both human resources and the coldly, calculated manner in which our Government chooses to spend millions of social dollars on entrenching oppression. (p. 2)

While Mayhew was editor, she frequently submitted her own stories to *Tightwire* which fit well with the increasingly political climate of not only the newsletter but the happenings outside of P4W, such as increased interest in Indigenous, women's, and prisoners' rights (Foran, 1998).

Special thanks were also given to those who helped with *Tightwire*'s production such as when editors Janie Walsh, Bobbie McQuaid, and Fran Sugar (Cree) (1985⁷⁴) acknowledged a donation they received: "A special thankyou to John Wiggins for his generous donation of a much-needed electric type-writer" (p. 4PDF). This excerpt shows how material items – such as a type-writer – were needed by *Tightwire* editors in order for the publication to continue production. Indeed, Clarkson and Munn (2021) discuss the variance between penal press publications in terms of what technologies they used. Some publications had access to printing and silk-screening services, while others – such as *Tightwire* – relied on donated typewriters, or old gestetner and mimeograph machines. Issues with acquiring equipment for publication were persistent as the penal press developed; however, these issues were partially alleviated by increased subscriptions which provided publications with more financial stability (Clarkson & Munn, 2021).

⁷³ See Appendix 21.

⁷⁴ See Appendix 22.

That said, subscribers were critical to *Tightwire*'s success for more than just financial reasons. For instance, some readers wrote into the editors to praise the publication and *Tightwire* staff – no doubt providing assurance and validation to the editors. For instance, John J. Rogers (1983⁷⁵) wrote:

Dear Editor: I had just read my first issue of “ Tightwire “, and I am very impressed. Being in a knowing position, I can state that “ Tightwire “ is, by far the largest, most complete, and highest in quality of all publications produced by inmates in any Canadian prison. Inmates of a very few prisons that produce periodicals, print two to four mimeographed news bulletins of coming events. You, your predecessors, the staff, and all contributors have attained a high degree of proficiency in all departments. All of you are to be congratulated for producing the most worthy periodical of any Canadian prison. I sincerely wish all of you good-luck, and a continued prosperous future; you earned it (p. 2).

It is interesting to read Rogers' direct comparisons between *Tightwire* and the other prison periodicals he read and to learn that *Tightwire* was a standout newsletter to its audience. To this extent, Rogers (1983) argued that *Tightwire* was “the largest, most complete, and highest in quality of all [prisoner produced] publications”. As discussed in my literature review chapter, Gaucher (1989) also notes *Tightwire* as an especially high-quality prison newsletter. Like-minded groups of people also wrote into *Tightwire* editors. For instance, *Tightwire* editors Kris and Gail (1985) wrote that:

The outside world is changing in respect to women (at last!). We receive literally hundreds of newsletters from feminist groups. Women in the old traditional role have always made “home” everyone's favourite place to be. If we apply the same principles from this microcosm to the world perhaps mankind can get its priorities straight (p. 1, emphasis in original).

In this editorial, I believe that *Tightwire* editors, Kris and Gail, felt hopeful in receiving letters from subscribers. That is, these letters represented a positive step in the right direction towards meaningful change for women that occurs when men (i.e., “mankind”) shift their priorities

⁷⁵ See Appendix 23.

(presumably beyond their own self-interests). Here again, *Tightwire* demonstrates its pedagogical and transformative potential which is vital to the newsletter's goals to educate non-incarcerated subscribers about women's prison experiences. Indeed, if *Tightwire* editors did not believe that change was possible, they would not have alluded to feeling hopeful. This sense of hope is, as discussed in my literature review, connected to feminist print culture in that – through their stories – women believed they could change the world (Piepmeier, 2009). Similarly, Foran (1998) also identified hope expressed throughout *Tightwire* – particularly as the publication evolved – which was often in relation to the women's increased (sociopolitical) knowledges and their engagement with non-incarcerated audiences. This hope for the future is conceptualized as decolonial by critical prison and Indigenous studies scholar Krista Benson (2020) who argues that Indigenous women can find freedom through storytelling while incarcerated. Literary scholars Roxanne Rimstead and Deena Rymhs (2011) agree that writing in prison can provide a sense of freedom. It is specifically this freedom that (Indigenous) women experience in their storytelling – and in sharing their stories – that resists the carceral system and the colonialism of imprisonment. That is, as Indigenous women's stories traverse the prison walls via *Tightwire*, they cultivate relationships with their readers, instill a sense of collectivity, and call for increasingly critical and Indigenous approaches to justice.

Despite *Tightwire*'s consistency, I also note variation between the issues such as the number of publications per year. The number of publications changed from six times per year in 1980 to four times per year in 1985. It was interesting to note several instances where *Tightwire* editors explicitly discussed the number of issues per year. For example, an anonymous Editor (1985a⁷⁶) wrote in the back matter of *Tightwire* that: “The Tightwire is published four times a

⁷⁶ See Appendix 24.

year (hopefully)” (p. 58PDF). This passage indicates that it was the intention of *Tightwire* editors to publish four times annually, but that this practice did not always occur. As evidenced in the front and back matter of *Tightwire*, the changing number of publications were explained primarily by reasons related to finances, changing editors, and the number of submissions. For instance, in 1992, editor Julie McKay explained in her *Tightwire* editorial that: “I would like to apologize for the delay but this is due to a number of things. The changing editors and the lack of contributions didn’t help” (1992⁷⁷, p. 3PDF). While “lack of contributions” was mentioned here, it is vital to note that, at times, *Tightwire* editors also expressed that there were “too many” submissions to publish. An example of this is expressed in editor Beverly Whitney’s (1980⁷⁸) story in which she ends her editorial with: “P. S. We regret that we were not able to print all the poetry and articles that we received, but our publication has now been limited to seventy pages” (p. 3PDF). In her story, it is unclear what was the cause of the page limit – perhaps it was in relation to finances such as printing and/or shipping costs of relatively large volumes, or even P4W’s administration’s regulations regarding mail sent out. An interesting part of Whitney’s editorial is the fact that she began her statement regarding the new page limit with “P. S.” which reminds me of writing a letter to a close friend or family. In this way, this story indicates that *Tightwire* subscribers are part of the prisoner (advocacy) community.

Tightwire also varied in terms of subscription cost. The price of the newsletter changed from \$4 per year in 1980; \$6 per year in 1983; \$8 per year in 1985; \$10 per year in 1988; and \$12 per year in 1991. The rising cost of subscription makes sense given inflation in addition to the repeated concerns expressed by editors about *Tightwire*’s finances and their ability to

⁷⁷ See Appendix 25.

⁷⁸ See Appendix 26.

continue production. For instance, *Tightwire* Editors (1985b) – as previously stated, who are presumed to be Fran and Gail – call for financial support in the back matter of *Tightwire*:

“Tightwire is published four times a year. In order to meet this objective, we are asking for financial backing through donations and subscriptions. Tightwire is self-supporting and we need your help in meeting our publication requirements. Thank you.” (p. 46). Emphasis on subscriber support was a continued mechanism that *Tightwire* editors employed to rally financial backing of the newsletter. This was not unique to *Tightwire* as subscription requests were common in social movement periodicals during that time (Meagher & Burton, 2021).

In their editorial, Janie Walsh, Bobbie McQuaid, and Fran Sugar (Cree) (1985) called out for subscribers’ help: “We hope you enjoy this issue. If you do, please share it with your friends and encourage them to take out a subscription. We desperately need the business! Our finances are near bankrupt! Help!!!” (p. 4PDF). Likewise, editors Diana Hartley and Janie Walsh (1983⁷⁹) state in the back matter of *Tightwire* that:

‘Tightwire’ is in dire financial straights. We would appreciate all those people who are presently subscribing to our publication to tell a friend or two about our newspaper and encourage them to obtain a subscription!!! If there are any organizations out there who receive our paper who would be willing to make a small donation or contribution to this periodical, we would greatly appreciate the assistance. Please help us stay creative, informative and involved with the community!!! So all of you who have enjoyed our publication in the past, please help us continue in the future!!!! Thank you!!!! (p. 58PDF).

Through these excerpts, readers of *Tightwire* are made privy to the financial struggles of the newsletter and are invited to contribute to its ongoing production through word-of-mouth discussions that encourage subscriptions as well as through monetary and material donations from individual and organizational subscribers. In this way, *Tightwire* editors imagine readers as part of a community from which they can draw support. Through the sharing of *Tightwire*’s

⁷⁹ See Appendix 27.

struggles with its readers, readers may have felt closer to the publication and storytellers, which could have increased the likelihood that readers would financially and/or materially back *Tightwire*. In this way, being communal was a strategy employed by editors not only to achieve collective action, but to ensure the ongoing success of *Tightwire*'s ability to catalyze future action via ongoing and new subscribers. The focus on not only the community but the future of the community shares similarities to Indigenous perspectives which emphasize thinking about the next seven generations (Kovach, 2009; TFFSW, 1990).

Although the above statements primarily regard finances, it is important to note that by financially backing *Tightwire*, subscribers were also backing prisoners, their stories, and ideas – which would have meant a lot to the women given that their self-representations and experiences were often ignored and/or denied (Jackson, 2019; Rymhs, 2008; TFFSW, 1990). Moreover, by explicitly mentioning the subscribers' friends, Hartley and Walsh (1983) and Walsh, McQuaid, and Sugar (1985) encouraged subscribers to enlarge their supportive and action-oriented community. The importance of people supporting *Tightwire* and the women who produced it was taken up in an editorial by Jo-Ann Mayhew (1989a⁸⁰) who wrote:

In a particular way, the readers and subscribers of TIGHTWIRE, by their support of this publication, have added weight to decisions which are bringing the problems confronting imprisoned women into action by political conscience. In my work as Editor, I have been consistently heartened by your responses...my deepest thanks to all... (p. 4).

Mayhew's statement validates the above point – that *Tightwire* was one vehicle from which women at P4W were able to create a supportive community – both within and outside of P4W – that was willing to listen to and advance the plights of prisoners to major stakeholders outside of the prison.

⁸⁰ See Appendix 28.

Importantly, there was a relationship between number of pages and finances that was illuminated by editors Diana Hartley and Janie Walsh (1983) who stated in the back matter of *Tightwire* that decisions were made regarding what would and would not be published when funds were scarce:

Due to a lack of funds in the 'Tightwire' accounts, we were unable to print all the material submitted by John Rogers and by the Native and French section editors and their contributors. The 'Tightwire' staff would like to express their regrets over these omissions. We hope to be able to publish everything that has been contributed in our next issue (p. 58PDF).

There are various interpretations of the fact that the Native Sisterhood Section was one of the sections affected by this editorial decision. For instance, some may question if the Sisterhood Section was not always deemed as important, relevant, or meaningful relative to other sections and/or individual contributions to the newsletter. Were certain stories submitted to the Native Section considered expendable because the Sisterhood had only been contributing materials to *Tightwire* for three years at that point (while other individuals had been contributing for 10 years)? From this viewpoint, *Tightwire* was potentially repeating a trend of dismissal and silencing of (certain) Indigenous peoples and stories (Dell et al., 2014; Green, 2007; Jackson, 2019; Rymhs, 2008; TFFSW, 1990). By contrast, the fact that there was a Native Sisterhood Section in the above 1983 issue speaks to the importance of this section to *Tightwire* editors Hartley and Walsh who, despite limited funds and page count, decided to include some stories by Indigenous peoples within the specified Native Section. Regardless, Hartley and Walsh acted transparently in this regard in that they were forthcoming with their readers, expressed regret over the omissions, and put forward a solution in which they sought to print the unpublished stories in the subsequent issue of *Tightwire*.

At the same time, readers were not privy to everything that transpired in relation to *Tightwire* – particularly when it came to the storytellers' full expressions. For instance, along

with Foran (1998), I identified that, throughout *Tightwire*, there are instances of censorship⁸¹. In her work, Foran (1998) points out that there were few, if any, editorial interventions by prison staff during *Tightwire*'s early years. She attributes this to her belief that the women themselves "incorporated the function of linguistic police" (Foran, 1998, p. 9). One example that I have identified that supports her belief is Beverly Whitney who referred to Indigenous women as "oppressed Natives" in her 1980 story in *Tightwire* (discussed in the next section of this chapter). Indeed, censorship by P4W staff began when *Tightwire* matured and its audience started perceiving it as an increasingly trusted and legitimate outlet. Its perceived legitimacy was in part due to the women's increasing engagement with thoughts stemming from feminist, legal, and rights discourses (Foran, 1998). It is interesting to note how prison staff began "correcting" stories in *Tightwire* "for no other apparent reason than that the writers were discursively out-of-bounds: who was speaking didn't match what they were saying" – that is, the stories in which the women ascribed value to their own lives (Foran, 1998, p. 50). Foran (1998) explains that: "The staff's objections to *Tightwire*, there, correlate with the writers' sense that their lives mattered enough to begin to dig themselves out from under the cement of stigmatizing namings as sentenced women" (p. 31). Specifically, what P4W staff chose to censor from *Tightwire* "suggests that what was considered unacceptable speech was any extenuating evidence of mental independence: feelings, memories, emotional response to experience" (Foran, 1998, p. 31).

⁸¹ Historian Chris Clarkson and critical sociologist Melissa Munn (2021) also identify instances of censorship throughout men's prison newsletters, including *Telescope* – a newsletter produced by men within Kingston Penitentiary between 1950 and 1968 that, as previously discussed, the women in P4W assisted with prior to producing *Tightwire*.

One example of this is Lana Fox Mahkeese⁸² (1988⁸³), a Cree/Saulteaux woman from Piapot Reserve in Saskatchewan, who talks about how she grew up with traditional teachings of the “Sweetgrass/Tobacco Road”. She says: “This is the Road I have chosen to live, in prison and once free. In prison it is a big struggle to maintain what you believe in. // **SECTIONS OF THIS ARTICLE WERE DELETED BY DIRECTION OF THE ADMINISTRATION**” (p. 34, emphasis in original). On the following page, the censorship continues as Fox Mahkeese (1988) explains that:

DELETED // I am quite aware there are people struggling out there from all walks of life. Even so, the public should not forget! That we the people in prison, from many walks of life, are struggling to exist and maintain our strength! Even when there are uncalled for actions by prison officials created! “Once out of prison, people tell you, “y ou are bitter!” And they wonder why? If they could for one minute feel and see, what we are subjected to, then they would understand why! I could have expressed myself more, I have chosen not to, as officials censor material given to Tightwire, they most likely would have omitted, what I really wanted to put down on paper. I have written this while we were on this lock down. Not of our choice! Today is January 14th, 1988. There is still 25 of us women locked, till when? Is unknown to us! (p. 35, emphasis in original).

Reading the heavily censored version of Fox Mahkeese’s (1988) story sheds light onto what CSC may not have wanted *Tightwire*’s readership to uncover. Immediately prior to the above excerpt, Fox Mahkeese talks about growing up on reserve and learning about her community’s sacred ceremonies such as the Rain Dance. The way she talks about this time is incredibly positive. Fox Mahkeese ends her story by saying that she feels bitter and prays to the Creator for strength to deal with her negative emotions while she is imprisoned. By contextualizing Fox Mahkeese’s (1988) story in this way, I believe that the parts of her story that were censored surrounded specific issues such as human rights violations regarding the practicing Indigenous spirituality

⁸²Lana Fox Mahkeese, also known as Lana Fox, was one of the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women’s commissioned researchers.

⁸³ See Appendix 29.

within P4W. On the other hand, like Foran (1998) believes, the censored parts could have been more of Fox Mahkeese's (1988) story regarding her recollections of spiritual ceremonies when she grew up on reserve. Regardless, the fact that P4W staff censored these kinds of stories in *Tightwire* signifies CSC's acknowledgement that the women's stories constructed their own lives as meaningful and valuable (Foran, 1998). In other words, I believe these censoring practices indicated that CSC believed the women's stories were powerful – and thus threatening to the prison as an institution.

As previously mentioned, Clarkson and Munn (2021) explain how, at first, prison administrators welcomed prisoners' critiques within the penal press – so long as they were “constructive” – but then, as prisoners began facilitating collective action through the penal press, administrators began to perceive the newsletters as a mechanism of resistance. Although multiple methods of suppressing prisoner resistance via the penal press were discussed at wardens' conferences in the 1950s – including “cutting off prisoners' access to other penal press magazines; cancelling all outside subscriptions; drafting a single, uniform policy for all institutions; hiring a central censor to vet all magazines from Ottawa; and discontinuing the penal press entirely” – there were ultimately no instructions for how administrators should proceed (Clarkson & Munn, 2021, p. 202). That said, Clarkson and Munn (2021) argue that prison administration increasingly censored prisoner newsletters as their stories became more centered around prisoners' grievances and critiques of the penal system. This is one reason I believe that the censored parts of Fox Makheese's story may have involved issues with practicing Indigenous spirituality in the carceral setting rather than childhood recollections of spirituality as Foran (1998) suggested.

It is vital to point out that editors continually drew attention to the potential for censorship in *Tightwire*. That said, it is near, if not impossible for *Tightwire* readers to decipher instances of censorship that were not explicitly pointed out by *Tightwire* editors – thus, readers are uncertain of the total number of instances in which stories were censored. Nevertheless, editors made certain that their subscribers and readers knew that there was potential for stories to be edited and/or censored in *Tightwire*. For example, editors Kris and Gail (1985) state in their editorial that: “All articles appearing in this issue have been subject to a review by an Administrative editorial board. Views and Opinions are those of the authors and are not necessarily reflective of the opinions of administration or the entire inmate population” (p. 1). At this point, readers may assume that the “Administrative editorial board” that Kris and Gail referred to is CSC administrators rather than an administrative board of *Tightwire* editors and/or contributors. This assumption is confirmed in the table of contents page of an issue that was collectively compiled by Gayle Horii, Jo-Ann Mayhew, and Pat McGonegal. Although there is no identified author, we can assume the table of contents page was written by one or all of the women who compiled the issue. Under the table of contents, it states that “Contents are subject to censorship by Prison Administrators” (Editors, presumed to be Horii, Mayhew, & McGonegal, 1988⁸⁴, p. 2PDF). In this way, *Tightwire* editors were not simply passive to CSC’s censorship. Like other prison newsletter editors of the time (Clarkson & Munn, 2021), another way that *Tightwire* editors resisted the censorship of CSC’s administrators is by making readers aware of when it happened. By explicitly showing readers which stories had deleted sections and where those sections were in relation to the whole story – *Tightwire* editors refused to accept CSC’s attempts at silencing the women.

⁸⁴ See Appendix 30.

An example of this is Fox Makheese's (1985) story. Upon my initial reading, I was surprised that Fox Mahkeese explicitly mentioned CSC's censorship yet that mentioning was permitted by CSC administration. My thought here is that CSC would not be overly fond of *Tightwire* readers being made aware of the fact that CSC was trying to hide and cover up particular parts of stories. Upon further contemplation, perhaps enabling the explicit mentioning of censorship was a power move on the part of CSC in that CSC allowed prisoners to print and publish *Tightwire* – but only exactly as the prison administration wanted (i.e., with censorship) – which made it clear to the prisoners and *Tightwire* readers that CSC administration was in fact in control of all happenings at P4W. In some ways, this was more a front for CSC's image than a reflection of reality. That is, P4W administration could have permitted the remaining parts of Fox Makheese's story to emphasize their own "Christian humanism" and benevolence – which is one of the reasons CSC agreed to start the penal press (Clarkson & Munn, 2021, p. 189). Thus, while CSC censored select stories in the penal press, they still permitted the press, and women still actively took relative control over their lives via their engagement with and dispersion of their ideas in *Tightwire*. Ironically, CSC's censoring practices were attempts to assert their control over the women; however, these practices acknowledged the women's power. CSC's implicit acknowledgment of the women's power may have been especially meaningful to the women themselves who continued to produce stories that included "I feel" and "I remember" statements which ultimately predicated "a newly founded and dangerously transformed "we" of the reading-alliance the prisoners themselves cultivated" (Foran, 1998, p. 31). By encouraging a greater collective "we" – one that was not bound by the prison walls – the women's stories regarding autonomy, sovereignty, emotions, and memories were perceived by CSC as threatening "to the good order of the institution" (Foran, 1998, p. 31).

“A sense of community and control”: The Native Sisterhood in *Tightwire*

Tightwire's “Native Sisterhood section” was more than just a section of the newsletter, it was representative of the broader Native Sisterhood at P4W. As evidenced by their long-standing relationship, the Native Sisterhood and *Tightwire* were mutually important to one another. While the first section in 1980 was titled “Native News”, in 1983 and again in 1991 and 1992, it was called the “Native Section”. In 1985, it was called “Warrior Women: Sisterhood Section” as well as “Native Sisterhood”. “Native Sisterhood” was also used as a title for the section in 1986 and 1993. In 1989 and 1990, the section was renamed “Sisterhood Speaks Out”. The last title reiteration of this section occurred in 1992 when it was called “Native Perspectives”. The page ranges of the Native Sisterhood Section in *Tightwire* varied anywhere from 4 to 15 pages. On average, the Native Sisterhood Section had approximately 9 pages per issue. As discussed in my methodology chapter, pages and stories must be understood as distinct in that some pages contain more than one story, while other stories take pages to tell. Thus, one page of Indigenous content does not necessarily represent one story. Moreover, Indigenous content was often, but not always, contained within the Native Sisterhood Section. I attribute this to the fact that *Tightwire* editors did not always follow typical organizational practices (e.g., grouping like stories together); but also, because not all Indigenous content was directly associated with or stemming from the Native Sisterhood. Given this, the Indigenous content in *Tightwire* was greater than the Native Sisterhood Section alone.

Over the years – such as in 1982, 1985, 1987-1988, and 1993 – the section was not clearly distinguished. These specific issues of *Tightwire* contained grouped Indigenous content that was not officially bound within a particular section – with its own cover page and section title. However, in these issues, Indigenous content was often clustered together – thus, for readers, there was indeed a Native Section; it was simply untitled. There were also pages of

Indigenous content that were not grouped with other Indigenous content. In these instances, for readers, there was no specific, or untitled, Native Section. Regardless, Indigenous content in *Tightwire* was consistently apparent across most of the newsletters' issues. In this way, the Native Section specifically – but also *Tightwire* more broadly – can be characterized as, what Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation Cora Voyageur (2005) refers to as, a “public square”. Initially conceptualized by David Taras (2001) as a communal meeting ground within media, Voyageur (2005) describes a public square as a place in which Indigenous peoples document their stories, control their own content, and share Indigenous stories with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities (Voyageur, 2005). Considering the frequent dismissal and invalidation of Indigenous perspectives within a colonial context, I believe the Native Sisterhood Section in *Tightwire* acted as a public square that was vital to the wellbeing and cultural continuity of Indigenous women within P4W. I will explore this argument in more detail in chapter seven.

The first official grouping of Indigenous stories in *Tightwire* was introduced by editor Beverly Whitney in 1980. Whitney (1980) called this section “Native News” and explained that: “the following section is a new one offered in ‘Tightwire’, which I hope will fairly represent oppressed Natives caught within our political system. [...] I trust that these articles are well received by the Indian population at large” (p. 24). The erroneous thinking here is not lost on the reader – Indigenous peoples are not “fairly represent[ed]” as simply “oppressed”. Indeed, this type of thinking is reflective of a damage-centered perspective that unjustly and exclusively depicts certain people, like incarcerated Indigenous women, as oppressed victims – thus denying their complexity (Tuck, 2009). The first stories included in the Native Sisterhood Section were:

- a cover page that introduced the new section (Whitney, 1980),

- a drawing of a large bird picking up a beaver with a wolf watching nearby (McGuire, 1980⁸⁵),
- a fact sheet of Leonard Peltier's case (Anonymous, 1980a⁸⁶)
- two commentaries that connect Peltier's case to land theft and resource extraction (Saskatchewan Coalition against Nuclear Development, 1980⁸⁷),
- a comic about treaties and stolen land (Linda Elder, 1980⁸⁸, p. 34), and
- an article originally published in the March issue of the *Ontario Indian* periodical whose author, Lois Bickley (1980⁸⁹), interviewed Indigenous women at P4W.

In her introduction to the Native Sisterhood Section, Whitney (1980) refers to Bickley's three-page article as "informative" (p. 24). This language may reflect the fact that non-Indigenous people are not widely aware or understanding of Indigenous teachings given that Indigenous truths were and often still are invalidated due to racism (TFFSW, 1990). Originally, Bickley intended to interview Indigenous women prisoners at P4W about their experiences of Christmas while being incarcerated; however, after meeting the women, her article became something altogether different. Bickley's (1980) article exposes her assumptions about prison and Indigenous prisoners – which she explains have been primarily informed by the sensationalism encapsulated in the media. Regarding her first visit to P4W, Bickley (1980) explains:

During the next two hours with the Native Sisterhood all my images of Prison inmates are challenged and discarded, but not adequately replaced. I know I will have to return. Nothing had turned out as expected. Instead of talking to the

⁸⁵ See Appendix 31.

⁸⁶ See Appendix 32.

⁸⁷ See Appendix 33.

⁸⁸ See Appendix 34.

⁸⁹ See Appendix 35.

inmates through bullet proof glass overlooked by a sinister guard, we sat together leisurely in a warm and comfortable room. The women wore street clothes (was I expecting stripes?) and many had recently had their hair cut and curled by fellow inmates learning to be hairdressers. The AIMS representative and Prison Liaison Officer Kathy Richmond, sat quietly in the background. All the women were friendly, hospitable and receptive to my uninformed questions (p. 35).

In this excerpt, Bickley begins to recognize her own assumptions about prison – that visitors and prisoners are physically separated by glass rather than having the ability to sit in close proximity, and that prisoners wear prison clothes rather than their own clothes. Her language – “all my images of Prison inmates are challenged and discarded, but not adequately replaced. I know I will have to return” – suggests that she is aware of how much more learning is in front of her, and that she intends to come back to P4W to continue her learning journey with incarcerated Indigenous women. This is certainly a positive recognition – one that aligns with the *Creating Choices* (1990) report that emphasizes the importance of “a racially and culturally specific [Indigenous] truth” from which non-Indigenous people have much to learn (p. 20).

Despite this realization, Bickley uses language to suggest that being Indigenous is inherently negative. For instance, within the same story, Bickley (1980) declares that “Indian women offenders are unlucky on three accounts – they are women, usually poor, and Indian” (p. 36). If Bickley had exchanged the word “unlucky” for “oppressed”, her statement would share similarities with Cree storyteller Fran Sugar (1988) who wrote in the Native Section of *Tightwire*:

Native women face double, triple and quadruple [discriminatory] standards when entering the prison system. Number 1 is because we are women, Number 2: we are Native, Number 3: we are poor, Number 4: we do not usually possess the education necessarily equivalent to the status quo (p. 26).

Importantly, Sugar (1988) also talks about surviving in her story – she does not simply say Indigenous women are oppressed, she says they are survivors. This perspective is reflective of, what Tuck (2009) describes as, a desire-centered approach which contributes to a more nuanced

understanding of the complexity of incarcerated Indigenous women and their lives. As Bickley's (1980) statement stands, it supports damaged-centered hegemonic stereotypes about Indigenous women prisoners. That said, Bickley (1980) not only focuses on the negative – she also talks about the resilience of Indigenous women prisoners.

However, in the same breath, Bickley (1980) discusses her yearning to leave the prison which is incongruous with her previous description of the prison as having a “leisurely”, “warm” and “comfortable” atmosphere from which she can carry out her interviews. She also fails to consider or acknowledge why she is uncomfortable within the prison setting or how Indigenous women feel while incarcerated. This complicated and contrasting set of thoughts is demonstrated in Bickley's (1980) closing statement:

As an observer who knows little about it, I see prison life as being lonely, frightening and a day to day struggle. I have to admire those very talented women on stage at rehearsal for their sense of humour and brave attempt to overcome the boredom and desperation that predominates their lives. I wouldn't want to go through it and was relieved when I found my way past the maze of corridors and barred iron gates to the outside world. I was just in time to get an unobstructed view of the sun setting on the horizon (p. 37).

It is vital to note how this last story in the Native Sisterhood Section has similar undertones to Whitney's (1980) introduction to the new “Native News” Section – a predominant focus on oppression. These two stories bind the first Native Sisterhood Section. Together, the stories in this particular Native Sisterhood Section explore issues surrounding the violation of Indigenous rights as well as the violation of Indigenous peoples' human rights within Canada's criminal justice system. The similar sentiment that readers perceive from Whitney's (1980) and Bickley's (1980) stories is not surprising. Foran (1998) explains in her thesis on *Tightwire* that the newsletter's early stories were “‘safe’ expressions, verifying the writers' domination, repression, and depression” that demonstrate the women's social and linguistic displacement (p. 9). In other words, the stories in *Tightwire* did not always express resistance to status quo perspectives about

women, Indigenous peoples, and criminalized people, rather *Tightwire* storytellers became more resistant – or expressed more resistance – over time. Indeed, this first section did not define the remainder of the Native Sisterhood Sections in *Tightwire* – that being said, many stories engaged with topics related to oppression.

By the 1990s “the section produced by and devoted to the Native Sisterhood thickened” as did their discussion of the cultural (ir)relevance of Canadian laws to First Nations (Foran, 1998). Foran identifies that growing interest in Indigenous issues was mirrored and gained legitimacy in public discourse which helped solidify the stories of Indigenous women in *Tightwire* in the eyes of their readers. Vitally, Foran (1998) discusses the relationship between rights discourse and the women’s stories in *Tightwire* as bidirectional in the sense that they both informed and, at times, mutually reinforced one another. This different kind of content is reflected in, for example, the last titled Native Section published in *Tightwire* in the Fall of 1993. In this final section, there were four stories:

- a cover page which included a drawing of several traditional drums (Anonymous, 1993⁹⁰),
- a written story discussing one Cree storyteller’s hopeful development of an “Indian justice system” (Bull, 1993⁹¹),
- a written story describing and explaining the Nisga’a’s cleansing feast and its significance (Nyce, 1993⁹²), and

⁹⁰ See Appendix 36.

⁹¹ See Appendix 37.

⁹² See Appendix 38.

- a written story discussing how an Elder mediated and helped mend the relationship between two young women (Thurgood, 1993⁹³).

Taken together, the stories in the last Native Sisterhood Section of *Tightwire* demonstrate several things. For instance, they show the importance of Indigenous peoples' distinctiveness – both relative to non-Indigenous people as well as between unique Indigenous cultural groups. The emphasis in distinction is important as it represents a shift from the pan-Indian approach of Indigenous movements – both in the broadest sense of the movement as well as the more specific Native Sisterhood's movement within P4W – and aligns with Indigenous peoples' prioritization of land and nation (Anderson, 2016; Benson, 2020; Moreton-Robinson, 2013; TFFSW, 1990). Indeed, various Indigenous cultures and locations were explicitly mentioned – Cree/Goodfish Lake, Nisga'a, and Moosejaw – in this set of stories (except for in the cover story drawing⁹⁴) which gives readers a more personal and specific understanding of who the storytellers are and where they came from. This specificity contributes to the rejection of stereotypes that represent Indigenous peoples as homogenous (Vowel, 2016).

Another emphasis in this set of stories is Indigenous justice. Lisa Monchalin⁹⁵, an Algonquin, Métis, Huron, and Scottish criminologist, explains in her book *The Colonial Problem* (2016) that Indigenous justice is founded on achieving equality and balance through the promotion of communal healing and the restoration of communal health. To achieve these goals, community members work together to address harms and come to a mutually agreed upon

⁹³ See Appendix 39.

⁹⁴ Presumably, people with Indigenous cultural knowledge would be able to identify the specific cultural origins of the traditional drums in this drawing, in which case, the cover drawing would also indicate its cultural origin.

⁹⁵ Monchalin is the first Indigenous person in Canada to receive their PhD in Criminology (*Kwantlen instructor Lisa Monchalin becomes first Aboriginal woman in Canada with a PhD in Criminology*, 2012).

resolution that engages all people involved in the harm (e.g., people who harmed, people who were harmed, and other affected community members) (Monchalin, 2016). The Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women also discuss Indigenous models of dispute resolution which center restorative and holistic approaches to justice that center community-based solutions and incorporate meaningful problem-solving, dialogue, and mediation – all of which prioritize culture (TFFSW, 1990).

One example of Indigenous justice in *Tightwire* is the story of Sam Bull (1993) who is Cree from Goodfish Lake, Alberta. In their story, they talk about the development of an “Indian Justice System” and how it “would take into account the values, customs, traditions, laws and legal institutions of the Indian people” (p. 10). Given the vast differences between Indigenous and Western/Euro-Canadian conceptualizations and approaches to justice (Monchalin, 2016), it makes sense that Indigenous peoples would greatly benefit from a system of their own making. Bull (1993) argued that such a system “is vital and essential in order to establish a sense of responsibility for the individual and a sense of community and control for tribal members” (p. 10). Here, I draw parallels between what Indigenous justice can achieve in the context of harm and its possibilities in the context of *Tightwire*. As previously mentioned, much of *Tightwire* can be conceptualized as an Indigenous space – a public square (Voyageur, 2005) – from which Indigenous women at P4W shared their stories and achieved a greater sense of community – both within and beyond the prison walls – as well as control over how they were represented. Drawing on Bull’s (1993) story then, by centering Indigenous representations of self – along with Indigenous “values, customs, traditions, laws, and legal institutions” – throughout the Native Sections of *Tightwire*, the stories collectively promote “a sense of community and control” – thus contributing to Indigenous justice (p. 10).

An example of Indigenous justice in practice is presented immediately following Bull's (1993) story in C. Harry Nyce's (1993) story. Nyce describes how, for Nisga'a people:

after the cleansing is done, the person does not have a record [of committing harm] – the slate is clean. It is never mentioned to that individual again nor is it ever publicly mentioned. In so doing, the cleansing feast very seldom happens more than once to an individual and there are very few repeat infractions of that offence by that individual (p. 11).

Here, the cleansing feast is an effective method of social control in which someone who has committed harm is publicly ridden of their shame for committing such an act. It is interesting to note how Nyce emphasizes that people often do not engage in the same harmful act after the cleansing – meaning that Nyce perceived that this was an effective practice that reduced or eliminated reoccurring harms, or recidivism. Another example of Indigenous justice at work is described by Grant Thurgood (1993) in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan who writes about witnessing a mediation between two adolescent Indigenous girls and a well-respected Elder:

The old man opened with a prayer ceremony and smudged the room with sweetgrass. I felt like it had finally been blessed. Then he did some gentle, warm things. 'I wonder if I could have each of you hold my hands', he said, and they found that in order to close the circle, they had to take one another's hand. Then he told them a story that each one could look at without feeling personally threatened. It was about how important youth is to where we are going. And it left us with the sense that all of us are here for a reason. We have been given life to live and to share. It gave the young women a sense of their integrity... of why they were born. There was no: 'Why did you do this?' // Someone looking at it from a Western perspective might be tempted to say that nothing happened. But I'm convinced there was a real tolerant growth that came out of it. Each of the young women was able to share her perspective, and to see the integrity of the other. It was a classic example of the fundamental basis of mediation, which is reconciliation. Justice is done when relationships are restored (p. 12).

Various features of this mediation – such as the smudge, circle, and story teaching – are practices of Indigenous justice (Monchalin, 2016; Vowel, 2016). So too are the foci on reciprocity, mediation, and reparation of relationships (Monchalin, 2016; TFFSW, 1990). Reconciliation is

an interesting term employed in this story because – as a settler – it reminds me of the responsibilities I have to Indigenous peoples and communities. These responsibilities are relational – it is about repairing and restoring relationships. In this sense, Indigenous justice is not only vital to Indigenous peoples, but to all people. This idea aligns with the *Creating Choices* (1990) report in which Indigenous members of the Task Force state that: “We have not shared what we understand to be the truth only for the benefit of Aboriginal women or Aboriginal people, but for all Peoples” (p. 20). The thought behind this statement is that Indigenous peoples, their belief systems, and methods of governance are “models in the area of alternative dispute resolution” (TFFSW, 1990, p. 20). That is, non-Indigenous people can learn to address conflict and harm differently should they seek to understand Indigenous cultural traditions.

Monchalin (2016) does a fantastic job of outlining some of the key differences between Indigenous and Euro-Canadian justice which help shed light onto Thurgood’s (1993) statement regarding Western perspectives of Indigenous justice practices. For instance, because the Euro-Canadian justice system focuses on the individual, it directly contradicts with the communal values of Indigenous justice systems. Thus, it is not surprising that Westerners have a difficult time understanding Indigenous approaches to justice and their efficacy for social control and responding to harm in Indigenous communities. Another example of critical difference regards the definition of equality which, as previously mentioned, for Indigenous peoples means the restoration of communal balance and relationships (Monchalin, 2016; TFFSW, 1990). Cree storyteller, Bull (1993) discusses their perspective of Euro-Canadian’s definition of equality in this excerpt in the Native Section of *Tightwire*:

‘Equality’ of treatment is a cornerstone in the Anglo-European legal system: ‘treat like cases alike’. The concept of equality in the court system is based on the premise that any law is equally applicable to, understood by and concurred with by all those subject to it. It is in fact, an assumption of cultural

homogeneity; it operates to maintain the existing socio-cultural order. This assumption is patently false to Indians whose traditions, values and customs are culturally distinctive (p. 10).

In other words, Bull emphasizes how unique contexts factor into decisions regarding Indigenous justice, whereas in Anglo-European systems, such as Canadian law, there is a general presumption of homogeneity – such as in case law which provides legal precedents – in the name of perceived fairness. By showing that there are in fact other ways of living and being and that there are many experiences outside the purview of Canadians, the Native Section in *Tightwire* demonstrates resistance to colonialism. The shift in the Native Sisterhood Section – as demonstrated by, for instance, the first of which affirmed oppression and the last of which reclaimed cultural practices – aligns with broader trends in Indigenous storytelling in which resurgence and reconstruction have become more centralized over resistance and deconstruction (Anderson, 2016; Coburn, 2015; LaRocque, 2015). This change reminds me of Foran’s (1998) argument regarding how *Tightwire* storytellers and activists were mutually influenced and informed by one another. I believe the same can be said for the Indigenous storytellers in *Tightwire* and the increasing interest of non-incarcerated people regarding “Indigenous issues”.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I filled critical gaps in scholarship related to the stories and storytelling practices of incarcerated and Indigenous women within the *Tightwire* newsletter. Vitally, by focusing primarily on the resistance, relations, and accomplishments of the women in *Tightwire* as well as in the Native Sisterhood, I helped ensure that my work does not fall into the trap of damage-centered research (Tuck, 2009). My central argument in this chapter was that both the

Tightwire newsletter and the Native Sisterhood were resistant forces that operated in opportunistic and strategic ways at the Prison for Women. That is, despite their positions of relative disadvantage – “because we are women, [...] we are Native, [...] we are poor, [...] and] we do not usually possess the education necessarily equivalent to the status quo” (Sugar, 1988, p. 26) – both *Tightwire* and the Native Sisterhood group members found opportunities to exist, thrive, and further their goals. For instance, by drawing attention to the inequalities that women experience – particularly those related to the criminalization process, as well as those experienced within the carceral setting – the women in *Tightwire* advanced counter-narratives about their identities as incarcerated women. In this way, they resisted dominating perceptions of who they were.

The Native Sisterhood similarly published stories of resistance – particularly around topics concerning colonialism, but also the carceral. Like the *Tightwire* newsletter more broadly, the Native Sisterhood Section became increasingly resistant over time. I believe part of why they were able to accomplish this is because they positioned themselves as a religious group (Native Sisterhood, 2003; Yuen, 2011) – one that could not be denied without accusations of human rights violations. As previously mentioned, positive public perception of the penal system was a priority of prison administration during this time (Clarkson & Munn, 2021); thus P4W staff would have been cautious not to jeopardize their image. Indeed, they likely avoided some public scrutiny by allowing the group and publication to officially exist despite the explicitly resistant stories. Speaking of the continuance of the penal press, Clarkson and Munn (2021) explain Commissioner Ralph Gibson’s letter to Warden Allan that stated: “A project of this nature, once approved, becomes very difficult to discontinue” – meaning that there would be negative reactions among the prison population that administration would have to “manage” should

newsletters such as *Tightwire* be shut down (p. 69). Thus, the penal press continued to operate, with the Native Sisterhood regularly publishing stories that were critical of colonial and carceral logics.

While some prison administrators were supportive of the development of the penal press in its early stages, as the press evolved and its content changed (i.e., became more critical and resistant, and employed language from social rights movements), instances of staff “headaches” and censorship regarding the press increased (Foran, 1998; Clarkson & Munn, 2021). By regularly publishing critical stories, and even calling attention to instances of censorship by CSC staff, the women who published in *Tightwire* resisted carceral control. In some ways, prisoners’ resistance and critiques via the penal press also benefited prison staff in terms of increasing the administration’s understandings – and thus management – of the institutional contexts within which the newsletter was produced (Clarkson & Munn, 2021). Given that Indigenous women were often cited for more infractions relative to their non-Indigenous counterparts and the increasing Indigenous prisoner population (Chartrand, 2019; Comack, 2014, 2018; Nichols, 2014; Ross, 1998), I believe it is likely that P4W staff also read *Tightwire* to better understand the happenings within the Native Sisterhood group.

Regardless of potential benefits gained by P4W administration via permitting the publication of *Tightwire*, I argue that the women’s relationships with one another within the context of the prison should be characterized as resistance. In a place that is intended to separate women from their communities, the women created their own new communities from which they drew strength, participated in collective action, and developed family-like connections. Indeed, it is not just Indigenous women who referred to themselves as Sisters in P4W, all women incarcerated at P4W called themselves Sisters (Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021).

Moreover, many years later, the women continue to call themselves Sisters (Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021). This language is representative of the strong bonds and collective respect that the women developed and shared over time – and through these relationships, the women defied the separation intended by practices of incarceration. In this way, relationships were very much part of the resistant efforts of the women who published in *Tightwire*.

In the first section of this chapter, I explored the Native Sisterhood that was formed at P4W. I explained the goals of the Sisterhood, how the Sisterhood was a response to familial and cultural loss that was compounded by experiences of incarceration, and how the resurgence of Indigenous spirituality within P4W constitutes a decolonial act of symbolic healing. In the second section, I examined *Tightwire* as a whole. I discussed some of the goals and contents of *Tightwire*. I also focused on *Tightwire*'s relationships between its editors, contributors, and audience, as well as with P4W staff. These relationships were primarily characterized by reciprocal appreciation and friendship; but in the case of prison administration, the women were simultaneously oppressed by and resistant to the censorship that staff imposed upon them. In the last part of this chapter, I dove into the Native Sisterhood Section of *Tightwire* to examine some of the shifts that occurred over time such as the name and number of pages. I also explored the first and last sections of the Native Sisterhood Section which illuminated some changing themes of the content – namely, oppression of Indigenous peoples, and Indigenous cultural distinction as well as approaches to justice, respectively.

CHAPTER SIX – “To the outside world, you’re dead”: The Separation of Federally Sentenced Women

Introduction

In this chapter, I take a step back from the Native Sisterhood and *Tightwire* to analyze the larger contexts that informed women’s stories in *Tightwire* – namely the logics underpinning the federal prison system (for women) and its reforms, as well as women’s experiences of and responses to those logics. Importantly, while I turn to scholarly literature to contextualize *Tightwire* in the specific sociopolitical history in which it was produced, I also want to note that the women whose stories are published in *Tightwire* provide critical insight about its sociopolitical contexts. Specifically, this chapter explores the women’s pains of imprisonment that they experienced at the Prison for Women (P4W). I argue that these pains are often related to the feeling of separation, as well as the fear of further separation – from society, their children, and one another. These feelings are well documented in existing scholarship (Chartrand, 2019; Scheuneman Scott, 2019) but exploring the perspectives of those who shared their stories in *Tightwire* has, to my knowledge, not been documented and offers a novel way of understanding and analyzing the experiences and viewpoints of federally imprisoned women. Moreover, it is critical to note that while this surrounding context implicated all prisoners in P4W, it had distinct effects on Indigenous women. Drawing on the work of trusted Indigenous ally and critical criminologist Vicki Chartrand (2019), I argue that Indigenous women’s distinct experiences of and responses to their pains of imprisonment are related to their historical and ongoing experiences of separation – that is, the intergenerational effects of Canada’s residential school system are retriggered by experiences of incarceration.

This chapter has three parts. The first part opens with a discussion of P4W, including some of its history, identified issues, and eventual closure. Of note is that I do not attempt to cover all historical moments pertaining to P4W as these histories have been substantially documented elsewhere (see, for example, Archambault Report, 1938; Arbour Report, 1996; Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Hayman, 2006). This first section shows what P4W symbolized to the women. For instance, the perimeter wall was perceived by prisoners as impenetrable and as attempting to conceal the realities of incarceration from those outside the wall – which is why I refer to P4W as having an “imposition” on the women. The wall also symbolized the physical separation of prisoners from the outside world. This symbolism as well as its effects on prisoners continued despite many reports that deemed P4W deplorable.

Guided by the stories in *Tightwire*, my engagement with Indigenous feminisms, and the importance of kinship to Indigenous peoples, the second section of this chapter discusses pains of imprisonment as expressed within incarcerated (Indigenous) mothers' stories. Together, these stories demonstrate pain associated with prisoners' separation from family (specifically children), how important children are to their mothers, as well as the crucial role that women and mothers play in Indigenous communities (Anderson, 2016; Monchalin, 2016; Scheuneman Scott, 2019). Vitally, this section demonstrates the ways in which various narratives of motherhood are taken up, critiqued, and resisted in the women's stories. Here, *Tightwire* acts as a vehicle for women to express and critique how the prison hurt them via separating them from their families, and how much more intense the pains of imprisonment feel to (Indigenous) women who are mothers.

While *Tightwire* was certainly a vehicle for the women to express and circulate their analyses of the prison system and how it functioned in relation to their lives, it also served as a

dedicated space – or public square (Voyageur, 2005) – for women to discuss, engage with, and critique current and upcoming penal reforms and research. Given this, in the final section of this chapter, I examine and highlight the women’s stories that pertain to a significant moment in Canada’s carceral history– the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women and their report, *Creating Choices*. The Task Force – an amalgamation of people from within corrections, community organizations, and two federally incarcerated Indigenous women – formed, in part, due to public pressure regarding the separation of federally sentenced women that is discussed in the first two parts of this chapter (Hayman, 2006). Although, for some, the Task Force and its report appeared to be a positive step towards justice, my work shows a division between, and changing perspectives of, prisoners in relation to penal reform. In this way, this chapter showcases the heterogeneity of women’s perspectives and how *Tightwire* was perceived as a relatively safe place in which the women felt comfortable enough to publish their politics. Regardless of women’s support or critique concerning reforms, this section makes clear that women consistently engaged in political and legal matters that directly impacted their lives. Their deep engagement shows that these women, while not in a position of power, still exercised their agency, autonomy, and sovereignty, and were not simply idle and waiting for changes to occur – rather they advanced their own situated standpoints.

Together, these sections demonstrate that although all the women were separated by their prison experience, the ways in which they felt separated differed, there were various degrees of separation, and their stories engaged with separation in different ways. For instance, for women whose stories discussed the imposition of P4W, they expressed both pride in regard to Sisterhood and despair in being denied experiences of Sisterhood – particularly the experiences that occurred in the outside community. For women who were mothers in P4W, they expressed deep

love for their children, but also questions and concerns about their experiences of punishment in relation to their kinship practices. For those who engaged with carceral reform in their stories, they expressed both hope for the future and fear regarding the changes that promised to separate them from their Sisters. In these ways, this chapter explores the breadth and heterogeneity of women's experiences regarding separation.

“surrounds us on the inside, repels us on the outside”: The Imposition of P4W

The Prison for Women (P4W) was the only federal women's prison in Canada prior to the opening of six other federal women's prisons in the mid-1990s. P4W was a four-story institution that operated from 1934 to 2000 (Adema, 2016; Hayman, 2006). Before P4W opened, incarcerating women and men within the same prison, such as Kingston Penitentiary, was a common practice; ironically, P4W was primarily constructed due to the Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC) administrators' feelings of discomfort with this practice (Adema, 2016). The opening of P4W was described in *Tightwire* by an Anonymous storyteller (1983⁹⁶) who said:

As early as Confederation year, 1867, the Warden's report from the Kingston [men's] Penitentiary recommended a separate women's prison outside the walls of the Kingston Penitentiary. Such reports continued until 1925, when as the result of the Nickle Report of 1922, construction finally began on a new women's prison outside the walls of the Kingston Penitentiary on a site a short distance away on Sir John A. MacDonald Boulevard. This building which became known as the Prison for Women, first housed an overflow of male inmates from the Kingston Penitentiary, but finally opened its [doors] to female inmates [on] January 24, 1934 (p. 40).

This account shows that there were repeated calls over a long period of time for women to be incarcerated in a separate prison. Interestingly, this story also demonstrates how P4W was constructed for women, but still initially incarcerated the overabundance of male prisoners from the federal men's prison across the street, Kingston Penitentiary.

⁹⁶ See Appendix 40.

Not only were women and men separated, but gendered assumptions were also used to guide the physical design of P4W. For instance, P4W lacked surveillance towers (Archambault, 1938) – common features of other prisons – because women were perceived as timid (Adema, 2016) and presumably they would not attempt to escape. At the same time, incarcerated women were (and still are) characterized as hypersexual, transgressive, and threatening – and it was these combined and contradictory gendered logics that underpinned P4W (Adema, 2016; Scheuneman Scott & Kilty, 2016). Indeed, Seth Adema (2016), a historian of Indigenous prison movements in Canada, states that “the decision to build P4W was, therefore, based on sexist assumptions regarding the character of women, specifically delinquent women” (p. 228). Despite the omission of towers, P4W had barbed wire and tall perimeter walls (Adema, 2016; Archambault, 1938). According to the same unlisted storyteller as above (Anonymous, 1983), P4W was “surrounded by an imposing 16 foot limestone wall. No towers were constructed in the wall, but 10 feet of wire fabric and 6 lines of barbed wire topped the wall and added height” (p. 40). The official reason given by CSC as to why there were no towers for mounting guards was that there were extensive walls with fencing (Archambault, 1938). The Archambault Report (1938) explained that P4W’s “wire fabric [was] supported on galvanized iron pipe posts” over a 26-foot yard, and that “electric lights [were] placed at intervals of approximately 100 feet” (p. 312). Overall then, despite the omission of towers, P4W had other measures of high security.

Another storyteller in *Tightwire*, this one in the Native Section, Judy Davis, (1988⁹⁷) also spoke of the wall surrounding P4W. Written directly underneath Davis’ (1988) poem it also states, likely added by a *Tightwire* editor, that “(this poem was written by Judy after she attended a Pow Wow at P4W in 1986 – the wall remains unchanged)” (p. 32). Davis (1988) writes:

⁹⁷ See Appendix 41.

On the Steps of the Prison for Women I Sat Down and Wept // I had come to dance, / While men drummed, / I drummed... / my hands, my feet, my head, my heart / against the impenetrable gray--- / Gray wall, gray faces, gray as a / cloudy November day gray – up / against the wall of gray. // The eighteen foot high wall / surrounds us on the inside, repels / us on the outside- // We danced / We honored sisters who died there / the weight of the wall crushes us. / We danced, / We honored sisters in Segregation / the wall blinds us / We find new ways of seeing // We danced, we ate, we shared / words and glances under the watchful / eye of big brother who masqueraded / in women’s bodies, bleached blond hair / and Cor Can uniforms- // At 9:00 p.m. we were spit out onto the / gray concrete sheet – I felt infinitesimal / So small against the wall... then / in the corner of my eyes / I caught a glimpse of a / Crescent Moon with [a] delightful star that rose above the wall / and in spite of the wall / it rose (p. 32).

In her poem, Davis repeatedly refers to the gray concrete wall which indicates that while P4W may not have had all the same structural aspects as other prisons, its stature still had grave impacts on those who encountered it. For instance, Davis (1988) discusses how “the wall blinds us”, but not completely as they “find new ways of seeing”. In this way, the wall – and the prison it represents – are unsuccessful in their mission to hide the realities of incarceration and separate the incarcerated from the non-incarcerated. While it is unclear if Davis (1988) was in fact a P4W prisoner herself or a non-incarcerated person who “sat down and wept” “on the Steps of” P4W during a Pow Wow before being “spit out onto the gray concrete sheet”, we can still think about what it means for a wall that “blinds us”, and how people resist that veiling.

Through the gathering of community – many, most, or all of whom were Indigenous – and the honouring of Sisters in segregation, this Pow Wow ceremony at P4W is an example of resisting the veil, or wall, of the prison. For instance, in the Native Section of *Tightwire* Tamera Papin (1991⁹⁸), also known as Little Running Feather, talks about her experience of Indigenous drumming and singing – key features of Pow Wows:

⁹⁸ See Appendix 42.

I grasp my bar's and look with pride out the window. / As I watch my sister's sing with unity in their voices around the drum. / A tear falls down my face as I hear the songs I know by heart. / I may be locked up behind bars but spirit and soul will forever sing these songs. / And even though I'm behind bars, I still have proudness pounding within my heart. / To the sacred beat of the sacred drum. My Sisters of our sacred circle, / I shall dance and I shall sing, with you proudly. / Within my heart and spirit as one, even when my time is done (p. 27).

In her story, Papin explains how she “will forever sing these songs” and that she has a “proudness pounding” within her heart despite her incarceration. Moreover, the imagery that comes to mind when reading this excerpt is that Papin is separated from her Sisters and the sacred circle by prison bars and a window – an image which is full of pain, despite her pride and “virtual” participation in her Sisters’ singing, dancing, and drumming.

The resistance of Indigenous women prisoners in P4W is especially apparent when the Pow Wow ceremony is put into general context. For instance, in a newspaper clipping by the Toronto Star (1986⁹⁹) reproduced in the Native Section of *Tightwire*, one of the people quoted in the article, Calvin Pompana from Sioux Valley Manitoba, states: “The [Pow Wow] songs give us strength, they are for the living and the people who have gone home [to the Creator (died)] [...] As we dance, we gather momentum, strength, and spiritual power” (p. 26PDF). In this way, the Pow Wow can be characterized as cultural continuity which is conceptualized by Emma LaRocque (2009), a Cree and Métis Indigenous representation scholar, as a decolonial act. Since the prison system is a colonial institution, I argue that within the context of the prison, Pow Wows are resistant to incarceration, specifically the colonialism of incarceration and the dehumanization that Indigenous women experience within the carceral setting. With this in mind, Davis’ (1988) poem is about resisting the power of the carceral system and “find[ing] new ways of seeing” through the cultural continuity of Pow Wows. In other words,

⁹⁹ See Appendix 43.

when Indigenous peoples are gathered in ceremony, they may be better positioned to understand different ways of thinking about the world – for instance, as Algonquin, Métis, Huron, and Scottish Indigenous criminologist Lisa Monchalin (2016) points out, that incarceration is a colonial and collective problem, not an Indigenous or individual person’s problem; similarly, psychologists Alison Reeves (who identifies as having some Indigenous ancestry) and Suzanne Stewart (Yellowknives Dene First Nation) (2017) explain that much of Indigenous trauma is related to colonialism rather than rooted in an individual’s psychology.

Davis’ (1988) poem is also about the resilience of Indigenous peoples and prisoners. This is especially apparent in the last line of her poem when Davis says she saw a “Crescent Moon with [a] delightful star that rose above the wall and in spite of the wall it rose” (p. 32). Parallels can be drawn here in terms of standpoint – it is specifically through the eyes of Indigenous women who are incarcerated, as expressed in their published stories, that *Tightwire* readers can better grasp what it means to be incarcerated from the perspectives of Indigenous women. Without these stories, readers would likely be less aware of aspects of prison life (e.g., the prison wall) that literally and often also figuratively keep prisoners captive, and how prisoners fight against their captivity.

Another woman in *Tightwire*, Fran Sugar (1988) who is Cree, similarly discusses in the Native Section how Indigenous women must “see through the wall” of P4W. Sugar (1988) states: “I believe justice does not exist for Native people. The battle of will is to see through the wall, to see through the screws and their power plays – their bureaucratic games of power and pleasure” (p. 27a). In this passage, Sugar (1988) brings to light her opinions regarding guards (screws), specifically how they are power hungry and get pleasure from the power they have over others (prisoners) – something not all prisoners could necessarily see from their

position behind “the wall”. While the wall in Sugar’s poem may be a metaphor, it provides a telling example of what the literal wall surrounding P4W can symbolize – things that are commonly unseen but can be realized once one is able to see through the wall. Through its production and distribution, *Tightwire* is an example of how women within P4W responded to the prison’s veil, as well as the wall of P4W and narratives of incarceration. In other words, the far reaching *Tightwire* newsletter enabled women’s stories to literally traverse the walls of the prison and reach prisoners incarcerated within other carceral institutions as well as non-incarcerated individuals who subscribed to the newsletter. In this way, women’s stories in *Tightwire* enable both imprisoned and non-imprisoned readers to better see through the prison walls and are acts of resistance to the carceral system.

Fran Smith (1986a), one of the Native Section editors of *Tightwire*, also depicted the wall of P4W in her drawing that was featured on the cover of *Tightwire*. Smith’s drawing is shown directly below. Immediately following Smith’s drawing, I also included Indigenous storyteller Judy Geehan’s (1983b) drawing that shows a head on view of P4W.

tightwire

VOL. II 1986



Figure 8 – Smith, F. (1986a). Prison for Women. *Tightwire* (V2, September). p. 1PDF.

While many federal female offenders are at this time housed under federal-provincial agreements in their home provinces, the Prison for Women continues to serve as the only federal penitentiary for women in Canada, and will probably continue as such until a more practical and economically feasible solution is found to the long-standing problem of where, and how best, to provide services to the federal female offenders under sentence of the courts.



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Figure 9 – Geehan, J. (1983b). Untitled. *Tightwire* (July-August). p. 44.

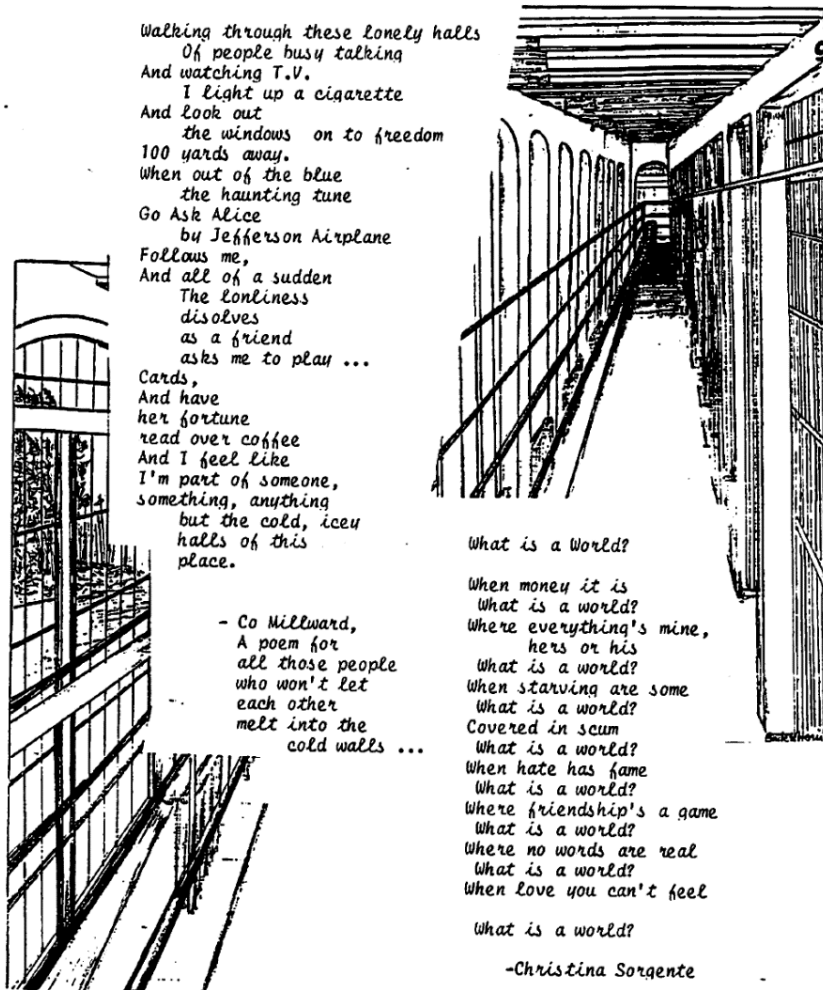
In Smith's drawing, we can see the height of the wall and the front steps that are mentioned in Davis' (1988) poem; whereas in Geehan's (1983b) drawing, the wall is not as prominent – it is portrayed more in the background with several horizontal lines – but we have a good view of the front of the building.

In many ways, P4W resembled any other prison with a perimeter wall, an administration building, and single cells for 100 prisoners. These and other features are described by an Anonymous (1983) storyteller in *Tightwire*, outside of the Native Section:

The new women's prison consisted of a T-shaped complex [...]. The front section, incorporated as part of the perimeter wall became the main administration building, and also contained the living quarters for matrons, a hospital, and chapels. The long cell block attached to form the base of the T, and located within the perimeter wall, contained single-cell accommodation for 100 inmates, an industrial sewing room and a laundry. The complex had a staff of approximately six matrons and was administered by a supervising matron under direction of the Warden of the Kingston Penitentiary. // This continued until, in 1960, Miss. I. J. MacNeill, a veteran in the correctional field, was appointed the first Superintendent. The Prison for Women then evolved into a separate institution, administered by the Superintendent who was responsible to the Commission of Penitentiaries (p. 41).

The details in Anonymous' (1983) story really help readers envision the physical form of P4W, the organization of carceral spaces, as well as the types and number of correctional staff who were employed at P4W. Another Anonymous (1988) submission to *Tightwire* are two drawings of the inside of P4W. Superimposed on top of the drawings are two poems, authored by different individuals; however, for the purpose of this section, I am only analyzing the drawings.

.....BOLD.....COLD.....



TIGHTWIRE

6-

Figure 10 – Anonymous. (1988). Untitled. *Tightwire* (V22, 4, Winter). p. 6.

In Anonymous' (1988) drawings, the halls of a wing within P4W are completely void of people which emphasizes and symbolizes the emptiness and loneliness prisoners often feel. The drawings both show windows with bars across them. In the bottom left drawing, viewers can see

foliage beyond the barred windows. Given the rounded shape of the tops of these windows and Smith's (1986b) drawing above, I believe that the range depicted in Anonymous' (1988) drawings represent the third floor¹⁰⁰ wing in the front of the building. Despite being able to see some of the outdoors, the drawing on the top right shows a long hallway of barred cells on one side, contrasted with barred windows on the other side. As the drawing reaches the end of the range, the hallway grows darker, symbolizing the length of the wing and representing the number of prisoners that P4W held captive. The proportions of Anonymous' drawing remind me of the growing numbers of (Indigenous) women who are incarcerated and align with the critical literature that shows such an increase (Comack, 2018; Sangster, 2021). Like the perimeter wall of P4W, the rows of cells in Anonymous' (1988) drawing are also reflective of the separation that imprisoned women experience and show that women are not simply separated from non-incarcerated people but from one another. As argued in the previous chapter, *Tightwire* was one way in which the women engaged in community and thus resisted the separation, and other pains of imprisonment, imposed by the carceral system.

In addition to the issues that all, or most, prisons share, several problems specific to P4W were identified almost immediately following its opening. These problems were first pinpointed in the Archambault Report in 1938 – only four-years after P4W opened (Adema, 2016). In one of her *Tightwire* editorials, Jo-Ann Mayhew (1988a¹⁰¹) acknowledged the irony of the women bearing themselves within their stories in *Tightwire* in comparison to the prison in which they produced stories:

¹⁰⁰ In the drawings, it can hardly be made out, but there are a set of windows in the basement of the building; so, although the rounded windows look like part of the second floor, they belong to the third floor.

¹⁰¹ See Appendix 44.

The minds, hearts and souls of the writers and artists of the Prison for Women find expression in the pages of TIGHTWIRE. Yet their bodies and those of their prison sisters are housed in quarters declared unsuitable since the passing of a 1938 Royal Commission (p. 3PDF, emphasis in original).

The irony stems from the fact that women show their vulnerability within their stories despite being incarcerated in some of the harshest prison conditions in Canada which do not make room for emotions. Identified problems with P4W included geographical dislocation of women (caused by the impossibility of being federally imprisoned elsewhere), the inflexibility of classifications and security levels, difficulty in providing and thus lack of adequate programming, hyper-representation of Indigenous women, and repeated human rights violations against prisoners (Adema, 2016; Hayman, 2006; Kilty, 2018; Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021). The Elizabeth Fry Newsletter (1992¹⁰²) expressed agreement with these identified issues as stated in an excerpt that was reproduced in *Tightwire*:

the problems which plague the present criminal justice system for women, among them: the fact of geographic dislocation; the fact of meager and inappropriate programming; the fact that most women in conflict with the law are also victims of poverty and abuse; and the fact that the criminal justice system for women of all cultures and races has simply been a modified version of that developed by and for white men (p. 5).

Importantly, this excerpt from the Elizabeth Fry Newsletter alludes to the victimization-criminalization continuum by speaking to “the fact that most women in conflict with the law are also victims of poverty and abuse”. In other words, they recognize that women’s criminalization is often related to their experiences of victimization as well as the likelihood they lived in poverty prior to their arrest (Comack, 2018). When examining the context of women’s violence, research shows that they most often commit violence when violence has been or is being committed towards them (Comack, 2018; Sheehy, Stubbs, & Tolmie, 2010). The victimization-

¹⁰² See Appendix 45.

criminalization continuum is a crucial concept for understanding all criminalized people, but especially criminalized women, and particularly criminalized Indigenous women. Another important point in this excerpt from the E-Fry Newsletter (1992), as reproduced in *Tightwire*, is that the criminal justice system was designed by and for white men. Despite this, CSC staff believe that the system is applied to everyone “equally” – which is reflective of a liberal perspective that law can be and is applied fairly (Vowel, 2016; Whalley & Hackett, 2017). This has severe consequences for women, especially Indigenous women, and helps to explain why security level classifications are inflexible as well as why Indigenous women are disproportionately denied (early) parole and are returned to prison even for the most minor infractions while on parole (Landertinger, 2015; Palmater, 2015; Turnbull & Hannah-Moffat, 2009).

“If only I wasn’t a mother, I could handle all this time”: Carceral Motherhood

The effects of geographical dislocation that women experienced from being incarcerated at P4W were prominently discussed in *Tightwire* as well as official documents, such as the Archambault Report (1938) and *Creating Choices* (1990). Effects included being physically separated from their families and communities and not having financial access to visitations. While all prisoners may experience these effects to some extent, for federally incarcerated women before the mid-1990s, there was no possibility of being incarcerated close to their communities¹⁰³ because P4W was the only federal women’s prison in operation until Edmonton Institution For Women opened in 1995. This meant that not only were most federally sentenced

¹⁰³ The exception to this is for any federally incarcerated women whose home community was Kingston.

women removed from their communities, but they were also unlikely to receive visitors at P4W due to the costs and time constraints associated with visiting another province. The challenge of travel was further complicated by poverty experienced by many of the women and their families and friends (Scheuneman Scott, 2019; TFFSW, 1990). The pain and suffering caused by dislocation prompted at least one woman, Gayle Horii, to request to be transferred to a provincial prison on the West Coast based on humanitarian grounds. Speaking of Horii's request, Jo-Ann Mayhew (1988a) states in her *Tightwire* editorial that:

This [*Tightwire*] publication, indeed, the [P4W prisoner] population and many staff members at this prison recognize the legitimacy of Gayle's (p. 3PDF) request. Her pain is intensely personal yet reflective of the pain suffered by many, many women incarcerated far from families and familiar communities. What is needed is the public and political will to bring about a transformation resulting in a broader concept of social justice with a better future in mind (p. 2).

This passage states that there was widespread agreement and potentially advocacy expressed among *Tightwire* editors, P4W prisoners and even "many" staff at P4W regarding the return of women to their communities; yet the ongoing operation of P4W continued to dislocate women for decades.

Dislocation was difficult for all prisoners, but especially for those who were separated from their children. The separation of mothers from their children was one of the most discussed pains of imprisonment in *Tightwire*. It was also identified in the *Creating Choices* (1990) report. Although some of the discussion was framed as geographical dislocation, most of the women's statements in *Creating Choices* (1990) reflected the fact that they were mothers concerned about the effects of separation from their families – especially their children. For instance, one woman who was incarcerated at P4W stated in her interview for the Task Force that: "There is nothing harder than facing kids that don't know you. Doing time is easy compared to that" (TFFSW, 1990, p. 12). Another woman from P4W, this one Indigenous, stated for the same project that:

“We need a chance to earn the trust of our children. Distance and money are big barriers to achieving that [while incarcerated]” (TFFSW, 1990, p. 12). These paints of imprisonment are also prominent in the work of critical prison and feminist scholar Krista Benson (2020) who examined women’s prison writing and identified that Indigenous women’s desire to “reclaim” their children after their own incarceration was a common theme. Moreover, Benson found that, for incarcerated Indigenous women, reclaiming their homelands was also a common theme. Pointing to the women’s resistance to colonialism and Indigenous erasure, Benson (2020) argues that Indigenous women literally want “to return to [t]he[i]r people’s lands with [t]he[i]r children” (p. 157). This reclaiming of children and land is also present in the women’s stories in *Tightwire*.

For mothers at P4W, stereotypes about gender and parenting played a role in how difficult their dislocation was. This is not surprising given what we know from existing scholarship. For instance, in her book, *Inventing the Savage: The Social Construction of Native American Criminality*, member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Luana Ross (1998) discusses how (criminalized) mothers are judged based on many aspects of their lives, including their race and ethnicity. Indeed, incarcerated (Indigenous) mothers are often perceived as “bad mothers” in that they are “bad women” who violate both gender and legal expectations – to be a “good mother” and a law-abiding citizen (Ross, 1998; Scheuneman Scott, 2019; Scheuneman Scott & Kilty, 2016). One Indigenous woman, Theresa Ann Glaremin, supports this notion in several of her publications outside the Native Section of *Tightwire*. In one poem, Glaremin (1993c¹⁰⁴) writes:

Well I am a mother in prison, / I know you don’t understand. / Society thinks it’s
done the best for me. / They gave me a ten year sentence, / With no regard for my
family. / And now they want me to rehabilitate before I leave. / They said you’re

¹⁰⁴ See Appendix 46.

not a person, / So get that out of your head. / You're not a wife or mother, / To the outside world you're dead (p. 21).

In this excerpt, Glaremin clearly demonstrates what she believes society thinks of her (she is not a person, she is not a wife, she is not a mother; instead, she is dead to everyone outside of prison). In other words, Glaremin felt that P4W administrators ("they") wanted her to feel as though she no longer existed – not only in the eyes of the non-incarcerated ("the outside world") but in the eyes of her loved ones (her husband and child to whom she was a wife and mother, respectively). This perception aligns with Ross (1998) who explains that gendered and racialized stereotypes, in conjunction with select types of crimes women commit (e.g., "male" crimes of violence that do not exemplify "ladylike" behaviours), tend to result in criminal justice officials' decisions in favour of longer sentences and harsher treatment – a finding also identified in the *Creating Choices* (1990) report. Indeed, Glaremin was convicted of manslaughter; however, she maintains her innocence (Marron, 1996, Spring).

Glaremin's feelings of no longer existing as the person she once was – or in the (gender) roles she once played – took a toll on her as described in her second poem. Published in *Tightwire* only a few months after her first poem, in her second poem, Glaremin (1993b¹⁰⁵) writes:

If only I wasn't a mother, I could handle all this time, / But my heart lies elsewhere beyond the prison walls. / If only I was alone, I would not have anyone else to worry about. / Someone I carried inside of me for nine long months. / I would not feel the pain of desperation, / Knowing I am responsible for another human being, / who needs me, needs me there at home. / And home is a place I gave, another part of my heart. / A feeling that time or space could not tear apart. / If only I was doing this time alone, / things would be less complicated, but I'm not, / and Lord it hurts so much. If only I could do something to ease the pain of knowing, / That someone out there loves me 'cause, I'm their mother. / And they are home alone. / If only I wasn't a mother, / I could handle this all the time / But my heart lies

¹⁰⁵ See Appendix 47.

elsewhere / Beyond these prison walls. / If only... If only.... If only I wasn't a mother..... (p. 35)

In this passage, Glaremin discusses how, if she did not have children, she could handle her prison sentence more easily. As described earlier in this section, this belief is similarly held by women in the *Creating Choices* (1990) report. Glaremin's deep consideration for her child is reflective of Ross' (1998) and Benson's (2020) studies in which they identified Indigenous mothers' primary concern in prison was being separated from their children. Interestingly, Ross found that the location of the mother within the prison played a role in which concerns each mother expressed. For instance, mothers imprisoned within the maximum security unit – many of whom were, and still are, Indigenous – tend to be “overwhelmed with their personal survival, [and] are distracted from concerns about their children” (Ross, 1998, p. 191). Instead, these mothers spoke at length about their prison experiences and had “difficulty concentrating on questions regarding their children” when Ross (1998) interviewed them (p. 191). However, when these women were asked directly about family, they most often became emotional, sincere, and wept when speaking of their children. The fact that Glaremin is a mother who is incarcerated hurts her tremendously, particularly when she thinks about how much her imprisonment hurts her children by virtue of her absence.

Indeed, it is crucial to remember that mothers are not the only ones affected by the dislocation of incarceration; their children are as well (Scheuneman Scott, 2019; TFFSW, 1990). For instance, Louise Simard – an NDP, MLA, and Status of Women Critic in Regina – stated to the Task Force (1990) that: “The separation of mother and child is a human tragedy. This punishes the child as well as the mother” (p. 22). Another example of this effect is a poem that an incarcerated mother received from her child that she then submitted to *Tightwire*. The child wrote to their incarcerated mother: “You are so far, that I cannot see / But, I have a picture in my

mind / They can't keep, that from me" (Shannon, 1989¹⁰⁶, p. 12). When I first read this poem, I thought it was written by an incarcerated mother to her child outside of prison; but upon careful examination, I noticed that, presumably, a *Tightwire* editor noted on the same page that it was "written by a **daughter** to her **Mother** in prison....." (p. 12, emphasis in original). It is devastating to note that this poem could in fact have been written by either mother or child because it expresses how they both experience feelings of connection despite being kept away from one another. In this sense, children of incarcerated mothers also feel pains of imprisonment created by being isolated from their family.

Given that most incarcerated mothers are the sole caregivers of their children (Ross, 1998; Scheuneman Scott, 2019; TFFSW, 1990), there are important questions to consider when mothers are incarcerated. Some of these are identified by Anonymous (1992b¹⁰⁷) in a *Tightwire* editorial:

When a women is incarcerated and taken away from her children, the question arises regarding who takes care of these children, where do they go, who cares for them, when do they see their mothers and what are the children told (p. 3PDF).

Although many mothers may pose these questions, due to racism, incarcerated Indigenous women's concerns of separation from their children are distinct from non-Indigenous women's concerns. For instance, federally sentenced Indigenous women in the community interviewed by researchers for the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women (1990) explained how "their children were placed in foster care, juvenile detention centres, or were moved between family members" (p. 43). The former placements are not as common for children of non-Indigenous women who are incarcerated (Scheuneman Scott, 2019).

¹⁰⁶ See Appendix 48.

¹⁰⁷ See Appendix 49.

Another Anonymous (1992d¹⁰⁸) storyteller in *Tightwire* explains the importance of mothers to their families and humankind:

What makes a womens incarceration so much worse than a man's, is that it makes one wonder 'Who is watching the children?' The locking up of so many women tares at the fiber of our family structure!! // The concept of women as life-giver and nurturer is as old as mankind itself. Even though we live in a patriarchal society, the woman's role as mother, in our family structure is a very integral one (p. 11PDF).

In other words, this storyteller points out that women are critical to the survival of “[hu]mankind”, and despite the patriarchal society we live in, mothering continues to be recognized – by some – as a crucial role. While readers are uncertain if Anonymous (1992d) was written by an Indigenous woman, this excerpt aligns with Indigenous feminist scholarship on motherhood. For instance, Kim Anderson (2016) – an Indigenous feminist who is Métis – explains in her book, *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood*, the vitality of Indigenous women's leadership and multitasking skills to their communities – skills she relates to women's ability to bear children and their traditional responsibility to nurture. From this perspective, women are key to the wellbeing and cultural continuity of Indigenous communities. The *Creating Choices* (1990) report also points to “the different notions of family” as conceptualized by Indigenous women relative to non-Indigenous women (p. 17). That is, Indigenous women emphasize the interconnectedness of family and community in which collective interests are prioritized over individual interests. An Indigenous woman on parole explained how she perceives family as vital to her ability to build a new life for herself after prison. To the Task Force researchers, she stated that because “Family is part of integration. [...] We need to keep the family together” (p. 15).

¹⁰⁸ See Appendix 50.

Anonymous' (1992d) perspective also aligns with the keynote address for the National Symposium on Aboriginal Women of Canada in 1990. Reprinted in the Native Section of *Tightwire*, the keynote address originally published in the Status of Women Journal (1992¹⁰⁹) comments on the immense power of women in relation to their roles as mothers in Indigenous communities:

The role of aboriginal women in the health of family systems from one generation to the next, was one of immense power. // The immensity of the responsibility of bearer of life and nourisher of all generations, is just becoming dear [clear], in its relationship, to all societal functioning. // In aboriginal society it was woman who shaped the thinking of all its members in a loving, nurturing atmosphere within the base family unit. In such societies, the earliest instruments of governance and law to ensure social order, came from quality mothering, during childhood (p. 17).

Importantly, this passage begins to demonstrate how traditional Indigenous cultures employed systems of social control, such as mothering. While this may be a common feature of many cultures, the matriarchal aspect of many traditional Indigenous cultures – including the reverence of women – has been degraded due to settler colonialism (Monchalin, 2016) – something that non-Indigenous cultures do not experience in the same way. While colonial degradation continues, Indigenous women and their communities persistently resist it and work together to reclaim and reinvent their communal roles and responsibilities to past, present, and future generations (Anderson, 2016; Kovach, 2009). This part of the story is crucial to be told so that Indigenous methods of governance – such as motherhood – are increasingly recognized and respected by non-Indigenous people across Turtle Island. Indeed, the Status of Women Journal (1992) further explains that:

It was woman that passed that social order intact from one succeeding generation to the next. // It was through the attack on this power of aboriginal woman, that the disempowerment of our peoples has been achieved, in a dehumanizing process that is one of the cruelest on the face of this earth. In the attack on the core family

¹⁰⁹ See Appendix 51.

system, the direct attack on the role of aboriginal woman resulted in the disintegration of our peoples towards genocide (p. 18).

This attack certainly stems from settler colonialism, and the following excerpt identifies residential schools as the core of the problem regarding the disempowerment of Indigenous women in relation to their roles of mothers. For instance, the *Status of Women Journal* (1992) argues that:

It is a fundamental human right for parents to mother, to nurture, to protect and to love their children. It is a fundamental and basic human right that parents raise their own children's culture and heritage and therefore what their children learn. // These are fundamental human rights that were, and still are, being seized from their homes and forcibly placed in sterile, military-like, hostile institutions called residential schools. These places of horror, were invariably run by people, whose only goal was what they called to 'civilize'. // This process took place during the child's most essential stages of development. The resultant breakdown in our communities, emerged, from helpless parents left with nothing to live for and children raised in racist hostility and dispassion. // The ensuing nightmare of the effect of that, on our communities has been, what those 'Indian problem' statistics are all about. It has been the single most devastating factor at the core of the damage, beyond all the other mechanisms cleverly fashioned to subjugate [subjugate], assimilate and terminate (p. 18).

While this part of the passage is about Canada's residential school system, very similar arguments can be, and are, made about the prison system. For instance, Chartrand (2019) argues that the colonial logics of separation and segregation that were prevalent throughout the residential school system continue to exist within institutions such as the prison – despite mainstream Canadian beliefs that we have progressed into a society that is no longer colonial. Indeed, in the *Status of Women Journal's* (1992) keynote address that was reprinted in *Tightwire*, the storyteller talks about the effects of residential schools, which include, for example, incarceration, homelessness, and death:

when I see my sisters in the prisons, on the streets and in their walking coffins, I see where the battle has taken its greatest toll. I see the scars. I see that these women, my sister[s], have fought the cruellest of battles on earth. I see them, through eyes of love and compassion. Never disgust. My utter disgust if for those who feed on the wounded. Who abuse them further with their bodies, their eyes,

and their unclean minds. Who dare to think that they are somehow better. I see, that when women of our nations are dying [from] this, then it is that we are all in danger (p. 19).

Importantly, this excerpt does not simply emphasize the colonially-caused social problems that Indigenous peoples are subject to, but also highlights those with colonial power – those who create and propel the previously mentioned “‘Indian problem’ statistics” (Status of Women Journal, 1992, p. 18). From the keynote’s perspective in the Status of Women Journal (1992), without women, humankind is “in danger”. In other words, when women go missing, are murdered, or are incarcerated – and thus are taken away from their communities – the entire community is negatively affected.

One way in which Indigenous women at P4W continually resisted their forced removal from their communities is through their publications in *Tightwire*. The coping strategies employed by incarcerated Indigenous mothers are different relative to incarcerated white mothers. For instance, Ross (1998) found that many incarcerated Indigenous mothers found “comfort uniting together in their culture”; by contrast, white women did not represent a cohesive group and thus tended to isolate themselves from other prisoners (p. 186). Given this, I argue that the Native Sisterhood – both the group and the section in *Tightwire* – represented a cultural outlet for Indigenous mothers during their imprisonment at P4W which enabled them to better cope with their separation from family – particularly their children. Even for Indigenous mothers in segregation whom Ross (1998) identified as being necessarily more preoccupied with survival strategies than their children, there is evidence that women continued to produce stories for *Tightwire* during their time in the hole. As such, I argue that *Tightwire* remained an outlet for mothers regardless of where they were imprisoned within P4W, which contrasts with Ross’ (1998) findings that women in segregation expressed more immediate concerns regarding their own survival while incarcerated than their children.

“transferred, by force”: *Creating Choices* and The Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women

As a result of the separation and dislocation issues described in the above section, the Archambault Report (1938) argued that the responsibility of women’s incarceration should fall back to the provinces which would help keep women closer to their families and communities. The report also stated that this proposed change made sense given that women’s crimes were more likely to merit provincial rather than federal custodial sentences (Archambault Report, 1938). This is because women tend to commit less serious crimes than men, a fact that still stands today (Comack, 2018). Disregarding many criticisms and calls for closure, P4W remained opened until 2000 and continued to propel problems for women who were incarcerated there. Moreover, despite the wealth of knowledge gained from repeated studies of P4W, the Canadian government continued to make the same mistakes. These mistakes were consistently identified by prisoners. One woman in particular, Jo-Ann Mayhew, a long-time editor of *Tightwire*, repeatedly critiqued CSC’s decisions in her stories. In an editorial in which she speaks of CSC’s plans to build a new provincial women’s prison, Mayhew (1988a) argues that CSC was:

displaying a devastating disregard for studies already prepared for the Solicitor General on the social causes of women and crime, as well as ignoring the Elizabeth Fry recommendations for alternatives to “traditional” incarceration (p. 2).

Of note is that Mayhew refers to “the social causes” of women’s crimes, and thus attributes blame not to the individual women, but pointing to greater society. This communal responsibility is part of the context that she accuses CSC of disregarding. The fact that Mayhew decided to share her critical analysis of Canada’s carceral system – including its failure to meaningfully consider or implement reforms suggested by criminologists – shows how, as an editor, she chose to open *Tightwire* with critique and resistance. Through the strategic placement of her editorials

in the front matter of *Tightwire*, rather than in the middle or end¹¹⁰, Mayhew practically ensured that *Tightwire* readers engaged with its political content.

In another editorial in the front matter of *Tightwire*, Mayhew (1988b¹¹¹) says she is watching “as the prison system blunders towards its own destruction by blindly building on historical patterns of failure” (p. 3PDF). In the same passage, Mayhew (1988b) states that the building of new prisons is a “carbon repetition of past mistakes” (p. 2). In this story, Mayhew refers to the word “building” several times which is interesting to consider given that it can symbolize multiple meanings. For instance, CSC is “building” on past mistakes and assuming that “building” new prisons will offer a solution for the problems identified with P4W. In these ways, Mayhew perceives any building by CSC in a negative light – both research reports and the construction of new prisons end in failure for criminalized women. This makes it more likely for readers to empathize with Mayhew’s frustration with CSC. In a third story, Mayhew (1989a) understandably says in an editorial that: “it is hard to maintain optimism in the light of past band-aid solutions offered to Federally Sentenced women” (p. 4). Because these “band-aid solutions” do not address the roots of social problems, they produce little to no meaningful change. Given this, Mayhew (1989b¹¹²) unsurprisingly insinuates in a fourth story how exhausted she is from constant studies: “I am told that 1989 can be viewed as the “Year of the Female Offender.” // I am not optimistic. The “needs of the female” offender have been studied to exhaustion since 1938!” (p. 7). Moreover, Mayhew (1988b) rightfully argued that:

If the Prison for Women in Kingston has only one positive contribution to make, it should be in the lessons learned from the many studies, prepared over many years, at P4W. These conclude that this prison, designed from the male

¹¹⁰ Mayhew’s stories were variously placed through *Tightwire*. Her stories included front matter editorials, commentaries in the middle, as well as stories near the end of the newsletter.

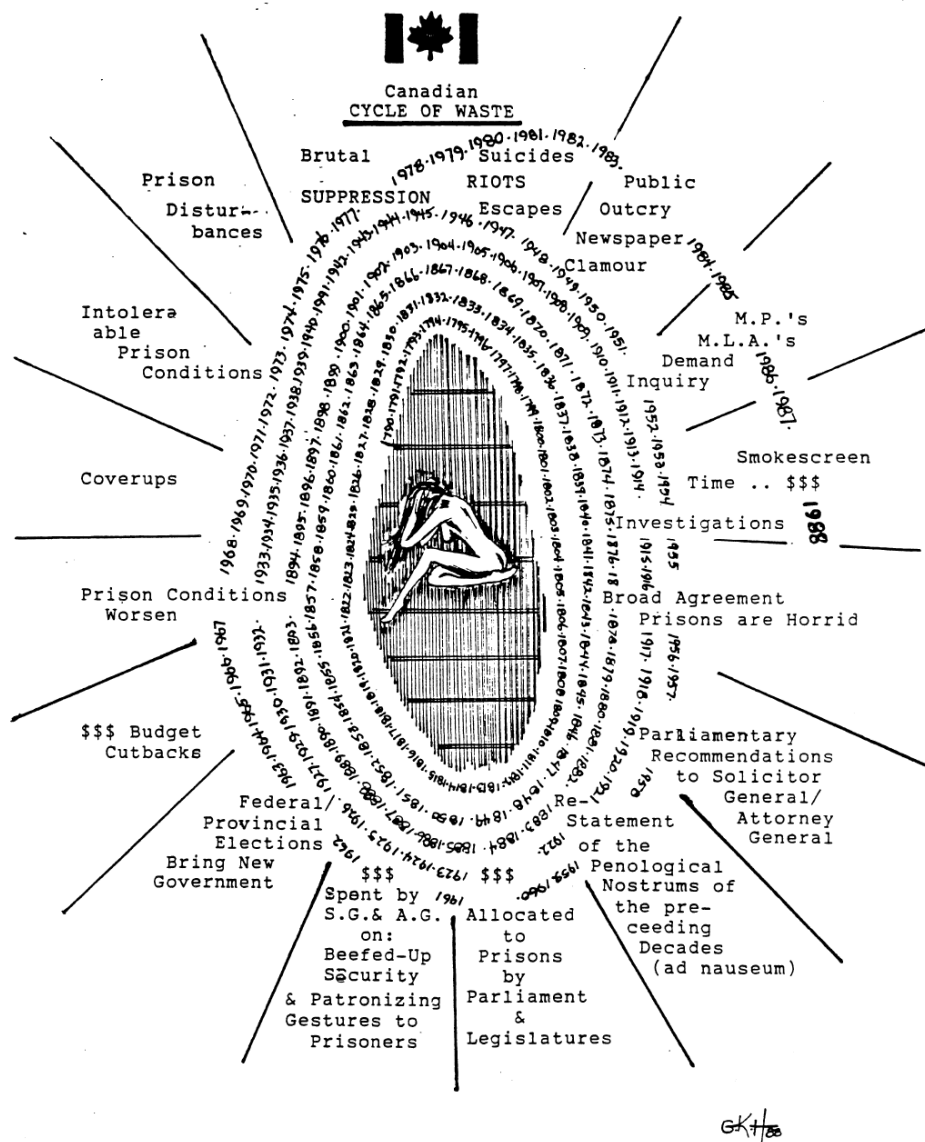
¹¹¹ See Appendix 52.

¹¹² See Appendix 53.

experience, is unsuitable for women; that barred cells are unwarranted and impose highly negative psychological barriers between the keepers and the kept; that a multi-level security system produces awkward, impractical program implementation (p. 3PDF).

An important part of this excerpt is that Mayhew argues what CSC ought to be learning from the many studies that have been conducted, and her language indicates that CSC has clearly not followed the directives of researchers despite their vast number of reports and recommendations. Indeed, in her master's work on *Tightwire*, Frances Foran (1998) identifies that "The most remarkable feature of official discourse about Canadian women's corrections is that each of the fifteen federal reports from P4W's inception in 1934 until 1996 recommends the prison to be closed." (p. 31). Thus, there were certainly pockets of people both within and outside of P4W that called for its closure.

In her story published in *Tightwire*, Gayle Horii (1988) textually and visually expresses what she calls the "Canadian Cycle of Waste":



imprisoned woman, readers are made aware of a cycle that relates to the federal incarceration of women in Canada that includes, for instance, prisoners' behaviours and responses, government politics, studies, and finances, as well as communal perspectives and responses to the prison and prisoners when prison conditions become "bad enough" to be newsworthy. The cycle that Horii (1988) describes can be summarized as follows: when "Prison Conditions Worsen" – which strongly relate to "Suicides RIOTS Escapes" and "Prison Disturbances", there is a "Public Outcry" which leads to a relative period of time when there is "Broad Agreement [that] Prisons are Horrid" which can catalyze "Smokescreen[s]", "Coverups", and "Demand [for an] Inquiry", only for CSC to continue with "Budget Cutbacks" and "Patronizing Gestures to Prisoners" which triggers the cycle all over again. I believe that until this "cycle of waste" is realized and denounced by those in power, we cannot expect any meaningful change to occur within Canada's criminal justice system. Regardless of many prisoners' and criminologists' perceptions that P4W did not need more studies and reports that resulted in little change, the Commissioner of the CSS established the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women with the stated goal to rectify the problems identified with P4W.

The closure of P4W was supported by the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women which was established in 1989 after the appointment of a new commissioner of corrections, Ole Ingstrup, in 1988 (Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Hayman, 2006). The purpose of the Task Force was to examine the correctional management of federally sentenced women from the beginning to the end of their sentences, and to develop policies and plans to help guide the process while being responsive to women's unique needs (Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Hayman, 2006). According to the Elizabeth Fry Society Newsletter, whose report was partially re-printed in *Tightwire*:

THE CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF [OF] CANADA WITH THE SUPPORT
OF COMMUNITIES, HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY TO CREATE THE

ENVIRONMENT THAT EMPOWERS WOMEN TO MAKE MEANINGFUL AND RESPONSIBLE CHOICES IN ORDER THAT THEY MAY LIVE WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT. // These powerful words represent the overall statement of principle which guided the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women since its commencement April 1990 (Elizabeth Fry Newsletter, 1992, p. 5, emphasis in original).

According to this excerpt, the Task Force represented itself as a body that was dedicated to improving the conditions of imprisonment for federally sentenced women by emphasizing principles of choice, dignity, and respect. These principles were laid out in writing when, in 1990, the Task Force released their findings in a report entitled *Creating Choices: The Report of the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women*. The report was mentioned in *Tightwire* numerous times, an example of which is Julia Deroches' (1992¹¹³) story where she explained:

In April 1990, the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women submitted its final report on its findings which includes numerous interviews and questionnaires. The report calls for a new approach to meet the unique needs of federally sentenced women. In September of the same year, the government announced the acceptance of the major recommendation of the Task Force. // The recommendations included the closing of Prison For Women, the establishment of five new facilities across Canada, and the expansion and enhancement of community services/programs for federally sentenced women. The cost of this commitment is estimated \$50 million (p. 2-3).

This excerpt points to some important facets of the report – *Creating Choices* was based on (some) research, it was accepted by the federal government, and the closure of P4W translated to the subsequent opening of a handful of other federal women's prisons. Indeed, the *Creating Choices* report highlighted “the opinions of over 300 people who shared their stories, wisdom [wisdom] and hopes for the future with the Task Force (Elizabeth Fry Newsletter, 1992, p. 5) – thus highlighting the knowledges that federally sentenced women brought – and still bring – to the table.

¹¹³ See Appendix 54.

One distinct feature of *Creating Choices* was that it focused on notions of difference to demonstrate diversities among women as a group, Indigenous women and non-Indigenous women, as well as between women and men (Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Hayman, 2006). The report also detailed how these differences ought to be reflected in the treatment of federally sentenced women (Hayman, 2006) and rejected the current workings of the criminal justice system. For instance, excerpts in *Tightwire* from the Elizabeth Fry Newsletter (1992) stated that *Creative Choices*:

delineates a plan, an ACTION plan which will, it is strongly hoped, radically alter the face of corrections for federally sentenced women. [...] ‘A VISION FOR CHANGE’ [, the proposed Task Force plan, is] [...] women-centered and, in the case of residence and programs for aboriginal people, aboriginal-centered. It is not simply an adjunct supplementing the larger justice system but a place designed for and by women of all races and cultures. ‘A VISION FOR CHANGE’ is also holistic. It should be considere[d] one recommendation, whose parts will not function unless all parts are implemented” (p. 5, emphasis in original).

This story shows that Elizabeth Fry Society, a women’s prisoners’ rights group, had hope and were anticipating radical change for federally sentenced women in Canada. Their support of and belief in *Creating Choices* was significant given their strong position of advocacy for women prisoners across the country. The reproduction of EFRY’s support in *Tightwire* suggests that whoever decided to reprint this story for publication (presumably the editors of *Tightwire*) were also supportive of this initiative. Vital to the vision, and highlighted in this passage, is how all parts of the whole must operate together or else the plan will be unsuccessful. Looking back, this statement now seems like a forewarning regarding the “new” federal women’s prisons – one of which I will discuss further in chapter seven.

Some parts of the whole put forward in *Creating Choices* can be described as the five principles that the Task Force hoped would guide the federal imprisonment of women:

- 1) Empowerment (e.g., provision of programs that enhance self-esteem);
- 2) Meaningful and responsible choices (e.g., provision of choices that enable prisoners to gain more control over their own lives);
- 3) Respect and dignity (e.g., rules that do not humiliate and/or contribute to prisoners' sense of powerlessness);
- 4) Supportive environment (e.g., provision of programs, environment, and security that are equally available and meaningful to all prisoners); and
- 5) Shared responsibility (e.g., actions that demonstrate understanding that the reintegration of prisoners is the responsibility of not only prisoners but also governments and community members) (Hayman, 2006; Struthers Montford, 2015).

Despite having good intentions, the Task Force's recommendations were subsumed within CSC's policies and procedures – that is, they were employed towards security-based regulations and the management of women as well as their social, cultural, and economic disadvantages (Law, Mario, and Bruckert, 2020). In this way, criminologists Tuulia Law, Brittany Mario, and Chris Bruckert (2020) explain that the principles:

support a neoliberal agenda of penal discipline, stressing self-governance (e.g., through empowerment by building self-esteem and encouraging a “take charge” attitude), responsabilization (e.g., exhorting women to be accountable, to self-govern, and to change their “deviant ways”), and the shared responsibility of prison staff, prisoners, and community members to engage in a “holistic approach” to rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners (p. 204).

These strategies, which focus on the individual and rehabilitation, do not take into account sociopolitical or other context factors such as settler colonialism and its effects on the criminalization of Indigenous women.

In addition to the guiding principles, the report also detailed several recommendations, which included the opening of six new federal women's prisons, including one Indigenous

“Healing Lodge”, that would operate under the above principles (Hayman, 2006; Struthers Montford, 2015). These new prisons were perceived by many as solutions to the problems identified with P4W (Dell, Fillmore, & Kilty, 2009; Hayman, 2006). For instance, Julia Deroches (1992) reports in *Tightwire* that Doug Lewis, the Solicitor General of Canada at the time, said during his visit to P4W that:

I can assure you that [that] the new regional facilities will be a vast improvement for federally-sentenced women. They represent my government’s serious commitment to improving the situation of women under federal sentences now, and for those who will come into federal care in the future. You told us during the task force consultation that improvements meant, among other things, being close to home, to your families, culture, and communities. I can assure you that my government listened to your comments and today’s announcement is further proof of that (p. 2).

In Lewis’ speech, reproduced in Deroches’ (1992) story, readers are under the impression that Lewis and the Canadian government actually care about, consider, and implement the wishes of federally sentenced women. Regardless of Deroches’ (1992) endorsement of Lewis’ statement, there were many other prisoners who were opposed to building new federal women’s prisons and would not have supported Lewis because they did not believe that the Task Force had the women’s best interests in mind – a point I return to at the end of this section. An unidentified storyteller in *Tightwire* agrees with Lewis’ speech in relation to women being closer to their families. Anonymous (1992a) states:

The positive aspect [of P4W’s closure] is that the women will be transferred [into new prisons which are] closer to their home provinces where they have support from family and friends. That will help them through the rough times that go along with being incarcerated (p. 3PDF).

The women’s desires to be closer to their home communities is a sentiment that is echoed throughout *Tightwire*; thus, it is likely that many women did in fact desire the closing of P4W simply to be nearer to their families, friends, communities, and cultures.

As previously noted, through imprisonment, all prisoners – not just women – are separated from their loved ones on the outside; but during its operation, P4W was the only federal women’s prison in Canada which meant that only women experienced the extensive separation caused by the likelihood of being moved to a different province – while men were more likely to stay closer to their home communities given that there were several federal men’s prisons in operation across the country at the time.

Still, other women in *Tightwire* note that moving women closer to their “home” provinces does not address larger systemic issues faced by women in prison. For instance, one Indigenous woman in *Tightwire*, Theresa-Ann Glaremin (1990¹¹⁴), who also goes by the name Little Running Water, talks about her mixed feelings in relation to the Task Force’s recommendations:

The efforts by Bonnie Diamond and Sally Willis of Elizabeth Fry are to be commended in the push for reform regarding federally sentenced women in Canada. Although there were rumors that the women would lose their rights in the provinces, I think we all lost sight of the fact, that the new units for women in the provinces are to be Federal ones and therefore ruled by Federal regulations. The Task Force have worked with the women here over the years for viable solutions to the problem of disparity between the provinces and federally sentenced women. I do not agree with the building of new prisons, but I do support the right for women to stay in their home provinces. // The Elizabeth Fry Society have taken the consensus of the women here and struggled to make a change in the way women did their sentences. I cannot see this being any worse then what we have now. This is the first time in the history of Corrections in Canada that women will have the same rights as men in their own provinces. [...] Due to efforts of Elizabeth Fry we are going to see changes for the better for Federally sentenced women in Canada (p. 51).

In this excerpt, Glaremin (1990) clearly states several things: she commends Elizabeth Fry Society’s push for federal women’s corrections reform; she supports women in their right to be transferred to their home provinces; and she disagrees with the strategy to build more prisons. At

¹¹⁴ See Appendix 55.

the end of this section, I include more excerpts from Glaremin's stories in *Tightwire* to demonstrate how her opinions regarding the Task Force changed over time.

Regardless of mixed emotions and diverging opinions in relation to the Task Force, *Creating Choices* became a monumental document. For the women in *Tightwire*, *Creating Choices* was certainly a paramount report. Their stories demonstrate federally sentenced women's critical and consistent engagement in the most important period of carceral reform for women in Canada. This finding aligns with Foran's (1998) work in which she argues that the women often engaged with "fancy words from legal and feminist dictionaries" which had the effect of their audience taking them more seriously (p. 50). Even though many women felt hopeless and without any control over their lives, they still had (some) optimism, agency, and desire to express themselves and discuss their experiences of criminalization and incarceration – both within *Tightwire* and *Creating Choices*. Drawing on feminist zine scholar Alison Piepmeier's (2009) work surrounding the pedagogy of hope, the fact that women published stories in *Tightwire* is a sign that the women felt they had – at least some – influence over their lives. Indeed, Piepmeier (2009) argues that if women were not hopeful, they would not have submitted their stories for publication.

Despite being published in 1990, *Creating Choices* remains significant to Canada's broader penal history. Some of the reasons for this are that the report, while conforming to the style of most other government reports, drew on radical language (e.g., they used the term "Aboriginal" as opposed to the more commonly used terms of the time, "Native" and "Indian"), an entire chapter was devoted to the voices of federally sentenced women, and issues concerning Indigenous women were not confined to a sole chapter, but rather were raised throughout (Hayman, 2006). The fact that Indigenous concerns run throughout *Creating Choices* (1990) is

especially significant given that, as Indigenous members of the Task Force explain, Indigenous voices have “been relegated to a few pages” of previous reports “or to several recommendations which were disconnected philosophically from the thrust of those works” (p. 20). Not only was *Creating Choices* concerned with racial differences, it also espoused gender-responsivity and spoke to concerns of all federally incarcerated women, with a clear emphasis on the experiences of Indigenous women (Dell et al., 2009; Hayman, 2006; Struthers Montford, 2015). One of *Creating Choices*’ successes was the inclusion of incarcerated women’s voices as well as the previous research that had been conducted at P4W. According to an excerpt from the Elizabeth Fry Society that was published in *Tightwire*, *Creating Choices* looked “at research in the field as well as the past twelve Task Forces and Commissions that made significant comment on Federally Sentenced Women” (Elizabeth Fry Newsletter, 1992, p. 5). The Task Force also sought for their report to have a more current empirical basis by commissioning research regarding federally sentenced women; however, this research was continually delayed because:

the Solicitor General had earlier decided to undertake interviews with all women in Kingston and had drawn up its own schedule. [...] The result was that all interviews for the task force had to wait until the DIS [Diagnostic Interview Schedule, an American instrument designed to measure mental health problems and prevalence in the general population] interviewer had completed her separate interview schedule (Hayman, 2006, p. 60).

Consequently, the Task Force began their work well before receiving the up-to-date findings that were specific to P4W and the women incarcerated within P4W. Moreover, the research regarding the federal incarceration of Indigenous women was, at the time, described as “non-existent” (Hayman, 2006, p. 61). As a result, much of the Task Force’s work was based on incomplete, international (rather than Canadian), and non-transferable (general population to prisoner population) evidence – making it unreliable (Hayman, 2006). This, accompanied by the Task Force members’ individual knowledges of incarcerated women that they had previously worked

with, enabled them to freely construct and assume characteristics of federally sentenced women. Problematically, these members “rarely visited the Prison for Women and did not know the women as individuals; rather, they saw the women as statistics informing their daily work” (Hayman, 2006, p. 62-63).¹¹⁵

One of their assumptions was that all federally sentenced women, but particularly Indigenous women, were victims. Generally, women’s collective histories of poverty, abuse, racism, addiction, and “educational failure” were used to define them (Hayman, 2006). This focus on victimization was believed by the Task Force to help counteract gendered stereotypes regarding the “bad female criminal” (Law, Mario, & Bruckert, 2020). Indeed, the members of the Task Force framed “criminalized women as victims who could be healed and empowered in penal facilities” (Law, Mario, & Bruckert, 2020, p. 203-204). In this way, the bad female criminal trope was supplemented, but not entirely replaced with, the victim trope (Law, Mario, & Bruckert, 2020). Specifically, Indigenous women’s victimization was perceived as stemming not only from within the criminal (in)justice system, but from historical impacts of colonialism (Hayman, 2006). Assumptions of women’s (almost) exclusive experiences of victimization are problematic because they tend to erase women’s agency and resistance to victimization and oppression (Chesney-Lind, 2006; Law, Mario, and Bruckert, 2020). In the case of Indigenous women, it can also mask their sovereignty. While I do not question the very real experiences of victimization that incarcerated Indigenous women experience (Comack, 2018), to avoid invisibilizing women’s resistance, I argue that researchers must also emphasize women’s agency, particularly in relation to the “crimes” they commit. For instance, when women living in poverty

¹¹⁵ For more information about the Task Force’s research process, see TTFSW (1990) and Hayman (2006).

steal food to feed their children, or when women living in abusive relationships are violent towards their partners, they are expressing their agency. They know they are breaking the law, but they choose to do what they believe is in their best interests given their relative position of powerlessness. In other words, the women choose to employ the (relatively limited) power they have. This is an example of how experiences of victimization (e.g., abuse) and oppression (e.g., poverty) relate to the criminalization of all people, but particularly Indigenous women who are more likely to experience these realities due to colonial patriarchy and power dynamics (Comack, 2018; Monchalin 2016).

While the Task Force was initially developed without explicit guidance and participation of Indigenous women, four Indigenous women (two of whom were federally incarcerated) eventually came onto the Task Force. One of the federally incarcerated Indigenous women on the Task Force, Fran Sugar, was a storyteller in *Tightwire*, and editor of the Native Sisterhood Sections. Sugar also served as president of the Native Sisterhood in P4W (Adema, 2015). The second federally incarcerated Indigenous woman on the Task Force, Lana Fox, was also a storyteller in *Tightwire*. Of their time on the Task Force, Sugar and Fox (1989) state:

Our participation in the Task Force has been difficult. We entered the Task Force as prisoners. As prisoners, we spoke with grave hesitation. It was our experience that the last 12 task forces, the numerous commissions, working groups, federal department officials, and other organizations that are said to represent women in cages, had already conducted study upon study. We felt that another task force would be repeating what is already known and documented somewhere... in some brown file... in some room... covered with dust. We felt that this task force would be as useless as all the other task forces that have been shelved (p. 468).

As readers may note, these sentiments strongly echo, support, and elaborate on Jo-Ann Mayhew's (1988a; 1988b) and Gayle Horii's (1988) stories regarding ongoing studies that brought no meaningful positive changes to their lives as federally incarcerated women. Despite their legitimate hesitations, Sugar and Fox state that they decided to partake in the Task Force

“because we feel a deep responsibility to our sisters still inside the walls [...], to echo their silenced pleas for improved lives” (p. 465)¹¹⁶. Like stories in the previous section, this statement depicts the prison in terms of its perimeter wall which functions to separate and silence the women inside. Vitally, this story also demonstrates the importance of women’s role to Indigenous communities which is deeply tied to kinship and relationality – specifically the responsibility to nurture and care for community members which contributes to cultural continuity and the success of future generations (Anderson, 2016; Kovach, 2009; Moreton-Robinson, 2013). This relationality is also indicated by Indigenous members of the Task Force who stated in the *Creating Choices* (1990) report that:

The participation of Aboriginal women in this Task Force must never be viewed as a recognition that the jurisdiction of the federal government of Canada (or any provincial/territorial government) in the affairs of our Nations is valid. [...] Our participation in the Task Force should be viewed as only a deep felt concern for the many citizens of our many Nations who suffer daily at the hands of the criminal justice system (p. 19).

In other words, Indigenous participation in a Euro-Canadian government report reflected their concern for incarcerated Indigenous women, rather than an acceptance of colonially imposed “justice”. The importance of Indigenous peoples’ participation in the Task Force cannot be overstated. Indeed, Indigenous members explain how: “No previous task force nor royal commission on corrections whether it was focused on Aboriginal peoples, women, or prisons generally, has ever recognized the unique position of Aboriginal women” (TFFSW, 1990, p. 20). In this way, *Creating Choices* was certainly unique and groundbreaking.

¹¹⁶ I also feel a deep sense of responsibility to these women, particularly Indigenous women; and my work echoes the women’s desires as best I can. My responsibility stems both from my shared understanding with these women in relation to my personal experiences of victimization and criminalization, as well as my privileges as a non-incarcerated white woman.

Other (non-incarcerated) Indigenous women also participated in the Task Force despite similar hesitations. Feminist criminologist Kelly Hannah-Moffat (2001) explains that many Indigenous women and other reform groups like EFRY “agreed to participate in the task force out of concern for women in prison” (p. 144). Importantly, Hannah-Moffat (2001) explains that “these reformers did not base their participation in this initiative on a naïve idealism regarding the possibility of change. They were skeptical, but they were also hopeful that an entrenched and punitive mode of governing could perhaps be altered” (p. 144). Again, we are reminded here that despite mixed feelings, hope existed within this group of women – which is similar to other feminist periodicals throughout history (Piepmeier, 2009). Indeed, although doubts persisted across the members of the Task Force, they continued to be optimistic that they would ameliorate the lived experiences of federally incarcerated women.

Vitaly, criminologist Stephanie Hayman (2006) argues that the only members of the Task Force who had more than anecdotal experience – and were thus qualified to speak on behalf of federally sentenced Indigenous women – were the two Indigenous women who had served federal time – Sugar and Fox. While some may argue that these two women’s stories are in fact anecdotal – which functions as a quick and easy way to dismiss the research, diminish the work of researchers, and downplay the lived realities of those who share their stories – there are others who point to the importance of stories as expertise and evidence (Benson, 2020; Kovach, 2009; McAleese & Kilty, 2019; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). For instance, sociologist Samantha McAleese and feminist criminologist Jennifer Kilty (2019) note that while not all stories are evidence of a widespread problem, when individual stories are taken together over time and show similar narratives about different aspects of prison life, these stories are indicative of a larger and significant trend rather than simply being anecdotal – something that

my analysis of *Tightwire* supports. The fact that the Task Force sought out and engaged with these two women's stories demonstrates that they took women's lived experiences of criminalization and incarceration seriously.

Jo-Ann Mayhew (1988c) comments on the Task Force's engagement with women incarcerated at P4W in an excerpt from her *Tightwire* editorial:

In early September an assembly of Elizabeth Fry members from across Canada met in Kingston for an Annual Convention. Part of their agenda involved a morning spent inside the Prison for Women in dialogue with the women for whom these workers were formulating policy. It was a historic occasion. It marked the first time that incarcerated women were asked to contribute their own views, their own opinions and their own experiences to the process of developing more substantial and effective solutions. The occasion was timely. Late summer had brought extensive newspaper coverage of views from both the Canadian Bar Association and the Daubney Commission stating the P4W should be closed. This view is not original. The same statement was made by a Royal Commission 50 years ago! It is a damaging position unless intelligent alternatives are concurrently offered. [...] Hopefully, by including our experiences in their planning, the E. Fry Association will have new insight to bring their provincial development forecasting (p. 2).

This passage demonstrates Mayhew's (1988c) enthusiasm for P4W prisoners' voices being considered regarding policy making efforts. In the same instance, Mayhew comments on the timely nature of this engagement given that there had recently been extensive media coverage about P4W. In this way, her timeliness comment could be considered positively in that EFRY responded in a timely manner to media coverage about incarcerated women. On the other hand, Mayhew's comment could be perceived negatively in that EFRY did not respond *until* there was media coverage about incarcerated women – in other words, there was no response from EFRY prior to extensive news about ongoing issues regarding the federal incarceration of women. This latter perspective begs questions about where EFRY was when the women most needed them.

Indigenous women specifically, both incarcerated and non-incarcerated, were an important part of the Task Force. In her introduction to Fran Sugar's and Lana Fox's (1989) report "Nistum Peyako Séht'wawin Iskwewak: Breaking Chains", Mohawk lawyer, educator, activist, and author, Patricia Monture explains:

For the First Nations' women involved in the Task Force, it was very important that the truth be told. By truth, we mean that the experiences and understandings of First Nations' women be told unaltered; this has meant that the language used by the women interviewed has not been edited to delete swear words or to soften the impact of their words. Real life experience at the hands of the criminal justice system (and not through academic or legal training) is the only way you can become a true expert. Lana Fox's and Fran Sugar's work is our success, because they have told both the truth of the 39 women they interviewed and their own truths. This is one of the first times that any government action or activity has truly reflected the truth as we, the First Nations, know it. For this, we celebrate and are glad for this opportunity to further share those understandings. (p. 467).

Particularly crucial to the understanding of this excerpt is the emphasis on truth telling. As previously noted, research regarding Indigenous women who were federally incarcerated had not yet been conducted (Hayman, 2006); thus, their knowledges were – and still are – critical in the pursuit of criminological knowledge pertaining to the federal incarceration of women in Canada. Of course, their knowledges are also crucial to pursue for their own merit as well. Vitally, the focus on truth telling in this excerpt supports my methodological decision not to edit – for swearing, alternative spelling, or grammar – *Tightwire* passages that I quote throughout my dissertation. Indeed, both this practice and excerpt from Monture in Sugar and Fox (1989) recognize and honour Indigenous women's stories as historical truths (Anderson, 2016; Kovach, 2009; TRC, 2015).

While *Creating Choices* attempted to draw in Indigenous women's voices – and is thus a rare example of women's stories being considered in policy making – frequently when sharing, the women were met with silence by the members of Task Force (Hayman, 2006; Sugar and Fox, 1989). Indeed, Fran Sugar and Lana Fox (1989) stated in their report that "our words were met

with tense silences and appear nowhere in the minutes of the meetings. Our descriptions of the reality are buried as our sisters are buried in prison” (p. 468). Here again, the women emphasize how they felt separated and silenced – this time, from and by other members within the Task Force – despite their official inclusion. The Task Force’s lack of response to the incarcerated Indigenous women on the Task Force could be indicative of what Indigenous literature scholar Sam McKegney (2008) terms “ethical disengagement” – that is, when non-Indigenous people try to avoid doing damage to Indigenous peoples by, for instance, retreating into silence. When non-Indigenous people are silent about Indigenous peoples and stories, McKegney (2008) argues that this signals a lack of deep and respectful engagement which contributes to the obfuscation of Indigenous voices. The tangible problems with disengagement are explained by Sugar and Fox (1989):

In the past we have spoken to other Task Forces, Sentencing Commissions, reporters, investigators, Correctional Service staff, and various other people who listened politely and nodded in apparent understanding. Yet afterwards our conditions, the conditions of our sisters, remained unchanged (p. 468).

That is, even when members of the Task Force appeared to listen and understand what the women were saying, this was not enough as it did not result in changes that the women had hoped for. Indigenous woman, Sandy Sayer, provides some telling reality regarding the Task Force in *Tightwire*. In her story in the Native Section, Sayer (1989¹¹⁷) says “all I ask is the truth spoken, written and heard. No more rearranging the puzzle so it looks good in their eyes, for their files” (p. 40). Again, we see that Indigenous women within P4W were critically engaged with, analyzed, and critiqued CSC and its “puzzle” pieces that Sayer (1989) argues were fitting neatly into “their files” in a manner that “looks good in their eyes”. This wording suggests that CSC was doing what was in their best interest, to make themselves look good, rather than what

¹¹⁷ See Appendix 56.

was in the best interests of the prisoners. It also suggests that the ways in which CSC rearranged things within their files were untruthful and did not represent the lived realities of women. These issues were part of what created disagreement among prisoners about the best next steps for federally incarcerated women.

Not all federally incarcerated (Indigenous) women were on the same page regarding the TFFSW, the *Creating Choices* report, and the closure of P4W. In the *Creating Choices* (1990) report, it was identified that “only 19 out of 170 [federally sentenced women interviewed at P4W] said they preferred to remain at the Prison For Women” (p. 38). This preference was explained by the Task Force as related to the fact that “only a small number [of the 287 federally sentenced women on register – meaning those in prison, on day parole, and those ‘unlawfully at large’ –] are serving their sentences close to their home communities” (TFFSW, 1990, p. 38). In response to the most important factors regarding their preferred environment, the women indicated that “being as near home as possible” was their top priority, while having access to programs was the second most important factor (TFFSW, 1990, p. 39). Indeed, Julia Deroches (1992) expressed these sentiments in her story in *Tightwire*: “The news of the closure were met with mixed emotions” (p. 1). When considering the cyclical nature of criminalization and incarceration it makes sense that some prisoners were not supportive of the Task Force’s calls to close P4W. For instance, Jo-Ann Mayhew (1989b) hit the nail on the head in her story in *Tightwire*:

The prisons built for women to-day will incarcerate the daughters of tomorrow – in increasing numbers. Prisons are not left empty and the social definition of crime is easily changed. I hope Mr. Ingstrup’s Task Force will recommend and enact remedies that will avoid entrenching disaster (p. 11).

In another story, Mayhew (1988a) similarly predicted the future of Canadian corrections when she said: “certainly, women will be found to fill these cells in the next decade and in all the years

to follow. Cages for..... 2001....2010.....2020..... Is this the thoughtful planning of women for the futures of their sisters? their own children?” (p. 2). In this passage, Mayhew (1988a) questions if this is the very best that CSC’s “thoughtful planning” can accomplish for federally sentenced women – to continue incarcerating them at greater numbers throughout the decades to come. In other words, Mayhew correctly predicted that once the new federal women’s prisons were built, they would be filled, not just with the women who were incarcerated at P4W, but with many other women who had not even been born yet. Criminal lawyer Loreenne Clark expressed a similar belief in the *Creating Choices* (1990) report stating that: “If you build more prisons, you will find more women to fill them” (p. 22). Interestingly, Mayhew’s reference to the future – and children specifically – align with the concerns of many Indigenous feminists regarding their deep consideration of future generations (Anderson, 2016; Kovach, 2009; LaRocque, 2009). However, by envisioning the future of corrections, Mayhew (1988a) predicts cultural continuity in terms of the culture of punishment which, in this instance, is clearly not what the women – both Indigenous and non-Indigenous – were aiming to achieve.

Fears related to family and incarceration are also mentioned by another former P4W prisoner, Bobbie Kidd. When talking about the closure of P4W, Kidd, an Indigenous woman who is uncertain of her exact heritage, explains that:

There was a lot of bad, bad karma in the place, a lot of bad energy, and they said this place is not good at all. Actually, it was Kim Pate from E[lizabeth] Fry [Society]— they’re the ones that fought to close it [P4W]. I remember it was Joey [Twins], Frannie [Chaisson], me, and a couple other girls who fought to keep it open because, like I said, [...] we knew it was coming but we also didn’t know if we were going to be separated from each other. Like, what was going to happen. [...] you know, change is bad when you’re in prison because you’re in there for a long time and you have no control, you feel like worthless (as cited in Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, and Kidd, 2021, p. 128).

Despite experiencing many pains of imprisonment, Kidd, alongside others such as Chaisson and Twins, fought to keep P4W open. On one hand, Kidd and Chaisson witnessed and personally

experienced the atrocities that occurred at P4W and do not believe in prisons as solutions to crime, but on the other hand, they were afraid of the unknown that came with the opening of new federal women's prisons. Both Kidd and Chaisson pointed to the total lack of control they had over their lives when they were incarcerated and, in their eyes, moving to a new prison signified even less control for them. Moreover, they did not want to be separated from their fellow-prisoners who, over time, had become their family. While promising to bring women closer to their (previous) home communities and families on the outside, the closing of P4W also promised to separate the families – or Sisterhood – that had formed as a result of being imprisoned in close proximity to one another over a period of years. Because of this, the women who tried to keep P4W open understood any move by CSC to “help” as a strategy to, as Fran Chaisson (Ojibwa) says, “cover their asses” and expand carceral power (as cited in Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, and Kidd, 2021, p. 130).

Theresa Ann Glaremin, also known as Little Running Water, expressed similar feelings to her fellow Indigenous prisoners Kidd and Chaisson. Through *Tightwire*, readers are informed that a lot has changed for Glaremin since her story published earlier in the same year, including her opinion of the Task Force and its mission:

Throughout my stay at P4W, a lot of changes have happened. Now that I am forced to consider another option in doing my Federal bit, with the Elizabeth Fry Society Lobby Group shooting their mouths off about what is best for us, we are now facing the closing of P4W in exchange for mini-prisons to house Federal women. This is supposed to bring us closer to our home provinces.... Well!!! All I can say is that there are 10 provinces and I am from Newfoundland and after 8 years of being at P4W, I consider Ontario my home province (Glaremin, 1993a¹¹⁸, p. 18).

As previously mentioned in her poem (Glaremin, 1993c), Glaremin was sentenced to ten-years of imprisonment which meant that, at the time, her only option was to go to P4W. Due to the

¹¹⁸ See Appendix 57.

length of her sentence, Glaremin (1993a) felt that Kingston had become her home, and she did not want to relocate to any of the new federal women's prisons. Another fact that made Kingston feel like home to Glaremin (1993a) was that her husband was also incarcerated in Kingston:

I met and married a man doing a life (25 [year]) sentence and he is housed five minutes down the road. I do not want to go to Kitchener [location of one of the new federal women's prisons]. This will be leaving my family behind and to me that would pose hardship. It's a problem now for CSC to transfer him for our conjugal visits – 5 minutes down the road. What kind of excuses would we receive when I am transferred, by force – to Kitchener? [...] Surely they can't expect us to be torn apart from our families merely because a lobby group wants to further secure employment in their ranks. What about our rights? Now as I end this piece, I am as much a basket case as when I came here regarding the stripping away of my rights as a federally sentenced woman. What options are left for me? What is the system offering me to protect my rights and to be near my partner? My partner is my life, my strength and my hope. I don't want to be torn from him (p. 19-20).

In this passage, as well as the last, Glaremin raises issues with the Elizabeth Fry Society who she deems to be “shooting their mouths off” and “want[ing] to further secure employment in their ranks”. In other words, Glaremin (1993a) perceives the Elizabeth Fry Society as doing what is in their own best interests, rather than what they are stating is in the best interests of prisoners. She also explains how her marriage to another federal prisoner who is incarcerated in Kingston makes that community feel like home to her, and how much hardship she would face if she was forcibly separated from him. Like the women's stories before her, Glaremin (1993a) expresses fear of separation and dislocation from the only family she knows via her transfer to a new federal women's prison.

Fran Sugar (1988) similarly expresses her distrust of groups who claim to represent women in prison. In a piece submitted to the Native Section of *Tightwire* just before *Creating Choices* was published, she writes:

I learned there is a certain degree of hypocrisy in the groups that represent women in prison. The money and efforts that go into “services” is a mere band-aid effort in conspiracy with the criminal just-us system. The money and efforts would be better directed at commuting the families of the incarcerated women to the

prisons. The time that is spent on conducting study upon study is wasted time because statistics stay the same, the pain stays the same, the faces of the women change – but the stories are identical (p. 27a).

This passage helps put into perspective what many other incarcerated women likely anticipated about the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women – they were drained by all the studies which, in their experience, lead to reforms that were “more of the same” in terms of their effects. This is because of the women’s perception that reforms and new “services” were simply “band-aid effort[s]” that were more aligned with “the criminal just-us cystem” than they were with the women. Through *Tightwire*, the women expressed their disagreement and critique of the system and challenged the optimism of EFRY and some of their fellow prisoners. Another Indigenous woman who was formerly incarcerated at P4W, Sandy Paquachon, critiqued the *Creating Choices* report in a CBC news article: “Creating choices, that’s what they call it. To me, it’s creating prisons inside of prisons” (“New women’s prisons”, 2003). In other words, CSC’s choice to build more federal women’s prisons has the effect of imprisoning more women at the federal level.

Tightwire storyteller Rarihokwats shared a similar sentiment that helps contextualize women’s analyses regarding their lack of choice while incarcerated. Published in the Native Section of *Tightwire* prior to the release of *Creating Choices*, Rarihokwats (1984 says:

Select very limited alternatives, neither of which has much merit, and then tell the Indian that he indeed has a choice. Ask, for instance, if he would rather have council elections in June or December, instead of asking if he wants them at all (p. 22).

In a comparable way, *Creating Choices* likely also led some P4W prisoners to feel as though they were being asked: “How would you like the new prisons to be built?”, rather than, “Would you like new prisons to be built at all?”. In fact, after I wrote these hypothetical questions, I found in the *Creating Choices* (1990) report that Ron Schriml, a professor in the School of

Human Justice at the University of Regina, stated that the Task Force “proceeded from an assumption which assumes (erroneously) that incarceration in an institution is an appropriate response to women who commit offenses against the Criminal Code” (p. 23). I also came across a similar story in *Tightwire*. Anonymous, but signed “A Lifer”, Lifer (1989¹¹⁹) explained that: “We wanted to talk about improving this institution [P4W] – they wanted to talk about building more institutions [prisons]. We should all be talking about the abolition of prisons” (p. 12). In other words, some prisoners desired for P4W to be fixed, not to build more prisons that, as the women predicted, would come with their own sets of problems – a topic that I will take up again in my final analysis chapter.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter covered some critical contexts surrounding the women’s stories in *Tightwire* – specifically pains of imprisonment that were experienced at P4W and, at the time, the proposed carceral reforms to the federal women’s prison system put forward in *Creating Choices*. What I found by examining these contexts is that the women’s stories concerned separation, both real and imagined. They experienced separation from outside (non-incarcerated) society and their children; and they were fearful of being separated from one another via carceral reform that would drastically change where women were federally incarcerated. While it is true that all prisoners are subjected to similar carceral contexts, P4W was unique in terms of being the first ever federal prison for women in Canada – thus geographically separating women more than the prisons of today and more than the federally incarcerated men of the time who were imprisoned country-wide. To reflect this, the first section of this chapter explored what I call “the imposition” of P4W which includes women’s experiences of the prison wall, P4W’s cell block,

¹¹⁹ See Appendix 58.

and being separated from Indigenous spiritual activities such as a pow wow. In the second part of this chapter, I discussed the stories in which women expressed their complex and changing experiences of carceral motherhood. Finally, I examined the women's hopes and fears surrounding a major period of reform in women's federal corrections – which again related to separation both in terms of how the Task Force (dis)engaged with the women's perspectives and the women's anticipation of being separated from the Sisterhood

Importantly, while there are overlaps in how all the women experience their imprisonment, this chapter shows that the ways in which Indigenous women at P4W were affected by incarceration were unique relative to their non-Indigenous counterparts. For instance, building on the previous chapter, I explored how the imposition of P4W separated women from their home communities which is one more example of how the colonial logics of separation, segregation, and assimilation that Chartrand (2019) identifies played out for federally imprisoned Indigenous women in P4W. That is, due to Canada's longstanding history of separating Indigenous peoples from their communities via the residential school system – which continues today in the carceral system – the experience of separation for Indigenous women at P4W was not only gendered, but racialized and colonial – and thus distinct from non-Indigenous women's experiences of separation from their communities.

In this chapter, I also discussed the role and importance of mothers to Indigenous communities and the impact that incarceration has on Indigenous women, their children and communities. For instance, the matriarchal culture shared by many Indigenous communities highlights how all Indigenous women – not just mothers – were, and still are, perceived as communal nurturers and teachers (Anderson, 2016; LaRocque, 2009). These roles are relational and underscore Indigenous women's deep sense of responsibility to prioritize the collective

interests of their communities (Anderson, 2016; TFFSW, 1990). When Indigenous women are separated from their communities via imprisonment, they are more likely to be mothers and the sole caregivers of their children compared to non-Indigenous women (Ross, 1998; Scheuneman Scott, 2019); TFFSW, 1990). Moreover, incarcerated Indigenous women's children are more likely than their non-Indigenous counterparts to be placed in state care during their mothers' imprisonment (Scheuneman Scott, 2019; TFFSW, 1990). In cases where both Indigenous women and their children are separated from their communities – via incarceration and state care, respectively – Indigenous communities experience the loss of maternal figures as well as the next generations of their communities. In these ways, the experience of separation from family and children is experienced differently for both Indigenous women and their communities in comparison to both Indigenous men and non-Indigenous women and their communities. That is, the act of removing Indigenous women and mothers from their communities via imprisonment extends and intensifies settler colonialism and plays a key role in the continued colonial goal of separation, segregation, and assimilation (Chartrand, 2019; Scheuneman Scott, 2019).

Another example of Indigenous women's distinct experiences was their engagement with *Creating Choices*. While some Indigenous women contributed to and/or supported the report's development, others were deeply upset, critiqued it, and were fearful of its consequences. In the context of Canada's history of separating Indigenous peoples to the point that many lost contact with and/or never returned to their home communities (Chartrand, 2019; Scheuneman Scott, 2019; TFFSW, 1990; Vowel, 2016), their ability to form kinship ties and create family – or Sisters – while incarcerated speaks volumes to their resiliency and explains how impactful separation would be for them relative to non-Indigenous women who did not have the same histories of separation.

Vitally, this chapter demonstrated not only the differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous women, but the heterogeneity between Indigenous women as a group in relation to their perspectives regarding P4W, carceral motherhood, and reforms. This distinction is important to recognize because it helps mitigate the “pan Indian” stereotype that all Indigenous peoples are the same. One of the ways in which their heterogeneity was expressed was through narrative. For instance, the women’s stories demonstrated various levels of their support and/or rejection of dominant narratives about womanhood, Indigeneity and criminalization. Importantly, even when women supported dominant narratives of womanhood, Indigeneity, and criminalization, they often continued to critique them or offer alternative interpretations. By sharing their experiences with *Tightwire* readers around the world, the women also significantly contribute to non-incarcerated peoples’ understandings of criminalization and incarceration from the perspectives of those with lived experiences of both. As previously argued, these women’s stories are critical and necessary for people to engage with as they shine light onto experiences that most Canadians do not personally experience – that is, criminalization, incarceration, and racism. My work clearly speaks to colonialism and patriarchy as well – however, all people who live in Canada are engaged in those relationships whether they are aware of them or not. Most people have a lot to learn about colonialism and patriarchy as well; and the women’s stories very much speak to and analyze these often-related experiences. It is precisely because of these women’s intersectional identities – as Indigenous women who were/are incarcerated – that they have experiential knowledge which enables them to understand, analyze, and resist the oppressive relationships to which they are subject. Based on their lived experiences of these relationships, the women share their knowledges with *Tightwire* readers which empowers readers to become increasingly aware of and resistant to ongoing power imbalances and how many of us

(especially the most privileged – white, non-incarcerated, men) are complicit with and benefit from such unequal relationships.

CHAPTER SEVEN – “a safe place for Aboriginal women”?: From Indigenizing to Decolonizing Justice

Introduction

As discussed in my first analysis chapter, incarcerated Indigenous women at the Prison for Women (P4W) created the Native Sisterhood in response to their shared experiences of colonialism; however, it is important to note the group’s heterogeneity. Evidence of the group’s heterogeneity is found in their differing opinions regarding indigenization. While some Indigenous women in the Native Sisterhood did not want P4W to close because they knew this would separate the Sisters by imprisoning them in different carceral institutions (Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021; TFFSW, 1990), other Indigenous women called for its closure and supported the indigenizing of a new federal women’s prison – the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge (OOHL) (Adema, 2016; Hayman, 2006; TFFSW, 1990). Those who fought for P4W to stay open were fearful that the Healing Lodge would be just another prison but with a different name (Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021). Their fear reflects one of the critiques of indigenization – that, instead of catalyzing long standing meaningful changes, this process often leads to only surface-level changes (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Pidgeon, 2016). Several academics – including Indigenous history and governance scholar Adam Gaudry (Métis) and education scholar Danielle Lorenz (2018), as well as Indigenous education scholar Michelle Pidgeon (2016) – identify one of the critiques is that the process of indigenizing often only employs “token” changes or people. Moreover, some women believed that the Healing Lodge would ultimately expand colonial power, thereby lessening Indigenous power and sovereignty. Similar to other criminological critiques (Chartrand, 2019; Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021), many of the women recognized that while the Healing Lodge may have beneficial aspects – such

as its emphasis on Indigenous community, spirituality, and healing (Hayman, 2006) – it would ultimately still be a prison that was built and continues to operate on neoliberal colonial logics (Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021).

Given these points, I agree with critical historian Seth Adema's (2016) argument that the simultaneous processes of closing and opening prisons – specifically closing P4W and opening OOH – should be understood against the backdrop of colonization, decolonization, and neocolonialism¹²⁰. While the opening of new prisons is clearly a (neo)colonial endeavour, it should not be perceived as exclusively colonial because that would diminish the important decolonial acts of the women incarcerated at P4W (Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021). That is, while I perceive Canada's prisons as part of its ongoing colonialism and neocolonialism (for instance, the newer subtle policy and institutional changes, for example, the residential school system relative to the prison system), I respect that incarcerated Indigenous women worked to change and decolonize the prison from within it. Nevertheless, in this chapter, I argue that the indigenizing of the Healing Lodge (while developed with good intentions) represents neocolonialism insofar as prison can never be fully decolonized due to its colonial origin and entrenchment (Adema, 2016; Chartrand, 2019; Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021).

Despite some positive aspects and experiences of the Healing Lodge (see, for instance, Pollack, 2009 and Tetrault, 2022), there are many problems with the concept and practice of indigenizing. In terms of inclusion indigenizing within the context of Canadian prisons, the small number of Indigenous women with lived experience of incarceration on the Task Force of

¹²⁰ Neocolonialism is a form of colonialism that is unique to the 20th century (Adema, 2016). According to Adema (2016), neocolonialism is an adaptation of colonialism that masquerades as tolerance and is invisible to non- Indigenous peoples who engage in such practices.

Federally Sentenced Women (TFFSW) relative to women without lived experience is one example that is consistent with tokenism. Another example is that, initially, only one Healing Lodge was developed amongst a handful of federal women's prisons that remained largely non-indigenized. On the surface, the Healing Lodge may seem revolutionary; however, in practice, it does not change the prison system and, given that the prison is a colonial institution, indigenizing that is based on inclusion – rather than integration – fails to completely transform Indigenous women's experiences of incarceration. I am not suggesting that we do away with indigenized prisons or Indigenous programming; rather – along with the women – I am critiquing this type of surface-level indigenizing and arguing that we need decolonization – or decolonial Indigenization. It is important to note that the women who published their stories in *Tightwire* did not have lived experience of the Healing Lodge at the time of *Tightwire*'s production as the new prison opened the same year that *Tightwire* ceased production – in 1995. Nonetheless, I argue that the women's stories shed light onto problems of indigenization. In this chapter, I draw on women's stories in *Tightwire* to an analysis of the Healing Lodge. I highlight both the storytellers' critiques of indigenization and their ideas for a decolonized justice. In sum, what I set out to accomplish here is to analyze the indigenization of prisons from the perspective of Indigenous storytellers, thinkers, cultural critics, and knowledge keepers who employed the pages of *Tightwire* to assess, analyze, and theorize the carceral landscape.

It is crucial to note that this chapter contains a variety of stories that were reprinted in *Tightwire* from outside sources, such as the Elizabeth Fry (E-Fry) Newsletter and the Status of Women Journal. Despite the women not being the creators of these stories, they remain significant points of analysis because the women – likely *Tightwire* editors – chose to include these stories for publication. The fact that women shared political and scholarly works in

Tightwire meant that they were actively aiming to critically educate and politicize P4W prisoners with tools needed to better understand and navigate the CJS. In this way, *Tightwire* acted as a mediating vehicle from and in which prisoners learned about and shared their activism which ultimately shaped how P4W prisoners' and *Tightwire* subscribers perceived and experienced Canada's CJS.

In the first part of this chapter, I assess the Healing Lodge in order to expand on and explore the women's perspectives of indigenizing in the criminal justice context. Overall, while an indigenized Healing Lodge seems to hold more promise than non-indigenized prisons – in terms of, for instance, its cultural appropriateness – the stories in *Tightwire* identify problems with indigenizing. Indeed, the women in *Tightwire* correctly predicted the eventual outcome of the Healing Lodge – it quickly reverted to a neoliberal colonial carceral institution that used punitive and coercive techniques to mandate prisoners' compliance, even with Indigenous programs employed at the Lodge (Hayman, 2006; Pollack, 2009). In the following sections of this chapter, I highlight the decolonial logics that are communicated in Indigenous women's stories in *Tightwire*. These logics emphasize anti-colonial and Indigenous approaches to addressing harm. For instance, these include the goal of unlearning colonialism which necessarily involves raising awareness and education by carrying stories marked by lived experience with the intention to distinguish colonial stereotypes about Indigenous women which exasperate their experiences of criminalization. It also includes relationality and kinship as a goal and a process that has the effect of undoing colonialism. That is, by working together – Indigenous peoples as a group, and Indigenous peoples with non-Indigenous people – we can make a difference in how justice is practiced. Guided by the women's stories, in this chapter, I argue that indigenization is neocolonial. Rather than working towards indigenizing more

institutions, we – including criminologists, government officials, policy makers, organizations, and the general public – all need to learn about, contemplate, and practice decolonial acts that will enable us to think beyond the carceral system as a “solution” to “crime” and injustice.

Following this, I argue that the women’s stories in *Tightwire* primarily reject the indigenization of prisons as well as a focus on crime and criminal acts. Instead, the women’s stories call for social injustices and harms to be addressed through decolonial and restorative approaches to justice. In a sense, this last analysis chapter returns to some of the ideas expressed within my first analysis chapter – Indigenous women’s kinship (e.g., Sisterhood), healing, solidarity, and decolonial acts – thus closing the circle.

“Nowadays the government plays creator”: Indigenizing the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge

In response to the consistent and longstanding concerns of federally sentenced Indigenous women, the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) decided to indigenize one of the new federal women’s prisons – the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge – also commonly referred to as the Healing Lodge or Lodge. According to the Minister of Agriculture Bill McKnight – who, at the time, was visiting P4W for a press conference and was quoted in Julia Deroches’ (1992) story in *Tightwire*, the Healing Lodge is “a small institution which offers Aboriginal women the opportunity of serving their sentence in a facility developed and operated based on Aboriginal culture, traditions, and teaching” (p. 3). Importantly, an excerpt from the newsletter by Elizabeth Fry Society (1992) reproduced in *Tightwire* stated that the Healing Lodge provided all federally sentenced Indigenous women with “the opportunity to choose to serve all, part or none of their sentence in the healing lodge” (p. 9PDF). Recommended by the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women – which I discussed in chapter six – the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge was

considered a new concept of incarceration that would provide Indigenous women with opportunities to heal, deal with their present circumstances, and prepare for their future responsibilities (Hannah-Moffat, 2001).

However, changes had been on the horizon for Indigenous prisoners for some time prior to the development of OOHL. For instance, two years prior to the establishment of the Task Force on Aboriginal Peoples in Federal Corrections in 1987, an Anonymous (1985b¹²¹) storyteller in the Native Section of *Tightwire* commented on how there have “been innovations in the criminal justice system” and that “These innovations are meant to ease the plight of the Native prisoners” (p. 24). Specifically, Anonymous identifies what they perceive to be a shift in correctional staff’s attitudes regarding the benefits and importance of culture for Indigenous prisoners. They write: “In penitentiaries, the attitudes toward Native culture has changed somewhat. Authorities are now beginning to recognize the value of cultural programs” (Anonymous, 1985b, p. 24). While this shift in attitude is critical to any positive change for Indigenous prisoners, Anonymous (1985b) also reminds *Tightwire* readers that:

One must not forget that it has been a long and constant struggle to be able to practice Native Spirituality inside the walls. It is not as if C.S.C. has made it easy for the Native Prisoner by giving it to them on a silver plater. There are many prisoners across Kanada who are not being given their right to practice their Native Spiritual Ways (p. 24, emphasis in original).

In other words, it is important to note that CSC did not simply hand over Indigenous rights to Indigenous prisoners – Indigenous prisoners had to, and continue to, fight for their rights in the Canadian prison system.

¹²¹ See Appendix 59.

One example of an Indigenous woman fighting for her rights is Fran Sugar (1987¹²²) who shared her story in the Native Section of *Tightwire*. In her nine-page story, Sugar states that she is:

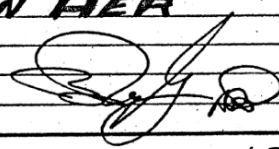
making a plea to all concerned citizens; namely Alberta Human Rights Commission and the Ombudsman of Alberta in hopes of gaining equal spiritual religious rights for myself and any other native people who practice Native Spirituality as a way of life (p. 22).

In her larger story, Sugar details many instances of discrimination in relation to her “spiritual religious rights” as a Cree woman imprisoned at Edmonton Remand Centre (ERC). One of these instances was the differing rules governing visits with her Elder compared to non-Indigenous prisoners’ visits with their spiritual advisors. Another instance regarded an eagle feather that CSC refused to allow in Sugar’s possession. Included in her story is a photocopy of an official memo that one correctional security staff wrote about Sugar:

¹²² See Appendix 60.



QUICK MEMO

Memo To:	Memo From:	Re:
1/11 PROPERTY	B DYKLEY ADD (Security)	"Feather" Property - Francis SUGAR-DUVALDE
Date: 27 Jan 1987	Telephone No:	File No:
Please initial/sign and return <input type="checkbox"/>	For your information/attention <input type="checkbox"/>	Please discuss with me <input type="checkbox"/>
Please complete/note and return <input type="checkbox"/>	Your comments, please <input type="checkbox"/>	As per our discuss/ telephone conversation <input type="checkbox"/>
Please return copy of your reply <input type="checkbox"/>	Please reply direct <input type="checkbox"/>	Please draft reply signature <input type="checkbox"/>
REMARKS		
1. Find attached one feather with beads and leather ties, which was delivered by the Solicitor of Francis SUGAR-DUVALDE.		
2. Record this item in to her property file and place the feather with her other effects. SHE IS NOT TO HAVE THIS IN HER POSSESSION!		
		

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Figure 12 – Sugar, F. (1987¹²³). Untitled. Tightwire (21, 3). pp. 22-28, 28a-28b.

Despite the sacredness of eagle feathers to many Indigenous communities (Vowel, 2016), the memo details that the eagle feather given to Sugar by her lawyer was to be put with her personal effects that she could not access until she was released from ERC. However, she “did not request that it be placed in property for safe keeping”; rather she “specifically requested it be forwarded to” her “personal possession on 5B [cell block range]” (Sugar, 1987, p. 25). In other words,

¹²³ For the purpose of readability, I flipped this page of Sugar’s story. Readers can decipher the original orientation of the page by the page number (28a) as well as see it for themselves within Appendix 60.

despite the eagle feather being a spiritual artifact that was gifted to her, prison staff deemed the feather as unacceptable for Sugar to have in her possession. Indigenous prisoners, such as Fran Sugar, have helped pave the way for CSC's acceptance of Indigenous spiritual artifacts. Indeed, on the concluding page of Sugar's story, she includes a photocopy of a letter from Denis St. Arnaud, the Regional Director of the Alberta Human Rights Commission, regarding her complaints. In the letter, St. Arnaud provides six points that he believes were agreed upon during his meeting with Fran Sugar's Elder – Gary Neault – and C. Thomas – the Director of ERC. These points lay out basic contexts in which Sugar is permitted to visit with Neault and are provided to “resolve the issue and avoid future problems with respect to the visitation of inmates” (St. Arnaud, as cited in Sugar, 1987, p. 85). While, in many ways, this example is one of success – on paper, Sugar was permitted equal access to her Elder – it is important to note that, in attempting to address Sugar's valid concerns, Arnaud positioned the proposed solutions within CSC's operational framework. I argue that this positioning is an example of indigenizing where Indigenous concerns are included within an existing colonial framework and thus do not work to decolonize or dismantle the colonial system (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Pidgeon, 2016).

While Sugar's experience described above occurred while she was remanded in a provincial prison – which, as the women in *Tightwire* have indicated numerous times, has less prison programming than federal prisons – in P4W, Anonymous (1985b) explains in the Native Section of *Tightwire* that they are permitted to practice Indigenous spirituality. In their story, they state that: “The Correctional Service has also been emphasizing programs focusing on the special needs of the Native prisoner. Natives now have the right to practice their own religion (sweat lodges, sweet grass ceremonies) inside the walls” (p. 24). Like the previous chapter, this story also emphasizes separation via “the [prison] walls” – as well as how certain things like

Indigenous spirituality can, at times, traverse the walls. Together, these stories show that Indigenous prisoners have different realities and experiences of the prison system – which is not surprising given the carceral institution was not originally intended to accommodate their spiritual views, kinship practices, or overall voice (with the arguable exception of the Lodge).

Regardless of the Healing Lodge’s many flaws, some of which I discuss shortly, feminist criminologist Kelly Hannah-Moffat (2001) argues that the Lodge “is perhaps the closest that the Canadian government has come to resolving the ‘predicament of governing’ aboriginal prisoners in a politically acceptable way” (p. 158). Importantly, the Healing Lodge’s vision, operational plan, and architecture were developed in consultation with Indigenous peoples – including the Nekanee community on whose land the prison was built – and are believed by CSC to reflect Indigenous traditions and spirituality (Hayman, 2006). Reprinted in *Tightwire*, an excerpt from the Elizabeth Fry Society Newsletter (1992) explains that “To facilitate the continued input of Aboriginal women’s expertise in the process of the lodge’s development and implementation, an Advisory Council to CSC will also be formed” (p. 9PDF). This council was the Healing Lodge Planning Circle (HLPC) and its responsibilities included developing the amenities of the Lodge (Hayman, 2006).

Due to budgetary constraints, certain non-Indigenous aspects of the original design – such as a gymnasium and family visiting houses – were axed; however, the Healing Lodge was built with an Elders’ Lodge, a cedar tipi, and a day care (Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Hayman, 2006). Even with these amenities that, at first glance, appear to reflect Indigenous values and traditions, Stephanie Hayman (2006), author of *Imprisoning Our Sisters: The New Federal Women’s Prisons in Canada*, points out that:

Aboriginal groups involved in the HLPC were helping to provide a system of punishment for Aboriginal women that had no cultural

foundation in Aboriginal practices... [they] felt they had no other option and, within those constraints, they fought hard to instill Aboriginal influences at the lodge (p. 211).

That is, despite the cultural inappropriateness of incarceration for Indigenous peoples, participating Indigenous groups worked together to help ensure that the Healing Lodge was premised, as much as possible, on Indigenous philosophies.

Indigenous criminologist Lisa Monchalin, who is Algonquin, Métis, Huron, and Scottish, elaborates on the incongruence between Indigenous and Euro-Canadian conceptualizations and practices of justice in her book *The Colonial Problem: An Indigenous Perspective on Crime and Injustice in Canada* (2016). Monchalin (2016) points out that no Indigenous cultures on Turtle Island practiced methods of incarceration or used any type of holding cells; rather Indigenous laws emphasized social harmony, restoring balance, and re-establishing peace. They accomplished this via, for example, the intergenerational sharing of stories that encourage pro-social behaviours and community values (Anderson, 2016; Monchalin, 2016). These philosophies and practices are in direct contrast to Euro-Canadian – and Western – perspectives of justice which uphold moral regulation, retribution, and punishment, often via imprisonment (Monchalin, 2016; Sangster, 2021).

Julia Deroches (1992) reports in her story in *Tightwire* that in order to avoid some of these contradictions, the TFFSW planned to indigenize the Healing Lodge which:

was developed with the knowledge of the wider societal understanding of women's and Aboriginal people's disadvantaged experience. It was based on the belief that a holistic approach to the treatment of federally sentenced women is required to address the historical problems (p. 3).

While a holistic approach is in line with many Indigenous traditions that focus on creating balance between the spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional parts of oneself (Monchalin, 2016), the fact that Deroches only mentions the historical, rather than the continuing, nature of

problems reflects the widespread misunderstanding that colonialism is a historical event rather than an ongoing process. In thinking through this common misperception, I ask how can a colonial institution holistically address ongoing colonial problems that they first created and then maintained?

In trying to improve the conditions of imprisonment for federally sentenced women, the Healing Lodge operationalized several principles. In her story, *Tightwire* editor Deroches (1992) understands the Lodge as:

predicated on the principles of empowerment, meaningful choices, respect and dignity, supportive environments and share[d] responsibility. The plan places high emphasis on the need for federally-sentenced woman to recover from past trauma, and to develop self-esteem and self-sufficiency through programs and services designed to respond to their needs (p. 3).

Again, the emphasis on “past trauma”, as opposed to the recognition of ongoing trauma aligns with the misconception that trauma only occurs in the past – that is, prior to women’s incarceration. However, it is crucial to note that the prison system itself contributes to the traumatizing and re-traumatizing of all women, but especially Indigenous women for whom the prison is culturally inappropriate and contributes to the intergenerational trauma of Indigenous peoples by separating them from their outside communities (Chartrand, 2019; Hannah Moffat, 2001; Sangster, 2021; Sims, 2020). That is, because the prison is a colonial site, it traumatizes incarcerated Indigenous peoples and their communities. Thus, while these principles seem effective on the surface, we must continue to question how they are in practice. In her work, Hannah-Moffat (2001) describes how these principles intended to instill:

- healing – knowledge and understanding of oneself and the issues that affect one’s life;
 - equality – knowledge and ability to empower oneself and to work from an equal position;
- and

- Indigenous spirituality and tradition – acquire or deepen knowledge and understanding of one’s role as a woman, mother, and community member through Indigenous teachings, traditions, and spirituality.

At first glance, these concepts appear to align with the values of traditional Indigenous justice (Monchalin, 2016; Park, 2016) and left unproblematized, the principles – put forth in *Creating Choices* and discussed by Deroches (1992) above in her story published in *Tightwire* – seem to hold positive value. However, when critically assessed, I believe they are damage-centered (Tuck, 2009) by their almost exclusive focus on victimhood. Moreover, they reproduce hegemonic white-normative gender roles, for instance, by assuming that all women need Western conceptualizations of “healing” which often involve psychotropic medications (Kilty, 2012), and by emphasizing intensive motherhood which prescribes a woman’s role as well as dominating parenting practices. While the victimization experiences of Indigenous peoples are very real (see Bucerius, Oriola, & Jones, 2021) and they should certainly not be dismissed, it is nonetheless vital that Indigenous peoples are not solely characterized as victims.

In the excerpt of Elizabeth Fry Society’s Newsletter (1992) that was reprinted in *Tightwire*, readers learn more about how E-Fry believed the Lodge’s principles were intended to promote:

a safe place for Aboriginal women prisoners; a caring attitude towards self, family and community; a belief in individualized client-specific planning; an understanding of the transitory aspects of Aboriginal life; an appreciation of the healing role of children who are closer to the spirit world; and pride in surviving difficult backgrounds and personal experiences” (p. 9PDF).

This excerpt identifies various features of Elizabeth Fry Society’s interpretation of the Lodge’s principles that align with Indigenous traditions and values such as “the healing role of children”. Importantly, the Elizabeth Fry Newsletter (1992) also points out what they believe are the far-reaching goals of the Healing Lodge:

The philosophy of the program will be holistic, its focus, to address the needs of federally sentenced Aboriginal women. It is projected that these needs will include working through the issues associated with health, sexual, physical and emotional abuse, relationships and addictions. An outreach program will be implemented to facilitate the transition to the city. This will include upgrading education, vocational training, employment counselling and teaching life skills (p. 7).

In this passage, E-Fry puts forward the notion of holism – that is, to address issues spanning across various types of abuse – “sexual, physical and emotional”, while also focusing on increasing health, education, and general life skills. To address different aspects of a person’s self aligns with Indigenous traditions regarding the (re)creation of balance in one’s life (Monchalin, 2016).

Shoshana Pollack (2009), a critical social worker and scholar, conducted a study in which she found some Indigenous women had positive experiences of imprisonment, all of which occurred at the OOHL. Of the 68 women Pollack interviewed, 22 were Indigenous and 11 of these women had spent time in both the Healing Lodge as well as non-indigenized prisons (such as Edmonton Institution For Women – EIFW). All the women spoke to the coercive nature of federal prisons, despite the prison’s women-centered rhetoric – derived from *Creating Choices* – that emphasized healing and empowerment, and promised women treatment for all kinds of ailments such as mental health, addictions, and abuse. At the same time, Pollack (2009) found that women who had been incarcerated at the OOHL experienced its culture and climate as significantly less hostile than non-Indigenized prisons. The women primarily attributed this to Indigenous programming and philosophies that emphasize holistic approaches to life and healing (Pollack, 2009; Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021). This finding supports the positive and meaningful effects of culture as well as the vitality of cultural continuity (Dell et al., 2014; Monchalin, 2016; Park, 2016; Waldram, 1997).

Bobbie Kidd – an Indigenous woman who was previously incarcerated at P4W and knows several other Indigenous prisoners who were incarcerated at the Healing Lodge also describes some positive aspects of the Lodge (Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, and Kidd, 2021).

Kidd argues that the Healing Lodge:

can help a lot of people but they only started that like a few years ago right. It wasn't like, they never had that for any of us before. [...] when they opened up that place, I seen a few women go there and I've seen it really do a lot of good for people there. But I've also seen that people were scared to go there because, again, it's the unknown, you know what I mean? It's the unknown, like "what kind of place is this going to be?" because it is supposed to be like a kind of jail too right, 'cause they have to have some kind of security 'cause you're leaving from a federal prison to a Healing Lodge (as cited in Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021, p. 129-130).

Importantly, Kidd identifies not only the value of the Lodge – “I've seen it really do a lot of good for people”, but she also speaks to the women's uncertainties – “what kind of place is this going to be?”, and predictions – “it is supposed to be like a kind of jail too”. Referring to how OOHL is still a federal prison, Kidd states:

that's why a lot of women didn't want to go there; but I've seen where a lot of people liked it too and I've seen where it did help change a lot of women. I'm glad that they have that [Healing Lodge] there (Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021, p. 130).

In other words, while some women incarcerated at P4W did not want to go the Lodge because they perceived it as just another prison, Kidd nonetheless argues that “it did help change a lot of women” who were incarcerated there; and overall, she would prefer an indigenized prison rather than a non-indigenized prison. I agree with Kidd's complex understanding of indigenizing the carceral system. On one hand, it is better than nothing through its partial inclusion of Indigenous philosophies; on the other hand, it is not a viable method of harm control nor does it fully address or ameliorate Indigenous women's experiences of the prison as a colonial place.

In carrying out its various functions that were guided by Indigenous traditions, the location of the Healing Lodge, as well as local community involvement, were paramount.

Tightwire storyteller, Julia Deroches (1992) explains her interpretation of the importance of the Lodge's location:

With respect to the Healing Lodge, a prairies location was suggested by the Task Force Report because 66.6% of federally sentenced Aboriginal women are from that region. The specific location will need to be determined by the Correctional Service of Canada in consultation with Aboriginal groups, and [and] will need the support of a neighbouring native community in order to be viable (p. 3).

This excerpt demonstrates what Deroches believes was the thinking behind the Healing Lodge. Its location was intended to help ease the pains caused by the geographical dislocation of Indigenous women from their communities, and the outside Indigenous community was critical to the success of the Healing Lodge in terms of providing, what was believed by many to be, a more “culturally sensitive” approach to federal women’s corrections in Canada (Bird, 2021; Hayman, 2006). In the same story, Deroches (1992) explains how this “new” woman-centered and indigenized approach to the carceral was recommended by the TFFSW to operate “premised on a program philosophy that approximates community norms, focuses on extensive utilization of the community expertise, and is geared to the safe release of of federally sentenced women at the earliest possible point in their sentence” (p. 3-4). Moreover, Deroches (1992) identifies the outlook of Doug Lewis, the Solicitor General at the time, as involving “the vision of closer ties to one’s home community, and a quicker and more substantial integration back into the society in order to further the healing processes for many women who were victims of abuse before becoming criminals” (p. 4). Together, these excerpts from Deroches’ story in *Tightwire* communicate her understanding of the stated intentions of the Healing Lodge which aimed to center community and restore prisoners for the purpose of releasing incarcerated Indigenous women as safely and quickly as possible from prison. Vitrally, stories like these confirm what

women like Deroches knew to be true about the Healing Lodge. They also show that women who published in *Tightwire* and people who read and/or subscribed to *Tightwire* were – or became – familiar with how CSC was promoting indigenization of the Healing Lodge.

Through the incorporation of Indigenous philosophies which emphasize kinship, or community, the TFFSW sought to create a more culturally sensitive corrections for Indigenous women. Some of the ways in which this philosophy was believed to be intended by the TFFSW to come to fruition at the Lodge is discussed in an excerpt of the Elizabeth Fry Society Newsletter (1992) that was reprinted in *Tightwire*:

The Lodge will be circular in structure and located within a natural healing environment. There will be a round meeting room for ceremonies, teachings, workshops with Elders. On-site daycare will enable mothers to be with their children. Prisoner[s] may choose to live communally, in family units or close to the land (p. 9PDF).

Here again, the location of the Lodge is stressed in terms of its proximity to “a natural healing environment”. The circularity of the Lodge as well as its meeting room also have roots in Indigenous traditions across Turtle Island and symbolize mutual balance and harmony (Monchalin, 2016). Kinship is another strength of the Lodge’s design – not only direct family ties (children of incarcerated mothers) but also broader communal ties (Elders) and ties to the land (Nekaneet territory). As previously discussed, this emphasis on kinship and community is key to Indigenous cultures (Anderson, 2016; Monchalin, 2016). An Anonymous (1992c¹²⁴) storyteller in the Native Section of *Tightwire* explains the importance of Elders to Indigenous peoples and communities:

Today and as far back as our people can remember, it has been the Elder’s who arr [are] the foundation of Aboriginal peopels. // I sit back, appreciating what our Elder’s have taught todays warriors and those from long ago. Without their wisdom, our people would be lost. So... I write this with the hope that readers will thank our Elders, especially those that take the time to be with those of us

¹²⁴ See Appendix 61.

who need their help. Let us not forget that the Elders have families of their own and yet willingly take the time to come inside [the prison] to share their knowledge of life. I give my thanks to them (p. 21).

As stated in this excerpt from Anonymous' story, Elders teach traditional knowledges and ways of life that would otherwise "be lost" without their ability and willingness to share. Losing the ability to share and receive transgenerational Indigenous knowledges lessens the likelihood of cultural continuity. In other words, the way in which Elders share stories is a crucial aspect of how Indigenous peoples traditionally transmit and carry knowledge (LaRocque, 2007; 2009). Indeed, community-based justice scholar Augustine Park (2015) identifies how Elders play a central role in guiding their communities – for instance, towards healing – by explaining how things should move forward, what should be done, and how ceremonies should be conducted. Another crucial part of Elders' role and skillset is their ability to help peacefully resolve disagreements – which earns them a lot of respect from their communities (Park, 2015). I argue that Indigenous women's stories in *Tightwire* similarly share and transmit knowledges and, without guaranteed access to Elders, *Tightwire* became an even more critical pedagogical tool – a public square (Voyageur, 2005) – for (incarcerated) Indigenous women as well as its readers. Indeed, Elders were, and are, not always able to access the prison to provide services and kinship to incarcerated people for a variety of reasons; nor were Elders "given the same stature or respect by correctional organizations as are chaplains, doctors or psychologists, either as a group of more specifically, as individuals" (TFFSW, 1990, p. 51). Anonymous (1992c) recognizes this as they emphasize their appreciation for the Elders who take time away from their own families to come inside the prison to teach and support incarcerated Indigenous women.

However, just like spiritual artifacts can be denied to Indigenous prisoners (Sugar, 1987), so can Elders be denied entry into the prison – thus denying prisoners of their spiritual rights, Indigenous services, and traditional kinship practices. One instance of this is discussed by

JORDI in her story “ON BEHALF OF THE SISTERHOOD & POPULATION” (1991¹²⁵) in the Native Section of *Tightwire*.

RESPECTED MEMBERS OF OUR NATIVE ELDERS HAVE BEEN ARBITRARILY DENIED ENTRY INTO THE PRISON FOR WOMEN. THUS PUNISHING EVERY ABORIGINAL WOMAN IN HERE THEIR RIGHT TO SPIRITUAL FREEDOM AND GUIDANCE. ANOTHER CLASSIC CASE OF OVERREACTION BY ADMINISTRATION. AS WELL AS THE NON NATIVE WOMEN WHO SUFFER ALSO. [...] THE NATIVE ELDERS STILL HAVE NO IDEA OF THE CONTENT OF THE ALLEGATION MADE AGAINST THEM BY THE CSC AND WHERE THEY GOT THE INFORMATION TO BAR THEM FROM THE PRISON WITHOUT JUST CAUSE. THE EFFECT OF THAT DECISION RESULTED IN: / 1. CUT OFF ALL NATIVE PROGRAMS INCLUDING A DRUG AND ALCOHOL, SEXUAL ABUSE GROUP. / 2. REMOVE ACCESS TO THE FEW PEOPLE WHO EVER MADE A DIFFERENCE TO US. / 3. ARBITRARILY DECIDE WHO WE MAY OR MAY NOT SEE REGARDING OUR SPIRITUALITY. / AND THIS IS IN THE FACE OF THE MISSION DOCUMENT AS WELL AS THE RECENT TASK FORCE AND AS WELL AS CD770 “SPECIAL NEEDS OF THE FEMALE OFFENDER AND ABORIGINAL WOMEN” (p. 23, emphasis in original).

This excerpt demonstrates JORDI’s perception of the arbitrary nature in which CSC bases its decisions regarding who is permitted entry into P4W. Her story shows that Elders are extremely important to incarcerated Indigenous women, referring to Elders as “THE FEW PEOPLE WHO EVER MADE A DIFFERENCE TO US”. JORDI also identifies the hypocrisy of CSC by pointing to how their decision goes against multiple official documents, reports, and Task Forces, thus demonstrating the difference between policies and on the ground practices.

In its reprint in *Tightwire*, the Elizabeth Fry Society (1992) similarly emphasized the important role that Elders play in the lives of Indigenous women, particularly those who are incarcerated: “The participation of Elders will be critical to the lodge’s success. At least one Elder will be on location full time to provide a variety of spiritual expertise” (p. 9PDF-7). While the ability to engage with and form meaningful relationships with Elders is paramount to the

¹²⁵ See Appendix 62.

cultural continuity of all Indigenous peoples, for incarcerated Indigenous women who are separated from their cultures in every way imaginable during the incarceration period, Elders become even more critical. It is important to note that the impacts of ongoing settler colonialism exceed and predate the hyper-incarceration of Indigenous peoples. This is reflected, for instance, in the fact that many incarcerated Indigenous peoples were separated and/or removed from their home communities and cultural practices prior to their incarceration – for instance via the residential school and/or child welfare systems (Chartrand, 2019; Scheuneman Scott, 2019). Moreover, there are Indigenous people who only begin learning about their cultural roots while they are incarcerated. However, even if the prison system was culturally appropriate for Indigenous peoples, only one Elder per 60 imprisoned Indigenous women is quantitatively and qualitatively insufficient to reflect the number of women as well as their distinct cultural backgrounds. The limited number of Elders in prison could be reflective of several things such as CSC’s non-specific or pan-Indigenous approach and the inability and/or unwillingness of Elders to work or volunteer within a carceral institution.

A related example of this is discussed by Mohawk legal scholar Patricia Monture-Angus (2006) who visited the Lodge in the early 2000s after being a member of the TFFSW. Of her experience she said: “One of the Elders expressed to me that ‘there was not enough Aboriginal programming at the Lodge’” (Monture-Angus, 2006, p. 30). This statement reflects the Elder’s belief that CSC did not realize what it set out to. As Monture-Angus (2006) explains, the Lodge “was to be in its entirety an Aboriginal ‘program’ (or Aboriginal space). It was not to rely on discrete Aboriginal programs to supplement the core programs of CSC” (p. 30). The Elder’s statement to Monture-Angus also likely reflects the extremely small number of qualified

individuals (i.e., Elders) who could facilitate such meaningful programming at the Healing Lodge.

Regardless, the concept of kinship and relationships was, at first, a distinguishing factor of the Healing Lodge relative to other federal women's prisons, even in terms of positive relationship building between prisoners and staff (Hayman, 2006; Pollack, 2009). One example of how these relationships function in a prison setting is through security measures. Unlike EIFW, the fact that the Healing Lodge had no major incidents in its opening months demonstrates the potential for successful dynamic security¹²⁶ within the prison setting (Hayman, 2006). Moreover, from 2008 to 2018, CSC reports that there were no escapes from the Lodge (Stefanovich, 2018, October 22). Two examples of how the Healing Lodge staff commonly built relationships with the women was by attending daily morning ceremonies at the cedar tipi and eating lunch with prisoners; however, these practices rarely occur anymore (Hayman, 2006).

Despite the benefits of the Healing Lodge relative to other federal women's prisons, scholars such as Kelly Hannah-Moffat (2001) and Monture-Angus (2000) point to its inherent problems which developed increasingly over time. Although, as critical prison studies scholar and member of the Saddle Lake Cree Nation, Danielle Bird (2021) explains, "The federal

¹²⁶ Dynamic security is broadly conceived of as correctional staff fostering "positive, regular, consistent and meaningful interactions" with prisoners by "building a rapport and trust" while "maintaining appropriate boundaries" (Correctional Service of Canada, 2020). This approach entails staff providing prisoners with "constructive feedback" in order to address "inappropriate and negative behaviours". Moreover, staff are expected to model "pro-social" behaviours. The idea behind dynamic security is for carceral staff to obtain information regarding each prisoner so that they can better predict prisoners' behaviours and officially "report and document dynamic security interactions and observations". By contrast, static security is a more controlled approach to ensuring the "security and stability of the institution and to protect the public, staff" and prisoners. In secure units – where women are classified as maximum security – there are "closed pods, a control post, cell accommodation and a secure yard" where staff monitor prisoners' behaviours, including with whom they associate (Correctional Service of Canada, 2020).

government and the CSC's creation of the OOHl is considered by many criminal justice agents as a culturally valid response to addressing the needs of federally incarcerated Indigenous women and some Indigenous women agree" (p. 111-112), it was not intended to be the final step; and as time passed, the Lodge was supposed to move increasingly towards Indigenous control and administration (Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Hayman, 2006; Monture-Angus, 2000; Piché, Kleuskens, & Walby, 2017). That is not what happened. The dynamic security of the Healing Lodge was gradually replaced by more traditional static security – even for visitors to the prison who became subjected to handheld metal detectors (Hayman, 2006).

CSC's shift in security at the Healing Lodge went against the TFFSW's original plan which, according to Julia Deroches' (1992) story in *Tightwire*, "stresses the need for physical environments which are conducive to regeneration, highly interactive with the community, and reflective of the generally low security risk of federally sentenced women" (p. 3). It is not difficult to imagine how – with each prisoner entering the Lodge having to go through an X-ray machine, ion scanner, and a strip search (Stefanovich, 2018, October 22) – the prisoners did not feel that the Healing Lodge was "reflective of the[ir] generally low security risk" (Deroches, 1992, p. 3). With expanded security measures that intensify the pains of imprisonment and retrigger the trauma that women have previously experienced – both inside and outside of the prison system – there is no doubt that relationships between the Healing Lodge staff and the women became increasingly negative. This, in addition to the fact that not many Elders worked within the Lodge, led people to wonder how the environment of OOHl could be "conducive to regeneration" (Deroches, 1992, p. 3).

Indeed, CSC's shift in security at the Lodge relates to Rarihokwats' (1984¹²⁷) story in the Native Section of *Tightwire* in which they suggest the following colonial strategy to steal Indigenous rights in a process that simultaneously attempts to make Indigenous peoples complacent:

Make the Indian believe that things could be worse, and that instead of complaining about loss of human rights, to be grateful for the human rights he does have. In fact, convince him that to attempt to regain a right he has lost is likely to jeopardize the rights that he still has (p. 21).

This excerpt demonstrates the type of coercive reasoning that characterizes neoliberal colonial carceral systems – that is, threats to withdraw Indigenous and human rights when Indigenous peoples do not comply with colonial laws. This perception of the loss of rights is also expressed in Bev Auger's (1989) story in the Native Section of *Tightwire* where she states: "Nowadays the government plays creator. Our people hardly have rights" (p. 38). In other words, the government dictates what Indigenous peoples should and should not do by making laws that entrench colonial rule. The indigenization of the Healing Lodge that resulted in an unsurprising return to more traditional colonial functions of incarceration is also an example of how "the government plays creator".

Another issue was that the number of Indigenous staff fell while the number of non-Indigenous staff rose (Hayman, 2006) which, again, is in direct contrast with the TFFSW's expectation that the Healing Lodge be highly interactive with Indigenous peoples – specifically the local Nekaneet community. Additionally, the change in CSC staff demographics at the Lodge reduced the probability of achieving what *Tightwire* storyteller Deroches' (1992) interprets as the TFFSW's intention for the Lodge to: "be holistic in nature, culturally-sensitive and responsive to the needs of women" (p. 4). This is because, without the ongoing guidance of Elders and other

¹²⁷ See Appendix 63.

Indigenous community members, the Lodge was, and still is, incapable of being “culturally-sensitive and responsive to the needs of [Indigenous] women” (p. 4). Indeed, the *Creating Choices* (1990) report identifies that Indigenous staff – especially programming and medical staff – are essential to reduce the violence and oppression that Indigenous women prisoners experience. This was believed by the Task Force to be essential because “racism has established a situation where Aboriginal women serving federal sentences can only be further harmed” (TFFSW, 1990, p. 18). The assumption was that federally sentenced women would/could not feel oppressed by Indigenous staff.

At the same time that Elders are vital and beneficial to Indigenous peoples, CSC uses Elders’ role to “justify” the indigenization of carceral spaces. For instance, critical criminologists Justin Piché, Shanisse Kleuskens, and Kevin Walby (2017) explain how CSC uses the presence of Elders at, for instance, opening ceremonies at indigenized prisons, to frame “new” prisons as “in accordance with Indigenous practices” (p. 36). This “convey[s] the idea that penal infrastructure, which will imprison Indigenous peoples on mass, is endorsed by these groups as well” (Piché, Kleuskens, & Walby, 2017, p. 36). However, as previously mentioned in chapter six, some Indigenous members of the TFFSW were ambivalent regarding their participation in the Task Force (Sugar & Fox, 1989) – no doubt because they understood incarceration as “the antithesis of traditional healing practices and First Nations spiritualities” (Piché, Kleuskens, & Walby, 2017, p. 37).

While the number of Indigenous staff decreased at OOH, their role also shifted. Even for Elders, their roles at the Lodge became increasingly blurred between maintaining cultural and spiritual bonds with the women and relaying what prisoners believed to be confidential information back to CSC officials (Hayman, 2006). This practice of relaying information to

correctional officers often negatively affected the women's experiences of incarceration by limiting their privileges and reducing their opportunities for parole (Hayman, 2006). It would have also caused friction in the bonds between prisoners and Elders – thus rendering the Elders' presence and programs less meaningful and effective. It is instances like these – the interlacing of penal and Indigenous policies and practices – where we can really begin to understand the problems associated with CSC's expectations for federally incarcerated Indigenous women. That is, CSC expects – and demands – Indigenous women to ““heal” while still being subjected to settler colonial violence on a daily basis” within the confines of the carceral system (Bird, 2021, p. 115).

Furthermore, instead of CSC orienting more towards Indigenous community leadership and the philosophical foundation of meaningful choices and opportunities to heal in culturally sensitive ways, they shifted back to their traditional operations (Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Monture-Angus, 2000; 2006). For example, morning ceremonies were previously optional for prisoners at the Healing Lodge, but they quickly became mandated – meaning that prisoners face further punishment and/or denial of privileges should they choose not to attend (Hayman, 2006; Pollack, 2009). In this way, CSC turned what began as a traditional Indigenous healing practice into another method of coercive colonial control. Indeed, many of the women that Pollack (2009) interviewed suggested that prison staff expected the women's healing to come on the staff's terms, rather than their own, given that the routines, strategies, and methods employed by staff were often integrated into prisoners' daily correctional plans. This meant that prison staff expected healing to occur regardless of the coercive and punitive environment that undermined the therapeutic potential of counselling within the Healing Lodge, and in any prison for that

matter (Bird, 2021; Piché, Kleuskens, & Walby, 2017; Pollack, 2009; Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, and Kidd, 2021).

In an article by Olivia Stefanovich (2018, October 22) for CBC News, CSC explains that “Inmates, who are called residents at the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge, are encouraged to use Indigenous programming and spirituality to address the underlying issues that have brought them to the facility operated by Correctional Service Canada”. The irony in this statement is not addressed in this CBC article. Specifically, the fact that Indigenous women’s experiences of hyper criminalization are a result of settler colonialism – which caused the (partial) loss of Indigenous cultures – is not mentioned. In this way, the article has the effect of responsabilizing Indigenous communities for their own cultural loss and subsequent criminalization. CSC’s statement demonstrates that carceral officials perceive that they can provide incarcerated Indigenous peoples with their traditional spirituality which will then help to address their rates of hyper incarceration. However, these assumptions are founded in colonial logics and ethnocentrism, rather than based on Indigenous peoples’ perceptions and desires.

In their story titled “ON THE ART OF STEALING HUMAN RIGHTS”, published in the Native Section of *Tightwire*, Rarihokwats (1984) provides a telling analogy that helps illuminate how Indigenous peoples’ desires were increasingly dismissed at the Healing Lodge: “Consult the Indian, but do not act on the basis of what you hear. Tell the Indian he has a voice and go through the motions of listening. Then interpret what you have heard to suit your own needs” (p. 21). Although Rarihokwats was not specifically referring to the Healing Lodge, the way in which Indigenous concerns fall on deaf settler ears was and continues to be relevant to corrections and “indigenized” carceral reforms such as the Lodge. A related example that is specific to the

Healing Lodge is how CSC staff altered the methods of and expectations around Indigenous healing to suit their need for control, dominance, and authority over Indigenous women.

These and other problems identified with the Lodge (see for instance, Bird, 2021; Hannah-Moffat, 2001, Hayman, 2006, and Monture, 2006) support the women's critiques and hypotheses that indigenizing one federal women's prison did not provide meaningful or sustained solutions to Canada's colonial problem of hyper-incarcerating Indigenous peoples. To be clear, both the women in *Tightwire* and I are not suggesting that the solution is for CSC to indigenize more prisons – nor is it to “un-indigenize” currently indigenized prisons, given that there are some positive aspects to them for Indigenous women (as identified in Pollack, 2009; by Bobbie Kidd in Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, and Kidd, 2021; and Tetrault, 2022). However, in some instances, attempting to indigenize a colonial system is perceived as having little effect other than creating a “new” image – rather than reality – of incarceration. Fran Chaisson, an Ojibwa woman who was previously incarcerated at P4W, explains her perception of why CSC indigenized the Healing Lodge:

It's to cover their asses and make it look good for the white man— “Hey, look what we got for them, holy fuck, imagine that, they even got their own Healing Lodge” right? Shove it up your ass, it's CSC either way you look at it, it's still the system, you know, like really (as cited in Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, and Kidd, 2021, p. 130).

In this excerpt, Chaisson suggests that CSC officials understand that indigenizing carceral reforms function to “cover their asses” and make them “look good” by creating the idea that the Healing Lodge is something special and generous that they “got for” Indigenous women. Crucially, Chaisson expresses her frustration that the Healing Lodge is really “CSC either way you look at it” which begs the question of what indigenizing carceral reforms can actually contribute to incarcerated Indigenous women specifically as well as decolonization more broadly. Indeed, Senator Kim Pate – the

previous Executive Director of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies – explains that “The healing lodge actually most resembles what the regional [federal] prisons were supposed to look like” (cited in, Stefanovich, O., 2018, October 22). In other words, the ways in which the Task Force envisioned the new federal women’s prisons was not the result; and the Healing Lodge itself also did not achieve all the goals the TFFSW set out.

The idea of indigenization as a “new image” rather than systemic change is also well depicted in a drawing that was submitted to *Tightwire* by an Anonymous (1991) storyteller. While there are other drawings and textual stories on the page, for the purpose of this chapter, I am only concerned with Anonymous’ drawing located on the bottom left corner of the page below:

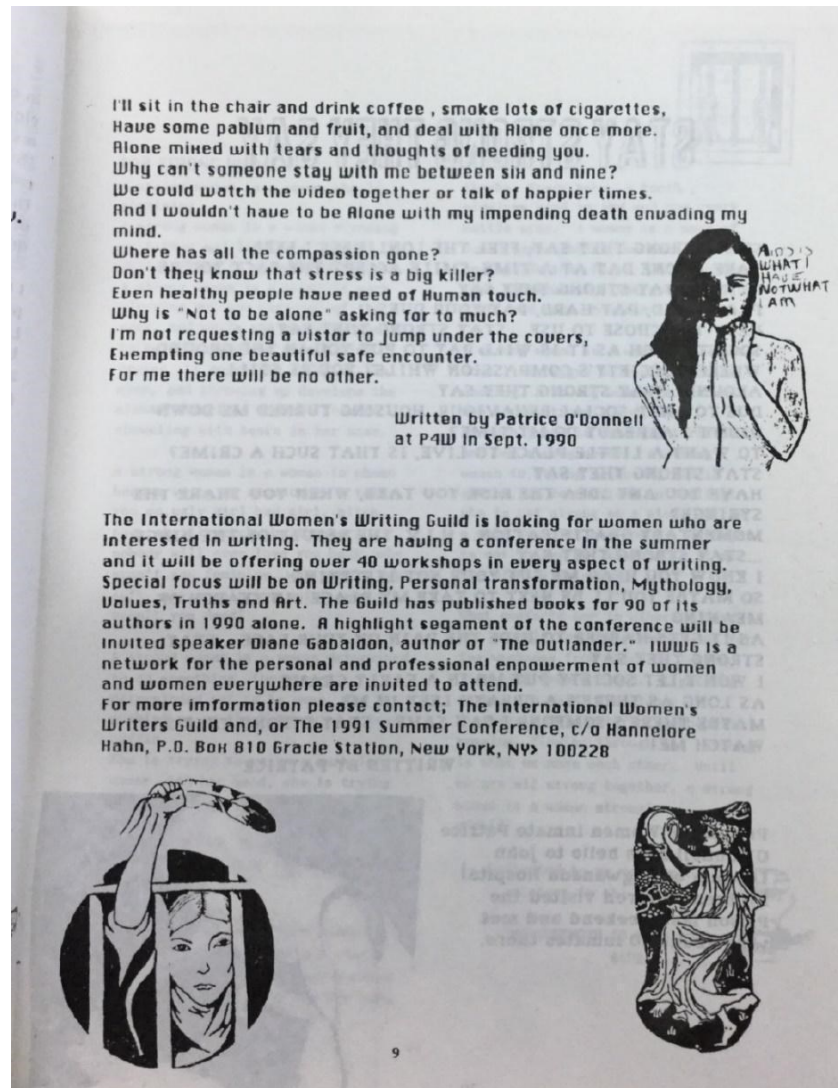


Figure 13 – Anonymous. (1991). Untitled. *Tightwire* (Spring). p. 9.

Anonymous' drawing depicts an Indigenous woman behind her cell bars, lifting a sacred eagle feather high above her head, with her arm and fist through the cell bars. This drawing symbolizes the ongoing presence and resistance of incarcerated Indigenous women. With the fist, it also symbolizes Indigenous pride and solidarity. Alternatively, the woman's fist symbolizes anger. Indeed, the raised fist is reminiscent of and used by various social movement groups as a symbol of political solidarity.

In the Native Section of *Tightwire*, Bev Auger (1989) expresses her anger and identifies who it is directed towards and for what reason: “My anger and hatred is not directed to all white people. It is directed to those who play the Creator and decide where and how our people should live their lives. // “These people are the government”.” (p. 39). In this excerpt, “the government” likely refers to actors such as CSC officials who attempt to control Indigenous women via punitive practices. While Auger only speaks of herself, there is a lot of anger expressed in the stories of Indigenous women throughout *Tightwire* – a very valid feeling given how they have been and continue to be treated, often at the hands of men. It is imperative that Indigenous narratives that are perceived as “too angry” or “attacking” by many non-Indigenous people are not dismissed as these felt experiences represent community knowledge that help to dismantle dominant settler narratives of history (Benson, 2020). Indeed, speaking of the women incarcerated in P4W, Frances Foran (1998) explains in her thesis on *Tightwire* that “the [women’s] tone became more frequently punctuated with anger and sadness at what they were suffering” which included not only prison administration’s dismissal of the laws which were supposed to govern their work, but also “the loss of dozens of women to suicide over the years” – many of whom were Indigenous (p. 12).

Overall, incarcerating Indigenous women in an indigenized Healing Lodge, rather than a non-indigenized prison, does not change the realities depicted in Anonymous’ drawing or the feelings expressed in Auger’s (1989) story – Indigenous women are still behind bars and they will continue to resist their imprisonment. Bird’s (2021) work supports this notion and argues that: “Prison reforms offer no transformative change and have yet to reduce, reverse, and eliminate the growing numbers of criminalized Indigenous women who are also underprotected by the criminal justice system” (p. 116). The paradox of invisibility (e.g., denied and/or ignored

lived experience) and hyper-visibility (e.g., surveillance and/or imprisonment) is analyzed throughout the women's stories in *Tightwire*. Chartrand (2019) makes a similar argument:

Without changing the underlying colonial relationship, we not only ignore the ways that colonialism continues to exist today; we also continue to offer colonizing arrangements as part of the remedy. This is relevant not only for Canada but also for other settler countries with similar trends and increasing rates of incarceration. As we move into justice reforms, with studies and restructuring under way in Canada, discussions should focus on this context of colonialism, with solutions rooted in untethering the colonizing relationship. This involves front-end and long-term strategies that are Indigenous-led and invested in self-determination, rights and entitlements, decarceration strategies, and the mitigation of the damaging impacts of an ongoing colonial encounter within the criminal justice system (p. 79).

Here, Chartrand provides compelling examples of how we ought to move forward regarding justice. In many ways, the women in *Tightwire* also show through their stories that indigenizing Canada's prison system is not a viable option for them; rather, they had other ideas.

“upon European contact our societies required no prisons”: A Brief Note on Decolonization

As the previous section showed, indigenizing prisons is not a solution to “the crime problem” as it pertains to Indigenous peoples. Indeed, Bird (2021) argues that indigenizing prisons reifies “the centuries-old ‘Indian Problem’ by constructing Indigenous women’s criminalization as ‘Indigenous’ problems, requiring ‘cultural’ solutions, rather than as manifestations of ongoing settler colonialism and settler colonial institutions in need to total transformation” (p. 111). Specifically, Bird (2021) identifies CSC’s indigenizing approach as pathological in its suggestion that Indigenous peoples’ criminalization results from “cultural deficiencies” and “individual dysfunctions” rather than from the effects of settler colonialism, marginalization, and oppression. The effect, Bird (2021) argues, is “sweeping ‘Indigenous cultural reclamation’ reforms” which overgeneralize the diversity of Indigenous peoples’

experiences and cultures (p. 112). The previous section also showed how indigenizing the prison is not a mechanism for achieving Indigenous justice and/or healing (Bird, 2021; Monture; 2006; Piché, Kleuskens, & Walby, 2017). Instead, decolonization is what is needed.

According to Monchalin (2016), decolonization is a process and a goal that involves the unlearning and undoing of colonialism. Decolonization reimagines relationships with and between land and people (Monchalin, 2016). Importantly, decolonization has different meanings that are dependent on whether an individual is Indigenous. For Indigenous peoples, decolonization can mean having the conviction and courage to be Indigenous, reclaiming traditional Indigenous cultures, redefining Indigenous peoples as a people, and reasserting distinct Indigenous identities (Dell et al., 2014; Monchalin, 2016). Decolonization takes many forms (Dell et al., 2014). Some examples of decolonization in practice are:

- standing up and asserting one's place as Indigenous peoples in/on Turtle Island;
- continuing to challenge Canada in respectful ways; encouraging peaceful education, awareness, and understanding of Indigenous realities and histories;
- collectively and consciously rejecting colonial identities and institutions;
- restorying cultural practices, thinking, beliefs, and values that are vital to Indigenous peoples' survival and well-being; and
- the birthing of new ideas, thinking, technologies, and lifestyles that contribute to the advancement and empowerment of Indigenous peoples (Monchalin, 2016).

For non-Indigenous peoples, decolonization involves learning and acknowledging Indigenous histories from Indigenous perspectives (Monchalin, 2016) which necessarily includes understanding how settler colonialism developed and how it remains an ongoing process on Turtle Island. Although Monchalin frames some of these points as practiced by Indigenous

peoples, I believe that settlers can also: challenge Canada, encourage peaceful education and awareness, as well as reject colonial identities and institutions.

But how does decolonization pertain to imprisonment and how can we use the concept of decolonization to think more deeply about the future of Canada's carceral system? One of the most obvious answers to this question is that we need to stop incarcerating people; instead, we need to focus on repairing relationships and healing individuals and communities who have been harmed. This latter approach aligns with perspectives of Indigenous justice that value restorative – rather than punitive – avenues to address harm (Monchalin, 2016; Piché, Kleuskens, & Walby, 2017; Vowel, 2016). Here, Indigenous perspectives are especially significant in that they hold great potential to reduce the amount of harm at the front end (i.e., prior to harm occurring) by pursuing and helping ensure harmony and health not only to individuals but to communities – thus having the capacity to benefit all people through reduced harm and incarceration rates.

Overall, the women's stories in *Tightwire* do not support prison expansion (i.e., building more prisons). This is not surprising given that prisons are culturally inappropriate for Indigenous women (Chartrand, 2019; Piché, Kleuskens, & Walby, 2017; Hannah Moffat, 2001). A story by the Status of Women Journal (1992) that was reprinted in the Native Section of *Tightwire* elaborates on this point: “Let me tell you that upon European contact our societies required no prisons, armies, police, judges or lawyers. Prostitution, rape, mental illness, suicides, homicide, child sexual abuse, and family violence were all unheard of” (p. 18). That is, Indigenous peoples did not experience many types of harms – or crimes – that occur today in Canada (Monchalin, 2016), nor did they practice organized approaches to coercively control and/or punish community members to resolve issues related to harm – unlike Canada's criminal justice system. In the Native Section of *Tightwire*, Bev Auger explains (1989) explains:

long ago, our ancestors had councils and chiefs, but their laws were made for their own tribes. **THEY DID NOT TRY AND CONTROL ALL NATIONS.** Our people lead simple lives. They were happy and they survived. They honored one another and took care of their young and old ones. The land was theirs to hunt and roam freely (p. 38, emphasis in original).

Crucial to this excerpt is Auger's identification that Indigenous peoples had laws to govern their own people; however, their laws did not attempt to govern all nations like colonial Canadian law.

A telling example of Canada's patriarchal and colonial attempts to control incarcerated women and Indigenous peoples is illuminated in a visual and textual story in *Tightwire* by LMD (1989) who analyzes the utility of prison programming and other methods of behaviour modification:

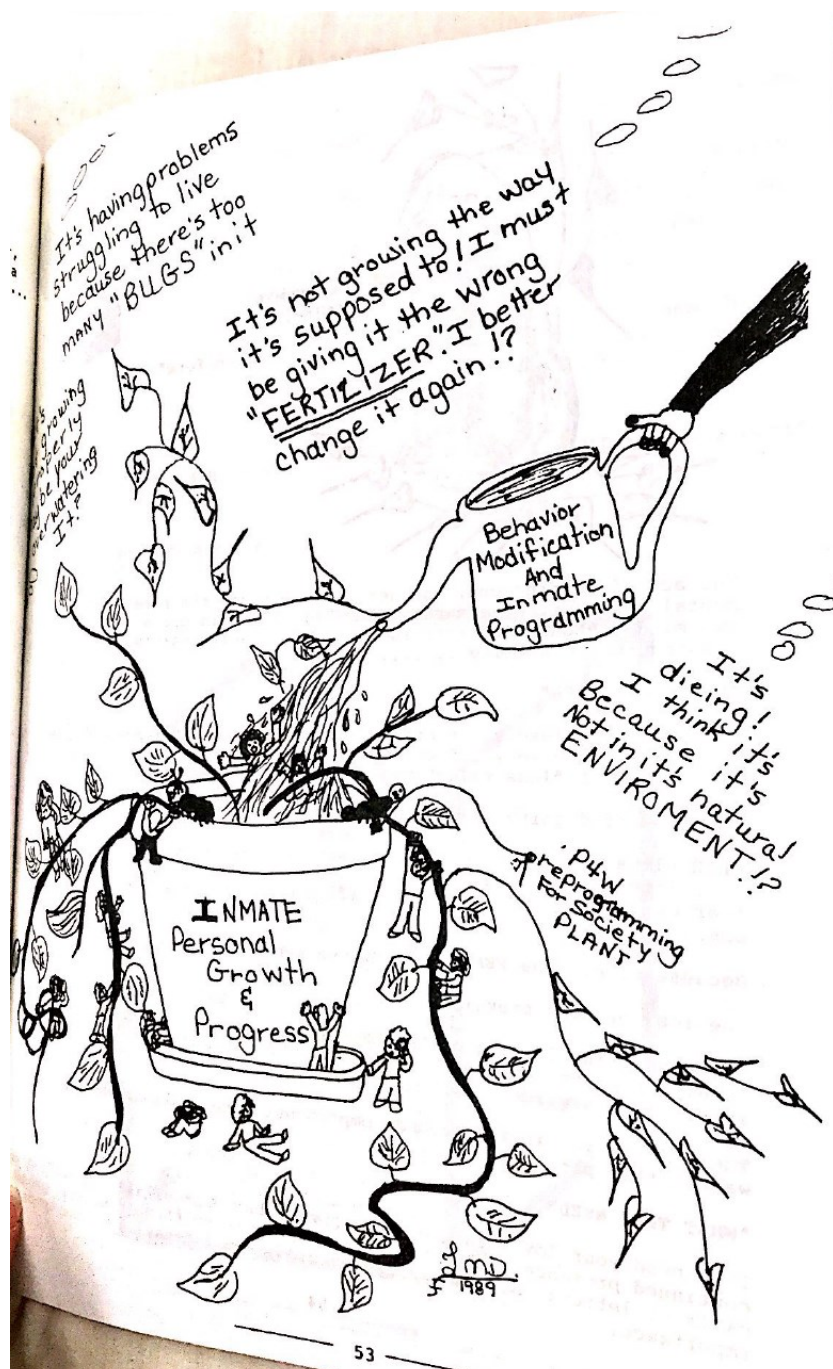


Figure 14 – LMD. (1989). INMATE Personal Growth & Progress. *Tightwire*. (V23, 3). p. 53.

In their visual and textual depiction, LMD heavily critiques CSC's methods of behaviour modification and programming. In LMD's drawing, we see a potted vine that contains tiny women prisoners – some in the pot itself, some hanging off or climbing the vines, and some on

the outside of the pot near the water saucer. The plant is called “P4W reprogramming for society PLANT”, and it is being actively watered by a hand holding a watering can called CSC’s “Behaviour Modification And Inmate Programming”. The women prisoners who are in the pot are drowning in the water that is poured on them from CSC’s watering can. Overall, LMD’s story shows readers that CSC’s tactics are ineffective.

I argue that LMD’s words are metaphors and/or euphemisms for the issues that occurred in P4W – many of which continue to occur in today’s Canadian prison system and thus are still relevant. For instance, when LMD says “it’s not growing properly maybe your overwatering it”, they could be alluding to the many programs that CSC coerces prisoners into taking that attempt to assimilate Indigenous peoples yet do little, if anything, to modify prisoners’ behaviours in accordance with mainstream societal values. In this case, LMD’s critique suggests that too many programs are ineffective for prisoners to modify their behaviours in accordance with mainstream societal values. Indeed, Indigenous women who were federally sentenced in the community and interviewed for the *Creating Choices* (1990) report explained how they “mistrust White authority” whom they experienced, in the case of prison guards, as people who physically beat them, sexually assaulted and harassed them, and verbally intimidated them (p. 43). Because of these shared experiences, Indigenous women often refused “helping” services within P4W – a refusal of which was considered by prison administration as “one more strike against them” (TFFSW, 1990, p. 44).

When LMD says “It’s not growing the way it’s supposed to! I must be giving it the wrong ‘FERTILIZER’. I better change it again!?”), they may be talking about the number of prescription drugs that CSC forces incarcerated women to ingest. I argue this because of the countless stories that I have read and personally heard from women prisoners (see, for instance,

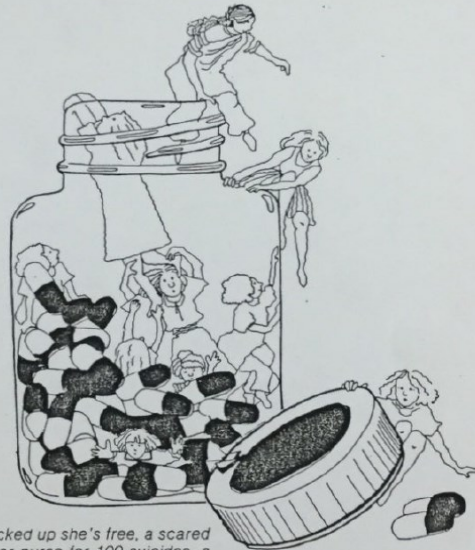
Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, and Kidd, 2021; TFFSW, 1990) regarding the coercive use of psychotropic medications within the prison system – especially for women prisoners – and how psychiatrists change prisoners’ prescriptions on a whim without the consent of the prisoner who is subjected to the prescriptions. Overall, I think the following quote does an excellent job of summarizing LMD’s critique of P4W and CSC: “It’s dieing! I think it’s because it’s not in it’s natural ENVIRONMENT!?”. I argue that this quote refers to the prison environment as an artificial and harmful place in which prisoners can expect to die – not only figuratively, but literally. This statement also strongly relates to the cultural inappropriateness of incarceration for Indigenous peoples whose justice practices do not involve imprisonment (Monchalin, 2016; Monture-Angus, 2000) – a topic that I return to shortly.

In Ahni’s (1987) story within *Tightwire* we see a similar drawing to LMD’s – but instead of a plant, it’s a pill bottle that the women are inside of and helping one another to climb out of:

Side Effects

A Dramatic Prescription

First we were all just people ... The earth turned a couple of times ... A woman got a headache ... Her friend said she knew of a flower that worked for headaches. The earth turned again ... A little boy hurt his finger ... His uncle said: "Let's see now. If we just pull here, maybe that'll fix it." The earth turned a few thousand times ... One morning we woke up ... Everything had changed ... Oh, we were still just people. But ... Most of us were patients ...



After hundreds of days locked up she's free, a scared woman, enough pills in her purse for 100 suicides, a total dependency on the shrink who by this time is plaguing her sexual innuendo and she is so lonely for a friend she can't stand it. And she can't think and wonders how she used to remember things and speak her mind. She's quiet now, reads cookbooks and she's very much into drugs. She's lonely, meets a man, gets married—the shrink and husband shake hands, therapy over, she's cured. Still lonely, she has a baby, a baby born of a momma force-fed drugs, born with fingers and toes webbed and the momma thinks, "thank God that's all." She knew, like women in Viet Nam know—our children are being poisoned by white men. Men have always feared our wombs and the power of birth. And the pills, Stelazine, Thorazine, Prolixin—they are money, they are power, they are death. In giving up the pills I no longer identified with sickness. My long struggle for rebirth began.

Ahni, in MADNESS NETWORK NEWS, Vol. 3, No. 6, 1976, p. 4.

42

Figure 15 – Ahni. (1987). Side Effects. *Tightwire*. (Spring). p. 42.

The one woman who, at first glance, appears safe on the outside of the bottle, actually appears exhausted – upon second glance – underneath the lid of the bottle with two pills nearby, symbolizing the difficulty of overcoming side effects of prescription medication, such as

addiction. Overall, this drawing shows that women are literally trying to escape from their prescriptions.

These aspects of CSC's operations are particularly harmful to Indigenous peoples, especially women, because they are culturally inappropriate and increase their already disadvantageous position in society and the wider criminal justice system (Comack, 2018; Monture-Angus, 2000). The cultural inappropriateness of the carceral system's emphasis on western medicine is depicted in Indigenous storyteller Kelly Steven's (1984¹²⁸) poem in *Tightwire*. In it, she says:

We knew about the universe / The animals, earth and trees / While you were telling people / That the moon was made of cheese / We had our herbs and medicines / We cured with drum and song / You lock us up in hospitals / And try to guess what's wrong (p. 12).

In her poem, Stevens juxtaposes Indigenous approaches to health and illness – herbs, medicines, drum, and song – to Western approaches which involve the medical field. Psychiatrists are one part of the Western medical field that are also involved in the prison system. In the *Creating Choices* (1990) report, an Indigenous woman in a provincial prison stated: “I think I’m seen as bad because I don’t want to see the psychiatrist. I resent having my private life dug into... there is no Native help available” (p. 14). To give a bit more context, in the same report, interviews with Indigenous women who were federally sentenced in the community identified how racialized violence experienced by the women throughout their lives – that is, before, during, and after prison – leave them “with the burden of memories” which catalyzed many of their addictions to not only narcotics but prescription drugs (TFFSW, 1990, p. 42). In fact, 23 of the 39 Indigenous women interviewed reported that they became addicted within institutions, such as the prison, in which “prescription drugs [were] provided by institutional psychiatrists or

¹²⁸ See Appendix 64.

physicians” (TFFSW, 1990, p. 42). Importantly, the above excerpt by Stevens (1984) demonstrates to *Tightwire* readers that there are more than Canadian approaches to healing that they may have not previously considered. In this way, Stevens sheds light onto Indigenous ways of knowing and being; as such, she asserts her sovereignty and resists neoliberal colonial logics at the same time. Moreover, it is vital to note that incarcerated Indigenous women’s rejection of psychiatrists as a solution to racialized oppression and pain represents their resistance to Western “healing” practices that continue to inform Canada’s prison system.

Now that colonizers have settled on Turtle Island, we live in a society in which colonial patriarchal harms occur. In this regard, I ask several questions: How can we work to reduce and/or eliminate the harm caused by and within Canadian society? What can we learn from women’s stories in *Tightwire* about harm inflicted by the Canadian government and its institutions, such as the prison system? How can Indigenous philosophies and ideas for justice prompt everyone – Indigenous peoples and settlers – to pursue justice for Indigenous peoples? Guided by the women’s stories, I argue that harms experienced by Indigenous peoples in the criminal justice system specifically, and Canadian society more broadly, can be reduced through increased awareness and understanding via critical and prolonged re-education of all people on Turtle Island. This approach reflects the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada’s Executive Summary (2015) which espouses the belief that education is key to bettering Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations and to achieving reconciliation in Canada. The Commission believes this to be true because of Canada’s past and present educational systems. First, the residential school system played a major role in the intergenerational disruption of Indigenous knowledges; and Canada’s contemporary education system primarily teaches colonial rather than Indigenous perspectives to students (Vowel, 2016). Supported by the TRC, I

similarly argue that the pervasive damage caused to Indigenous peoples by Canada's previous and contemporary educational systems shows that critical Indigenous education holds great promise in terms of its potential to address these problems. Inspired by the women's stories, I also argue that Indigenous kinship specifically, and working together more broadly, can facilitate greater advancement towards justice for Indigenous peoples, as well as all people by breaking down intersectional oppressions to which many people are subject. It is only by working together, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, that we will be able to achieve a more meaningful justice in Canada.

“TRUTH IS NOT SOMETHING THAT SHOULD SIT” Raising Awareness to Unlearn Colonialism

While some people, primarily Indigenous peoples and their allies, may be aware, many others, such as Canadians and people living in Canada, are still not aware of what The Justice Group (1988¹²⁹), published in *Tightwire*, identifies as “ONE OF THE MOST SERIOUS INJUSTICES IN THIS COUNTRY” which is “CANADA’S TREATMENT OF HER NATIVE INUIT AND NATIVE PEOPLE IN GENERAL” (p. 17, emphasis in original). In this regard, The Justice Group (1988) argues that in order to address injustices against Indigenous peoples, “WE SHOULD ALL HELP HERE AND THE BEST PLAN TO DO SO MUST INCLUDE MAKING PEOPLE AWARE JUST HOW SERIOUS A PROBLEM THIS IS” (p. 17, emphasis in original). Indeed, one of the first steps in addressing any problem is ensuring that people are aware there is in fact a problem. As The Justice Group argues, it is vital that Indigenous truths are shared so that we can work to unlearn dominant colonial perceptions regarding Indigenous peoples and criminalization. In their story, they argue that: “TRUTH IS NOT SOMETHING

¹²⁹ See Appendix 65.

THAT SHOULD SIT. TRUTH SETS OUT AND DESTROYS ERROR” (The Justice Group, 1988, p. 17, emphasis in original). In other words, if the goal is to destroy colonial and carceral errors – for instance, stereotypes regarding criminalized Indigenous peoples and “best practices” for addressing their concerns, such as building more (indigenized) prisons – incarcerated Indigenous women’s truths should be widely circulated to help raise awareness.

For Indigenous peoples, colonial problems are mostly obvious, as explained in the Status of Women Journal’s (1992) story that was reprinted in *Tightwire*:

We are all very much aware of the history of colonization, which has systematically achieved, through various well known measures, a breakdown in the structures, upon which the well being and health of our peoples depended. Our present social conditions bear this out. // What is not well known, is that the influences of a patriarchal and imperialistic culture upon a people, whose systems were fundamentally co-operative unities, has not only been devastating, but de-humanizing to a degree that is unimaginable (p. 17).

Although specifically referring to “a breakdown in the [family-clan] structures” of Indigenous peoples, I argue that this passage and story also reflects the prison’s “severe and irreversible effects on aboriginal women, and the resultant effect on” Indigenous nations (Status of Women Journal, 1992, p. 17). The above block quote demonstrates that Indigenous peoples “are all very much aware of the history of colonization” – particularly its “well known measures”, but that there is room for more learning regarding patriarchal and imperialist policies and practices. While these policies and practices are enacted on and against all of us in Canada, they have specific and detrimental effects on Indigenous peoples, particularly Indigenous women (Benson, 2020; Sangster, 2021; Sims, 2020).

In *Tightwire*, The Status of Women Journal (1992) discusses an apt example shortly after the excerpt in their story above – the Indian Act. Between 1876-1984, the Indian Act legally stripped Indian status from Indigenous women who married non-Indigenous men which had devastating consequences on matriarchal communities’ kinship lines (Monchalin, 2016). As

demonstrated in the visual and textual story by Anonymous (1985a) below, the women in P4W were aware of this legislation:



Figure 16 – Anonymous (1985a). Bill C-31. *Tightwire*. (V20, 10). p. 51.

In their story, Anonymous depicts an Indigenous mother sitting with her infant who is in a cradleboard – a traditional practice of securing infants – with a ceremonial pipe pictured above them. The smoke coming out of the pipe is in the shape of three women’s gender symbols – a strong indication of Indigenous feminisms against heteropatriarchy. The textual part of the story reads: “**Bill C-31** // Native Women have regained their Indian Status lost through marriage or the marriage of their parents” (p. 51, emphasis in original). The fact that Bill C-31 was passed in 1985 – the same year that this story was created – demonstrates Anonymous’ (1985a) timeliness and indicates that this was an important change to share with Indigenous women and *Tightwire* readers. The women’s anti-colonial political nature, as expressed throughout the pages of *Tightwire* – and especially in the Native Sections – is a recurring feature of the newsletter – thus prompting me to argue that raising awareness was not only a goal of *Tightwire*’s, but the Native Sisterhood’s as well. Through many of the women’s stories, there is a simultaneous process of unlearning colonial logics and relearning or learning for the first time about Indigenous truths.

Another example that demonstrates Indigenous peoples’ recognition of the colonial problem is Bev Auger’s (1989¹³⁰) story that was published in the Native Section of *Tightwire*: In it, she explains: “Sure, I have always been aware how the “Dominant Assholes” have looked down on us. I’ve just never realized just “How Bad” our people and ancestors have been mistreated and taken advantage of ... and still are.” (p. 38). In this excerpt, Auger explains how she is well aware, and has always been aware, of how “Dominant Assholes” (settlers) look down on Indigenous peoples. This act of settlers looking down on Indigenous peoples contributes to the widely acknowledged feelings of Indigenous peoples in which they feel less than human while under the colonial gaze (Monchalin, 2016; McGuire & Murdoch, 2021; Razack, 2014). As

¹³⁰ See Appendix 66.

I have argued throughout my work, Indigenous women have a powerful standpoint from which they understand colonial patriarchy (Jobin, 2016; Moreton-Robinson, 2013); and those who are incarcerated are excellently situated to analyze and critique neoliberal colonial effects on criminalization as well as Canada's criminal justice system and methods of crime control. This, in combination with the women's stories in *Tightwire* that affirm their critical knowledge, leads me to argue that Indigenous peoples (and their stories) should be at the forefront of education that raises awareness about issues of justice that pertain to them. With Indigenous women at the center of knowledge creation and mobilization, they resume their traditional communal role (Anderson, 2016; Dell et al., 2014; LaRocque, 2007; 2009). Importantly, at the same time that Auger (1989) demonstrates her knowledge, she also expresses which aspects she does not know as well – the sustained colonial use and mistreatment of Indigenous peoples by settlers. This part of Auger's story points to the fact that ongoing education and awareness raising is of benefit not only to non-Indigenous peoples but also to (some) Indigenous peoples. While acknowledging this, it is also crucial to note that Indigenous peoples and organizations are not the only ones who struggle to understand the contexts of criminalization as they pertain to Indigenous peoples. Rather than race, I argue that the common denominator for this lack of understanding is people who do not have lived experiences of criminalization and/or kinship ties with those who do. I believe this is the case because those without lived experiences of criminalization do not possess a "double consciousness" that enables them to more accurately understand and critique the criminal justice system.

One specific community of Indigenous peoples who could benefit from more awareness is identified by an Indigenous storyteller, Lisa Pelletier (1987¹³¹) in the Native Section of

¹³¹ See Appendix 67.

Tightwire. In her story, Pelletier problematizes how some members of Native community organizations struggle to understand and exercise compassion with Indigenous peoples who are criminalized and/or (were previously) incarcerated:

The rate of recidivism for the incarcerated Native men and women is shockingly high in the Provincial Correctional Centres in Saskatchewan. // [...] It would also seem to anyone who does not quite understand the causes of what provoked a period of incarceration – “is that these men and women do not desire to change their lifestyle of living in an absurd way of being incarcerated time after time”. // It would also appear as a hopeless situation to people who do not have the insight into what makes these men and women reoffend. I find that beginning to understand the causes of recidivism can be very frustrating to one who has not experienced incarceration at all. But it can no longer be ignored (p. 32).

In this excerpt, Pelletier describes how some non-incarcerated Indigenous peoples think and feel about their fellow people who are incarcerated – that incarcerated Indigenous peoples have no “desire to change their [“criminal”] lifestyle” and that their recidivism rates “can be very frustrating”. Pelletier explains that these thoughts and feelings derive from the fact that non-incarcerated (Indigenous) peoples do “not quite understand” what is provoking the criminal acts of Indigenous peoples, and thus their subsequent criminalization and incarceration. Although she does not name the issue in this excerpt, readers such as myself can assume that Pelletier is referring to ongoing settler colonialism which had and continues to have devastating consequences, many of which pertain to the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual separation of Indigenous peoples from one another (Chartrand, 2019; Comack, 2018; Monchalin, 2016). The ramifications of this lack of understanding are dramatic. As Joan Sangster (2021) explains, some Indigenous leaders engage with Canada’s criminal justice system in hopes of addressing the social problems that plague their communities which would help them effect more social control. However, Sangster (2021) argues that, when Indigenous leaders or organizations do this, they participate in the criminalization of women in their communities.

In another excerpt from the same story, Pelletier (1987) elaborates on why she thinks that some people within Native organizations have trouble supporting those of their people who are criminalized and/or incarcerated:

Native Organizations out there in mainstream society are not capable of identifying with their people upon release from a Correctional facility. At times it would seem as though most Native organizations are more than likely to refuse such a responsibility as helping their people who have been incarcerated, or are facing a period of incarceration. // it disgusts me to the point of an overwhelming anger towards Native organizations that are not responsive to our Native brothers and sisters who are in prison. [...] // [...] So much has been lost in our people as a result of being incarcerated. Then to have to be shoved aside, shuffled around, rejected, ignored and humiliated by our very own people can be a very traumatic insult to our beliefs as Native people (p. 32).

Here Pelletier discusses her feelings of disgust, overwhelming anger, and trauma regarding how she and other incarcerated Indigenous peoples have been treated – “shoved aside, shuffled around, rejected, ignored, and humiliated” – by Indigenous community organizations. In her experience, such mainstream organizations, despite being Indigenous, are not always supportive of Indigenous peoples upon their release from prison. Pelletier points to how she interprets this lack of support as a refusal of responsibility towards “Native brothers and sisters who are in prison”. This refusal and rejection of criminalized Indigenous community members is complicated as it goes against traditional Indigenous emphasis on the importance of kinship (Anderson, 2016); however, it aligns with some traditional methods of harm control in Indigenous societies, such as shaming (Monchalin, 2016).

Another storyteller in the Native Section of *Tightwire*, Bev Auger (1989), also discusses how certain Indigenous peoples are not supportive of other Indigenous peoples. She writes:

Some of our people have climbed the ladder of success. They, too, have turned upon their own people. They prance around in their three piece suits, drive expensive cars and own beautiful houses. They’ve forgotten their heritage, their colors, their loyalty. THEY ARE NOW ONE OF THEM! // I use[d] to hang my head in shame when I first entered their concrete world. Now, I walk proudly,

holding my head up high. I'm proud of my people and my culture and I'm proud to be a Native Woman (p. 38-39).

Like Pelletier (1987), Auger (1989) describes feeling ashamed when engaging with Indigenous peoples who “have climbed the ladder of success” and work in a “concrete world”, such as those employed in the social service sector that Pelletier described. Both Pelletier’s and Auger’s stories are indicative of the need to center (formerly) incarcerated Indigenous women’s voices within the development, policies, and operations of Indigenous community organizations. In her story, Auger argues individuals working within Native organizations have lost their Indigenous cultures and kinship traditions – aspects of which she perceives as contributing to her own self-confidence and pride in being “a Native Woman”. Auger’s feelings, as well as the actions of those Indigenous peoples who “prance around in their three piece suits”, are not surprising given what we know about reform – the integration of Indigenous philosophies into the current system – versus more radical perspectives that aim to dismantle the system and rebuild a new one. Auger also sheds light on double consciousness. As discussed in my theory chapter, Cree and Métis Indigenous governance scholar Shalene Jobin (2016) employs the concept of double consciousness to explore how, due to effects of settler colonialism, Indigenous peoples tend to perceive themselves from colonizers’ eyes which can create low self-esteem when they believe they do not measure up to white people. For instance, in Auger’s (1989) story, she tells readers about her “shame” upon entering the “concrete world”; and, from Auger’s perspective, Indigenous people in this world of concrete “ARE NOW ONE OF THEM” who are trying to measure up to and fit in with settlers. On the other hand, Jobin (2016) also identifies double consciousness as a place of power from which Indigenous women can actively resist colonialism and reclaim their Indigenous identities – exemplified by Auger’s pride in being an Indigenous woman.

Auger's (1989) and Pelletier's (1987) feelings and perspectives are embedded within a kinship focused framework that is traditional to many Indigenous nations; thus, to understand their perspectives, it is vital to explore unity (Anderson, 2016; Monchalin, 2016). Indeed, although Pelletier (1987) critiques "Native Organizations out there in mainstream society", she also points to the importance of Indigenous peoples working together to help those with experiences of incarceration:

As Native people, we are supposed to be as "one in mind, body and spirit". Where has this concept of unity gone? [...] It's time for us as a Native people to come together, and help our brothers and sisters in prison" (p. 32).

The way Pelletier asked where the unity has gone suggests that there was a time when unity was present among Indigenous peoples. Supported by critical Indigenous literature (Anderson, 2016; Monchalin, 2016), unity was likely the strongest amongst Indigenous peoples prior to settlers' arrival on and subsequent colonization of Turtle Island. This idea of working and/or coming together shows up repeatedly in the stories published in *Tightwire*; and represents one way forward – via the return to the traditional value of (Indigenous) kinship. Thus, the remainder of this section will focus on that.

“feeling as one”: Working Together to Undo Colonialism

Throughout the women's stories in *Tightwire*, there is an overall sense of “working together” to create positive and meaningful change in the lives of women, Indigenous peoples, and prisoners. While working together is not specifically an Indigenous concept, I argue that it strongly relates to the notion of harmonious and reciprocal kinship practices and the importance of kinship in and to Indigenous communities. As previously discussed in my literature review chapter, Indigenous women play a prominent role in nurturing and ensuring cultural continuity through storytelling (Anderson, 2016; LaRocque, 2009). An example of this process is when

Elders share teachings about their cultures through storytelling. Through stories and the storytelling process, Indigenous children learn about their cultures and develop kinship with Elders and one another. In this way, stories create community and help to ensure cultural continuity. As discussed in my first analysis chapter, Elders' stories not only teach children, they also help ensure cultural continuity with Indigenous adults who are incarcerated – many of whom do not have prior cultural knowledge due to effects of ongoing settler colonialism (Tetrault, 2022; Waldram. 1997).

Even in educational courses¹³² taken while incarcerated, Indigenous kinship appears to have positive effects on incarcerated Indigenous women such as Bev Auger (1989) who writes in the Native Section of *Tightwire* that: “When I walked into the Native Studies Course, I expected Text books, schedules for different topics to be followed on a daily basis. // What I didn’t expect was the feelings of closeness, warmth, comfort and feeling as one” (p. 38). This excerpt demonstrates Auger’s surprise regarding the unanticipated impact of Indigenous kinship – “closeness, warmth, comfort, and feeling as one” – as experienced in a Native Studies Course. In discussing the course, Auger also points to the negative feelings that were conjured when she learned more about colonization and settlers whom she refers to as “Dominant Assholes”. These feelings, although typically perceived as negative, are likely experienced more positively when surrounded by Indigenous peoples because, as a group, they can vent and work together through their feelings which strengthens their experience of closeness and unity. Vially, Kim Anderson (2016) points out that Indigenous women often resist in situations where other strong Indigenous

¹³² While it is unclear what exactly was the nature of the course or where the women took the course, some of the women in P4W were permitted to take university courses outside the prison and, based on the women’s positive reception of the course, I presume that this course was indeed one of those taken outside P4W.

women are resisting or have resisted; thus in this sense, the Indigenous women in *Tightwire* work together and support one another's resistance. Like the previous theme of unlearning colonialism, this excerpt also points to the fact that it is not only non-Indigenous people who benefit from Indigenous education – Indigenous peoples can also learn, grow, and cultivate positive relationships with one another through education (TFFSW, 1990). It was not just individuals or Indigenous peoples who believed this, but also some organizations who worked with prisoners. For instance, in speaking with the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women, the John Howard Society of Manitoba disclosed: "It is our belief that non-Native society has much to learn from Native traditions and wisdom" and that "all citizens affected by the injustices of current [criminal justice] practices, be they Native or non-Native, male or female, would benefit from a more humane and sensible way of administering justice" (TFFSW, 1990, p. 24). For the John Howard Society of Manitoba, this approach entailed more restorative and community-based practices.

Feeling close and united with one another is particularly apparent in *Tightwire* stories that discuss mental health within the prison setting. For instance, one Anonymous (1989a¹³³) storyteller outside the Native Section of *Tightwire* explains that:

Because of the close confinement [in P4W] friendships and relationships intensify far more than in the free world. You live with each other's pain, you share their hopes, dreams, fears, their joys and pain. // [...] // You're subjected to seeing your friends who can't handle the games and the indecision, slash, maybe even hang themselves. If you care about people it has a devastating effect on you. However, that appears to be unimportant to the powers to be to any great degree – life will go on (p. 58).

This excerpt identifies how, when prisoners are close – that is, when they are physically near one another and have deep seeded kinship – the health of one affects the health of the community,

¹³³ See Appendix 68.

whether positively or negatively. It also reflects empathy and the importance of kinship as well as the importance of each individual to their community. This perspective aligns with one of the shared characteristics of traditional Indigenous cultures – the pursuit of and value placed on harmony and restorative healing processes (Anderson, 2016; TFFSW, 1990; Vowel, 2016).

While this story is told anonymously, critical and Indigenous criminologists know that Indigenous women disproportionately experience mental health issues – including self-harm – in the prison setting due to its upholding and further entrenchment of settler colonialism (Chartrand 2019; Comack, 2018; Ross, 1998; TFFSW, 1990). Importantly, Anonymous (1989a) also critiques prison officials who do not share the empathetic kinship of incarcerated women which points to the very different standpoints between Indigenous peoples who are incarcerated and non-Indigenous people who participate in the incarceration of others. Moreover, this difference is reflective of the opposing methods of harm control that are employed by distinct Indigenous and Western/Euro-Canadian cultures in that the former involves a great deal of care put into restoring harmony while the latter takes up a more retributive approach that is generally concerned with punishment rather than healing (Monchalin, 2016; Sangster, 2021; TFFSW, 1990).

In speaking of the health and survival of Indigenous nations, the Status of Women Journal (1992), reprinted in the Native Section of *Tightwire*, identifies and explains the struggle and contributions of Indigenous women to their communities:

Through all the horror it has been the struggle of those women who survived somehow against all odds to bring healing where they could to their families and nations. It has been the struggle of these women that has maintained some balance, so that their children could survive and contribute to their peoples. It has always been the women, the mothers who provide that chance. // We find our strength and our power in our ability to be what our grandmothers were to us. Keepers, of the next generation in every sense of that word. Physically, intellectually and spiritually. We strive to retain that power and interpret it into all aspects of survival on this earth in the midst of chaos. // It is that fierce love at the centre of that power, that is the weapon they gave us, to protect and to

nurture against all odds. That compassion and strength is what we are, and we have translated it into every area of our existence because we have had to. And we must continue to do so. It is not a matter of female rights, it is a matter of the right of the female to be what is fundamentally is, the insurer of the next generation. It is a matter of survival where genocide is an everyday reality. // It is that compassion and strength that has been at the fore front of change in our communications. It is the power to adapt around all situ[a]tions in order to insure health and therefore survival of the young. (p. 19).

This passage speaks to the resilience of Indigenous women who have survived ongoing settler colonialism and its many detrimental effects “to bring healing where they could to their families and nations”. The Status of Women Journal points out that when Indigenous women maintain “some balance” and can provide “fierce love”, their power to “protect and to nurture” their children, and thus their communities – via cultural continuity – is demonstrated. In a settler state, acts related to the survival and cultural continuity of Indigenous peoples are decolonial acts (Jobin, 2016; LaRocque, 2009). Importantly, this excerpt identifies, at least for this storyteller, that it is “not a matter of female rights” but rather “the right of the female” to ensure the future generations of her community while colonial and genocidal practices persist. In other words, they argue that power of Indigenous women rests in their abilities to contribute to their communities, and when this power is diluted by colonizers – for example, through incarceration – Indigenous women’s rights to act out their traditional role as “the insurer of the next generation” are denied. This argument is supported by critical Indigenous scholars such as Anderson (2016) In this way, the Status of Women Journal strongly advocates for Indigenous women’s power and rights in relation to traditional kinship practices which emphasize acts that contribute to cultural continuity. In the face of ongoing settler colonialism, those acts of kinship are decolonization in practice (LaRocque, 2007; 2009).

In further explaining Indigenous women’s traditional role, the Status of Women Journal (1992) states that:

At its core, it is the spirit of the female, holding in balance the spirit of the male, in a powerful co-operative force of family and community. It is the strength of this force that holds all nations and families together in health and is the bridge to the next generation. It is the power, that is the key to the survival of all, in an environment that is becoming increasingly damaged, and unfit for all life forms. It is the woman that holds its power and becomes powerful only when catalyzing co-operation and harmony and therefore health at all levels, from the individual, outward to the family, the community and the environment. Without it, all becomes chaos, despair, hostility and death. That is immense power (p. 19-20).

In other words, it is the strength of this “powerful co-operative force of family and community” that holds nations together, creates a “bridge to the next generation”, and “is the key to the survival of all”. Through cooperation, harmony, and health – starting at individuals, which then moves to the family, greater community and environment, Indigenous women hold “immense power”. The ideas and philosophy expressed in this excerpt are consistent with Indigenous feminist scholarship which emphasizes the power of Indigenous women to contribute to cultural continuity in their communities through relational storytelling practices (Dell et al., 2014; LaRocque, 2007; 2009). More broadly, the publication of this story in *Tightwire* indicates the development, expression, and circulation of Indigenous feminist perspectives not only within the Status of Women Journal but within P4W and to *Tightwire* subscribers in the early 1990s which predates the two words “Indigenous” and “feminist” being used together (Nickel & Snyder, 2019).

It is not only Indigenous peoples who benefit from an emphasis on cooperation, harmony, and health – everyone stands to benefit from this way of life. Indigenous ally and editor of *Tightwire*, JoAnn Mayhew (1987a¹³⁴), explains the importance of valuing all lives and how this philosophy stems from Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island:

To the person that celebrates life, all life is sacred. No exceptions. // This is not an original idea nor is it new. To Canadians who have had the opportunity of acquainting themselves with the spiritual values of our Native People it will

¹³⁴ See Appendix 69.

sound very familiar indeed. In the narrow-minded flush of technological progress these fundamental values that could enrich all of us have been most ignorantly devalued. Frequently, because they were not compatible with commercial interests (p. 3PDF).

By integrating aspects of Indigenous stories and cultures into her editorials – and thus insisting on the inclusion and integration of Indigenous women’s concerns more broadly – Mayhew demonstrates what critical scholar Krista Benson (2020) identifies as “decolonial ethics of collaboration” (p. 152). Mayhew’s acknowledgment – in this and many of her other stories and editorials – emphasizes her consideration of the importance of standpoint and women as experts of their own experiences (Benson, 2020; Jobin, 2016; Moreton-Robinson, 2013; Smith, 1990). At the same time that she integrates Indigenous philosophies and stories into her own stories, in this excerpt, Mayhew also points out that Indigenous beliefs of life as sacred are “ignorantly devalued” by “narrow-minded” settlers because this philosophy is “not compatible with commercial interests”, or settler colonialism more broadly. Indeed, the lives that are most often valued in settler colonial states such as Canada are the lives of male colonizers. This is demonstrated, for instance, by the incarceration rates of white people relative to Indigenous peoples more broadly, and non-Indigenous relative to Indigenous women specifically. By discussing both Indigenous stories and the fact that Indigenous stories are routinely silenced in dominant Canadian culture, Mayhew (1987a) offers *Tightwire* readers an opportunity to reflect on their own standpoints and to become aware of and accountable to their own colonial erasures of Indigenous peoples’ knowledges (Benson, 2020).

Anonymous (1992), another storyteller in the Native Section of *Tightwire*, reveals why they think that settlers attempt to cast aside, reject, and erase Indigenous peoples and philosophies. They state:

Now I think about the future and the past... I think of many things in life. I hurt the most when I think about some things... I sit here in a time where there is no

true peace as there once was. I think of [...] governments that are corrupt and caught up in their games of destroying any thing that may threaten the status quo (p. 21).

In this excerpt, Anonymous compares the present and past, saying that they “hurt[s] the most” when they reflect on how “there is no true peace as there once was”. They explain that, from their perspective, the peace has vanished because colonial governments are corrupt and work towards “destroying any thing that may threaten the status quo”, such as Indigenous peoples, kinship, and ways of life. That is, the shared aspects of Indigenous philosophies regarding community, healing, and consensus decision making do not align with Euro-Canadian philosophies pertaining to the achievement of justice that center authoritative and retributive approaches (Monchalin, 2016; Sangster, 2021). In this way, Indigenous philosophies and approaches to justice are perceived by settler state officials as threatening. Thus, to avoid more competition over who has control over the land and the way people live on the land, colonizers attempt to destroy and segregate Indigenous peoples whom they perceive as threats to their authority. Destructive acts include various forms of imprisonment such as the former residential school system, as well as the current child welfare and prison systems (Chartrand, 2019; Rymhs, 2008; Scheuneman Scott, 2019). In the same story, Anonymous (1992) states that they think of the past: “As my mind wonders, I think of my people--- the Indian people, the First people. I think about our lifestyle and how it once was, peaceful and with few worries” (p. 21). In their reflection, there is a sense of longing to return to the way things once were – before colonizers arrived, when things were “peaceful and with few worries”. Although this statement could be perceived as romanticizing the past, it is nonetheless this storyteller’s stated perspective to which I am committed and emphasize.

The idea of peace relates to the notion of harmony – both of which are deeply embedded within and shared across many Indigenous nations. In *Tightwire*, The Justice Group (1988) also

discusses how Indigenous kinship and philosophies are threats to settler colonialism and thus the descendants of colonizers (settlers). I conceptualize this threat as the power of Indigenous philosophies to “undo colonialism”. Vitally, the Justice Group argues that we must work together to advance Indigenous self-governance and philosophies which will help all people live in greater harmony and health – thus reducing the amount of harm that occurs in our communities. They argue that Indigenous self-governance is the way forward to achieve freedom. In their story, The Justice Group (1988) states:

The way is harmony. This freedom is needed badly. Yet it, along with self-reliance is a threat to the established way. Those who have something to gain by not sharing, watch cultures die. Native languages and ways of just getting by become damaged or destroyed. In Canada, Aboriginals bear the brunt of the social problems of the dominant society. Native self-government will turn this around and get people away from the existing order. This is a priority. The reasons can be found in the values of life that most hold to today. After self-government, self reliance will stand out the right way from the wrong ways. It will set an example once again like long ago. The way is harmony. This way must be shared. We must all work together to stand for this freedom” (p. 17, emphasis in original).

This passage makes clear connections between kinship, working together, and the previous section regarding consciousness raising and awareness. That is, they argue that when Indigenous knowledges are not shared, Indigenous cultures die – specifically, Indigenous ways of living “become damaged or destroyed” which contributes to Indigenous peoples bearing “the brunt of the social problems of the dominant society”. When thinking of storytelling, P4W, and *Tightwire*, the organization of the Native Sisterhood and their sharing of knowledge within the Native Section and general body of *Tightwire* show how the women worked together to promote and achieve cultural continuity – thereby contributing to notions of Indigenous lifestyles and justice. Vitally, in this excerpt, The Justice Group advances Indigenous self-governance as the solution to social (i.e., colonial) problems. Like others have previously argued, problems such as sexual and domestic violence, suicide, and murder were relatively non-existent prior to the

colonization of Turtle Island (Monchalin, 2016; Status of Women Journal, 1992). This suggests that Indigenous self-governance can play an enormous role in addressing colonial social problems, and thus the “crime problem”. Again, connecting to the previous section on disseminating Indigenous knowledges and perspectives, The Justice Group argues that we must work together to advance Indigenous self-governance and philosophies which will help all people live in greater harmony and health – thus reducing the amount of harm that occurs in our communities.

The Justice Group specifies their vision that: “All people should stand on all issues together. Those concerned about social justice must be strong and work together” (p. 17).

Specifically, The Justice Group envisions:

One large body of people, an active membership stretching right across the country learning about social justice issues and helping others, would see everyone working together. There would be just one direction. It would be to help all people experiencing an injustice. The group would learn about everyone suffering from this and about those people that fail them. All those who fail people, fall short in the responsibility people give them. They are not part of the solution, they are part of the problem (p. 17, emphasis in original).

Crucially, The Justice Group’s vision involves people from across the country who are actively working together to learn about and help solve social justice issues with the understanding that the group’s mission is “to help all people experiencing an injustice”. The proposed group would not only learn about people who have experienced injustices, but also about the people who have contributed to and/or been previously unable to solve these issues. In other words, people with lived experiences of criminalization and victimization should be centered in this learning process. Moreover, the focus is on “injustice” rather than “crime” which, in the case of a settler colonial state like Canada, includes an examination of the criminal justice system and how its colonial logics “fall short” to address injustices and “fail” Indigenous peoples. Vitrally, this passage emphasizes attending to one’s responsibilities of finding solutions that are able to

address social injustices. This is a responsibility we all share and that we can accomplish by working together.

Concluding Remarks

Indigenous women's criminological critiques of indigenizing often rest in the gaps between what the Healing Lodge was believed by the women to be intended to accomplish and what actually happened and happens there in practice. While the women who published in *Tightwire* did not have lived experience of the Healing Lodge because the publication ceased the same year as the Healing Lodge opened, their stories still hold incredible value in thinking through issues of indigenization. That is, even though the Healing Lodge does not accomplish the empowerment of Indigenous women that the TFFSW set out to achieve (Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Monture-Angus, 2006), there are still lessons to be learned from this endeavour. By assessing indigenization – through the example of the Healing Lodge – from the critical feminist, Indigenous, and Indigenous feminist perspectives expressed within *Tightwire*, we can imagine that *Tightwire* readers were politicized by the newsletter's contents and were similarly critical of indigenization in the context of justice as they correctly perceived it as only “going so far”. Through the failures of the indigenization of one federal women's prison, along with the women's stories in *Tightwire*, I argue that the power of and need for decolonization becomes more evident and harder to refute for those who may not have been previously aware of its potential, such as past and present *Tightwire* readers.

Overall, the women's stories suggest two particular approaches to decolonization that are just as relevant today as when the women initially expressed them. The first approach is the provision and widespread dissemination of critical education regarding settler colonialism which contributes to the “unlearning of colonialism”. The critical education and awareness raising that

many of the women in *Tightwire* contribute to commonly includes feminist, Indigenous, and Indigenous feminist analyses of systemic oppressions such as colonization, gender discrimination, and unequal wealth distribution. It is precisely these historical and contemporary analyses and perspectives that, according to Mohawk legal scholar Patricia Monture-Angus (2006), CSC detached itself from soon after the Task Force disbanded and the Healing Lodge opened. This detachment made it increasingly easy for prison officials, along with the public, to continue believing in and pursuing the individualization of the concept of empowerment. This is where raising awareness and critical re-education will be particularly effective in helping to create more public pressure for CSC to take critical perspectives, grounded in lived experiences, into account.

The second decolonial approach that the women commonly emphasized is continuing to and increasing the practice of working together, especially with Indigenous peoples – to create and strengthen Indigenous kinship ties – but also between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples – to create and strengthen allyship. These positive relationships contribute to the “undoing of colonialism”. Although it is critical to center Indigenous knowledges and kinship practices, it is also crucial for settlers to understand their role and responsibility in terms of allyship. Allies to Indigenous peoples must participate in the hard work that is involved in “carrying stories” (Benson, 2000), which will help reduce the weight that many Indigenous peoples feel is exclusively on their shoulders. Both decolonial approaches that are advanced in the women’s stories in *Tightwire* relate to one another. That is, the more we work together, the more we can contribute to critical re-education which is decolonial in that these practices both unlearn and undo colonialism. Together, these philosophies and practices promote Indigenous

experiences, knowledges, and relationships while advancing issues of social justice to achieve the ultimate goal of a decolonized, rather than an indigenized, justice in Canada.

CHAPTER EIGHT – Conclusion

Introduction

Throughout this project, I have learned a considerable amount not only about the women who were incarcerated in the Prison for Women (P4W), their experiences and perspectives, the *Tightwire* newsletter, and the Native Sisterhood, but about myself, my responsibilities as a non-incarcerated settler, the disciplines with which I am engaged, and my own aspirations for the future. One lesson I have learned is that not only is it okay to step outside of one's discipline, but in many cases this step is crucial to the integrity of the project. This was certainly the case for me; and I am thankful to have drawn on and integrated multiple fields and perspectives in my work such as critical feminist criminology, Indigenous studies and feminisms, feminist print culture, and narrative criminology. Having an interdisciplinary approach to research enabled me to build on and expand each of these fields with the stories of federally incarcerated (Indigenous) women as well as with my methodological approaches which are grounded in and respectful of Indigenous ways of knowing. It also supported an exploration of my responsibilities that have been and will continue to be enacted from my position of privilege – responsibilities which I hope to inspire others in my communities to take on as well. In this final chapter, I summarize my major research findings for each research question and explain how these findings relate to my research objectives. I then discuss my research contributions and how the implications of my work can be realized when we all play a role in achieving justice for Indigenous and criminalized women.

Major Research Findings

In this project, my major research question was: “What stories are Indigenous women telling in *Tightwire* about their experiences of and responses to Canada's criminal justice

system?” While this question was posed in the broadest sense in order to encompass all of Canada’s criminal justice system (CJS), it is worth noting – and not surprising given their physical location at the time of submission – that the women’s stories in *Tightwire* were concentrated around the site of the prison. Overall, the women’s stories took up experiences of trauma – both before, leading up to, and during their incarceration. The trauma described in the women’s stories overwhelmingly involved physical and emotional violence, and in the case of Indigenous storytellers, also spiritual violence. While all prisoners experience separation, all Indigenous prisoners – and peoples – have personal experience, intergenerational trauma, or both personal and intergenerational experiences of the residential school system which, like the prison, functions to separate and attempts to assimilate Indigenous peoples (Chartrand, 2019). Because of this, Indigenous women’s experiences of imprisonment are distinct from their non-Indigenous counterparts.

In terms of their responses, the women’s stories focused on Sisterhood – not only the Native Sisterhood as an official organization within the prison but also the kinship ties that developed between all the women incarcerated at P4W. It is crucial to note that, although the women’s stories repeatedly demonstrated their experiences of being hurt by people (often men) and institutions (such as the prison), the women’s response to their retriggering experiences of harm within P4W was to form relationships with one another. These relationships occurred both within and as a result of *Tightwire* as well as the Native Sisterhood which met as a group on its own terms and produced its own section within *Tightwire*. Vitrally, these kinship practices not only validated their experiences pertaining to gender, race, and criminalization – that is, their experiences as incarcerated Indigenous women – but also resisted the pains of imprisonment and intergenerational trauma that was specific to Indigenous women. These findings fill important

gaps in scholarly knowledge regarding the storied experiences of all incarcerated people – but especially for incarcerated women, incarcerated Indigenous peoples, and incarcerated Indigenous women – which achieves my first research objective to contribute to scholarly knowledge regarding incarcerated Indigenous women’s stories.

In addition to my major research question, my project also has several minor research questions. The first minor research question of my dissertation was: “How do Indigenous women’s stories in *Tightwire* engage with narratives about womanhood, Indigeneity, and criminality?” Throughout the women’s stories in *Tightwire*, the women often highlighted dissonance between their lived realities and dominant stereotypes about women, Indigenous peoples, criminalized people, and incarcerated Indigenous women. By identifying and explaining contexts around the women’s experiences of their identities (as women, Indigenous, and incarcerated), their stories were often complex and identified hypocrisies of gendered and racialized stereotypes regarding criminalized people. For instance, when discussing experiences of carceral motherhood, the women questioned how their children were doing without them which helps to debunk stereotypes that criminalized women are “bad mothers” who only care about themselves (Scheuneman Scott, 2019; Ross, 1998). Given this, I consider the women in *Tightwire* to be cultural critics (LaRocque, 2009) who help open the minds and eyes of their readers by engaging in a public square (Voyageur, 2005) of incarcerated (Indigenous) women’s voices. Despite the repression that these groups – that is, incarcerated people, Indigenous peoples, and women – often experience, they worked together to critically re-educate their readers regarding their lived realities. By centering their analyses throughout my work, I carried out my second research objective to position the women’s stories – that were created for their

own purposes – as valuable knowledges that are crucial to deeply integrate into other knowledge systems, such as the field of criminology.

For my second minor research question, I asked: “How do Indigenous women’s stories in *Tightwire* inform the sociopolitical and historical contexts surrounding the federal incarceration of women in Canada?” One of the most interesting things I found in answering this question was that the women’s stories indicated both their heterogeneity and solidarity regarding carceral reforms of the time – specifically, the recommendations stemming from the *Creating Choices* Report (1990). On one hand, Indigenous women demanded that their cultural needs be considered in the carceral context; but on the other hand, Indigenous – and non-Indigenous – women did not support carceral expansion. The exception was the women who desired being closer to their home communities from which the geographical location of P4W had separated them. This group of women, as well as the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women, perceived the “new” federal prisons – located in various provinces – as a mechanism to bring federally incarcerated women closer to their families (Hayman, 2006; Monture, 2006). A surprising¹³⁵ finding in my research was that there were women in P4W who fought to keep it open – not because they believed in imprisoning women, but because they were afraid of further separation, unprecedented change, and the expansion of colonial carceral power (Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021). By openly communicating the women’s critiques and desires – in my scholarly, pedagogical, public, and personal practices – my work contributes to my third research objective, which is to create change for criminalized and Indigenous women.

¹³⁵ This was surprising to me because, in my previous criminological training, I learned and incorrectly believed that all of the women in P4W supported its closure. The first time I learned otherwise was in my conversation with Fran Chaisson and Bobbie Kidd who were both opposed to the closure of P4W (see Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021).

Specifically, sharing the women's stories in the communities of which I am a member (e.g., the academy) helps to dispel colonial patriarchal stereotypes about criminalized Indigenous women while supporting and advancing Indigenous practices of wellbeing and justice. In other words, I employ my privilege as a non-incarcerated middle-class settler scholar to make and hold space for these women's stories.

The last minor research question of my dissertation was: "How can Indigenous women's stories in *Tightwire* inform perspectives of and approaches to justice in Canada?" Throughout *Tightwire*, but especially in the later years of the publication, the women's stories reflected their overall disagreement with the ways in which Canada's CJS approached and intended to achieve justice. While "indigenizing" has more recently become perceived by institutional officials as a solution to Indigenous peoples' and their allies' concerns regarding the embedding of settler colonialism into Canadian institutions (Bird, 2021; Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Monchalin, 2016; Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021), during the time that *Tightwire* was published, the notion of indigenizing the prison was novel. While some women hoped that indigenizing the Healing Lodge would help improve prison conditions for Indigenous women, many women correctly predicted the outcome of the Lodge as simply another prison, but with a different name (Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021). In this way, the women's stories in *Tightwire* demonstrated desire for Indigenous justice, but were, in general, not supportive of indigenizing one prison as a way to achieve justice; rather, they forwarded decolonial ideas for our shared future. For instance, the women believed that they could raise awareness through *Tightwire* which is reflective of the pedagogy of hope – the belief that they can make change (Piepmeier, 2009). Specifically, the women's stories demonstrate their belief that, to unlearn colonialism, everyone should be critically (re)educated about the factors – such as colonial patriarchy – that

contribute to the process and experiences of criminalization that relate to women, and especially Indigenous women. A surprising finding here was that Indigenous community organizations were identified as one group that would benefit from learning more about Indigenous peoples' criminalization. I believe this may have been discussed in *Tightwire* because it shocked the women that they did not personally experience support from some of these organizations. However, today the ongoing impacts of settler colonialism are increasingly being tied to the criminalization process that many Indigenous peoples are subject to (Chartrand, 2019; Nichols, 2014; Monchalin, 2016).

To undo colonialism, the women forwarded the notion that we need to work together, which helps strengthen existing relationships and create new kinship ties between all people on this land, and Indigenous peoples specifically. By working together, the women believe that justice can occur at the community level which would help support women where they are and effectively decrease and/or eliminate women's involvement and subsequent entrapment within the CJS. Here again, by following the women's lead and broadly disseminating their stories, ideas, and dreams about justice – through, for instance, this dissertation, my co-authored chapter with two formerly incarcerated Indigenous women (see Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, and Kidd, 2021), my designing and teaching of a third-year university course entitled “Indigenous Peoples and Criminal Justice”, and my membership on the P4W Memorial Collective Advisory Board – I achieved my third research objective of working towards meaningful social and political change for criminalized and incarcerated Indigenous women. Moreover, I will remain accountable to the women and commit to continuing the necessary work of co-resistance for co-existence (Irlbacher-Fox 2014).

Research Contributions

Vitally, my research fills gaps in research while also paying attention to how Indigenous women's knowledges can be employed and integrated into our world today. To this extent, my research addresses various issues such as the lack of scholarly work regarding incarcerated Indigenous women's self-representations that were created for purposes other than research as well as the problems and potential of various approaches to achieving justice – specifically for criminalized Indigenous women. Although my project is rooted in the field of criminology (specifically the field of critical feminist criminology), I have also drawn on other disciplines such as women's and gender studies, Indigenous studies, and print culture studies. Specifically, my interdisciplinary research is situated between criminological and print culture scholarship on the stories of prisoners and Indigenous peoples; feminist and criminological scholarship on experiences of intersectional oppressions, criminalization, incarceration, and resistance; as well as feminist criminological and Indigenous studies scholarship pertaining to Indigenous women and their strategic employment of sovereign power within the colonial carceral context. Due to my interdisciplinary approach, my work has significant potential to contribute to these and other related fields.

Drawing on the work of one of Canada's leading feminist criminologists Elizabeth Comack (2018) to contextualize the colonial patriarchal trauma experienced by incarcerated Indigenous women, I expand her work by engaging with the self-representations of incarcerated women in the form of published *Tightwire* stories. By integrating the women's stories in *Tightwire*, I similarly enhance criminologist Stephanie Hayman's (2006) historical research regarding the closure of P4W and subsequent development and opening of Canada's new federal women's prisons. By narrowing in on Indigenous women, my work broadens the research of Indigenous literature scholar Deena Ryhms (2008) which focuses almost exclusively on

Indigenous men. Analyses of P4W, (Indigenous) women's lived experiences of P4W, and *Tightwire* stories – that were circulated within P4W, other prisons, and around the world – are significant in that they help to document the history of federal women's corrections in Canada while also shedding light onto (Indigenous) women's experiences of and responses to incarceration from their own perspectives and for their own purposes.

In terms of the field of criminology, my work has implications regarding decolonizing criminological thoughts pertaining to knowledge and research. For instance, by not only including, but centering the stories of Indigenous women – which carry their distinct knowledges derived from their standpoints and lived experiences – my work is an example of how criminology, and other colonial disciplines, can begin the long process of reconciliation and decolonization. My project is one of few examples that treats incarcerated Indigenous women's stories – that were created for purposes other than research – as (criminological) knowledges that are vital to include throughout the field, not just in works that exclusively pertain to incarcerated Indigenous women. Moreover, by highlighting colonial logics that women identify and illuminate in their stories, my work is significant and builds on a growing body of scholarship regarding the connections between Canada's residential school system and the prison system (Chartrand, 2019; Nichols, 2014). Given that our present and future are informed and influenced by the past, this connection is paramount to explore – especially in criminology where the discipline merits expansion in not only Indigenous inclusion and integration, but in terms of reversing the colonial gaze on itself. It is only through this process that criminology can become more reconciliatory and decolonized.

Indeed, my documentation and analysis of Indigenous women's stories in *Tightwire* is paramount given that: 1) settler colonialism is ongoing in both practices and effects (Monchalin,

2016); 2) Canada's carceral system continues to be entrenched with and governed by the logics underpinning both patriarchal colonialism and neoliberal colonialism (Chartrand, 2019); 3) Canada's current federal women's prison system is still premised upon *Creating Choices* – the report that culminated from the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women regarding P4W (Bird, 2021; Hayman, 2006); and 4) many institutional officials continue to pursue inclusion indigenization (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018) as an equitable solution to Indigenous concerns regarding justice (Bird, 2021). That is, the logics of colonial patriarchy – and the “solutions” proposed to address these ongoing issues (e.g., “indigenized” and woman-centered prisons) – continue to have effect and are in practice within Canada's prison system (Chartrand, 2019; Comack, 2018; Scheuneman Scott, 2019; Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, & Kidd, 2021).

All of these points allude to the fact that the past is not simply the past – it is deeply connected to our present and will continue to shape our future. Thus, despite the age of *Tightwire* stories, they continue to have relevance today because many of the contexts that the women discussed continue to occur, albeit some in slightly different ways. One difference, for instance, is that residential schools have closed – and many Canadians finally perceive them as wrong, rather than as church and government officials having “good intentions”. However, the logics that these schools were built and operated on have not changed and continue to be located within the prison system through policies and practices that target Indigenous peoples and emphasize separation, segregation, and assimilation (Chartrand, 2019; Comack, 2018; Scheuneman Scott, Chaisson, and Kidd, 2021; Vowel 2016). Moreover, logics that similarly dehumanize and characterize Indigenous peoples, especially women, as “less than human” are very much alive across the colonial institutions on Turtle Island – regardless of reforms such as the Indian Act and Healing Lodge that attempt to restore some level of justice (Monchalin, 2016).

By centering, actively listening, and acting on Indigenous women's stories in *Tightwire*, my work supports the rehumanization of Indigenous women and criminalized people who have continually been silenced and dismissed (Sugar & Fox, 1990). It also enables a more complex and informed understanding of the development, operations, inadequacies, and outright failures of both the historical and contemporary carceral system in Canada. Through this process of listening and learning to the women's stories, I have become better equipped to honour and support them. To be accountable, I commit to furthering the goals of both *Tightwire* and the Native Sisterhood around working together to critically re-educate ourselves and others, and imagining a decolonized justice for all people on this land. However, I cannot do this work alone, and I hope my project and the women's stories inspire others to think critically about and enact their own responsibilities to Indigenous and criminalized peoples.

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ENTRENCHED SOCIAL CATASTROPHE

BY FRAN SUGAR

NATIVE PEOPLE LEAD THE KKKOUNTRY IN STATISTICAL CATEGORIES SUCH AS UNEMPLOYMENT, ALCOHOLISM, EARLY DEATH RATES FROM INFANT MORTALITY, VIOLENCE AND CRIMINALLY-RELATED ACITIVITIES. ACCORDING TO A RECENT STUDY BY TRENT UNIVERSITY, THE DANGEROUS OFFENDERS ACT, BILLS C-67 AND C-68, NATIVE PEOPLE IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE CYSTEM ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE GATED UNDER THIS BILL, AND THEREFORE ARE DEEMED THE MOST DANGEROUS AND MOST VIOLENT OFFENDERS IN CANADA.

NATIVE WOMEN FACE DOUBLE, TRIPLE AND QUADRUPLE STANDARDS WHEN ENTERING THE PRISON CYSTEM. NUMBER 1 IS BECAUSE WE ARE WOMEN, NUMBER 2: WE ARE NATIVE, NUMBER 3: WE ARE POOR, NUMBER 4: WE DO NOT USUALLY POSSESS THE EDUCATION NECESSARILY EQUIVALENT TO THE STATUS QUO.

PROFILE:

Ms. CREE IS EIGHTEEN YEARS OLD, A SINGLE PARENT WITH 2 CHILDREN. SHE LIVES IN THE CITY OF _____ WHERE THE OFFENCE TOOK PLACE. SHE WAS CONVICTED OF MANSLAUGHTER AND SENTENCED TO 4 YEARS. HER PARENTS ARE DECEASED. SHE HAS 2 SISTERS AND 2 BROTHERS. Ms.CREE WAS A HOUSEWIFE WHOSE SOLE INCOME WAS SOCIAL ASSISTANCE.

Ms.CREE ENTERED THE INSTITUTION WITH A GRADE 4 LEVEL OF EDUCATION. SHE QUIT SCHOOL DUE TO PROBLEMS IN HER FOSTER HOME. Ms. CREE HAS NOT BEEN INVOLVED IN AN EDUCATION UPGRADING PROGRAM. SHE HAS BEEN OFFERED A JOB CLEANING YET HAS REFUSED THIS PLACEMENT BECAUSE SHE FEELS THE SCHOOL SUPERVISOR DOES NOT TREAT HER OR OTHER NATIVE STUDENTS PROPERLY. AS A RESULT SHE WILL NOT WORK ANYWHERE IN THE INSTITUTION.

Ms.CREE WAS FIRST ARRESTED AT AGE 16 FOR UTTERING AND FORGING DOCUMENTS. SHE WAS PUT ON ONE YEAR'S PROBATION WHICH SHE COMPLETED SUCCESSFULLY. THE SUBJECT DISPLAYS NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR HER CRIMINAL INVOLVEMENT. THE SUBJECT CLEARLY HAS A DRUG AND ALCOHOL PROBLEM. HER INSTITUTIONAL PARTICIPATION IS LIMITED TO NATIVE SISTERHOOD. THE WRITER STRONGLY SUGGESTS THAT Ms.CREE REMAIN A MAXIMUM SECURITY INMATE. THE WRITER IS NOT IN SUPPORT OF COMMUNITY RELEASE AT THIS TIME. DAY PAROLE DENIED. FULL PAROLE DENIED. ESCORTED TEMPORARY ABSENCE DENIED FOR ONE YEAR. Ms.CREE WAS INVOLVED WITH A WOULD-BE SERIOUS INCIDENT WITH A NUMBER OF HER FRIENDS ON MAY 1, 19__ WHEN SECURITY STAFF WERE PROCEEDING TO DISPEL AN INCIDENT IN ANOTHER PART OF THE BUILDING. AS A RESULT OF Ms.CREE NOT BEING ABLE TO REMAIN CHARGE FREE FOR ANY LENGTH OF TIME, HER CAVALIER ATTITUDE, HER ACTIVITIES AND FRIENDSHIPS WITH MANY KNOWN DRUG DEALERS IN THE INSTITUTION, IT IS THE WRITER'S OPINION THAT Ms.CREE MEETS #2 & #3 CRITERIA UNDER BILL C67-68.

Ms.CREE IS A DANGER TO SOCIETY, TO HERSELF AND THE STAFF MEMBERS OF THE INSTITUTION. Ms.CREE IS BEING REFERRED UNDER BILL C-67-68. Ms.CREE'S SENTENCE EXPIRES JANUARY, 199_. NEXT CASE MANAGEMENT REVIEW SCHEDULED DECEMBER, 198_.

THIS IS A FICTIONAL PROFILE, BUT IT CLOSELY RESEMBLES A PERCEIVED REALITY ON THE PART OF THE BUREAUCRACY WHO ASSESS THE NATIVE WOMAN AS SHE ENTERS PRISON. THOSE WHO ASSESS US COME FROM AN OPPOSITE LIFE-EXPERIENCE. THE AVERAGE CASE MANAGEMENT PERSON IS CAUCASION, MARRIED, HAS 1-2 CHILDREN, A UNIVERSITY DEGREE, IS FROM AN UPPER-MIDDLE-CLASS BACKGROUND WITH NO COMPARABLE EXPERIENCES TO A NATIVE WOMAN.

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OBVIOUSLY THERE ARE GOING TO BE SOME VERY PROFOUND DIFFICULTIES THAT THE NATIVE WOMAN WILL HAVE IN MAKING ADJUSTMENTS WITHIN THE INSTITUTION AND IN SERVING OUT HER SENTENCE. ALMOST EVERY SISTER I HAVE TALKED TO HAS TOLD ME THEY WERE RAISED IN FOSTER HOMES, SENT TO JUVENILE DETENTION CENTRES, WERE VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE, WERE VICTIMS OF RAPE. AND FINALLY ENTERING PRISON FOR WOMEN, WE HAVE ALL BECOME VICTIMS OF BUREAUCRACY BECAUSE WE DO NOT HAVE THE RIGHT COLOUR OF SKIN, THE RIGHT KIND OF EDUCATION, THE RIGHT KIND OF SOCIAL SKILLS AND THE RIGHT KIND OF PRINCIPLES TO GET OUT OF HERE.

MOST OFTEN CRIMINAL DEFENSE LAWYERS IN CONJUNCTION WITH CROWN PROSECUTORS AND JUDGES AGREE THAT A GUILTY PLEA WITH A LENGTHY SENTENCE WILL CORRECT PAST LIFESTYLES, OUR WAY OF THINKING, AND MAKE US INTO LAW-ABIDING "CITYZENS". IT IS AN ABSURD, PHUCKING JOKE TO THINK THAT THE CRIMINAL JUST-US SYSTEM WITH THEIR RESIDENTIAL CARE, TREATMENT, PROGRAMMING, COUNSELLING AND MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS ARE SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED PROGRAMS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF NATIVE WOMEN WHEN WE HAVE NEVER HAD AN EQUAL FOOTING IN THE CASE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSIONS THAT TAKE PLACE. THE BUREAUCRACY AND PAPER PUSHING OUTWEIGHS THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING TO WHAT THE NATIVE WOMAN SAYS SHE NEEDS.

USUALLY THE WOMAN IN THE CAGE IS TOO BUSY SURVIVING THE NEW RULES, NEW REGULATIONS OF DAILY LIFE IN LA-LA LAND TO EVEN CONSIDER WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS AFTER SHE IS FINISHED HER SENTENCE.

WHEN WE COME TO PRISON, WE NEED TO ADJUST TO GREATER AND GREATER VIOLENCE IN OUR LIVES. WE ADJUST TO INCREASINGLY DEADLY CONDITIONS, AND COME TO ACCEPT THEM AS "NATURAL". WE ADJUST TO HAVING FREEDOMS STOLEN AWAY FROM US, TO HAVING FEWER AND FEWER CHOICES, LESS AND LESS VOICE IN THE DECISIONS THAT AFFECT OUR LIVES. WE COME TO BELIEVE THAT MAKING \$4.20 A DAY AND THE THINGS WE CAN BUY WITH IT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT LIFE GOALS. WE HAVE ADJUSTED TO DEAFENING SILENCE BECAUSE IT IS NOW MANDATORY TO WEAR HEAD-PHONES. WE HAVE ADJUSTED TO THE DEAFENING NOISES AND SCREAMS COMING FROM SEGREGATION WHEN OUR SISTER HAS JUST BEEN STRIPPED OF HER CLOTHES AND MACED IN THE FACE. WE HAVE ADJUSTED TO THE DEADENING ENTERTAINMENT OF BINGO GAMES THAT GIVE OUT PRIZED BAGS OF TACO CHIPS AND WE HEAR GLEES OF HAPPINESS AT THIS SCORE BECAUSE SOME PATHETIC INDIVIDUAL HASN'T TASTED TACO CHIPS SINCE 1979. WE HAVE ADJUSTED TO THE LACK OF CONVERSATION BECAUSE SOME DAYS THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING OF SIGNIFICANCE OR MEANING TO A FEW CHEAP WORDS. WE HAVE ADJUSTED TO DREAMING OF OUR FUTURES. WE HAVE ADJUSTED TO DIVORCING OURSELVES FROM RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR HUSBANDS. WE KEEP ADAPTING TO NEW AND EVER MORE DANGEROUS CONDITIONS AND IDEAS IN THE NAME-SAKE OF SURVIVAL.

WE FORGET HOW LIFE ONCE WAS, HOW BLUE THE SKY IS, HOW GOOD FOOD TASTED. WE FORGET BECAUSE THE CHANGES ARE GRADUAL AND UNANNOUNCED. NO ONE CAN FOREWARN US OF WHAT LAYS AHEAD. IF WE COULD IMAGINE OURSELVES TAKING PLEASURE IN A SLAVE JOB LIKE CLEANING FLOORS OVER & OVER AGAIN, DAY AFTER DAY, YEAR AFTER YEAR, AND SEE OURSELVES AS FANATICAL PSYCHO'S WHEN OUR FRESHLY WAXED FLOOR GETS A SCRATCH ON IT AND RUINS OUR ENTIRE DAY, WE WOULD RECOIL WITH HORROR AND SHAME BECAUSE OUR MINDS AND VALUES BECOME AS TWISTED AND IRRATIONAL AS THE ONES THAT IMPOSE THESE CONDITIONS UPON OUR LIVES.

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WE BECOME SO PHUCKING NUMB FROM THE INCREDIBLE B/SH WE ARE EXPOSED TO: TRYING TO SEE A CASE MANAGEMENT OFFICER TO GET A CALL TO OUR CHILDREN IS A MAJOR, MAJOR EVENT. IT IS NO WONDER THAT SO MANY OF US CUT OUR THROATS, LACERATE OUR BODIES, HANG OURSELVES. IT IS NO WONDER THAT WE NEED TO IDENTIFY OUR PAIN ONTO OUR PHYSICAL BODIES BECAUSE OUR WHOLE LIVES HAVE BEEN FILLED WITH INCREDIBLE PAIN AND TRAUMATIZING EXPERIENCES - PYSCHIC PAIN, PHYSICAL PAIN, SPIRITUAL PAIN.


WHEN YOU ASK A NATIVE WOMAN WHY SHE WAS PLACED IN A FOSTER HOME SHE'LL LIKELY TELL YOU IT WAS BECAUSE CHILDREN'S "Aid" ARRESTED HER BECAUSE HER PARENTS DIDN'T SEND HER TO SCHOOL REGULARLY. WHEN YOU ASK A NATIVE WOMAN WHERE SHE WAS SEXUALLY ABUSED, SHE'LL LIKELY RESPOND IT TOOK PLACE IN THE FOSTER HOMES. WHEN YOU ASK A NATIVE WOMAN WHY SHE FINALLY KILLED SOMEBODY SHE'LL TELL YOU SHE WAS A BATTERED WIFE AND SHE LOST CONTROL OF HER SENSES WHEN SHE WAS TAKING ANOTHER BEATING. SHE DIDN'T MEAN TO KILL HER HUSBAND, HER LOVER, HER FRIEND, SHE WAS JUST SO SPUN OUT AFTER EACH LICKING SHE LIVED THROUGH- SHE JUST WAS SO SPUN OUT.

I AM YOUR TYPICAL NATIVE WOMAN AND ONE WHO HAS SURVIVED THE CRIMINAL JUST-US SYSTEM. WHEN I THINK ABOUT THE TIME IN PRISONS, I OFTEN WONDER HOW I MAINTAINED MY SANITY. I NEVER CONFORMED IN MY HEART OR IN MY MIND BUT MY BODY DANCED. I LEARNED HOW TO COPE WITH LIES. I BELIEVE JUSTICE DOES NOT EXIST FOR NATIVE PEOPLE. THE BATTLE OF WILL IS TO SEE THROUGH THE WALL, TO SEE THROUGH THE SCREWS AND THEIR POWER PLAYS- THEIR BUREAUCRATIC GAMES OF POWER AND PLEASURE.

I LEARNED THERE IS A CERTAIN DEGREE OF HYPOCRACY IN THE GROUPS THAT REPRESENT WOMEN IN PRISON. THE MONEY AND EFFORTS THAT GO INTO "SERVICES" IS A MERE BAND-AID EFFORT IN CONSPIRACY WITH THE CRIMINAL JUST-US SYSTEM. THE MONEY AND EFFORTS WOULD BE BETTER DIRECTED AT COMMUTING THE FAMILIES OF THE INCARCERATED WOMEN TO THE PRISONS. THE TIME THAT IS SPENT ON CONDUCTING STUDY UPON STUDY IS WASTED TIME BECAUSE STATISTICS STAY THE SAME, THE PAIN STAYS THE SAME, THE FACES OF THE WOMEN CHANGE - BUT THE STORIES ARE IDENTICAL.

I ENTERED PRISON FOR WOMEN AS A YOUNG, POORLY EDUCATED, NATIVE WOMAN ANDI WILL SOON BE RELEASE WITH SIMILAR CHARACTERISTICS - BUT YOU CAN ADD ANOTHER DEFICIENCY - AFTER 7 YEARS - I AM NOW ANANGRY, YOUNG, POOR, UNEDUCATED, NATIVE WOMAN!!!!

SIGNED IN THE BLOOD OF MY SISTERS,
Ms.CREE XO



Appendix 2: Anonymous, presumed to be Editors Whitney, B., Wise, G., Dollan, D., and

Knowles, L.M. (1980b). TIGHTWIRE. *Tightwire* (March-April). p. 5PDF.

TIGHTWIRE

VOLUME ^{SIX}NINE, NUMBERS ONE AND TWO

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Appendix 3: Anonymous. (1987). NATIVE SISTERHOOD AT KINGSTON PRISON FOR WOMEN. *Tightwire* (Spring). p. 29.

NATIVE SISTERHOOD AT KINGSTON PRISON FOR WOMEN

The Native Sisterhood has been in existence for over the past ten years in the Kingston Prison for Women. The Native Sisterhood is made up of a group of Native female prisoners. Members of the Native Sisterhood are from all points across Canada. There are Status, Non Status and Metis women who are actively involved in the struggle to be recognized as Native people behind prison walls.

Issues and concerns relating to the Native Sisterhood are presented at their weekly Monday night meetings. It is not mandatory that every Native woman attend the Native Sisterhood meetings. However, the Native women are welcome to join the group at any time.

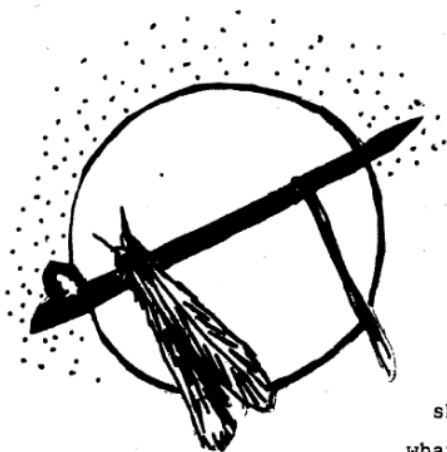
There are no fees for membership. All that is required is that respect is shown to the cultural and spiritual aspects of Native life - and that the women are of Native ancestry.

The Native Sisterhood holds two Pow Wows a year inside the prison. Sacred sweats are performed every so often when an Elder is available to attend a sweat inside the prison. Sweetgrass is provided for the women which they burn at their own discretion in their cells by themselves, or with other women.

Outside Native Liaison Services are provided by "N'shikewizwug" her in Kingston. It holds a staff of three people who are available to assist the women in preparing release plans, and making contact with other Native people who have an interest in helping the Native women who are in prison. N'shikewizwug also provides its own drum and singers for evenings of singing, drumming and dancing inside the prison, and at the other Federal prisons in the area that have a Native Brotherhood group.

Elections were held on January 5, 1987 for positions on the Executive Board. Newly elected President/Chairperson is Ruth Tornquist from Winnipeg, Manitoba. Vice-President is Tammy Papin from Edmonton, Alberta. Debbie Maracle, from the Six Nations Reserve near Brantford, Ontario, is the Secretary. Treasurer is Lisa Pelletier from Regina, Sask. Marg Mecas from Winnipeg, Manitoba, remains as the Native Representative on the Inmate Committee. Former President of the Native Sisterhood was Janice Bear from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Appendix 4: Betty. (1985) To my Coppertone Sister. *Tightwire* (V20, 8). p. 31PDF.



December 5th, 1984

To my Coppertone Sister:

As we all know we are Brother's and Sister's in this creation! Native or non-Native we should all help each other! But due to the hatred going on in this world it is most important that the Native people should be more close as Brothers and Sister's. That is what Sisterhood is there for, to help one another through the struggles and to grow... We have been wiped out all over through the passing of time but we cannot dwell on that!!!!

That has past, it is time to forget what happened to our people in the past. Now it is important to think of what will happen to our next coming generation. We do not want to see our next generation in our shoes or worse! Right?!

Sister hood helps us to get Sweatlodges, Sweetgrass, these things are brought in to us for a purpose: to help us grow Spiritually and to give us the strength in our Beliefs.

We must all pray to Grandfather and ask him to bring a tighter bond to Sisterhood for US Sisters and for the ones to come with in the future. we must make a decision very soon. To reunite. Or all our strengths will parish.....

BETTY



Appendix 5: North American Indian Travelling College. (1985). Thanksgiving address of the
North American Indian. *Tightwire* (V20, 8). p. 30-32.

These are some prayers from "Thanksgiving Address of the North American Indian", published by the North American Indian Travelling College, R.R. #3, Cornwall, Ontario K6H 5R7, 1977.

The words that come before all else; a spiritual way of communication:

Whenever our people get together, a speaker is chosen from among us to recite the Thanksgiving Greetings on behalf of all the people. He chooses his own words, but the general form is traditional. It follows the order in which we relate to all of the Creators' works.

Since we are all a part of the same creation, then we must all acknowledge each other as brother and sister.

Through this address, the Creator is introduced into a ceremony, social dance, or council. Then at the end of the meeting, the address again brings the minds of the people together before we leave for our homes.

THE MOTHER EARTH

We give thanks and greetings to the earth; she is giving us that which makes us strong and healthy. She supports our feet as we walk upon her. We are grateful that she continues to perform her duties as she was instructed. The women and mother earth are one; givers of life.

We are her colour, her flesh, and her roots. Once we acknowledge and respect her role, then begins a true relationship, and all that is from her returns to her.

THE FOUR WINDS

We listen, hear their voices as they blow above our heads. We are assured that they follow the instructions given them, sometimes bringing rain, and renewing the waters upon the earth. They always bring us strength. They come from the four directions.

The air and the winds are still active in the changing of the seasons. Winter is the time when the earth is covered with snow and cold winds blow. Summer wind causes life to continue. In the fall season life matures and gets ready for the continuation of the cycle once more.

You refresh us and make us strong. For this we give greetings and thanksgiving.

OUR GRANDFATHERS, THE THUNDERERS

We call them our Grandfathers. They are the Thunder People. We are of one mind that we should give them greetings and thanks.

Our Grandfathers have been given certain responsibilities. We see them roaming the sky above, carrying with them water to renew life.

At certain times we hear our Grandfathers making loud noises. Our Elders tell us their voices are loud to suppress the powerful beings (not of his making) within the Mother Earth, from coming to the surface where the people dwell. Grandfathers, you are known to us as protective guardians and as medicine, so we now offer these words of thanksgiving.

THE DAY SUN

Our thoughts turn toward the sky. We see the day sun, the source of all life. We are instructed to call him our eldest brother. He comes from the east, travels across the sky, and sets in the west. With the sunshine we can see the perfect gifts which we are grateful for.

Brother Sun nourishes Mother Earth and is the source of light and warmth. The cycle sun changes; during the winter months we say, "She wears a blanket of snow." As the cycle continues the sunshine and heat become stronger to allow all life forms to be reborn.

Our brother is the source of all fires of life. With every new sunrise is a new miracle; for this we are grateful.

THE MOON OR NIGHT SUN

In our world we have night time or darkness. During this time we see the moon reflect lights, so that there isn't complete darkness. We have been instructed to address her as our Grandmother. In her cycle she makes her face new in harmony with other female life.

She is still following these instructions and we see her stages. Within these are the natural cycles of women. She determines the arrival of children on earth, causes the tides of the ocean, and she also helps us measure time.

We know that there are two sides to the natural flow, for day time there is night. They are on equal balance yet. Our Grandmother continues to lead us. We remain grateful, and we express our thanksgiving.

STARS

The Stars are helpers of our Grandmother Moon. They have spread themselves all across the sky. Our people knew their names and their messages of future happenings, even to helping mold individual character of mankind.

When we travel at night we lift our faces to the stars and are guided to our homes.

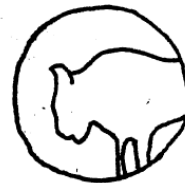
They bring dew to the gardens and all growing plants on Mother Earth.

When we look in the sky to the vast beauty of the Stars, we know they are following the way the Creator intended. For this we offer our greetings and thanksgiving.

THE SKY DWELLERS

The four powerful spirit beings who have been assigned by the Creator to guide us both by day and night are called the Sky Dwellers. Our Creator directed these helpers to assist him in dealing with us when we are unhappy and of many minds here during our journey on Mother Earth. They know and see our every act and they guide us with the teachings that the Creator established.

For the power of direction, we give greetings and Thanksgiving to these four beings, his helpers.



THE CREATOR

Now, we turn our thoughts to the Creator: we will choose our finest words to give thanks and greeting to Him. He has prepared all these things on earth for our peace of mind. Then, he thought, "I will now prepare a place for myself where no one will know my face, but I will be listening and keeping watch on the people moving on the earth."

And indeed, we see that all things are faithful to their duties as He has instructed them. We will therefore gather our minds into one and give thanks to the Creator.

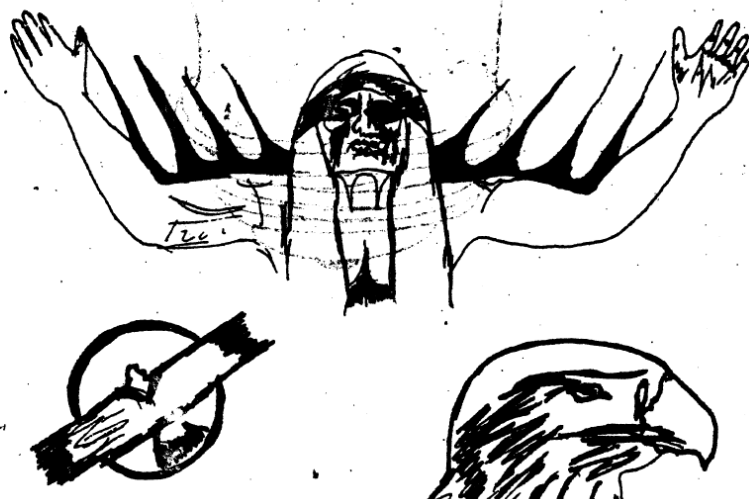
CLOSINGS WORDS

We have directed our voices toward our Creator in the best way that we are able to do. Let it be our thought that we will abide by his word so that we may yet be happy.

If we have left something out, or if there are some who have other needs or other words, let them send their voices to the Creator in their own ways. Let us be satisfied that we have gone as far as it was possible to fulfill our responsibilities.

These Thanksgiving prayers are delivered before and after all meetings and ceremonies of traditional Iroquois people. Native people of other nations have told that in prayer we all face in the same direction. Therefore, we are proud to share with the Creator's children these thoughts of gratitude for life.

we believe that the Creator wishes us to regard the life cycle with the greatest respect and appreciation. Our thanks are to be expressed at every new sunrise.



Appendix 6: Geehan, J. (1983). The way it is in the Indian world today. *Tightwire* (V20, 5). p.

36-40.

The Way It Is In The Indian World Today

A long time ago a strange people came to this land. They were strange in so many ways and they are stranger still today.

They came and they planted crosses and the flags of strange Kings in our mother, the earth and they claimed ownership over her and all that she provided for her children.

We had understood for untold centuries that our mother, the earth and all that was seen and unseen in our world and in the universe had been created by the great mystery and that He alone was the owner of all things and that we, his children, were given life by him and that in our short time here on this world we were to give honour and thanksgiving to Him each day as we walked about on the earth.

We understood that to honour Him we had to regard his plants as sacred and He taught us which were to be used as medicine and which ones to use when we prayed to him, like the sacred tobacco, the sweet grass, the cedar and the sage and the other plants.

We saw that the animals had a life like our own and that their life was sacred and precious to them. We regarded them as our brothers and we knew that when we killed one of them for food, we must give thanks to the creator, to our mother earth, and to the guardian spirit of that animal and so we tried to walk on this earth in a sacred way.

We observed the rythm of all the creation around us and we saw that everything in the universe; the sun, the moon and stars, the water and the wind, the night and the day, the summer and the winter, each was doing his work according to it's original instructions from the creator, and we patterned our lives and our work according to that sacred rythm; we saw that the creator had provided everything food for our needs and we trusted him.

It was the creator who gave us the sacred pipe to pray with, and he was the one who taught us the sacred purifying way of the sweat lodge. It was he who taught us the sacred songs so that we could grow abundant food in the desert. He heard us when we prayed in that way or rain. It was He who taught us about the four spirits who had a special work to do for us while they guarded the four quarters of the earth.

It was the great mystery who gave us our visions and our medicine people, and He was the one who gave us our prophecies and our sacred ceremonies. Our prophecies told us about those strange people who would come to this land and the great troubles that we would have to live with. Our prophecies also told us about the great purification that is about to begin very soon now and how we must prepare ourselves for that time.

We were not perfect but we gave honour and thanks to our mother, earth and to all things. We saw the great harmony of everything around us and we patterned our lives accordingly. We prayed and we trusted. We apologized to a tree before we took its life to support our own, we prayed before we pulled them out of the ground for our food, or for our medicine. We did not kill what we did not need because we believed that the life of each plant or animal was sacred and we offered tobacco to its spirit. We believed that in giving honour to all things that we were giving honour to Him who made them. We believed that in developing our

minds and bodies to the highest possible degree of perfection that we were following in the way of the flowers and the plants who were giving the greatest honour to their maker by blossoming to their greatest perfection.

We were not perfect but we had no jails and we had no judges or lawyers and no policemen. We had no taxes and we had no wine and no beer and no whisky.

We had no money.

We had no old people's homes,

We had no children's aid societies,

We had no crisis centres,

We had no atomic bombs, no hydrogen bombs,

We had no war planes,

We had no warships,

We had no standing armies.

We honoured our dead, we honoured our old people and our children, and we honoured each other. We had self discipline and a code of moral conduct. We had a philosophy of life based on the creator and harmony with all of His creation, including his spirit world, " and we had our humanity ".

We did not know about Christianity but we had our spiritual way that governed everything about our lives and we believed that, God was our father. We did not know about scalping until the strangers came and taught it to us and they called us savages and pagans, but we always fed those who were hungry; even our enemies.

There are two great powers in the universe. One is the great mystery that we call the creator. We also call Him the first worker. The other great power is the evil one and there is a great war between them which is very near its climax now. The war can only end in one way, there is only one who can win and He is the creator of the universe and that will be the time of the great purification when all that are working on the side of the great evil spirit will be destroyed and all their works will be wiped away with them, after that the earth will be renewed, our mother earth will be like a new young woman again, the water and air will be clean and the animal life will return as it was, all the food will be clean again and that human life that the creator has preserved from among those living now will be re-started in a pure way again with their instructions about how to live on this earth.

Those strange people that came to this land of North and South America, they called us savages and said they were going to civilize us and they had a mandate to Christianize us too, and in some cases they gave us a choice, either join their religion or have our hands cut off or be killed outright. They must have been very dedicated Christians to put it that

strong and there's documentary proof that some of the Christianizing was done that way.

Christopher Columbus said that the ones he met were clean, handsome, and gentle people and " that they would make good slaves ". and he tricked some of the first ones aboard and did just that when he got them back to Europe.

Sieur De La Salle said in part of a petition to his King in 1677 that " these countries will infallibly furnish, within a few years, a great many new subjects to the King and Church."

When these strangers who came were few and hungry, our people welcomed them and fed them and gave them shelter, but in time the strangers grew many and with excessive greed and treachery they began to make what they called treaties, and no matter how much land they got, they always wanted more, so that our brother's, the Sioux people came to call the (Waishu's) which means : Those who take everything.

And these Waishus made law and they made armies and they stole everything, with procises, (treaties) that they never intended to live up to, as one old wise chief said at that time, they (the white people), made a great many promises and they never kept but one, they promised to take our land and they did.

Once we were dispossessed they put us on " reservations ", (ghettos) often at the point of a gun and the laws were made to make sure that we remained a disinherited people, then the laws and the courts and the armies and the police were sent to make sure that it stayed this way till this day in 1974.

But it was not enough that we were put on reservations, often on the poorest looking land around. Our dead were dug up and put on display, we were ridiculed and humiliated in the most hateful ways, our children were carted off to schools often hundreds of miles away; they were completely cut off from the love and customs of their families and forbidden to speak their mother tongue under pain of cruel punishment.

But these people who did this insisted they were Christians and that we must become Christianized.

The whole history of a rape of a people and of a continent is written in books as it was once written in blood, and it has got to be one of the most sordid accounts in the history of mankind. But in their haste and their greed and their arrogance the Wasichus forgot many things, they forgot whatever you do your brother, you also do to God, and now we are close to the time of the accounting.

They forgot that when you foment hatred against your fellow man, you do it against his creator. They forgot or never knew we had, (and many Native people still have), a philosophy based not on the aquisition of material things but on a harmony with the creator and the rythn of his creation, that is how we fitted into the timelessness of the universe, time belonged to the great mystery and we did not have to concern ourselves except to be in tune with it.

But those strangers who came had strange ways, they made machines to measure time and they made machines to measure everything because they

were takers, they took everything, from the earth and the water and from each other so that now in this time things are so out of balance that millions of people die of starvation every year but the takers say that those who die that way; it is their own fault, not ours. We who have been so artfully dispossessed and so oppressed for so long, we have watched the takers taking.

We have watched them making their artificial world and living in their artificial ways, some said, " God is dead " and " we only live once " and " sex has got to be free " and we wonder about a people like that.

These Wasichus, we have watched them for hundreds of years now, they never stopped taking, so we had to conclude that they have a philosophy based on material things because they measure and they make laws and they put fences around where no-one can go, they put people in jail because they try to feed their hungry children.

They dig gold out of the ground and they bury it back in the ground and they put armies around to guard it, if anybody tries to take some; they kill him. We see always that money is more important than human beings. But these strange people, they mark on their money, " In God We Trust ", yet they act so strangely towards other human beings. They must have a strange God.

We see that these strange people have almost entirely lost the humanity they must have once had and we see that many native people have adopted many of their ways, so that they have become as deceptive as the ones they have copied from, now at this time its almost impossible to find anyone who still speaks true words and tries to live in a true way.

So we have turned back to look at the old prophesies that our old people told us about long ago and we are determined to go back to the true human values and the true ways of living on this earth because we must purify ourselves to be ready for the time of the great purification.

We see that some of our brothers, of other races, are already doing that too. We are beginning to insist on our rights as children of the creator, we are beginning to restore our humanity, regardless of the increasing oppression by the majority society, we are resisiting their ever increasing greed that seems boundless.

They want more electricity, they want more coal, they want more oil, they want more land, they want more water, they want more slaves, but we the native peoples of this land, we stand in their way and we stand as a reproach before their faces, not only for their past misdeeds but for the even more monstrous misdeeds that they plan to carry out now.

And you, of the majority society, should know it is your governments, it is your laws, it is your police, it is your guns which are pointed at our heads. So that your industrialists can have more, so that your consumers can consume more.

Its a money society but the money is dying like our old ones said it would, what will you do then? Our old ones also said that when the time comes our young people would again wear braids and go back to the old ways and that time is now and we are hated because of it.

When you go to your churches on December 25 and you pray for peace, on

earth, you should remember that war is not made in the capital cities of the world, " it is made in the hearts of men ". Men and women who choose to work on the side of the great evil power but call themselves Christians, men and women who pray to the real God but give their hearts to another.

The American Indian movement is a spiritual movement, it represents the spiritual re-birth of the native people of North America. We, the native people of this land recognize that the time of truth has arrived, and we know that as the months come toward us, this majority society with its artificial make believe world will be confronted with more and more truth. Truth has only one source, it comes from the creator. The only weapon Aim has is truth but it is only one of the truths that the majority society will be confronted with.

FOR ALL MY NATIVE SISTERS

Sometimes writing an writing an article is a difficult task, but this

one will be the easiest of all. I'm going to write and dedicate this article to all my sisters in this prison.

Many times I have been the president of the Native Sisterhood. You have all put faith in my leadership abilities. I tried to fulfill my office to the best of my ability and I have only my sisters to thank for their support. Without it I know it would have been a difficult job.

The power within the sisterhood can be made to move any obstacle that may come in the path of our beliefs and solidarity. We have proved this fact many times. Without one another, we have only a surface. With each other, we could say we have a little nation within the system. It's all because we are united as one group, not to be divided from one another.

There were many times when I doubted myself. There were many times I questioned my ability to be able to do what I had been elected to do. I had to ask for strength from our Grandfather. And, my sisters I had to take my strength from all of you. There have been times when I didn't know where to turn. I turned to my sisters for my advice. For all of this, I thank you. Meegwetch.

When this is published in " Tightwire ", I will be gone from here and we will have a new president. To her I will leave a united and solid group. I will leave behind a job that I have been proud to do. I will leave you all knowing that when the time comes, you too will be able to walk out that door.

Meegwetch, for my strength to leave here.

Meegwetch, for what I have learned while I was here.

Meegwetch, for your friendship and sisterhood.

Meegwetch, for what I have found and what I have been taught through you all.

I wish each of you luck, but most of all that your path will lead you to where your struggles will be few and your lives will be fuller.

By: Judy Geehan
Past-president

Appendix 7: Solomon, A. (1984) What is a woman?. *Tightwire* (V20, 6). p. 18.

ON THE ART OF STEALING HUMAN RIGHTS

The art of denying Indians their human rights has been refined to a science. The following list of commonly used techniques will be helpful to burglar proofing your reserve and rights.

GAIN THE INDIAN'S COOPERATION. It is much easier to steal someone's human rights if you can do it with his own cooperation. So.....

- 1: Make him a non person. Human rights are for people. Convince Indians their ancestors were savages, that they were pagan, that Indians are drunkards. Make them wards of the government. Make a legal distinction, as in the Indian Act, between Indians and persons. Write history books that tell half the story.
- 2: Convince the Indian that he should be patient, that these things take time. Tell him that we are making progress, and that progress takes time.
- 3: Make him believe that things are being done for his own good. Tell him that you're sure that after he has experienced your laws and actions that he will realize how good they have been. Tell the Indian he has to take a little of the bad in order to enjoy the benefits you are conferring on him.
- 4: Get some Indian people to do the dirty work. There are always those who will act for you to the disadvantage of their own people. Just give them a little honour and praise. This is generally the function of band councils, chiefs and advisory councils: they have little legal power, but can handle the tough decisions, such as welfare, allocation of housing etc.
- 5: Consult the Indian, but do not act on the basis of what you hear. Tell the Indian he has a voice and go through the motions of listening. Then interpret what you have heard to suit your own needs.
- 6: Insist that the Indian " GOES THROUGH PROPER CHANNELS ". Make the channels and procedures so difficult that he won't bother to do anything. When he discovers what the proper channels are and becomes proficient at the procedures, change them.
- 7: Make the Indian believe that you are working hard for him, putting in much overtime and at a great sacrifice, and imply that he should be appreciative. That is the ultimate in skills in stealing human rights! When you obtain the thanks of your victim!
- 8: Allow a few individuals to " MAKE THE GRADE " and then point to them as examples. Say that the hardworkers and the " GOOD " Indians have made it, and therefore it is a persons own fault if he doesn't succeed.
- 9: Appeal to the Indian's sense of fairness, and tell him that even though things are pretty bad it is not right for him to make strong protests. Keep the argument going on his form of protest and avoid talking about the real issue. Refuse to deal with him while he is protesting. Take all the fire out of his efforts.
- 10: Encourage the Indian to take his case to court. This is very expensive, takes lots of time and energy and is very safe because the laws are stacked against him. The courts ruling will defeat the Indian's cause, but make him think he has obtained justice.
- 11: Make the Indian believe that things could be worse, and that instead of complaining about loss of human rights, to be grateful for the human rights he does have. In fact, convince him that to attempt to regain a right he has lost is likely to jeopardize the rights that he still has.
- 12: Set yourself up as the protector of the Indian's human rights and then you can choose to act only on those violations you wish to act upon. By getting successful action on a few minor violations of human rights, you can point at these successes as examples of your devotion to his cause.

Appendix 8: Scarff, I. (1983b). THE HURT OF YESTERDAY. *Tightwire* (March-April). p.

46PDF.

THE HURT OF YESTERDAY

Many days past when we use to be proud people. But today the women's hearts are on the ground. The pride of our men lay with the women. Our children of today do not know the meaning of harmony. When will we again walk with our heads held high? Our people must find the meaning of harmony once again. As in the past days we never heard of prisons, alcohol and chemical drugs. The Indian was a true nature's child and had respect for Grandmother Earth. Today as I sit behind these bars. I think a great deal of the way we use to live. I compare today with yesterday, and what I see today makes my heart bleed. I remember the stories of yesterday from my grandfather, and I cry for those days to come back to my people. There was no hate, frustration and anger inside of us. We all walked as one upon the earth, and the children could really smile. The men were proud and strong. The women were happy and content.

Today I can feel the anger and hate within. As I look at my sister, I can feel her shame. As I look at my brother, I can feel the hurt. I often wonder what the Elder's think of the young people today. Do they feel shame and hurt for us? For a lot of things we've done, I think it's enough to make the Elders look away from our direction. How it pains me to know that. But a person has to be strong, or crumple like so many things around us. What comforts me today is the little bit of knowledge I have of our Spiritual Religion and of our old ways of living. I can whisper the words "I am an Indian", but that is not enough because I would like to shout them. When that time comes, I know we will once again be a strong, proud people and walk in harmony. But I want that so much for today instead of tomorrow. For I may not be here.

" Do Not Walk Ahead of Me ...
For I will Not Follow...
Do Not Walk Behind Me...
For I Will Not Lead...
But Walk Beside Me And
Be My Friend..."

In Unity
Irma Scarff
1371
P.4 W.

Appendix 9: Sugar, F. (1983). Closing comments. *Tightwire* (V20,5). p. 41.

Closing Comments.....

Native Sisterhood recently held our annual Pow-wow this past October 22, 1983. The Pow-wow ran successful with alot of hard work from participating members. A number of outside guests were in attendance from all over Ontario. We presented various people with gifts and an offering of tobacco. The drum groups that came in were the centre of attention! Sault Ste. Marie drummers travelled especially to make this day a special one for our little sister, Kelly. Also Toronto drummers and members of the Native Canadian Centre once again came to our rescue!!!

I would like to take this time to thank the Sisterhood for making the Pow-wow an exciting and memorable day. Many thanks to our Elders drummers, guests, and last but not least...Claire and 1/2...Meerwetch. We invite each and everyone of you back again next year for our Pow-wow and Social. Native Sisterhood welcomes your support.



It was said many years ago the Indian and the White man started off on the same road in harmony with the creator and his creation. But as they went along they came to a fork in the road and at that point they were to choose one road or another. The Indian chose one and the White man the other.....Thus making them different...Many times people have approached me asking about Native spirituality. Native spirituality to me is seeing life through the eyes of the soul and heart. It is a way of harmony with the rythm of this creation that we live in. It is a way of life based on respect for all living things. Since I have been elected as President and editor, I will try my best to make Native involvement both in Sisterhood and Tightwire a success. I'll need your support and encouragement!!!

Native Sisterhood
President.....
Fran Surar

Appendix 10: Brooker, T. (1991). Sisterhood. *Tightwire* (Spring). p. 26.

SISTERHOOD

I heard the wolf call my name
The scent of timberwood
I realized at that moment I
belonged to Sisterhood.

That natural, spiritual healing
I knew was happening to me
My body inside a prison
My spirit was set free

A sense of direction was
given along with knowledge
too
it was then at that moment
I knew what I had to do.

We all gathered together to
join a circle in prayer
All our thoughts and concerns
A feeling someone cared.

A time to be humble and
realize where we went wrong
A time to share and love
to make each other strong.

A chance to thank the Creator
for our Mother Earth
To release our positive
energies and see what life is
worth.

A time to respect our Elders
listen to what they say
A time to forgive one another
in our sweats we pray.

A beautiful road we can walk
if we stick together
Yes for as long as we live
May Sisterhood last forever.

I heard the wolf call out my
name.
Like music to my ear
It was then at that moment
it brought each one of us near

MIGWITCH

by Toni Brooker



Appendix 11: Anonymous. (1992a). 1992- A TIME TO HEAL. *Tightwire* (Fall-Winter). p. 27-

28.

1992- A TIME TO HEAL

1992 is coming to an end. To some the connection takes a second or two, to others, the connection has been on their minds for a long time and it is an opportunity to capitalize on the significance those four digits take on when together. Spain, the United States and Italy have spent literally millions of dollars to (celebrate) the Discovery of America.

Since 1492, our world, as Indigenous people has been drastically changed. Be it for better or worse. On October 11, 1492 we were a free people, never imagining what was about to befall us! However long ago, the impact of that day affects every Tribal member more than we realize at times.

The simple question of Did you celebrate 1992, takes on great political significance. More than a raised fist in defiance or an upside down flag, the boycott, protest or objection of celebrating 1992 affects the very essence of us as a people. How we reacted was our choice.

Lets look at the facts. Since the arrival of the Europeans, the Indigenous people of this hemisphere have survived terrible atrocities. We have been captured and taken to Spain and other parts of Europe, we have been forced into slavery and murdered. More recently, we were kidnapped from our homes and sent many miles away to Boarding Schools, we were denied the practice of our own spiritual communication and Christianized, we were given small pox blankets, our diet was drastically changed with serious health problems as a result, our hunting grounds were significantly reduced, we had to give up living like Crees, or Souix, or Seminoles, or Ojibways and live like white people, and we were introduced to alcohol.

Maybe not many of us has thought about it. Homework, work and the kids occupy our

daily lives with our mind only daring to venture far enough to worry about the next payday., let alone 1992 and its political significance.

We have to stop thinking of our own historical importance as prehistory. Our history is as relevant now as it was then. We have to change the attitudes of (sudden history) beginning when Colubus landed, and that it existed well before that.

We have to take what we have learned in this process, and salvage what our people have saved for us and hand it over to our young as their legacy, as their survival skills and defense in the public school system, universities, and in life!

WE MUST DECIDE IF WE ARE GOING TO BE INDIANS OR NOT. WE MUST NOT BE OPPORTUNIST WITH OUR HERITAGE.

One of the new catch words that we hear everywhere is dysfunctional. Be it a dysfunctional family, a dysfunctional relationship, or a dysfunctional symptom of growing up in an alcoholic family. One thing that is certain, there is alot of trauma growing up as an Indian these past couple of centuries. There has been alot written now on the effect trauma has on (totally messing someone up), by not dealing with them in a healthy manner.

As far as this writer knows, the first acknowledgement of the mistreatment of our children (really our Parents and our Grandparents) was in their government educational system. They were forbidden to speak our Native languages, practice our Native Spirituality, they were belittled to the point that it brought shame to their thought patterns on their upbringing and heritage. They tried to separate hundreds of years of traditional teachings our identities, from culture to language, to make us civilized like them!

1492 is like a grain of salt in time. It is an end and a beginning. Our people left us

with everything that we need to survive. EVERYTHING WE NEED TO BE GOOD PEOPLE IS ALREADY INSIDE OF US!! It is around us, it is along side us, it is above, we just have to have the courage to reach up and grab a hold of it!!

LET 1992 BE A HEALING TIME FOR THE REDISCOVERY OF OURSELVES AS INDIAN PEOPLE. THEY SAY EVERYTHING COMES BACK AROUND FULL CIRCLE.

MAY GRANDFATHER CREATOR GIVE US THE STRENGTH TO ENDURE OUR JOURNEY, AND BRING US BACK TO THE PROUDNESS OF OUR FOREFATHERS. MAY HE WALK WITH US ON THIS LONG PATH BACK TO GOOD HEALTH, GOOD THOUGHTS, AND LOVE.

IN STRENGTH & SISTERHOOD,
A SISTER LEARNING TO LIVE

MEEGWETCH!!!!!!

**THIS WHITE MAN,
THESE WHITE LAWS
HAVE REALLY BEEN
DESTROYING US. OUR
GREAT ANCESTORS
HAVE BEEN BURIED ON
THIS GROUND, AND SO
WHERE ARE WE GOING
TO PUT THEIR BONES.
WHERE ARE WE GOING
TO BE BURIED WHEN WE
ARE GONE. AND WE
NEED LIVES FOR OUR**

**THEIR CHILDREN AND
THEIR CHILDRENS
CHILDREN. WE NEED
EDUCATION ON THIS
LAW WE HAVE BEEN
FACING. IT HAS BEEN
HARD AND IT NEEDS TO
STOP!!!!**



Appendix 12: Scarff, I. (1983a). SPIRITUAL HOUR. *Tightwire* (March-April). p. 47PDF.

SPIRITUAL HOUR

Starting April 1/83 the Sisters are going to be having an hour each Sunday to burn Tabacco and Sweetgrass. But they have not okayed it for the Native Sisterhood to have it in the Chaple. Which the Sisters asked for. But we do have the quiet room in the activity building. Which the Sisters really appreciate.

It will help many of us who are having trouble with-in ourselves. It will also help a number of the Sisters to understand a bit more of our Spiritual Religion. Also the Spiritual Leader, Art Solomon is cleared to come in any Sunday to the hour that has been granted to the Sisters. It is a beginning.

In Unity
Irma Scarff
#1371

SEASONS

THERE'S A SEASON FOR BEGINNING
WHEN THE WORLD IS FRESH AND NEW
WHEN WE SHAPE OUR DREAMS OF ALL
THE THINGS WE HOPE AND PLAN TO DO..

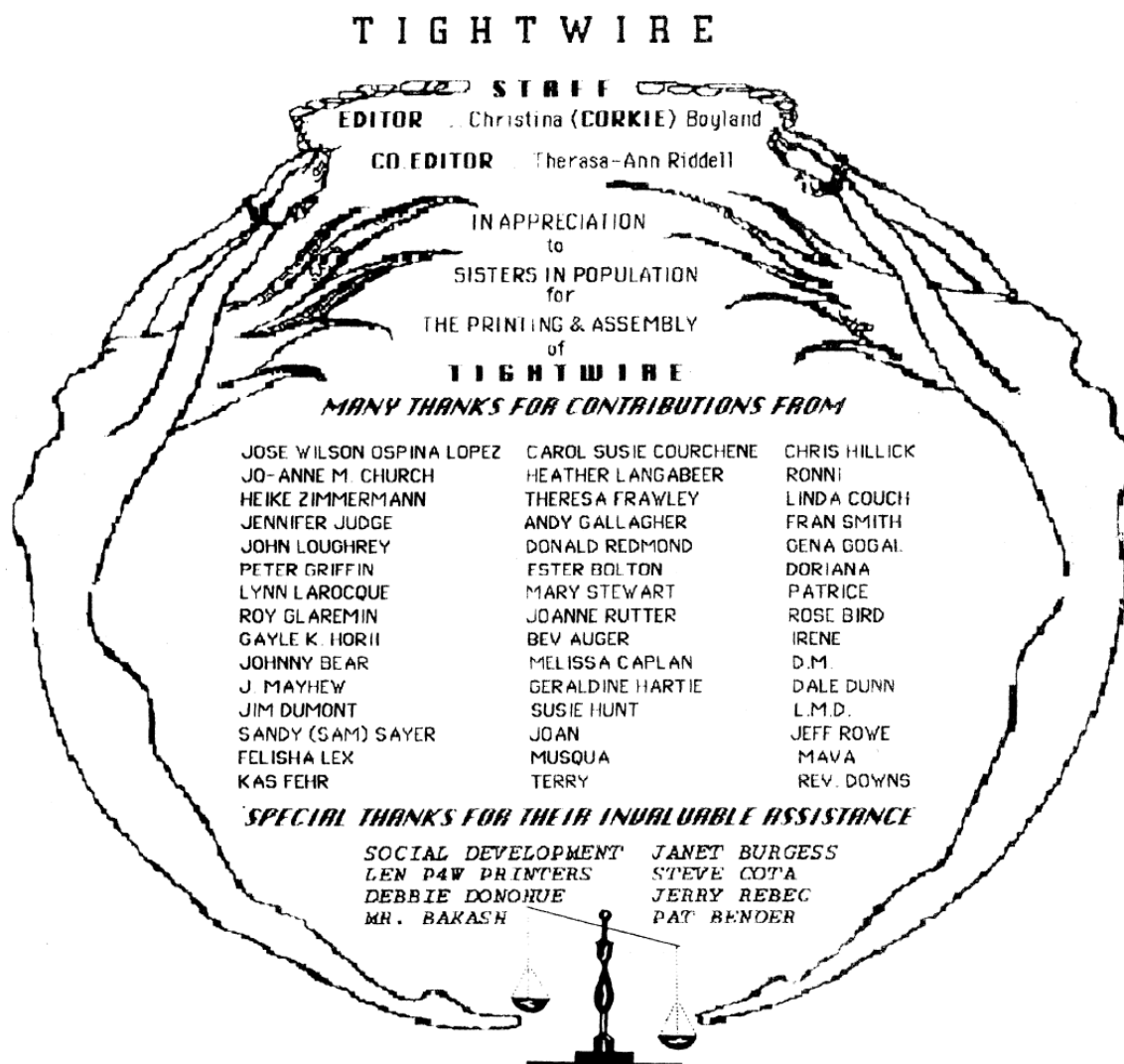
THERE'S A SEASON FOR MATURING
WHERE WE THINK, WORK AND GROW
AND A SEASON FOR HARVESTING
OF ALL WE HAVE COME TO KNOW..

AND EACH SUCCESSFUL SEASON
GROWS STILL RICHER THAN THE LAST
AS TREASURES OF THE PRESENT
ADD TO THE MEMORIES OF THE PAST.

By: Brenda Adams

MAR/APR 1983

Appendix 13: Anonymous. (1990). TIGHTWIRE. *Tightwire* (24, 4). p. 1.



TIGHTWIRE is a quarterly publication by the federal Prisoners at the Prison For Women in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. All material is subject to censorship by the Administration prior to printing.

* OVER 90% of content within this publication together with all typesetting, layout and design work - including the printing is done within the walls of P4W by the population

Appendix 14: Editor(s), presumed to be Fran and Gail. (1985b). tightwire. *Tightwire* (V20, 11).

p. 46.



tightwire

The Tightwire serves many functions. Primarily, it offers a platform for artistic expression to the incarcerated women in Canada's only female federal penitentiary. It also informs the readers of current proposals in law reform. Included in the format are short stories, poems, artwork, quotes, puzzles and jokes. We welcome any contributions in these areas. Especially those with a women's viewpoint.

Tightwire is published four times a year. In order to meet this objective, we are asking for financial backing through donations and subscriptions. Tightwire is self-supporting and we need your help in meeting our publishing requirements.

Thank You.

Editor.
Tightwire

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Appendix 15: Mayhew, J. (1987b). Untitled. *Tightwire* (21, 3). p.17.

somewhat apart from my areas of specialization. I did learn about publishing, editing, formatting, all of which are ancillary to teaching English. I, also, was able to adjust my approach to a given task to the perceived needs of the person I was dealing with. Thus, in this respect, i.e. ensuring a learning range for individual differences did come into play.

In conclusion, I believe it has been a unique learning experience -- much more for me, I suspect, than for my adult 'students' and fellow workers who are the publishers and editors of, as well as, the contributors to, the 'Tightwire' magazine at the Prison for Women.

The Tightwire staff wishes to thank Birtie for her energetic and enthusiastic interest.

In part, Tightwire attempts to translate the prison experience in a manner that can be more readily understood by the outside reader. Birtie was most helpful in teaching us how better to bridge the chasms of misunderstanding/misperception that too often prevail.

Thank you, Birtie

Jo-Ann Mayhew
Editor



"I can't stand it . . . They're so CUTE when they sit like that."

Appendix 16: Fran, and Gail. (1985). EDITORIAL. *Tightwire* (20, 11). p. 2PDF.



EDITORIAL

There are a lot of major issues being dealt with lately by the Justice Dept. and the Parole Board. The most crucial of these is the Violent Offender's Act. I've included highlights of this Act in this issue along with various comments that have appeared in newspapers. A complete reading of the Parole Act and it's amendments remains in the Tightwire office and is available to any who wish to read it. This issue of Tightwire has been a 'joint' effort in more ways than one. Our thanks goes out to all those who contributed their comments, thoughts and articles. It has made our job alot easier.

THANK YOU!!!

Fran and Gail

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*Reference material for horoscopes supplied by:
International Webster New Encyclopedic Dictionary
Taberhouse New York 1971

Appendix 17: Mayhew, J. (1986). Untitled. *Tightwire* (V2, September). p. 4PDF.

September, 1986

Dear Reader,

Once again the tides of personal fortune and the winds of suspicion have swept through the office of Tightwire.

Due to the closure of the magazine office for reasons?, there once again arose the double dilemma of a new editor trying to assemble unfamiliar material and to rush an overdue issue to print.

Fortunately the former editorial team left behind a healthy framework to build from. Both Di and Fran have happily packed their pencils, pens and brushes and have rejoined 'Another World'.

We extended a big thank you to them for their efforts and contributions over the past months. We wish them good luck as they move towards future goals.

Tightwire will continue in its on-going effort to provide a forum for the women of P4W to express their views, opinions and sentiments.

The daily, living oppression of this penal system on individuals is agonizing, the courage with which it is born is amazing. We hope Tightwire can reflect these pits and pinnacles of life as well as the more light-hearted moments.

My own appointment to editorship tends to fall into the latter category. I come to this job at Tightwire by way of having served my apprenticeship with the Corps de Cleaners who do brilliant work. Indeed, I feel I'm one of many who have 'polished handles carefully' and risen in position.

Now I'm out of the (broom) closet and I feel both privileged and pleased at having this opportunity to greet you with my first janitorial.

EDITOR

Jo. Ann Mayhew



Appendix 18: Mayhew, J. (1988d). FROM WOMEN TO WOMEN FROM WOMEN. *Tightwire*

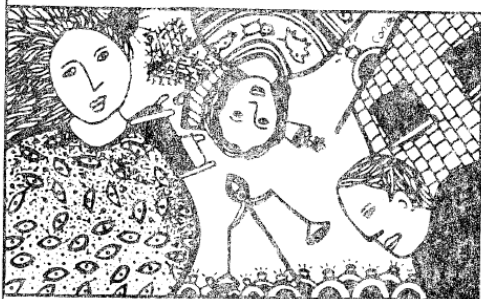
(V22, 2). p. 42.

FROM WOMEN TO WOMEN FROM WOMEN

One of the subtly unfolding pleasures I am discovering is a profound delight and appreciation for women's writing. A new wave of female writers is ascending, believing in themselves, unfurling powerful talent. For me, the hallmark of these writers is the sensitivity with which words are chosen. I am reminded of women selecting pieces of perfect fruit from crowded bins. Each chosen with an inner view of color, texture and higher purpose of a waiting lover. The choice must stimulate the appetite of the mind. It will bite with invigorating sharpness, the tang of new ideas or it may be smoothly mellow, the sweetness of fond romance, tender moments. Possibly, it may blend both to stir memories of the past into visions of tomorrow. These words of women are my sustaining food for to-day.

Jo-Ann Mayhew

The Changing Family



Catherine O'Neil

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SHY CHILD

But maybe shy is short for "shining,"
or maybe it means:
"seeing without being seen,
like a green bird in a green tree,"
for you sat down then
to draw another picture,
a scene in which people spoke
in comic strip balloons.
The people said, "Thank you, May I
have some?"
They said, "Fine thanks," and "How
are you?"
And you drew a small person
down in the corner of the picture,
a small person grinning and sticking
her tongue out.
We taped it to the refrigerator.

Barbara Drake

"What We Say To Strangers"

Appendix 19: Smith, F. (1986). ... SPRING1986. *Tightwire* (Spring). p. 2PDF.

...SPRING 1986

It's been a busy quarter for us here at TIGHTWIRE. As always, everything seems to happen at once. Issues involving the media, institutional policies and national equality are all covered.

We are still waiting for feedback on a few of the articles and any responses will be covered in the next edition of TIGHTWIRE.

We couldn't hold this one back any longer.

We had to say good-bye to my co-editor, Gail, back in February. No one could operate the machines like she could. Linda has taken her place and brings with her a creative and artistic ability along with nimble typing fingers. Both are greatly appreciated.

So, kick-back and enjoy this issue of Tightwire.

Fran Smith,
EDITOR

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3	Lay Naked - Poem
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26	Poem by Jim Edgar
27	C-31 Suit Filed
28-29	Question of Life & Death
30	Poems by Debbie G.
31-32	Right to Vote
33	Poems by B. J. H.
34-35	Helping Hand
36-37	Brother's Keeper
38	Subscription



Appendix 20: Kris and Gail. (1985). Editorial. *Tightwire* (V20, 10). p. 1.

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38	Subscription



Appendix 21: Mayhew, J. (1988c). Editorial. *Tightwire*. (V22, 3). p. 2.

EDITORIAL

This edition of TIGHTWIRE marks the beginning of my third year as editor. During this period, readers have commented on the evolving nature of this publication. It reflects my own passage through the painful, maze-like channels of Corrections with a deepening awareness of the tragic waste of both human resources and the coldly, calculated manner in which our Government chooses to spend millions of social dollars on entrenching oppression.

From a his-torical perspective, an ongoing wave of prison construction across Canada seems most likely but that future is not inevitable. Alternatives are possible. I am heartened and strengthened in this view by meeting an ever increasing number of individuals who have taken the time to understand the current prison process; to analyze both society's right to safeguards and the fundamental nature and cause of crimes that bring women in conflict with the law. These informed people are proceeding to search for and to recommend alternatives.

In early September an assembly of Elizabeth Fry members from across Canada met in Kingston for an Annual Convention. Part of their agenda involved a morning spent inside the Prison for Women in dialogue with the women for whom these workers were formulating policy. It was a her-storic occasion. It marked the first time that incarcerated women were asked to contribute their own views, their own opinions and their own experiences to the process of developing more substantial and effective solutions. The occasion was timely. Late summer had brought extensive newspaper coverage of views from both the Canadian Bar Association and the Daubney Commission stating that P4W should be closed. This view is not original. The same statement was made by a Royal Commission 50 years ago! It is a damaging position unless intelligent alternatives are concurrently offered.

What "outsiders" fail to realize as they review the facilities of this antiquated prison is, that despite the limited resouces offered to women at P4W, these are light years ahead of what is now in place in the provinces. Women in provincial jails have no significant work placements or job training opportunities and few educational or recreational facilities. Women at P4W have come from such places. We have the first hand experience to contrast these situations. Most outside observers do not have the experience from which reasonable comparisons and responsible conclusions can be inferred.

Hopefully, by including our experiences in their planning, the E. Fry Association will have new insight to bring their provincial development forecasting. E. Fry faces an awesome challenge. Will it remain a passive channel for the current mode of government funding; or, will this Association follow the course of its founder in social activism and demand that our Federal and Provincial Governments allocate funds for alternatives to "traditional" prisons suited to the needs of women? TIGHTWIRE salutes the energy of these women and wishes them strength and courage for the work ahead.

Jo. Ann Mayhew
Editor

Appendix 22: Walsh, J., McQuaid, B., and Sugar, F. (1985). Untitled. *Tightwire*. (V20, 8). p.

4PDF.



Well another issue of "Tightwire" has been put to bed! We hope you enjoy this issue. If you do, please share it with your friends and encourage them to take out a subscription. We desperately need the business! Our finances are near bankrupt! Help!!!

"Tightwire" is making every effort to publish four times a year: Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall.

Due to costs, "Tightwire" has had to increase our subscription rate to eight dollars per year.

A special thankyou to John Wiggins for his generous donation of a much needed electric type-writer.

Just a reminder that "Tightwire" is always looking for material to print ie., jokes, poems, articles, short stories etc. If you would like to see it in print- send along to "Tightwire".

I hope you enjoy this issue.

From the desk of...

Editor: Janie Walsh

Asst. Editor: Bobbie McQuaid

Native Editor: Fran Sugar

**Appendix 23: Rogers, J. (1983). **AN OPEN LETTER TO THE READERS OF
TIGHTWIRE**. *Tightwire* (V20, 5). p. 2.**



****AN OPEN LETTER TO THE READERS OF TIGHTWIRE****

I was sad to discover that, as usual, the latest issue of "Tightwire" failed to touch upon the bitter truths that make up this prison.

The newspaper reported with glowing remarks the success of Family Day, however, when it stated that it was for the benefit of the entire population they forgot to mention that Administrative Segregation and punitive disassociation were excluded.

When a few prisoners wrote solemnly about the solidarity and friendship in this prison, they must have forgotten signing their names to a petition supporting the opening of a Special Handling Unit.

There is no unity in this prison, and at the rate things are going, there doesn't appear there ever will be. What people don't realize is that by ignoring the sane ramblings of a group of prisoners dedicated to the task of making this a "safe" home for themselves, they are giving the administration greater leeway in bringing in more rigid rules and regulations.

Those same concerned prisoners will be in for a rude awakening when they find themselves on twenty-three hour lock.

It seems ludicrous to me that after one hundred days in Administrative Segregation, it is not the administration I am pleading with for release; it's the population!

WELCOME TO THE PRISON FOR WOMEN!!!

-A prisoner in Administrative Segregation.

By Leslie Wright

Dear Editor:

I had just read my first issue of "Tightwire", and I am very impressed. Being in a knowing position, I can state that "Tightwire" is, by far the largest, most complete, and highest in quality of all publications produced by inmates in any Canadian prison. Inmates of a very few prisons that produce periodicals, print two to four mimeographed news bulletins of coming events.

You, your predecessors, the staff, and all contributors have attained a high degree of proficiency in all departments. All of you are to be congratulated for producing the most worthy periodical of any Canadian prison. I sincerely wish all of you good-luck, and a continued prosperous future; you earned it

Sincerely,
John J. Rogers

Appendix 24: Editor(s). (1985a). tightwire. *Tightwire*. (V20, 10). p. 58PDF.



tightwire

Dear Friend:

In these times of restraint it appears that the worthiest of causes are being cast out like old newspapers. The Tightwire has been in publication for twelve years. Currently under new management, we are seeking financial backing through donations and subscriptions.

The Tightwire serves many functions. Primarily, it offers a platform for artistic expression to the incarcerated women in Canada's only female federal penitentiary. It also informs the readers of current proposals in law reformation. Included in the format are short stories, poems, artwork, quotes, puzzles, and jokes. We welcome any contributions in these areas especially those with a women's viewpoint.

The Tightwire is published four times a year (hopefully).

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prison for women; box 515; kingston, ontario; canada k7l 4w7

Appendix 25: McKay, J. (1992). FROM EDITOR:. *Tightwire*. (Fall-Winter). p. 3PDF.

FROM EDITOR:

Well here it is, our Fall and Winter issue. I would like to apologize for the delay but this is due to a number of things. The changing of editors and the lack of contributions didn't help. But here we are and I hope that you will enjoy the poetry and work done by the women at P.4.W

Due to the fact that we will be re-locating in 1994. The last issue of "Tightwire" will be published in August 1994. Those wishing to subscribe, please do so up until that date. I would also like take this opportunity to add: anyone who would like to write and give us their input, please do so we are always happy to hear from our readers.

So "Happy Reading" from all the women at P.4.W.

EDITOR
JULIE MCKAY

-
I WOULD LIKE TO SUBSCRIBE TO "TIGHTWIRE" AS

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NEW ADDRESS _____

NAME _____
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POSTAL CODE _____

PLEASE ENCLOSE \$18.00 WHICH WILL INCLUDE ALL REMAINING ISSUES UNTIL 1994. issue. I would like to apologize for the delay but this is due to a number of things. The changing of editors and the lack of contributions didn't help. But here we are and I hope that you will enjoy the poetry and work done by the women at P.4.W

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Appendix 26: Whitney, B. (1980). Native news. *Tightwire* (March-April). p. 24.

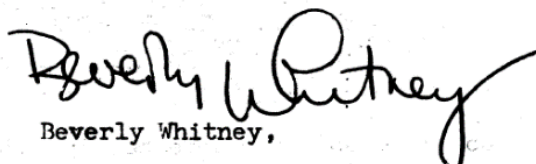
NATIVE NEWS

The following section is a new one offered in "Tightwire", which I hope will fairly represent oppressed Natives caught within our political system.

The first in this series is "The Leonard Peltier Case".

Also, there is an informative article written by Lois Bickley, re: published from the "Ontario Indian", March issue.

I trust that these articles are well received by the Indian population at large.


Beverly Whitney,
Editor.

Appendix 27: Hartley, D., and Walsh, J. (1983). EDITOR'S NOTE: *Tightwire* (V20, 5). p. 58.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

DUE TO A LACK OF FUNDS IN THE " TIGHTWIRE " ACCOUNTS, WE WERE UNABLE TO PRINT ALL THE MATERIAL SUBMITTED BY JOHN ROGERS AND BY THE NATIVE AND FRENCH SECTION EDITORS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTORS. THE " TIGHTWIRE " STAFF WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS THEIR REGRETS OVER THESE OMISSIONS. WE HOPE TO BE ABLE TO PUBLISH EVERYTHING THAT HAS BEEN CONTRIBUTED IN OUR NEXT ISSUE.

WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO EXTEND OUR APOLOGIES TO THE POETESS, " SYGUN ", WHOSE POEM, " FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT " WAS MISPRINTED IN THIS ISSUE. UNFORTUNATELY, BECAUSE OUR FUNDS ARE SO MEAGRE AT PRESENT; WE WERE UNABLE TO AFFORD THE 500 SHEETS OF PAPER NECESSARY TO CORRECT THIS ERROR. THEREFORE, " SYGUN'S " POEM WILL BE RE-PRINTED IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF " TIGHTWIRE ", CORRECTLY AND IN IT'S ENTIRETY.

AS I HAVE PREVIOUSLY STATED, " TIGHTWIRE " IS IN DIRE FINANCIAL STRAITS. WE WOULD APPRECIATE ALL THOSE PEOPLE WHO ARE PRESENTLY SUBSCRIBING TO OUR PUBLICATION TO TELL A FRIEND OR TWO ABOUT OUR NEWSPAPER AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO OBTAIN A SUBSCRIPTION!!! IF THERE ARE ANY ORGANIZATIONS OUT THERE WHO RECIEVE OUR PAPER WHO WOULD BE WILLING TO MAKE A SMALL DONATION OR CONTRIBUTION TO THIS PERIODICAL, WE WOULD GREATLY APPRECIATE THE ASSISTANCE. PLEASE HELP US STAY CREATIVE, INFORMATIVE AND INVOLVED WITH THE COMMUNITY!!! SO ALL OF YOU WHO HAVE ENJOYED OUR PUBLICATION IN THE PAST, PLEASE HELP US CONTINUE IN THE FUTURE!!!! THANK YOU!!!

EDITORS: DIANA HARTLEY
JANIE WEISH

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Appendix 28: Mayhew, J. (1989a). EDITORIAL. *Tightwire*, (V23, 2). pp. 1, 4.

T I G H T W I R E

EDITORIAL

The new Commissioner of Corrections, Mr. Ole Ingstrup has taken firm control of the direction of Corrections by issuing his Mission Statement. It is clear from the core values expressed in this document that Ingstrup has a positive view of human nature. He has placed high expectations on both his staff and imprisoned human beings. The challenge of the Mission Statement is for ALL to be accorded human dignity and, for ALL, to be accorded the right to recognize their potential for human growth.

These expressions are lofty but abstract. The practical translation will be dependent, not only individual effort but tragically, on the already existing mechanisms of a system designed for and maintained by coercion. The conflict between the resources suited to human development and those suited to control has persistently plagued prison design.

I speak from the microcosm of P4W where over fifty years of regulations have been designed to meet the specifications of a limestone structure and not the needs of the women incarcerated within. Women are caged in bars and concrete, not because of their security level requirements but because cells were what were built in 1934. The fantasy of uncontrolled, untamed behavior suggested by the original design made control the cornerstone of all this prison's activity. With the fundamental model and the players remaining unchanged, how will it be possible to realistically begin implementing Mr. Ingstrup's Mission of recognizing human growth and potential? In my view, this will be unlikely without substantial change.

Fortunately, Ingstrup appears to be a man of more than words. I choose to believe that the well-bound, highly polished delivery of the Mission Document to individual staff members of the CSC was a tangible intended with regard to both motivation and respect.

 TIGHTWIRE

In the case of Federally Sentenced Women, a Task Force has been established . Ingstrup's Task Force is made up of individuals from both the private sector and Corrections. It has a mandate to develop an Action Plan by December 15, 1989...Godspeed to those involved.

However, it is hard to maintain optimism in the light of past band-aid solutions offered to Federally Sentenced women. It is wise to remember that the speedy call for this Task Force follows the trauma witnessed within P4W and the death of Marlene Moore in late Fall of 1989. Our sisters, Marlene and Pat Bear, paid the heaviest of all prices for the deficiencies of a reluctant system. Throughout the recent months there have been many efforts by individuals and organizations such as CAEFS to bring the CSC to affirmative action on behalf on incarcerated women. These sustained inquires have helped prompt the course of action now being undertaken.

In a particular way, the readers and subscribers of TIGHTWIRE, by their support of this publication, have added weight to decisions which are bringing the problems confronting imprisoned women into action by political conscience. In my work as Editor, I have been consistently heartened by your response...my deepest thanks to all..

At this time, due to new responsibilities, I will be leaving the post of editor of TIGHTWIRE. It has been an extraordinary experience. I am delighted to pass on the unique opportunities of this role to the talents of Corkie Boyland. I will offer her my assistance in every way. I would like to offer a very special thank you to both

Hash O'Keefe and Corkie for the making this Summer issue of TIGHTWIRE unique....ENJOY!!!

meegwetch

Jo-Ann Mayhew

Editor

Appendix 29: Fox Mahkeese, L. (1988). *Untitled. Tightwire* (21, 5). p. 34-35.

I am a Cree/Saultaux Native Woman from Papot Reserve, Saskatchewan. I was raised there untill I was 14. Growing up on my reserve, I have seen the sacred ceremonies, such as a raindance.

I hold many memories of these times. One such memory is our Rain Dance. It's a beautiful memory. I think of it and others when I need strength to Go Forth!

I will sure share som of it with you, the people who read Tightwire. My reserve is located in the Qu'Apple Valley, our raindances are held in the Valley.

The Sacred Lodge is in the middle of the Campground. Everyone is united for this. Grandmothers , Grandfathers, women, men and children come together.

The Ceremonies take place in the lodge, prayers, singing of songs, dancing. The people who are dancing are also fasting for four days without food or water. Children run around the camp playing, enjoying life.

While this is all taking place, the Eagles are slowly circling down over the top of the lodge , they come down low right above the lodge, there is usually at the least four of them. It's a beautiful feeling to see this.

The old men would come out of the lodge, to pray and sing a sacred song. Their prayers and songs would be so powerful, it would start pouring rain really hard, while they stood there praying and singing.

Our Native People are strong. It is up to us as individuals to use all we are given to nurture our spirit, so we can walk on Mother Earth in a good manner.

The Sweetgrass/Tobacco Road. The true Traditional Indian Way, to live in life - I believe it's the only way to live a good, fruitful life, with peace of mind and good thoughts - nothing materialistic as long as I am comfortable and happy.

This is the Road I have chosen to live, in prison and once free. In prison it is a big struggle to maintain what you believe in.

**SECTIONS OF THIS ARTICLE
WERE DELETED BY DIRECTION OF THE ADMINISTRATION**

DELETED

I am quite aware there are people struggling out there from all walks of life. Even so, the public should not forget!

That we the people in prison, from many walks of life, are struggling to exist and "maintain our strength!"

Even when there are uncalled for actions by prison officials created! "Once out of prison, people tell you, "you are bitter!" And they wonder why? If they could for one minute feel and see, what we are subjected to, then they would understand why!

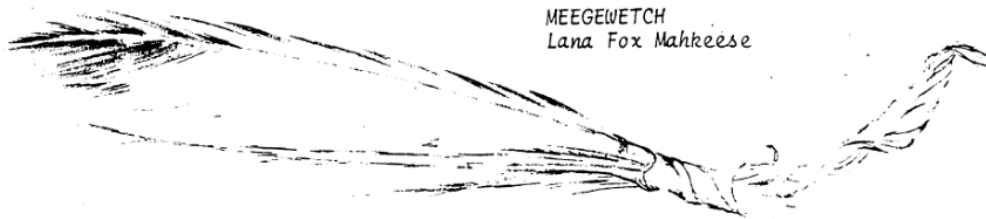
I could have expressed myself more, I have chosen not to, as officials censor material given to Tightwire, they most likely would have omitted, what I really wanted to put down on paper.

I have written this while we were on this lock down. Not of our choice! Today is January 14th, 1988. There is still 25 of us women locked, till when? Is unknown to us!

Today I am feeling very bitter! The way I am feeling and thinking I know is not good way to feel or think! I am aware I am not the only woman here locked feeling and thinking this way!

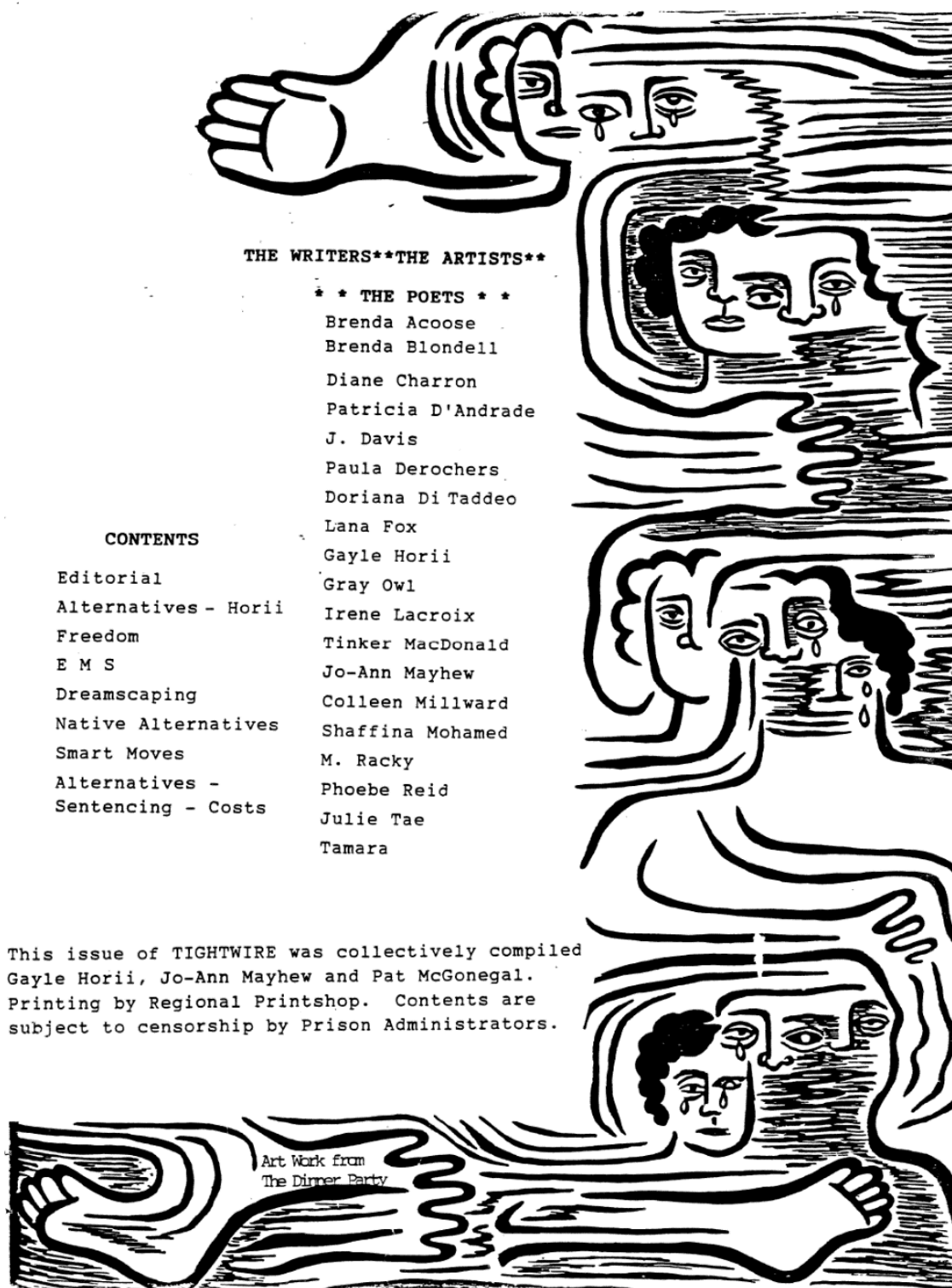
Still I pray and I ask the creator to ask my Kokum and Mushems, to give me strength, to enable me to live with and deal with the bitterness I feel. I also ask for strength, for the women in here!

MEEGEWETCH
Lana Fox Mahkeese



Appendix 30: Editors, presumed to be Horii, G., Mayhew, J., and McGonegal P. (1988).

Untitled. *Tightwire*. (V20, 5). p. 2PDF.



Appendix 31: McGuire, M. (1980). Untitled. *Tightwire* (March-April). p. 35.



Appendix 32: Anonymous. (1980a). THE LEONARD PELTIER CASE Fact Sheet. *Tightwire*

(March-April). pp. 26, 37PDF, 28, 39PDF.

THE LEONARD PELTIER CASE

Fact Sheet

June 26, 1975:

U. S. military forces attack Native spiritual camp in Oglala, Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Leaving dead one Native man and two FBI agents. The year coincides with Bureau of Indian Affairs feasibility study of natural resources. The day coincides with tribal chair man Dickie Wilsons' signing one eighth of Pine Ridge Reservations' land base over to the U. S. government for uranium development.

July, 1975:

U. S. Grand Jury indicts the four oldest males believed to be in the camp, Jimmy Eagle, Dino Butler, Robert Robideau, and Leonard Peltier. Indictment states they are all equally guilty on two counts of murder. Charges against Jimmy Eagle were later dropped, after it was proven he was nowhere near Pine Ridge that day.

February, 1976:

Leonard Peltier was arrested by R. C. M. P. in a small Native community in northern Alberta. He was immediately transferred to Vancouver, B. C. to wait for extradition hearing. Leonard has no criminal record.

February, 1976:

The body of Anna Mae Aquash was found on the Pine Ridge Reserve. FBI autopsy showed she died of exposure. A second autopsy ordered by her family and friends discovered Anna Mae had been murdered by a bullet in the head. Anna Mae was a MicMac from Nova Scotia, and a member of the American Indian Movement.

February, 1976:

Leonard Peltier is locked in death row, and is shackled hand and foot. He is refused spiritual council. He is not brought to court for remand for several weeks, although weekly appearances are required by law. Court rules this is OK on reports from FBI that Leonard is an extremely dangerous killer and a high security risk.

June, 1976:

On the strength of two affidavits* signed by Myrtle Poorbear, a judge rules that Leonard is subject to extradition to the U. S. Leonard has 15 days to appeal.

July, 1976:

Dino Butler and Robert Robideau are acquitted on the grounds of self defence, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Jury states there should be an investigation into the FBI actions of campaign of terror being carried out on Pine Ridge Reservation.

October, 1976:

Defense appeals against extradition order. Leonard is denied the right to be present during appeal. New evidence of a third affidavit signed by Myrtle Poorbear, and contradicting the other two, is not allowed to be submitted. Grounds for this appeal were:

- Judge Schulz erred in finding U. S. had status at the original hearing
- Judge erred in finding that the extradition court had not lost its jurisdiction because Leonard had not appeared for remand within required period
- erred in finding certain exhibits on behalf of the U. S. were admissible
- erred in finding that the Canadian Extradition Act was not inoperative because of Canadian Bill of Rights
- erred, even if it was operative, in saying it did not affect the extradition treaty with the U. S.
- erred in interpreting U. S. case law

Despite attempts to present evidence of false affidavits, the appeal court refused to accept them on grounds that it could not hear new evidence.

Appeal court upholds extradition order.

November, 1976:

Defence appeals to U. N. Committee on Civil and Political Rights to back up appeal to Justice Minister Ron Basford not to sign the extradition order. Appeal to the U. N. is based on two points: 1) the U. S. attorneys used perjured evidence by use of false affidavits; 2) Leonard was subject to cruel and unusual punishment.

December, 1976:

Leonard's lawyers meet with Ron Basford, Justice Minister. They present him with documentation of the third, contradictory Poorbear Affidavit, as well as detailed information about the situation on Pine Ridge.

Justice Minister Basford signs extradition order. He states he has concluded that the charges against Leonard Peltier were not politically motivated, and that he saw no evidence that Peltier's rights would be denied.

December 20, 1976:

Leonard Peltier extradited from Canada to the U. S. despite concern raised by his lawyers, family and supporters, Native and Non-Native, that his life was in danger in the hands of the FBI.

December 21, 1976:

Leonard pleads not guilty to charges of murder of the two FBI agents in South Dakota.

May, 1977:

Leonard's trial begins in Fargo, N. D., in front of Judge Paul Benson. FBI allowed to introduce illegal material relating to other charges in

Oregon and Wisconsin, as well as showing colour slides of the autopsies on the two dead FBI agents, designed to have an emotional impact on the jurors. FBI does not call Myrtle Poorbear to testify, despite the importance of her affidavits in securing the extradition. Prosecutor states she is mentally incompetent. The defence subpoenas her, and she testifies that she was coerced into signing the affidavits after FBI threatened her life. Approximately 80% of the defence case is not heard by the jury, including Poorbear's testimony, on basis that it is "irrelevant". Evidence of FBI misconduct and contradictions also not allowed. Judge states, "The FBI is not on trial in my court room, Leonard Peltier is".

Norman Brown, a 16-year-old Navajo, states that he had been forced to testify and told what to say, by FBI agents who threatened his life and freedom.

April, 1977:

Leonard Peltier is convicted and given two, consecutive life sentences, on circumstantial evidence, of "aiding and abetting" two murders. To this day, no one has been convicted with actually committing the murders. Leonard is immediately sent to Marion, Illinois maximum security federal prison.

January, 1978:

Leonard is acquitted on charges of attempted murder of a police officer in Milwaukee, Wisc. after police witness is totally discredited.

January, 1978:

Charges of burglary in State of Oregon are dropped. The arresting officer has been drummed off the force as a bad element.

April, 1978:

8th District Court upheld conviction after second hearing. First appeal had to be discontinued when one of three judges was appointed head of the FBI. He is replaced for second appeal hearing, but the other two judges remain.

April, 1978:

Leonard Peltier Defence Committee and the United Native Nations, in British Columbia hold a Citizen's Hearing into the extradition. Invited representatives of the Canadian government did not appear. Hearing concludes that Leonard should be returned to Canada, and requests Canadian government to demand his return.

April, 1978:

Ruling by B. C. Supreme Court Judge, R. P. Anderson that, "It seems clear to me that the conduct of the U. S. government involved misconduct from inception" in that it deliberately used false affidavits to secure the extradition of Leonard from Canada.

July, 1978:

3,000 mile Longest Walk reaches Washington, D. C. to bring to the attention of U. S. President Carter, the issue of human rights viola-

tions. Documentation was presented by Native Peoples from Canada and U. S. to the Canadian Ambassador to the U. S. requesting that Canada demand Leonard be returned to Canada.

October, 1978:

Delegation of Natives and non-Native supporters went to Canadian Justice Department in B. C. to present evidence of on-going campaign of terror waged by the FBI on Pine Ridge Reserve. Gave evidence of FBI perjury in Canadian courts through use of false affidavits.

February, 1979:

Panel of three judges, U. S. Supreme Court of Appeal refused to hear an appeal on the Fargo, N. D. conviction. They gave no reasons. The same day -- John Trudell, National Chairman of the American Indian Movement, and a representative for Leonard Peltier, burnt the U. S. flag in front of FBI headquarters in Washington, D. C. 12 hours later, on Duck Valley Reservation in Nevada, his mother-in-law, wife, and three children were burnt to death in a still uninvestigated firebomb attack on his home.

March, 1979:

Leonard is transferred from Marion, Ill. federal prison to a minimum security federal prison in Lom Poc, California, after all his legal channels are exhausted.

July, 1979:

Leonard Peltier, Bobby Garcias and Dallas Thundershield are involved in an escape attempt. Bobby Garcias was immediately recaptured outside the prison wall. Dallas Thundershield was shot to death with a high-powered rifle by an ex-prison guard after he surrendered. Leonard managed to stay free for five days.

August, 1979:

Nine members of Leonard Peltier Defence Committee from the U. S. are stopped entering Canada from U. S. Steve Robideau is arrested in over-reaction by RCMP and detained, though released hours later. John Trudell and Dino Butler request political asylum in Canada, because of threats to their lives, by FBI.

October, 1979:

Canadian Immigration officials hear evidence from John Trudell and Dino Butler of past attempts on their lives and history of human rights violations by FBI and U. S. courts.

November, 1979:

Leonard Peltier and Bobby Garcias are on trial for escape in Los Angeles, California. The defence will present evidence of FBI conspiracy to murder Leonard in Marion Federal Prison. Affidavits are signed by a prisoner in Marion who states he was approached by the head warden and unidentified man, and forced to co-operate with their plan to set Leonard up.

Appendix 33: Saskatchewan Coalition against Nuclear Development. (1980). Press statement:

Nuclear land grab. *Tightwire* (March-April). p. 30-33.

PRESS STATEMENT

Nuclear Land Grab

Few of us thought highly of Canada's and Ron Basford's unjust extradition of Leonard Peltier, but evidence has accumulated that shows a motive for the injustice. The motive is uranium and Northern development. The proportions of the event surrounding this case would long ago have equalled the publicity of the Karen Silkwood case, except Leonard Peltier is not white.

Leonard's case, or the government's case against Leonard, is linked directly to stealing resources from Indian lands. Two points stand out: one, that on June 26, 1975 while FBI gunmen attacked the traditional camp in Oglala, Pine Ridge Reservation in S. Dakota, THERE WAS A SECRET TRANSFER OF ONE EIGHTH OF THE RESERVATION (CONTAINING A LARGE DEPOSIT OF URANIUM) FROM THE TRIBE TO THE U. S. GOVERNMENT. This section of land is known as the "Sheep Mountain bombing range". The tactic of diversion is not new in the 400 year war of the U. S. against the Indian people. The government was successful in focusing all attention on the shoot-out, framed as an "Indian attack" on the FBI, and was able to smoothly acquire land and resources without a major response. An added result of the shoot-out is that Leonard Peltier is serving 2 life sentences stemming from a conviction of aiding and abetting in the deaths of 2 FBI agents on the Pine Ridge Reservation in June 1975, even though, prior to this trial, his two co-defendants, Robert Robideau and Dino Butler, were acquitted on self-defense for the same charges.

The second point involved Leonard's extradition from Canada. The extradition, completed as quickly as possible through use of false affidavits acquired by forceful intimidation of witnesses, was considered an immediate necessity by the Canadian government. The Canadian government didn't want a strong leader like Peltier giving Canadian Indians any idea about fighting to defend their own lands in Northern Canada that contain extensive deposits of uranium.

The conspiracy against Leonard is not, and never has been, solely the work of the U. S. government. From the beginning, and until Leonard was handed over to U. S. Sheriffs, the Canadian government was actively involved. In April 1978 a B. C. Supreme Court judge confirmed that false evidence was used to affect the extradition. THIS EVIDENCE WAS PROVEN TO BE FALSE BEFORE LEONARD LEFT CANADA. Defence lawyers were prevented by judge's ruling from using this proof at an appeal against the extradition order. However, at a special meeting with Ron Basford, then Justice Minister, they presented this evidence IN FULL.

You must ask yourself why the Canadian government of the day was prepared to allow such a cynical and blatant miscarriage of justice — and why today when this information is part of public record, they continue to remain silent. You must consider whether it was not in the interests of the Canadian government to actively collude with the U. S. government in this case.

This collusion is easy to believe just from consideration of the copycat political policies the Canadian government announces after the

U. S. government on Afghanistan, the Olympics and Iran. Also to be considered is that 70% of Canada's energy industry is owned or dominated by the U. S. A.

The person and example of Leonard Peltier is exactly what government wants to imprison or kill. Indian warriors who fight for the sovereignty of their land and people are a direct threat to Canadian and U. S. governments, which are increasingly turning to Indian lands to get the energy resources they no longer have unlimited access to in other parts of the world. One third of the remaining U. S. coal is on Indian land and much of the uranium (used to fuel nuclear reactors and to eventually create plutonium used to build bombs, like the neutron bomb) is on Indian land. The energy conglomerates can create sufficient panic about shortages to allow a free hand in the rip-off on Indian resources.

Navajo miners are being killed as they mine for uranium and many more Indian people on the Navajo reservation or wherever uranium is mined, face lung cancer and other contamination from the highly radioactive wastes left by open uranium pits and tailings.

In our North, alcohol was used to help break Native culture at the start. The process is now continuing, under the fake name of "assimilation" in which land grabs impoverish the old native lifestyle and economy. Social services and treaty payments are withheld from natives who refuse any available work — and, of course, the only available work is uranium mining. The Inuit of Baker Lake and their entire culture and living are threatened by exploration of the uranium multinationals. Both government and the companies have lined up in court against their aboriginal rights, and the record of court decisions favouring such rights is dismal.

It is urgent that the anti-nuke movement take up as its priority, stopping the seizure of uranium from Indian lands in the Southwest and in the Black Hills as well as in Northern Canada where Indian lands are yet undeveloped.

Leonard is now serving two consecutive life terms in a U. S. prison, after a trial which was notable for the suppression of 80% of the defence case, and witnesses testifying to coercion and perjury by the FBI.

We demand a full PUBLIC inquiry into the extradition of Leonard Peltier. This inquiry should and must hear all evidence that Native people wish to present to it. It must also have the power to require that the Canadian government reveal its full role in this case.

Both these articles are courtesy of the Saskatchewan Coalition against Nuclear Development.

the defence evidence heard in the Iowa acquittal trials was disallowed. Peltier was convicted of "aiding and abetting" in the deaths of the agents and handed two life sentences. No one was charged in the Indian man's death.

THE URANIUM CONNECTION

The uranium connection is that on the day of the shoot-out, the chairman of the "Pine Ridge Tribal Council", Dick Wilson, signed a portion of Lakota Sioux treaty land over to the American authorities. That land is being explored today by companies such as Gulf, Exxon and Union Carbide.

Wilson's tribal council, backed by the U. S. government's Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), is in conflict with the traditional Lakota government, embodied in the "Lakota Treaty Council".

"Treaty law dictates that land can only be alienated by referendum with a two-thirds majority. The land transfer has no legal basis whatsoever, and the shoot-out was created as a smokescreen to cover up a land grab", John Graham charged.

In order to understand this charge, it is necessary to understand that the American government has been trying unsuccessfully to obtain a surrender of the Black Hills since Custer found gold there in 1874. Recent cash settlement offers of \$4.5 million in 1974; 17.5 million in 1977; and \$105 million in 1979 have all been turned down by the Lakotas.

Another basis for Graham's charge lies in the fact that Pine Ridge reservation has been used as a military training ground since World War I, and real live Indians are often used as "practice enemies". At the acquittal trials of Robideau and Butler, a number of tribal elders testified that Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams have done everything from holding them at gunpoint to descending on their homes in helicopters for no apparent cause.

THE SHOOT-OUT

AIM is convinced the 1975 shoot-out was carefully planned. As evidence, they cite the removal of Dick Wilson's family to Nevada two weeks prior to the incident; the addition of at least 40 agents to already substantial FBI forces stationed near the reservation; the assignment of FBI agents to perform an arrest INVOLVING A PAIR OF STOLEN COWBOY BOOTS that would normally have been a BIA police matter; and the curious circumstance that SWAT teams totalling over 100 men were, at the time, practicing maneuvers just over the hill.

The shoot-out lasted about 6 hours. Thousands of rounds of bullets were fired into the cluster of family dwelling which allegedly harboured the "boot thief". Roads into and out of Pine Ridge were blocked, but Edgar Bear Runner was allowed to come in and effect removal of the women and children. Of those who remained in the houses, all but Joe Stuntz managed to escape alive. A massive manhunt followed through the hills and in people's homes, which were searched without warrant. "It was an atmosphere which allowed the FBI to move around at will on the reserve, with weapons and machinery to back them up", Graham explained. "It was also an opportunity to feed fear and hatred in the white communities, and to divert any attention that could have been focused on the land deal."

Appendix 34: Elder, L. (1980). Crosscurrents. *Tightwire* (V9, 1 & 2). p. 34.

CANADIAN PATTERN OF VIOLENCE

Violence against Indians in Canada differs only in kind. In some parts of the N. W. T. liquor outlets remain open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Elsewhere, cash is destroying self-reliant economies. Helicopters drive away game animals. Traplines are flooded by dams. Men are robbed of their responsibilities, women are sterilized, and children taken to be "schooled" or adopted outright. Traditional lands are seized. Over all of this stands the white man's prisons. Half of their inmates are natives and those who resisted what our history books will call genocide.

It should be noted that Indians hold title to a very substantial portion of the undeveloped resources left in Canada. At this writing, the Association of Metis and Non-Status Indians are demanding their land claims in NorthernSask. be resolved before uranium mining proceeds at Key Lake. But if the past record is any indication, this will not be done. Many of the same multinationals wanting the Lakota's Black Hills are exploring in our North. The Inuit of Baker Lake and their entire culture are threatened by the effects of uranium exploration. Both government and companies have lined up against their aboriginal rights.

A secret RCMP document, leaked to the press in 1975, branded "The Red Power Movement" as the "principal threat to Canadian stability". The "threat" is that violence might occur if thier land claims and native rights are not recognized.

Two questions in this writer's mind are: Why is Canada, in consort with multinationals and the U. S., developing resources rapidly while ignoring Indian rights if this is expected to provoke violence? What other methods of violence does Candda expect to employ when their current genocidal policies no longer suffice?

Crosscurrents: February, 1980. By Linda Elder.



Appendix 35: Bickley, L. J. (1980). BAD GIRLS. *Tightwire* (March-April). p. 35-37.

BAD GIRLS

(November 10, 1979, three women from Caughnawaga Indian reserve are charged with first degree murder after the death of a taxi driver from injuries sustained in a beating the month before.)

For most people reading this in the *Globe and Mail*, society being what it is, they would assume these women would be tried, convicted and put away in prison. Thus satisfied, justice done, the women would never be thought of again.

Christmas 1979 is only a month away as I drive into Kingston intending to interview Indian women inmates about their fears and aspirations as they face yet another Christmas in the Pen. I must confess - my knowledge of penology is only that gained through the sensationalism provided by newspapers, movies, and T. V.

Along the paved, winding streets of Kingston I drive past fences, gates, brick and concrete. But none are so foreboding and grey as those of the PRISON FOR WOMEN. Thoughts to what lay behind them haunt me. I wish I could look through those walls to find out what's going on - before I have to actually go through the gate.

Moments later the iron gate crashes to one side and I enter a hidden world.

During the next two hours with the Native Sisterhood all my images of Prison inmates are challenged and discarded, but not adequately replaced. I know I will have to return. Nothing had turned out as expected. Instead of talking to the inmates through bullet proof glass overlooked by a sinister guard, we sat together leisurely in a warm and comfortable room. The women wore street clothes (was I expecting stripes?) and many had recently had their hair cut and curled by fellow inmates learning to be hairdressers. The meeting was conducted in an orderly, although informal, manner. The AIMS representative and Prison Liaison Officer Kathy Richmond, sat quietly in the background. All the women were friendly, hospitable and receptive to my uninformed questions. They suggest I talk to Andrea because she has been there the longest.

Originally from Caughnawaga reserve, Andrea had been an inmate of the Prison For Women for almost ten years. Nearing 40, she expects to be released soon. Andrea has learned to speak English in prison and is now reading a book she borrowed from the Prison library, Harold Cardinal's, "The Unjust Society". When asked what she thought of the book she said, "There is no justice. The only justice is when you're dead, and I'm not about to die".

Society is concerned about justice and all good citizens abhor crime. That is why society locks up its offenders. But these words: justice, crime, law all take on different meanings when discussed by those usually considered as criminals by society. All the old truths, all my notions of law and order, justice and courts were being questioned.

Later, when I had some time to think about what they said to me, I was able to recall some words that had been written down over 2000 years ago: Plato admitted that justice is usually in "the interest of the

stronger". Anacharsis, another early philosopher said, "The laws are like cobwebs: where the small flies are caught, and the great break through". And Karl Menninger, M. D. said in 1966, "I suspect that all the crimes committed by all the jailed criminals do not equal in total social damage that of the crimes committed against them". It doesn't take a great philosophical mind to realize that there is a truth to these statements - especially if you're Indian.

In the 1970's three times more Indians were sent to prisons than non-Indians, and unless conditions change we are not likely to see a decrease in the number of violent crimes on reserves. Instead many believe there may be an increase in crime as frustration mounts in Indian communities. "It's too late for those who have been institutionalized", said Kathy Richmond, "Prevention is the key and it has to begin on the reserve".

As we enter the 1980's there is little evidence that anyone will seriously address the problems pertaining to Indian people and the law. Indians will likely continue to receive day paroles, holiday passes, early paroles and other privileges and rights disproportionately less than other prisoners.

Society has noble ideals about prison reform. The prisoner should learn to be industrious, sociable, and responsible. It wants to protect the community from a repetition of the offence. But it does not want to take the time to ensure that inmates are adequately prepared to resume life on the outside. In most cases this is a greater injustice than the one we are punishing the inmate for.

Indian women offenders are unlucky on three accounts - they are women, usually poor, and Indian.

For Indian women nearing the end of mandatory (completion of their sentence) there is little help for them to bridge the gap between institutional maintenance and self-maintenance in the social community.

The Elizabeth Fry Society has a halfway house in Toronto which allows women to complete their mandatory on the outside. It has no program, however, for Indian women. "We want a halfway house segregated from non-Indians. We need counsellors who understand where we are coming from", said one inmate.

Poundmaker de-tox centre in Alberta is designed to assist Indian inmates with drug and alcohol problems. But it is only a 30 day program and that is not enough time for the inmates to make the adjustment. It also doesn't help them find jobs or homes afterwards. Most Indian inmates, therefore, have little choice but to complete their mandatory on the inside giving them no time for adjustment to the outside. This can be frightening.

"It's much harder on the outside than it is on the inside", said ex-inmate Bobby Woods who is now working for AIMS as a drug and alcohol counsellor for the inmates. "It isn't easy walking these streets, with no money and no friends. It's very lonely." After ten years in the institution, prison becomes a way of life. "The institution offers a morbid sense of security", said Supervisor of Classification, Owen Rowe. "Food, clothing, housing, and health care are all provided for creating a child-like state of dependency and irresponsibility." That's why after-care and a prerelease program is so important to helping inmates adjust slowly to community living.

Some job training programs are offered at prison to help inmates find work on the outside. The women can learn about hairdressing, office procedures, arts and crafts, sewing and, if they wish, they can complete their high school education. There are some complaints, however, that the training received often does not provide skills necessary to compete in the community job market. "Things are getting better, but compared with prisons for men this place is far behind", said Marilynne, an inmate. "The men have programs that train them for technical trades. There's not much we can do with our trades now-a-days, unless the administrator expects us to all get married and become housewives."

Meanwhile the biggest concern of the inmates is summed up in a common expression, "I want to be left to do my own time". Most claim to be loners but some keep active in groups so they know what is going on. Others prefer not to get involved at all and don't care if they get any news. "In prison everything is magnified out of proportion", explained one inmate who prefers 'to do her own time'.

"Sometimes it is worth a celebration just to make it through the day with your sanity intact", said an inmate. "There is much distrust, fear and frustration among the inmates." After three visits I must admit that I have to admire these women for their courage and strength. It must be difficult facing each day of routine boredom with seldom a glimpse at the outside world. Recently at a concert rehearsal, one woman requested the song, "Help Me Make It Through The Night". She said, "How about 'Help Me Make It Through The Day', its not the nights I have trouble with".

Music is very important to the women. During my last visit I spent some time in the gymnasium, after visiting hours, listening to a concert rehearsal. The "Bad Girls" concert had received good reviews following a public performance at Christmas. The reviews were brought to the attention of the Commissioner who requested a special show, which he attended, in January. On February 7th they again performed the concert in order to raise funds in support of handicapped children.

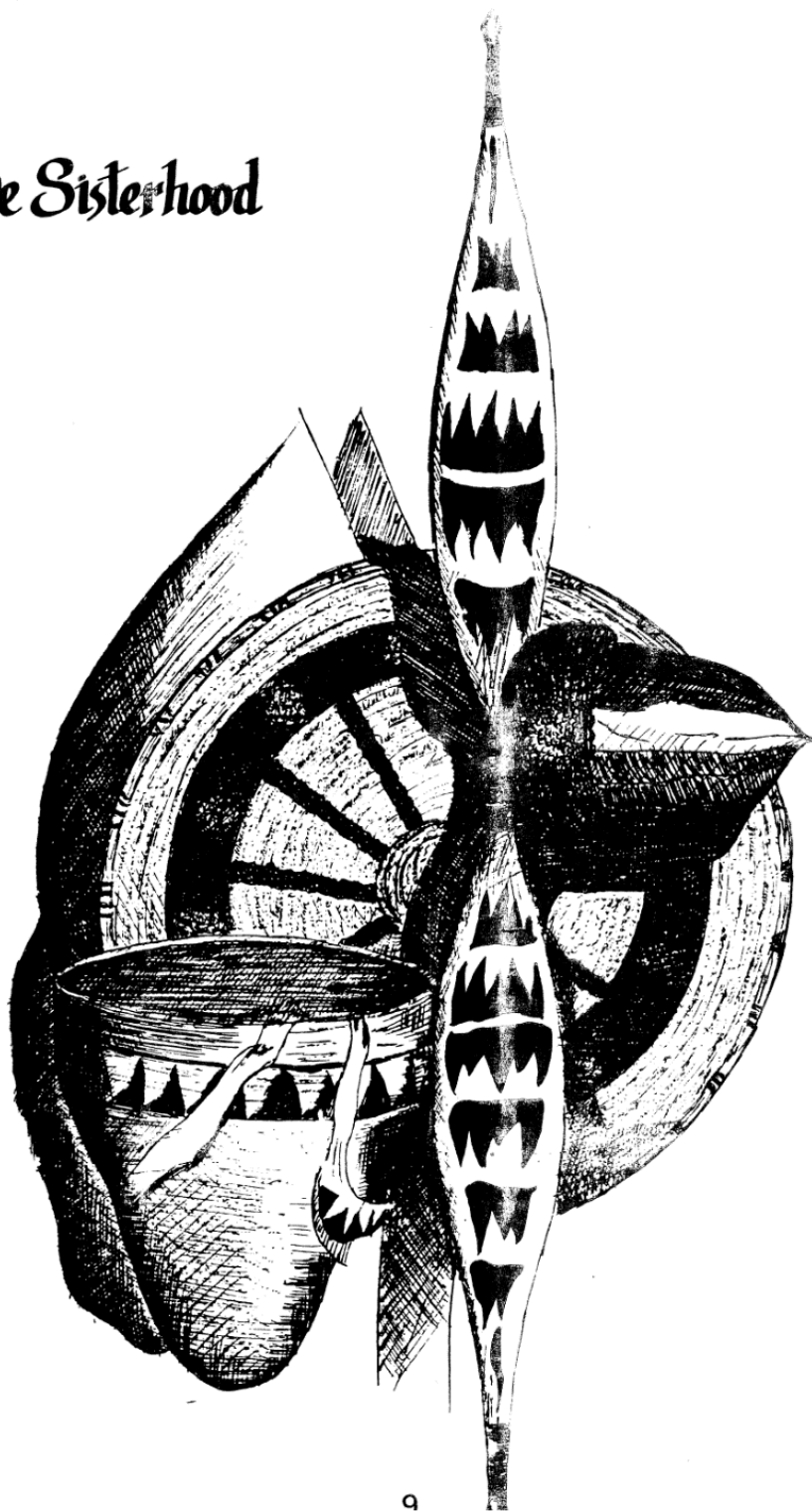
The concert was performed with the combined efforts of Indian, white and Black women inmates. This provided for an interesting variation in music from a Rock Trilogy to Country and Western. "Down In Jamaica" was sung by a Black inmate followed by "Delila" sung in French by Andre, and finally a Cree song written by Alec Twins and sung by his daughter, Joyce Bull an inmate of 9 months, who had recently turned twenty-two.

Before leaving the prison I was taken on a tour by a Metis inmate who aspires to become a photographer when she is released. "I no longer take people, or life, for granted," reflected Kas. "Sometimes I am fortunate to see the top crest of the orange sun as it sets beyond those walls. From these windows I am never able to see the whole sunset."

As an observer who knows little about it, I see prison life as being lonely, frightening and a day to day struggle. I have to admire those very talented women on stage at rehearsal for their sense of humour and brave attempt to overcome the boredom and desperation that predominates their lives. I wouldn't want to go through it and was relieved when I found my way past the maze of corridors and barred iron gates to the outside world. I was just in time to get an unobstructed view of the sun setting on the horizon.

Appendix 36: Anonymous. (1993). Native Sisterhood. *Tightwire* (Fall). p. 9.

Native Sisterhood



Appendix 37: Bull, S. (1993). A Native lawyer's plea. *Tightwire* (Fall). p. 10.

A NATIVE LAWYER'S PLEA

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The development of an Indian Justice System, which would take into account the values, customs, traditions, laws and legal institutions of the Indian people, is vital and essential in order to establish a sense of responsibility for the individual and a sense of community and control for tribal members. The current Canadian Justice System has failed to adequately serve the Indian people.

"Equality" of treatment is a cornerstone in the Anglo-European legal system: "treat like cases alike". The concept of equality in the court system is based on the premise that any law is equally applicable to, understood by and concurred with by all those subject to it. It is in fact, an assumption of cultural homogeneity; it operates to maintain the existing socio-cultural order. This assumption is patently false to Indians whose traditions, values and customs are culturally distinctive.

Many Indian people have, therefore, proposed the development and establishment of an Indian Justice System. The content and substance of aboriginal justice would be administered within Indian structures. The Indian Justice System would introduce a system of community-based courts, tribunals and support systems, designed to meet the specific needs of the respective Indian communities.

Indian people have long realized that in order to reverse the trends of social and cultural disharmony in their communities, they are ultimately responsible for taking the necessary corrective measures. In order to do this, the Indian must use the customary system of social control, allowing the individual and the community to accept responsibility of resolving their own conflicts. To allow the emergence of Indian political and judicial autonomy in the Indian community, will ultimately lead to tribal cohesion, understanding, and acceptance of positive conflict resolution.

by Sam Bull (a Cree from Goodfish Lake, Alberta.)

Appendix 38: Nyce, C. H. (1993). THE CLEANSING FEAST. *Tightwire* (Fall). p. 11.

THE CLEANSING FEAST

The cleansing feast is a spiritual event that is used to cleanse an individual. However, merely discussing the event does not do it justice for it must be experienced.

The Nisga'a tribe is divided into four phratries: the eagle, the wolf, the killer whale, and the raven. If I was to hold a cleansing feast, all my people who are of my phratry, the eagle, would come to my assistance. In the Native system we are not alone in any major decision we make. During the cleansing feast the individual to be cleansed is brought to the feast house and is disrobed publicly. Then a number of people who are gathered, sponge the individual. The shame of the individual is cleansed.

After the cleansing is done, the person does not have a record - the slate is clean. It is never mentioned to that individual again nor is it ever publicly mentioned. In so doing, the cleansing feast very seldom happens more than once to an individual and there are very few repeat infractions of that offence by that individual. The entire tribe is involved with the process, not just one man, but the whole.

by C. Harry Nyce,
Vice-President
Nisga'a Tribal Council

Appendix 39: Thurgood, G. (1993). A Native approach to justice. *Tightwire* (Fall). p. 12.

A NATIVE APPROACH TO JUSTICE

I had been doing mediations for about 9 years when I was approached by the crown prosecutor to consider taking an assault case between two 16 or 17 year old women. One of them was pregnant and had decided the other was trying to steal her boyfriend. She called her a slut, and the name calling turned physical.

When I visited the young woman who had been charged, I found that she had been struggling with a drinking problem, but seemed to have it under control. I also discovered her grandfather was a well-respected elder. He lived in a nearby community.

I talked to both women separately and let them air their grievances. Then I talked with the grandfather about whether he would be willing to be part of a mediation.

He agreed to give it a try, and the two women agreed to go along with it. Even though he was the grandfather of one of them, the other knew him, and trusted him to be fair.

We met in the John Howard office. The old man opened with a prayer ceremony and smudged the room with sweetgrass. I felt like it had finally been blessed.

Then he just did some gentle, warm things. "I wonder if I could have each of you hold my hands," he said, and they found that in order to close the circle, they had to take one another's hand. Then he told them a story that each one could look at without feeling personally threatened. It was about how important youth is to where we are going. And it left us with the sense that all of us are here for a reason. We have been given life to live and to share. It gave the young women a sense of their integrity...of why they were born. There was no: "Why did you do this?"

Someone looking at it from a Western perspective might be tempted to say that nothing happened. But I'm convinced there was a real tolerant growth that came out of it. Each of the young women was able to share her perspective, and to see the integrity of the other. It was a classic example of the fundamental basis of mediation, which is reconciliation. Justice is done when relationships are restored.

By Grant Thurgood, Moose Jaw, Sask.

Appendix 40: Anonymous. (1983. PRISON FOR WOMEN: HISTORICAL SKETCH.

Tightwire (July-August). p. 40-44.

PRISON FOR WOMEN**HISTORICAL SKETCH**

The first female inmates in the Canadian Penitentiary system date back to 1835, the first year of operation of the Kingston Penitentiary, when a female unit was established in the north wing. This unit continued in operation until the early 1900's when a new building with a wall around it was built for female inmates, separate from buildings housing male inmates, but still within the perimeter walls of the Kingston Penitentiary. Although the bulk of female offenders were housed in the female unit of the Kingston facility, a few inmates from the maritime provinces were held in units in St. John, Halifax, and finally in the Dorchester Penitentiary when it was built in 1880. These female inmates from the maritime provinces were shuffled back and forth between the existing maritime unit and the Kingston Penitentiary as was most politically expedient, until 1923, when the Dorchester unit was finally closed and the remaining inmates and staff were transferred to the Kingston Penitentiary pending the building of the new women's prison.

As early as Confederation year, 1867, the Warden's report from the Kingston Penitentiary recommended a separate women's prison outside the walls of the Kingston Penitentiary. Such reports continued until 1925, when as the result of the Nickle Report of 1922, construction finally began on a new women's prison outside the walls of the Kingston Penitentiary on a site a short distance away on Sir John A. MacDonald Boulevard. This building which became known as the Prison for Women, first housed an overflow of male inmates from the Kingston Penitentiary, but finally opened its to female inmates January 24, 1934. Although renovated and expanded in the intervening years, this grey Limestone edifice has remained to this day, the only federal penitentiary for women in Canada, and the third in a series of female facilities established under the federal penitentiary system.

The new women's prison consisted of a T-shaped complex, surrounded by an imposing 16 foot limestone wall. No towers were constructed in the wall, but 10 feet of wire fabric and 6 lines of barbed wire topped the wall and added height. The front section, incorporated as part of the perimeter wall became the main administration building, and also contained the living quarters for the matrons, a hospital, and chapels. The long cell block attached to form the base of the T, and located within the perimeter wall, contained single-cell accommodation for 100 inmates, an industrial sewing room and a laundry. The complex had a staff of approximately six matrons and was administered by a supervising matron under direction of the Warden of the Kingston Penitentiary.

This continued until, in 1960, Miss I. J. MacNeill, a veteran in the correctional field, was appointed the first Superintendent. The Prison for Women then evolved into a separate institution, administered by the Superintendent who was responsible to the Commissioner of Penitentiaries. The Superintendent was given all of the discretionary powers delegated to a Warden, but the Kingston Penitentiary retained responsibility for such services as annual estimates, accounting, administration of personnel, rations, maintenance and extra manpower resources.

In 1962, the administrative services formerly provided by the Kingston Penitentiary were transferred to the Collin's Bay Penitentiary, another federal institution located in Kingston. As problems were encountered with this division of services, the terms of reference were redrafted after consultation with the Commissioner, the Regional Director, and the Superintendent. On December 1, 1965, under the newly negotiated terms of reference, the Superintendent, Miss MacNeill, became responsible to the Regional Director for the "administration of the Prison, custodial control and correctional training of the inmates and for the direction and discipline of the staff, with full powers of Warden for these purposes". Although Miss MacNeill retired a short

time later, she has retained the distinction of being the only woman to be warden of the Prison for Women. Through her work in establishing autonomy for the institution, a new era began for the treatment and training of the federal female offender in Canada, a process which has continued to evolve to the present day.

The next years saw a dramatic change in the staff establishment and programming within the institution. A new living area to accommodate 50 inmates in single rooms was built to lessen the crowding and gymnasium-auditorium unit was added to the complex. French speaking staff were added to assist French speaking inmates from Quebec, and a pass or temporary absence program came into existence. As a result of political pressure on the federal government by groups such as The Elizabeth Fry Society, and the Ouimet Royal Commission Report, which noted pressures of separation from the family and community for inmates who were transferred long distances to Kingston, federal-provincial agreements came into existence allowing some of the federal female inmates to serve their sentences in their home provinces and allowing provinces to send certain high risk inmates to the Prison for Women.

In 1966 a special drug treatment unit for female addicts was established in the Matsqui Institution in British Columbia housing a group of federal female offenders. In 1971 this unit was closed and this special group was transferred to the Prison for Women along with a staff member. As these inmates had special privileges not previously extended at the Prison for Women, it became necessary to equalize the difference in privileges. As a result, privileges and programs at the Prison for Women were expanded and the former inmate uniform disappeared. For the first time, inmates at the Prison for Women were permitted to wear their own clothing, a practice which today is unique in the federal system.

The population of female inmates at the Prison for Women has continued to fluctuate widely while the provinces have attempted to assess the needs,

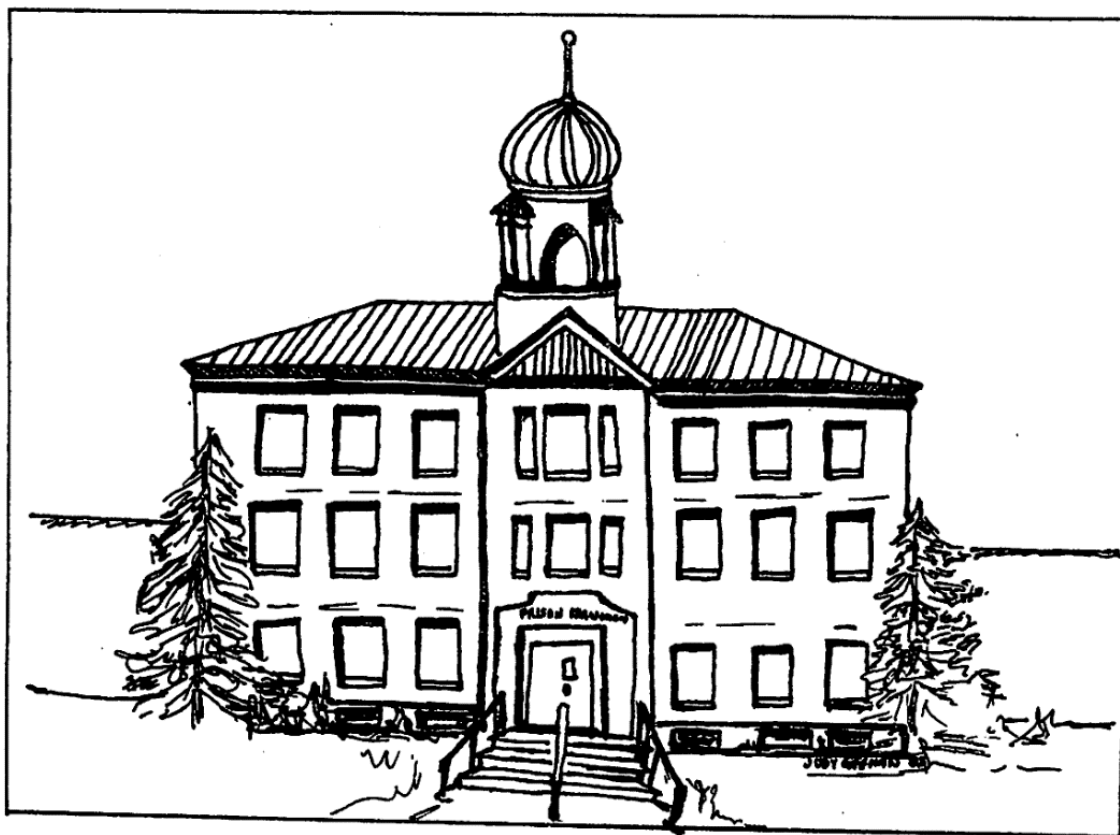
services, and political implications of housing the federal female offender. The problem of how best to provide for this small number of female inmates, serving long sentences, requiring varying levels of security, and from diverse backgrounds and geographic areas has persisted in being a major problem for the provinces and the Federal Government, a problem that has extended for well over 100 years. Many studies, reports and Royal Commissions have addressed the issues but to date no totally satisfactory solution has been found to offer a practical alternative to the Prison for Women that will provide a comprehensive level of service to this heterogeneous group of offenders, which is economically feasible.

Meanwhile, the Prison for Women, physical facility, has continued to expand and improve. A new concrete wall to replace the aging limestone wall and enlarging the enclosed area has recently been completed. A family visiting unit is also completed and a multi-purpose activity building has also been constructed, while new segregation, hospital and kitchen units are being finalized on the drawing board.

The staff establishment has continued to grow. Four divisions operate within the institution with a total staff of 128½ to provide a broad range of programs and services. The inmate population served at this time is in the low seventies, allowing for a high staff-inmate ratio.

The Prison for Women is administered today as a multi-security level institution and is recognized within the Correctional Service of Canada as a special facility. The basic problems encountered in operating this institution are unique within the Canadian correctional system, as no other institution in the system serves a more diversified population within a single operating unit. The historical problem of which governing agency, the province or the federal government, can most adequately care for the federal female offender, has never been resolved.

While many federal female offenders are at this time housed under federal-provincial agreements in their home provinces, the Prison for Women continues to serve as the only federal penitentiary for women in Canada, and will probably continue as such until a more practical and economically feasible solution is found to the long-standing problem of where, and how best, to provide services to the federal female offenders under sentence of the courts.



Appendix 41: Davis, J. (1988). HANDS from the EAST COAST: Citizens Concerned for the Rights of Prisoners. *Tightwire* (V21, 5). p. 32.

HANDS

from the EAST COAST

Citizens Concerned for the Rights of Prisoners

submitted by Judy Davis

On the Steps of the Prison for Women I Sat Down and Wept

I had come to dance,
While men drummed,
I drummed...
my hands, my feet, my head, my heart
against the impenetrable gray---
Gray wall, gray faces, gray as a
cloudy November day gray -- up
against the wall of gray.

The eighteen foot high wall
surrounds us on the inside, repels
us on the outside-

We danced
We honored sisters who died there
the weight of the wall crushes us.
We danced,
We honored sisters in Segregation
the wall blinds us
We find new ways of seeing

We danced, we ate, we shared
words and glances under the watchful
eye of big brother who masqueraded
in women's bodies, bleached blond hair
and Cor Can uniforms-

At 9:00 p.m. we were spit out onto the
gray concrete sheet -- I felt infinitesimal
So small against that wall...then
in the corner of my eye
I caught a glimpse of a
Crescent Moon with delightful star that rose above the wall
and in spite of the wall
it rose--

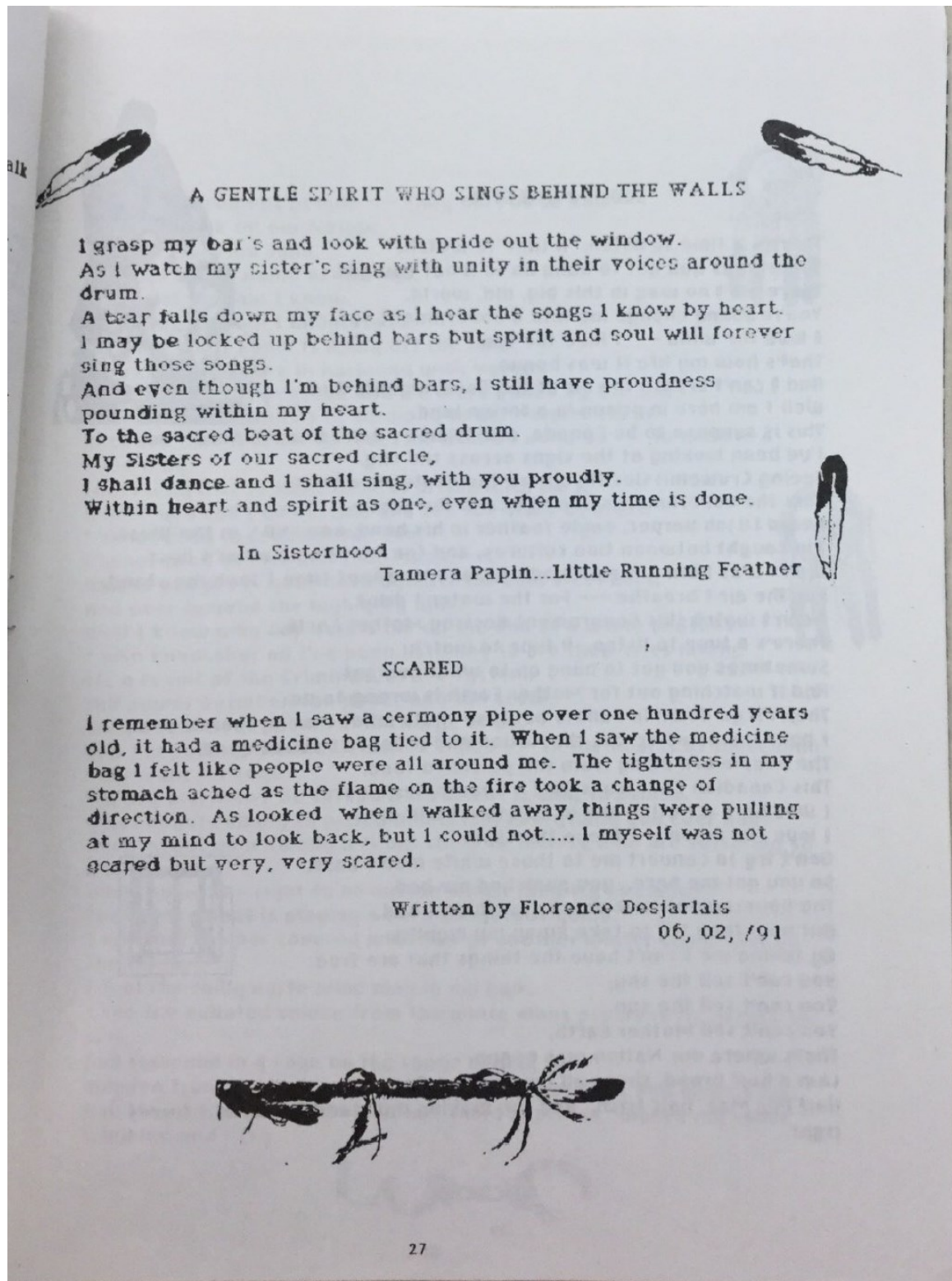
(this poem was written by Judy after she attended a Pow Wow at
P4W in 1986 -- the wall remains unchanged)

J. Davis



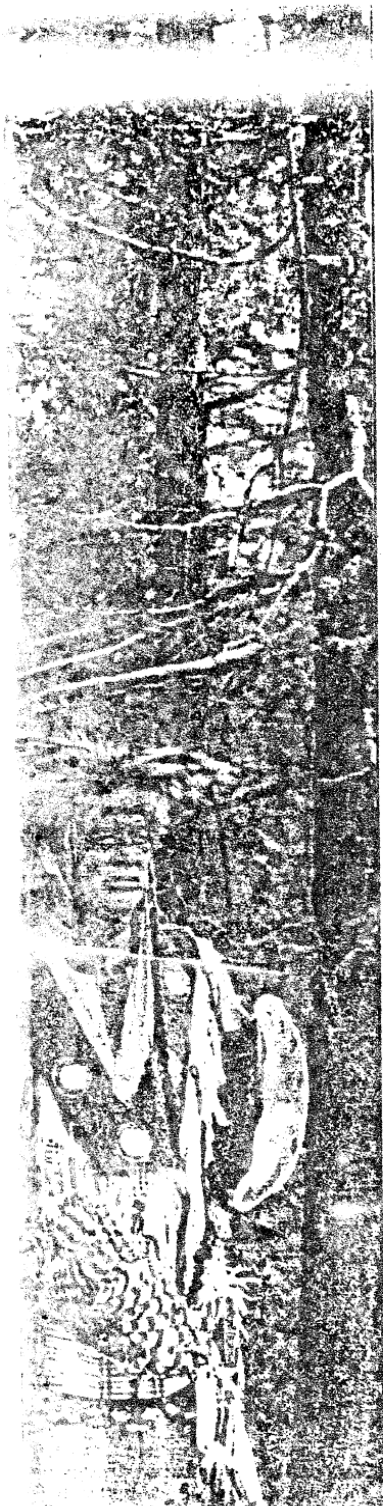
Appendix 42: Papin, T. (1991). A GENTLE SPIRIT WHO SINGS BEHIND THE WALLS.

Tightwire. (Spring). p. 27.



Appendix 43: Toronto Star. (1986). POW-WOW: Indian festival glory renews pride in past.

Tightwire. (Spring). p. 27.



POW-WOW

Toronto Star September 3, 1986

Indian festival glory renews pride in past

WABIGOON RESERVE — "Without Indians there will be no North America."

That view by Calvin Pompana, of Sioux Valley, Man., was shared by more than 400 Indians who gathered here on the Labor Day weekend for 48 hours of song, prayer and festivities to celebrate their cultural and spiritual pride.

Decked out in full traditional regalia of leggings, bone choker, eagle-feather bustle and a delicate porcupine and deer hair headdress called a *roach*, Pompana stood as an example of how proud and regal Indians once were.

Gathered for the third annual pow-wow at the Wabigoon Band reservation, 200 kilometres northwest of Thunder Bay, adults and children alike heeded the words of their leaders for a return to tradition.

The Wabigoon Band is unique as the only one headed by a woman — Chief Esther Pitchenese — and an all-female council.

This pow-wow centred around 15 drums and singing groups from different reservations, headed by George Brown's drum from the host band.

"The songs give us strength — they are for the living and the people who have gone home," said Pompana. "As we dance, we gather momentum, strength and spiritual power."

The backlash against drug and alcohol abuse is so strong, many reservations are banning alcohol and a reservation hosting a pow-wow must be dry.

"Like everyone else, I used to blame the white man for our problems," said Harold Good Sky, 48, of the Bois Fort Indian Reservation, Red Lake, Minn. "The white man didn't do it to us — we fell prey to our own systematic decay of a way of life."

Good Sky returned to reservation life after many years in the "white man's world," where he had a failed marriage to a white woman, taught Indian culture at a university and worked as a probation officer in Minneapolis.

"We've got to teach our children the traditional values," he said. "When I taught language, 85% of the class were Ojibway — and they didn't have a clue about their heritage."

Good Sky blames his people for losing track of their own heritage.

"If I spoke English to my great-grandmother and grandmother I got whacked across the head," Good Sky said.

But language and rituals were the order of the day at the pow-wow.

Story and photos by Stuart McCarthy

For 12 hours each day, traditional, jingle-dress, fancy-shawl and grass dancers, some as young as two years old, pounded a beat in time to the drums.

The pow-wow was also a forum for such joyous occasions as two marriage announcements, a baby's first birthday and a woman receiving her Indian name.

As one guest put it, "Wouldn't it be great if there was one central place where we could have one long pow-wow for the entire summer?"

Someday, his dream might come true.

...

This is dedicated to the memory of Margaret Gardner, a spiritual elder of the Wabigoon Band, who died the morning of the second day of the pow-wow. May her spirit continue to guide the Wabigoon.



Appendix 44: Mayhew, J. (1988a). EDITORIAL. *Tightwire* (V21, 5). pp. 3PDF and 2.

EDITORIAL

I look from this typewriter through a barred window into the unyielding force field of a concrete wall. Beyond it, above it, reach the still barren branches of trees. From these, my eyes move higher to freer atmospheres of open sky... expanding...limitless...to "imagine there is no country...it isn't hard to do. Nothing to kill or die for. And no religion too." (John Lennon). I'll write searching for a greater social vision that will reduce oppression....idealism to the MAX! My transcendence is temporary. I am brought to earth by cement boots of reality....\$\$costs\$\$..knowing many people in Canada would benefit from a more rational, equitable division of the social \$\$pie. Indisputably this Prison for Women punishes but beyond that? The cost of keeping a woman in this prison is estimated at between \$50,000.- \$65,000. per annum. The recent recipient of the first B.A. earned by a female prisoner was incarcerated over seven years costing a minimum \$350,000. (the academic fees paid, in part, by the prisoner) Lifers can be viewed as \$Million Dollar\$ women. Undoubtly, many individuals could serve sentences in a less costly manner.

Many questions should be directed to this country's overall failure to deal with it's criminality problem properly. Why do "many Canadians over-estimate the amount and seriousness of crime in Canada?" (Juristat, 1987) With a record of failure and waste why? are politicians continuing to approve huge expenditures for building more prisons, monuments to failure? What happens to prisoners inside? their families? What of the victims left outside, alienated and still suffering...a restorative model of justice would consider justice done when relationships were restored. These questions must be answered.

The minds, hearts and souls of the writers and artists of the Prison for Women find expression in the pages of TIGHTWIRE. Yet their bodies and those of their prison sisters are housed in quarters declared unsuitable since the passing of a 1938 Royal Commission. As difficult as the situation is in Kingston, the Provincial institutions are much worse. Space at Prison for Women is limited. Currently, over 100 women serving lengthy Federal sentences are being held in even less adequate Provincial facilities. The historical development or more accurately nor-development of these problems is well covered in a recently published book "Too Few to Count" edited by Ellen Adleburg and Claudia Curry. This book, along with "Lifer's" by Bonnie Walford represent major, first steps in documenting women's experiences within the dominating male Correctional System. The questions are mounting..

A reader from the British Columbia wrote, asking why TIGHTWIRE had not covered the controversy created by Gayle Horii's request to be transferred from Kingston to the West Coast on humanitarian grounds. This publication, indeed, the population and many staff members at this prison recognize the legitimacy of Gayle's

request. Her pain is intensely personal yet reflective of the pain suffered by many, many women incarcerated far from families and familiar communities. What is needed is the public and political will to bring about a transformation resulting in a broader concept of social justice with a better future in mind.

Displaying a devastating disregard for studies already prepared for the Solicitor General on the social causes of women and crime, as well as ignoring the Elizabeth Fry recommendations for alternatives to "traditional" incarceration, Corrections' official, Mr. Fred Hunt has announced that a "new prison" for women will be built in South Burnaby, B.C. Construction is to begin shortly and should be completed in the early 1990's.

...Gayle Horii may or may not be transferred....

but, certainly, women will be found to fill these cells in the next decade and in all the years to follow. Cages for2001....2010.....2020.....
Is this the thoughtful planning of women for the futures of their sisters? their own children?

It is not an answer for Gayle who is opposed to continued prison construction but these decisions being made today will brighten or mure many tomorrows....

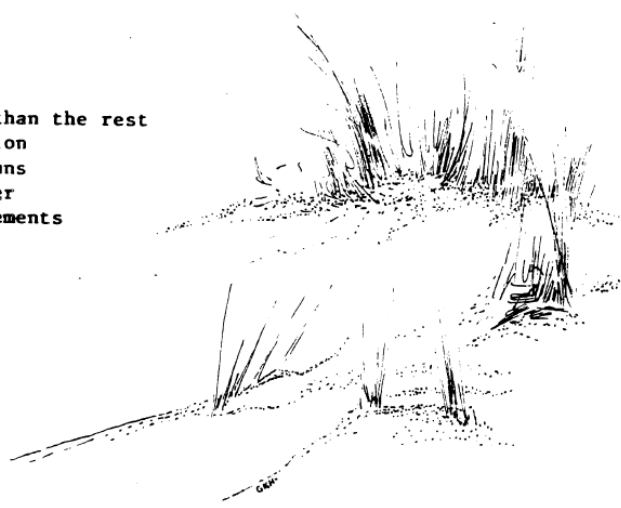
....Imagine a better future, is this so hard to do?....

Jo Ann May Kew
Editor

LOST

A grain of sand slightly bigger than the rest
Rolls back and forth since creation
Through all kinds of moons and suns
Rejected from one mound to another
Sister, I consist of the same elements
Accept my difference and let me
Please rest under this new sun
That's just risen!

Dec./87
Doriana



Appendix 45: Elizabeth Fry Newsletter. (1992). TASK FORCE REPORT: "AN EXCERPT FROM ELIZABETH FRY. *Tightwire*. (Spring). pp. 5, 9PDF, and 7.

TASK FORCE REPORT

" AN EXCERPT FROM ELIZABETH FRY NEWSLETTER "

THE CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF CANADA WITH THE SUPPORT OF COMMUNITIES, HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY TO CREATE THE ENVIRONMENT THAT EMPOWERS WOMEN TO MAKE MEANINGFUL AND RESPONSIBLE CHOICES IN ORDER THAT THEY MAY LIVE WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT.

These powerful words represent the overall statement of principle which guided the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women since its commencement April 1990. The report entitled CREATING CHOICES voices the opinions of over 300 people who shared their stories, wisdom and hopes for the future with the Task Force. It tersely describes the problems which plague the present criminal justice system for women, among them: the fact of geographic dislocation; the fact of meager and inappropriate programming; the fact that most women in conflict with the law are also victims of poverty and abuse; and the fact that the criminal justice system for women of all cultures and races has simply been a modified version of that developed by and for white men. It looks at research in the field as well as the past twelve Task Forces and Commissions that made significant comment on Federally Sentenced Women. It outlines a long-term vision, a vision of a society where community based alternatives to incarceration will be the method of choice. And, most importantly, the Task Force Report CREATING CHOICES delineates a plan, an ACTION plan which will, it is strongly hoped, radically alter the face of corrections for federally sentenced women. The proposed Task Force plan entitled "A VISION FOR CHANGE" takes advantage of two facts about federally sentenced women; that they are so few in number (at present, approximately 240 women in prison as compared to 12,500 men) and that for the most part they do not pose a threat to society. "A VISION FOR CHANGE" is also women-centered and, in the case of residence and programs for aboriginal people, aboriginal-centered. It is not simply an adjunct supplementing the larger justice system but a plan designed for and by women of all races and cultures. "A VISION FOR CHANGE" is also holistic. It should be considered one recommendation, whose parts will not function unless all parts are implemented.

"A VISION FOR CHANGE" has three major components: regional women's facilities, the Aboriginal healing lodge, and the community release strategy. Each is briefly outlined:

1. THE REGIONAL WOMEN'S FACILITIES

There will be regional women's facilities operated by Correctional Service of Canada with the cooperation of the community.

DESIGN: The environment of each regional facility will promote wellness by utilizing such design features as natural light, fresh

provide Aboriginal programs including unrestricted access by Elders, indoor or outdoor space for ceremonies and gatherings and dedicated space for sweat lodge. There will be some Aboriginal staff and all staff will be sensitive to the spirituality and culture of Aboriginal peoples.

MOTHERS AND CHILDREN: Considering the complexity surrounding the decision of whether a child should be with her incarcerated mother, each case will be considered on an individual basis. To ensure that this option is available, each regional facility must have the capability to house children.

In the case of foster care, specialized foster homes will be developed close to each facility to permit frequent visitation. In the case of mother-child separation, CSC will provide the necessary funds to enable children to visit their incarcerated mothers. Special parenting programs will also be available.

VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT: CSC will encourage and fund the active participation of volunteers in each regional facility.

2. THE ABORIGINAL HEALING LODGE

The concept of the Aboriginal healing lodge was developed by the Aboriginal members of the Task Force, who will, in conjunction with the larger Aboriginal community, finalize details at a later date. To facilitate the continued input of Aboriginal women's expertise in the process of the lodge's development and implementation, an Advisory Council to CSC will also be formed.

THE CONCEPT:

LOCATION AND OCCUPANTS: The lodge will be built in Saskatchewan. All federally sentenced Aboriginal women will have the opportunity to choose to serve all, part or none of their sentence in the healing lodge.

PHILOSOPHY: The lodge will be premised on the following six principles which will promote: a safe place for Aboriginal women prisoners; a caring attitude towards self, family and community; a belief in individualized client-specific planning; an understanding of the transitory aspects of Aboriginal life; an appreciation of the healing role of children who are closer to the spirit world; and pride in surviving difficult backgrounds and personal experiences.

DESIGN: The Lodge will be circular in structure and located within a natural healing environment. There will be a round meeting room for ceremonies, teachings, workshops with Elders. On-site daycare will enable mothers to be with their children. Prisoner may choose to live communally, in family units or close to the land.

ELDERS: The participation of Elders will be critical to the lodge's success. At least one Elder will be on location full time

to provide a variety of spiritual expertise.

PROGRAMS: The philosophy of the program will be holistic, its focus, to address the needs of federally sentenced Aboriginal women. It is projected that these needs will include working through the issues associated with health, sexual, physical and emotional abuse, relationships and addictions. An outreach program will be implemented to facilitate the transition to the city. This will include upgrading education, vocational training, employment counselling and teaching life skills.

3. THE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

COMMUNITY SUPPORT TEAMS AND PERSONAL RELEASE PLANS: Throughout each prisoner's sentence, her aforementioned personal plan will continually be reviewed and adjusted as necessary. As her release date approaches, community resources will be lined up in a detailed release plan and she will be assigned a Community Support Team. This team will be comprised of the prisoner, the community worker, a release worker, an advocate from a community group and ancillary support. While the release worker will be responsible the supervision as mandated by the law, the community release team as a whole will pro-actively ensure that the woman is provided with the services required as specified in her personal release plan. Each regional women's facility will form a regional advisory council, which will include representative of the community including Aboriginal groups. Councils will be charged with advising CSC on programs and services in their community and regional women's facility, monitoring the continuity of programs between the two, identifying gaps in services, and making recommendations for improved programming.

COMMUNITY RELEASE CENTERS: Community release centers will vary in structure and according to need. An inexhaustive list of possible centers includes traditional half-way houses, Aboriginal centers, satellite units, home placements, addiction treatment centers, multi-use women's centers and mother-children centers. Each will offer a wide variety of programs and services in a culturally sensitive environment which encourages growth and the development of self-empowerment. While at community release centers, the women will continue to work on their personal plans.

Appendix 46: Glaremin, T. A. (1993c). MOTHER IN PRISON. *Tightwire* (Spring). p. 21.

MOTHER IN PRISON

Well I am a mother in prison,
I know you don't understand.
Society thinks it's done the best for me.
They gave me a ten year sentence,
With no regard for my family.
And now they want me to rehabilitate
before I leave.

They said you're not a person,
So get that out of your head.
You're not a wife or mother,
To the outside world you're dead.
you can't be while you're in here.
What you were before.

Know you're a federal prisoner,
You're not a mother anymore.
I used to have an alcoholic husband,
He used to beat me real bad.

I used to have two wonderful children,
They used to be living with their dad,
They used to come and visit me,
And twice a month I got to call home.

Well someday I'll get out of here,
And hold my head high.

I'll teach the world of Jesus,
And try hard not to cry.

He was a prisoner once like me,
and suffered I am sure.

Now I'm a federal prisoner, I'm not a mother anymore.

Well I am a mother in prison,
I know you'll understand.

Society thinks it's done the best for me.

They gave me a ten year sentence,
With no regard for my family.

And now they want me to rehabilitate before I leave

They said you're not a person,
So get that out of your head.

You're not a wife or mother,
To the outside world you're dead.

You can't be while you're in here,
What you were before.

Now you're a federal prisoner,
You're not a mother anymore.

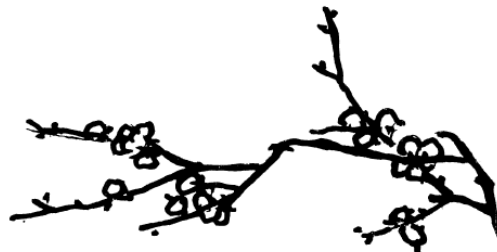
BY: T.A. GLAREMIN

Appendix 47: Glaremin, T. A. (1993b). IF ONLY. *Tightwire* (Fall). p. 35.

IF ONLY

If only I wasn't a mother, I could handle all this time,
But my heart lies elsewhere beyond the prison walls.
If only I was alone, I would not have anyone else to worry about.
Someone I carried inside of me for nine long months.
I would not feel the pain of desperation,
Knowing I am responsible for another human being,
who needs me, needs me there at home.
And home is a place I gave, another part of my heart.
A feeling that time or space could not tear apart.
If only I was doing this time alone,
things would be less complicated, but I'm not,
and Lord it hurts so much.
If only I could do something to ease the pain of knowing,
That someone out there loves me 'cause, I'm their mother.
And they are home alone.
If only I wasn't a mother,
I could handle this all the time
But my heart lies elsewhere
Beyond these prison walls.
If only...If only....If only I wasn't a mother.....

BY: T.A. GLAREMIN



Appendix 48: Shannon. (1989). *SO FAR, BUT I LOVE YOU*. *Tightwire*. (V23, 2). p. 12.

TIGHTWIRE

"SO FAR, BUT I LOVE YOU"

You are so far away
Farther than an arms' length
But close enough to say
That I LOVE YOU

written by a daughter
to her Mother in prison

You are so far, that I cannot see
But, I have a picture in my mind
They can't keep, that from me
But remember that I LOVE YOU

You are so far away, that I cannot touch
But I can still feel you in my arms
You are so far, I miss you so much
But I DO LOVE YOU

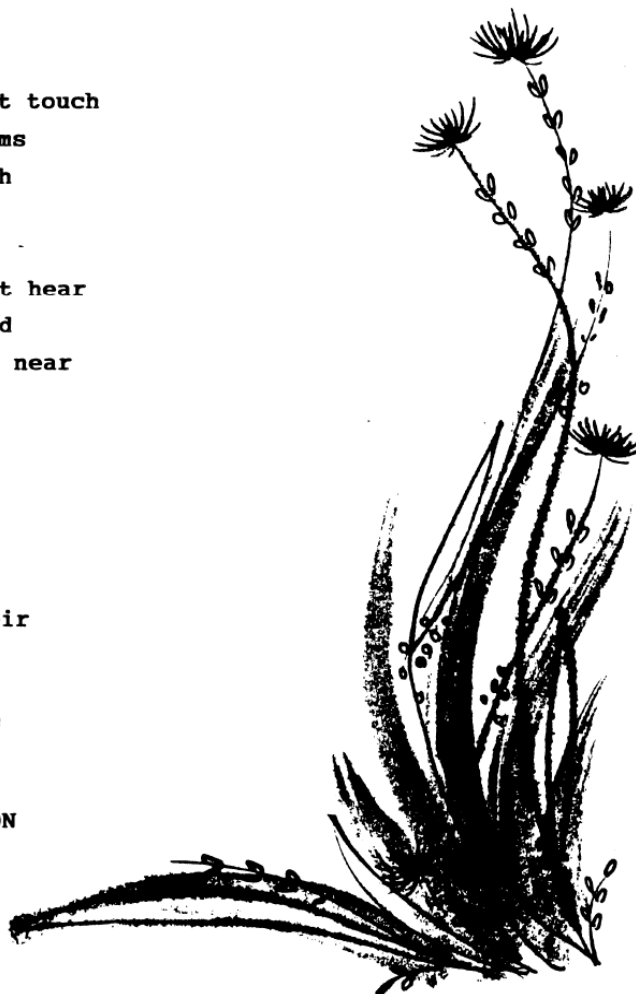
You are so far away, that I cannot hear
But I still have echoes in my mind
That way, you seem to be, so very near
I can say I LOVE YOU

"A FOREVER FIGHTING BATTLE"

I heard your voice
So sweet it made me cry
I so long to see your eyes
Once more blue like the sky
Your eyes seemed to have lost their
Sensation
Of the lost years gone by
It is quite the temptation
To say hello rather than good-bye
One day we will be together
And soon that day will come
We will be forever
And FIGHT a battle that can be WON

by

"SHANNON"



Appendix 49: Anonymous. (1992b). EDITORIAL. *Tightwire*, (Spring). p. 3PDF.



EDITORIAL

Dear Readers:

Our Spring issue is hot off the presses and ready for your reading enjoyment.

We have a new positive, energetic staff.

We have prepared this issue for you, and are proud to present our latest publication of *Tightwire*.

We have a date for the closing of Prison For Women. As of now it will be Sept 1994. With the closing of P.F.W. there are a lot of positive & negative attitudes.

What will these new institutions do to rehabilitate and re-enter us into the communities surrounding the new facilities? Do the women at P.F.W. have a choice of whether or not they will be transferred?

The negative aspect is that some of the women here have been here for so long, that Kingston is now their home. They have made local contacts and support through many organizations and churches. And to take them away from that would make it hard for some women to cope.

The positive aspect is that the women will be transferred closer to their home provinces where they have support from family and friends. That will help them through the rough times that go along with being incarcerated.

As prisoners we have been judged by the courts only to be brought here to be judged all over again. The Wasted Lives here are a shame. The women here have been taken away from their most precious possessions and that is their children. That is a feeling that never, ever goes away.

When a woman is incarcerated and taken away from her children, the question arises regarding who takes care of these children, where do they go, who cares for them, when do they see their mothers and what are the children told.

This issue contains articles from all cultural backgrounds within the Prison For Women. We have input from the Native, French and Black women. They are all great

Appendix 50: Anonymous. (1992d). WASTED LIVES: WOMEN BEHIND BARS. *Tightwire*, (Spring). pp. 11PDF, 12PDF, 10, and 11.

WASTED LIVES: WOMEN BEHIND BARS

PART ONE

"At the first sound of a jail gate closing, we lose something within and without: family, friends, jobs and good times, just to name a few," says Rudine Huguley, resident of Florence Crane Women's Facility, in her article "Identity and self-esteem." Rudine is a contributing writer for the prison newspaper "INSIGHT."

Statistics bear out the disheartening fact that women now have an incarceration rate that far exceeds the men's. What factors contribute to the sudden shift in the sentencing Judges' attitudes? There was a time when the criminal justice system was more sensitive to the plights of women. **But, No More!!**

The topic of why there are more women in prison then ever before raises a lot of unanswerable questions. Are more women committing more violent crimes than in the past? Are women finally receiving equal rights, which includes equal status under the criminal justice system?

What makes a women's incarceration so much worse than a man's, is that it makes one wonder **"Who is watching the children?"** The locking up of so many women tares at the fiber of our family structure!!

The concept of women as life-giver and nurturer is as old as mankind itself. Even though we live in a patriarchal society, the woman's role as mother, in our family structure is a very integral one.

Christina "Corkie" Boyland, once, Editor of the "Tightwire," at the Federal Prison for Women in Kingston, Ontario, relates what it feels like to be in prison. Corkie says, "we feel love and sometimes lost, we feel sorrow, pain and we we feel frightened, and then there is embarrassment and not to forget self-pity, but most of all, we feel **Alone**- a feeling that is so immense, that it overrides all else and never seems to go away..." Hollywood stereotypes female convicts as broad-shouldered,

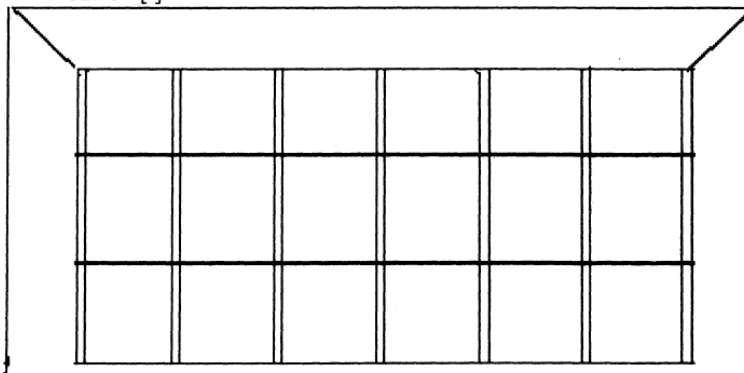
tattooed, tough-talking lesbians. Sort of a female version of their stereotypical male convict. Hollywood gives you the impression that prison life makes women hard and tough, with all vestiges of motherhood discarded or forgotten.

Even before Hollywood was in existence, however, Dr. Cosare Lombroso, called the "father" of Criminology, made a vicious attack upon female criminals when he wrote,... if female-born criminals are fewer in number than males, they are often more ferocious... the normal woman is naturally less sensitive to pain than a man, and compassion is the offspring of sensitiveness... their moral sense is deficient... when piety maternal sentiments are wanting and in their place are strong and intensely erotic tendencies into a born criminal more terrible than any man."

Some of today's criminologists, however, haven't strayed too far from Dr. Lombroso's original theories. The same implications are there, but hidden in subtlety.

What is life like for a woman living in a Canadian prison? Corkie says that "Conditions may vary from institution to institution, country to country, however, we **ALL** share a common ground- 'complete loss of control' in our lives. Similar feelings of despair, loneliness, rejection and ultimately hopelessness, are fear and cruelty."

Ellen Adelberg and Claudia Currie, editors of "Too Few To Count: Canadian Women in Conflict With The Law," bring to fore the pending crisis of the escalating numbers of women being incarcerated. Their book shows that Canada faces the same dilemma which plagues the United States. Adelberg and Currie shed light on the "Wasted Lives and intense pain and anger of those [women] behind prison walls."[]



**WASTED LIVES:
WOMEN BEHIND BARS
Part Two**

We all should be aware that incarceration is hard on a person. However, when that person is a female, it can be a particularly if she happens to be a mother. What follows are excerpts of letters from such a woman. Her name is Evangeline Isom,. But she prefers to be called 'Eboni'. She is a resident of Huron Women's Facility at Ypsilanti.

"I am earthshaken! Earthshaken! in my role as woman and mother."

"As a woman incarcerated within this state's penal system, I have to admit to myself that I am earthshaken! Earthshaken in my role as woman and mother. At this point in my humble life, I feel uncertainty and doubt in the totality of my womanhood." Eboni goes on to say that, in prison, she feels that she is under constant threat from the powers that be. She believes that her personal growth and development is being put on hold."

Eboni, in spite of her present situation, still maintains her sleep spirituality. Her love of God and self are, she feels, the primary reasons she keeps on going. She was only recently released from Administrative Segregation, after spending more than three months in the "hole," for reasons she doesn't wish to mention.

Being a mother of several children, Eboni knows well the responsibilities that motherhood demands. "I know I am a good mother, having several children I've given birth to, "she relates, "breast-fed, totally loved, tried hard to keep together, taught and schooled... yet now, I feel empty of motherly love. It is hurtful for me to express this because the children mean the world to me. I do feel neglected of my motherhood, even though my rainy eyes, though I've got to face what I believe to be mysteriously my fault...."

Struggling for her children to have a positive identity was a hard task for Eboni. Now that she is away from them, she feels that she may have, as she says, "spoiled them away from myself. Here I am sorry." However, after examining deeper, she feels that the absence of a positive male role model may have

had something to do with it.

"I've been so beaten down," Eboni says, "by the MDOC's mission and aim to prevent me from any sense of self-expression. creativity, sociability, growth of development or happiness... I deserve the right to be angry."

"I think I've been dogged just a bit too far," says Eboni about her being placed in the hole, "and too much in this situation. And I am struggling with the feelings; I'm scared! I've never hated another human being, even when I was most hurt by them!" After she was returned to general population, she discovered that a few personal affects, along with most of her photographs of loved ones were missing.

"I am hurt by it, almost crushed from the certain desperation; hurt as much by the torture. I've begun to throb inside."

On her being placed in Administrative Segregation, Eboni says, "I keep trying to find out and wanting to know why so harsh an exile can be so passively allowed. I am hurt by it, almost crushed from the certain desperation; hurt as much by the torture. I've begun to throb inside. I would actually give up if it wasn't for that deeper voice which speaks harsher and more sounder. I'm sure I can maintain the hope!"

I feel that it is best to end with words from one of Eboni's articles entitled "You Can Make It With Faith:" "...Today, I reflect upon just how far God has brought me. I ponder all wonderful blessings and tender mercies the almighty source of my being has bestowed upon me. despite my incarceration. Each and every day God gives me breath. I can still give birth to new beginnings." []

Appendix 51: STATUS OF WOMEN JOURNAL. (1992). REAL POWER ABORIGINAL

WOMEN---PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE. *Tightwire* (Spring). p. 17-20.

**REAL POWER
ABORIGINAL WOMEN---
PAST, PRESENT, AND
FUTURE**

OCTOBER 19, 1989;
KEYNOTE ADDRESS PREPARED FOR
NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON
ABORIGINAL WOMEN OF CANADA;
UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE
Reprinted from STATUS OF WOMEN
JOURNAL 1990



We are all very much aware of the history of colonization, which has systematically achieved, through various well known measures, a breakdown in the structures, upon which the well being and health of our peoples depended. Our present social conditions bear this out.

What is not as well known, is that the influences of a patriarchal and imperialistic culture upon a people, whose systems were fundamentally co-operative units, has not only been devastating, but de-humanizing to a degree that is unimaginable.

I speak in particular of the damage to the family-clan systems as the base units of social order in aboriginal societies of North America. I speak in specific of the severe and irreversable effects on aboriginal women, and the resultant effect on our nations.

The role of aboriginal women in the health of family systems from one generation to the next, was one of immense power.

The immensity of the responsibility of bearer of life and nourisher of all generations, is just becoming dear, in its relationship, to all societal functioning. In aboriginal society it was

woman who shaped the thinking of all its members in a loving, nurturing atmosphere within the base family unit. In such societies, the earliest instruments of governance and law to ensure social order, came from quality mothering, during childhood.

In our instruments of teaching, the use of non-sexist figures such as animals, provided instructions based on human worth. Our languages contained no words for "he" or "she" as a result of the high elevation of human dignity and personal recognition. The concept of colonization of other people lies outside the perimeters of those whose languages and philosophy is to strive for co-operation and harmony wherever is possible with all things, as a necessary means to survival. It is impossible to dominate or coerce another when this basic principle is a childhood requisite, in the learning of such a social order.

It was women who controlled and shaped that societal order to the state of such harmony, that in this time of extreme disorder, it seems near impossible.

Let me tell you that upon European contact our societies required no prisons, armies, police, judges or lawyers. Prostitution, rape, mental illness, suicides, homicide, child sexual abuse, and family violence were all unheard of. Physical disease were at such a minimum that our bodies had no immunities to even simple endemic diseases, upon contact.

It was woman that passed on that social order intact from one succeeding generation to the next.

It was through the attack on this power of aboriginal woman, that the disempowerment of our peoples has been achieved, in a dehumanizing process that is one of the cruelest on the face of this earth. In the attack on the core family system, the direct attack on the role of aboriginal woman resulted in the disintegration of our peoples towards genocide.

It is a fundamental human right for parents to mother, to nurture, to protect and to love their children. It is a fundamental and basic human right that parents raise their own children's culture and heritage and therefore what their children learn.

These are fundamental human rights that were, and still are, being seized from their homes and forcibly placed in sterile, military-like, hostile institutions called residential schools. These places of horror, were invariably run by people, whose only goal was what they called to "civilize".

This process took place during the child's most essential stages of development. The resultant breakdown in our communities, emerged, from helpless parents left with

nothing to live for and children raised in racist hostility and dispassion. The ensuing nightmare of the effect of that, on our communities has been, what those "Indian problem" statistics are all about. It has been the single most devastating factor at the core of the damage, beyond all the other mechanisms cleverly fashioned to subjugate, assimilate and terminate.

Through out the dehumanizing years which followed, the struggle of aboriginal woman has simply been to serving, under the onslaught of a people steeped in a tradition of hostile cultural supremacy. The struggle has been to survive, to be able to give protection, food and love to our children. The struggle has been just to keep our children with us, as our children were seized from the homes of mothers whose residential school experience deprived them, of essential parenting skills. Parenting skills which could only have been learned through quality parenting of themselves. The struggle has been to keep families together and functioning without any behavioral models but the worse patriarchal, dictatorial models on which to base relationships.

The struggle has been to try, when the males stopped struggling, to provide the essentials in an employment atmosphere hostile to all natives and to all women. Many aboriginal women found themselves stripped of their basic rights to family and community support systems through loss of status. The struggle has been to nurture, to protect, to provide and to

heal in an environment in which aboriginal women have been trodden to the edge of despair in a country boasting of its high standards.

Therefore, when I see my sisters in the prisons, on the streets and in their walking coffins, I see where the battle has taken its greatest toll. I see the scars. I see that these women, my sister, have fought the cruellest of battles on earth. I see them, through eyes of love and compassion. Never disgust. My utter disgust is for those who feed on the wounded. Who abuse them further with their bodies, their eyes, and their unclean minds. Who dare to think that they are somehow better. I see, that when women of our nations are dying this, then it is that we are all in danger. Through all the horror it has been the struggle of those women who survived somehow against all odds to bring healing where they could to their families and nations. It has been the struggle of these women that has maintained some balance, so that their children could survive and contribute to their peoples. It has always been the women, the mothers who provide that chance.

We find our strength and our power in our ability to be what our grandmothers were to us. Keepers, of the next generation in every sense of that word. Physically, intellectually and spiritually. We strive to retain that power and interpret it into all aspects of survival on this earth in the midst of chaos.

It is that fierce love at the centre of that power, that is the weapon they gave us, to protect and to nurture against

all odds. That compassion and strength is what we are, and we have translated it into every area of our existence because we have had to. And we must continue to do so. It is not a matter of female rights, it is a matter of the right of the female to be what it fundamentally is, the insurer of the next generation. It is a matter of survival where genocide is an everyday reality.

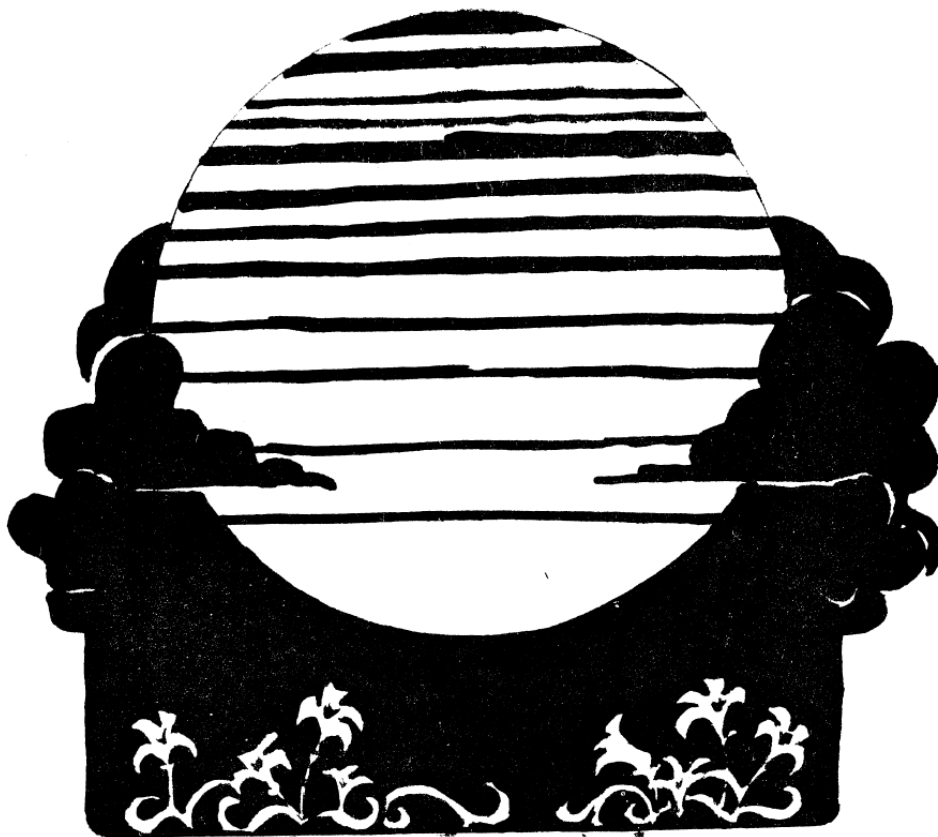
It is that compassion and strength that has been at the fore front of change in our communications. It is the power to adapt around all situations in order to insure health and therefore survival of the young. It is the spirit to infiltrate into and learn all the systems around us in a balanced way, engendering the compassion and understanding that only those who know the true nature of despair and suffering can express in all they do.

At its core, it is the spirit of the female, holding in balance the spirit of the male, in a powerful co-operative force of family and community. It is the strength of this force that holds all nations and families together in health and is the bridge to the next generation. It is the power, that is the key to the survival of all, in an environment that is becoming increasingly damaged, and unfit for all life forms. It is the woman that holds its power and becomes powerful only when catalyzing co-operation and harmony and therefore health at all levels, from the individual, outward to the family, the community and the environment. Without it, all becomes chaos, despair,

hostility and death. That is immense power.

Let it be known as the truth to all, so that we might all come through, to a world once more balance and harmony. I pray for that and struggle for that, for my great grandchildren to come.

To you aboriginal women out there, to you survivors, I congratulate you, I encourage you, I support you and I love you.



Appendix 52: Mayhew, J. (1988b). EDITORIAL. *Tightwire* (V22, 2). p. 3PDF.

EDITORIAL

Among the more tenacious myths of socio-sci thinking is one which sides with evolution favoring the most adaptable, not the biggest or strongest. This suggests dinosaurs died from maladjustment. I'll keep this in mind - it may make it easier to watch as the prison system blunders towards its own destruction by blindly building on historical patterns of failure. This carbon repetition of past mistakes is evident in the deeply disturbing stories from British Columbia. Tenders have been quietly called for the quick and immediate construction of a new provincial prison for women in that region. The projected cost is \$40,000,000.

If the Prison for Women in Kingston has only one positive contribution to make, it should be in the lessons learned from the many studies, prepared over many years, at P4W. These conclude that this prison, designed from the male experience, is unsuitable for women; that barred cells are unwarranted and impose highly negative psychological barriers between the keepers and kept; that a multi-level security system produces awkward, impractical program implementation. B.C. is disregarding these facts and building another prison from a male perspective to house 140 women.

This is beyond ignorance. It represents an official government policy supporting masochistic attitudes towards both women of to-day and the women of the future. This is grim a reality: \$40,000,000. of a "social" budget will be spent on a project that will stigmatize, punish and alienate women. Why not spend this money on a centre with extensive resources that could be used by many women in the community - in addition to those who may be referred by the courts?

It is not difficult to vision a Forty Million Dollar sanctuary designed by women for women. It would be an immense area of positive employment; it would present opportunities for personal growth in a community with a mandate to heal and mend fractured lives rather than rend them into smaller, wasteful tatters. Such a sanctuary could offer: counsel to all victims of crime, battering, rape and incest; support and direction to women attempting to live chem-free lifestyles; upgraded-education and employment training. This undertaking could act as the grandmother of smaller residences throughout the province and serve as a new model for provincial corrections across this nation.

These are the types of recommendations being made by CAEFS in a recent, comprehensive consultation paper prepared by legal analyst Renata Mohr for the Department of Justice. The research for this project was compiled with input from **participants across this entire country and its first, primary recommendation is to RECOMMEND THERE BE A LEGISLATIVE CAPPING OF PRISON POPULATIONS.** Without doubt if a new prison for women is built in British Columbia, it will be filled...in direct opposition to adopting recommendations by women for women...revealing a political appetite for blind repetition of past mistakes - like the unchanging diet of old dinosaurs.

Jo. Ann Mayhew
editor

Appendix 53: Mayhew, J. (1989b). From isolation to community.... Seeking MINIMUM SECURITY FACILITIES 4 WOMEN. In *Tightwire*, (V23, 3). pp. 6-8, 10-11.

TIGHTWIRE

FROM ISOLATION TO COMMUNITY....

....seeking MINIMUM SECURITY FACILITIES 4 WOMEN

For several years I have been writing on issues facing women imprisoned in Canada; particularly those incarcerated at the antiquated Prison 4 Women in Kingston, Ontario. My writing is prompted by my personal experiences and from being a captive witness to the pain, indignity and brutality inflicted on very young women, elderly women, physically ill women and many marginally illiterate women, with whom I live.

My own observations are independently reflected by those of Sally Wills, the Executive Director of Elizabeth Fry in Kingston. In a brief (1988) submitted to the Standing Committee of the House of Commons on Justice, Wills states that:

"When we look at female offenders it is quickly seen that they are doubly oppressed (by prison and the facts of their own lives). Ninety percent of female offenders are victims of sexual abuse and/or incest (yet "Corrections" maintains the right to the physical violation of arbitrary strip searching). Virtually all female offenders are victims of physical and emotional abuse (but "Corrections" will use Mace rather than talk an individual down). 90 % are women of poverty, low education and broken homes. Approximately 80% are mothers, 50 % are single parents. Most of us have a knee jerk reaction to the Inmate Mother; however, just because a woman is an offender does not mean that she is a poor parent. For most mothers the most difficult part of serving a sentence is the separation from her children. Most female offenders (approximately 80%) admit to drug and/or alcohol addictions."

For over FIFTY years "Corrections" has simply added pain-filled years to the cycles of abuse these women have already encountered. The cost of this traditional mode of incarceration has continually mounted until it is estimated by statistician Gayle Horii to cost \$80,733. per year per women. Against the realities

TIGHTWIRE

of the profile of a female offender and the cost to taxpayers, I continue to speculate whether the continuation of this brutal treatment of women is by accident or a reflection of a more sinister social design of "righteous wrath" against "fallen" women.

In 1988, a former Danish correctional official, Mr. Ole Ingstrup was appointed as our Canadian Commissioner of Corrections. Mr. Ingstrup has issued several Mission Statements that are intended to offer clear direction to the Correctional Service. He has also organized a Task Force to address the situation of female offenders. I am told that 1989 can be viewed as the "Year of the Female Offender."

I am not optimistic. The "needs of the female" offender have been studied to exhaustion since 1938! In 1989, I have already been told that the most significant remedy being considered is the construction of a 10-12 Minimum Security Facility in the Kingston area. This in itself is hopelessly inadequate. It demonstrates, once again, steadfast blindness to the realities of women in this prison and throughout this entire country.

I realize that remedies for addressing the situation of Female Offenders are complex. But the simplistic, naive idea that a 10-12 bed facility had significant merit is bureaucratic solutionism at a most cruelly inept and ignorant level. The only meaning to emerge will exist in the ol' boy back-slapping as construction contracts are signed. Corrections will pacify the public by high profile media coverage of conferences, substituting planning in place of action....again.

It is past time that basic facts were taken into account as the Correctional Services of Canada is attempting to formulate solutions. It must be accepted that deporting women from all across Canada to Kingston, in itself, constitutes cruel and unusual punishment. Nothing should be done to further

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entrench this practice. Constructing any new institution in the Kingston area would both contribute to and knowingly compound the existing discrimination.

A viable, economical alternative would be to lease, or purchase for future re-sale, several houses that could accommodate a reasonable number of women. In many ways, there would be substantial benefits to following this course.

Financially, the cost off such an undertaking would be far more economical than the construction of yet another prison. The project could be viewed as a blue-print for a National network. Houses would be a Real Estate Investment and could be re-sold, as Provincial facilities developed and the demands on the Kingston area decreased. It would be an opportunity for a Government agency to demonstrate fiscal responsibility as well as engage in vibrant social change. These factors would be a healthy challenge to the status quo.

The need for several houses rather than one facility comes from an analysis of women's needs. The women in the custody of Corrections represent distinct groups.

Women sentenced to (relatively) short prison terms frequently warrant minimum security conditions after brief evaluation periods. In a Community Home they would be permitted and encouraged to make full use of community resources. Currently, the CSC pays substantial amounts to have self-help groups and counseling brought into the prison. These funds could be channeled to support and develop similar programs in the larger community.

Often, women doing long prison terms or even Life Sentences come to be viewed as minimum security risks. They regress when held in a Maximum Security environment over extended period of time. These women need relief from the harshness

 TIGHTWIRE

of P4W but they would not be allowed access to the greater community. These women would need resources brought to them and a structure created through which they could earn community privileges to churches, libraries and a YMCA or similar.

Two other distinct groups come to mind. One is women who need and want substantial help dealing with substance abuse and past victimization. Current experiences at P4W are making it clear that both these problems are closely related. The other distinctive group of women is our Native sisters. They would be better served if they were assisted in setting up a residence in harmony with their own cultural and spiritual background. The dislocation of Native Women represents the most brutal form of outrage being tolerated by the Justice System. These women suffer not only geographical and family difficulties but are also placed in a situation where "rehabilitation" is standardized by an alien set of cultural norms.

If successful in the Kingston area, this Community Correctional Housing model could be expanded into a nation-wide network of such clusters. In comparison to traditional prison construction the savings would be enormous. At this time in Burnaby, British Columbia, construction is about to begin on a **NEW** traditional prison for 120 women that at a cost of **\$40,000,000**. The design for Burnaby is a modern version of the **failure** in Kingston.

In contrast to the fierce fortress model contracted by the mainly male enterprise of Corrections, community homes would demand intense human involvement; not just dollars, concrete and steel. Employment would be offered to many individuals with positive social skills. The programming for women in the areas of addiction, sexual abuse, up-grading of educational tools and job skills would serve other community members as both additional referral services to community agencies as well as a source of employment. The model would also be compatible with victim/offender reconciliation efforts.

TIGHTWIRE

Community models could easily be adapted to accommodate **MOTHERS AND THEIR CHILDREN**. The grim and tragic family repercussions of sending mothers to prison is a fact that is ignored by the present system, as Sally Wills clearly points out. The institutionalized practice of separating women from young children to whom they have just given birth or have cared for over months and years is barbaric. Corrections should be moving in the direction of maintaining relationships, developing healthy growth rather than actively contributing to separation, its pain and the on-going trauma of dislocated primary bonds.

The Task Force on Female Offenders may direct decisions that will dictate the direction of MANY MILLIONS of social dollars. Many institutions dehumanize; but prisons, as they now exist, make it their business. Our brothers in American and Canadian prisons have been trying to tell us that prisons breed hatred, violence and social contempt. Four years within the walls of the Prison for Women are making these male realities my own. The price for this brand of Corrections in Canada is \$759,083,378. each year. The few number of women involved make the feasibility of attempting ALTERNATIVES practical. The issue is much more than dollars and sense, it raises profound questions as to the direction to be taken by the Justice System into the 21st century. The prisons built for women to-day will incarcerate the daughters of tomorrow - in increasing numbers. Prisons are not left empty and the social definition of crime is easily changed. I hope Mr. Ingstrup's Task Force will recommend and enact remedies that will avoid entrenching disaster.

Your concern and interest will matter. Ask more questions, send your own views to the Solicitor General, Mr. Pierre Blais at the House of Commons, Ottawa and to the Commissioner of Corrections, Mr. Ole Ingstrup, 340 Laurier Ave. W., Ottawa, Ont. K1A 0P9.

Meegwetch

Jo-Ann Mayhew

SUMMER - 89

11

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Appendix 54: Deroches, J. (1992). FAREWELL TO PRISON FOR WOMEN. *Tightwire* (Spring). p. 1-4.



FAREWELL TO PRISON FOR WOMEN

BY JULIA DEROCHES

On December 16 1991, the Solicitor General of Canada arrived at Prison For women to make a press conference. The topic is the affirmation of the closure of the 57 year old prison and to announce the locations of the five female correctional region centres. The news of the closure were met with mixed emotions. For years it seemed that the female inmates at Prison For Women have heard that prison will be closed. But after the initial anticipation and the constant "broken-record" of the rumour, attitudes had been shaped into "I will believe it when I see it."

But on that fateful day, the impending closure became a reality. In his speech, Mr. Lewis states: "The locations had been decided for the Atlantic and Ontario facilities. Decision about the Quebec and Alberta facilities will be made soon. The fifth facility, the Healing Lodge, will be located in the province of Saskatchewan. The regional facility in the Atlantic will be located in TRURO, Nova Scotia. Truro is a town of approximately 12,00 people located just over an hour's drive from major centres in New Brunswick such as Moncton, Saint John, and Fredericton. I have chosen Truro for several reasons. It offers a caring support and volunteer spirit which is characteristic of small towns yet large enough to offer a range of various social and other services. In addition, this community is developing some relevant support networks for women.

In Ontario, the new facility will located in Kitchener. It is a city of over 60,000.00 people and has close and frequent transportation links to nearby centres such as Toronto, Hamilton, Brampton, Guelph and London. This community offers an impressive and extensive network of social, educational and recreational services. It also has a lot of strong women-centred supports.

In Quebec, the government is continuing to explore how best to meet the needs of federally sentenced women in that province in the spirit of the task force.

In the prairie provinces, the location for the Alberta regional facility will be announce in the near future in combination with the Healing Lodge in Saskatchewan will offer significant improvements to women from that region.



I realized that my announcements today may not be well received by all of you. I understand that some of you may be fearful of the many unknowns that relocating to a new regional facilities presents. I can assure you that the new regional facilities will be a vast improvement for federally-sentenced women. They represent my government's serious commitment to improving the situation of women under federal sentence now, and for those who will come into federal care in the future. You told us during the task force consultation that improvements meant, among other things, being closer to home, to your families, culture and communities. I can assure you that my government listened to your comments and today's announcement is further proof of that."

Mr. Doug Lewis was born in Toronto and became a chartered accountant in 1962. He was graduated from Osgoode Hall Law School in 1969. He became a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in 1982 and was appointed a Queen's Counsel in 1984. Mr. Lewis was elected to the House of Commons in 1979 and served as parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Supply and Services.

In 1984, he was appointed parliamentary secretary to the Cabinet as Minister of State for the Treasury Board. In January 1989, Mr. Lewis was appointed Justice Minister and Attorney General of Canada and government House Leader. Mr. Lewis was appointed Solicitor General of Canada on April 21, 1991. As Solicitor General of Canada, Mr. Lewis is responsible to Parliament for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC), the National parole board (NPB) and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS).

Prison For Women opened its doors in 1935 as the only federal penitentiary for women in Canada. Women from all over are housed here. The holding capacity is 130 but the prison rarely is over that limit unlike the male penitentiaries where double-bunking is a common occurrence. Prison For Women had been deemed unhealthy to its residents mentally and emotionally for a long time and the suggestions of its closure had fallen on deafened ears until March 1989, when Corrections Commissioner Ole Ingstrup, established a Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women in Collaboration with the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies to develop a plan which would comprehensively respond to the needs of federally sentenced women.

In April 1990, the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women submitted its final report on its findings which includes numerous interviews and questionnaires. The report calls for a new approach to meet the unique needs of federally sentenced women. In September of the same year, the government announced the acceptance of the major recommendation of the Task Force.



The recommendations included the closing of Prison For Women, the establishment of five new facilities across Canada, and the expansion and enhancement of community services/programs for federally sentenced women. The cost of this commitment is estimated \$50 million.

In his announcement, Lewis already stated two out of four locations proposed for the centres. The fifth one is a healing lodge facility. A centre for federally-sentenced Aboriginal women, and will be located in Saskatchewan. The \$7 million healing lodge is part of a larger \$50 million national initiative for the establishment of five regional institutions to replace the Prison For Women. "The Healing Lodge will be a small institution which offers Aboriginal women the opportunity of serving their sentence in a facility developed and operated based on Aboriginal culture, traditions, and teaching," said Minister of Agriculture Bill McKnight.

The Task Force plan was developed with the knowledge of the wider societal understanding of women's and Aboriginal people's disadvantaged experience. It was based on the belief that a holistic approach to the treatment of federally sentenced women is required to address the historical problems, and is predicated on the principles of empowerment, meaningful choices, respect and dignity, supportive environments, and share responsibility. The plan places high emphasis on the need for federally-sentenced woman to recover from past trauma, and to develop self-esteem and self-sufficiency through programs and services designed to respond to their needs. It stresses the need for physical environments which are conducive to reintegration, highly interactive with the community, and reflective of the generally low security risk of federally sentenced women.

The locations recommended by the Task Force Report for the regional facilities were determined based on proximity to the home communities of the majority of women from a given region, and on the availability of women from a given region, and on the availability of essential community resources generally found in larger urban centres. The recently concluded agreement with British Columbia, which will accommodate federally sentenced women from that province in the new Burnaby Correctional Centre, was acknowledged by the Task Force as part of the current plan. With respect to the Healing Lodge, a prairies location was suggested by the Task Force Report because 66.6% of federally sentenced Aboriginal women are from that region. The specific location will need to be determined by the Correctional Service of Canada in consultation with Aboriginal groups, and will need the support of a neighbouring native community in order to be viable.

The Task Force recommended that regional facilities would be developed and operated premised on a program philosophy that approximates community norms, focuses on extensive utilization of the community expertise, and is geared to the safe release of



of federally sentenced women at the earliest possible point in their sentences. Program delivery would be based on individualized plans developed by each woman in conjunction with a staff person and a community worker assigned from a private sector agency. Programs would be holistic in nature, culturally-sensitive and responsive to the needs of women. As envisioned by the Task Force Report, the community orientation of the regional facilities would facilitate the development of individualized release plans associated by a community support team. The team, composed of Correctional Service of Canada staff and community workers, would work closely with each woman to ensure that needed services and support would be available on release. There would be an increased need for specialized services including Aboriginal halfway houses, community based treatment residences as well as alternate accommodation such as satellite apartment beds and private home placements. Services purchased from community would not only include accommodation, but also support services such as employment counselling, substance abuse treatment and living skills programs.

One final word on the closing of Prison For Women and the five regional centres, in my brief interview with Mr. Lewis, I asked him on the future of these regional centres. His outlook was the vision of closer ties to one's home community, and a quicker and more substantial integration back into the society in order to further the healing processes for many women who were victims of abuse before becoming criminals. A bit of information about transference to these centres: it is a flexible choice for all female offenders to go to any one of the regional institutions rather than being forced to stay at the institution in one's province. Thus, a chapter will soon be closed on Prison For Women while new ones unfold in the future of federally sentenced women in Canada.

Appendix 55: Glaremin, T. (1990). THE CASTLE TO BE CLOSED. *Tightwire*, (Winter). p. 51.

THE CASTLE TO BE CLOSED

BY EFFORTS OF ELIZABETH FRY AND THE TASK FORCE

The days are numbered for the Medieval castle called The Prison For Women. The efforts by Bonnie Diamond and Sally Willis of Elizabeth Fry are to be commended in the push for reform regarding federally sentenced women in Canada. Although there were rumors that the women would lose their rights in the provinces, I think we all lost sight of the fact, that the new units for women in the provinces are to be Federal ones and therefore ruled by Federal regulations. The Task Force have worked with the women here over the years for viable solutions to the problem of disparity between the provinces and federally sentenced women. I do not agree with the building of new prisons, but I do support the right for women to stay in their home provinces.

The Elizabeth Fry Society have taken the consensus of the women here and struggled to make a change in the way women did their sentences. I cannot see this being any worse than what we have now. This is the first time in the history of Corrections in Canada that women will have the same rights as men in their own provinces. The only concern we all have is where they are going to bunk the P.C.s and the high risk prisoners. We do not want a repeat of the multi-level stratification that has existed here at P4W since 1934. We know that this system doesn't treat prisoners fairly and we hope that preferential treatment will be done away with when we are housed in these new units.

Due to efforts of Elizabeth Fry we are going to see changes for the better for Federally sentenced women in Canada. But instead of building more prisons why can't we try co-corrections. Instead of five small prisons spread sparsely across Canada, we can be encumbered in every province where a prison already exists. In any event most of us here are very positive about having our rights as federal prisoners become a reality in the provinces thanks to the hard work and time consuming efforts of Elizabeth Fry.

Theresa-Ann Glaremin

PAGE 51

Appendix 56: Sayer, S. (1989). Untitled. *Tightwire* (V23, 3). p. 40-41.

— SISTERHOOD SPEAKS OUT —



I am taking this opportunity to voice out my opinions. Witnessing issues in a perspective which consists solely of emotional and personal knowledge spoken from all of my heart.

First of all I do not imply, condemn or discriminate against any specific individual, groups or Task Forces for that matter. This is my opinion is all in one and one in all. What you are about to read is one Native woman taking the time to share what has been sealed up and silences...now is the time to open that up.

While attempting to write on "The Task Force on Aboriginal Peoples in Federal Corrections," my mind was pacing, wondering on the possibility of doing something I can't make myself believe in. Coming to the conclusion of recognizing that I am not out to condemn certain peoples or parties or Task Forces. This is only one of many speaking as an individual. I believe deeply that I will speak when given the chance on any Native issue.

**"My mind is Indian;
My heart is Indian;
My life is Indian."**

I wear such a facade that hides the animosity and hurt I feel until I see a time fit to introduce it to others seeing on the same level as I.

All this deals with us presently and more importantly, our future generations. Any opportunity that opens and invites ways for our people to better our lives inside and outside of prison. "My heart belongs to my people."

All I ask is the truth spoken, written and heard. No more rearranging the puzzle so it looks good in their eyes, for their files. Stop and remember all us women that are striving for survival, for our lives and for our futures. We're left with high hopes and fewer dreams. It is my concern that there is a thirst for understanding, good hearted and open mindedness needed in choosing the right allies acceptable to deal with issues and reports dealing our cards and bring reports, more Task Forces that will show us another solution or, another "answer."

— SISTERHOOD SPEAKS OUT —

To some people their job is work to be done. Once the job is finished they put us in neat brown files and pass it on to the next one down the line. A better name for their whole concept ...is masking tape...white man style.

"It is our lives and our peoples future at stake here. Decisions made by the 'so-called-powers-that-be' that don't have the least bit of understanding of how we live and feel. Do they realize that they hold our future in their hands? They are deciding our futures but fail to acknowledge that it is our lives and bodies in here...not theirs!!

They may not see it now but in 10 years from now when another Task Force is on the prowl and they go through the statistics, analyzing the changes made (if any) and how they've worked. Will they feel satisfied? A better question; Are we satisfied? How do we feel?

I get restless and begin to feel melancholy inside because as I believed and still do that there is always hope. Even through all the interviews being analyzed and watched like animals...of course only willing to help my people....they are supposedly to know our needs better than ourselves. I'm still hoping that maybe something will be successful and will work for our people. I feel raped of what I cherished and cheated for all I gave and never received, not in materialistic sense but, a moral one.

I don't regret all I've seen and what is trying to be done for our Sisters inside. Very little is all I ask and the bottom line to all this talk is....
ACTION TALKS - BULLSHIT WALKS

A Skeptical but
Sincere Sister...

Ms. A. Sayer

Ms. Sandy Sayer
P. 4. W.
July 22, 1989



Appendix 57: Glaremin, T. A. (1993a). CHOICES. *Tightwire* (Spring). p. 18-20.

CHOICES

I came to P4W in 1986 after a lengthy stay in the Metro West Detention Centre in Toronto. I was a basket case when I arrived here. After orientation on B-range for 90 days, I was ready to settle into my ten year sentence. The first year into my bit, I hung out in the library studying the C.D.'s, S.O.'s, P.S.R.'s and Human Rights Charter to begin the struggle in the Federal System for things that I fought so hard for in the Provincial System. Things like proper medical and dental care, healthy food, fresh air and exercise and educational programs. Family was not a consideration in Provincial, as all visits were behind glass and no conjugal visits - period!

After becoming aware of the information in the documents in the library, I soon went on a campaign to see that "Human Rights" would be left intact despite my imprisonment. Oh....there were a lot of losses, but when I won something, it was significant and a benefit to everyone, not just myself. I soon became a prisoner that "sisters" could turn to for help with complaints and problems they were having. I helped everyone but one type of prisoner - the sexual offender or "baby-killer". I found it very unsettling to be around these women. It became a constant reminder to the administration of how the integration of P.C.'s (Protective Custody prisoners put in general population) affected me as a woman. I was angry at their presence as it awoke sleeping memories within my sub-conscious of how I suffered incestuous acts inflicted on me by my family. I hated these women for reminding me of things I wanted to forget. I hated the Warden and upper administrative management for the sudden release of these women into population.

That is the only judgemental trait that I freely expressed to my "sisters" in population and the Warden and Custody. I found it hard to accept the knowledge of memories as a result of the abuse. The Warden won the battle with the integration of P.C. prisoners who were offered protection, the best living conditions, best jobs and best programs while the rest of us earned rights to these things were denied them due to their presence.

As a result of staff pressure and renewed memories of abuse, I tried to hang myself in February, 1990. I was cut down, revived and made to hobble to segregation. I survived the experience. I am forced to exist with women that in my opinion should be left to do their time in a class group of their own. I have no emotions except bitterness and rage when it comes to adults who kill and sexually hurt little kids. Throughout my stay at P4W, a lot of changes have happened. Now that I am forced to consider another option in doing my Federal bit, with the Elizabeth Fry Society Lobby Group shooting their mouths off about what is best for us, we are now facing the closing of P4W in exchange for mini-prisons to house Federal women. This is supposed to bring us closer to our home provinces...well!!! All I can say is that there are 10 provinces and I am from Newfoundland and after 8 years of being at P4W, I consider Ontario my home province.

I met and married a man doing a life (25) sentence and he is housed five minutes down the road. I do not want to go to Kitchener. This will be leaving my family behind and to me that would pose hardship. It's a problem now for CSC to transfer him for our conjugal visits - 5 minutes down the road. What kind of excuses would we receive when and if I am transferred, by force - to Kitchener?

When task forces were going through the P4W, the majority of women at the time wanted co-corrections. The reasoning was to assure the same programs as the men. Since all levels of structure existed for men, - minimum, medium, maximum and camps in every province, the hardship to the taxpayer would be reduced. All CSC had to do was open a small wing for the few women from every province. It worked for Gayle Horii. She was, in my opinion, the fore-runner for co-corrections, working in this country. Thank you Gayle for your help in the struggle for justice of federal women in the justice system. It is now 8 years later and I find myself struggling with problems of the similar kind regarding home and family. Apart from the sexual offenders and child killers in the P4W population, the matter of family still remains a problem. My family is here at Collins Bay Pen. and my home is Kingston. I spent 4 years on E.T.A.'s (escorted temporary absences) 16 months on U.T.A.'s (unescorted temporary absences) and 15 months of day parole in this community so the CSC, National Parole Board and Elizabeth Fry could put their minds at ease to my placement here in Kingston. But for what? So they could whisk me off to Kitchener, away from my family and community? Is that for the good of federally sentenced women?

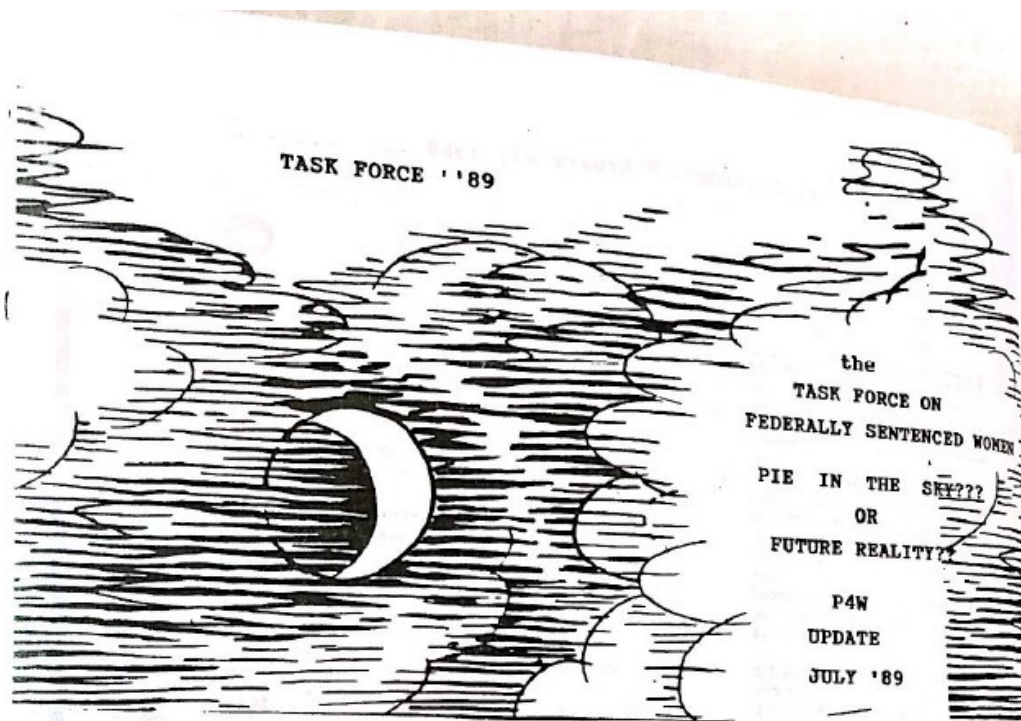
Well, I am a federally sentenced woman and I am here to tell you that my best interests have never been represented by Elizabeth Fry, National Parole Board or the CSC. And what about the women at P4W who have partners in area prisons? What about their rights to be near their families? It peeves me to no end when I stop to think about the logic behind circumstances regarding federally sentenced women. My idea or plan for the P4W would be to open it to men and women who are legally married and committed to one another. Co-corrections have been a workable option in systems all over the world. I recall earlier this year, Wardens from Africa, Denmark and Australia singing praises of the co-corrections programs in their countries while they were visiting P4W. I remember what I said then and what I believe now. Close the P4W as a prison for women and open it for spouses in the area prisons who are serving sentences. There is no reason why this can't be an option for the women and open it for spouses in the area prisons who are serving sentences. There is no reason why this can't be an option for the women who will not benefit from a move to Kitchener. I understand that Kitchener will not provide conjugal trailers but will approve passes home to see our families. This is not an option for me or for any other woman whose partner is doing time in the pen in Kingston. I just want it to be perfectly clear that as P4W closes, it presents a hardship for me and my family. And what did the system do to ensure that my special needs under CD 701 would be met? The CSC placed me in a program in the men's Pen, the university program, where I met and married a man doing time. The system approved the marriage and the first 6 day honeymoon between prisoners in the federal system and changed C.D.'s (commissioner's directives) for long termers in the system. The system further

encouraged us as partners by providing escorts for visits and weekly phone calls. Surely they can't expect us to be torn apart from our families merely because a lobby group wants to further secure employment in their ranks. What about our rights? Now as I end this piece, I am as much a basket case as when I came here regarding the stripping away of my rights as a federally sentenced woman. What options are left for me? What is the system offering me to protect my rights and to be near my partner? My partner is my life, my strength and my hope. I don't want to be torn from him. I nearly died as a result of P.C.'s being integrated into general population here at P4W. If you put me in Kitchener, away from my partner, you present the same set of circumstances that resulted in women dying at the P4W. I don't think I stand alone when I say : As long as there is family, love and hope - women will be willing to die to protect their FREEDOM OF CHOICE.

By: THERASA ANN GLAREMIN
AKA Little running water
& Ann Ridell



Appendix 58: A Lifer. (1989). TASK FORCE '89. *Tightwire* (V23, 3). p. 12-13.



ARE WE PADDLING UPHILL???

AGAINST THE CURRENT CSC REALITIES???

An exercise in frustration and futility - women with good hearts and well-meaning attitudes came to visit with us this morning. In the 1½ hours that we spent discussing the matter of "improving" the lot of the Federal Female Prisoner, many matters were brought to the fore.

Comments from the legal representative of the group indicated that it was "unrealistic" to expect the institution to be able to provide a written copy of all the rules and regulations. If the rules are important enough for them to be used to infringe on our freedoms and liberties then they should also be important enough to put in writing and give each inmate a copy. If we don't know the rules, how on earth are we supposed to conform.

We wanted to talk about improving this institution - they wanted to talk about building more institutions. We should all be talking about the abolition of prisons.

While I recognized in these women a real desire to make things better, I, also, recognized that they, like us, are fighting an uphill battle on a virtually rudderless ship.

A classic example of the lack of cooperation and assistance that is being given in this matter was seen in the fact that we were only notified at 0900 hours of the intent for us to meet with these women at 1030 hours. This left us with no time to prepare and little time to think. In my opinion, this was not an oversight - it was planned that way. After all, it is a known fact that numbered among the members of the Life Savers group are some of the most intelligent, liberal minded women in the building and Heaven forbid that we be allowed time to develop a plan of action.

Once more we have been shelved with nothing more than a pacifier. Will we ever be really heard?? Will we ever be treated humanely and fairly?? Will Prison for Women ever come out of the Dark Ages??

If you can answer any of these questions then you are probably even more deluded and brain washed than we are.

Prison for Women

THE TASK FORCE MOTTO

July 4, 1989

©BRILLIANT ENTERPRISES 1975.

POT-SHOOTS NO. 733

A Lifer

**"AS SOON AS I CAN FIND
A GOOD POSITION,**



Collegit Antilist

**I INTEND TO
TAKE A
FIRM STAND."**

Appendix 59: Anonymous. (1985b). The plight of Native prisoners. *Tightwire* (V20, 11). p. 24.

The Plight of Native Prisoners

For many Canadian Indians in the 19th century, a stretch in prison meant a sentence of death.

The reasons were both physical and psychological. Because Native people had less resistance to disease, it was considered common for them to sicken and die in prison. But a more subtle, spiritual malady was affecting the Native prisoner. At the time, Native people were experiencing drastic changes in their lifestyle. Their traditional way of life was changing. They had also lost most of their land and were being kept on reservations as wards of the government. This government was indifferent to Native culture and believed these people had to be "Canadianized", "Christianized" and above all "civilized".

The prison system believed Native people should abandon their "superstitions" and adjust to the white man's way of life. As a result, the Indians languished in confinement and sorely missed the freedom of their outdoor life. The prison rides made no sense to them.

The saddest aspect of the Native prisoners' plight was that often they did not understand why they were in prison. Frequently, they had been convicted of deeds their own people did not consider criminal.

In 1906, only 1.5 per cent of all federal prisoners were Native. By 1979, this had risen to approximately 9 per cent. Native people only make up 4 per cent of the general population. This sparked major concern for organizations such as the National Indian Brotherhood. There have also been innovations in the criminal justice system. These innovations are meant to ease the plight of the Native prisoners. The courts have introduced alternatives to imprisonment for Native Offenders. Sometimes Native convicts are allowed to serve their time in their community by doing volunteer work.

In the penitentiaries, the attitudes toward Native culture has changed somewhat. Authorities are now beginning to recognize the value of cultural programs in increasing Native offenders self-esteem. Native lawyers, courtworkers and correctional liaison workers are beginning to bridge the gap between the Native offenders and the white man's laws.

Native prisoners are now emerging from their own dependence and passivity and undertaking their own rehabilitation. Self-help groups now operate on both sides of the wall and friendship centres are offering practical help and counselling to parolees.

The Correctional Service has also been emphasizing programs focusing on the special needs of the Native prisoner. Natives now have the right to practice their own religion (sweat lodges, sweet grass ceremonies) inside the walls.

However, one must not forget that it has been a long and constant struggle to be able to practice Native Spirituality inside the walls. It is not as if C.S.C. has made it easy for the Native Prisoner by giving it to them on a silver platter. There are many prisoners across Kanada who are not being given their right to practice their Native Spiritual Ways.

Cross cultural awareness programs are offered, as well as courses in life skills, finding a job. Native culture and literacy training, some of them in Native languages.

Appendix 60: Sugar, F. (1987). Untitled. *Tightwire* (21, 3). pp. 22-28, 28a-28b.

February 12, 1987

To: Alberta Human Rights Commission
Ombudsman of Alberta
All Concerned Citizens

My name is Frances Sugar Dulude. I have been incarcerated at Edmonton Remand Centre since July 12, 1986. I am a Cree Native from Piopot, Saskatchewan.

I am making a plea to all concerned citizens; namely Alberta Human Rights Commission and the Ombudsman of Alberta in hopes of gaining equal spiritual religious rights for myself and other native people who practice Native Spirituality as a way of life.

Since entering Edmonton Remand Centre, I have encountered numerous displays of discrimination concerning my religion and access to spiritual artifacts such as sweetgrass, sage, prayer bundle and the sacred eagle feather. I have some documentation from requests that I have directed to Edmonton Remand Centre administration that will be attached and I will attempt to document certain episodes that I have experienced. Due to cell searches a lot of personal written documentation concerning the endeavor to gain access to Spiritual Rights have been removed and have never been returned. I will forward information in point form for convenience.

- 1/ Upon entering E.R.C. I stated I practiced "Native Spirituality" on E.R.C. admission form, July 12, 1986.
- 2/ I requested through Chaplain Services, ~~Chaplain Services~~, that I be permitted professional visits with Spiritual Elder, Garry Neault. He informed me that appropriate security clearance would have to be verified by E.R.C. before the visits were permitted. He inquired if I practiced Native Spirituality as a rule. I replied "Yes, Mr. Garry Neault has been my Elder and he has been working in a spiritual way with my husband and myself prior to incarceration."
- 3/ Two visits were given to me during the months of August and September, 1986. In September, I was informed by Garry Neault through telephone communication that he was no longer permitted professional visits with me. I put in a request to ~~Chaplain Services~~ to inquire why the visits were terminated. A personal interview took place. At that time, he told me that because I am a violent prisoner the visits were suspended.
- 4/ On September 10, 1986, I put in a request to the visiting co-ordinator. "Through outside sources I am told I am no longer permitted professional visits with Spiritual Elder, Garry Neault. I am inquiring why and the reasons for this decision. If it is untrue, I request a visit be scheduled. Thank You."

The response I received from ~~Mr. [redacted]~~ of ~~the [redacted]~~, Mr. ~~[redacted]~~ was: "Spiritual counselling is conducted through our Native Counselling within the Remand Centre."

- 5/ Upon direction to Native Counselling Services, I furthered a request to N.C.S.A. within E.R.C. An interview took place between myself and Ms. ~~[redacted]~~, who, to my knowledge is a Native Liaison Court Worker. I inquired if there was an Elder who came into E.R.C. for Spiritual Counselling, the reply was "No". Our conversation seemed to be generally enlightening, she was quite enthusiastic about Native people and their access to spiritual rights. I then compared other denominations to Native Spirituality and her response was that if I persisted to be radical about religious access I would get no where.

I asked that N.C.S.A. be supportive and liaison between E.R.C. administration and myself. She informed me that she would make inquiries on my behalf. I waited for a period of two weeks after which time I submitted further requests to N.C.S.A. stating that if they could not or would not service my request to please inform me in writing. I have never received a response from Ms. ~~[redacted]~~ or any other representative of N.C.S.A.

- 6/ On September 23, 1986, I submitted a request to Director of E.R.C., ~~[redacted]~~. Please find attached.

"I have exhausted avenues of access to Native Spiritual guidance. I would like to discuss with you why this right is violated in E.R.C."

His response:

I am in receipt of your request dated September 22, 1986 regarding access to Spiritual Guidance. The Centre has the services of Native Counsellors, R.C. Chaplain and Protestant Chaplain for providing spiritual guidance to the residents. You may wish to avail the services of the Native Counsellors as is done by all other inmates of Native ancestry incarcerated at this Centre. I am forwarding your request to Brian Shanks, Native Counsellor for his attention."

Upon receiving this response to my request, I waited for ~~[redacted]~~, Native Counsellor to contact me. At no time since the first interview with ~~[redacted]~~ have I seen or heard from Native Counselling Services of Alberta.

- 7/ Since professional visits were terminated with Elder Garry Neault, September 1986, he endeavored to gain entrance to E.R.C. to visit me. He was given a personal interview with the Director, Mr. ~~[redacted]~~ at which time permission was granted to us (Elder and myself) to have one half hour professional visits with previous appointment scheduled and notification to E.R.C. administration.

8/ Professional visits commenced between myself and Mr. Nault on these terms once every two to three weeks.

9/ On November 26, 1986, Mr. Rod Carter, who is a Minister of the United Church of Canada came into E.R.C. on professional status to visit me. We were given a two hour visit. I did not request a visit with Mr. Carter. Upon acquaintance I inquired who sent him and why. He informed me that a mutual friend from Eastern Canada asked him if he would make a visit to ensure that I was alright. It was purely consideration on his part.

After the visit was completed I immediately put in a request to Security of E.R.C. to inquire why a two hour visit was permitted with Minister of the United Church and why I was only permitted half hour visits with the Spiritual Elder of my faith. Mr. [REDACTED] conducted a personal interview in the presence of a C.O. III on living unit 5B. He said that it was my choice to visit the Minister. He asked me if I would pursue this matter further and reminded me that the professional visits that were granted to me and Elder Neault was a privilege that could be removed. He did not suggest a reasonable answer as to why a two hour visit was granted with Mr. Carter and why a half hour visit was appropriate with Elder Garry Neault. For personal fears of repercussions concerning access to my Elder I did not pursue the matter further.

10/ January 7, 1987, myself and another Native prisoner requested that we be celled together because we were about to begin a spiritual fast for four days. C.O. II, [REDACTED], accepted the request and housed us together. January 9, 1987, C.O. III and ADD Security entered our cell at 4:00 p.m. and informed us that we had a choice if we wished to continue our fast. The choice was if we continued our fast we would be confined separately in 23⁰ hour lock-up on the medical unit or we could terminate our fast and remain in general population. I inquired as to why this action was taken. I have been in E.R.C. since July 1986, I have fasted each month for a period of two to four days. He (ADD Security) responded that it was policy and that my regular fasts were previously unobserved. At that point, I suggested I would terminate my fast in favor of remaining in general population. My suggestion was a lie purposely voiced for their benefit so they would allow me to remain in population. I continued my fast until January 11, 12:00 a.m. which expired the four days of my commitment. I asked them to leave my cell before I became belligerent.

11/ January 20, 1987, Native Male Prisoner, Phil Bearshirt, lodged a court action against Edmonton Remand Centre on the grounds of freedom of religion under the Canadian Charter of Rights because he had been denied his constitutional right to carry a spiritual bundle in his cell. An Alberta Court

ruled that he be permitted his Sacred Eagle Feather, a headband, sage, sweetgrass and tobacco in his cell. Please find attached newspaper clippings.

In relation to the court ruling, I phoned my lawyer, Mr. S. Sanderman, who had had my sacred eagle feather in his possession since my arrest in July, 1986. I asked him to put the eagle feather in my property so that I could have it in my personal possession.

January 27, 1987, I requested that Inmate Property forward the eagle feather to my prison on living unit on 5B. Please find attached:

~~Security~~ Security ~~denied~~ denied the request: "Feather was placed in your property for safe keeping".

January 28, 1987, I forwarded a letter to ~~Security~~ Security. It read as follows:

"According to a judgement passed in a court of law, native prisoners are permitted sacred sacraments such as eagle feathers, sage, sweetgrass, cedar and a prayer bundle on unit in the prisoners's possession. Re: Phil Bearshirt VS Edmonton Remand Centre.

In reference to request 37-01-27 to Inmate Property, Security replied, "feather was placed in your property for safe keeping". I did not request that it be placed in property for safe keeping, I specifically requested it be forwarded to my personal possession on 5B.

If there are further complications concerning the status of my religious way of life, please refer to admitting form under religion. Upon admittance to E.R.C. I declared I practiced Native Spirituality, a part of the sacraments of Native People is the Sacred Eagle Feather.

My lawyer, Mr. S. Sanderman will be in contact with E.R.C. concerning this matter."

January 28, 1987, ~~Security~~ Security ~~responded~~ responded:

"As a routine we do not accept property for inmates after their initial admission, however, the feather was accepted from your solicitor as a favor to them. As such, the feather shall remain in your personal property."

- 12/ January 15, 1987, my husband and myself had a legal interview with lawyer, S. Sanderman. Prior to this appointment my hair was placed in braids, each tied with red cloth. The cloth was approx. 16 inches and wrapped tightly around each braid. The visiting co-ordinator asked me to remove the red cloth, I did as they asked. They retained the braid holders.

13/ Monday, February 9, 1987, Elder Garry Neault and myself were scheduled for a professional visit. At 1:30 p.m. after the visit took place I was immediately taken into a private room where I was strip searched by female visiting co-ordinator. Upon returning to female living unit, 5B. after inmate count was verified by unit staff I was called to my cell and strip searched again. The time was 3:00 p.m.

14/ February 12, 1987, another professional visit was permitted between myself and Eldon Neault. After the visit was complete I was strip searched. I removed all clothing and my glasses but refused to remove my underpants. The reason for this refusal was because I was on my menstrual cycle.

C.O. II, ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~, ~~XXXXXX~~ stated that I would be placed on charge for refusing to strip search. I replied that is was discrimination to strip search me after a professional visit concerning my religious faith. She called another female guard and ordered me to stand in the corner without my clothes. Under the guards supervision I sat on a bench for ten minutes wearing only my underpants. ~~XXXXXX~~ returned and informed me that I would be placed in isolation without the water turned on for observation. I inquired if I could call my lawyer, I was told that I could call him once I returned to my range. At 2:00 p.m. I called solicitor, S. Sanderman.

At the time of this writing (4:00 p.m.). I am not in isolation. I am in general population. I do not know if I am being charged. I have not received a charge sheet.

In comparison of Native Spirituality to other religious denominations; I would like to clarify that there are numerous volunteers who enter E.R.C.; not only on religious status but also on personal basis. The visits that are granted between prisoners and the volunteers are recognized as religious visits. For comparable reasons I am forwarding a list of visitors:

Mrs. Hughes, volunteer of the Protestant religion is permitted regular professional visits with female prisoners.

Father Purcell, Roman Catholic Priest, is permitted on all living units to socialize among female and male prisoners. Plus regular church services.

Mr. & Mrs. Ackienhead of the Salvation Army denomination are permitted on all living units for counselling and socializing purposes. Plus regular church services.

On a regular basis a United Church Minister is permitted to socialize on living units. It is usually Saturday mornings on female living units.

Over the Christmas holiday season, December 1986, there were a number of volunteers who paraded through all the living units to

sing Christmas Carols to all the prisoners. I would approximate fifty people came in three separate groups.

In relation to the documentation I have submitted, I believe that my constitutional right of freedom of religion has been violated repeatedly and blatant discrimination has been practiced by E.R.C. I am at a complete loss for reasoning why was I granted two professional visits with Native Spiritual, Elder Garry Neault and without reason the visits were terminated. (September, 1986!!) ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ informed me that is was because I was a violent prisoner. Is being labelled a violent prisoner adequate grounds to deny me the right to maintain cultural faithfulness to Native Spirituality?

ADD Security of E.R.C. have answered most of my requests concerning Native Spiritual access. Why would security of E.R.C. be involved in the religious status of an incarcerated person?

Having been directed to Native Counselling Services of Alberta, I find it inappropriate that Native Liaison court workers are, as suggested by Director ~~XXXXXX~~ qualified to conduct spiritual counselling. I, also, find it extremely discriminating that the Director of E.R.C. suggest that R.C. Chaplain, Protestant Chaplain and Native Counsellors provide spiritual guidance to me when in fact, I have my own spiritual Elder who has worked with me for a number of months. Any other prisoners incarcerated in E.R.C. are permitted professional visits with their personal chaplain or minister if they belong to a community parish.

Why is there a half hour stipulation placed on the visits that are given to the Elder and myself when there are no stipulations placed upon other religious denominations?

According to a court action that ruled in favor of a native prisoner having his sacred sacraments in his cell, all native prisoners should gain this right. Why hasn't E.R.C. given me my Sacred Eagle Feather from my property? Again, I have to wonder at the sacraments of other faiths.. Bibles are permitted in cells, Bible study courses are conducted through Protestant and Salvation Army denominations, rosary beads and blessed medallions are permitted in cells.

Fasting has always been a part of Native Spirituality, the purpose it to purify one's body, mind and spirit. Why would E.R.C. policy state that a native prisoner be placed in twenty three and a half hour confinement for fasting? Is there such a policy in existence? Doesn't the Roman Catholic denomination purify one's body, mind and spirit by participating in the holy communion service and confession?

At Christmas time, a number of volunteers were allowed to parade on the living units to sing Christmas Carols. Christmas is a Christian celebration. I have to wonder if Native people would be permitted to celebrate an inter-tribal pow-wow throughout a particular holiday season??

Why would a strip search be warranted immediately after my visit with Elder Garry Neault? Any time I had interviews/visits with Reverend Acklenhead and Rod Carter I was not strip searched or pat searched. Does this happen to other prisoners who visit their religious priests or ministers?

I do not mean to reject Christianity or categorize other denominations by comparing them to my faith, however, I do wish to make an effort towards equal rights in the pilgrimage towards salvation. Most Native people recognize how the tragic blows of history have threatened to destroy our culture, our faith and our way of life. Although native persons have voiced a collective desire for social renovation, cultural revitalization and spiritual renewal, we have been unfortunate enough to face experiences that I have mentioned. It is my hope and trust in the Creator that people can arrive at a shared experience and renewal of social order. I trust that my document is adequate grounds for your services to act on.

From a personal point of view, I would recommend that appropriate steps be taken to establish an appropriate policy concerning Native Spirituality in Edmonton Remand Centre. I would suggest that Native organizations, Native Elders and other concerned citizens participate collectively to ensure that equal rights be afforded to all native people who will be incarcerated in Edmonton Remand Centre now and in the future.

Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

Frances Sugar Dulude

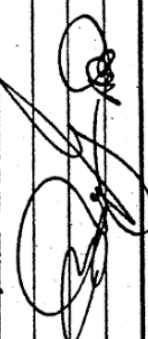
cc/ Alberta Human Right Commission
Ombudsman of Alberta
Native Spiritual Elder, Garry Neault
Canadian Human Rights Commission
Elizabeth Fry Society of Edmonton Alberta
John Howard Society of Alberta
Native Spiritual Elder, Art Solomon

In the interests of "fair play" TIGHTWIRE extends an invitation to both the Edmonton Remand Centre and other parties concerned to respond to the issues raised.

Such replies will be printed in the next issue of TIGHTWIRE. - editor



QUICK MEMO

Memo To:	Memo From:	Re:
1/1M PROPERTY	B DYKSEY ADD (Security)	"Feather" Property - Francis SUGAN-DUVADE
Date: 27 Jan 1987	Telephone No:	File No:
Please initial/sign and return <input type="checkbox"/>	For your information/attention <input type="checkbox"/>	Please discuss with me <input type="checkbox"/>
Please complete/note and return <input type="checkbox"/>	Your comments, please <input type="checkbox"/>	As per our discuss/telephone conversation <input type="checkbox"/>
Please return copy of your reply <input type="checkbox"/>	Please reply direct <input type="checkbox"/>	Please draft reply signature <input type="checkbox"/>
REMARKS		
<p>1. Find attached one feather with beads and leather ties, which was delivered by the Solicitor of Francis SUGAN-DUVADE.</p> <p>2. Record this item in to her property file and place the feather with her other effects. SHE IS NOT TO HAVE THIS IN HER POSSESSION!</p>		
		

SG 300-AS (01/80)

A-180



801 Kensington Place, 10011 - 102nd Street, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5J 3S3 403/427-7661

April 28, 1987

Gary Neault
Box 1672
SPRUCE GROVE, Alberta
T0E 2C6

C. Thomas
Director, Edmonton Remand Centre
9660 - 104 Avenue
EDMONTON, Alberta
T5H 4B5

Copy for: Fran Sugar-Daluda

Dear Sirs:

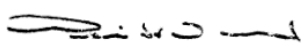
Further to our meeting last week, the following is my understanding of the agreement we arrived at in respect to Mr. Neault visiting inmates at the Edmonton Remand Centre.

1. Mr. Neault will contact the Remand Centre with his visit requests one day ahead of time. Where circumstances necessitate, the Remand Centre will be reasonable in accommodating Mr. Neault on shorter notice.
2. Visits will be held during the normal visiting hours which are 9:00 A.M. - 11:00 A.M., 1:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M., and 7:00 P.M. - 8:30 P.M. Visits may also be held on weekends, arrangements to be made on the preceding Friday.
3. Mr. Neault will advise the Remand Centre prior to his visits with inmates as to the amount of time he will be requiring.
4. All visits will be conducted in the visiting area.
5. The burning of sweet grass will be allowed however, Mr. Neault will ensure that this does not interfere with other professional visitors in the area.
6. It is my understanding that Frances Sugar-Daluda will be returning from Kingston in the near future for her appeal. Mr. Neault will be allowed to visit her as per the above agreement.

Hopefully, this should resolve the issue and avoid future problems with respect to the visitation of inmates.

Your co-operation has been most appreciated.

Sincerely,


Denis St. Arnaud
Regional Director (N)

DSA/dd

8b



Appendix 61: Anonymous. (1992c). Our Elders: Quiet reflections. *Tightwire* (Fall-Winter). p.

21.

Our Elders: Quiet Reflections

Today and as far back as our people can remember, it has been the Elder's who are the foundation of Aboriginal peoples.

I sit back, appreciating what our Elders have taught today's warriors and those from long ago. Without their wisdom, our people would be lost. So... I write this with the hope that readers will thank our Elders, especially those that take the time to be with those of us who need their help. Let us not forget that the Elders have families of their own and yet willingly take the time to come inside to share their knowledge of life. I give my thanks to them, and although for me it does not seem enough. I know they appreciate the gesture of a warm handshake and recognition of their advice.

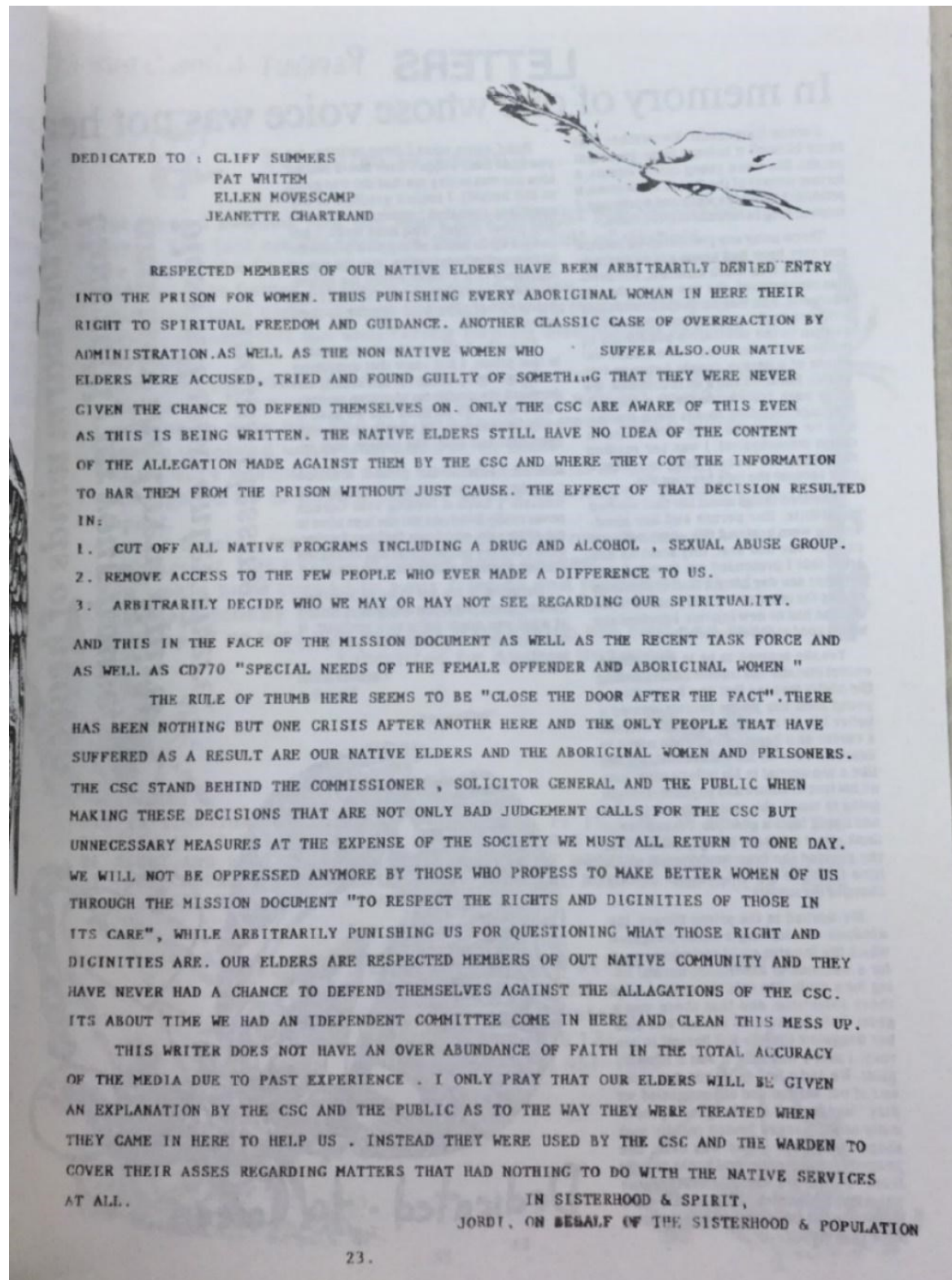
Now I think about the future and the past... I think of many things in life. I hurt the most when I think about some things... I sit here in a time where there is no true peace as there once was. I think of the technology that seems to have taken over, as well as governments that are corrupt and caught up in their games of destroying any thing that may threaten the status quo.

As my mind wonders, I think of my people--- the Indian people, the First people. I think about our lifestyle and how it once was, peaceful and with few worries. I imagine the many children running around and laughing. They are happy. I imagine another group of children in a circle, and at the head of the circle I see an old man speaking to them and demonstrating with his hands. I can only imagine he is one of the many Elders teaching the children the traditions of life. Further on I see a group of women beading and sewing, some are scalping hides, placing them in the sun to dry, working with smiles on their beautiful faces.

I imagine a formation of tipis with the tops showing above the tree tops... a wonderful sight. I listen and hear the laughter of the place but also there is a silence that fills the air. I see the children pointing up in the sky... so I look up and see the eagles flying in circles above the camp, majestic and proud. My heart is beating fast with excitement, my pounding heart! I realize that it is not only the pounding of my heart beating with excitement, but it is the beating of the drums and the drummers chanting their songs

Appendix 62: JORDI, ON BEHALF OF THE SISTERHOOD & POPULATION. (1991).

Untitled. *Tightwire* (Spring). p. 23.



Appendix 63: Rarihokwats. (1984). ON THE ART OF STEALING HUMAN RIGHTS.

Tightwire. (V20, 6). p. 21-22.

ON THE ART OF STEALING HUMAN RIGHTS

The art of denying Indians their human rights has been refined to a science. The following list of commonly used techniques will be helpful to burglar proofing your reserve and rights.

GAIN THE INDIAN'S COOPERATION. It is much easier to steal someone's human rights if you can do it with his own cooperation. So.....

- 1: Make him a non person. Human rights are for people. Convince Indians their ancestors were savages, that they were pagan, that Indians are drunkards, make them wards of the government. Make a legal distinction, as in the Indian Act, between Indians and persons. Write history books that tell half the story.
- 2: Convince the Indian that he should be patient, that these things take time. Tell him that we are making progress, and that progress takes time.
- 3: Make him believe that things are being done for his own good. Tell him that you're sure that after he has experienced your laws and actions that he will realize how good they have been. Tell the Indian he has to take a little of the bad in order to enjoy the benefits you are conferring on him.
- 4: Get some Indian people to do the dirty work. There are always those who will act for you to the disadvantage of their own people. Just give them a little honour and praise. This is generally the function of band councils, chiefs and advisory councils: they have little legal power, but can handle the tough decisions, such as welfare, allocation of housing etc.
- 5: Consult the Indian, but do not act on the basis of what you hear. Tell the Indian he has a voice and go through the motions of listening. Then interpret what you have heard to suit your own needs.
- 6: Insist that the Indian " GOES THROUGH PROPER CHANNELS ". Make the channels and procedures so difficult that he won't bother to do anything. When he discovers what the proper channels are and becomes proficient at the procedures, change them.
- 7: Make the Indian believe that you are working hard for him, putting in much overtime and at a great sacrifice, and imply that he should be appreciative. That is the ultimate in skills in stealing human rights! When you obtain the thanks of your victim!
- 8: Allow a few individuals to " MAKE THE GRADE " and then point to them as examples. Say that the hardworkers and the " GOOD " Indians have made it, and therefore it is a persons own fault if he doesn't succeed.
- 9: Appeal to the Indian's sense of fairness, and tell him that even though things are pretty bad it is not right for him to make strong protests. Keep the argument going on his form of protest and avoid talking about the real issue. Refuse to deal with him while he is protesting. Take all the fire out of his efforts.
- 10: Encourage the Indian to take his case to court. This is very expensive, takes lots of time and energy and is very safe because the laws are stacked against him. The courts ruling will defeat the Indian's cause, but make him think he has obtained justice.
- 11: Make the Indian believe that things could be worse, and that instead of complaining about loss of human rights, to be grateful for the human rights he does have. In fact, convince him that to attempt to regain a right he has lost is likely to jeopardize the rights that he still has.
- 12: Set yourself up as the protector of the Indian's human rights and then you can choose to act only on those violations you wish to act upon. By getting successful action on a few minor violations of human rights, you can point at these successes as examples of your devotion to his cause.

12 cont: The burglar who is also the doorman is the perfect combination.

13: Pretend that the reason for the loss of civil rights/human rights is for some other reason than that the person is an Indian. Tell him some of your best friends are Indians, and that his loss of rights is because of his housekeeping, his drinking, his clothing. If he improves in these areas, it will be necessary for you to adopt another technique in stealing his rights.

14: Make the situation more complicated than is necessary. Tell the Indian you will have to take a survey to find out just how many other Indians are being discriminated against. Hire a group of professors to make a year long research study project.

15: Insist on unanimity. Let the Indian know that when all the Indians in Canada can make up thier minds about just what they want as a group, then you will act. Play one group's special situation against another group's wishes.

16: Select very limited alternatives, neither of which has much merit, and then tell the Indian that he indeed has a choice. Ask, for instance, if he would rather have council elections in June or December, instead of asking if he wants them at all.

17: Convince the Indian that the leaders who are most beneficial and powerful are dangerous and not to be trusted. Or simply lock them up on some charge like driving with no lights. Or refuse to listen to the real leaders and spend much time with the weak ones. Keep the people split from their leaders by sowing rumours. Attempt to get the best leaders into high paying jobs where they have to keep quiet to keep their paychecque coming in.

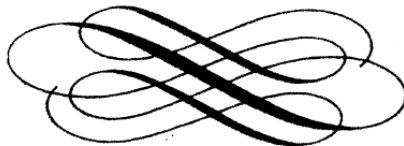
18: Speak of the common good. Tell the Indian that you can't consider yourself when there is the whole nation to think of. Tell him that he can't think only of himself. For instance, in regard to hunting rights, tell him we have to think of all hunters or the sporting goods industry.

19: Remove rights so gradually that people don't realize what has happened until it is too late. Again, in regard to hunting rights, first restrict the geographical area where hunting is permitted, then cut the season to certain times of the year, then cut the limits down gradually, then insist on licensing, and then the Indians will be on the same grounds as white sportsmen.

20: Rely on reason and logic, (your reason and logic.) instead of rightness and morality. Give thousands of reasons for things but do not get trapped into arguments about what is right.

21: Hold a conference on Human Rights, have everyone blow off steam and tension, and go home feeling that things are well in hand.

- This was written by Rarihokwats.



Appendix 64: Stevens, K. (1984). Untitled. *Tightwire*. (20, 7). p. 12.

12

You burned our shaking tent
Put a phone upon our wall
And charge outrageous prices
For a long distance call

We knew about the universe
The animals, earth and trees
While you were telling people
That the moon was made of cheese

We had our herbs and medicines
We cured with drum and song
You lock us up in hospitals
And try to guess what's wrong

You said it was the devil
He never did such good
When you crucified your God
I guess you never understood

You took away our tipi's
Outlawed our right to roam
You built all all new houses
But you took away our homes

You shared with us your blankets
They were filled with your disease
Annihilating our people
The way you're cutting down our trees

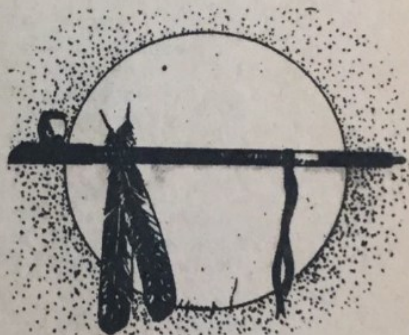
You brought us war and destruction
You murdered your fellow man
We spoke of life and sharing
Now, try that if you can

We spoke of co-existence
The way all people should
But only your vengeful God
And only your ways were good

Perhaps there's still a chance
I don't speak of assimilation
For all to co-exist
As unique and growing nations

I feel that I have told you
About the people of this land
I hope you all tried to listen
I hope you tried to understand

Our life blood is the rivers
Our flesh and bone the sod
We are the people of this earth
Placed here by our God.



submitted by: Kelly Stevens

Appendix 65: The Justice Group. (1988). CANADA'S ABORIGINALS. *Tightwire* (V22, 3). p.

17.



THE JUSTICE GROUP

"THE EXISTING ORDER MUST BE CHANGED"

P. O. Box 283
Station L
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3H 0Z5

FOR MORE ISSUE INFORMATION

CANADA'S ABORIGINALS

ALL PEOPLE SHOULD STAND ON ALL ISSUES TOGETHER. THOSE CONCERNED ABOUT SOCIAL JUSTICE MUST BE STRONG AND WORK TOGETHER.

ONE OF THE MOST SERIOUS INJUSTICES IN THIS COUNTRY IS CANADA'S TREATMENT OF HER NATIVE INUIT AND NATIVE PEOPLE IN GENERAL. WE SHOULD ALL HELP HERE AND THE BEST PLAN TO DO SO MUST INCLUDE MAKING PEOPLE AWARE JUST HOW SERIOUS A PROBLEM THIS IS.

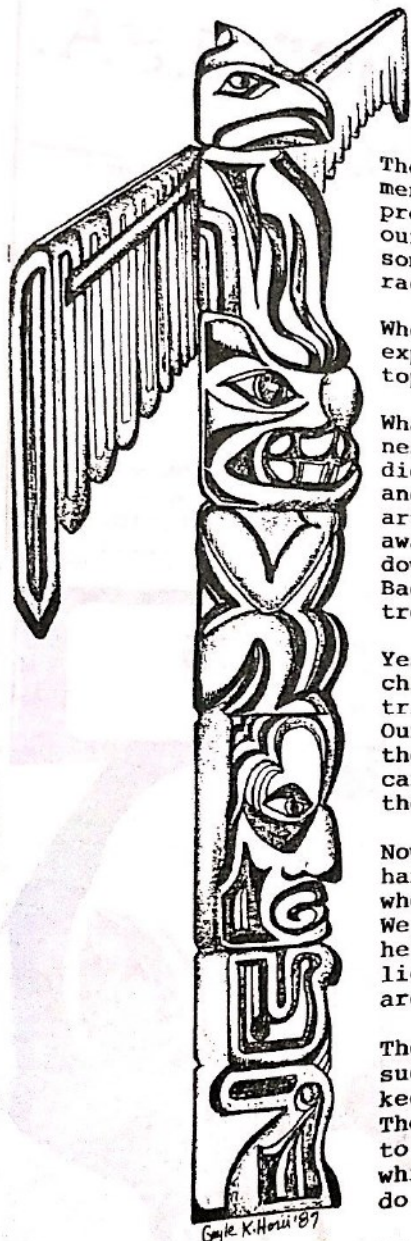
TRUTH IS NOT SOMETHING THAT SHOULD SIT. TRUTH SETS OUT AND DESTROYS ERROR. TRUTH IN LIFE CAN ONLY BE SHARED WHEN PEOPLE CAN MOVE AWAY FROM APPETITES THAT TAKE AWAY FROM TRADITIONAL WAYS.

ONE LARGE BODY OF PEOPLE, AN ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP STRETCHING RIGHT ACROSS THE COUNTRY LEARNING ABOUT SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES AND HELPING OTHERS, WOULD SEE EVERYONE WORKING TOGETHER. THERE WOULD BE JUST ONE DIRECTION. IT WOULD BE TO HELP ALL PEOPLE EXPERIENCING AN INJUSTICE. THE GROUP WOULD LEARN ABOUT EVERYONE SUFFERING FROM THIS AND ABOUT THOSE PEOPLE THAT FAIL THEM. ALL THOSE WHO FAIL PEOPLE, FALL SHORT IN THE RESPONSIBILITY PEOPLE GIVE THEM. THEY ARE NOT PART OF THE SOLUTION, THEY ARE PART OF THE PROBLEM.

THE WAY IS HARMONY. THIS FREEDOM IS NEEDED BADLY. YET IT, ALONG WITH SELF-RELIANCE IS A THREAT TO THE ESTABLISHED WAY. THOSE WHO HAVE SOMETHING TO GAIN BY NOT SHARING, WATCH CULTURES DIE. NATIVE LANGUAGES AND WAYS OF JUST GETTING BY BECOME DAMAGED OR DESTROYED. IN CANADA, ABORIGINALS BEAR THE BRUNT OF THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF THE DOMINANT SOCIETY.

NATIVE SELF-GOVERNMENT WILL TURN THIS AROUND AND GET PEOPLE AWAY FROM THE EXISTING ORDER. THIS IS A PRIORITY. THE REASONS CAN BE FOUND IN THE VALUES OF LIFE THAT MOST HOLD TO TODAY. AFTER SELF-GOVERNMENT, SELF RELIANCE WILL STAND OUT THE RIGHT WAY FROM THE WRONG WAYS. IT WILL SET AN EXAMPLE ONCE AGAIN LIKE LONG AGO. THE WAY IS HARMONY. THIS WAY MUST BE SHARED. WE MUST ALL WORK TOGETHER TO STAND FOR THIS FREEDOM.

Appendix 66: Auger, B. (1989). Untitled. *Tightwire* (V23, 3). p. 38-39.



SISTERHOOD SPEAKS OUT

The following articles are part of our assignments in our Native Studies Course. It expresses our own thoughts and feelings regarding our culture and our people. If any parts offend some readers, we are not to be condemned for racism, we merely speak what is the truth to us.

When I walked into the Native Studies Course, I expected Text books, schedules for different topics to be followed on a daily basis.

What I didn't expect was the feelings of closeness, warmth, comfort and feeling as one. Nor did I expect the Hostility, Anger, Frustration and Hatred I would be experiencing each time an article was before me. Sure, I have always been aware how the "Dominant Assholes" have looked down on us. I've just never realized just "How Bad" our people and ancestors have been mistreated and taken advantage of ... and still are.

Yes, long ago, our ancestors had councils and chiefs, but their laws were made for their own tribes. **THEY DID NOT TRY AND CONTROL ALL NATIONS.** Our people lead simple lives. They were happy and they survived. They honored one another and took care of their young and old ones. The land was theirs to hunt and roam freely.

Nowadays the government plays creator. Our people hardly have rights. We're told where to live, when to hunt and how much wild life we're allowed. We're made to pay for most of what we need. God help us if we slaughter wild game without a license. It does not seem to matter if our family's are starving, "We are only Indians".

The majority of our people end up in Iron Cages ... such as myself. They either pull jobs to feed and keep a roof over the heads of their little ones. Then there's the people who will do almost anything to support their alcohol/drug addictions which the white people have so kindly shared with us. Where do we turn to and where do we go from here?

Some of our people have climbed the ladder of success. They, too, have turned upon their own people. They prance around in their three piece suits, drive expensive cars and own beautiful houses. They've forgotten their heritage, their colors, their loyalty. **THEY ARE NOW ONE OF THEM!**

— SISTERHOOD SPEAKS OUT —

I use to hang my head in shame when I first entered their concrete world. Now, I walk proudly, holding my head up high. I'm proud of my people and my culture and I'm proud to be a Native Woman.

My anger and hatred is not directed to all white people. It is directed to those who play the creator and decide where and how our people should live their lives.

"These people are the government".

IN SPIRIT,

Bev Auger



Appendix 67: Pelletier, L. (1987). NATIVES IN PRISON – A FORGOTTEN PEOPLE ALSO.

Tightwire (V22, 3). pp. 32, 34PDF.

NATIVES IN PRISON – A FORGOTTEN PEOPLE ALSO

The rate of recidivism for the incarcerated Native men and women is shockingly high in the Provincial Correctional Centres in Saskatchewan.

These men and women are on a continuous cycle of incarceration. It would almost seem to anyone who does not quite understand the causes of what provoked a period of incarceration - "is that these men and women do not desire to change their lifestyle of living in an absurd way of being incarcerated time after time".

It would also appear as a hopeless situation to people who do not have the insight into what makes these men and women reoffend. I find that beginning to understand the causes of recidivism can be very frustrating to one who has not experienced incarceration at all. But it can no longer be ignored.

These Native men and women who are incarcerated today must be recognized as individuals who would like to make the necessary changes in their lives, but who have been rejected in more ways than one could comprehend.

Native Organizations out there in mainstream society are not capable of identifying with their people upon release from a Correctional facility. At times it would seem as though most Native organizations are more than likely to refuse such a responsibility as helping their people who have been incarcerated, or are facing a period of incarceration.

it disgusts me to the point of an overwhelming anger towards Native organizations that are not responsive to our Native brothers and sisters who are in prison. As Native people, we are supposed to be as "one in mind, body and spirit". Where has this concept of unity gone?

I am certain that as Native people, we can pull together and do something for our brothers and sisters who are in prison. So much has been lost in our people as a result of being incarcerated. Then to have to be shoved aside, shuffled around, rejected, ignored and humiliated by our very own people can be a very traumatic insult to our beliefs as a Native people.

The rate of recidivism will continue to grow. The ignorance of our very own people will continue to remain. It's time for us as a Native people to come together, and help our brothers and sisters in prison.

The date for the next Pow Wow has been scheduled for May/87. regular guests in the past have travelled as far away as South Dakota - and from places in Ontario such as Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, and Cornwall.

Generally speaking, the Native Sisterhood is promising beginning for some of the women who are politically aware of the issues that concern Native people today - who would like to see positive changes made for their people inside and outside prison.

Lisa Pelletier
January 18, 1987
Prison for Women



Appendix 68: Anonymous (1989a). LIFE IN CANADA'S ONLY PRISON FOR WOMEN P 4

W KINGSTON, ONTARIO. In *Tightwire* (23, 3). p. 58.

LIFE IN CANADA'S ONLY PRISON FOR WOMEN

P 4 W
KINGSTON, ONTARIO

For some it can be a horrifying experience. People from all walks of life, all nationalities, vacuum packed and confined in a limited space.

Because of the close confinement friendships and relationships intensify far more than in the free world. You live with each other's pain, you share their hopes, dreams, fears, their joys and pain.

It's a house with no answers. The most common reply is "I'll get back to you", six months later you may well still be waiting. No two members of authority give you the same answer.

You're subjected to seeing your friends who can't handle the games and the indecision, slash, maybe even hang themselves. If you care about people it has a devastating effect on you. However, that appears to be unimportant to the powers to be to any great degree - life will go on.

We have obsolete equipment at best and no real jobs. It's great if you want to be a cleaner or a hairdresser - anything else you could learn here will be of little use to you in the outside world. After months and years of "I don't know" and "I'm not sure" and "I'll check and get back to you", when you get discouraged, disgusted and fed up, they can't understand why and then you're labeled as having a bad attitude.

Because it is a multi-level prison everyone lives under almost maximum conditions. And rest assured for everything the right hand gives you the left one will take it away, so neither knows what the other is doing.

Then we have the New Living Unit system, supposedly based on caring and sharing, and what psychologically conducive to the well-being of all. A workable theory, but only if the right people are in place. At present not a workable solution in P4W.

To be able to pass a competition does not make you a good unit manager. There are CX staff who care more. If you're not a caring individual who has time to listen, and who cares about people in general and can treat everyone as an individual then you're not the right person for the job.

Then we have the Warden, a very nice lady who dresses nicely, but is nowhere to be found if you should need her. You're either told "she's away" or "she's in a meeting" or "put in a request and she'll get to you". (The question is when!!) I personally have five requests in from December 1988 concerning a proposal to make a more amiable place to be a safety proposal. I have yet to hear from her eight months later. The Warden -- Thanks but NO THANK YOU!!!!

Pray for strength daily and never let them get you to the point of desperation where you feel your only answer is to slash, for if you do, the help for your problem you will receive is to be thrown into seg and placed under observation. Punished for being in distress. Great System.

What's living at Prison for Women like, I really wouldn't know, I merely exist here and will continue to do so until the day they open the door and let me go. In the meantime, I'll continue to pray daily that I'll still be fit to live in the free world after the C.S.G. has finished kicking me and finds itself another victim that they can put through.

Do to the fact that it's dangerous to have an opinion and less impressive to express such an opinion...I chose to remain... Anonymous

Editor's Note: At this point in time roughly 10% of the population is classified as Maximum security and yet the Rules, Regulations and Counts are structured for a maximum security institution.

Appendix 69: Mayhew, J. (1987a). EDITORIAL. *Tightwire* (21, 2). pp. 3PDF, 4PDF.

EDITORIAL

During the past few months we have been given the opportunity of watching the gradual development of a major art project in the form of a large vibrant wall mural. The sinister green of a fire breathing dragon clashes with the glistening white of a soaring Pegasus. A dramatic other-worldly imagery of the eternal conflict between good and evil. During this same period a number of women have been meeting to watch a film series and discuss the complicated moral issues that are arising from modern scientific advances in the area of bio-ethics. Meanwhile, the newspapers are covering the preparatory groundwork for politicians to once again debate the issue of Capital Punishment.

Let's keep it as honest and as straight forward as possible. When all sides of a question on morality have been considered, the final resolution lies in the value that is placed on human life. Not in any abstract idea or thought but in the immediate here and now. Each of us is individual and unique but we are all part of the same body of humanity. We constantly make choices that reflect our own attitude towards life. These may seem small and of little consequence but the sum total is very significant. No one, and that includes society as a whole, can escape the consequences of the accumulation of these actions and decisions.

Daily living expresses an affirmation of the joy of life or treats the experience with contempt and scorn. Again it is an individual decision. There is no gray area. To the person that celebrates life, all life is sacred. No exceptions.

This is not an original idea nor is it new. To Canadians who have had the opportunity of acquainting themselves with the spiritual values of our Native People it will sound very familiar indeed. In the narrow-minded flush of technological progress these fundamental values that could enrich all of us have been most ignorantly devalued. Frequently, because they were not compatible with commercial interests.

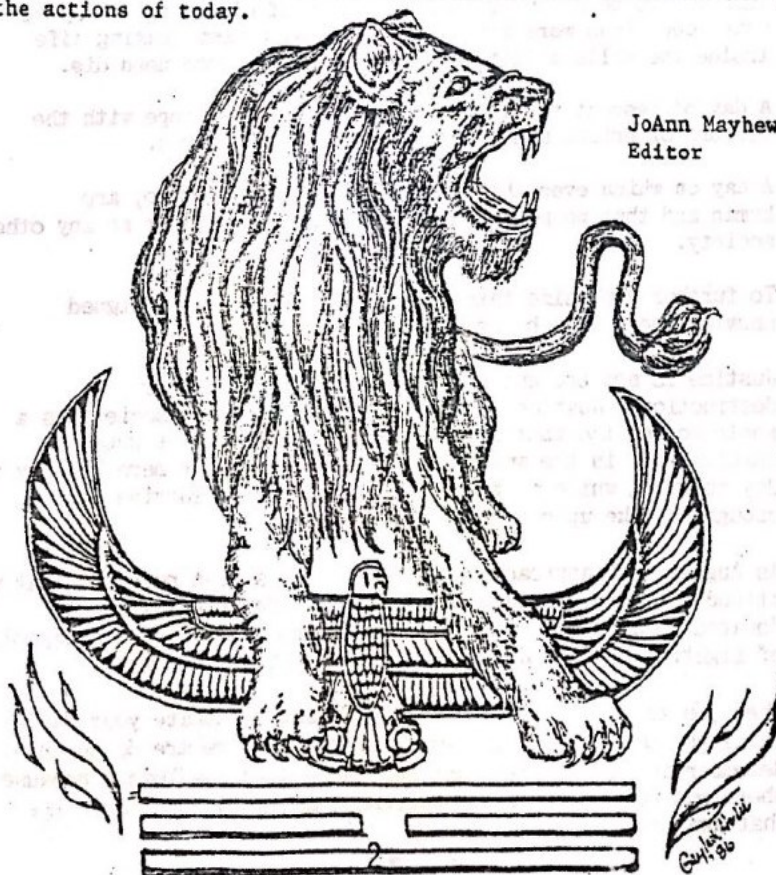
This is not an "historical note". The government is still empowered by the same sort of economic forces that treated with our natives with nothing but \$\$\$\$ and "progress" in mind. This same elitist government has failed to evolve a policy of social equality for any social class that does not neatly fit into their accountants mentality of \$\$\$profit.

There are very possible, positive practical solutions to helping people deal with life problems and situations that create "crime". A term most frequently applied to any property infringement on the "rights" of the rich. These are called SOCIAL PROGRAMS. We are told that they cost too much. Too much to whom? Not to the elite class that directs economic development with a clear visionary zeal towards-\$\$\$profit and progress.

It sounds to me as if an historical attitude is being repeated. Time after time after time. Poverty, unequal job training and employment opportunities, drug and alcohol addiction are problems that can be addressed with significant success. Some small steps have been made but many more need to be taken. They represent the affirmation of the right of each individual to opportunities that will provide spiritual, emotional AND economic resources in an amount to make living more than a matter of mere survival. I feel these are individual rights. To deny them to one is to open the door to denying them to many, many others. No man or woman can be greater or lesser than the whole. Decisions that disregard Step #1 in the value of human life are wrong. Justifying this first wrong step is a major evil.

To vote for Capital Punishment, to legitimize the killing of an individual, is to admit moral defeat. There are other solutions to handling the problem of severe psychopathic behavior. But they cost \$\$\$\$\$. The real question is How much is an INDIVIDUAL worth?

Fran Smith's dramatic mural is gradually being completed. The presence of two floating moons has given it a futuristic other-worldly tone. The battle between forces for good and evil is also on-going. However, the course of the future will be determined by the actions of today.



JoAnn Mayhew
Editor