



**For Immediate Release**

## **Announcing the Launch of Elizabeth Fry Week 2021: Human Rights in Action**

**OTTAWA, Ontario** (May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021): Every year, the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies and local Elizabeth Fry Societies across the country mark Elizabeth Fry Week on the week leading up to Mother's Day. We continue to mark this week as Elizabeth Fry Week because most women in prison are mothers, and many of these women were the sole supporters of their families at the time they were incarcerated. When mothers are sentenced to prison, their children are sentenced to separation.

This year's theme is Human Rights in Action.

As an organization, we've always known that human rights for criminalized and marginalized people are hard won. During the COVID-19 pandemic, however, it has been made clear that these rights – even when won – can still be overlooked and minimized. Having rights enshrined in law is not enough. This year then, we draw inspiration from the legacy of this organization's namesake, Elizabeth Fry, and her work in asserting the humanity of incarcerated people – in helping to center the 'human' in their 'human rights' through our awareness raising campaign. In doing so, we spotlight the work that is happening across our network of 24 local Elizabeth Fry Societies and regional advocates to safeguard the humanity of people within systems and structures that are designed to be dehumanizing.

We also use this moment to reiterate our numerous calls to act to protect the safety of incarcerated people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Limiting the spread of COVID-19 in prisons must not undermine safe conditions of confinement, dignity, or timely reintegration. During the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for decarceration is all the more urgent in order to save lives. We need to protect the health and lives of prisoners– because it is what is legally obligated and because it is right." – Emilie Coyle, Executive Director of CAEFS

To help mark the week, we will be posting videos from across the Elizabeth Fry Network that discuss the human rights issues facing marginalized and criminalized women, trans, non-binary, and Two Spirit people and draw attention to the many ways that CAEFS, local Elizabeth Fry Societies and their clients, and people who are incarcerated are working to defend and uphold the human rights of people in our communities. Videos can be found across our social media platforms, and on **YouTube**.

We are also asking our network, partners, and the public in sharing why the rights of prisoners are important to them and why they advocate for human rights through an interactive social media campaign.

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Finally, On May 7th, we will be launching this year's memorial bursary applications. The Memorial Bursary is an annual bursary distributed by CAEFS that seeks to support criminalized women, trans, non-binary, and Two-Spirit people to reach their educational and employment goals. More information will be available on our website.

"It has been a long, challenging, and often devastating year. We hope that this Elizabeth Fry week we can come together to reflect on all the work we've done and get inspired for the work – and world – that is still to come." – Emilie Coyle, Executive Director of CAEFS

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