



ANNUAL REPORT
2022-2023





Cover Photo by Selena Phillips-Boyle ([Life by Selena Photography](#))

A Note on This Year's Artwork: Throughout this year's annual report, you will see artwork created and submitted by currently and formerly incarcerated people. All artists were compensated for their work and have been credited using the name of their choosing.

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A MESSAGE FROM

EMILIE COYLE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CAEFS AND
CORY ROSLYN, PRESIDENT OF THE CAEFS BOARD

It is with immense pride and gratitude that we share with you the annual report for the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies for the remarkable year that was 2022-2023. Together, we have achieved incredible milestones and made significant strides towards our vision of a just and compassionate society.

Throughout this report, you will see a summary of the busy year that we had, which included a joint network-wide application for funding. Though the funding opportunity was significant, we also want to draw your attention to; the new projects we embarked upon, the housing summit that brought many of us together in-person for the first time in many years, the significant archival digitization project, our legal intervention, and inquest work, as well as the creation of the Systems Change and Transformative Voice committee.

While our work is at times overwhelming, we can remain confident that over the past year, our efforts have brought about positive change and renewed hope after the three years of uncertainty and turmoil brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic forced us to move beyond the status quo and question as well as challenge the systems that we took as a given. It has become even more urgent to address the problem of prisons as solutions to societal failings and expose the areas that we need changed. Throughout all of this, our belief in the inherent worth and potential of every person, has driven our work and propelled us towards our vision of a world without prisons with strong and well-resourced communities.

In 2022-2023, our advocacy work has been instrumental in challenging systemic barriers and demanding justice for marginalized communities. We have raised our collective voices, calling for alternatives to incarceration, equitable access to justice, and the dismantling of discriminatory policies that perpetuate inequality. Our partnerships with like-minded organizations and individuals and the unwavering dedication of our member societies have amplified our impact, ensuring that the voices of those affected by criminalization and marginalization are heard and respected.

As we reflect on the accomplishments of 2022-2023, let us also acknowledge the challenges we faced and the obstacles that remain. Our work continues to be complex, and our journey towards a society free from discrimination and harm will not be without setbacks. However, we remain resolute in our pursuit of a better world for all of us.

The staff of CAEFS are a dedicated and loving group of people who are thoughtful about the ways we engage with this important and difficult work. The team has grown and evolved over the last few years as we identify better ways to be able to meet our objectives. We are

indebted to them and the way each one of them has made their individual mark on our collective endeavours.

On behalf of CAEFS, we also extend our heartfelt gratitude to our Board, and the many volunteers, and supporters whose unwavering commitment has made our achievements possible. This year, we welcomed four new Board members, Jennifer Power, Kelly Potvin, Quinn Saretsky, and Kassandra Churcher and we are already reaping the benefits of their expertise. We were also sad to say good-bye to three Board members, Axelle Francois, Amelia Reimer, and Jillian Barrington. While they will be missed, we are certain that they are

making a big impact in their new endeavours. We would also be remiss if we did not make special mention of the PBSC law students who have supported our work over the years and the many volunteers who work as regional advocates within the prisons designated for women. You are all such important and valued members of our team.

We also want to express our deep gratitude to the criminalized women and gender diverse people who we work with and alongside. Your courage fuels our determination to create a more caring society.

In solidarity and love,



EMILIE COYLE
Executive Director
of the Canadian
Association of
Elizabeth Fry
Societies



CORY ROSLYN
President of the
CAEFS Board

WHO WE ARE

Statement of Purpose

The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) works to address the persistent ways in which women and gender-diverse people impacted by criminalization are denied humanity and excluded from community.

Vision

A world without prisons with strong and well-resourced communities for everyone.



▲
Members from across the Elizabeth Fry Network.
Photo by Selena Phillips-Boyle (Life by Selena Photography)

National Office Team Members and Positions

Alphabetical, by first name. 2022-2023 Fiscal Year

- **Brianna Bourassa**, Regional Coordinator: Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut
- **Darlene MacEachern**, Regional Coordinator: Atlantic
- **Emilie Coyle**, Executive Director
- **Jackie Omstead**, Director: Operations and Engagement
- **Johanne Wendy Bariteau**, Regional Coordinator: Ontario and Quebec
- **Nat Pace**, Housing Development Coordinator
- **Nyki Kish**, Director: Systems Change and Advocacy
- **Ruchika Gothoskar**, Administrative Assistant
- **Sarah Gelbard**, Housing Development Coordinator
- **Sheri Pranteau**, Advocacy Liaison
- **Yoriko Susanj**, Regional Coordinator: Pacific and Prairies

Systems Change Committee Members

Alphabetical, by first name. 2022-2023 Fiscal Year

- **Anastasia Samms**, Systems Change
- **Andrew Roeske**, Systems Change
- **Cathee Tkachuk**, Systems Change
- **Danielle Merasty**, Systems Change
- **Jesse Belanger**, Systems Change
- **Lorraine Pinnock**, Systems Change
- **Michele N'Kansah**, Systems Change
- **Patricia Whyte**, Systems Change
- **Rachel Fayter**, Systems Change

Board

Alphabetical, by first name. 2022-2023 Fiscal Year

- **Amelia Reimer**, Treasurer, Atlantic
- **Aleksandra Zajko**, Interpreter, Quebec
- **Cory Roslyn**, President, Ontario
- **Diane Bergeron**, Board Member, Quebec
- **Jennifer Murphy**, Board Member, Pacific
- **Jennifer Power**, Board Member, Atlantic
- **Jillian Barrington**, Board Member, Atlantic
- **Judy Murphy**, Board Member, Atlantic
- **Kassandra Churcher**, Treasurer, Ontario
- **Kelly Potvin**, Board Member, Ontario
- **Kelly Redmond**, Vice-President, Ontario
- **Patti Tait**, Indigenous Women's Representative, Prairies
- **Quinn Saretsky**, Board Member, Prairies
- **Ruth Gagnon**, Board Member, Quebec
- **Toni Sinclair**, Board Member, Prairies

Member Societies

Atlantic

- [Elizabeth Fry New Brunswick](#)
- [Elizabeth Fry Society of Cape Breton](#)
- [Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia](#)

Quebec

- [Société Elizabeth Fry Quebec](#)

Ontario

- [Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa](#)
- [Elizabeth Fry Society of Peterborough](#)

- [Elizabeth Fry Toronto](#)
- [Elizabeth Fry Simcoe Muskoka](#)
- [Elizabeth Fry Hope and Help](#)
- [Elizabeth Fry Society of Northeastern Ontario](#)
- [Elizabeth Fry Society of Northwestern Ontario](#)
- [Elizabeth Fry Society Southern Ontario Region](#)
- [Elizabeth Fry Kingston](#)

Prairies

- [Elizabeth Fry Manitoba](#)
- [Elizabeth Fry Society of Saskatchewan](#)
- [Elizabeth Fry Society of Calgary](#)
- [Elizabeth Fry Society of Northern Alberta](#)

Pacific

- [Kamloops & District Elizabeth Fry Society](#)
- [Prince George and District Elizabeth Fry Society](#)
- [Central Okanagan Elizabeth Fry Society](#)
- [Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver](#)
- [The South Cariboo Elizabeth Fry Society](#)
- [Archway Society](#)

Regional Councils

- [Council of Elizabeth Fry Societies of Ontario \(CEFSO\)](#)
- [Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba Elizabeth Fry Societies \(ASMEFS\)](#)
- [Pacific Elizabeth Fry Societies \(PREFS\)](#)

Regional Advocates

By Region, actively volunteering in the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year

Atlantic

Courtney Pyrke
Darlene MacEachern
Emma Arnold
Randall Duguid
Mukisa Kakembo
Katie Herrington

Ontario

Johanne Bariteau
Erin Moores
Jen Rinaldi
Sabra Rezaei
Jacqueline Omstead

Pacific

Caitlin Meggs
Yoriko Susanj
Rye Dutton
Brianna Bourassa

Prairies

Patti Tait
Toni Sinclair

Quebec

Gabriela Vragovic
Aleksandra Zajko
Ruth Gagnon



ENGAGEMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

With Our Membership & Our National Office

CAEFS Housing Summit

The CAEFS Housing Summit brought together the Executive Directors and/or Housing Directors from member Elizabeth Fry Societies across Canada. Participants also included the Transformational Voices and Systems Change Committee and CAEFS National Office Team. The summit was held September 24-25, 2022, in Montreal and was co-facilitated by the CAEFS Housing Development Coordinators Sarah Gelbard and Nat Pace. Members of the CAEFS National Office Team assisted with facilitating group discussions, taking notes, and coordinating logistics. The CAEFS National Office Team convened a day early for team building and facilitation training.

The summit followed a modified World Café methodology for facilitating group dialogue and meaningful discussions. This method was selected for its approach to creating a welcoming environment; exploring questions that matter; encouraging everyone's contribution; connecting diverse perspectives; and listening together for patterns and insights.

The first day of the summit focused on discussions that could contribute to the revision of the CAEFS Housing Principles by thinking through definitions of housing and how to position our housing work within the newly implemented CAEFS vision and statement of purpose. The table discussions then moved into sharing ideas for improving available housing and housing-related supports; mobilizing around the right to housing



▲ Sarah Mckeachie (CAEFS), provides feedback on CAEFS housing principles



▲ Co-facilitator Nat Pace (CAEFS) facilitates a discussion with members of the CAEFS network. Photo by Selena Phillips-Boyle (Life by Selena Photography)



◀ Co-facilitator Sarah Gelbard (CAEFS). Photo by Selena Phillips-Boyle (Life by Selena Photography)

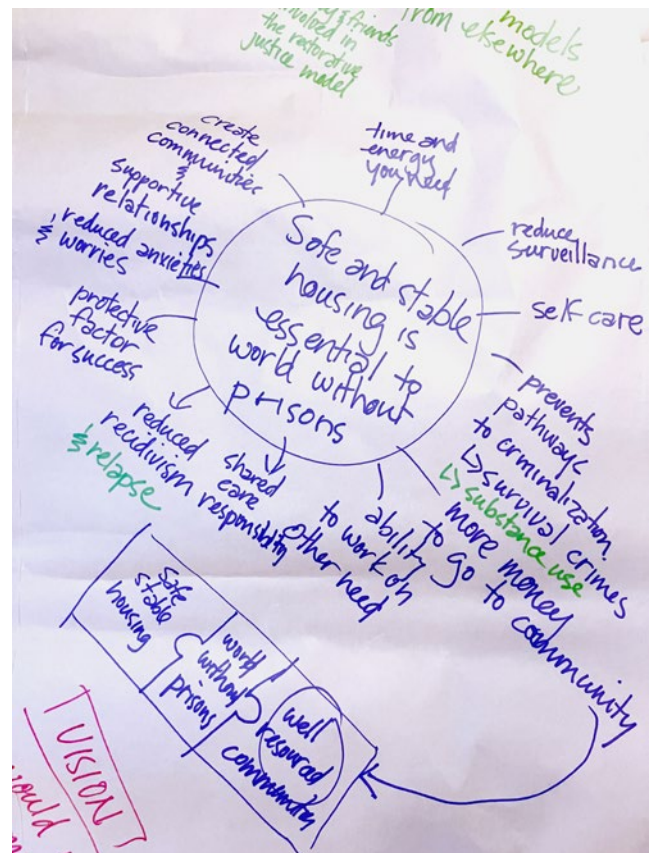
movement and NHSA; and deeper dives into key issues identified by the CAEFS Housing Team. The CAEFS Housing Team also gave brief presentations on the Right to Housing, and findings of the National Housing Portrait.

Overall, the housing summit helped us to explore the following key questions: What role should CAEFS and member societies play in improving access to and quality of the housing and housing-related supports they provide? What role should CAEFS and member societies play in advancing the right to housing? What supports and resources do member societies need to fulfill the roles? What opportunities does the National Housing Strategy and Right to Housing movement create that CAEFS and/or Elizabeth Fry Societies should mobilize? What should CAEFS prioritize in its housing work moving forward?

An evening reception included a poster display of the CAEFS National Housing Portrait and selections from the society housing profiles and offered an informal setting for participants to carry on discussions from the day.

Day two of the summit focused in on residential options (including community residential facilities) and considered how these do and do not fit within our discussions of housing and the development of a CAEFS Housing Strategy. Participants discussed definitions of abolition and needed supports within community residential facilities.

This housing summit was the culmination of CAEFS multi-year project, beginning in 2021, focusing on advancing ongoing housing and residential research and strategy development work for our membership. This project was funded through the Canadian Women’s Foundation’s Safer + Stronger Grants and the Northpine Foundation. CAEFS continues to work to center the experiences of criminalized women and gender-diverse people and support their position as rights-holder within these emerging funding, legislative, and accountability frameworks.



▲ Table notes from group discussions.



Archival Digitization Project

The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies possesses decades of documents, touching on critical moments in the history of federal prisons designated for women in Canada. As the only national organization specifically mandated to monitor the conditions of confinement in prisons designated for women - and advocate with and on behalf of federally incarcerated women and gender-diverse people - we believe it is critical to understand and, where possible, make more widely available the knowledges and stories held within our archive.

In April 2022 we applied and were approved for pro bono services via Deloitte Canada's Social Innovation Fund to digitize and code our paper archives. In collaboration with Deloitte Canada's Legal Project Solutions team, we developed a process for the first stage of the archive project: (1) identify what was in our archives; (2) digitize our archives, (3) create a high-level coding index to allow us to search these digital archives, (4) return documents to our archives in an organized and systematic way.

In total, Deloitte Canada provided us with over \$180,000 in pro bono services to realize this project. This included staff time, scanning, shipping / transportation, and digital document storage.

Over the course of only a few weeks, we were able to review all 315 boxes that had been held in our storage locker in Ottawa. This locker contained 720,000 pages and over 8,370 documents. The earliest documents we reviewed were from 1955 and the most recent from 2020. They ranged from correspondence, administrative and governance records, reports, ATIPs and other individual files, and more. Documents were coded to identify key systemic issues, allowing us to start the process

of tracking re-occurring human rights issues in prisons designated for women over time.

This fiscal year also saw the beginning of work on the next phase of the project, with the support of pro bono law students from Thompson River University. These students worked to further analyze the document and identify individual files, with the intention of returning them. They also supported CAEFS in identifying needed documents for ongoing systemic legal advocacy work. We look forward to future stages of this project, which we envision will be done in collaboration with grassroots collectives, researchers, and archivists.



▲ 315 boxes of documents from CAEFS archives were delivered to Deloitte Canada for scanning and review.



▲ Jacqueline Omstead (CAEFS, left) and Chelsey Roy (Deloitte Canada, right) returning and reorganizing CAEFS' archives, following their review.

Annual General Meeting, 2022

Our Annual General Meeting was held virtually on Friday, June 18th, 2022. We were thrilled to welcome author and scholar, Robyn Maynard, as our guest speaker to discuss her recently released book “Rehearsals for Living”, co-authored with Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. In conversation with Emilie Coyle and Toni Sinclair, Robyn answered questions about her book and its themes. Together, they discussed the connection between abolition and decolonization, the role that non-profits can play in the “constellations of co-resistance”, and how we can find joy and hope in work that is often so heartbreaking.

During our 2022 AGM, our membership voted to adopt CAEFS’ new vision and statement of purpose. The refreshed language was a reflection of our evolution as an organization but also a reminder of our long-held roots. This new vision and statement of purpose serve as a guide in all of the work that we have done since then and reminds us to stay grounded in our values and our goals.

Pro Bono Students Canada

This is the third consecutive year that CAEFS partnered with Thompson River University chapter of Pro Bono Students Canada. Pro Bono Students Canada is the largest pro bono organization in Canada and seeks to provide legal support to people and communities facing barriers to justice. This fiscal year, CAEFS supervised six law students across three distinct initiatives: our Archival Digitization Project, the Systems Change Committee, and our ongoing work to update our organization’s advocacy positions. We look forward to continuing this partnership next year. Thank you to TRU PBSC and to all our student volunteers!

With the Sector

Conferences, Sessions & Presentations

- **June 2022:** Canadian Women’s Foundation 2SLGBTQ+ GBV Panel for GBV Sector
- **July 2022:** Presentation to the Elizabeth Fry Society of Northern Alberta on CAEFS’ work
- **September 2022:** World Congress on Probation and Parole (Ottawa): “Parole Success Factors”, presented by Emilie Coyle and Jacqueline Omstead.
- **November 2022:** Presented at the Wellness Within Annual Conference in Halifax Nova Scotia
- **December 2022:** Feminist Influencer Group - In-person gathering
- **January 2023:** 2SLGBTQIA+: IJS Theme 1/2 Dialogue
- **January 2023:** Women’s: IJS Theme 1/2 Dialogue
- **February 2023:** RCMP Body-Worn Camera Project Consultative Session
- **March 2023:** Presentation at Shockproofing Communities Summit for The Canadian Women’s Foundation on Understanding Carcerality in the GBV sector: Carceral responses are inexorably connected to gender-based violence.
- **March 2023:** 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Breaking the Cycle

Launched in late 2019, Breaking the Cycle (BTC) is a four-year project rooted in ending the cycles of incarceration for women, trans, non-binary, and Two-Spirit people in Canada. This initiative centers on ensuring that vulnerable and criminalized women and gender-diverse people can access the supports they need. A critical part of this work is collaborating with our local member societies to develop and strengthen the resources that criminalized women and gender diverse people need.

This project is funded through a capacity building grant from Women and Gender Equality Canada (formerly the Status of Women Canada) and has enabled much of our capacity building work, both internally and externally to our network – including an update of our [“Human Rights in Action”](#) handbook.

The National P.A.T.H Project

The national focus of the project is a collaboration between CAEFS and the Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia with the goal of decreasing barriers to access to justice for criminalized populations by identifying, strengthening, connecting, and scaling the capacity of existing legal advocacy efforts and knowledges, through a framework that centers the voices of lived experience and informal and grassroots approaches / expertise. This project was launched in August 2023 and is supported through funding by The Northpine Foundation.

The P.A.T.H Project objectives are:

1. Identifying existing informal/unrecognized/grassroots advocacy approaches to access to justice for incarcerated women and gender diverse people in Canada.
2. Developing strategies to support enhancing the resources and capacity of existing informal/grassroots approaches and expertise.
3. Identify existing regional networks, services and institutionalized efforts that support access to justice for all incarcerated people – across women’s and men’s sectors, provincial and federal incarceration.
4. Identifying comparative analyses of differences between access to justice for incarcerated people across sex and gender in Canada (Pacific, Prairies, Northern, & Rural and Remote pilot).
5. Contributing to a paradigm shift toward an advocacy/non-profit culture of practice sharing, support, and solidarity across individuals and organizations engaged in legal/penal advocacy dedicated to increasing access to justice.
6. Developing an effective partnership between CAEFS and PATH to systemically resolve the persistent and prevalent injustices impacting criminalized populations in Canada.

Honouring Voices and Visions: Illuminating Incarcerated Indigenous Women and Gender-diverse peoples Sexual, Reproductive and Maternal- Child Health and Wellness

This research project, “Honouring Voices and Visions: Illuminating Incarcerated Indigenous Women and Gender-diverse peoples Sexual, Reproductive and Maternal-Child Health and Wellness” aims to understand and address the Over-incarceration of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people and current health and

wellness realities. This collaborative research will be undertaken through interdisciplinary and multisectoral teams with Indigenous and allied researchers, Knowledge Keepers, healthcare providers, academic institutions (University of Calgary, McMaster University, Lakehead University, University of Manitoba, Simon Fraser University, University of Saskatchewan, Dalhousie University); and national advocacy organizations including Native Women’s Association of Canada and CAEFS. Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) will also be consulted for data collection purposes.

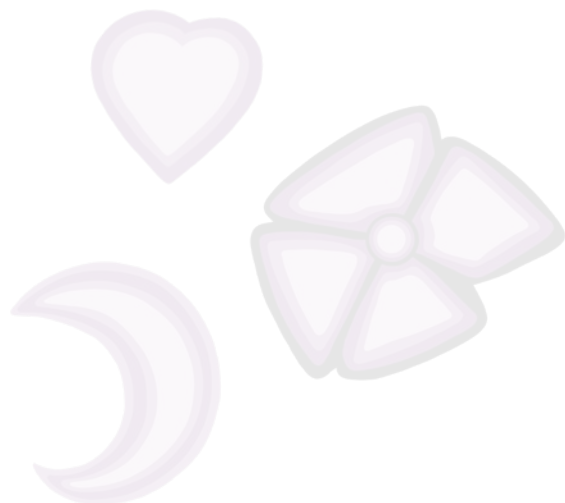
With the Public

PRESS RELEASES, PUBLIC STATEMENTS, OPEN LETTERS

- **April 2022:** The Courage of Formerly Incarcerated Women leads to Former Correctional Officer at Nova Institution Pleading Guilty to Sexual Assault and Breach of Trust
- **June 2022:** Inquest into the Death of Delilah Blair: Outrage and Heartbreak Are Not Enough
- **June 2022:** Body Worn Cameras – RCMP, with BLAC and LEAF
- **July 2022:** Recommendations in Inquest into the Death of Delilah Blair – Systemic Change Is Needed
- **August 2022:** Canada must end “extreme”, prolonged solitary confinement
- **September 2022:** Open Letter: No, Longer Prison Sentences Do Not Reduce Crime – Canadian Civil Liberties Association
- **October 2022:** An Update from CAEFS on the Revision of our Organizational Positions

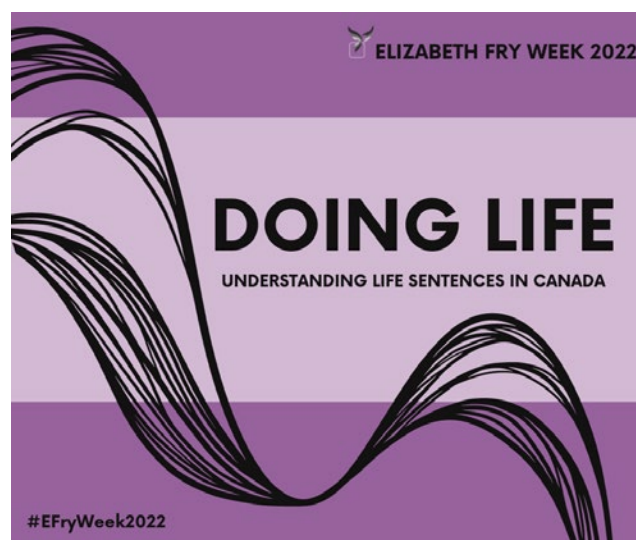


- **November 2022:** R v. Sharma – CAEFS Response to the “Confounding” Decision That “Ignores the Historic Disadvantage of Indigenous People”
- **November 2022:** Joint Statement on the Release of the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence
- **November 2022:** CAEFS Response to the Office of the Correctional Investigators 2021-2022 Annual Report – Binding Oversight and Meaningful Change is Needed
- **December 2022:** Joint Statement in solidarity with Indigenous families mourning the murder of four Indigenous women
- **January 2023:** Letter from CCLA and CAEFS to PM Trudeau and Minister Lametti on Bail Reform
- **March 2023:** CAEFS and Elizabeth Fry Northern Alberta Call for a Systemic Response to Sexual Violence or Coercion Perpetrated by the Staff of Correctional Services of Canada



ARTICLES AND PUBLICATIONS

- **April 2022:** [Dry cells to be banned for women prisoners suspected of carrying contraband in bodies](#)
- **June 2022:** [Proposed class-action lawsuit targets Ottawa over prison practice set to become illegal](#)
- **July 2022:** [Over-representation of Indigenous women in federal prisons reaches new high](#)
- **September 2022:** [Sealing criminal records of marginalized people will improve many lives](#) by Emilie Coyle Pamela Cross, and Pam Hrick (Toronto Star, Opinion)
- **March 2023:** [Investment in women and gender equity expiring just when it's needed most](#) by Raji Mangat with contributions from Pam Hrick and Emilie Coyle (Toronto Star, Opinion)



▲ Promotional image for Elizabeth Fry Week 2022.

MYTH



Life Sentences in Canada are imposed for a maximum of 25 years.

#EFRyWeek2022

REALITY



In Canada, life means life.

Regardless of how old someone is when they receive a life sentence, life sentences are imposed until the sentenced person dies.

#EFRyWeek2022

You may have heard sentences described as "10 years to life" or "25 years to life"

This is because when people are sentenced to life, they are required to spend a certain amount of time in prison before being able to apply for parole. The shortest eligibility period is 10 years and there is presently no maximum amount of time.

Very few people with life sentences are released at their eligibility dates. Many people are never released at all.

Even when parole is granted, people always face the possibility of being sent back.

#EFRyWeek2022

ELIZABETH FRY WEEK 2022

The goal of Elizabeth Fry Week is to enhance public awareness and education around the issues impacting criminalized and marginalized women and gender-diverse people, and in 2022 we used Elizabeth Fry Week to raise awareness about one of the least talked about and most egregious justice issues in Canada: perpetual sentencing. Our theme was: "Doing Life: Understanding Life Sentences in Canada".

From May 2nd to 7th 2022, we hosted a series of free public virtual discussions, launched a social media campaign, held internal discussions, and developed publicly available content – all of which was aimed at helping to make visible the hidden and unjust impacts of life sentences in Canada.

We began the week by releasing two pre-recorded features. The first was an audio panel featuring Johanne Wendy Bariteau (Regional Coordinator, CAEFS), Sheri Parenteau (Advocacy Liaison, CAEFS), and El Jones (Poet, Scholar, Activist) in conversation with Emilie Coyle (Executive Director, CAEFS). Together, they shared their perspectives on life sentences in Canada, offering critical insight into the day-to-day realities of living with a life sentence and the systemic issues that underpin them. El also shared an incredibly moving poem, inspired by a list of "activities we will do when mommy gets out" left in the visiting room at Nova Institution. The second was a conversation with Dr. Debra Parkes – one of the leading scholars studying life sentences in Canada, and CAEFS' Executive Director, Emilie Coyle. Together, they discussed why life

◀ Throughout the week we dispelled myths about life sentences in Canada across our social media platforms.

sentences are a feminist issue, the realities and histories of life sentences in Canada, and what changes can lead us towards the abolition of life sentences.

Our first live event was a conversation that laid out the history of life sentencing of women in Canada. From a time when all women were held within Kingston's Prison for Women, through the implementation of Canada's infamous Creating Choices framework, to the state of carceral conditions today, the expertise of those on this panel shed insight into how life sentences have and continue to adversely impact women and gender diverse people, their families, and communities.

Our next panel examined life sentences over the life course. This discussion brought together four advocates of criminalized people in Canada to look at how life sentences impact people over their life courses. Adelina Iftene, Sheri Pranteau, Johanne Wendy Bariteau, and Cathee Porter debunked the misinformation that portrays life sentences as a sentence that ends after 10 or 25 years in Canada, and how problematic this sentence becomes for individuals, communities, and even for the prison system because its perpetual nature contradicts the fundamental listed purpose of Canadian prisons: public safety through reintegration.

Following that, we hosted a conversation between Shelly Williams, Wendi Lamirande, Idil Abdillahi, and Sheri Pranteau that centered the juxtaposition of the importance of maintaining contact with one's family and community during and post-incarceration, and the many ways that the conditions surrounding life sentences permanently disrupt family and community contact, connection, and closeness.

MYTH



Only a small number of federally sentenced people in Canada are serving a life sentence.

#EFRyWeek2022

REALITY



24.3% of federal sentenced people are serving life and/or indeterminate sentences.

Source: Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, 2021

#EFRyWeek2022



That number has risen consistently. In 1983, only 11.7% of the people under federal sentence had perpetual sentences. This rose to 12.1% in 1990, 18% in 1996, 19% in 2009, and 24.3% today.

This consistent rise has happened as homicide rates have declined. Canada's homicide rate was at its highest point in 1975, the year before the death penalty was abolished.

#EFRyWeek2022

We ended the week with Joey Twins and Senator Kim Pate, who discussed the ways in which life sentences perpetuate colonial violence and intergenerational harm and sought to bring attention to how systemic racism and misogyny is exacerbated by the legal system in ways that ensure the mass incarceration of Indigenous people.

We were grateful to have had the support and guidance of helper Vicky Boldo and Elder Wanda Whitebird during these public events.

A goal of Elizabeth Fry Week 2022 was to provide space for people whose voices are often left out of public discussion in the hopes of raising awareness about the persistent ways that discrimination and bias underpin the Canadian legal and prison system. We aim to work in solidarity with people serving life sentences, seek out opportunities to share power, and release harmful approaches that are rooted in paternalism. As such, interspersed with these public events were internal facilitated discussions amongst the CAEFS network. These discussions aimed at applying the knowledges gained and experiences shared during the week to our own practice.

MEMORIAL BURSARY FUND

CAEFS Memorial Bursaries are annual bursaries that support women and gender-diverse people who are or have been incarcerated in reaching their educational and employment goals. Each bursary is \$750, and the number of bursaries distributed is based on the availability of funds. Past bursary recipients have used bursary to fund entrepreneurial projects, buy school supplies, or subsidize the cost of post-secondary courses, and more.

Applications are evaluated based on whether there is a clearly stated goal and a plan to achieve that goal. It will also take into consideration if the applicant has faced or is facing barriers in achieving their goal that this bursary might help to overcome. We encourage applicants to list other ways that CAEFS or a local Elizabeth Fry Society might help you in achieving their goal, but those questions will not be used to evaluate the application.

In 2022 – 2023, CAEFS distributed 15 bursaries to people across Canada.



Tara De Souza

ADVOCACY

Legal Work

Public Inquest into the Death of Delilah Blair

CAEFS and the Council of Elizabeth Fry Societies of Ontario (CEFSO) had standing in the inquest into the death of Delilah Blair. Blair was a 30-year-old Indigenous woman who died while in custody at the Southwest Detention Centre (SWDC). On June 30th, 2022, jurors came to a decision and made 38 recommendations in the inquest into the death of Delilah Blair. The jury determined that Blair died by suicide, however her family is certain that her death was an accident. What is clear is that Blair's death was a preventable tragedy.

The crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls is inextricably linked to the ways in which the state continues to disproportionately punish and incarcerate Indigenous women and girls. Blair's death makes the connection between these crises heartbreakingly clear and requires action on the part of all levels of government.

Recommendations were put forward by Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) and the Council of Elizabeth Fry Societies of Ontario (CEFSO). CAEFS and CEFSO welcomed some of the recommendations made by the jury and call for more systemic changes related to solitary confinement, preventative resources, and the disproportionate incarceration of Indigenous people, while focusing on the ways in which incarceration harms overall. CAEFS full response can be found [on our website](#).

Human Rights Case: Conditions of Confinement for People in Prisons Designated for Women

In 2010 CAEFS filed a Human Rights Case on behalf of all federally sentenced women with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. Information from our years of advocacy and monitoring conditions of confinement will be used as evidence in this case.

Work on this is ongoing.

SUBMISSIONS, BRIEFS, AND REPORTS

October 2022: Summary Submission to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights on Bill C-5, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act

May 2023: The Failure of Creating Choices

February 2023: Submissions by the Council of Elizabeth Fry Societies of Ontario (CEFSO) and The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) for the consideration of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy Regarding Bail Reform and Fundamental Rights: Why Evidence-Based Responses are Needed.

CONSULTATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS TO GOVERNMENT

- **May 2022:** Presentation to Senate Finance Committee on Dry Cells
- **May 2022:** Presentation to House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights for Bill C-5

- **June 2022:** Presentation to House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights on the government's obligations to the victims of crime
- **September 2022:** Presentation to the Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs on Bill C-5, An Act to Amend the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act
- **November 2022:** Presentation to the Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs on Bill S-205, An Act to Amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to another Act (interim release and domestic violence recognizance orders)
- **February 2023:** Presentation to the NDP Women's Caucus - Joint budget submissions with 35 other women and gender equity organizations
- **March 2023:** Presentation to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights on Bail Reform

The Mass Casualty Commission

On March 30, 2023, the Mass Casualty Commission released its Final Report – [Turning the Tide Together](#) – in Truro, Nova Scotia and delivered to the Governors in Council of Nova Scotia and of Canada. The work of the Commission has now concluded.

On July 20, 2022, CAEFS' participated in Roundtable 2: Police and institutional understanding and responses to sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence.

This roundtable addressed the following core themes:

- The barriers to effective police and other institutional responses to sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence

- The cultural aspects of these barriers and how can they be addressed
- Promising and best practices in police and institutional responses (Canadian and international)

ASSOCIATIONS, COALITIONS, AND COMMITTEES

National Associations Active in Criminal Justice

As a member of the [National Associations Active in Criminal Justice](#), CAEFS works with other members to enhance the capacity of member organizations to contribute to a humane, fair, equitable and effective justice system. Emilie Coyle, CAEFS executive director, is the vice president of the board of the NAACJ.

Canadian Bar Association

CAEFS' executive director is a member of the [Canadian Bar Association \(CBA\)](#), where we collaborate with others in the legal sector on issues related to prison law, criminal law, and other areas of law that impact the work of CAEFS.

Canadian Prison Law Association

The [Canadian Prison Law Association](#) provides a forum for lawyers and others who work on behalf of incarcerated people, and who seek to protect and promote the constitutional rights, interests and privileges of incarcerated people in Canada and around the world. CAEFS' executive director is an active member of the association.

Fresh Start Coalition

CAEFS, along with over 85 organizations and individuals are advocating for a transition from the current onerous and time-consuming record suspension application process to a spent record regime. A spent regime would automatically seal a person's criminal record and allow them to move on with their lives. The coalition is engaged in lobbying government and bringing attention to this important and transformative change that would benefit thousands of people across the country. You can learn more about the coalition's work on [their website](#).

The Chanterelle Alliance

The **Chanterelle Alliance** for Feminist Law Reform was established in 2022, with funding from Women and Gender Equality Canada by the National Association of Women and the Law and Luke's Place, to help coordinate feminist organizations in advancing a robust, proactive feminist law reform agenda in Canada. Knowing that we are stronger together, The Chanterelle Alliance will foster new collaborations, allowing us to share resources, coordinate our demands and amplify our collective and individual work nationwide to build a safer, more just world for all women, trans, two-spirit and gender diverse people.

Shockproofing Communities Summit for The Canadian Women's Foundation Advisory Committee

The Canadian Women's Foundation and Women's Shelters Canada is pleased to present the **Shockproofing Communities National Summit**, a national summit for gender justice and gender-based violence organizations and leaders, taking place March 27-30, 2023. This interactive, peer-led event includes a Youth

Summit Day, a two-day Summit with in-person and virtual activities, and a NAP on the Hill Day to discuss the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence.

Understanding Trans Inclusion in Feminist Movements – Steering Committee for the Trans Inclusion in Feminism Project

CAEFS planned and attended a series of workshops and collaborative sessions intended to achieve the following objectives:

- Build our capacity to be more meaningfully trans inclusive, both in terms of who we advocate for, and in terms of our internal structures;
- Acknowledge the history of trans exclusion in historically women's organization, repair and rebuild relationships with trans communities;
- Strengthen and ultimately broaden our coalition of historically women's organization to share blueprints and lessons learnt on trans inclusion; and
- Challenge transmisogyny, transphobia, and cissexism in feminist spaces.



REGIONAL ADVOCACY

Upholding and Redressing the Human and Legal Rights of Women and Gender Diverse People Under Federal Sentence in Canada

CAEFS trained Regional Advocates (RA) work in teams across the country to monitor the conditions of confinement in federal penitentiaries designated for women in Canada. In addition to documenting the conditions of confinement, our model centers a relational approach to working with federally incarcerated women and gender diverse people, as well as people on parole. It is designed to promote agency and education, encouraging cultures where people have strong knowledges and tools to utilize laws, policy and redress processes to uphold and redress their human and legal rights.

Monthly advocacy visits in institutions

Each month, RA teams go into the penitentiaries in their region to observe the conditions of confinement. During advocacy visits, our teams work directly with incarcerated people to document the legal, civic, and human rights issues that they experience, and to collaboratively develop solutions by utilizing existing redress mechanisms, both internal to the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC), such as the use of the CSC's complaint and grievance processes, as well as external redress mechanisms, such as constitutional challenges. CAEFS advocacy model builds relational solidarity with people in prisons, providing resources and support for individuals to navigate redress processes, and maintaining strong relationships and ongoing training opportunities for the incarcerated counter position to the regional advocate-peer advocates. Peer advocates are actively

incarcerated individuals who are trained by CAEFS and who work with RA's to accomplish important advocacy work inside prisons.

Advocacy phone lines

During the pandemic, CAEFS expanded the use of toll-free advocacy telephone lines to increase access and communication. While in person visits have resumed nationally, CAEFS continues to maintain 5 phone lines, which people in any of the penitentiaries designated for women can access, to communicate directly with an advocate and receive advice between monthly site visits. Peer advocates and regional advocates also maintain weekly or bi-weekly calls through our advocacy phone lines.

CAEFS Advocacy Phone Lines

Pacific/Northern Regional Advocacy Line
Prairies Regional Advocacy Line
Ontario Regional Advocacy Line
Atlantic Regional Advocacy Line
CAEFS National Line

Monthly dialog with senior management in penitentiaries designated for women

At the end of each monthly in-person advocacy visit, the teams meet with the penitentiary's warden (and often other senior managers) and summarize the issues that were discussed with them. This includes phone line issues that were reported over the month. The process of maintaining dialog provides an anonymous channel for people in prison to bring issues of conditions of confinement forward, as there is a strong power imbalance between people in prison and prison staff. This process also provides opportunities for CAEFS to practice non-carceral approaches to ground level resolution of issues.

Monthly advocacy letters

After advocates meet with wardens/senior management in the penitentiaries, advocates write monthly advocacy letters. The letters serve to build an evidentiary record of the conditions of confinement in penitentiaries designated for women. Each letter summarizes issues that were reported, the discussion between advocates and prison management, then provides relevant law and policy, and outlines CAEFS position and recommendations for solutions for each reported issue. Letters are sent to the prison wardens and various stakeholders. CAEFS advocacy letters provide real-time information about human rights and legal violations occurring on the ground in Canadian prisons designated for women to stakeholders and change-makers who can work to address and redress the gross injustices that

continue to define federal incarceration for women and gender diverse people.

Internally, CAEFS indexes the issues reported in monthly advocacy letters, coding them within CAEFS' regional advocacy letter database. This process enables us to understand and track issues and systemic trends over time. CAEFS continues to partner with Pro Bono Students Canada to support the coding and indexing of letters.

CAEFS Regional Advocacy approach is guided by using existing redress mechanisms to uphold penal policy and federal legislation. Canada's overarching penal legislation, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, for example, sets the mandate and purpose of the penitentiary system itself. Section 4 is of particular importance to our work (figured below):

Principles that guide Service

4 The principles that guide the Service in achieving the purpose referred to in section 3 are as follows:

- (a)** the sentence is carried out having regard to all relevant available information, including the stated reasons and recommendations of the sentencing judge, the nature and gravity of the offence, the degree of responsibility of the offender, information from the trial or sentencing process, the release policies of and comments from the Parole Board of Canada and information obtained from victims, offenders and other components of the criminal justice system;
- (b)** the Service enhances its effectiveness and openness through the timely exchange of relevant information with victims, offenders and other components of the criminal justice system and through communication about its correctional policies and programs to victims, offenders and the public;
- (c)** the Service uses the least restrictive measures consistent with the protection of society, staff members and offenders,
- (c.1)** the Service considers alternatives to custody in a penitentiary, including the alternatives referred to in sections 75 and 81;

(c.2) the Service ensures the effective delivery of programs to offenders, including correctional, educational, vocational training and volunteer programs, with a view to improving access to alternatives to custody in a penitentiary and to promoting rehabilitation;

(d) offenders retain the rights of all members of society except those that are, as a consequence of the sentence, lawfully and necessarily removed or restricted;

(e) the Service facilitates the involvement of members of the public in matters relating to the operations of the Service;

(f) correctional decisions are made in a forthright and fair manner, with access by the offender to an effective grievance procedure;

(g) correctional policies, programs and practices respect gender, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic differences, sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, and are responsive to the special needs of women, Indigenous persons, visible minorities, persons requiring mental health care and other groups;

2022-2023 STATUS OF THE CONDITIONS OF CONFINEMENT IN PENITENTIARIES DESIGNATED FOR WOMEN

The following pressing issues represent key issues and systemic trends that have been reported to and/or observed by CAEFS during advocacy visits in the 2022-2023 fiscal year. This list is not exhaustive, but constitutes the issues reported in highest volume, and issues which demonstrate the most clear violations of law and policy.

- Lack of access to meaningful reintegration preparation
- Crisis of Mass incarceration of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people
- Exposure to extreme temperatures
- Lack of access to family
- Fear and lack of understanding of CSC's complaint and grievance process

SNAPSHOT OF ISSUES WITHIN SYSTEMIC TRENDS

Lack of Access to Meaningful Reintegration Preparation

Lasting impacts of pandemic restrictions have worsened already large deficits in penitentiary environments related to the provision of programs and services that support the community re-entry process. Specifically, there continues to be very limited access to vocational and educational programs in custody, and very few escorted temporary absence and work release opportunities which could facilitate educational and vocational development in the community. In addition, the CSC maintains punitive mental health services, and does not

conduct its custodial decision making within a trauma informed framework. As the majority of incarcerated women and gender diverse people in Canada have experienced significant trauma in their lives, including physical and sexual abuse, pre-incarceration, and as incarceration worsens existing trauma and is in and of itself, a traumatizing experience, the lack of trauma-informed care within the prison system constitutes a key issue, and leads to tragic outcomes, such as higher rates of self-harm and suicide. Not only do these practices violate the Canadian legislative framework regulating prisons designated for women, but it works against international protocol such as the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules).

Crisis of Mass Incarceration of Indigenous Women and Gender-Diverse People

As 50% of federally incarcerated women and gender diverse people in Canada are Indigenous overall, with much higher concentrations in certain penitentiaries, their overrepresentation demonstrates a clear violation of human rights and underscores that systemic discrimination continues to be rampant within and across Canada's carceral milieu. CAEFS continues to receive high instances of adverse reports from federally incarcerated Indigenous people, from higher security classifications, to increased admissions into structured interventions units, to more instances of institutional disciplinary charges and high rates of involuntary transfers which fractures access to community and family. For many Indigenous women and gender diverse people who gain conditional release in the form of parole or statutory release, restrictive parole conditions and community fracturing lead Indigenous women and gender-

diverse people into geographic isolation from their communities. Manifestations of untreated addiction and trauma are responded to as violations of parole conditions, leading people back into custody, perpetuating cycles of criminalization and intergenerational harms.

Lack of Access to Family

Lack of access to family and community is an incredibly harmful unintended consequence of incarceration that creates devastating outcomes for individuals who experience incarceration, for their families and communities, and for the general public. While there are a number of programs, practices and legal protections that are meant to ensure that incarceration does not break apart families, practices in penitentiaries for women create extreme barriers to maintaining family contact. The following selected issues do not constitute a comprehensive list, but represent key practices that serve to fracture incarcerated women and gender diverse people from their loved ones.

Parent-Child Separation

For incarcerated mothers and parents, separation from their children can have long-lasting negative impacts on both the mothers and their children, leading to intergenerational impacts of incarceration. The best interests of the child must be a paramount consideration in all decisions concerning incarcerated mothers, in line with the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for women and gender diverse people. However, in the 2022-2023 year CAEFS received elevated reports of barriers to the program nationally, many of which have been attributed to penitentiary environments that are over-crowded, and lack of staff support and institutional capacities to implement mother-child programs effectively.

(Involuntary) Transfers: Especially from the Prairies Region, which is represented by people who become federally incarcerated from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, transfer to other regions is a very common experience for federally sentenced women and gender diverse people, and especially so for those who are also Indigenous. In many instances, transfers are classified as involuntary and are used by the CSC as a population management strategy. In many more instances however, the transfers are classified as voluntary, but are coercively imposed and incentivized. Most transfers bring individuals into new regions where they have little, if any, community support and/or access to their family. This is a devastating practice that works against the Creating Choices philosophy and leads to elevated re-incarceration rates, as people are released into new communities.

Lack of access Private Family Visit (PFV) Units

Private family visits allow for approved family and community members to stay for between 24 and 74 hours with incarcerated women and gender diverse people. Additionally, when the units were not being used for a family visit, incarcerated individuals could request use of the units for 'solo time', as the penitentiary environment is hectic, instable, and lacking in privacy, and the units are designed to provide comfort and privacy by mimicking household environments. During the pandemic, private family visiting units nationally were repurposed as isolation units, a practice which continued throughout the 2022-2023 year. In addition, high rates of transfers and complicated visitor approval processes serve as barriers for people to access the program, leading to very limited access to this essential program.

SPOTLIGHT 2022-2023: BUILDING CAPACITY IN CAEFS REGIONAL ADVOCACY

CAEFS continues capacity deepening efforts within our advocacy program to prioritize the wellness and sustainability of our advocacy teams, and to expand the program's ability to bring systemic resolution to pressing issues impacting criminalized women and gender diverse people, including:

- **Developing a model that centers advocate wellness and sustainability:** CAEFS Regional Advocacy program has traditionally been maintained through the amazing volunteer efforts of dedicated members of our communities and wider Elizabeth Fry network. To foster deeper support and sustainability within these dedicated teams, during the 2022-2023 fiscal, CAEFS secured funding to introduce dedicated staffing to support and coordinate each regional team, with consistent training and support provided by CAEFS National Office, beginning in the 2023-2024 fiscal year.
- **Enhancing our digital infrastructure:** Digital hubs for each regional team were developed, making it easier for advocates to store and locate important resources and documents, and making collaboration more accessible and effective.

- **Prioritizing the agency, consent, and education of incarcerated women and gender diverse people:** CAEFS updated our advocacy consent processes to emphasize education about informed consent. We also created a number of professional development workshops, trainings, and resources for advocates—in prison and in the community—to expand their expertise.
- **Raising network and community awareness:** CAEFS leadership team participated in a number of public education activities to increase network and community understanding of the regional advocacy model, and to raise awareness about the pressing issues impacting criminalized women and gender diverse people in Canada.

We thank CAEFS Regional Advocates for the tremendous work that they continue to do.



CAEFS TRANSFORMATIVE VOICE AND SYSTEMS CHANGE COMMITTEE

CAEFS is pleased to announce our Transformative Voice and Systems Change Committee (TVSC), which convened in June 2022, and brings a together a remarkable group of 9 individuals who have demonstrated exceptional dedication and commitment to advocating alongside and for criminalized communities in Canada. Members of the TVSC committee have all experienced incarceration and gone on to demonstrate outstanding community involvement, and represent diverse positionalities, experiences, and geographies.

The team works together through bi-weekly virtual meetings to develop solution and action-oriented approaches to addressing policies and practices in social systems that perpetuate oppression, harm, and criminalization.

Transformative Voice and Systems Change Members

Lorraine Pinnock
Rachel Fayter
Cathee Tkachuk
Danielle Merasty
Andrew Roeske
Jesse Belanger
Michèle N’Kansah
Patricia Whyte
Anastasia Samms
Nyki Kish

Each member of the Transformative Voice and Systems Change Committee is an inspiring example of resilience, compassion, and leadership. Their journey from incarceration to becoming dedicated community leaders is, in and of itself, a testament to their advocacy commitments. Despite facing adversity, members use their experiences and voices to uplift others and create a more equitable and just society.

In the 2022-2023 year, members routinely provided their expertise to inform CAEFS reports, public campaigns, and practices.

Additionally, building upon existing evidence and their expert knowledges, they identified four social systems which contribute to the ongoing and needless criminalization of many people in Canada, toward the goal of transforming these systems. The committee refers to the following areas as “Pillars for Change”:

- Housing and Re-entry Post Incarceration
- The Media
- Research/Employment
- The Law

The committee’s overarching goal is to identify key issues within each Pillar for Change, and to develop systems level actions and responses to transform them. This year, they worked substantively on identifying key issues and solutions related to housing and re-entry, as well as the media. Here is a preview of what they have been working on so far!

Housing and Re-entry into Community Post Incarceration:

- **Creating dialog with property management companies and advocating for changes to housing applications:**

Criminal record checks are a harmful practice that pose significant barriers to safe and adequate housing post incarceration. The committee sampled both large and medium size property management companies nationally to identify where record checks are being imposed, and developed processes and incentives to educate property management companies about why removing record checks improves public safety. Proposed next steps on this issue to be followed in the next 6 months.

- **Awareness raising about the impact of incarceration and release processes on criminalized people:**

The committee collaboratively developed a resource to provide to frontline workers in Community Residential Facilities (halfway houses) that informs about the impacts of carceral processes on criminalized individuals. The resource draws on experiential knowledges and intends to teach what textbooks seldom adequately capture- how prison and CRF practices and policies actually impact people's wellness and outcomes. This important resource is set to be released early in the 2023-2024 fiscal year.

Media Engagement and Education

- **Encouraging policy change in dominant media:** The committee is developing a coalition of academics, advocates, and media professionals to foster policy changes in media organizations that can lead to more accurate and balanced portrayals of judicial and penal processes, and enhance public understanding of the complexities surrounding crime, criminalization, and incarceration. The coalition will advance “the right to be forgotten” and work to encourage media organizations to implement processes for articles to be removed from the internet.
- **Reducing Sensationalism:** The committee is raising awareness about the harmful social outcomes that result from sensationalized reporting and is working to encourage journalists and media professionals to focus on in-depth reporting that sheds light on systemic issues within the justice system and helps the general public to understand issues in criminalization.
- **Broadening the narrative:** The committee advocates that there is a host of positive news stories that are news-worthy and can assist in reducing fear and misinformation about people who have been criminalized in Canada and are developing outputs to support more positive reporting in Canada.

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS

Thank you to all of the individuals who have supported the development of this committee, and of course, to each member for all the tremendous work that you do!

Look for updates about the TVSC committee and the work they are doing at caefs.ca



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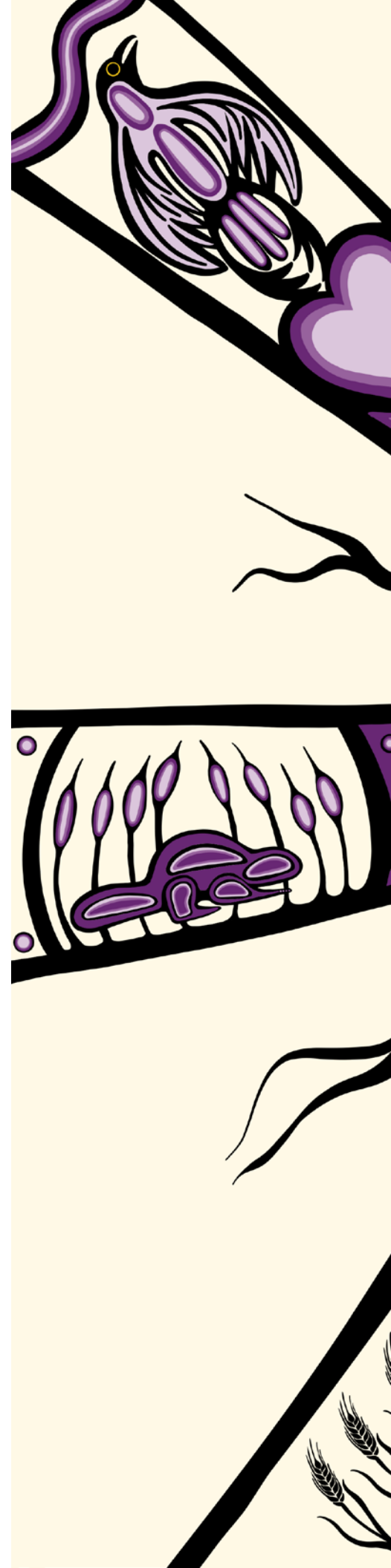
Women and Gender
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité
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C. Jameso ☆ '22



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