

THE INSIDERS COOP

Produced by the participants of the John Howard Society literacy program:
The best of prison literacy and art, created by inmates for inmates

Summer 2011



At the 2010 Prisoners' Justice Day March, a drummer carries a sign bearing the names of women who have died in the prison system. The Elizabeth Fry Society organizes this march to draw attention to the violence, suffering and inequality that prisoners face. For more details about Prisoners' Justice Day, see page 8.

LIVING CASUALTY

Systematically it seems the system's mad at me
A neechie in jail — the government's prison fantasy
Exterminate a culture, the government's vision baffles me
This is actually a true story; I'm a living casualty
Residential schools owned my mother
I ain't spitten' casually
There's terror stories on the reservation-hidden
gravel streets
I wanna open up and all ya'll to listen drastically
How about the native women,
they're all gone missing magically
And the kids up north with no playground
has them sniffing gasoline
This is written practically
for those suffering living savagely
The Britain Majesty is no help so I guess
we'll live in tragedy
The government apologizes to only start fixing gradually
I'm assisting manually the voice of
this written masterpiece
But who's going to listen
while I'm sitting on prison salary
To take this serious to start a mission
for the missing battle piece
I was placed systematically on the hidden gravel streets
to become a living casualty.

Monty AKA Bad Conscience



THE JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY
OF MANITOBA, INC.

FROM THE EDITOR



Greetings, readers! Thanks, as always, for checking out the *Scoop*.

With Prisoners' Justice Day fast approaching, this issue focuses on injustice in the prison system and in the legal system. Read on to learn more about Prisoners' Justice Day and to read one JHS literacy student's research on the elimination of the Faint Hope Clause.

The John Howard Society will be hosting a breakfast to raise funds in support of the work we do in Manitoba jails and prisons. This will take place on Friday, August 12th, two days after Prisoners' Justice Day. Our clients are always welcome, so if you expect to be living in the community in mid-August, contact us for more information and free tickets.

As you enjoy this issue of the Inside Scoop, don't turn too quickly past page 11, where you'll find an entry form for JHS's third annual "Speaking Out From the Inside" Poetry Contest.

We welcome anyone who is presently in jail or who has been in jail in the past year to submit one poem, one page or less, for a chance to win gift certificates from McNally Robinson book store.

We will have a special panel of judges standing by to pick the winners. One of this year's judges will be Jake MacDonald, a local author who has written ten books, including the award-winning *Juliana and the Medicine Fish* and the backwoods memoir *Houseboat Chronicles*. Another will be Duncan Mercredi a Cree/Metis poet, writer and storyteller

who originally hails from Grand Rapids, MB. Finally, we have members of Segweh, a local funk/rock band who have won several Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards, among other various honours.

You can send your entries to:

The Inside Scoop
583 Ellice Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3B 1Z7

Or, if you're in WRC, call Jacquie Nicholson, literacy coordinator, and I'll come and pick it up.

Good luck, and happy writing!

Jacquie Nicholson
Literacy Coordinator, JHS

GETTING BYE

I sit here every day wondering
How will we get bye.
A lot of ideas, still wondering
How will we get bye.
I sit and think, but what I think
It is troubling me.
Each day passes and still the need
To get bye.
My friend, my brother, like no one other
We make a plan,
to do what's needed to get bye.
But with all the thinking, makes me wonder
Why did we ever make a plan.
Now I sit here in my cell, hoping, praying
For someone who will help me get bye.

Rita Hogarth

Hey Dads, Want to Read to Your Kids From Jail?

The John Howard Society has a storybooks-on-tape program, where fathers in Remand Centre can record themselves reading a story, and send the recording and book to their child (or niece or nephew, or little brother or sister...).

The program is free and open to everyone. Contact Jacquie Nicholson at 775-1514 ext. 303, or write "Get the Story Out" Program" on a green request form and send it to John Howard Society. (For female readers, Elizabeth Fry Society offers a similar program. Contact them at 589-7335).

POETRY

BELIEVE

To my peers, I am tough,
it's what I have to put as a front,
But once alone my eyes quickly fill with tears.
I don't understand when my family says
everything is going to be okay,
When all I think is it's too late.
If I want to walk a positive life, I must first seek
Forgiveness, I have found but cannot grasp.
I forgive those who do not forgive me.
I will try in my mightiest power to make right
For the victims I have created.
For those who only focus on the piece of darkness
That forms in my heart, unaware of the goodness
I so often share. Sadness falls upon my face.
Reading this think and believe that I, Tray, can
change.
Sorry for I am a human that is not perfect.
I admit I've made many great mistakes that I must
Live with, knowing they won't ever fade.
I am in search of forgiveness and one last change.
Even if it means it's to my grave, until such
Time I will be brave and keep moving on.
If you don't understand what I'm trying to say,
I am sorry, I hope and wish you have a nice day.

Traper Cook



ACH'N

As I lay here wondering
if your even think'n of me
it's been so long since we touch'd
I need you tight
as I'm ach'n for your touch
I curl up on my mat
hold'n my pillow tight
want'n your kiss's
need'd your hugs
ach'n for love
I still can't get it pass'd my mind
whispers start to come
say'n not much more longer
That day will come

R-Judyid

REAL LOVE

I see you clearly when it's pouring,
Nothin' else matters,
It's just you that I see.
Rain washes away all the problems we're havin.
When things let up it's like I am seein you
for the first time
I saw you for who you are
As the rain starts rushin down on us
I think of why and how I fell for you
What brought us together like the rain flows together
After it falls from the sky.
As it starts comin down harder, it reminds me of
That first smile you gave me that made my heart
skip a beat.
When you pull me tight against your soak and wet
body,
Our lips find our way to one another,
Our eyes lock as our tongues get tangled,
Time stands still, nothing matters,
Not a care about anything but what's between
you and me
Like on the day we say our I do's and I love you's.

Willis Van Den Bosch

GRANDMOTHER

Dedicated to my granny, rest in paradise
Amy Emma Beardy 1995-2010

Yesterday, I met her, my Grandmother,
she was singing Sunday evening
And her eyes were shining; she remembered me.
Yesterday, I learned how to skin a rabbit
and cut the moose, she taught me how.
Yesterday, we would all sit around with granny
and pray with her, listen
To the wonderful words that she had to say to
the great creator.
Yesterday my cousin saw her in the hospital still
smiling and laughing
and I felt bad.
Today she is gone and I am alone.
Today I remember I had made a promise I would
finish school for her.
For my future children's sake and their children,
we will go on,
Smiling, living and loving.

Revonne Miles AKA Ray-Ray #15



BABY I GOT YOU

I've been incarcerated since back then
Chillen in my cell, got told tryna get bail
These bars can't keep us apart
Yo my #1 man in my Heart.
I've been lost since 1987
I truly believe you got sent from Heaven
Met ya 7 months ago
Realizing how much I love ya so
I'm happy God sent you in my lil life
Babe I know one day I'll be your wifey
When I hear yo voice truly I made the right
choice.
Life's so good now coz
your in it
So babe don't kill it,
Love ya boo!

Dedicated 2 my Native G
Mandy H AKA Angelcakez

PAIN

Pain is a gunshot or,
Is it a cut on the arm
Or is it your girlfriend saying
That she can't deal with it all by herself
No, that is not pain.

Pain is a knife stabbed in your back
Or is it a punch to the face
It's when the doctor say your
Best friend passed away
No, that is still not pain.

Pain, is it when you get jumped by a gang
Or is it a car accident that puts you in a wheel-
chair
It is a drive-by shooting
No, but we are getting closer
To the pain

O.K., here is the pain that hurts US
It is when a judge says 18 months
Or your lawyer saying no bail.

O.K., how for pain that hurts on the inside
It is when your kids write a letter saying
Love you daddy/mommy, miss you,
When are you coming home?

Now that is pain that can be seen and felt,
No matter how big you are, or strong you may be
Your kids can make you cry by just saying love
you daddy/mommy
Now, that is pain

Kevin Bunn



STUDENT ART



Artwork by SKETCH

Faint Hope to No Hope

By Donald Richard

Most of us have a date with freedom at some point in the future. Some sooner, some later, and some that aren't guaranteed any freedom at all.

The Faint Hope Clause (745.6 of the Criminal Code of Canada) offers the hope of parole to those serving a life sentence (first or second degree murder). Under this legislation, early parole could be sought after serving a minimum of 15 years.

Faint Hope was created in 1976 when capital punishment (the death penalty) was abolished in Canada. It offered incentive to rehabilitate and behave by giving inmates hope of getting out. By no means was this a get-out-of-jail-free card, though. There was a rigid application process.

The first step was to make an application to a judge who would determine if there was a likely chance of a jury agreeing to the release. Secondly, the applicant had to convince a panel or jury of 12, who must be unanimous in their decision. Only then could the petitioner approach the Parole Board of Canada, who held the final say. Between 1987 and 2006, 97 people were granted early parole, of a possible 1,500 eligible people.

The Conservative government passed Bill S-6 in March of 2011, which abolished or repealed the Faint Hope Clause.

In my opinion, they've made a big mistake by letting politics control the justice system. This is their attempt to look "tough on crime" without actually addressing the issues.

These are the same people who got rid of 2-for-1 credit for pretrial custody, which is now costing taxpayers billions. The public is fed the line "innocent until proven guilty", yet many spend months and years in custody without their day in

court. What about bail? Sure, if you have money. But what if you consider that most people awaiting trial are poor?

I understand the public's desire to keep criminals off the streets for as long as possible, but we all need to realize that, in Canada, almost everyone who is in jail will eventually get a chance to get out.

What kind of people do we want to get out? Those offered rehabilitation programs, preventative programs, counselling and incentive measures built into sentencing are more likely to change (or want to change), ultimately lowering recidivism.

The Faint Hope Clause encouraged convicted murderers to rehabilitate themselves. It prompted them to behave, to become less violent, and it gave them hope. It lowered the risk to prison guards and staff from murderers who would otherwise have nothing to lose by unleashing violence.

So the Conservatives look good now by axing the Faint Hope and 2-for-1 credit, but in the long run the average taxpayer is no more safe and has to shoulder the huge cost of incarceration.





I Hate Big Cities

One JHS literacy student's reflections on growing up in different types of communities, and the effect they can have on childhood

By Todd McMillan



In 1981, I moved to Brandon from a small rural Manitoba town at the age of thirteen. All the crowds and the traffic were pretty scary and overwhelming to me coming from a small town. It was difficult adjusting to the new friends and bigger schools. What I learnt from this experience is that I hate big cities, because of all the bad influences, such as all the crime and the snobby attitudes, as well as the trouble I had adjusting to the bigger school system.

I love country-living. I grew up in a tiny community with a population of about fifty people. I would have to say it has been the best time of my life so far. There were very few boring days, and there was always something to do. We had a 4H Club where you learned about agriculture and animals. We each cared for a calf until she grew up. A lot of my friends lived on farms, so we would get to help out on the farm. We all knew how to drive trucks and tractors by the age of twelve or thirteen. Every Sunday, my friends and I would get two or three wagons and go bottle hunting along the highway. We usually made about ten dollars each, which was big money in the seventies. My father drove a gravel truck, so I would wait for him on the highway after school and ride around with him. I started curling with my dad and my two brothers when I was eight. My dad helped take care of the curling rink, so we got a lot of practice time. I can't remember a day without fun. In the country, there are open spaces, the fresh air, and crime is virtually non-existent.

When I moved to Brandon at thirteen, the kids' fun consisted of hanging around 7-11, getting into trouble, and smoking pot. All I found in the city were boring days and bad influences, which resulted in me getting into trouble with the law a lot until I was seventeen. I knew if I kept it up after I was eighteen I would end up in jail, so I stopped.

The school I went to kindergarten in was pretty cool. It was a one room school, there were four grades, and a total of eight students... yes eight. There were two students in each grade – it was awesome. The principal was still asking my mom about me 35 years later, when she was well into her 80s. We had to catch the school bus and travel ten miles to school in a neighbouring town that was large enough to have its own school.

After moving to Brandon, I went to Betty Gibson School, which is an open air school. The only thing that separated classes was book shelves or tables. I had a lot of trouble with my grades there; I can't concentrate when there are distractions around, and there were a lot at school. My grades dropped a lot until I got into junior high school. There was definitely a big difference from small town schools to the big city schools.

The people are very different also. In small towns everyone knows each other, so you always say "hello" even if you don't know them. I remember walking downtown in the city and if you said "hello" they looked at you like you wanted their wallet or something. Our door at home was never locked. If your neighbour needed to borrow something, they went in, took it, and told you later. In the city, you have dead bolts, chains, cameras, and you still get robbed. I can always tell a country person by talking to them. Country people are laid back like they have no worries. City people are always in a hurry, always stressed out, and always worried about one thing or another.

There are good and bad points about living in both places. The good far outweigh the bad in the country, and the bad far outweigh the good in city-living. This, of course, is one man's opinion, and this is why this one man wishes he was a little boy living in small town Manitoba again.

Prisoners' Justice Day: August 10, 2011

“The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons.”
-- Fyodor Dostoyevsky

Every year on August 10, inmates take a day to remember those who have died behind prison walls. Some stop working or go on hunger strike as a way to honour the dead or to bring attention to the conditions in jails and prisons that still need to be changed.

Prisoners' Justice Day began in 1974 with the death of an inmate in Millhaven Institution, a maximum security prison in Bath, Ontario. Edward Nalon was being punished for refusing to work, had served 30 days in solitary confinement and was being kept in segregation. On August 10, he slashed his wrists and bled to death. Eddie had called for help by pressing the panic button in his cell, and other prisoners pressed theirs, but they later learned these had been deactivated by the guards.

The year after Eddie's death, prisoners at Millhaven refused to eat or work, even though they knew it would mean being sentenced to solitary confinement. They also held a memorial service.

In 1976 another prisoner, Robert Landers, died on that same unit. He was in segregation for trying to organize a prisoners' strike, and like Eddie his cries for help were not heard because the call buttons in the cells hadn't been repaired. Robert died of a heart attack, ap-

parently with a nurse standing not far away. He wasn't found until the next morning.

In the years since the first Prisoners' Justice Day, inmate activists have fought hard to win (or keep) their human rights. In 2002, inmates won the right to vote in federal elections. In December of 2010, inmates at several prisons in Georgia organized the largest prisoners' strike in U.S. history. For seven days they refused to work, demanding fairer pay, better nutrition, and access to education. In March of 2011 inmates in B.C.'s Mountain Institution announced they were at work on organizing the first prison labour union in Canada.

There are many issues to be concerned or angry about in prisons. On Prisoners' Justice Day, prisoners and their allies on the outside remember that:

- People have died in Canadian prisons, and are still dying today.
- Aboriginal people are incarcerated at very high rates in Canada. Aboriginal people make up 2.7% of Canada's general population, but 17.3% of its prison population.
- Many people do not get adequate medical care while in jail or prison.
- People still experience violence while incarcerated, by staff and other inmates.

- Many women are in prison for defending themselves against abusive partners.

- Many people are in prison because of serious mental health issues that could be managed some other way.

- Literacy rates are lower in correctional institutions than on the outside, but still inmates have very little access to education.



The John Howard Society is having a fundraising breakfast in honour of Prisoners' Justice Day on August 12, 2011.

Inside Scoop readers living in the community can get more details (and free tickets) by calling 775-1514.

Elizabeth Fry is also holding a march on August 10, leaving 544 Selkirk Ave at 11:00am.

Call them at 589-7335 for details.

A POEM ABOUT THE DEVIL'S DRUG 'N THE ONE I TRULY LOVED

I hate U wit a passion, it's so sad I met U
in Murda Mansion
Where evil lurks N crackheads "fien", I didn't
know better I was just a "teen"
I never noticed then, but I now realize I was
hooked to "drugs"
Going on missions or "hustling" to make money
N getting luv from "Thugs"
To me that's what it was all about
Been through so many fucked up situations
felt so many different feelings N emotions
Everyday I reminisce about all the crazy shit
Me N him would do juss for another hit
I can't believe he just up N left me
without even saying "I love you," Bye
Probably too busy smoking that shit getting high!
Every night I lay in my cell thinking
about how U took
The one I truly loved far far away
I wish he would just phone N lemme know you're
"OK," doing fine
I still "love you" N care, that's still "true"
I can only hope someday you'll come to be strong
like I have for this long
I ain't gonna lie, but I still crave the rush and high
Coming to jail was a "good thing" for me at least
I'm away from that and sober
I hope that shit stays away and just lets me be!
I really didn't wanna do no more crime
I kept trying N trying
Saying to myself, I messed up again
Getting closer to being free,
I ain't ever going back to that shit. "Fuck that!"
I've been too strong for too long N got
too much PRIDE!

Treena Beaulieu AKA Queen.B



Artwork by Beezee

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

Dear Inside Scoop, this is my inside loot
The W.P.S. dishes out dummy charges
to keep me locked up,
It's "poop".
Aboriginal in appearance I am,
Stop me, arrest me, trying to make me depressed,
And suffer more than the oppressed
Oppression, physically thrown down on the ground
With mad aggression
Racial profiling is the issue, no time to hurt,
No time for a tissue,
Where and who is the voice, to instil the choice
Of helping our people, let it be known a lot of us
are "decent,"
The opposite of evil.
Maybe the belief I carry,
There isn't no such word as "equal"
Maybe the saga continues, and this is the prequel
Who is out there,
that could help our aboriginal people,
From the injustice that is being dished out,
So dish in and listen: enough is enough.

Waylon, Siyisi First Nations voice



Artwork by SKETCH

TO PEDRO

I used to wonder why I was
never loved
But when I think of it
Feel it
It was just me
Not wanting
To be loved
All my young adult years
I tried to find
Someone to tame
Not knowing it was me
Who needed to be tamed
When I think of us
I get all silly
Cause I know
I found love
I only hope you know
My heart is always
Beating like a sacred drum
for you
I feel my heart opening up,
I don't know
If I should pull back or
push forward
I just want you to know my
heart is
Yearning for your love is
like potion that
Is my solution

Love your woman,
Crystal Dorie

UNTITLED

Sit'n in this cell
Think'n what the hell
How'd I get here
Can you hear me?
Do I still exist?
Cannot resist temptations
Therefore I am here
Can you hear me?

Maureen Wood

IN IT TO WIN

Only Heaven knowz
When your time is up on your
schedule
Reminiscing on the loss of my
innocence
Thingz have been really insane
I know I ain't changed
But I ain't the same
Countless tears over the yearz
I cried
Lost love over pride
Always kept my head held high
Sick of all the liez
Footstepz that are traceable
Walk this way you're guaranteed
to be hateful
Living day for day
Constantly trying to forget about
yesterday
Whatz in store for tomorrow?
Probably more pain and sorrow
At timez I feel like I can't hold
on any longer
But I know this will only make
me stronger
I try to forget all the bad and re-
member the good
Leave this place?
Hah, I wish I could
Always keeping my head up
because I ain't giving in
The Creator will be the one
to judge
All my sinz
So for now I'm in it to win...

Carleigh J. Lathlin



BLIND

Clouded mind with so much pain,
Watching my life flow down a drain.

Wanting to forget my messed up past,
Because all good things never last.

Looking straight but blinded by hate
Always in jail, is this my fate?

When I close my eyes, I see only red,
Too much evil stuck in my head.

Calling out names but no one will
come,
Nerves are dead and body's so numb.

I'm not the man I used to be,
Still locked in a jail, will I ever
be free?

Is God out there for me to find?
If he is I must have gone blind.

Robin Bousquet

DEADLY CONTACT

There's no sudden symptoms of loss
Smiling, walking, talking
As if to be on top of the world
Greeting to place a common meeting
place
Rushing to feel the familiar embrace
One life to live abundantly, free
Carefully tread a path unknown,
please
Believe that D.C. is alive, it breeds
With a smile on its face
One Deadly Contact is one life to
waste
I drew an illustration in case it fades
The Deadly Contact is in fact
AIDS...
So be safe.

Too Tone



3rd Annual “Speaking Out From the Inside” Poetry Contest

The John Howard Society’s *Inside Scoop* is holding its third annual poetry contest, which is open to anyone who is currently incarcerated or who has been incarcerated in the last year. Participants can submit **one poem only**, one page long or less, for a chance to win a gift certificate to local bookstore McNally Robinson. There is no entry fee! Simply fill out the form below, tear it out of the *Inside Scoop*, and send it, along with your poem, to The John Howard Society, 583 Ellice Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, R3B 1Z7, or, if you’re in WRC, write “Inside Scoop Poetry contest” on a request form and ask to see Jacquie Nicholson, JHS literacy coordinator. **The deadline for entries is August 1, 2011.**

Entry Form

Please fill out all sections of the form, or your poem may not be eligible. If you have questions you may contact Jacquie at 775-1514 ext. 303.

Full Name: _____

Are you currently in custody in a jail or prison? _____

If yes, which one? _____

If no, when were you last in custody and where? _____

If we print your poem in the *Inside Scoop* or some other publication, what name would you like to appear next to your poem? (You can use your full name, first name, a nickname, whatever you want)

Provide a phone number we can contact you at if you are no longer in custody when the contest winners have been chosen. This could be your home phone number, a cell phone number, or the phone number of a family or friend who will know how to get a hold of you.

Please sign and date below to give us permission to print your poem in the next edition of the *Inside Scoop*, which is distributed in institutions and in the community, and also appears on the JHS website. We will be printing the winning poems, and also as many of the runner-ups as we can fit!

Signature

Date

Check this box if you would like to have your poem used in other JHS publications, such as workbooks and facilitation manuals, handouts in groups, or for future fundraising projects.

RAINDANCER

By Dwayne Birchwood

To Anirniq,

It had been months since the rain had fallen on the great valley. The grassland was drying up and the buffalo had gone elsewhere to graze.

The land was dry and becoming lifeless, even the vultures were moving on. But the great valley had become home to the native people for many generations.

They hunted the buffalo that grazed the land and drank from the streams that flowed through it. Now with the grass dying and the streams drying up the tribe would have to leave their homes.

One night the children gathered around the fire to listen to the elder tell a story. He told them the story of the great Thunderbird that would fly over the land and bring the rains to replenish the valley.

A young girl named Dakota asked the elder "Grandfather why does the Thunderbird not come to us now?" The elder replied, "In time, my girl. In time." That night Dakota went to her grandfather's teepee and asked him about the Thunderbird.

The elder told Dakota about a sacred chant that would be said at

the top of the highest mountain or hill to summon the Thunderbird. Dakota said the chant to herself over and over until she remembered it by heart.

The next day after she ate breakfast the young girl packed a bag with some bannock and berries and left to go climb the highest hill in the great valley.

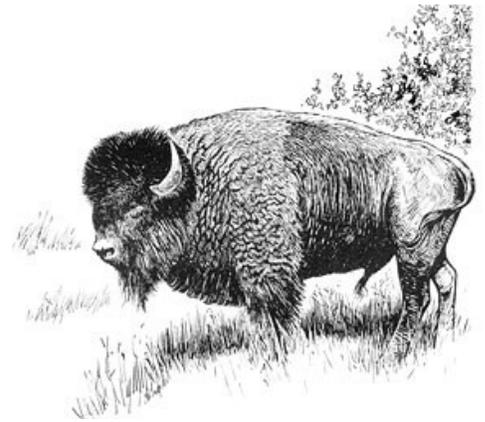
After a long hard day of climbing Dakota finally reached the top of the hill. She ate her bannock and berries then she said the magic chant her grandfather the elder had told her.

Dakota yelled the chant into the sky again and again, until a strong wind blew and a dark shadow fell over the hilltop. It was the shadow of the Thunderbird.

"Who has summoned me?" asked the mighty ancient bird. "Me, Dakota," replied the young girl. "The people of my village need rain or we will have to leave the great valley."

"Then take my feathers and dance with them, and rain will fall over the valley," said the Thunderbird. Dakota took the feathers that the Thunderbird gave her and thanked the mystical bird as it flew away.

She then returned to her tribe with the feathers. She went to her grandfather and told him what had happened.



He was happy Dakota was safe and he believed in her. The elder called out to all the people of the tribe to come and see his granddaughter dance.

Dakota placed the Thunderbird's feathers in her hair and began to dance. As the young girl danced, a strong wind blew over the land and like a miracle it began to rain.

Soon the grass would grow again and the buffalo would graze the valley once more. The tribe was saved and all would remember Dakota the rain dancer.

The Chant

Where has the rain been
Song of Thunder, Song of Wind?
Lightning flashes lightning strikes
may it rain tonight.
Clouds grey wind strong may the
valley be rained upon.

With the Thunderbirds feathers I
call upon rainy weather.

From Mom and Dad



THE JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY OF MANITOBA, INC.