

**“BRINGING THE OUTSIDE WORLD IN”:
CANADIAN PRISONERS’ CORRESPONDENCE WITH
CLAIRE CULHANE, ACTIVIST AND PENAL
ABOLITIONIST, 1976-1996**

by

Alison Rowley
Bachelor of Arts, 2002 Simon Fraser University

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APPROVAL

Name: Alison Rowley

Degree: MASTER OF ARTS

Title of Thesis: "Bringing the Outside World In": Canadian Prisoners' Correspondence with Claire Culhane, Activist and Penal Abolitionist, 1976 – 1996

Examining Committee:

Chair: Prof. Neil Boyd
Professor of Criminology

Dr. Brian Burtch
Senior Supervisor
Professor of Criminology

Dr. Elizabeth Elliott
Supervisor
Associate Professor of Criminology

Dr. Stephen Duguid
External Examiner
Professor of Humanities

Date Defended:

Nov. 25/2005



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ABSTRACT

Claire Culhane was a leading Canadian prisoners' rights activist and penal abolitionist from 1976 until her death in 1996. Over these two decades, she corresponded with over 1,000 prisoners to assist them with grievances and problems. A purposive sample of the 100 most voluminous prisoner files was undertaken which yielded 9, 235 items for this exploratory analysis. A dual-methodology was selected for study through combining a content analysis with short verbatim excerpts from the archive and interviews with faculty. The focus of the content analysis is on overt and covert violence in prisons and prisoner resistance strategies – violent and non-violent. Excerpts allow a venue for the prisoner correspondents to express the issues in their own words, to show the humanness of those incarcerated, and to exemplify the methods and advice that Culhane used in her social justice advocacy work.

DEDICATION

To the men and women who were courageous enough to ask for non-violent solutions in violent situations by writing to Claire Culhane. Thank you for sharing your hopes, dreams, and visions for a more inclusive future.

To the memory of Claire Culhane who set an example for all of us who wonder what difference one person can make in this world. Claire said:

Somewhere in the human organism there is an ear that will listen, a mind that will open, a heartbeat that will quicken, and a voice that will clamour for the conversation of the border which exalts 'business as usual' over one which honours concerns for others. And, when enough people realize this and organize themselves to act upon their convictions, it will change.

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research I have done that we can keep Claire's work alive and that the example she set can continue to influence others to protest the injustices in our society.

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ACRONYMS

CSC	Correctional Services of Canada
CJS	Criminal Justice System
CCRA	Corrections and Conditional Release Act
CAC	Citizens Advisory Committee
RFM	Research from the Margins
SHU	Special Handling Unit
PCU	Protective Custody Unit
PJD	Prisoners' Justice Day
IC	Inmate Committee
JPP	<i>Journal of Prisoners on Prisons</i>
PRG	Prisoners' Rights Group
AVP	Alternatives to Violence Project
CC	Claire Culhane
MS	Mandatory Supervision
ETA	Escorted Temporary Absence
NPB	National Parole Board
AA	Alcoholics Anonymous
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
RPC	Regional Psychiatric Centre
V&C	Visiting & Correspondence
SMU	Super Maximum Unit
CO	Correctional Officer
WCB	Workers' Compensation Board
CMO	Case Management Officer
PREAP	Prison Research Education Action Project

CHAPTER 1: CANADA'S PRISON SYSTEM: RESILIENCY IN THE FACE OF CRITICISM AND FAILURE

Everything we know about the way social control ideologies originate and function should warn us about the delusion of ever expecting a synchronization of words with deeds (Cohen, 1985, 155).

Today the Service is trying to contend with the problems of a very angry, hostile reactive public that demands 100 per cent perfection. There is no tolerance with any kind of what is perceived to be bureaucratic bungling or mistakes... We are a political organization, I am not going to apologize for that. It is run by the shareholders or the public and we have to be responsive to that, but within that is always the problem of balancing science, correctional wisdom, and sound correctional practice with what the public mood is at the time, and along with other government priorities (Warden of Matsqui Institution, see Jackson, 2002, 86).

Introduction

Prisoners are arguably the most disenfranchised group in society because they have lost their freedom and, as adults, they are often subject to regimes of surveillance and permission-seeking more closely associated with childhood or adolescence. Furthermore, there is not as distinct a social movement on behalf of prisoners as there is with racial discrimination, anti-sexism, disabilities, environmentalism and the labour movement (Young, 1990). Correctional Services of Canada (CSC), as part of the Criminal Justice System (CJS) is mandated to be responsible for all federally-sentenced offenders. In the eyes of the public the containment of dangerous individuals is a fundamental concern; however, only 6% of Canadians report being very confident in the prison system and only 3% in the parole system (Angus Reid Poll, 1997 – cited in

Roberts, 2004). The public wants to feel safe from victimization and to know that something constructive is being done about crime. Prisons are funded through taxpayers' money and the public is justified in having a general expectation of CSC that they will not jeopardize the safety of citizens by returning offenders to the community "uncorrected" or even worsened. The total expenditures of Corrections Services Canada (CSC) were \$1.5 billion in 2003-2004. It costs \$150,867 annually to incarcerate a female prisoner, \$74,431 for a minimum-security male prisoner, \$71,640 for a medium-security male prisoner and \$110,223 annually to incarcerate a male maximum-security level prisoner (CSC website, 2004). The ineffectiveness of corrections programs has been debated extensively throughout Canadian history. There is overwhelming evidence that the prison system fails to carry out its complex mandate to rehabilitate the prisoner, deter future criminal behaviour, and reintegrate prisoners into society safely upon release (Cayley, 1998; Jackson, 2002; Duguid, 2000; Hannah-Moffat, 2001, Culhane, 1991; Morris, 1995; Gaucher, 2002; DeHann, 2003; Harris, 2003; Christie, 2004). Criticism from both the politically aligned "left" and "right" is directed at the prison system. For some critics, the prison system has been very successful at wasting taxpayers' money, destroying many peoples' lives, "warehousing"¹ criminals, and deflecting attention away from its shortcomings (Culhane, 1991). Prisons have been effective at temporary incapacitation (Cayley, 1998) but questions remain about social justice and public safety after prisoners are released.

Despite decades of condemning evaluations by academics, governments, and non-government task forces and commissions exposing human rights abuses, incarceration

¹ *Warehousing* occurs when prisoners are put into prison to incapacitate them without any programs or activities to assist them with eventual re-integration back to the community.

continues to be a social defense in response to serious criminal behaviour. There are many examples of these types of inquiries. Mark MacGuigan's *Report to Parliament* (1977), a report commissioned by the government in response to several protests ("riots") in prisons across Canada, clearly stated that large-scale reform was necessary because of the crisis in the penitentiary system (MacGuigan, 1977, 2, cited in Harris, 2003, 154).

The report concluded that:

Society has spent millions of dollars over the years to create and maintain the proven failure of prisons. Incarceration has failed in its two essential purposes – correcting the offender and providing permanent protection to society. The recidivism rate of up to 80% is evidence of both (MacGuigan, 1977, cited in MacLean, 1989, 59).

In 1982 a riot in Archambault resulting in the death of three guards and two prisoners and severe mistreatment of several other prisoners was addressed in Reverend MacDonald's report. MacDonald (1983) stated,

...the allegations of harassment and intimidation, of torture by hitting, gassing and threatening; of humiliation, of obscene acts... have been largely substantiated by the first hand information provided by these prisoners....(see Culhane, 1991, 80).

In 1996 Justice Louise Arbour produced a comprehensive report on the inappropriate strip-search and subsequent segregation of women at the Prison for Women (P4W); most of these recommendations still have not been fully implemented. The resiliency of the prison system in the face of failure and continued protest is an important site for analysis (McMahon, 1992).

Prisoners' rights activists have played a crucial role in exposing inhumane conditions, wrongful incarceration, and the unjust treatment of prisoners (Jackson, 2002).

The Western world is still experiencing a crisis in punishment (Garland, 1990; Christie,

2004) and it is in crisis that we may search for alternatives to prison and look for real solutions to social problems. Critiques from convict criminologists, penal abolitionists and peacemaking criminologists will be presented in this thesis as well as alternative solutions to the retributive justice practiced in our prisons today. The empirical core of this thesis is a content analysis of prisoner correspondence with the late prisoners' rights activist Claire Culhane. Between 1976 and 1996, Culhane maintained unprecedented correspondence with approximately 1,133 prisoners and this thesis focuses on a sample of the 100 prisoners who wrote her most extensively, often to assert their rights and to protest unjust policies in prison or in society-at-large.

Resistance & Social Change: The Fight for Prisoners' Rights

The fight for prisoners' rights is a political process marked by power struggles between different groups. The development of prisoners' rights in Canada has been led by prisoners, prisoners' rights activists, concerned citizens, and some academics and researchers. It is through this collaboration between different groups with similar interests that social change is possible. Adding weight to activists' protests against prison conditions are task force reports, precedent-setting judicial rulings, and the implementation of legislation to protect the rights of prisoners such as the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982) and Parliament's passing of the federal *Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA)* in 1992. The Supreme Court of Canada (2002) ruling in *Sauvé* (CBC Archives, 2003) now guarantees all federal prisoners who are Canadian citizens the right to vote in elections. *Sauvé*, an ex-prisoner now on parole, spent 18 years fighting to have this voting right extended to prisoners. This legislation confirms

that human rights are extended to the imprisoned. Despite such social change, many issues are unsolved and abuse of power and authority remains entrenched.

Some critics have argued that prisoners have too many rights (Harris, 2003) and that the administration is unable to discipline prisoners even when they break laws while incarcerated. Harris (2003), who has championed “underdogs” such as Donald Marshall (Harris, 1986), has argued that prisoners are able to assault and harass others, and use alcohol and illicit narcotics with little or no consequences if they are caught. Local newspapers feature headlines stating “Inmates use rights to disrupt jails, guards say ‘there’s no real punishment’” (O’Brian, 2005) and many believe that prisoners should not have rights at all. Front-line workers in prison argue that they want the use of their discretion returned because their personal safety is at risk if they have to follow too many laws and protocols that protect prisoners’ rights (Harris, 2003).

Although Canadian federal prisoners have gained some rights and methods for redress that they did not have historically, the prison administration has resisted many reforms at the heart of these requests for justice. One form of resistance by administrators has been to silence those who are outspoken about human rights abuses. Prisoners and their advocates who are deemed too political are targeted for retribution (Culhane, 1979). Furthermore, prison front-line workers who voice concerns about policies or protocols are told that the administration has its hands tied (Harris, 2003). Although conditions of confinement have improved as a result of the work of prisoners’ rights activists, incarceration is still often criticized as inhumane and ineffective at preventing future criminal behaviour and even arch-critics of contemporary prisons in

Canada acknowledge that many institutions are characterized by violence, including suicide of prisoners (Harris, 2003, 98-99).

Overview of Thesis Design

This thesis draws on core work by Claire Culhane and the people she corresponded with and often visited. Claire Culhane remains one of Canada's most celebrated prisoners' rights activists and penal abolitionists. Claire took up what she described as "the best fight in town" for two decades prior to her death (Lowe, 1992, chapter 9). Between 1976 and 1996 Culhane was wholeheartedly dedicated to decreasing the pains of imprisonment for men and women across Canada and to educating the public about the injustices and futility of the prison system. Claire identified herself initially as a prison activist and later as a prison abolitionist after witnessing firsthand the negative effects of imprisonment on human beings: overseas and in Canada (Lowe, 1992, chapter 9). We know from records that Claire corresponded with 1,133 male and female prisoners nationally and internationally. This correspondence was entrusted in its entirety to Dr. Brian Burch by Claire in 1995 for the purposes of academic scholarship *and* a companion set was provided to UBC library's special collections. The primary data set comprises letters exchanged between Culhane and prisoners; newspaper clippings; reports from Correctional Services of Canada (CSC); and responses from government agencies and institutional heads. In this thesis I conduct an exploratory secondary analysis of this archival material. Secondary analysis is a term used to describe the analysis of research that was originally collected by another researcher (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), or in this case, collected by an activist.

The prisoners' correspondence offers a greater understanding into informal grievance procedures at play in this time period as well as insight into the role of prisoners' rights activists. This qualitative analysis breaks down stereotypes about prisoners and provides a venue for prisoners to speak for themselves while protecting their identities. Although it is a paradox to give "voice" while keeping identities confidential, this was a research condition imposed by Claire to protect the prisoners and part of a "minimal risk" safeguard developed to protect the humans at the heart of this research. The real-life consequences of an ideology based upon punishment of the criminalized comes out in the correspondence from prisoners. Most prisoners wrote to Claire to have their concerns heard and hopefully dealt with.

That said, I draw on this spirit of bringing forward issues in prisoners' own words and using their lived experiences to effect changes in legislation, policy and public opinion. This archive, while offering a unique glimpse of prisoners' expressed concerns and experiences, has a number of limitations: the prisoners are but a small select sample of the total number of prisoners over these two decades, and as a researcher I do not have access to corroborating materials to verify the claims. There is also very little information from the perspective of guards and senior correctional managers. By using only minor verbatim excerpts from this voluminous archive, I keep to the "insubstantial" criterion and the "fair dealing" criterion that states that these archives can be used for academic research, without risk of copyright infringement, as noted in the *Canadian Copyright Act* (Vaver, 2000; Harris, 2001; Tamaro, 2005). A more detailed account of efforts to protect privacy and copyright is outlined in chapter three. Uncovering the

reasons for corresponding and identifying the methods that Claire used as an advocate for prisoners provides a unique, exploratory contribution to criminology.

Chapter One provides the reader with an overview on historical and contemporary literature and research on the Canadian prison system in relation to the development of prisoners' rights. Emphasis is placed on the contributions of convict criminologists, penal abolitionists and peacemaking criminologists to the study of prisons and prisoners' rights.

Chapter Two focuses specifically on Claire Culhane as a penal abolitionist and prisoners' rights activist. Of key importance here are the methods that Claire employed in her work with prisoners and a discussion of how effective these methods were. She employed methods such as ensuring publicity of human rights violations in Canadian prisons, the use of law and litigation, letter-writing campaigns to officials, and direct contact with prisoners through visiting. This chapter employs a dual-methodology aimed at exploring Claire's activism. This is accomplished through combining textual information with interviews of professors who knew Claire professionally and personally to provide readers with a biographical account.

Chapter Three discusses the methodology I chose in my exploration of the prisoner correspondence and ethical dilemmas of how to conduct research on marginalized individuals or groups without exploiting or betraying them. I discuss how I protect the privacy and confidentiality of those that contributed to this archival resource. Chapter Three also discusses the problem of how to effectively combine academic understanding with activist reality, an issue which often divides the penal abolitionist movement.

The core of the fourth chapter is an exploratory content analysis of the 100 largest prisoner files. The content analysis specifically focuses upon the use of violence as a method of social control. Prisons were – and are – violent spaces and because violence permeates prison life, it is argued that much of what prisoners were writing about was the overt and covert violence that they were experiencing. Both social control and violence are defined in this chapter.

In Chapter Five I briefly discuss the limitations of this research, the challenges to the penal abolitionist movement and I provide suggestions for future research on prisons and related topics. The contribution of prison writers to understanding prison's past and present is integral to this research. In the following paragraphs I discuss the long-standing tradition of prison writing and the contributions of some of the more notorious as well as less known prison writers.

Convict Criminology: Prisoners Who Write

There is a long history of writing by prisoners that takes many varieties of form, content and intent (Davies, 1990). Writing by prisoners ranges from informal letters to outsiders for support and assistance with grievances to formal publications for the academic community. The work of the latter group has led to the development of “the new school of convict criminology” (Ross & Richards, 2003, 5). Ross & Richards (2003) define convict criminology as consisting of essays and empirical research executed and written by convicts and ex-convicts who possess a Ph.D. Convict criminologists critique literature, policies and practices in relation to prison. Prisoners and ex-prisoners hold a unique perspective on the CJS based on their personal experiences with it. Traditionally, these voices have been absent in criminological

discourse even though convict criminology is a useful vehicle in the academic debate over crime. Some former prisoners in academia however, are critical of adopting the title of “convict criminology”. They argue that by adopting the designation of “convict”, one is accepting mainstream rhetoric about “crime” and “criminals” (personal communication, Elliott, 2005).

There is also a body of literature that has similar goals which is produced by prisoners who do not necessarily hold academic credentials. It is important to educate the general public about prison conditions and to encourage prisoners to raise their social and political awareness. One way of doing this is to provide a venue for the inclusion of prisoners’ “voices” in the production of knowledge about the prison system (see Lamb, 2004; Condello, 2003). In 1988 Liz Elliott, Bob Gaucher and Howard Davidson developed the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* (JPP) with the help of prisoners’ rights activist, Claire Culhane. They noted the ironic exclusion of prisoners in criminological discourse and the importance of not speaking for prisoners (Davidson, 1991). The JPP provides a freer venue for prisoners to offer their lived experiences which sometimes matched an analysis of the “prison industry” (Gaucher, 2002). Prison writing can help to show the disjuncture between rhetoric and reality in policy evaluation of the penitentiary (Gaucher, 2002).

Prison writing acts to break down harmful stereotypes about prisoners while also providing a context for their criminality. Forcing the reader to question previously held assumptions about crime and criminals, writing helps to bridge the gap between those that live outside prison walls and those who live within. Fostering connections between prisoners and those on the outside is a strategy on the part of activists to both educate the

public and assist prisoners with the isolation and alienation of imprisonment (Faith, 2000; Faith & Pate, 2000; Culhane, 1991). This type of writing can contribute to an awareness and mobilization for serious penal reforms in North America or even penal abolition.

Writing by prisoners is not a new phenomenon; however, the inclusion of the prisoner writer to academic debate is. There are different types of writers; intellectual, political prisoners (or prisoners of conscience) and so-called common criminals. Prison writing is thus not a uniform collection of materials that expose a common carceral experience. A prisoner's writing reflects the context of the writer as it is created within a specific historical, economic and socio-political period in time (Davies, 1990). The creation of convict criminology is an important reflection of the relationship between the prisoner and the prison (Davies, 1990; Gaucher, 2002). It has been argued that whatever happens in society is reflected in the prison (Culhane, 1991) and thus allowing prison intellectuals to participate in academic debate is an important addition to the theoretical framework of that time. Some academics have argued that without being imprisoned and having this first hand experience, it is not possible to understand what it means to be imprisoned (Ross & Richards, 2003; Moberly, Pepinsky & Terry, 2002). Many academic prisoners reject the notion that any worthwhile analysis or suggestions for prison reform can come from someone who has not experienced prison as a prisoner (Faith & Pate, 2000; Ross & Richards, 2003). The discipline of criminology is filled with people who have opinions about prisoners and the prison system but have little contact with prisoners or ex-prisoners. Furthermore it should be noted that the creation of the prison as a form of punishment, enabled the creation of criminology as a discipline (Foucault, 1977).

Many prominent criminologists derive their understanding of prison from official reports that are misleading and biased towards preserving the interests of the administration (Ross & Richards, 2003). This narrow approach leads to counterproductive and often very damaging policies. Traditionally, the views and experiences of prisoners have been silenced by the academic community because their opinions are devalued. The lack of value placed on prisoners and ex-prisoners is a deeply-embedded cultural issue that stems from harmful stereotypes about prisoners coupled with an elitist attitude among many criminologists. In the past, many prison reforms have been damaging to prisoners and to front-line correctional staff because they were never consulted in the process (Jackson, 2002). Reforms often only act to make corrections easier for the administration and are not for the prisoner (Faith & Pate, 2000). It is time for the revitalization of criminology with research grounded in personal experience and a broader political and cultural framework that might include academic work by victims of crime.

Notorious Prison Writers: Political Prisoners and “Common Criminals”

Eugene Debs produced *Walls and Bars* (1973) while serving a jail sentence in the U.S.A. Debs entered the American penal system as a political prisoner and through his experience wrote in favour of social reforms to the prison. Debs' work was in response to being incarcerated within a specific socio-historical context in the early 20th century. Debs' work still has a great deal of relevance. This prototype of the convict criminologist was sentenced to ten years in prison for making a speech against conscription in 1918. His incarceration was a symbolic act on the part of the government to coerce the general

public into compliance with the predominant social order. The irony of his incarceration is that World War I was about demanding freedom – freedom of speech, thought, expression, and movement – yet he was incarcerated for speaking out against conscription. Debs is considered to be one of the first prison abolitionists as his book argues for the need to reform the prison environment and for better treatment of prisoners. Debs felt that if poverty was abolished there would be no need for the prison, but if these underlying causes are not addressed the prison population will continue to expand.

Jean Genet's *The Thief's Journal*, published in 1949, is about his personal struggles in France under “the constraints of imperialist ideology and practice” (Gaucher, 2002, 39). Genet was a social outcast in society due to his homosexuality, his interest in cross-dressing, and his criminal activities such as prostitution, robbery and burglary. Although Genet's work does not have a foundation in academia, his work is an authentic account of a “common criminal” (Ross & Richards, 2003) that lends understanding that there is a “regular person” within a “criminal” and there is a “criminal” within a “regular person”.

Genet (1964) examines issues such as conformity, poverty, homosexuality, and the creation of the criminal. He writes for a mainstream audience that he is not a part of because he often makes reference to the reader as being from a world that is different from his own. The world that the reader is a part of is one which rejects Genet due to his social deviancy and thus Genet in return rejects mainstream society. Jean Genet's work is a reflection of how the powerful first create the criminal, and then label the criminal in such a way that this identity is internalized.

Penal Abolitionism: A Socio-Political Movement

A related movement to convict criminology is now gaining momentum internationally. Penal abolition is a theoretical perspective, political strategy and social movement that stems from a rejection of punitive responses to crime (De Hann, 2003). As a theoretical perspective it studies social and political oppression of victims, offenders and the community with a focus on *resistance* to power structures (Saleh-Hanna, 2000). It is a political strategy as it is focused upon advocating for equality of all people through advancing human rights, as well as a social movement which has the long-term objective of abolishing penal structures (Saleh-Hanna, 2000, 4).

The penal abolitionist movement comprises two main streams: academic and activist. Penal abolitionist literature is grounded in critical criminology. Much like convict criminology, penal abolitionist literature focuses upon critiquing traditional criminological theories of crime and criminality and opposing positivistic, managerial correctional policies. Abolitionist literature challenges the academic community including criminal justice departments and faculties of law by demonstrating the ineffectiveness of the current retributive system. In Canada, several penal abolitionists contend that the only way to do “good work” is to be actively involved in dismantling the system as we must do more than theorize about the system’s failure (Elliott, personal communication, 2003; Culhane, 1991; Morris, 1989; Saleh-Hanna, 2000; Faith, 2004). While the retributive system focuses on delivering punishment in the name of revenge, these activists and academics show that there *are* more humane and productive ways to address criminal behaviour. Penal activists seek to educate the public about the futility of most uses of punishment per se as a response to criminal activity (Saleh-Hanna, 2000).

The penal abolitionist movement includes an international movement of academics and activists who have organized bi-annual conferences known as the International Conference of Penal Abolition (ICOPA) since 1983 (Saleh-Hanna, 2000, 15). The late Ruth Morris, a Canadian academic and activist, was a founder of ICOPA (Saleh-Hanna, 2000, 15). At these conferences, participants present papers and collaborate with one another as to what forms of action need to be taken. The *penal* abolitionist movement was originally called the *prison* abolitionist movement as it was focused on abolishing prisons. The movement was re-named at the third ICOPA in 1987 held in Montreal, noting that it will take more than *removing* or *minimizing* the use of prisons to achieve social justice (Elliott, personal communication, 2003). Saleh-Hanna (2000) explains this change:

While the first International Conference on *Prison* Abolition in 1983 marked the emergence of an organized and recognized prison abolitionist movement, the switch to *penal* abolition in 1987 broadened the social context in which prisons are constructed...The abolitionists were not only looking to take down the prison walls, they were looking to dismantle the social structures which sustain and support those walls and to build a community that will not need to fall into dependence on those walls. It is understood that dismantling prison walls will not alone eliminate the state use of coercion and social control (Saleh-Hanna, 2000, 16, italics in original).

There is, however, more than one vision for the penal abolitionist movement and several groups that are working towards this goal. Not all abolitionists agree on how to dismantle the present retributive system, nor do they all believe in abolitionism in its purest form – no penal system. One variation on this perspective is peacemaking criminology which is discussed briefly.

Peacemaking Criminology: Punishment Begets Violence

Peacemaking criminology is a paradigm that focuses on the use of violence as punishment and its negative effects. The roots of this paradigm are drawn from abolitionism, peace studies, radical feminism, Buddhism and ideals of restorative and transformative justice (MacLean & Milovanovic, 1997). Peacemaking criminologists seek to decrease societal violence (Pepinsky & Quinney, 1997) while recognizing that violence is, in large part, the result of power imbalances in interaction (Pepinsky, 2000). Peacemaking criminologists oppose the general practice of segregating convicted criminals from the wider social structure and advocate assisting all members of society to develop acceptable, safe social relations in the community (Pepinsky & Quinney, 1997). The criminal justice system engenders more violence against criminals in the name of justice and legal rights (Caulfield & Evans, 1997). Rather than invoke a “war on crime” which increases the overall level of violence, resolutions such as mediation and restitution come from a more humanistic style of intervention (Pepinsky & Quinney, 1997). Pepinsky (2000) argues that “violence begins in a state of dissociation or detachment from the feelings, needs and wishes of the person to be victimized. That dissociation permits violence to begin and to repeat itself” (280).

The theoretical positions of convict criminologists and peacemaking criminologists help to advocate for massive structural changes to the operation of the CJS and in the case of penal abolition – the dismantling of the current system. These changes will in turn be reflected in the operation of the prison system. Critical perspectives attempt to deconstruct and debunk relationships of power and domination. These

perspectives challenge the status quo in the prison system and offer practical alternatives to punishment.

A Brief History of Corrections in Canada and Prisoners' Rights

Disenchantment with the prison has a long history. In the 1930s a series of strikes and riots inside Canadian prisons prompted an independent inquiry into the conditions of penitentiaries. As a result of the Archambault Royal Commission of Inquiry (1938), changes to penal philosophy and management were proposed. CSC describes this report as being a landmark for the philosophy of corrections today. This change of philosophy is characterized by an emphasis on rehabilitation and crime prevention. The inquiry suggested "strict but humane discipline and the reformation and rehabilitation of prisoners" and a need to abandon the retributive methods of correctional intervention (CSC website, 2003). Despite growing support for changes in the corrections system, these recommendations were not fully implemented at the time. Historically, one main issue in Canadian penitentiaries has been the right of prisoners to not be abused, tortured or forced to live in brutally harsh conditions. Indeed, prisoners had *very few human rights* accorded to them and it was very difficult to initiate any form of grievance procedure within institutions because of official discretion and the courts' reluctance to overturn official discretion in prison affairs (Goff, 1997).

Post World War II was the next clearly defined period in penal philosophy. Prison overcrowding due to rising prison populations prompted an investigation into the violence and disruption that coincided with this increase. The resulting recommendations from the Fauteaux Committee (1953) inquiry envisioned a penal environment focused on programs for offenders in order to change their criminal behaviour (CSC website, 2003).

To accommodate these changes, CSC staff would have to include professionals such as social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists and criminologists (Jackson, 2002) With this movement we see the professionalization of corrections in Canada. Along with a movement for professionalization comes a necessity for bureaucratic methods of organization and accountability.

Despite this movement towards institutional reform and professionalization, abuses against prisoners continued and prisoners still lacked rights and methods for redress. The Canadian Bill of Human Rights was the key legislation where prisoners could seek redress through court proceedings. The courts remained apprehensive and would only hear a prisoner's case where extreme abuse was alleged (Goff, 1997). Jack McCann won his case in 1975 for being put in solitary confinement for 754 days, arguing under Section 2(b) against the use of cruel and unusual punishment of prisoners (Goff, 1997).

In the 1970s there were a series of severe prison riots in Ontario, Québec and British Columbia. The Kingston Riot in 1971 is described by Jackson (2002) as "one of the bloodiest riots in its history" (50), where "five staff were taken hostage, and a small group of prisoners, mostly sex offenders, were placed in a circle in the prison dome and brutally tortured; two of the prisoners died, and part of the institution was destroyed" (Jackson, 2002, 50). Millhaven Institution – which opened in 1971 – also was the location of severe violence with nineteen incidents in the first six years it was open (Jackson, 2002, 51).

Full-blown prison riots occurred in 1976, most notably in the B.C. Penitentiary in New Westminster that resulted in deaths and financial loss (Culhane, 1979; Jackson,

2002). In Québec, Laval Institution also experienced a violent upheaval. Jackson (2002) explains that these violent demonstrations occurred because useful rehabilitation programs for prisoners did not exist, there was no grievance system for prisoners and because of long-term hostility between prisoners and prison staff. CSC responded to these issues with the offer of accountability to the public (Jackson, 2002). They offered increased public access to penitentiaries and agreed to set up Citizens Advisory Committees (CACs) in penitentiaries (Culhane, 1979). CSC claimed that they would cultivate a reputation of accountability to the public by involving them in correctional policy formulation (CSC website, 2003). Claire Culhane was among the first group of citizens to sit on the CAC at the B.C Penitentiary. It was felt that by having an independent group to liase between the administration and prisoners they could curtail much of the violence and unrest in the penitentiaries. Claire was asked by the Chairman to resign her position on the CAC after she stayed with the prisoners during the riot and hostage taking in September of 1976. She was considered by others on the CAC as partisan and therefore she would compromise their position as independent liaisons (Culhane, 1979, 139).

The rule of law was not explicitly recognized in prison until a ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada in *Martineau v. Matsqui Institution Inmate Disciplinary Board* (1980). In *Martineau*, it was argued that a prisoner was treated unfairly, punished by the administration for a crime to which he was not given the right to be heard or to an impartial trial (Goff, 1997). Following this ruling, CSC relaxed its disciplinary policies for solitary confinement and the involuntary transfer of prisoners (Goff, 1997). CSC was prompted to develop a code of regulations to govern the staff and prisoners based upon

the rule of law. The idea that prisoners *have* rights gained strength with documented abuses exposed by inquiries, several noteworthy court cases, and the ongoing work of prisoners' rights activists (Jackson, 2002). Claire Culhane, one of the most vocal prisoners' rights activists, held that it is especially important for prisoners to have fundamental human rights guaranteed to them.

Claire began her work in prisons prior to the enactment of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982), when prisoners had very limited legal rights as noted above. The Charter brought more protection for prisoners against conditions of harsh confinement, unequal treatment and the right to be treated fairly and humanely by the administration and staff. The *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* (CCRA) (1992) further obliges CSC staff to ensure that the human rights of *all prisoners* are protected, at least theoretically. The CCRA entrenches prisoners' rights, standards for professional behaviour of administration and staff at CSC, and encourages prisoners to be included in the development of policies that affect them (Jackson, 2002).

It is clear that CSC has grown increasingly interested in fostering and maintaining public credibility. This brief introduction into prisoners' rights is by no means intended to be inclusive of all historical events that have led to the acknowledgement that prisoners' rights should be protected in prison. It is intended to highlight how the fight for prisoners' rights is a political process marked by power struggles between different groups where protests can create social change. However, social change brings unintended consequences. Many reforms to the prison system in Canada have acted as net-wideners bringing more members of society under the control of the CJS (Cohen, 1985; McMahon, 1992). The parole system, probation system, community services,

treatment centres, family courts and house arrest are all examples of these net-wideners which act to exert more control over rule-breakers (Culhane, 1991, 146).

“For their Own Good”: Treatment of the Criminalized

Various programs and techniques of intervention have been imposed on prisoners in order to “correct” them. These programs follow changes in ideology that support these frameworks of understanding (Cohen, 1985; Duguid, 2000). While in the past criminals were identified as a type of everyman, the emergence of a classification system for deviant groups led society to see criminals as more variegated and essentially “different” from law-abiding people (Garland, 1990). As cultural patterns change over time, so do notions of who is deserving of punishment and what forms of punishment we see as acceptable (Garland, 1990; Jackson, 2002). These changes occur as a result of the differing conceptions about criminals and the causes of criminality. These conceptions affect the programs and techniques employed in corrections (Jackson, 2002; Duguid, 2000).

While most people who are incarcerated are not insane and dangerous, there are strong myths and stereotypes which lead the general public to believe otherwise. Claire Culhane strongly opposed this, which she termed “groupism”. The writing of convict criminologists can help to dispel some of these harmful myths, showing readers that most prisoners were not categorically different from people who are not in prison when they entered the penitentiary. Ross & Richards (2003) identify educating the general public and criminologists about the meanings and motivations of convicts as convict criminology’s core purpose: “what distinguishes [convicts] was their race, class and demeanor, rather than criminal behaviour” (xix). This rather polemical approach – which

seems to downplay prisoners' agency in criminal involvement – nevertheless highlights how incarceration can be deeply damaging for prisoners. Many non-violent prisoners become “unique” through the experience of incarceration where they are forced to adopt the role of convict and perhaps a violent persona (Ross & Richards, 2003; Huckelbury, 2002; Cayley, 1998).

Punishment becomes justified and more palatable if we believe that it is being done to someone who is different from us (Garland, 1990) and that it is “for their own good” (Miller, 1990). The dichotomy created between prisoners and non-prisoners is done to justify certain interventions in the mission to “normalize” prisoners and to establish a type of animosity and suspicion to the detriment of prisoners.

Re-integration & Control

Jackson (2002) argues that CSC has been largely successful in mystifying people into thinking that very positive, humane and progressive changes are occurring. The rhetoric of change and progress needs to be contrasted with the reality of life in a prison. In the late 1980s, CSC reorganized its operations, touting higher principles and the mission to “do good corrections” (Jackson, 2002, 33). Out of these organizational changes CSC developed a Mission Statement and Mission document that acts as the framework for the organization (Vantour, 1991). The importance of this document cannot be underestimated as it comprehensively articulates the goals of the organization, the values and principles that inform these goals and proposes the strategies that should be used to accomplish the objectives. The Mission document is an important site for understanding the crisis that we are currently facing in the corrections industry. It is also

an interesting source on contemporary penal philosophies which informs how the prisoner is ideally dealt with and understood by corrections.

The two main objectives of CSC are to “contribute to the protection of society by actively encouraging and assisting offenders to become law-abiding citizens, while exercising reasonable, safe, secure and humane control” (Vantour, 1991, 47). It can be argued these goals are based on incompatible ideologies, are more focused upon punishment than assistance in practice, and cannot be accomplished in a penitentiary.

The goal of assistance through control is not compatible with re-integration as the ideologies supporting each are contradictory. For someone to be deserving of punishment they must have an appreciation for what they have done wrong. The supposition that all offenders choose to become criminals is influenced by the assumption that offenders are rational actors who weigh the costs and benefits of committing a punishable crime prior to embarking on the criminal behaviour. The classical school of criminology argues that offenders deserve punishment and are in need of control and that punishment should be fair and conditions of confinement need to be humane. In contrast, the rehabilitation model builds on the notion that there is something different about offenders and they cannot merely be punished for their criminality as it is not their fault.

The core concepts of rehabilitation and the disease model of crime were largely modified by corrections in the 1980s (Hannah-Moffat, 1995; Duguid, 2000) as they were claimed to be unsuccessful at keeping ex-offenders out of prison. However, the premise of re-integration is not that different from rehabilitation. There is still a focus placed on changing the offender in order to make their behaviour more appropriate for the outside world. This line of thinking expects changes on an individual level, ignoring the wider

structural forces that may contribute to criminality (Faith, 2004). Morris (1995) argues that a system based on retribution is truly criminal and “the recognition that our retributive justice system is mostly about enforcing racial and class barriers and not much related to any realistic assessment of the social harm caused by people” (52). Punishment is used as a powerful form of social control that too often targets certain segments of the population, usually the less powerful. The idea of removing someone from society to assist them in correcting their behaviour assumes that the problem lies within the individual and not within society at large. This places emphasis upon the psychological state of offenders to whom these social problems are attributed (Hannah-Moffat, 1995). Furthermore, it is important to recognize that manifestation of criminal behaviour can be the result of either social or more individual factors or a combination. Traumatic brain injury and undetected hearing loss (Dahl, 1995) are examples of individual factors that may spur on criminal activity or limit a prisoners’ ability to cope with closed custody, while being the victim of severe abuse by a parent is argued to be a social factor.

Correctional ideology in North America is rooted in punishment which is in turn based on the demand for conformity with the dominant Eurocentric, masculine, middle-class culture. Knopp (1976) discusses penal philosophy that disguises its intention:

Control is institutionally administered. Conformity is demanded. ‘Correction’ is enforced. ‘Rehabilitation’ is required as a condition for release. The key to successful rehabilitation is conformity-nothing more, nothing less. When the ‘deviant’ no longer deviates from the values of the dominant class, s/he is ‘rehabilitated’ (47).

Penal abolitionists reject incarceration as we know it today because of its vindictive nature and its counterproductive effects. Abolitionists argue that the use of incarceration is an ineffective, inhumane response to the complex social and personal problems that

brought offenders to prison in the first place (Culhane, 1991). They argue that punishment does not deter future offending nor can it be used in conjunction with a rehabilitative approach (Morris, 1995) as suggested in the CSC Mission. Prisoners who feel punished through loss of control over their life are not likely to feel as though they are being assisted. If the goal is to truly re-integrate someone, then prisoners must be able to make some actual choices (Duguid, 2000). While the objectives of assistance and control are supposed to be balanced properly, many prisoners do not experience prison as an assisting environment. Even if all of the staff and the administration were focused on helping prisoners, prisoners are also controlled by politics with others incarcerated.

Penal abolitionists argue that the experience of being confined in prison can have very damaging, long-term effects on the health and well-being of human beings (Morris, 1995; Culhane, 1979). Abolitionists cite high suicide rates, violence, mental illness, health problems and drug/alcohol addiction as symptoms of this damaging environment (Faith, 2004). Many people enter prison with mental health issues and/ or alcohol/drug dependencies, these problems can be exacerbated by incarceration. Elliott (2002) points out that “rates of learning disabilities, fetal alcohol effects, emotional disturbances, and substance addictions are higher in prison populations than outside cohorts, diminishing the impact of didactic prison programs for many prisoners” (470).

Suicide is the number one cause of death in Canadian prisons and prisoners are more likely to commit suicide than be murdered while incarcerated (CSC website, 2003). CSC reports that 93 prisoners committed suicide between 1991 and 1997. It is argued that many incarcerated people suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSS), or as a result of their incarceration develop this debilitating disorder (Herman, 2000). Some

prison staff also experience PTSS as a result of their jobs (Harris, 2003). Canadian prison staff estimate that anywhere between 40 to 90% of prisoners use illicit narcotics (Harris, 2003, 68) and many become addicted to heroin or cocaine. A report from the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network shows that between 1996 and 2000, the proportion of federal prisoners with HIV/AIDS increased by over 35%. According to the Office of the Correctional Investigator, 2% of federal prisoners now have HIV/AIDS and 25% have Hepatitis C (Correctional Investigator, 2004). The Canadian AIDS society argues that prisoners with these diseases often do not have access to medication or therapy, or prison regimes make it impossible to treat these diseases optimally.

The goal of re-integrating an offender is paradoxical considering that the offender is removed from society to accomplish this goal. It is hard to understand the logic behind removing someone from society to teach them how to be a part of it (Lowman, 1989). Far more funding is earmarked for incarcerating prisoners and security measures than in assisting them with re-integration (Cayley, 1998). However, in the 2002 Supreme Court of Canada ruling in *Sauvé versus The Chief Electoral Officer*, Chief Justice MacLaughlin determined that federal prisoners should be given the right to vote as an important tool in teaching respect for law and encouraging civil responsibility. MacLaughlin stated, “Denying prisoners the right to vote imposes negative costs on prisoners and the penal system. It removes a route to social development and undermines correctional law and policy directed towards rehabilitation and integration” (Sauvé v. Canada’s Chief Electoral Officer, 2002). Although the right to vote is a positive development, the idea of rehabilitating an individual in prison is puzzling given that on release many ex-prisoners are ostracized in mainstream society. The irony of the goals of CSC is that while they

suggest that through incarceration a person can successfully re-integrate into society, when ex-prisoners are released they usually experience intense stigma attached to being an ex-con (Ross & Richards, 2003). The other issue is that many prisoners learn harmful behaviours and coping methods while incarcerated that do not assist them upon release (Cayley, 1998). Bauman (2000) explains that:

...what prison did instead [of rehabilitation] was to *prisonize*² their inmates – that is, to encourage them or force them to absorb and adopt habits and customs typical of the penitentiary environment and of such environment only, and so sharply distinct from the behavioural patterns promoted by the cultural norms ruling in the world outside the walls; ‘prisonization’ was the opposite of ‘rehabilitation’ (Bauman, 2000, 30, italics in original).

Instead of putting resources into the “warehousing” of criminals, abolitionists argue that resources should be put toward affordable housing, education and health care (Culhane, 1991). Essentially, they advocate for a proactive rather than a reactive approach. Penal abolitionists note that disenfranchised and some visible minorities are over-represented in prisons and thus advance a proactive approach where resources are more evenly distributed to these groups (Morris, 1989). For example, 18% of federal prisoners are Aboriginal; however, they represent only 2.8% of the Canadian population (CSC website, 2003).

Alternative Visions

Stephen Duguid (2000) agrees with abolitionists that most programs offered in prison do more harm than good for prisoners. For prisoners to be properly re-integrated on release the relationship between the incarcerated and those who implement programs

² *Prisonize* is a term used by Donald Clemmer, 1940.

needs to be transformed (Duguid, 2000). Using a liberal-humanist outlook, he rejects the tradition of treating prisoners as an object to be studied, quantified and controlled (Duguid, 2000). Duguid (2000) argues for the re-introduction of face-to-face-post secondary education in prisons. Post-secondary education has the potential to foster more egalitarian, democratic relations between prisoners and instructors. This relationship is re-conceptualized by mutual respect and a subject-to-subject model of interaction (Duguid, 2000). He cites lower recidivism rates from prisoners who participated in the BC post-secondary program from 1973-1990 in support of his argument. With an expected recidivism rate of 42%, only 25% of prisoners who participated in the education program recidivated (Duguid, 2000, 134). Prison regimes that emphasize “good staff-inmate relationships, a high degree of autonomy for inmates and good group communication and decision-making” have dramatically lowered levels of violence (Shaw, 2000, 65). All of these ingredients are present in a post-secondary environment.

Convict criminologists insist that prisoners need to be asked what programs and services they need rather than paternalistically implementing what the administration thinks is best for them (Richards & Ross, 2003). Prisoners must be able to make their own decisions and have some control over their lives and accountability even though they are incarcerated. Shaw (2000) suggests:

Inmates themselves must *feel* that they are being treated with fairness and justice in order for the power exercised over them by the prison to be seen as legitimate, and not power which is divisive, oppressive or exploitative. This places a particular onus on prison authorities to attend to the legitimacy of their actions and suggests that prisoners’ criticisms of prison regime should not be ignored or dismissed, but listened to, taken note of, and have the chance of being responded to (Shaw, 2000, 68, italics in original).

Post-secondary education can lead to self-improvement and positive personal growth for prisoners (Duguid, 2000; Tregea, 2003). The program should be introduced by outside groups less affected by “inside” prisoner-correctional staff politics and tensions (Duguid, 2000) and provide an arm’s length alternative community for the prisoner (Tregea, 2003).

There are at least two significant barriers to such a change. The first is that several academics report that prisoner solidarity has declined (Ratner & Cartright, 1990; Duguid, 2000; Jackson, 2002). If prisoners are not sufficiently organized to make such demands for themselves, mobilizing change will be difficult. The second problem is that there is not wide public support for offering prisoners a post-secondary education especially when it is becoming more and more difficult for outsiders to afford such education. There is a very influential, conservative victims’ rights movement that sees increased rights for prisoners as a zero-sum game, translating into decreased rights for victims (Christie, 2004). Culhane (1991) argued that the public should be interested in the best treatment of prisoners – including access to meaningful programs – because most prisoners are eventually released.

Feminism and Women Prisoners

Traditionally, criminological discourse has neglected the experiences of incarcerated women in Canada. Because far fewer women are incarcerated than men they are often ignored by criminologists (Faith, 2004) although there is a movement to highlight women’s experiences of confinement (Comack, 1996; Wiebe & Johnson, 1998; Faith, 2001; Lamb, 2003). As of April 11, 2004, 379 women were serving federal sentences in Canada, and 106 of these women are Aboriginal compared to 12,034 male prisoners serving time in federal prisons, 2,193 of these men are Aboriginal. Women

usually come to prison for very different reasons than men (Faith 2004). Women also have different needs while they are incarcerated. Often, their demands for programming have led to nothing more than programs developed for male prisoners being used for female prisoners (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). Men and women may also experience imprisonment differently from one another and thus it is unacceptable to generalize research findings on male prisoners to female prisoners, or vice-versa.

Prison writing holds a partial solution to problems faced by female prisoners. Several female prison writers address the issue that prisons were designed for men by men. For Jo-Ann Mayhew (2002), who wrote for the JPP, the programs or lack of programs offered to incarcerated women are not adequate to address the needs of women:

I do not suggest that a parallel system of Corrections be implemented for women. This establishment has rationalized inequality by justifying its position with economics. It is too expensive to provide the same services to women as are provided for men. Most have accepted this explanation and walked on. I do not. I do not believe that the mere handful of women involved in the "cystem" justifies the overwhelming abuse. What does explain the reluctance to face these abuses is the function of paternalistic capitalism at its worst (156).

Owen (2003) explains that many incarcerated women are victims of sexual, physical or emotional abuse and many have drug and/or alcohol dependencies coupled with health problems such as HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, sexually-transmitted infections and emotional disturbances such as anxiety and depression. In response to the 1990 *Creating Choices Task Force* and later the *Arbour* (1996) report, CSC allowed that dramatic changes were needed in the administration of corrections for federally-sentenced women. Although a discourse of assistance and empowerment was adopted, many practices remain punitive.

Hannah-Moffat (2001) discusses how these changes led CSC to re-define and classify deviant groups as being “unempowerable” in order to justify more punishment:

These women (who are mainly aboriginal or mentally ill) are ultimately portrayed as a danger – to the prison culture, to the public, and to themselves. They are constructed as needing more intensive and ultimately more punitive supervision to ensure public safety. The construction of this group of women as ‘disruptive,’ ‘risky,’ ‘mentally ill,’ and ‘potential escapees’ is used to justify the use of force, searches, involuntary transfers, and prolonged solitary confinement, as well as the transfer of some women to segregated units in men’s maximum security penitentiaries (Hannah-Moffat, 2001, 177, parenthesis in original).

Owen (2003) believes that these women would be better served in a community setting that can offer support, rather than being further punished through imprisonment. Faith (2004) advocates for a community-based, “women-centred” approach to the justice system. She argues for community-based programs that address the root causes of criminality:

...having women-centered and feminist goals integrated into new prisons specifically for women is not possible within a decidedly punishment-and-control framework. Much more than progressive rhetoric is needed to cut through harsh, punitive, masculinist correctionalist practices. For real change to happen, prisons must be abolished, with investment instead going to schools, occupational training, decent employment, social services, and the rights of the most marginalized of women (and men) in Canadian society (2004, 286).

Last years’ report by the office of the Correctional Investigator was circulated in November 2004. It details how women are still being discriminated against in the federal system and calls for CSC to implement the recommendations of The Canadian Human Rights Commission report, *Protecting Their Rights – A Systematic Review of Human Rights in Correctional Services for Federally Sentenced Women* (2004).

The Power to Name and Rename

Language is used to legitimate knowledge claims and justify power imbalances between different groups. Language and its meaning are not neutral, for it is an active force in knowledge production. According to Cohen (1985), “social control talk” gives the impression of change and is used to convey progress, rational-decision making, dramatic breakthroughs and choice. Along with the corrections move towards bureaucratization, new language and new technologies for deviancy control were developed (Cohen, 1985; Garland, 1990; Jackson, 2002). This new language is designed to give the impression to the public that “a just measure of pain” (Ignatiff, 1978) is meted out in the corrections industry.

Many abolitionists and convict criminologists reject such “systems language” as it distorts the experience of incarceration (Knopp, 1979, 10; Culhane, 1991; Horii, 2000; Saleh-Hanna, 2000, 177). Prisoners are referred to as inmates, and prisons as institutions, terms normally used to describe patients held in a mental health facility. This connotes that prisoners are mentally disordered. After years of protest, activist Claire Culhane was finally able to convince CSC that using the term “feeding” rather than breakfast, lunch or dinner is better suited to animals than humans. Garland (1990) discusses the adoption of “sanitized language” as a method of concealing punishment practices, thus making the imposition of punishment more palatable to the public. The Mission document (Vantour, 1991) for CSC is filled with sanitized language that obscures what is being done to prisoners. Although a discourse of assistance and encouragement is touted in the Mission document, prisoners experience much of what happens in prison as punishment rather than rehabilitation. Horii (2000) expresses discontent over the way that CSC interprets

the Charter in their policy implementation. She describes CSC as interpreting this important legislation “on their own terms, using their methods, with impunity” (106).

Horii, who spent seven years incarcerated in both men’s and women’s prisons in Canada, argues that:

The language of the oppressor, those reams of rhetoric and countless nice-nellysims that effectively mask the barbarity of imprisonment hidden behind policies fronted by cardboard people and programs are tools of this structure which must be disabled (Horii, 2000, 107).

Just as abolitionists discuss the misuse of language to mask imbalances in power and authority, prisoners and ex-prisoners warn that the use of euphemisms in policy construction further entrenches the power imbalance between prisoners and the staff and administration. The language of penal abolitionists and feminists has often been co-opted and transformed (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). The document *Creating Choices* (1990) was to be the organization’s framework for the incarceration of federally-sentenced women.

Hannah-Moffat (2001) reconsiders the use of the feminist term *empowerment*:

The widespread use of this term in everyday language has gradually depoliticized or de-radicalized the language of empowerment, so that nowadays both easily resort to it...Thus in Canadian women’s penalty, bureaucrats and feminist reformers alike uncritically champion empowerment. Part of the appeal of empowerment, for those who already have power, is that it enables them to informally and subtly govern marginalized populations in ways that encourage the latter to participate in their own reform; at the same time, it suggests that an alternative to past regimes is being offered (Hannah-Moffat, 2001, 168-169).

You cannot empower someone while punishing them on a daily basis. Empowerment includes having the power to make choices in life; however, prisoners have most key decisions made for them. The adoption of radical language allowed for the impression that a paradigm shift occurred while in fact no such shift occurred. CSC “perceives

empowerment as linked to *responsibility* rather than to relations of power” (Hannah-Moffat, 2001, 175, italics in original).

The prison system’s resiliency in the face of failure can be understood by examining its ability to deflect attention away from its own shortcomings by placing responsibility onto the offender for their own re-integration. The emphasis has shifted from the state as being responsible for “correcting” deviants to being the responsibility of the prisoner (Garland, 1990; Hannah-Moffat, 2001). It is very individually focused upon the offender and how they must work to repair themselves to re-enter society. This perspective ignores how poverty, racism, drug and alcohol addiction, unemployment, lack of resources, violence, and desperation can contribute to criminal behaviour. This inward approach assumes that the causes of criminality can be properly addressed within prison if the offender takes an active part in this process. Furthermore, programs in prison are based solely on prisoners’ negative characteristics or behaviours rather than acknowledging their positive attributes and behaviours which facilitate them in improving themselves (Elliott, personal communication, 2005).

Entrenched Professional Management

The prison system has also been able to respond to certain demands through the professionalization of deviancy control (Garland, 1990). Because the administration contracted out to different professionals they have been able to blame others for the failure in the implementation of new programs or to accept at least some praise if programs were successful (Duguid, 2000). With the proliferation of experts in corrections, a strengthened classification system for targeting and controlling different deviant groups in prison was designed. The language of punishment was transformed to

risk management (Jackson, 2002). Programs were designed to meet prisoners' criminogenic needs. Punishment became more concealed because it was now viewed in technical terms administered privately by professionals (Garland, 1990). The public was told that the methods used by experts employ rational and scientific tools (Garland, 1990). The CSC Mission document gives the impression that prisoners are able to make choices in rehabilitation but this is largely a Hobson's choice – which means that there is no choice at all. Reid (2002) writes:

My Regional Reception Assessment Centre Handbook informs me I will be here for ten to fourteen weeks during which time I will be evaluated, assessed, analyzed, tested, probed, and profiled. A team of IPOs, CO2s, psychologists and unit managers will collect, collate, graph, and interpret the data. They will determine risk factors, crime cycles, pen[itentiary] placement, and treatment programs (262).

Many prisoners express frustration with being treated as a commodity rather than as human beings. Prisoners are made to feel like non-persons due to the bureaucratization of corrections practices in Canada. While CSC has attempted to move towards a management system that is invested in officials being accountable for their actions, we see how this practice has had the unforeseen consequence of denigrating human beings. Prisoners are told what programs to take to “look good” before the parole board (Elliott, 2002). If a prisoner refuses to take a program that they are told to take, for whatever reason, this is viewed by staff at CSC as showing lack of remorse for the crime committed or they are labelled a security threat to the institution (Hannah-Moffat, 2000). Prisoners often refuse to take programs because they do not reflect cultural values, gender, or a personal sense of what they require to be rehabilitated. The corrections model continues to be based on Eurocentric male ideology that is seen as the “norm”. Ms. Cree (2002) expresses her frustration with the system:

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...It is an absurd phucking joke to think that the criminal just-us system with their residential care, treatment, programming, counseling 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 (Ms. Cree, 2002, 161).

Programs offered in federal penitentiaries involve the development of “life skills” which focus on family violence, sexual offending and drug and alcohol abuse (Elliott, 2002). Common to all of these programs is the focus on the offender as needing correction. These programs do not teach offenders marketable skills and do not encourage them to think about issues outside of themselves. It keeps them focused on what is – or thought to be – *wrong* with them, rather than having the analytic skills to understand the broader context of their criminality. While it cannot be denied that prisoners should have the opportunity to take part in such programs if they want to, post-secondary education should still be an option. Although prisoners can obtain their high school diplomas, a variety of educational opportunities in penitentiaries is simply no longer offered (Duguid, 2000). Horii (2000) reflects on treatment programs in prison:

Tragically, many prisoners internalize this fake normalcy and become totally ‘manageable’ (institutionalized). After years inside, many are completely ‘programmed’ (debilitated), are unable to apply critical thinking and have no understanding of ‘real world’ inter-relationships between work, family and community. When released, many ‘good inmates’ fail at ‘reintegration,’ returning to prison (their ‘normal’ ‘homes’) over and over and over again. Prison ‘treatment and programs’ produce good ‘recidivists,’ not good citizens (Horii, 2000, 108).

The system of categorization with its checklists and prediction tools is a means for professionals to distance themselves from the impact of their decisions. Professionals are

able to blame the assessment tools rather than take responsibility themselves for such failure. In the face of failure, proposed improvements to the measurement devices and categorization tools occurs deflecting attention away from the ideology that supports these methods. If the professionals administering these devices are challenged, the system need only replace one type of expert with another.

Cohen (1985) notes that entire new groups of deviants can be created and their management justified as professionals expand their scope to justify their existence. This form of empire-building can be seen in the co-option of mental health professionals by the corrections industry. A label of mental disorder assigned to a prisoner by an expert can have far-reaching implications and will justify various forms of intervention and incapacitation. This returns us to Hannah-Moffat's (2001) argument that the classification and labelling of "difficult to manage female offenders" are used to justify more punitive measures. These classification tools intensify control by pathologizing, demonizing and medicalizing prisoners who resist (Hannah-Moffat, 2001).

Resisting Change

As Claire Culhane often found, the prison administration is effective at finding ways to avoid change and sharing power. Mathiesen (1990) asks how the prison system deals with demands from the outside while still maintaining system interests on the inside. "This question becomes important when competing ideas, suggestions, proposals, and initiatives appear which have a view towards opening the prison system to fresh starts which run counter to prevailing system interests" (Mathiesen, 1990, 37). The first technique is to refer to a superior authority outside of prison, such as the Solicitor General, thus enabling corrections to disclaim responsibility for refusing to employ new

ideas (Mathiesen, 1990). Other techniques include defining initiatives as irrelevant, impossible to implement, or absorbing them into existing practice while fundamentally changing them. Corrections also may postpone the implementation of new initiatives indefinitely. These methods allow for the status quo to prevail while the administration gives the impression that they are open to reform.

Despite the formal adoption of the rule of law, CCRA and the Charter bias and institutional politics still enter into decision-making (Jackson, 2002). Jackson, a lawyer and professor with thirty years' experience as a prisoners' rights advocate, interviewed prisoners, correctional staff and the administration of several institutions in British Columbia. Jackson (2002) has witnessed several situations where bias has entered decision-making in the administration of corrections. One example was in a situation where Jackson was invited to sit in on an activity where staff and the administration were trying to identify the most problematic prisoners for transfer to another institution or segregation. The process lacked integrity because "there was no attempt during the meeting to determine whether information was reliable, corroborated, or recent. Indeed, several prisoners initially identified as troublemakers were no longer in the institution" (Jackson, 2002, 122). Jackson explains:

I found that afternoon's events remarkable; had I not been there and seen how the decision to segregate the eleven prisoners was made, I would not have believed it. The process was as far removed from principled decision-making as one could conceive. What I saw that afternoon were collective and generalized gut reactions forming the basis for making major decisions affecting prisoners' lives. The bottom line, however, was that the decision to segregate was not based on a careful assessment of the evidence available, not properly corroborated from reliable sources, and not evaluated against the criteria of the CCRA (Jackson, 2002, 123-124).

Jackson's interviews with prison guards and the wardens of several federal penitentiaries in BC revealed that the administration believes that outsiders cannot make institutional decisions. They argue that due to staff's knowledge of the dynamics of the institution and the personality of the prisoner they are more equipped to make case-by-case decisions rather than to strictly follow policy and law. CSC can contend that they are following codes and laws, while making biased decisions. Noting the inherent power struggles and biases that enter into decisions that are made by the administration, Jackson contends that an independent party should review decisions that greatly impact prisoners. Jackson's bias towards law is apparent in his continued belief in the adoption of more laws that promote the fair and humane treatment of prisoners; however, this may act to undermine the very process he is trying to control. By removing more and more discretion from the administration it may act to increase tension and resentment towards prisoners rather than create a fair and humane environment.

Violence: Space, Ideology & Practice

The archetypal max-security prison is a menacing space with its razor-sharp fences, expensive locks, technological surveillance and often isolated location. Davies (1990) sees the prison riot as the ultimate attempt to re-write a violent space, as the prisoners' critical and invariably doomed attempt to somehow "bring the outside world in". Violence is thus used to resist the oppressive environment. Prison has been criticized as state-sanctioned violence (Saleh-Hanna, 2000; Cayley, 1998). The irony is that while offenders are often sent to prison in reaction to their violent actions, private, professionally administered violence is the penalty. The question must be asked: how do

you teach a person to be non-violent by sentencing them to a profoundly violent and lawless environment? (Culhane, 1991). Jackson (2002) reflects on violence in prison:

The threat of violence permeates the fabric of existence, shaping prisoners' conceptions of who they are, informing their perceptions of other prisoners, and conditioning their interpretations of the gestures, walk, and talk of those around them (141).

CSC's policy of classifying all prisoners who are serving life sentences to maximum-security institutions for a two-year assessment to determine an appropriate security level is unacceptable given the history of violent events at maximum-security institutions. Furthermore, this policy is contrary to the CCRA which states "that the service use the least restrictive measures consistent with the protection of the public, staff members and offenders". This policy means that prisoners who have not committed violent behaviours are housed in the same institutions as the most violent offenders. This policy is an example of how outside interest groups demands can affect prisoners. CSC was not consulted in the creation of this policy. It was the direct result of political intervention by then Solicitor General MacAuley, in response to the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime requests.

The violence of the prison environment affects more than prisoners. For many prison staff the act of keeping other human beings in cages can be dehumanizing for them as well (Cayley, 1998). Furthermore, staff employment in a violent atmosphere can have severe psychological effects on prison staff, as reported by those interviewed by Cayley (1998). Harris (2003) interviewed several prison staff and found that many suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSS). One ex-guard explained:

When that lad hit me and I went down, it was like reality struck here. Just like old Humpty Dumpty, cracked his shell, can't put it back together

again. My world collapsed right around me. There was absolutely no way in the world I could ever rebuild that world (Harris, 2003, 53).

Regardless of whether prisoners behave violently, it is important for prison staff to “model desired behaviours [which] may be the greatest influence for the individual change of prisoners” (Elliott, 2002, 470). Elliott (2002) concludes that correctional “officers who are empathetic are more committed to their jobs, more satisfied with their work, and experience less job stress than their punitive counterparts” (470).

Conclusion

The conditions of confinement and treatment of prisoners have dramatically improved with the enactment of various legislation, judicial rulings and recommendations ensuing from evaluations. Laws and codes are not however, always implemented the way that they were envisioned and institutional bias still enters into decision making (Jackson, 2002). Serious problems in Canadian prisons are just more concealed than they have been in the past. The practice of punishment is removed from public scrutiny and concealed behind sanitized language, professionals and “scientific” tools. Prison programs aimed at rehabilitating the prisoner have not been very successful in the past as they entrench a division between those in power and those without. The move towards the professionalization of corrections acted to make prisoners feel dehumanized as their lives have been simplified into a series of checklists and charts. For prisoners to be successfully and meaningfully re-integrated into society, resources must be placed into assisting with this transition. It is imperative that prisoners are able to develop a positive self-image to assist them on release and that the wider society reconsiders the caricatures

of prisoners (Duguid, 2000). Chapter Two examines Claire Culhane's use of civil disobedience to promote penal abolitionism.

CHAPTER 2: CLAIRE CULHANE – PROFILE OF AN ACTIVE ACTIVIST

She had started, after all, from a position of absolute weakness, or so it seemed. She had no cachet in the male-dominated world of Canadian politics or diplomacy, no credentials and no pedigree. And yet through sheer determination and force of will, combined with political savvy, courage, and compassion, she managed to impinge on Canada's national conscience, to help mobilize opposition to the country's complicity, to give Canadian policymakers pause.... (Lowe, 1992, 233).

We [the Prisoners' Rights Group] find it very difficult to encourage prisoners to observe the rules and to be patient when the institution itself ignores the very standards they expect prisoners to follow. And when the higher bodies of the criminal justice system do the same, it becomes well nigh impossible. To brush this aside... with the remark that prisoners deserve little better by reason of their current status, is to ignore the fact that there are actually people imprisoned for a great variety of reasons, not all of which relate to their personal culpability (Culhane, to prisoner in Atlantic Region, early 1980s)³.

The crux of social and political activism is to promote social justice through challenging the status quo. Social and political activism takes many forms – e.g., street protest, lobbying government agencies and conducting academic research that creates awareness and mobilization for change. Activism reflects a power struggle between those who have power to make changes to the system and those who demand that changes be made. Effective activism requires a commitment not only to the issues but also an awareness of *how* to strategically elicit the support of those with power to make desired changes. Mobilization of resources, shared goals and an opportunity to act are all

³ Bradley Hand ITC font is used for Claire's wording to help readers distinguish correspondence from her versus correspondence to her.

ingredients of effective social movements (Carroll, 1992). Carroll adds that “at different times and places the state may be particularly receptive or vulnerable to organized protest by a given contending group” (1992, 12).

Based on the democratic rights accorded to Canadian citizens, peaceful protest is permitted in theory but activism is often discouraged by the government – sometimes subtly, other times more forcefully. The treatment of protesters at the 1997 Asia Pacific Economic Conference (APEC) summit in Vancouver and the street protest at the 2001 World Trade Organization (WTO) in Québec City are examples of the state’s propensity to use violence (e.g., clubs, pepper spray and tear gas) even against those practicing non-violent civil disobedience. Some issues and some methods of protest are seen to be more appropriate than others at gaining support through being viewed as legitimate. This acceptance of the legitimacy of some issues over others is connected to ideology. Ideology can be seen as a orientation towards certain “beliefs or assumptions about the correct or proper state of things, particularly with respect to the moral order and political arrangements, which serve to shape one’s positions on specific issues” (Miller, 1973, 142). Because activists work against existing laws and norms their ideas and methods are often silenced or distorted by mainstream media and officialdom (Kuyek, 1990).

Canadian society has known several very influential activists who have lobbied on behalf of these marginalized men and women. Claire Culhane was one of the most dedicated and high-profile prisoners’ rights activists in Canadian history. Claire tirelessly advocated for the fair and humane treatment of prisoners and demanded accountability from the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) and other agencies responsible for the welfare of prisoners and ex-prisoners’. Her knowledge about conditions and politics in

the administration of every prison in Canada assisted her in this struggle. Champions of abolitionism are often denigrated in their lifetimes but their causes are often prized later.

To educate the public and gain support for prisoners' rights, Culhane wrote three books about the politics of prison, including her own experience of being ousted from prison – *Barred From Prison* (1979), *Still Barred From Prison* (1985) and *No Longer Barred From Prison* (1991). She also hosted a cable television show called *Instead of Prisons*, lectured widely in classrooms, conferences, and public meetings, and protested on Parliament Hill and at prison gates across Canada. Claire explained that the prison system needs to be challenged methodically (Burtch, 1986). She argued that it was only after all the legal, orthodox channels have been explored and exhausted that it is time to consider non-violent civil disobedience at prison gates (Burtch, 1986). Claire's approach for promoting social change was to protest at every level, in every way possible, without violence. Her long-term goal was the abolition of prisons.

Contextualizing Claire's Prisoner Advocacy Work

In 1992 Mick Lowe's biography, *One Woman Army: The Life of Claire Culhane* traced her life up to the early 1990s when she was still active in prison work. Claire worked to have people understand that prisons were a way for the state to control marginalized people. She argued that prisons were first developed as a form of slavery, that prisons were overused and that marginalized people were overrepresented in the prison population. She saw the overuse of prison as a symptom of capitalist greed and viewed the processing of prisoners as being "cannibalism" because so many actors in the CJS were profiting from the prison industrial complex (Culhane, prisoner correspondence). Culhane saw the prison as inhumane, counter-productive and damaging

to prisoners' psychological and physical well-being. She believed that many returned to the community worse off than before their incarceration.

Claire argued that struggles for prisoners' rights need to be included in the broader movement for social justice. Although she is most remembered for her prisoners' rights activism, she was a lifelong radical activist. Space constraints do not allow for a complete overview of Claire's activism; however, I will trace her entrance into prison work. To understand Claire's commitment to prisoners it is worthwhile to first reflect upon her distrust of the Canadian government as a result of her experiences in the Vietnam War as a health worker.

In 1967 Claire accepted a contract as a health worker at a Canadian sponsored hospital, Quang Ngai, in South Vietnam (Lowe, 1992). After witnessing the bloodshed and suffering imposed on the Vietnamese people due to the U.S.A. foreign invasion, Claire began to question the true objective of this war (Lowe, 1992). The official justification for the war was because of "North Vietnamese aggression". Through her contact with civilians, victims and soldiers Claire understood the motivation for the war was the cultural genocide of the South Vietnamese (Lowe, 1992). Claire resigned and returned to Canada outraged about Canada's role in the war (Burtch, 1986; Lowe, 1992; Culhane, 1972).

It took four years for her critique of the Canadian government's role in the Vietnam War to be published in her first book, *Why is Canada in Vietnam: The Truth about our Foreign Aid* (1972). Burtch explains that Claire's Vietnam experience made her question the Canadian government's hypocrisy (personal communication, 2004). On the surface, Canada is hailed as a peacekeeping nation that respects and promotes human

rights. Claire's experience in Vietnam allowed her to understand that, on closer examination, Canada supported the munitions industry in the war (Burtch, personal communication, 2004). Furthermore, the Canadian government did not vocally oppose the war as they were under pressure from the American government to support the latter's foreign policy. Burtch speculates about Claire's reasons for becoming involved in prison work after her return from Vietnam:

Her comment was when she came back to Canada after seeing people imprisoned in cages and camps in Vietnam and Cambodia – being held captive and tortured – she realized that there were tens of thousands of people in our own country who are incarcerated: women, men and adolescents (personal communication, 2004).

By 1970 Claire was one of the most outspoken Canadian critics of our country's role in the Vietnam War (Lowe, 1992). Many of her articles began to appear in local and national newspapers as a result of several interviews, speeches and demonstrations involving Claire. Claire wished to shift the focus on Canada's complicity with an unjust war (Lowe, 1992). Elliott (2004) recalls one memorable strategy Claire used in her 1968 protest:

Claire of course was a veteran of Parliament Hill as she had organized a lot of protests there. When she got back from Vietnam she handcuffed herself to the chairs in the visitors' gallery of the House of Commons and proceeded to throw her pamphlets onto the floor and onto Trudeau's head. She also set up her tiger cage and did her 10 day protest (Elliott, personal communication, 2004).

The "tiger cage" was a replica of devices used to imprison as many as 200,000 political prisoners during the Vietnam War (Lowe, 1992, chapter 6). Claire felt that by protesting at Parliament Hill she could go to the source of where decisions were made regarding foreign policy. Her strategies included hearing from those most affected by state policy,

informing the public and demonstrating to those in power. Claire's experiences protesting against this war gave weight to her argument that the democratic right to protest peacefully was often discounted by elite interests. This provided more motivation to Claire to expose social injustice and the denial of democratic rights. It is not possible to say to what degree Claire's demonstrations, interviews, speeches and published book influenced Canada's policy in Vietnam. Claire helped to deconstruct Canada's role in the war by challenging the public to question foreign policy. The social milieu in Canada was ripe for political activism partly because of the influence of the civil rights movement, women's movement and the anti-war movement. Many youth in Canada and the U.S.A were politically active and were rebelling against the previous generation's conservative nature through popular culture: music, clothing styles and open contempt for authoritative figures.

In 1974 academic degrees were not essential to teach at community colleges. Claire accepted positions at Vancouver City College to teach "Québec in Canada" and Capilano College to teach "Women in Politics" (Lowe, 1992, 235). Her work at Capilano College led her to teach a women's studies course in 1975 at Oakalla Women's Correction Centre in Burnaby (Lowe, 1992). Initially, female prisoners were reluctant to participate in the course as they regarded Claire's role as being an extension of the punitive system. However, Claire was able to gain the respect of several women prisoners (Lowe, 1992).

In 1975 a prison riot in BC Penitentiary resulted in the Emergency Response Team (ERT) killing Mary Steinhauser, a classification officer and one of eight hostages (Culhane, 1979, 11). Due to the ERTs extreme use of force in the moment and

longstanding, deplorable prison conditions, several prisoners organized a sit-down strike (Lowe, 1992). This protest grew when a group of young lawyers and activists who called themselves the Prisoners' Union Committee camped outside of the B.C. penitentiary prison gate to support the prisoners' strike action and to ensure that extreme force was not used against the protesting prisoners (Lowe, 1992). Claire took part in this demonstration as she had developed respect for the women she was teaching at Oakalla and was herself very aware of the state's propensity to employ deadly force during peaceful protest (Lowe, 1992, 236).

Claire began to visit distraught prisoners who did not have anyone else visiting them. Through this experience she became very aware that authorities were often intent on making it difficult for prisoners to foster relationships with the outside community. At Claire's memorial service, one ex-prisoner commented that she was the only one who always remembered to send him wishes on his birthday, wrote and visited him often because his own family was not supportive of him during his incarceration. Claire pointed out that prisons are not only designed to keep prisoners in, they are designed to keep the public out (Lowe, 1992, 238). Although the development of healthy relationships is of utmost importance for prisoners to be successful after their incarceration, these relationships are always suspect from a security perspective (Elliott, 2002, 468). As a result of several prison riots across Canada where prisoners protested conditions of confinement, CSC received increasing pressure from outside groups to improve conditions, ensure basic human rights were afforded to prisoners and to be accountable to the public (Lowe, 1992). Lowe (1992) suggests that "like Canada's policy in Vietnam, the official attitude seemed to be that Corrections should be paid for by

citizens, who ought then to be discouraged from asking too many questions about what was actually done with their tax dollars” (238).

In 1976, tension inside BC Penitentiary was increasing between the guards’ union and the prisoners’ representative group, the Inmate Committee (IC). Several prison riots resulted in six deaths inside the maximum-security institution in New Westminster (Lowe, 1992). CSC responded to such by allowing the first Citizens’ Advisory Committee (CAC) to be organized (Culhane, 1979). The role of the CAC was to be an independent body that could mediate between the IC and the prison administration (Culhane, 1979). Claire, along with university professors, lawyers, and politicians was one of the first committee members (Culhane, 1979). The IC wanted the public to know about conditions inside the penitentiary and had attempted to send several messages through the media to try to counteract the riot before it erupted. Claire was well aware of growing tensions inside the prison and had repeatedly tried to discuss the issue with the three levels of Administration of CSC - Institutional, Regional and National (Culhane, 1979). Culhane (1979) argued that the administration ignored the growing tension and the media was kept from gaining awareness of the extremity of the situation.

When one of the most memorable prison riots broke out in B.C. Penitentiary (BCP) in 1976, Claire was highly respected by the IC. Claire’s second book, *Barred From Prison: A Personal Account* (1979), was produced after this riot that led to the permanent closing of this institution. Claire stayed with the IC which was in charge of the penitentiary during the intense 80 hour prison riot where two hostages were taken. She offered support to the prisoners and remained with the prisoners to ensure that peaceful negotiations were taking place. For the first time in Canadian history an outside

group was present when prisoners confronted authorities with hostage taking (Culhane, 1979). Although significant damage resulted from the riot, there were no injuries or deaths.

Two months after the riot, despite a resolution reached with the administration, close to 200 hundred prisoners were spending 24 hours a day in a gymnasium. The administration argued that there was simply no place to put them as a large portion of the institution had been destroyed in the riot. Prisoners occupying the gymnasium were not receiving proper medical attention, exercise, privacy or connection to their loved ones. All visiting privileges had been removed and correspondence privileges were largely being suspended as well. On the request of the IC, Claire spent a great deal of time in BCP after the riot to ensure that the administration was following through on its agreement with the IC. Claire also contacted family members, at the prisoners' request, to inform them of what was going on as the prisoners were more isolated from the outside world than ever.

On October 6, 1976 Claire was asked by several prisoners if she would deliver their letters to family members to the Visiting & Correspondence office for inspection and mailing (Culhane, 1979). Although Claire asked several guards present what the current policy was regarding correspondence she was told she could take them herself down the hall to the office. After doing so, Claire was apprehended by the administration, charged with carrying contraband and removed from the premises (Culhane, 1979; Lowe, 1992). Local newspapers reported that she was transporting contraband for prisoners (Culhane, 1979, 66). The IC wrote their own letter to the Vancouver Sun newspaper, "Mrs. Culhane, although firm in her stand against brutality

and corruption, has never, at any time, entered into any scheme with any prisoner at this institution to violate the rules” (Vancouver Sun, October 8, 1976, cited in Culhane, 1979, 66).

It needs to be noted that a few days prior to this event another CAC member, Mary McGrath, had also transported letters for the prisoners. The fabricated charges against Claire resulted in her being barred from entering prison, while Ms. McGrath was not. The only way that the prison administration could be held accountable was for those on the outside to be witness to the events inside the penitentiary. Claire’s ability to see to the heart of the matter and her interest in exposing injustices in prison made her an adversary of the CSC. These events led Claire to devote the rest of her life to prisoners’ rights advocacy with the long-term goal of abolishing prisons.

Claire understood poverty, sexism and racism. Due to her skills of analysis and her use of other research as a basis for understanding, she recognized that certain segments of the population were targeted and overrepresented in the prison population. Notably, Claire was a victim of many racist remarks for being Jewish. Anti-Semitism was rampant in Montreal when she was growing up (Lowe, 1992). Claire came from a modest economic background and in her early adult years, raising two girls by herself, she experienced financial hardship (Lowe, 1992). Another type of discrimination that Claire could personally relate to was sexism. The point is that Claire adamantly opposed what she called “groupism” in its many forms.

Born into a Jewish family in 1918, there were few choices for a woman wanting a career (Elliott, personal communication, 2004). Claire was the younger of two children in her family and described herself as never being treated as well as her older brother

(Lowe, 1992). Claire's older brother went to medical school; however, there was not enough money for Claire to do the same. Claire had to replace her dream of being a doctor by going to nursing school. She was told that "I don't think Jewish girls make good nurses, but if you want to come and do your probation period I guess I can't stop you" (Lowe, 1992, 25). Claire's questioning of authority led to her resignation from nursing school for ignoring hospital policy, including distributing clean sheets to poorer patients (Lowe, 1992). Claire understood at a very young age how certain segments of the population were marginalized due to their socio-economic status. Due to her personal background and her life experiences it was not difficult for her to empathize with the underdog.

Correspondence & Voice: Help Prisoners to Help Themselves

Asked by a prisoner in the early 1980s why she – who had never been incarcerated – was so committed to advocating for prisoners she wrote, *"The only way that I can handle the tragedies and horrors of this life is to find a way to fight back"* (correspondence to prisoner in Ontario region, early 1980s). Culhane explained to a prisoner in the Atlantic region *"we have to fight this 'war' at every level... everyone has to pick and choose where they feel they can make the best contribution"* (early 1980s). Claire encouraged prisoners to speak out about their grievances by writing to her so that she was aware of the issues and circumstances within the prisons. She had rules that she needed prisoners to adhere to so that she could be effective at advocating for them. As head of the Prisoners' Rights Group (PRG) she wrote to a prisoner in the Pacific region:

Don't B.S. us – give us the whole story so we don't get left in a stupid position if and when we reach the top officials. Don't expect anything –

as we really have no clout/ power/ connections. All we can do is stay with it until something breaks - if so. We won't let you down that way and will always maintain contact with you. Don't contact us if you think it may come down heavier as a result - since there are obviously many people in authority who don't particularly approve of a Prisoners' Rights Group, they can and do take it out on prisoners who contact us (Correspondence to Pacific region prisoner, mid 1970s, emphasis in original).

Claire became knowledgeable about issues in prison and used this knowledge to enter into a letter-writing campaign. Claire would seek to first address the issues and concerns that prisoners expressed to her at the Institutional level. If a satisfactory resolution did not result, she would travel up the CSC hierarchy, contacting Regional and then National headquarters.

Claire spoke on behalf of prisoners who were so institutionalized they could not help themselves (Elliott, personal communication, 2004), yet she was aware of the importance of encouraging prisoners to use their own voices. Voicing grievances to Claire and to those in administrative authority allows prisoners to resist the misuse of power. Encouraging prisoners to resist oppression, Claire was helping to empower them. Even so, any show of resistance in prison is equated with non-compliance in the eyes of staff and the administration. The correspondence with prisoners served a vital purpose but at times prisoners were punished for their affiliation with Claire.

Claire took the task of writing to prisoners very seriously as she knew how much the prisoners needed her on their side. She committed herself to keeping in contact with prisoners, many of whom were very isolated from the general population in prison. When Claire was travelling promoting her books, visiting prisoners or attending conferences and seminars, she ensured that someone would respond to the prisoners

writing to her and inform them that she would be delayed in responding to their matter due to travel. The amount of respect she showed to prisoners was immeasurable. In turn, the mutual respect shared between Claire and many prisoners is paramount to understanding her commitment to the task of correspondence. Claire's main focus was with the men and women who were incarcerated. She empathized with them greatly.

Claire's Books

Claire's books were distributed in prison libraries; however, most copies disappeared (Culhane, 1985) for reasons that are not entirely clear. Individual prisoners, often through correspondence, requested a copy of her book. Prisoners were only charged \$1.00 for a copy of her book plus the price of postage. In her books Claire included verbatim excerpts of letters from various prisoners that provided a venue for them to tell their own stories of abuse at the hands of the prison system. In Claire's first book about Canadian prisons, *Barred from Prison* (1979), she included a diary created by the Inmate Committee (IC) during the major BCP prison riot in 1976. With the permission of the prisoner who created this hour-by-hour, day-by-day log, Claire was able to showcase the prisoner's version of the story. This was the version of the story that the prison administration wanted to keep out of the media. During the hostage taking, "it was learned that those in the Super Maximum area ("the hole") were being hosed down and deprived of food, clothing, and heat, by the guards, who were venting their anger on the only accessible victims" (Culhane, 1991, 18). In her next books – *Still Barred From Prison* (1985) and *No Longer Barred From Prison* (1991) – Claire included excerpts from the prisoner correspondence to help prisoners tell their own stories and provide support for her views on the inhumanity of life in prison. She thus provided

avenues for prisoners to be included in the processes that intimately affected them. Her correspondence with prisoners challenges the status quo by allowing a denigrated group access to knowledge production. Part of the experience of being incarcerated means limited control over participation with the outside world. Claire was a firm believer that major unrest in the prison population would ease if prisoners were treated with respect and had their grievances dealt with in an appropriate and professional manner. Clearly, the provision of her boxes of correspondence to UBC and to Dr. Burtch expressly reflected her wish that these letters not be forgotten but rather used to promote justice for prisoners.

The knowledge that she equipped prisoners with in her books was threatening to the prison administration because it was both personal and strategic. A population is much easier to control if it is ignorant. Claire taught prisoners to educate themselves and use this knowledge as a form of resistance. She often talked about how there had to be a fight for things to change. For Claire, “the best fight in town” was very uphill because she demanded the accountability of a system that traditionally had unquestioned authority and power over prisoners. Claire first began to advocate for prisoners prior to *The Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982). Abuse and even torture in prisons were commonplace, especially towards prisoners who did not conform and there was little avenue for redress (Elliott, personal communication, 2004).

Claire’s books discussed actual events and issues in individual institutions and offered a wider structural analysis of the prison system. She effectively contextualized the prison industry in Canada through exploring the political and economic complexity of it. Although Claire was ultimately seeking the abolition of prisons, she worked to

improve the daily conditions of the people who were already suffering from the effects of imprisonment. Despite her awareness of the need for wider structural change, her methods succeeded on more of an individual level than a structural one. It can be argued that she was not able to elicit enough support for the abolition of prisons in Canada. In many ways the corrections industry had become more powerful and entrenched because it was a growing bureaucracy with professionals and its own language further separating the public from its practices. During the twenty years that Claire challenged incarceration, the prison population continued to increase. Claire was effective at helping individual prisoners to deal with their incarceration as well as demanding that systems be put in place to challenge the administration to be accountable.

The Prisoners' Rights Group (PRG): "Stay with it Until Something Breaks"

Claire was very independent in her work but one strategy she employed was to forge connections between people across geographic boundaries. Claire was the founder of the Prisoners' Rights Group (PRG), a group of loosely connected activists who were spread out across Canada, each committed to fighting for prisoners' rights. When prisoners wrote to the PRG for help it was usually Claire who would respond to the grievance and contact the people necessary to address the issue. In a letter to a prisoner in the Prairie region, Claire relates some of the group's accomplishments:

It's really marvellous - have scored on most demands, eyeglasses for one, surgery for another, cane and repaired special boots for another, snatched baby from welfare machine for another, and so on. If this looks like a glorified social worker job, and for cheap at that, you may be right - however that's one of the goals of PRG to help prisoners help themselves...the other one is to help educate the public, and the third one long term, is abolition of the present prison system, altogether - by

turning the responsibility back to the community where the crimes occur in the first place (Culhane, late 1970s).

The statement on the PRG letterhead read: “We can’t change prisons without changing society. We know that this is a long and dangerous struggle. But the more who are involved in it, the less dangerous and the more possible it will be”⁴. Prisoners trusted her with their issues and concerns because she was someone who was independent of the administration. For many, she was an ally. She did not have to worry about conflicts of interest with her work as she was not employed by the government or any other non-governmental agency. She was proud of her independence as she could never be fired and she did not have to compromise her position as a liaison between the administration and prisoners (Elliott, personal communication, 2004). Claire was effective at gaining access to the prisoner subculture as her independence ensured that she was not susceptible to the cooptation by any sector of the prison industry.

Activist Strategies: “Bringing the Outside World In”

In addition to corresponding with officials to rectify grievances for prisoners Claire knew how to use the media to get her message out. Claire wrote various editorial letters to local newspapers as the founder and spokesperson for the PRG. This allowed Claire to have many of the most serious issues for prisoners accessible to the general public. She also hosted a cable television show called *Instead of Prisons* where she would interview activists, academics, ex-prisoners and others related to the movement for the abolishment of prisons. Claire recognized the importance of educating the public about the prison industry to help counter some of the myths and misinformation that is

⁴ This quote that the PRG adopted was originally found in the Coalition for Prisoners’ Rights Newsletter from Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1980.

usually presented by the media. The media is a key source of most people's knowledge about the criminal justice system (Condello, 2003). This knowledge is thus limited to the portrayals given by a small group of actors that have the resources, power and privilege to do so. Through writing editorials on behalf of prisoners, and her television program, Claire was able to have the issues presented and unmediated by the government, CSC, or any other interest group. Her editorials represent an alternative viewpoint about the use of incarceration as a response to criminal behaviour. In 1984 Culhane authored one of many newspaper articles on behalf of the Prisoners' Rights Group:

There is never any money (we are told) to care for our children, elderly, sick, homeless, jobless, but there is always enough for substantial salaries for those who continue to direct an insane criminal justice system. When will the public stop taking no for an answer and get themselves into our prisons to see for themselves how we really can start cleaning out the mess (Culhane, 1984, A5).

One of Claire's strategies was to show the interconnectedness of social justice issues.

Ruth Morris, a penal abolitionist and academic and the founder of ICOPA wrote:

We cannot have peace without justice. Those who want peace will have to recognize that peace is not found in expecting the powerless and jobless and minorities to accept police violence, court stigmatization, and imprisonment as their lot. Sexism is intimately tied to all the other forms of discrimination woven into our criminal justice system. An end to prisons, and the building of a caring community which responds creatively to our differences, is the foundation of a world free of sexism and other discrimination, where peace is an inevitable outgrowth of our whole way of life (Morris, 1989, 17).

Reaction to Activism: Limiting Access

Claire made many enemies in her work as she threatened the prison administration with exposure of unjustifiable, even inhumane practices (Burtch, personal communication, 2004). Perhaps the most prominent example of this backlash against her

was barring her from prison visits in British Columbia provincial jails for nine years and federal jails in BC for twelve years. Claire (1991) discusses how she litigated to have her visiting rights restored under the jurisdiction of the B.C Correctional Service. Culhane received advice from lawyers Ann Cameron and John Steeves and was set to present her own case at trial (Rebalski, 1987, A3), claiming a violation of her Fundamental “Freedom of Expression” Section 2(b); “Freedom of Association” Section 2(d); Legal Rights under Section 7 and; Equality of Rights Section 15 (Culhane, 1991). Nine days before the trial date the B.C Corrections Commissioner restored her visiting rights (Culhane, 1991). CSC had also barred Claire from entering all eight Pacific Region prisons for “unspecified reasons and solely at the discretion of each warden (two of them opted to restore them following personal discussions)” (Culhane, 1991, 8). Claire again argued Charter violations and demanded that she be able to visit as many different prisoners as she wanted (Culhane, 1991). The prison system requires public support if it is to continue to flourish and therefore those in control have a vested interest in keeping someone like Claire out.

Since 1976, Visiting and Correspondence regulations at CSC changed from being able to visit as many different prisoners as one wants (after being cleared by security) to only being able to visit one prisoner in one jurisdiction (Culhane, 1991, 19). This was an indication of CSC’s interest in keeping the public out of the institutions. This acts to further isolate prisoners and therefore is experienced as punishment. Today, the policy is that you can visit more than one prisoner in each jurisdiction; however, it is up to each institution to determine the suitability of each visitation request. A few days prior to the trial date on November 7, 1988, Claire’s visiting privileges were reinstated. Claire was

then permitted to visit as many different prisoners as she wanted. Access to visiting prisoners was crucial for Claire's work. She understood the need to foster connections with lonely prisoners, many of whom had no other connections with people on the outside. The Mission document of the CSC promises accountability to the public, but the experiences of Claire Culhane over the course of 20 years show this to be largely rhetorical.

Claire's battle to regain access would have been enough to deter many others from meaningfully participating in the struggle for prisoner justice. Lack of access to institutions limits knowledge of conditions and the mistreatment of prisoners. Morris (2000) describes cooptation as being another method that can distract abolitionists such as Claire away from their cause. Morris (2000) writes, "cooptation is the process of making one compromise after another until eventually we are so much like those who maintain the system that no one can distinguish one from the other" (34). Morris (2000) writes:

Another reason for cooptation is that we lose access to the very people we want to help, the prisoners, if we blow the whistle on what's wrong with the prisons. The fear of losing access to needy prisoners prompts all of us to swallow wrongs silently, and each silence is another step on the inexorable march to cooptation. Every volunteer that I have ever known who is doing a caring and conscientious job has sooner or later had trouble with the prison system threatening his or her volunteer status (35).

Morris (2000) goes on to say that Claire was resistant to cooptation and that she was "a woman who couldn't be stopped" (35).

After Claire was officially barred from prison, she was arrested on at least two occasions for trespassing because she was practicing civil disobedience. She would sometimes march outside of prison gates holding placards with messages on them or

would hold vigils and would always inform the media of these demonstrations. This was part of Claire's strategy of *non-violent civil disobedience*. Claire handcuffed herself to the warden's desk at BCP demanding attention to a situation with a prisoner (Lowe, 1992). Claire was arrested for each of these acts but nothing ever transpired from the charges. On each of the trial days the judge would give Claire a fine, as opposed to the other penalty of six months in jail. Claire would refuse to pay, and the judge would rule the case closed (Elliott, personal communication, 2004). The irony of all of this was that they would never have put her in jail regardless of how often she practiced civil disobedience.

The institutional heads of the prisons were not the only ones in authority that were denying Claire information or access. The prisoner correspondence indicates that at certain points National headquarters, the Commissioner of Corrections, the Ministry of Safety and Emergency Preparedness (responsible for corrections in Canada), and the Solicitor General developed policies against answering mail from Claire. Claire explained this trend to a prisoner in the Pacific region:

I have been officially told that the new commissioner has instituted a policy in his department where they don't respond to the correspondence of Ms. C.C. I am now trying to get it verified that the same policy exists in the Solicitor General and Minister of Justice Offices. They never even bother acknowledging any more - another dodge. But in spite of it all, you must keep up the good work of writing, filing grievances, and exhausting all the legal channels - otherwise you haven't any hope of some change (Culhane, mid 1980s).

The archival material identifies how even the Office of the Correctional Investigator (the Ombudsman for federal prisoners), at times denied Claire her role as the head of the PRG. "This is in response to your letter of January 19, 1983 and to politely inform you

for the last time that it is not my intention to take direction from you with respect to the conduct of any investigation by this office” (Office of the Correctional Investigator, Jan. 31, 1983, underlining in original).

Claire experienced backlash from victims’ rights groups and many members of the public mistook her fight for prisoners’ rights as undercutting victims’ rights. Claire, a great humanitarian, was not interested in placing one group’s rights before another. One common misconception about prisoners’ rights activists and penal abolitionists is that they somehow condone or trivialize criminal activity and do not care about victims of crime (Saleh-Hanna, 2000; Christie, 2004). Penal abolitionists and those who argue for transformative or restorative justice models see the retributive model as further victimizing victims of crime because there is so much focus on trying, convicting and incarcerating the offender with very little focus on victims of crime (Saleh-Hanna, 2000; Elliott, 2002). Claire explains her outlook to a prisoner in the Ontario region in the late 1970s:

We get accused a lot for ‘CARING ONLY ABOUT THE PRISONERS, NOT ABOUT THE VICTIMS’. Not true, as we assure our audience. But, with only two options before one as to what to do with the so-called criminal, -- either dig up all the best medical/social/educational etc. help available to help him/her overcome whatever problem got them in here since they will be released some day, and might as well be in a better space than when they came in - or, go along with the ‘hang ‘em all, throw the key away, etc.’ and with such a steady diet of dehumanization for sure when he/she comes out there are going to be more victims - so, we lay ourselves on the line. By working for prisoners we are also working to ensure that there will be far less future victims, right? (Emphasis in original).

Claire attracted criticism for contributing to net-widening and increased control because of her focus on improving conditions of confinement. Opponents argue that by

working towards reforming – or even transforming – prisons you are further entrenching their power rather than dismantling it (Senger, 1988). Claire rejected this viewpoint:

The Canadian prison system must be abolished; and as I worked toward this goal, how my efforts were consistently directed toward helping prisoners to stay alive and to get the earliest possible eligibility date. However, should it happen that my efforts contribute to a better functioning institution, it is purely coincidental for that is neither my concern nor my intention (Culhane, www.jpp.org).

Claire's work was definitely controversial and some prisoners she advocated for could point out the limitation of her individualized approach to social justice. Claire was entirely aware of how liberal reforms to corrections can contribute to increased social control. Claire recognized that systemic change is what is really needed to abolish the prison system but she could not ignore the men and women who were asking for help by absenting herself from the effort to ease individual suffering.

Claire was involved with many social justice groups promoting prisoners' rights such as Strength in Sisterhood (SIS), she contributed to *The Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, and she fought to have Christine Lamont and David Spencer returned home from Brazilian prisons. Christine's mother, Marilyn Lamont, recalls how focused Claire was on action rather than on discussion (Lamont, 1996, 6-7). Claire knew that actions speak much louder than words and threatened to hold a demonstration on then External Affairs Minister Barbara MacDougall's front lawn unless Christine and David were returned to Canada. Claire never gave up an opportunity to help someone in distress. Many prisoners, ex-prisoners, friends, colleagues and family members reported that she would never accept a thank you for the work she was doing. She would tell people not to thank her that she was just doing what needed to be done.

The impact that Claire made on individual people was arguably her most notable achievement. Dr. Elliott (2004) recalls a situation where an ex-prisoner told Claire the impact of her actions on him:

This ex-prisoner was there and I brought Claire and he gave her a big bear hug and he said, “you probably don’t remember me but in 1970-something we sent you a desperate letter and a call saying that this place is going to explode and the things that were happening to us in Dorchester” and she actually got the money together to fly from Vancouver out to Moncton and took a cab out to Dorchester. She was barred so she wasn’t even allowed to enter or anything. She thought that the situation was really serious and actually flew out there to support the prisoners. That is the way Claire was. The ex-prisoner said, ‘so there you were outside the front with your sign [walking] back and forth and we could see you through there and it meant everything to us that you were there’ (Elliott, personal communication, 2004).

She would not turn down an opportunity to give a talk, attend a seminar or presentation or visit with a prisoner (Elliott, 2004). Claire devoted 20 hours a day towards helping individuals who are the most despised in our society (Elliott, 2004; Burtch, 2004). In response to Claire’s death in 1996 we hear from a prisoner:

As a Native prisoner serving a life sentence in the Canadian prison system, I am honoured and grateful to have had Claire Culhane in my corner fighting tenaciously against some of the injustices I encountered during my incarceration... she did more than advocate for our rights, as she also instilled in some of us a sense of social consciousness – something the prison system abysmally fails to do. She helped us empathize with others in their struggle against injustice whether inside prison or in other institutions of society (Beaulieu, 1996, 6-7).

Claire was aware of how Eurocentric values were forced on Aboriginal prisoners making incarceration even more difficult for these groups. Claire was ahead of her time with her awareness of the effects of racism on the Canadian prison population. She argued that prison is historically rooted in slavery (Culhane, 1984).

Radical social activists confront a very powerful, far-reaching system with deep roots in punishment and social control. Both Elliott (2004) and Burtch (2004) mentioned that they did not feel that Claire ever had a comprehensive, fully-detailed answer for what system to have in place if prisons as we know them today were ever abolished (personal communications, 2004). Elliott (2004) nevertheless argues that decarceration is essential. It is one thing to get a prisoner out of jail but another to keep them out. Elliott (2004) explains her impressions on the strengths and weaknesses of Claire's approach:

Claire was very, very good and focused on what was happening in the prisons and making sure that people were not being abused by having their human rights violated but, not as good when the people were coming out (of prison) and that's what I was looking at mostly in Kingston. You know the dirty secret of this all is that the hardest part of the sentence for sure is doing the time. Although it's hard it is certainly a lot better... for prisoners' rights than it was 20 years ago. Claire didn't focus so much on that other part and so people would phone her when they would get out on the street she wouldn't have time for them and really she didn't have time for them.

My argument was that [returning to the community] is the biggest part of the hill. Doing time is like climbing a mountain and everybody thinks that their release date is the peak of the mountain and that it is all easy from there. It has been my experience that the hardest part of the climb is right after you get out. I don't think she really got the psychological understanding of what this experience does to human beings in the long-term when they get out. I mean she was able to observe it externally but she herself didn't get too terribly involved in the dirty work of how you help people get through their release. I mean let's face it, she was covering every prison in the country to make sure that people were not being tortured and abused in them (Elliott, personal communication, 2004).

Toward the end of her life, Claire reflected a great deal on the state of prisons and the prisoners' rights movement. Elliott (2004) recalls one of these conversations:

She said to me before she died, she was looking back on her life [and] she wondered if she hadn't just squandered it. She said, "You know, nothing is different, it's worse, there are more people in jail". The difference was

individuals. She made a huge difference to individual prisoners who had nobody and I [said], “What about so-and- so and so-and-so, you know all these people you helped, where would they be without you Claire? They would have been dead years ago and what about their families? You’ve done stuff in your relationships with people that nobody can take away from you and things *are* worse in the sense that sentences are longer now, [but] conditions of confinement aren’t as bad as they were...[yet] prisons are still there and they are not being abolished” (Elliott, personal communication, 2004).

Viviane Saleh-Hanna, an activist and academic, also reflects on the battle for abolitionism:

Abolitionists recognize that healing and transformative journeys are not ‘easy’. There are many misconceptions that work to delegitimize, not only the harm which people on those journeys have experienced, but also discredit their decisions to reject revenge and socially prescribed reactions to harm and grief. People often mistake healing with forgiveness and forgiveness for leniency. Healing is often attributed with an overall ‘soft, fuzzy, comfortable’ image. This is seldom the case (Saleh-Hanna, 2000, 48).

Official Recognition for a Life of Struggle

Claire received several awards in 1995 including the Canada Volunteer Medal and Certificate of Honour, the Commemorative Medal for the 125th Anniversary of Canada’s Confederation, and the Order of Canada. In a press release sent out by Claire to the West Coast Prison Justice Society, Claire commented on her acceptance of these awards:

I am pleased to accept this medal and Certificate of Honour not so much as a personal tribute but as public recognition of the commitment to justice that so many Canadians share with me. Canadian prisons, when we understand them as microcosms of our society, remain an ongoing and costly challenge to these aspirations for social justice. Thousands of men, women, and youth – less than 10% of whom are considered violent, another 10% of whom are estimated to have been wrongly convicted, and a disproportionate percentage of whom are Aboriginal – are currently incarcerated in our country. Yet we know that prisons are doing little to solve the causes of this situation, and in fact contribute to aggravating the

negative consequences of imprisonment for individual ‘criminals’ and ‘victims’ alike, their families and communities, and society as a whole. We must look to the social roots of so-called crime before any hope of correction can be realized.

Many people expressed their gratitude and admiration for her passionate work (Callwood, 1989; Horii, 1994). It is ironic that the very government she challenged her entire life later honoured her.

In failing health, Claire Culhane died of a stroke on April 25, 1996. She had experienced a series of health setbacks including a heart attack and a car accident. After her heart attack, Claire was confined to a hospital bed and told by the doctor that she had to give up her prison work for health reasons. This was very difficult for her as it has become such an integral part of her existence. Shortly after respecting the doctor’s orders, Claire was back corresponding with prisoners as she had always done. It was in her nature – the men and women still needed her help (Burtch, personal communication, 2004).

After Claire passed, a Memorial service was held for her at the Maritime Labour Centre in Vancouver, BC on May 13, 1996. At the memorial, many of her family, friends, colleagues, ex-prisoners and politicians who knew and loved her spoke publicly about Claire’s life and her life’s work. In his tribute to Claire at her memorial service Dr. Burtch explained:

Claire appealed to the romantic in me and she appealed to the realist. And I could never understand which was the romantic and which was the realist part. I’d say it was romantic to say that we could abolish prisons but, the more I look at it, the more intelligent and the more rational it seems – that we shouldn’t have the kind of prisons we have now. She knew for example that things like residential schools, apartheid, many institutions that are based on racism, sexism, on punishing the poor, had been abolished, had been challenged, and that prisons were the hardest

one... When I asked why she was writing to prisoners when she was so ill she looked me right in the eye and said, "We've gotta fight!" Like I'd missed the point – you've gotta have a fight.

Her family received hundreds of letters, telephone calls and faxes that were selectively chosen to be read at the Memorial as well. There were several other vigils in her honour across Canada including one on Parliament Hill held by a Lifers' Group and the John Howard Society. Mission Institution also had a memorial service where prisoners whom had known Claire for many years spoke about her impact on their lives. A monument bench was built on Trout Lake in East Vancouver – her favourite spot for quiet reflection. The library in William Head Institution on Vancouver Island is dedicated to Claire. After Claire's death, numerous articles were written honouring her life.

The Broader Picture: "Yours in Struggle"

In a tribute to Claire, her friend and colleague Dr. Elliott reflected on Claire's analysis of the prison industry:

Claire wasted no opportunities to make the connections between the politics of imprisonment and the socio-economic practices of the state. The heavy reliance on imprisonment in addressing social problems speaks more to our failure as a society to provide for all of its members, than our illusionary success in maintaining law and order. She denounced the individualist philosophies of capitalism and denied that the 'problem of crime' was a legal problem of individual 'criminals'. Prisoners were, rather, like canaries in a social coal mine and we ignored them at our peril (Elliott, 1997, 2-3).

Claire's work is a call for activism. Culhane (1991) writes:

Since there is a terrible need to combat the pattern of blatant disregard for maintaining even the appearance of truth which persists in most areas of prison life, and since attempts are being made to silence those who are still free to speak out, it becomes crucial that everything published or acted out on this issue should contribute to decisive analyses and plans for action. An unyielding solidarity with those already in prison is a good place to

start. The treatment of prisoners in Canada is indeed ‘cruel,’ but it is not ‘unusual’. Every punitive act tests not only the prisoner’s capacity to survive, but our capacity to permit such suffering (Culhane, 1991, 162).

Claire asked Canadians to question their belief systems and preconceptions of prisoners and sought to touch on their sense of decency and connectedness with the rest of humanity. Claire sought to demonstrate the importance of understanding the politics behind imprisonment and tried to show Canadians that by accepting the mostly unquestioned control over the most marginalized members of society, they were giving up some of their own autonomy and their safety as well.

Very few people dedicate their professional and personal lives to promoting social change as a life work. Most people do not have the time, energy, dedication or courage to do what came so naturally to Claire Culhane. The choice to commit to a movement that is inherently controversial and unpopular requires strength, tenacity, sacrifice and passion. Claire exemplified these qualities and knew how to use them to advance her social cause. As noted earlier, she was not able to produce the type of social change that she desired through her prison work. In many ways the punishment industry is more entrenched than in the past, yet Claire made a remarkable difference to the prisoners for whom she fought. Claire also was very effective at raising public consciousness by exposing the problems of the prison industry. She worked to demonstrate to the public the importance of resisting the oppressive punishment industry. The following chapter details the methods I used in exploring the prisoners’ correspondence and discusses ethical dilemmas associated with this type of research.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND ETHICS

She split the filing system in two, choosing to file by author primarily, then chronologically, rather than let simple dates rule the roost. Because this was all about people. People making a connection across continents, across seas (Novelist Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*, 2001, 365).

Researching captive populations such as prisoners requires a great deal of thought about ethics, primarily those of consent and confidentiality. A method of research that protects the identity of the authors is needed because prisoners can be vulnerable to the results of such studies. During the time that the “bulk” of these letters was exchanged between Culhane and prisoners, their content was subject to inspection by the Visiting and Correspondence (V&C) departments in the Institutions. Oftentimes, prisoners would mention the lack of privacy they could expect in their correspondence and that letters to and from Claire Culhane were often targeted for censorship due to the political nature of her advocacy work.

Prisoners who corresponded the most with Claire were often asked why they wrote to her since Claire was often seen as a threat to security. In the late 1970s Claire responded to an Ontario prisoner, “It is almost funny the way that they [CSC] have made a myth out of me, when I’m quite content to play low profile if I can be helpful in any way to make justice a little more meaningful on both sides of the wall”. In *Doing Research on Sensitive Topics*, Lee explains that:

Within bureaucratic structures especially... research can be perceived as threatening to the careers of those who might have to take responsibility if

the study subsequently reveals information unfavourable to the organization...outsiders whose values are thought to be unsympathetic, or even just different, may be feared or greeted with suspicion (Lee, 1993, 9).

Claire encouraged prisoners to work within the law she was so knowledgeable about the policies and practices in most prisons that she passed this information on to prisoners to advance their purposes – the knowledge she equipped them with was however often translated into a security threat. I often read letters encouraging Claire to pass their stories on to others who would help to advance their cause. An Ontario prisoner wrote, “Feel free to pass on copies of enclosed letters to any others who may be influenced by it [social justice for prisoners] and may offer significant and beneficial aid or support”.

A content analysis of the 100 largest files was undertaken with a focus on overt and covert violence in the institutions and prisoner resistance strategies in response to this violence. In total, the archival materials in these 100 files in my sample contained 9,235 items. Although Claire corresponded with prisoners from the United States, Ireland, England and Brazil (Dean, 1996, 58), I chose only files of prisoners serving sentences in Canada as the focus of my research is on Canadian prisons and prisoners’ rights in Canada. Before providing readers with a detailed account of my research method I will first discuss the preliminary work that went into preparation for this thesis and include a detailed discussion on the ethics of researching prisons and prisoners.

The Prisoner Files: Completing the Collection

I first met Dr. Brian Burtch in a proseminar class where he discussed his career development and research interests. The Proseminar is a class for newly-admitted graduate students where faculty members discuss their research. Having graduated from

SFU with my B.A, I was familiar with Dr. Burtch's research on topics such as suicide in prison, the midwifery movement, and sociology of law; however, I was not aware of his connection to Claire Culhane nor that she had donated her personal collection of correspondence to him for academic purposes. I became aware of Claire in my first year of university in 1997 because two textbooks I used that year – in criminology and history – were dedicated to her memory (see MacLean & Milovanovic, 1997; Antony & Samuelson, 1998).

I became intrigued when Dr. Burtch mentioned to students that the correspondence was available for a graduate student interested in thesis research and he had supervised theses for an MA student and a BA Honours student who worked on Claire's files (see Dean, 1996; Faust, 1998). I met with Dr. Burtch about one week later and we discussed the possibility of researching the correspondence. Because Claire's work is highly political and many of the issues addressed in the correspondence require sensitivity and discretion, Dr. Burtch emphasized the need for confidentiality of information entrusted to him, and, by extension, to those working with the files. Dr. Burtch allowed me some time to make my decision about whether to research the files or not and asked me to call or email him when I had decided. Having already done some preliminary research on Claire's work and life accomplishments, I knew before I even left his office that day that I wanted to commit the next two years to this research. I contacted him shortly thereafter about starting such and thanked him for the opportunity.

I received formal research ethics clearance through the Simon Fraser University Research Ethics Board on February 16, 2004. Prior to actually beginning specific research on the files I educated myself about Claire's work because it was important to

me to understand everything that I could about her life of activism and more specifically her advocacy work to promote social justice for prisoners. I read all of her books and articles and those written about her and interviewed professors around the school who knew her personally and professionally. With the permission of these professors, excerpts from these informal interviews are included in the previous chapter.

Dr. Burtch and Jen Kato, a work-study student hired by Dr. Burtch to assist with organizing the materials, realized that two to three of the boxes of files seemed to be missing. The files had been stored in a secure storage space located in the School of Criminology for the last seven to eight years and it seems that there was a flood that may have destroyed these files along with other stored materials. Dr. Burtch preferred that the files were kept in a secure, professional setting such as the SFU Special Collections/ Archives. However, since the materials were already available at a nearby university (UBC), the SFU library declined to store and organize them. The next best strategy was to keep the files secured in the SFU School of Criminology. Despite an extensive search of the School's storage areas and Dr. Burtch's office, the files remained missing and our primary concern was that their sensitive contents would be protected. The prisoner correspondence was organized alphabetically by prisoners' surnames by Tyler Dean and his research associates by surname and it appeared that all of the boxes with A's, most of the B's and all of the C's were lost. Dr. Burtch contacted Ralph Stanton, head librarian at UBC Rare Books and Special Collections library, where a companion set had been donated by Claire. They agreed to let us come in and photocopy the letters that we were missing under the condition that they were used for academic research purposes. We were concerned that the files in Brian's collection were not researchable without the

whole collection and it was not feasible for me to work at the UBC archives because of my purposive sampling method of choosing the largest files. UBC archives has a policy that only 3 boxes can be in use at one time and it therefore would have been impossible to sample the largest files because Dr. Burtch's files were organized alphabetically and the UBC collection were organized chronologically.

Dr. Burtch, Jen Kato and I met at UBC to begin the process of replacing the files. It proved to be a tedious, time-consuming task because, as previously mentioned, their files were organized chronologically rather than alphabetically. This meant that we needed to sort through all 60 boxes looking at each letter to find the missing ones. Jen and Dr. Burtch were able to join me in working to replace the files on a few other occasions, and I spent about two months at this task. I was happy to do it though and glad that there was an opportunity to replace the files, not just because of my own research, but because of future research as well. I knew too that the files were very important to Dr. Burtch as he had commented at Claire's memorial service that Claire's donation of the files to him was one of the greatest honours of his career. Considering the volume of correspondence and the courage and perseverance Claire put into her work, I understood why.

Replacing the files was an integral process for my research because it gave me an opportunity to glance at some of the letters as I was busy photocopying them. This provided me with a good sense of prisoners' issues. I read literally hundreds of letters during the two months I was at UBC Archives. I began to reflect on not only the violence that prisoners were discussing with Claire, but saw that many of them were working at organizing with each other to use non-violent means to have their issues

heard. Believing in the merits of inductive research, I wanted to be as familiar with the letters as I could be before I actually began any formal process of research for my thesis.

Continuing my Research Process

The sample was purposively selected based on the quantity of correspondence exchanged between the prisoner and Culhane. In consultation with myself and Dr. Burtch, and after reviewing other work related to Claire's activism (Burtch, 1986; Horii, 1994; Dean, 1996; Elliott, 1997), Jen Kato categorized the files on the basis of amount of correspondence. The labels given to the correspondence are "very minimal", "minimal", "moderate", "extensive" and "very extensive". Because all of the letters in each file varied greatly in size, the categories were mostly operationalized based on how "thick" the file was. Generally, the size of the files and the amount of correspondence in each category are:

- Very minimal: under 15 documents
- Minimal: 15- 25 documents
- Moderate: 75-100 documents, or ½" thick
- Extensive: 100- 150 documents, or 1" thick
- Very Extensive: 150 + documents, or files over 1" thick

Based on this categorization I selected the 100 largest files for analysis. This sampling method was chosen because I felt that it may provide for a deeper understanding of the issues, would keep the thesis manageable, offer an original analysis of information over the course of longer periods of time and would help illuminate greater understanding of the role of Claire as a prison activist.

The focus of the content analysis is on overt and covert violence in the institutions and prisoner resistance strategies – violent and non-violent. The content analysis includes 32 categories (see Appendix A). These categories include demographic variables as well as issues and concerns identified by prisoners. Overt violence included forced involuntary transfers, solitary confinement, Special Handling Units (SHUs), Protective Custody Units (PCUs), conditions of confinement, and aggressive treatment of prisoners. I also included covert violence and inward violence such as harassment, threats, racism, psychological distress, suicide and self-injury. To show how many prisoners overcame the violence of their environment I also identify prisoner resistance strategies and methods of redress that Claire encouraged. Hunger strikes, work-stoppages, demonstrations, petitions, prisoner publications, use of the formal grievance procedure, prisoners assisting other prisoners with problems, and participation on Inmate Committees (IC) are included. This thesis design also augments the content analysis with the ideas, thoughts, and experiences of the confined men and women. As themes and issues emerge they are analyzed further for their meaning and contribution to understanding prison life and the policies, practices and environment that shape it.

Tyler Dean had done a great deal towards organizing the files when he researched them for his M.A thesis; however, most of the files were not organized chronologically. After selecting my sample of the 100 largest files (which ended up being over half of the correspondence), my next step was to organize them chronologically. By organizing them in this manner I was able to see a story unfolding – a story that often lasted for years. The files were sometimes difficult to work with because some letters, for whatever reason, did not make it into the collection. I know this because Claire and those she

corresponded with usually began their letters listing the dates and contents of the most recent mail exchanged. Because Claire passed away almost a decade ago it is not possible to find out why some of these letters are missing. Many letters also posed a challenge when they were handwritten and not very legible. The task of reading often photocopied, handwritten letters was very time-consuming.

I realized through reading the materials that Claire used to make three copies of each letter that she sent to a prisoner in case they did not receive their correspondence because it was “lost” or delayed. There were repeated situations where prisoners reported that they did not receive their correspondence from Culhane and so she would re-send a copy of the letter. Other letters would be held by the V&C for some time before being forwarded on to the addressee. Most of the correspondence I explored in the files began with the author stating “I received your letter dated” or “I do not believe that I received your letter dated....” Culhane needed to be very organized in her work and kept records of when she last heard from a specific prisoner and any pertinent information to their special needs or situation. At her memorial, one friend commented on how difficult it was to find a dish towel to dry dishes with because Claire’s modest apartment was filled with papers and letters in every drawer, closet and cupboard.

All categories were predefined to ensure the reliability of the research tool. A reliable research tool means that different researchers can use the predefined categories here and produce the same results in the content analysis as I did (Palys, 2003; Silverman, 2003). The content analysis includes only issues identified in the prisoners’ letters and not topics that were discussed by Claire or any other writer. I also recorded, when available, demographic variables such as gender, ethnicity (as identified by

prisoner), reason for incarceration (offence(s)), institution, quantity of correspondence and duration of correspondence for each of the files.

These issues and variables were then entered through the SPSS computer program. Because I chose to do a purposive sample, this limited applications I could run through the SPSS software program. I used SPSS to organize my data and to run frequency distributions. A “frequency distribution is a numeric display of the number of times (frequency) and the relative percentage of times each value of a variable occurred in a given sample” (Babbie, Halley & Zaino, 2000, 73). I was interested in not only looking at issues prisoners identified in their letters to Claire but how often these issues were being identified. I decided that the content analysis should only include issues as identified by the prisoners and not those mentioned by Claire. Because Claire wrote on a daily basis to so many prisoners, her letters understandably tended to be a bit repetitive and I did not want to inflate the counts for the issues. The results of the frequency distributions are indicated in the tables and graphs in chapter 4.

I also used the SPSS program to calculate descriptive statistics or basic measures of central tendency and dispersion (Babbie et. al., 2000) to find out averages, the range of the variables and the sum of each of the categories. For example, on average, prisoners in this sample corresponded with Claire for six years and on average these prisoners wrote 92 letters to Claire. The measure of dispersion indicates such things as the minimum and the maximum values in a sample. For example, seven is the maximum number of institutions that prisoners in the sample “did time” in. Furthermore, the frequency distribution shows me that 25% of prisoners were in one institution, while 2%

were in seven institutions. The measures of central tendency and dispersion also tell me the total amount of times each variable was identified by each prisoner in their letters.

The methodology in this exploratory research helps to break down stereotypes about prisoners and creates a venue for the inclusion of prisoners' voices and concerns. Because prisoners are seldom asked what they need, a point made by convict criminologists, the prisoner correspondence highlights such needs. Direct quotations from the prisoners are included to help to uncover some of the silences of incarceration. The quotations bring issues to life and add depth in meaning and understanding to this work. Rather than paraphrasing what prisoners have said I have used verbatim quotes and not corrected grammar or spelling.

Confidentiality is given to all prisoners in this sample. I inputted my data into SPSS and coded the names of prisoners from 1 - 100 in the order that I read the files in. To protect prisoners' identities I have only included the region and the approximate time period. Claire wished for these files to be analyzed for academic purposes under the condition that anonymity and confidentiality be guaranteed. If ever in the letters a prisoner indicated to Claire that they did not want their ideas or information shared, I honoured this request (this occurred in only two files). The great majority of prisoners asked her to do whatever she could to have their issues *heard*. This research strategy is considered unobtrusive as the files were created without the explicit knowledge that they would be studied later for academic purposes. Reactivity bias is thus eliminated in this design. Reactivity bias occurs when research participants behave differently because they know they are being observed and evaluated (Palys, 2003).

Prisoners *were aware* when they contacted Claire that the information they shared with her would be used to advance prisoners' rights and hopefully correct injustices. It is therefore ethical to base research upon such letters in order to contribute to the fight for penal abolition. As Culhane was wholeheartedly committed to her cause, she wished for the letters to be put to use rather than stored away and forgotten. She must have been sure when she donated the letters to Dr. Burtch and to UBC archives that they contained important messages and lessons from the past that should not be forgotten.

Qualitative Analysis

This research is exploratory in nature and is informed by qualitative methods. Qualitative methods allow for the inclusion of "internal perceptual variables" and emphasize meaning (Palys, 2003, 15). Traditional research techniques drawn from positivist teachings do not provide an adequate understanding of complex social phenomena. The notion that there is an empirical world out there ready to be captured and recorded by an independent and neutral scientist is not appropriate for an activity that centres on understanding. In social science research it is not possible to capture purely objective reality since as researchers we can only know something through its representations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Many researchers now champion the merits of combining qualitative and quantitative methods and the divide between the two is somewhat of a false dichotomy (Palys, 2003).

Kirby & McKenna (1989) advocate "research from the margins" (RFM), research created from the edges of production of knowledge that focuses on those who live on the margins as well. Claire did not associate herself as a researcher nor identify with qualitative research techniques; however, many methods of resistance she used as an

activist are compatible with these orientations. Claire's grassroots activism is compatible with RFM for her work exposed the hidden side of the prison system by deconstructing its surface appearance. RFM proponents hold that those normally excluded from this process of knowledge production be involved since only through collaborating with marginalized groups can true social change occur. The relations of power and domination need to be erased to promote differences in thinking and behaviour. Qualitative research methods allow for a forum where prison issues can be contextualized, where prisoners can speak for themselves rather than being spoken about. Kirby and McKenna (1989) advise that:

The production of knowledge from the margins is a radical enterprise. Its overall goal is to challenge the monopoly on the production of knowledge in order to transform the existing descriptions and explanations of social reality into an inclusive and truly human view and to contribute to making the social world a more equitable place for all. It is therefore essential to remain centred on the experience of individuals with direct experience, to include your personal experiences in the research enterprise and only then incorporate other documentation (102).

Claire's work was often marginalized by the criminological community because she lacked the credentials required in academia and she did not believe in distancing herself from her work. Positivists argue that for research to be "scientific" and objective the researcher must remain separate from the phenomena being studied. This research challenges positivism and traditional research techniques because it is focused on Claire's deep involvement and her research from the margins.

Essentially, the prisoners' experiences, as reported by them, are taken at face value. This means that I have not sought to evaluate the "truth" behind any accusations of staff misconduct or check if events occurred the way that they were presented. Not

only would this be impossible due to limited resources, but I was wary of breaching prisoners' privacy by such follow-ups. There are always different versions of the truth – it depends on whose truth is being told. There are as many different versions of a story as there are storytellers. What is important here is *understanding* the issues as identified by prisoners and relaying what these issues and experiences meant to prisoners. This study is therefore focused on perceptions and meanings as set out by the prisoner as well as Claire's responses and initiatives.

My research scheme is phenomenological and constructionist. Palys identifies what is meant by phenomenology: "humans are cognitive beings who actively perceive and make sense of the world around them, have the capacity to abstract from their experience, ascribe meaning to their behaviour and the world around them, and are affected by those meanings" (2003, 9). Qualitative researchers argue that unless you take a person's perceptions into account, your research is incomplete or even trivial (Palys, 2003, 10). Constructionists argue that phenomenon cannot be understood unless the context of the experience is included. "Knowledge and truth are created, not discovered by mind...there is no unique 'real world' that preexists and is independent of human mental activity and human symbolic language" (Schwandt, 1994, cited in Palys, 2003, 12). "'Behaviours', 'events', or 'entities' are shown to be either highly circumscribed by culture, history, or social context or altogether nonexistent" (Gergen, 1985, cited in Palys, 2003, 14).

The prisoners' excerpts therefore allow prisoners a platform to speak for themselves independent of my evaluation of these thoughts. It should be noted that although I am including verbatim quotes from prisoners I have made decisions about

which quotes to include and which to leave out. Palys (2003) informs researchers that the topics or phenomena that are chosen for inclusion say as much about a researcher as what a researcher does not include. I tried to include quotes that seemed to represent very common themes identified by many different prisoners. However, it is important to not generalize between prisoners because just like people on the outside, prisoners' views, experiences and personal backgrounds vary greatly. While I was reading the letters I earmarked (without damaging the documents) quotes that I felt were interesting and well articulated. Without indicating the identity of the prisoner, I inputted these into my computer with the time period and region the prisoner was writing from. I also included quotes from Claire. When I had done this to all 100 files I then went through them and colour-coded them on my computer according to theme. For example, I coded *overt violence* in red and used the colour blue to indicate Claire's quotes. This allowed me to go through the quotes in an organized manner and it also helped me to visualize the most common issues identified by prisoners.

Like convict criminologists, prisoners who correspond with activists such as Claire do so to make the problems inside more visible to outsiders. A secondary analysis of the primary data set provides a unique if partial understanding of important issues for male and female prisoners and offers greater understanding into the informal grievance procedures and the general work of a prominent prisoners' rights activist in Canadian history. The letters help to illuminate ideologies that support or challenge prison policies and practices. The real-life consequences of an ideology based upon punishment of the criminalized comes out in the correspondence from prisoners.

Ethical and Legal Considerations: Confidentiality & Copyright

One paradox of this research is that I am trying to give prisoners a “voice” and a forum to discuss issues from their perspective; however, the one condition that Claire placed on those doing this research is that the identities of the prisoners be protected. I have respected this, recognizing this condition as binding; however, it is ironic to give “voice” without crediting identity. All my research has been done in a private, secure setting and when the files were not in use they remained in a locked location. When I executed my content analysis I coded the names 1-100 in the order that I went through the files in. The only place that the names were recorded was on a master sign-out list which Dr. Burtch and I agreed would be a good method to ensure control over the files while they were in use and to more easily locate specific items. This list will be destroyed after this research is complete and the names of the prisoner files I included in my sample are not found anywhere else. Tied in to protecting the identities of the prisoners corresponding, I have ensured confidentiality by not discussing specific cases in detail. I have permission from the SFU Research Ethics Board to proceed with minimal-risk research by following such safeguards.

Another major issue in this research is the ownership of copyright on the materials that I am including as verbatim quotes since concerns over copyright have increased dramatically since Claire’s death. According to the Canadian Intellectual Property Office:

Copyright consists of legal rights attached to works and other subject matter. In general, copyright means the sole right to produce or reproduce a work or a substantial part of it in any form...and if the work is unpublished, it includes the right to publish it or any substantial part of it (2005).

The copyright issue, as it pertains to my work, is two-fold. The first consideration is who owns the copyright on the letters and the second one is how can I use excerpts from the letters in my thesis work without infringing on someone else's rights? After consulting a lawyer for the Writers' Union of Canada as well as a law student who advises for UBC Archives, and reading parts of the *Canadian Copyright Act*, among other references, it is clear that Claire or her estate own the copyright on her own letters. The letter that Claire wrote giving Dr. Burtch permission to use the files for research can only extend to the letters she wrote (in terms of copyright ownership). Therefore, each of the prisoners holds the copyright on the letters they sent to her even though they are in her private collection.

After consultation and great deliberation, I believe that my research falls under a copyright exception known as the *fair dealing* exception (Harris, 2001, 126) which is section 29 of the *Copyright Act*. It is not considered to be a copyright infringement if the work is used judiciously for "research, private study, criticism, review or news reporting" (Harris, 2001, 126). According to Vaver, a Master of Arts thesis falls under the ambit of research or private study even if the thesis is publicly available through SFU library or the National Library (2000, 196). I have found through my research that the copyright laws in Canada with regard to such correspondence are hazy and grey. I say that this law is unclear because only a court of law can interpret the copyright law and determine if in fact anyone has adhered to the fair dealing criterion. This is determined by the quality and quantity of what is used and also by what the material is being used for. According to Vaver, the question is whether I have "taken more than reasonably necessary for the purpose" (Vaver, 2000, 199) of academic scholarship. It is generally accepted that

duplicating 10% of an unpublished work is permitted by law (York University website, 2005). I have adhered to this by only including short (a paragraph or less) excerpts from the letters. I have also tried to be sensitive and to use discretion when determining which quotes to include.

Academics or Activism?

The dilemma for many researchers is how to combine academic understanding with activist strategies. Claire Culhane emphasized activism over academics in the movement to abolish prisons. Claire's work epitomized what researchers discuss as *praxis*. Praxis is "a philosophical term referring to human action on the natural and social world [that] emphasizes the transformative nature of action and the priority of action over thought" (Marshall, 1998, 521). For Harvey (1990), praxis is not just finding out about the social world; it is also about effecting social change. Claire gained as much knowledge as she could about prisons and the justice system and used this as her ammunition for her activist work. Because Claire spent more time in direct action on behalf of prisoners than writing and publishing, much of her work has gone unrecorded. This thesis provides space to discuss grass-roots activism aimed at producing social change and contributes to our knowledge about prisons while providing weight for alternative perspectives such as penal abolitionism and peacemaking criminology.

Claire was often sceptical of academic papers on the need to change prisons or abolish them as she felt that direct action through protest and civil disobedience was the way to get things done. She rejected studies that were strictly done by and for the academic community that did nothing to help prisoners. Burtch (2004) recalls that Claire had asked everybody at a conference to name one thing that they had done that year that

had made a difference for a prisoner and not many people could say that they had (Burtch, personal communication, 2004). Claire feared that prison issues would become bled-out, academic subjects distanced from the reality of the incarcerated (Elliott, personal communication, 2004). Towards the end of her career when one of her daughters, Dara Culhane, now a professor in the Sociology and Anthropology department at Simon Fraser University, obtained her Ph.D., Claire recognized that it is possible to do “good work” in academia and still help the people you are studying (Faith, personal communication, 2004).

The reality is that academic researchers often have external constraints imposed on their research that Claire did not have. Academics may accept contracts from government bodies or private corporations that want a particular type of research done (Palys, 2003; Wolcott, 1995). At times, the results of such “tied” research can have a profound effect on certain stakeholder groups and therefore it can be a politically-oriented process rather than an academic pursuit. There are usually additional financial and career-advancing rewards associated with executing research. For me, there is an ethical dilemma of how to conduct research on marginalized groups without exploiting or betraying them to advance my own goals.

My Journey In Academia

Clearly, I bring my own interpretations and experiences to my research. Studying criminology since 1997 has made me aware of how dissatisfied I am with the current retributive system and I have searched for alternative perspectives on crime and criminals. I have long been concerned with social justice issues including poverty, violence against women (including domestic and sexual assaults) and I have been critical

of the tendency to criminalize the marginalized and the mentally ill. I have also spent time working with Crown Counsel and am very critical of our criminal court system and policing, especially in relation to marginalized groups. I became interested in critiquing the prison after reading Victor Hassine's book, *Life Without Parole: Living in Prison Today* (1999). This research is a natural fit for me and it has become increasingly important to me to actually make an impact beyond writing essays for my professors.

In November 2004 I first entered prison as a volunteer. Since then, I have been going to Ferndale Institution in Mission, B.C. to volunteer in the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP). AVP started in 1975 in New York. Prisoners in New York invited Quakers to assist them in finding ways to deter youth from crime. "The successful AVP prison workshops were expanded into the community when 'outside' people saw the same need for non-violent solutions in their own lives" (Apsey, 2005). One of the founders of AVP, Larry Apsey, writes: "I am giving my life to this work because I believe the world will destroy itself, unless it learns the arts of peace. I believe that peace begins with the individual" (Apsey, 2005). It is a non-profit and volunteer-based project that has since expanded internationally.

I am lucky to have been introduced to this project and invited to participate by Dr. Liz Elliott and my graduate colleagues Alana Abramson and Robb Chauhan. This project is particularly appealing because these workshops are facilitated by prisoners and non-prisoners collaborating together. AVP is focused on creating a sense of community between insiders and outsiders. AVP is modelled on the values of restorative justice which are "based on the belief that peace and justice are not only destinations, but also the 'correct means' to be employed in working towards these destinations" (Braswell,

Fuller, and Lozoff, 2001, 37, cited in Elliott, 2002). When I share with the prisoners what I am studying for my thesis some of them either knew Claire or knew of her. They tell me she was “feisty” and very strong in her convictions.

The Impact of Claire’s Work

Claire’s use of praxis publicized the problems of a marginalized and isolated group. Claire brought the concerns of prisoners into the public forum as serious issues to be debated and injustices to be corrected. Despite their academic credentials and social status, many criminological researchers are not able to speak to important issues to such a wide array of people. Part of the problem with academic research is that it is mostly produced for other academics and not disseminated among the public or the population being studied. Claire was extremely effective at bringing attention to her work.

Ultimately, a strategy combining community awareness through activism with academic understanding resulting from proper research has the potential to create social change. There is the dilemma of how much to involve oneself in each realm: activist and academic in order to provoke social change. If the goal is to provoke social change then the work that is being done must be grounded first in the experiences of the community where change is needed. Furthermore, you must be connected to academic research in order to act more effectively.

Claire’s work with prisoners has a great deal to offer the discipline of criminology as it causes one to question the fundamental values that uphold a system so focused on punishment. It is important to carry on Claire’s approach as it offers alternative viewpoints from marginalized people and alternative solutions for dealing with crime and

victimization. Claire's work remains compelling as it has the potential to make the public question what happens behind prison walls. If the public is made aware that there are worthwhile alternatives to incarceration and a system based on revenge and punishment, then there is the potential that they will demand more than just minor reforms. Claire's cause was unpopular but it need not be forgotten or abandoned. The next chapter presents original findings from a subset of correspondence to Claire, supplemented with samples of her correspondence and, where appropriate, integration of this archival material with key works related to prison issues and resistance by prisoners.

CHAPTER 4: “NO MORE, NO LESS”: AN INTEGRATIVE EXPLORATION OF PRISONER CORRESPONDENCE

I am deeply touched by your expression of confidence not that I need to be encouraged, for the only time I'll stop is when I stop breathing. It's that much a part of me to fight for what I believe in, and that is that EVERYONE must have the basic rights that are inherent in our democratic system: -no more, no less (Culhane, to prisoner in Prairie region, 1986, emphasis in original)⁵.

Introduction

Claire knew that democracy was a hollow promise unless all citizens were guaranteed their rights. A social justice foundation for criminal justice meant that prisoners, who were largely invisible once confined, or whose outlooks were discredited when they surfaced, needed to be part of the work for social justice. This chapter features the results of an exploratory content analysis, using tables, figures and brief excerpts from the archive. This modest exploratory research is integrated with relevant and available contemporary research so that it is not purely a historical review of prisoner issues. The 100 prisoners who corresponded the most with Claire wrote to have their issues and concerns heard by someone who cared and to have wrongs corrected. The content analysis of prisoner correspondence in this chapter is drawn from the 100 largest prisoner files which included a total of 9,235 items. This archival material is composed of:

⁵ Most quotes in headings are from the prisoners' correspondence, except where indicated.

- letters exchanged between prisoners and Claire in her capacity as the head of the Prisoners' Rights Group (PRG);
- reports from the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC);
- responses from government agencies, institutional heads and politicians;
- newspaper articles;
- prisoner art, poetry, cards, essays and photographs.

This archive's rich materials tell a different glimpse into the history of corrections in Canada – a story that differs from official versions and media re-creations⁶ (see Comack, 1996). It is difficult for most people to fathom how one woman could maintain correspondence with at least 1,133 people⁷. She kept immaculate notes and was therefore knowledgeable about each of the prisoners' concerns and she always answered her endless mail, regardless of how many hours it took. She learned how to get by on 4-6 hours' sleep each night and she often wrote "way past midnight"⁸ after dating her letters. Many issues in the prisoner correspondence required immediate and serious attention as they had to do with human dignity and liberty. Understanding the history of Canada's penal institutions requires that attention be given to the lived experiences of prisoners. Today, when many members of the public support longer and harsher periods of incarceration, and protest that prisoners have too many rights now (Harris, 2003), or should not have rights at all, it is essential to uncover the past.

All materials in the sample (n = 100 correspondents) were read by the researcher.

The information in this content analysis is derived solely from the correspondence by

⁶ For a complete overview of the issues in all 1,133 files, see Appendix B.

⁷ Mick Lowe, author of, *One Woman Army: The Life of Claire Culhane*, also donated his research to the UBC Rare Books and Special Collections library. This archive is accessible to the public.

⁸ Rowley, A. & Burtch, B. (2006). "Working Way Past Midnight": Claire Culhane and the Fight for Prisoners' Rights and Penal Abolition, John Howard Society of Ontario, in press.

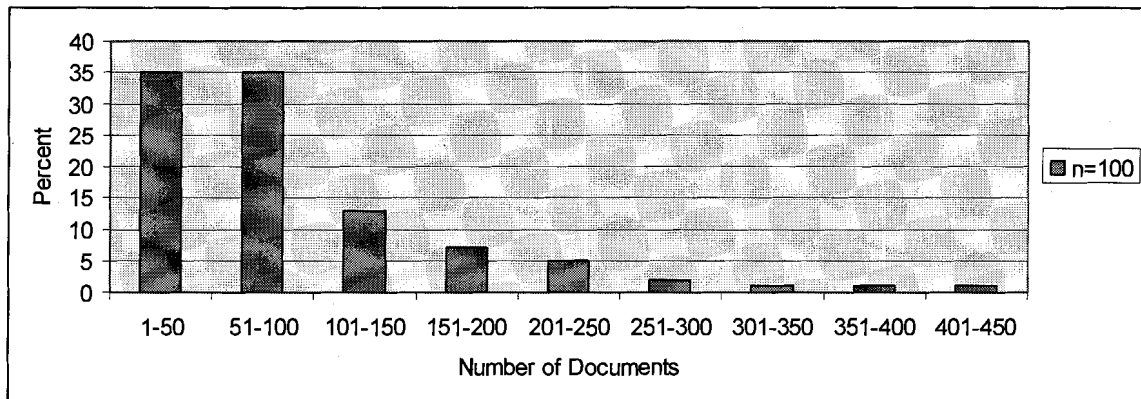
prisoners. The topics of discussion identified by Claire or third parties were not recorded in this content analysis but brief verbatim quotations are used to illustrate the methods and advice she offered to prisoners.

More than Numbers: A Closer Look at the Sample of Prisoner Correspondents

The sample is overwhelmingly male: 97 of the correspondents were male, 2 were female and one identified as transsexual. Given the tradition of overlooking women in prison (Faith, 2004), I was hoping that there would be a larger representation of correspondence from female prisoners; however, based on the sampling technique of choosing the largest files, only 2 files fit this category. When compared to the entire archive, there are 50 female correspondents in the 1,133 files. I also only included people serving sentences in Canadian institutions, although several men were of American citizenship. Ethnicity or race of the prisoners were impossible to determine because 83% did not mention this. Thirteen percent of prisoners identified as First Nations, 3% French Canadian and 1% as African-American. I had to exclude three files and select replacements because they were written in French and I am only fluent in English.

The largest file has 415 letters and the smallest has 29 letters. The average number of letters in a file is 92. The length of the letters varied considerably, from one page to sizable documents with 30 or sometimes more pages. Figure 1 (below) indicates the number of documents in each of the prisoners' files.

Figure 1: Number Of Documents In Each File



The letters were sent from 38 institutions, 36 of which were men's institutions and 2 women's institutions. Most prisoners experienced at least one transfer while corresponding with Claire. Only one-quarter of prisoners "did time" in one institution. Two prisoners were in seven different institutions while corresponding with Claire. The average number of institutions is 2.73. Table 1 (below) indicates the 15 most common institutions that prisoners wrote to Claire from, and includes the region and level of security. The "number" indicates the number of prisoners who corresponded with Claire from each institution. I have included only these institutions to protect the identities of prisoners corresponding from less common, and therefore, more identifiable locations.

Table 1: The 15 Most Common Institutions From Which Prisoners Wrote To Claire

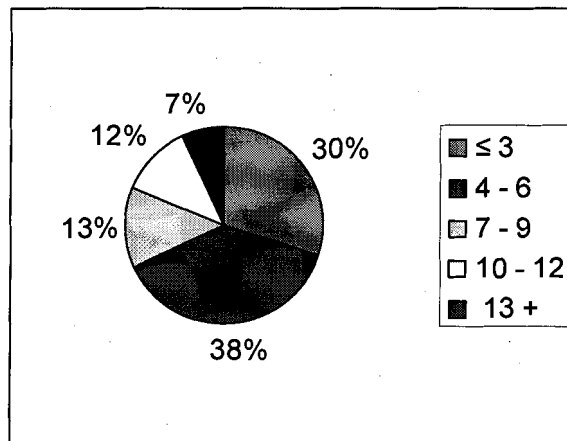
Institution	Region	Security Level	Number of Prisoners
Millhaven	Ontario	Maximum	27
Kent	Pacific	Maximum	27
BC Penitentiary	Pacific	Maximum	22
Dorchester	Atlantic	Medium	20
Saskatchewan Penitentiary	Prairie	Medium/Maximum	17
Matsqui	Pacific	Medium	15
Kingston Penitentiary	Ontario	Maximum	12
Oakalla (Lower Mainland Regional Correctional Centre)	Pacific	Provincial facility (sentences less than 2 years)	11
Edmonton Institution	Prairie	Maximum	10
Joyceville	Ontario	Medium	10
Leclerc	Québec	Medium	10
Warkworth	Ontario	Medium	9
Stony Mountain	Prairie	Medium	8
Collins Bay	Ontario	Medium	8
Archambault	Québec	Maximum	8
Total			214

Most prisoners were incarcerated in more than one institution and therefore the total does not add up to 100 prisoners. Most of the correspondence came from federal as opposed to provincial institutions. I can speculate that because prisoners in provincial institutions serve sentences less than two years, they had less reason to correspond with Claire and therefore are not as strongly represented in this sample. Prisoners serving their sentences at federal maximum and medium-security institutions corresponded more frequently and over a longer duration of time, generally speaking, than those in less secure settings. The volume of correspondence out of maximum-security institutions may be higher because these institutions are reserved for prisoners labelled as a higher security threat and who may have more violent histories. The high volume of correspondence from higher-security institutions may also be the result of prisoners being

isolated more often due to perceived security risks and harsher prison conditions may have generated more concerns as well. The majority of correspondence came from the Pacific and the Ontario regions.

The average time spent corresponding with Claire was six years. Figure 2 (below) indicates the number of years prisoners spent corresponding with Culhane. The least amount of time was just under one year and the longest was 18 years.

Figure 2: Years Spent Corresponding With Claire Culhane



The type of offence prisoners were sentenced for was very difficult to ascertain. Culhane had a policy of not asking a prisoner why they are serving time. She respected their privacy and understood that in prison culture, there is a code of silence. Fifty-six of the correspondents in this sample did not mention the crime(s) that led to their sentence of incarceration. Of the known offences, Table 2 (below) displays the prisoners' offences from the most common to the least common.

Table 2: Offences That Led To Incarceration

Known Offence	Number of Prisoners	% (excluding unknown)
Armed robbery	13	20
Sex offence	9	14
Drug trafficking	8	13
Homicide – second degree	6	10
Break and Enter	6	10
Theft	5	8
Homicide – first degree	4	6
Fraud	3	5
Abduction	3	5
Habitual/ Dangerous Offender Label	3	5
Manslaughter	1	2
Assault	1	2
Total:	62	100

The total in the “Number of Prisoners” column adds up to higher than 100 prisoners because many were serving time for more than one crime and three correspondents had a Habitual or Dangerous Offender designation. Claims of wrongful conviction were identified by 7% of the prisoners corresponding with Claire. The prevalence of wrongful conviction is unknown, although more sophisticated techniques such as DNA analysis are now available and have been used to exonerate prisoners (Huff, 2002). Claire used to say in her correspondence that she could find at least one innocent person per institution.

“Struggling On”: Violence as Social Control

Many issues emerged in the correspondence. Given that Claire advocated non-violent solutions and techniques, I thought it would be interesting to explore whether prisoners discussed the use of violent or non-violent resistance strategies. I say “resistance strategies” because prisoners are often at the receiving end of anger, hate, fear and revenge for harms they have committed. Because prison staff and the administration have near-total control over the lives of prisoners and conditions of their confinement,

basic human rights have been abused. A great deal of the prisoner correspondence in this exploratory work was written prior to 1982 legislation such as the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the 1992 *Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA)* which means that many of these prisoners were more vulnerable to abuse and mistreatment than they would be today. Thus, in this content analysis there is a focus on how violence was used as a mechanism of social control in prison.

Cohen (1985) defines social control as an organized response and employment of various methods for dealing with those who are deemed problematic or deviant. I am defining violence in broad terms to encompass brutal, unmistakable violence as well as subtler expressions. In this context, violence is understood as either a deliberate abuse of power or an attempt at inappropriately gaining power. I define violence as behaviour that causes, or has the potential to cause, mental, physical or emotional harm or anguish. It is any action that attempts to humiliate, harass, degrade, harm, or anger another human being. This behaviour may be perpetuated against oneself, another person or object. Violence includes what is termed state sanctioned violence that is protected by law and is committed by those in positions of power (Saleh-Hanna, 2000). The irony is that while offenders are often sent to prison for their violent actions, officially-administered violence is often part of the penalty.

As violence permeates prison life, I argue that much of what prisoners were writing about was the overt and covert violence that they were experiencing. In addition to the content analysis I include verbatim quotes from prisoners' letters, a technique that Claire often used in her writing. I have not edited the quotes for spelling and grammar.

These quotes help to dramatize prisoners' personal experiences and thoughts about the violence of prisons and how they responded to patterned problems and issues.

Isolation & Containment

Segregation/ Solitary Confinement

Solitary confinement, an issue in 692 of the 9,235 letters, was the most common reason for prisoners to write to Claire. On average, solitary confinement was discussed 7 times per prisoner. Only 19 prisoners did *not* identify this issue in their letters. Below, Table 3 displays the frequency of this topic and shows how many prisoners in the sample discussed solitary.

Table 3: Mentions Of Segregation/Solitary Confinement

Frequency of Topic	Prisoners in sample (n = 100)
0	19
1-5	37
6-10	22
11-15	10
16-20	5
21-25+	7
Total	100

Reasons for writing to Claire about solitary confinement varied, but the most common reasons were to protest or bring attention to the conditions of confinement, to document the manner in which prisoners were mistreated by staff, the prisoners' sense that they were confined too long in solitary, and descriptions of profound loneliness, boredom, and anger while in solitary confinement. A prisoner from the Pacific region wrote:

As the dreaded monster of sensory deprivation tightens its tentacles around my brain, my misery and wretchedness manifests itself in the form of pacing back and forth. I walk night and day in this stinking little cell

crunching enemies beneath my callused feet in a losing struggle to maintain a semblance of sanity that other people take for granted (late 1970s).

The above quotation dramatizes the experience of solitary confinement from a prisoner's perspective. Prisoners are forced into solitary confinement ostensibly as punishment for infractions that threaten the safety or security of others in prison. There are many terms used to describe this response: segregation, solitary confinement, administrative dissociation, the "hole", the "dungeon" or "solitary". Today, it is officially called administrative dissociation and is described as a method to ensure the "good order and maintenance of the institution" (Jackson, 2002). A prisoner is usually sentenced to a term of 30 days, at which point a board will decide whether the prisoner can be returned to general population or whether they are to remain in solitary confinement (Jackson, 2002). However, prior to the Charter and the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* (CCRA) the prison administration had discretion to keep a prisoner confined in segregation as long as they deemed necessary. The prisoners' correspondence identified this as an abuse of power since it was not uncommon for a prisoner to be physically beaten, psychologically tormented, or essentially forgotten while in segregation.

The conditions in solitary confinement varied greatly over time and from institution to institution. As noted earlier, here and elsewhere in this chapter, I am chronicling the assertions of prisoners as set out in the correspondence as well as Claire's knowledge of solitary confinement and other contentious practices. There is some corroborating material (Jackson, 1983) but nothing that confirms or disconfirms the prisoners' allegations. Common to many segregation cells during this era were cement

slabs with or without a mattress and buckets for a toilet or, in some cases, just a hole in the floor. The prisoner was in this cell for 23 ½ hours of the day with only ½ hour for exercise. They were not permitted visitors, phone calls, work duties, or any social functions while segregated. Several prisoners claimed that they were stripped naked and made to remain naked for the period of time they are being punished in segregation. Historically, the conditions of confinement in solitary have been a source of concern (see Culhane, 1991; Jackson 1983, 2002). Solitary confinement units in the Pacific region were under some scrutiny by activists, academics, human rights' commissions and government committees and many of them were subsequently closed, at least officially closed. Some prisoners' letters suggest that these areas were quietly reserved for some of the more "difficult prisoners". In a letter to the Attorney General in the late 1970s Claire protested the improper use of solitary confinement:

I can also provide the names of approximately fifteen other prisoners who were held in this same area about three months ago, some of them with neither clothing nor mattress and thereby required to try and sleep naked on the cement floor. The practice of attaching makeshift nooses to the bars of his cell by the guards can be described as a form of psychological maltreatment, not altogether in keeping with [a] sound health environment, and one which should also be investigated when interviewing [the prisoner who made the complaint] in our [the PRG] view.

The letters reveal that many prisoners felt that solitary confinement was overused by prison staff to control prisoners and undermine their psychological well-being. The following excerpt was written by a prisoner in solitary confinement:

Here I am writing from the depths of hell which is my description of the prison system including solitary confinement where I'm presently wasting away and dying slowly. Not the physical death of course (though at times I'm not so sure). I mean in the spiritual/emotional/psychological one. My

spirit is almost broken, at times my emotions seem dead and mentally I'm messed up (Prairie region, mid 1980s).

In *Discipline & Punish*, Foucault (1977) identified several transformations in punishment with the emergence of the prison. He argued that there is shame in the act of punishing and therefore there is a distancing from the act by entrusting it to experts and professionals. This transformation began when prisons replaced public torture and executions in the mid 19th century. The development of prisons meant that punishment could occur in a closed setting, outside of the view of the public. Foucault explains the implications of this transformation:

Punishment, then, will tend to become the most hidden part of the penal process. This has several consequences: it leaves the domain of more or less everyday perception and enters that of abstract consciousness; its effectiveness is seen as resulting from its inevitability, not from its visible intensity; it is the certainty of being punished and not the horrifying spectacle of public punishment that must discourage crime; the exemplary mechanics of punishment changes its mechanisms (1977, 9).

He warned that the punisher would increasingly hide behind bureaucracy and there was a conversion from the body as the location for punishment to the soul (Foucault, 1977). Many of these changes contributed to a covert mode of punishment (Cohen, 1985; Garland, 1990).

The use of solitary confinement today is a good example of obscured violence (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). It is a concealed form of punishment as it occurs in an isolated part of the prison. It is important to recognize the psychological element to violence. Today, violence is still used by the administration to ensure conformity and compliance and such violence is most effective if it is covert. While physical punishment is very apparent and immediate, mental punishment breaks down the human psyche over time

and is not as visible. While the beating of prisoners in solitary confinement is no longer allowed, an attack on the psyche of the prisoner is acceptable. Not only is this suffering outside of our public view, it is left to continue as we are told that prisoners are different from us and deserving of retribution for the harms they have imposed.

Culhane was adamantly opposed to solitary confinement. She viewed this as inhumane, counter-productive and inherently violent (Culhane, 1979, 1985, 1991). Garland (1990) argues that we often take punishment for granted and fail to think deeply about it. Culhane understood the effects of solitary confinement on prisoners because they would reveal these concerns in their correspondence. She believed that if people were informed about issues such as solitary confinement they would no longer tolerate this and ask for other solutions to institutional issues (Culhane, 1991). Claire wrote to a prisoner in the Prairie region:

Whenever I get to describe the 23 ½ hours solitary to classes I speak to, I challenge them - if they admit to any kind of sympathy or empathy - to prove to themselves!! [I tell them] "Take your radio, TV, books, food, and a bucket (!) into your garage, and lock yourself in only from Friday night to Sunday night, and talk to absolutely no one in that 48 hours!" I've never had a taker, and I tell them so, too!! (Culhane, early 1980s, emphasis in original).

Claire challenged people to be compassionate to prisoners and question what we as a civilized society will accept as humane treatment. Prisoners in solitary are kept from communicating with anyone on the outside and therefore their suffering can go unnoticed. When Culhane did not receive a response from a prisoner she frequently corresponded with, she often became concerned that they were suffering in segregation and she would make the appropriate contacts to ensure the proper treatment of that prisoner as well as a timely release back into general population.

Herman (1997) explains that people exposed to repeated captivity suffer from trauma which can affect them physically and mentally (1997). She notes the connections between the reported traumatic experiences of prisoners, abused women, hostages and survivors of concentration camps.

In addition to inducing fear, the perpetrator seeks to destroy the victim's sense of autonomy. This is achieved by scrutiny and control of the victim's body and bodily functions. The perpetrator supervises what the victim eats, when she sleeps, when she goes to the toilet, what she wears. When the victim is deprived of food, sleep, or exercise, this control results in physical debilitation. But even when the victim's basic physical needs are adequately met, this assault on bodily autonomy shames and demoralizes her (Herman, 1997, 77).

In their correspondence, prisoners reported situations where they were not given meals but given instant powdered soup mix without hot water to cook with, where light bulbs were on for 24 hours a day – making it impossible to sleep – and that the half-hour allocated for daily exercise often consisted of being walked back-and-forth in front of their cell in leg shackles and hand cuffs. It is impossible to know to what extent these accusations were founded; however, these conditions were reported by several prisoners corresponding with Claire, writing from various institutions.

Prisoners also identified the inappropriate use of solitary confinement as a reprisal against those active in the prisoners' rights movement:

A great deal rests on the shoulders of the administration and its guards, and their excessive use of what they call segregation. Solitary is used against prisoners who continue to resist against the repressive environment within the system, and it is used to extremes that are hard for anyone to believe possible in a modern day society. It is used to wear us down, to degrade us, humiliate us, and to try and break our spirit (Ontario region, late 1970s).

It is important for prisoners to be involved in their fight for justice but, for many, this task seems futile. Prisoners who resist and protest in prison are often subjected to retaliation. Many prisoners who challenge the administration by writing articles for newspapers or prison publications claimed to be penalized through solitary confinement. One prisoner who commonly wrote for the local newspaper returned to his cell to find his papers, books and pens removed from his cell. Prisoners organizing petitions, work-stoppages, and hunger strikes were often reprimanded and the administration often separated prisoners involved through transferring them to separate prisons. The use of solitary confinement also strengthens the dichotomy of “us” versus “them” and encourages animosity between the captors and the captive.

Special Handling Unit

Another form of segregation discussed in the prisoner correspondence is the Special Handling Unit (SHU). The SHU was defined by Culhane as:

A minimum two-year programme of regulated solitary confinement in top security, heavily guarded, specially constructed prisons. Minimum since any infraction adds to the time ‘awarded’ for solitary confinement. This process is not legally sanctioned by the courts, therefore it cannot be appealed (1985, 19).

In 1977 the two first SHUs were opened in the Ontario region (Millhaven) and Québec region (Correctional Development Centre) (Jackson, 2002, 8). In 1984 CSC opened two SHU prisons – one in the Prairie region (Prince Albert) and another in the Québec region (Sainte-Anne-des-Plaines). Since 1997 Sainte-Anne-des-Plaines is the only institution that is designated as a SHU (Jackson, 2002, 8). “In the Special Handling Unit, my surroundings were made up of chain link fences, razor wire, steel doors, guns, and the

bang of electronic locks being thrown; what I listened to there were accounts of the precarious state of prisoners' rights in Canada's harshest prison" (Jackson, 2002, 8).

SHUs were designed to house difficult prisoners who usually have a history of prison violence. This may include prisoners who have killed another prisoner or guard while incarcerated. These men are segregated from general population for 24 hours a day and not allowed visitors or even to attend social functions and they are restricted as to which programs they can take part in. There were supposed to be special programs for prisoners in these units but Jackson explains that at "Millhaven SHU the 'library' was a cell furnished with an empty bookcase, the 'music room' was a cell with a shelf on which a single guitar rested, and the 'gym' was a double cell equipped with a punching bag and exerciser" (Jackson, 2002, 8). The correspondence reveals that SHU prisoners were to remain in their cells for 23 hours a day with 1 hour reserved for exercise. It was not uncommon for these prisoners to be in the SHU for years at a time. SHU prisoners often reported feeling the most isolated as they were often confined much longer than prisoners held in administrative dissociation or the "hole". The irony is that one reason for creating SHUs was to house prisoners who would otherwise be held in solitary for extended periods of time, yet many prisoners corresponding with Claire reported a preference for the "hole" than to be shipped to a SHU. SHUs were a topic of discussion in 328 prisoner letters. On average, prisoners discussed this topic 3 times. Table 4 displayed below shows the frequency of discussion on the SHU.

Table 4: Mentions Of Special Handling Unit (SHU)

Frequency of Topic	n = 100
0	51
1-5	30
6-10	11
11-15	1
16-20	2
21-25+	5
Total	100

Just over half of the prisoners in my sample (51%) did not discuss the SHU in their correspondence. This is most likely because they were not placed in this form of segregation while they were corresponding with Claire. Those who did discuss the SHU complained that they had to suffer long periods of segregation in the SHU for unproven allegations. The following excerpt is from a prisoner from the Prairie region who claimed he was put in the SHU based on unfounded charges:

...we prisoner's have no access to justice when you impose your inhumane cruel treatment against us. You've shown me your guilt, by not even offering me the chance to defend myself in a court of law. To prove my innocence...is one thing you people cannot handle...'cause it never fails to bring out the true light, in what goes on in your prisons. I ask you people, if ever you were accused of a major wrong doing ...would you prefer a fair trial or be guided around 24 hours a day with a shot gun at your head until your spirit breaks? This is the justice and logic that you dish out to us in your cages...Your prisons are a breeding ground for hatred and revenge. You psychologically abuse, and physically beat man...and you wonder why he had so much hate and revenge inside him (mid 1980s).

Culhane (1985) discusses the harmful effects of the SHU on prisoners' physical and psychological well-being, pointing out the large number of prisoners who either attempted suicide or committed suicide or slashed themselves while in this form of segregation. These issues will be addressed in subsequent sections of this chapter.

Protective Custody Unit

The Protective Custody Unit (PCU) is a “prison within a prison” (Culhane, 1979, 192). These separate units tend to house jail house informants – “rats” or “stool pigeons” in prison argot – and sex offenders (Culhane, 1979, 192). These prisoners are considered to be the lowest on the social hierarchy among prisoners and are isolated for their own protection. They would likely be harassed, severely beaten, or killed if they were in general population. The stigma of serving time in the PCU usually keeps prisoners there for their entire sentences. Culhane (1979) understood the PCU to be a method of social control on the part of the administration. Planting jail house informants in the prison creates hostility between prisoners. The administration keeps “spies” in general population and coerces them to “rat” on other prisoners under the threat of being sent to the PCU (Culhane, 1979). If prisoners mistrust each other and use up their energy fighting one another they will have less energy in which to organize resistance against the administration. In her work, Claire did not point out that the sex offenders in the PCU were actually there for their own protection from the violence of other prisoners.

The topic of the PCU was discussed in 129 prisoner letters. Sixty-two prisoners did not discuss the PCU, probably because many prisoners do not need this type of protection. Table 5 shows the frequency of discussion on the PCU.

Table 5: Mentions Of Protective Custody Unit

Frequency of Topic	n = 100
0	62
1-5	31
6-10	5
11+	2
Total	100

The 38 prisoners who discussed the PCU in their correspondence reported being threatened by prisoners from the general population who were in charge of food preparation. Foreign objects were sometimes found in their food. PCU prisoners also did not have access to many programmes and activities that were available to other prisoners because of cost concerns. One Atlantic region prisoner informed Claire about his difficulties as a PCU prisoner lobbying for improvements in living conditions and opportunities to take programmes:

The bureaucrats, at all levels, tend to place the responsibility of seeking help, onto the inmate himself. Yet, they tend to forget that these inmates have already sought help, only to be told that the facilities necessary don't exist (early 1980s).

Several prisoners protested the treatment of PCU prisoners and one reported to Culhane that “five days after the [protest], I was called out front by my C.O [correctional officer] and my P.O. [parole officer] they informed me that my pre-release program and other day parole had been cancelled due to the [protest]” (prisoner in Atlantic region, early 1980s, type of protest not specified here to protect the identity of this prisoner).

Jackson (2002) discusses the current trend of more and more prisoners placed in “protective custody” (316). CSC has responded to this increase by allocating specific institutions to hold these labelled prisoners. Jackson (2002) notes that Kent – a maximum-security institution in Agassiz B.C. – is organized into two parts: general population and protective custody (316). In such institutions, when prisoners get into trouble they may request placement in the protective custody unit but are often more likely to request a period in segregation or a transfer because re-entrance into the general

population after being in PCU is unlikely and dangerous for the safety of the prisoner

(316). Jackson explains the politics of the PCU:

In a general population prison such as Matsqui, where prisoners encounter situations in which their lives or safety are endangered, often through the intersecting and conflicting lines of prison commerce, politics and personalities, prisoners may find themselves with no choice but to request placement in segregation. From there, since protective custody prisoners are unwelcome in general population prisons, they are left with no choice but to move to an institution designated for protective custody prisoners, either within or outside the region (2002, 316).

In her correspondence and her books Claire argued that Protective Custody Units must be abolished. When I reflect on the level of disgust and hatred described in the correspondence of non-PCU prisoners for those in these units I am not convinced that putting all prisoners in the same units is the answer. Based on my understanding from the correspondence, it seems that abolishing those units could create more violence. Nevertheless, it is difficult to see how PCU prisoners could be expected to re-integrate after their release because they have been so isolated and stigmatized in prison.

Prison Transfers

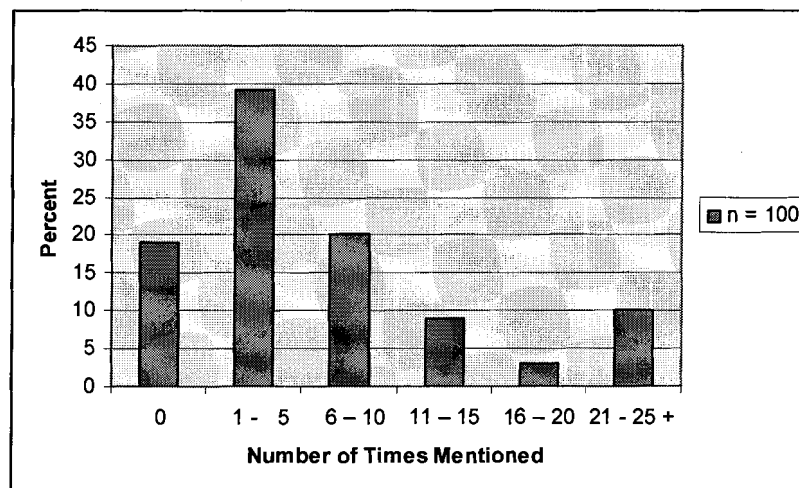
Voluntary Transfers

Voluntary transfers as opposed to forced transfers are when a prisoner makes a formal request to change prisons. In their correspondence, prisoners identified various reasons for wanting to transfer institutions. One reason is so they can be closer to family and friends. Many prisoners corresponding with Claire had wives, girlfriends, children and other people they wished to visit. Generally, these visits were only possible if geographic barriers were minimized. Prisoners may also request a transfer to an institution with a lesser security rating to have more privileges and to prepare for future

release or parole. This process, called *cascading*, is identified by CSC as part of their “opportunities model” where prisoners are rewarded for good behaviour (Jackson, 2002, 435). Other reasons may be that the prisoner is having difficulty getting along with other prisoners or correctional officers or the administration at a particular prison. The last reason that prisoners identified for requesting a transfer was for programming purposes. For instance, some institutions had specific programs for sex offenders. Some prisoners experienced frustration in seeking access to programs that they were told they needed for parole hearing preparation and eventual release back to the community, only to be told that these specific programs are not available in their institution.

Voluntary transfers were discussed by prisoners 691 times in their letters. On average, each prisoner discussed this issue 7 times. Only 19 people in this sample did *not* discuss voluntary transfers in their letters and 10 prisoners discussed this issue on more than 20 occasions. Figure 3 indicates the frequency of this topic in the letters.

Figure 3: Mentions Of Voluntary Transfers



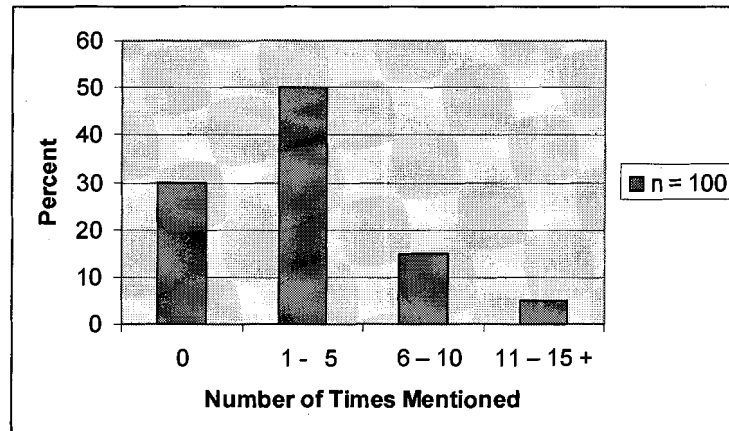
One reason for discussing this issue so often was that many prisoners were dissatisfied with their connections to family members and friends on the “outside”. This connection to the outside world is integral to the well-being of a prisoner. Nevertheless, it could take months and in some cases years for prisoners to get the transfers they felt they required. Prisoners and their supporters report that maintaining meaningful contact between those on the inside and those on the outside is difficult and this is worsened by security-oriented policies and an air of distrust throughout the prison environment. Prisoners could be denied a transfer request if there was no room at the institution they wished to be transferred to, or if the administration at either the requesting or receiving institution opposed it for political or other reasons. Officials could be evasive and also often justified arbitrary decision making through catch phrases such as it is in the “best interests of the institution”.

Forced Transfers

An *involuntary* or forced transfer occurs when a prisoner is, usually without previous warning, transported from one institution to another. A prisoner can later file a grievance if they want to return to the previous institution but I learned through the correspondence that this request was rarely granted. Forced transfers are particularly common after a riot or demonstration but they have also been used to dispose of “difficult prisoners” (Jackson, 2002, 436). The justification for these transfers is to ensure safety and security in the prison, yet prisoner correspondence often indicates that involuntary transfers were a common disciplinary practice rather than a method of last resort. Forced transfers were discussed in 300 letters. On average, prisoners discussed this topic 3

times. Only 30% of prisoners did *not* discuss this issue in their letters. Figure 4 shows the frequency of discussion on forced transfers.

Figure 4: Mentions Of Forced Transfers



Culhane (1991) was opposed to forced transfers because of the harm it invariably caused prisoners and their loved ones. After a person was transferred, family members might not know what has happened. Prisoners referred to this practice as “kidnapping” or being “bagged” (because you were given two plastic bags to put your possessions in). Often, these items would go “missing” before arriving at the institution where the transferred prisoner resided. Prisoners commonly complained that these items were destroyed or stolen as further punishment by prison staff; however, it is again impossible to know if these allegations were founded. Because of the closed nature of prisons and the fact that there is little public or independent access, it is difficult to verify these allegations of brutality.

This practice – much like the practice of solitary confinement – can be seen as a form of violence. Prisoners corresponding with Claire reported being taken by force and it was not uncommon for prisoners to report being physically beaten while being

transported. If a prisoner resisted, more physical force would be justified even though the prisoners were already restrained by handcuffs and leg shackles and, some said, with a gun pointed at their head. This type of activity perpetuates or escalates violence in prison because many prisoners fought back. The brutality that some prisoners reported to Claire during a forced transfer occasionally resulted in legal battles where photographs of physical wounds were used to corroborate the prisoners' stories.

Forced transfers were also seen as psychologically violent by many correspondents. Prisoners had such little control over their lives while incarcerated and were often not able to make decisions about core issues and resources. They may lose jobs and programs in addition to personal relationships. One prisoner experienced a forced involuntary transfer and years later was denied an Escorted Temporary Absence (ETA) because he did not finish the sex offender program at the former institution. This program was not available at the institution he was transferred to. This is a "Catch-22" situation, "a dilemma or circumstance from which there is no escape because of mutually conflicting or dependent conditions" (Canadian Oxford Compact Dictionary, 2002). Because of the size of the CSC bureaucracy, remedies to such situations take time and dedication. It took over one year to rectify this situation and required the intervention of a Member of Parliament. This causes a great deal of distress in a prisoner's life and does not contribute positively to their future reintegration. One prisoner shared his thoughts on the danger of involuntary transfers:

Many people are getting sudden transfers to no one knows where. This morning half a dozen guys went from my wing, sixteen from the rest of the joint. Many friends gone. No notice, no time to pack or say good bye, no reasons, no nothing. This is the result of a string of killings (6), riots, several attempted mass escapes, and just the usual unrest (Pacific region, late 1970s).

The violent actions of prisoners may be rooted in a need to survive while in prison and to avoid being exploited or further degraded (Cayley, 1998). It is a form of self-preservation. This focus on surviving oppression keeps prisoners thinking of themselves as victims and thus prisoners are able to avoid taking responsibility for the behaviours that brought them to prison (Saleh-Hanna, 2000). Prisoners are not likely to improve their behaviour or to learn non-violent responses in conflict situations if they are dealt with in a violent manner. Accordingly, Claire Culhane (1979) called for the abolition of forced involuntary transfers.

Overt Violence

Physical Assault

Physical assault was discussed in 237 letters. This includes reported incidents of physical assault including: punching, hitting, biting, pushing, kicking and throwing things at someone. Unfortunately, prisons are filled with people trying to resolve their conflicts through violence. Many prisoners feel frustrated, lack the communication skills necessary to resolve conflict or other resources and thus resort to violence. Incidents of assault identified in the prisoner correspondence include prisoner-on-prisoner violence; guard-on-prisoner violence; and prisoner-on-guard violence. On average, prisoners discussed this topic 2 times in their letters. Approximately half of the prisoners did not identify this as an issue in their letters. Table 6 shows the frequency of discussion on assault.

Table 6: Mentions Of Physical Assault

Frequency of Topic	n = 100
0	49
1-5	36
6-10	9
11-15+	6
Total	100

One prisoner discussed the brutality of guard-on-prisoner assault:

One of our guys who [the guards] know they can get going easily, they pushed a little too far and he flipped out and then started to cut himself up. Then about fifteen or twenty of them got him down and were dragging him down the hall administering some of their corrections with what looked like oak baseball bats and god was it awful and we were all locked in so we couldn't do anything (Ontario region, late 1970s).

Another prisoner reflected on his experiences with violence by guards in the early 1980s:

People who don't believe that they torture cons are really misinformed. They've broken my bones, shackled my hands and feet to pegs on the floor, naked and pissed and beat on me. They have also hand-cuffed me to the bars naked with my heels 2-3 inches off the floor, so when I got too tired to stand on my toes my wrists would bleed like crazy (Atlantic region).

Violence was often encouraged in the prison atmosphere. An Ontario region prisoner reflected on his use of violence against another prisoner:

I have made another visit to the hole. Last Sunday I took a baseball bat to a real asshole who was playing the role – running guys off the range. Almost all the guys on the range thanked me for it and even some of the guards told me it was 'right on' (mid 1980s).

In the early 1980s a Prairie region prisoner informed Claire:

Violence might be distasteful, but it sure gets quick results after everything else fails...they [front-line staff] are not the only ones who can use a weapon and make a man scream in pain.

Death in Prison

The next category is death. This includes natural, murder and accidental death (suicide will be discussed in a subsequent section). Death was identified in 192 letters with half of this sample never mentioning it in their letters to Claire. Attempted murder in prison was identified in 100 of the letters. Many prisoners fear dying while they are incarcerated (Davies, 1990). Culhane advised prisoners that their number one goal needed to be survival. As an advocate of non-violent solutions, Claire would often advise prisoners to “keep a cool head” in situations in order to avoid violence and to not worsen the situation. In the late 1970s Claire writes:

We know that you cannot find a sane answer in an insane situation⁹, so in order to preserve your own energy both to face immediate problems and to be able to plan for your future, you simply must sit down and accept the reality of the present, work to change what can be changed, but not to let yourself be overcome and overwhelmed with despair. Of course I know it is easy for me to tell you that, given our respective locations. But, I am thinking only of how to help you get through this situation (to prisoner in Pacific region, emphasis in original).

On average, each prisoner discussed death twice in their correspondence. Fear of death and perceived threat of being murdered were also included in the count.

Occasionally, a prisoner wrote to Claire fearful that they would be killed or severely hurt and this fear could become reality. Many files included newspaper articles and at times the death of a prisoner was documented. I recorded if a prisoner who previously wrote to Claire died, but only included mentions of death as identified by prisoners in the count.

Table 7 displays the frequency of these issues.

⁹ Claire may be alluding to Rosenhan's well-known study, “On Being Sane in Insane Places”, 1973.

Table 7: Mentions Of Death - Natural, Accidental And Homicide

Frequency of Issue	n = 100
0	51
1-5	36
6-10	8
11-15	5
Total	100

A correspondent speculated why there is so much violence and death in prison:

There was an inmate killed here a few weeks ago, and it appears as if he was killed by staff who were about to put him in the hole. I'm sure you have heard about that through news clippings etc. It's a very violent place because there is so much pent-up anger, rage and frustration in so many of the men (Ontario region, early 1990s).

Frustration over the violence and death that surrounds them is a common theme identified by prisoners.

About a week ago I broke down and cried for the first time in years. The easiest way for me to explain it is that I am just tired. Tired of the games; the joint; the phoniness; tired of time. They weren't tears of self-pity, but rather of anger, frustration and fear. Fear not for myself. I was and am still afraid of what I am capable of doing to others when I get in a bad headspace (Ontario region, early 1980s).

In a 2003 statistical report available over the internet, CSC reports that when prisoners die while incarcerated it is usually because of suicide and not murder. Between 1991 and 1997, 93 federal prisoners committed suicide while incarcerated and 30 prisoners were murdered (CSC website, 2003). Despite this official report, some prisoners and staff have indicated situations where a death was recorded as a suicide when they believe it was murder (Harris, 2003).

Attempted Murder

Attempted murder was identified in 100 letters. Each time a stabbing or very serious assault was reported it was counted in this category. Also included in the count are letters where the prisoner indicates to Claire that it was an attempted murder either in their opinion or when charges were laid against a prisoner by the administration of the prison. Table 8 shows the frequency of this issue in the letters.

Table 8: Mentions Of Attempted Murder

Frequency of Topic	n = 100
0	68
1-5	27
6-10	3
11-15+	2
Total	100

On average the correspondents discussed this issue once. I found that the apparent or perceived threat of being murdered created a great deal of fear in prisoners who discussed this topic with Claire. Attempted murder was only discussed in the context of prisoner-on-prisoner violence. This threat of murder acts to keep other prisoners fearful and therefore compliant to those that are threatening them. Herman states:

Fear is also increased by inconsistent and unpredictable outbursts of violence and by capricious enforcement of petty rules. The ultimate effect of these techniques is to convince the victim that the perpetrator is omnipotent, that resistance is futile, and that [his or] her life depends upon winning his indulgence through absolute compliance. The goal of the perpetrator is to instil in his victim not only fear of death but also gratitude for being allowed to live (1997, 77).

More research is needed on the incidence of attempted murder in prison because there is little attention devoted to this issue.

“A Steady Diet of Dehumanization”: Harassment and Threats

Claire wrote that constant dehumanization through harassing or threatening prisoners is counterproductive. Each time a prisoner mentioned that they felt they were being harassed or threatened by another prisoner or staff member, it was noted. This includes threats to personal safety and security and is not limited to physical threats. If a prisoner indicated a threat to their psychological well-being, it was counted as well. This topic was discussed on 232 occasions. Thus, the experience of being harassed or threatened was mentioned as an issue by 58 prisoners in this sample. It should be noted that prisoners are not the only ones to experience harassment and threats in prison – employees also experience abuse and harassment of female correctional officers is common (McMahon, 1999; Harris, 2003). On average, harassment and threats were discussed two times per prisoner. Table 9 shows the frequency of this issue in the correspondence.

Table 9: Mentions Of Harassment/Threats

Frequency of Issues	n = 100
0	42
1-5	43
6-10	12
11-15+	3
Total	100

A Pacific region prisoner writing in the early 1990s noted his inability to participate in a program because of harassment:

My difficulties were coping with one abusive prisoner who constantly physically assaulted, bullied, and verbally assaulted [me] continuously. He threatened me verbally if I made it a group issue. I was SCARED of the consequences, so I kept silent. Others did too. Another prisoner was of a violent nature, unpredictable, sexually harassing me. He too was

bullying and verbally abusive outside of group time. My fear interfered with my trust and coping while ongoing abuses continued. I felt concerned, trapped. I did not want to leave, nor was I going to risk my reputation as a rat... (emphasis in original).

In prison being considered an informer or a “rat” places you at the bottom of the hierarchy. You are considered a “rat” if you pass on information about another prisoner that will have implications for them. Unfortunately, this creates a situation where unknown issues result in violence and motivations are misunderstood by the administration. Sometimes the threat of violence keeps prisoners from experiencing the benefits of such programs.

Use of Weapons and Destroyed Property

The next two violence-based issues are destruction of property and use of weapons. Eighty-six prisoner letters discussed destruction of property and 95 letters addressed the use of weapons. Destroyed property includes prisoners’ personal items and in many cases severe structural damage to the prisons. A prisoner writing from the Atlantic region in the late 1980s reported:

As for things around here, it has went from bad to worse and there is no line of communication between the administration and us at all. The moral[e] has sank so low that nothing is done together as a population anymore. Men are squabbling with each other, and every now and then men are just plain blowing up. Matter of fact we just came off another lock down today. Last week both cafeterias got trashed on the serious, and a couple of cell blocks have been totaled – out of pure frustration.

Weapons mentioned by prisoners included: tear gas, clubs, knives, bombs, straight razors, guns – including revolvers and shotguns, mace, fire hose, baseball bat, chair, staple gun, a dog, iron bar and riot gear. One prisoner at a maximum-security institution

estimated that up to 95% of prisoners were “packing shanks”(concealing a knife). These knives are usually home-made by prisoners in prison or smuggled in.

Sexual Assault

The issue of sexual assault was rarely discussed in the correspondence. This sensitive issue was mentioned in 46 letters and 84 of the prisoners did not mention sexual assault in their letters. Several prisoners explained to Claire that young prisoners who entered the system were often adopted as someone’s “kid”. If you are taken as a “kid”, then you are there to fulfil their sexual requests for themselves and their friends in exchange for protection. One prisoner in the Québec region recalls: “You live with the fear that it might happen today or tomorrow, and it’s scary because it is forcibly done if you resist” (mid 1980s). Some prisoners discussed how degrading and violent this situation can be and that someone deemed a “kid” has only two choices: to comply or be severely beaten. None of the prisoners corresponding with Claire admitted ever sexually assaulting another prisoner; however, they did “rat-out” others to Claire.

It is difficult to locate information on this topic in Canada, but a U.S.A. based group called *Human Rights Watch* conducted an exploratory study of prisoners’ experiences with being raped in prison (Human Rights Watch website, 2003). The study included surveys of prison authorities and is drawn from the letters of over 1,000 prisoners and 200 interviews. The group informed prisoners about the study through prisoner publications such as *Prison Legal News* and *Prison Life Magazine*, encouraging them to share their stories by writing to the group or in an interview. The report, entitled *No Escape: Male Rape in US Prisons*, concludes that rape is common in prison and that despite prisoners filing grievances about such assaults often little is done to change the

situation. The most recent report of the Correctional Investigator (2005) does not discuss sexual assault in Canadian prison but the investigator continues to demand that prisoners no longer be double bunked (placing two prisoners in one cell). Double bunking is now referred to in CSC as “shared accommodation”.

A School of Criminology honours student, Heidi Franz, examined the lack of academic research on consensual and non-consensual sex in prison, stating:

Beyond a 1993 prison victimization study (of which sexual victimization was a small facet), there has been no published research examining sex in Canadian prisons. Clearly, how do we expect to acquire information if no one is asking any questions? The focus becomes, why aren't academics interested in or encouraged to engage in research concerning prison sexual activity... 'Because prison rape [and prison sex] happens in controlled institutional settings, official information about sexual assaults is tightly controlled' (Struckman-Johnson et. al., 1996, 67). Moreover, prison administrations are reluctant to allow research that may reflect negatively on the institution (2001, 40-41).

Claire's correspondence to prisoners did not discuss the issue of sexual assault in prison; however, she was adamant that condoms should be available to prisoners to minimize the transfer of sexually-transmitted infections.

Inward Violence: Suicide, Self-Injury and Psychological Distress

Suicide, self-injury and psychological distress emerged in the prisoners' correspondence. Claire helped prisoners survive because she fostered connections between those “inside” and those “outside”. Many prisoners experience psychological distress and loneliness due to physical and social isolation. She never missed an opportunity to help a prisoner make social connections with the outside world through contacting family members or friends to pass on messages and regards and sometimes even smoothed the path for reconciliation. Interpersonal connections are crucial for the

successful reintegration of ex-prisoners upon release into the community (Ross & Richards, 2003). Prisoners were also not allowed to correspond with each other making it near impossible to maintain friendships that are made while incarcerated; Claire helped prisoners to keep in contact with each other through relaying messages and regards between prisons through encrypted correspondence. Encouraging prisoners to forge positive, outside ties is also in the best interests of the prison administration because it helps to relieve some of the problems that come with conditions of isolation (Cayley, 1998).

Suicide: “I’m Tired of the Games”

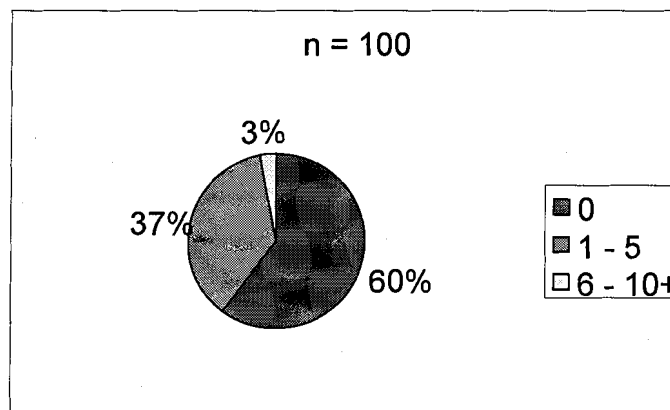
Suicide was addressed in 111 letters. Both suicide and attempted suicide are included in this count. Any suicidal planning or mere mention of it was counted. Prisoners who discussed suicidal thoughts or intentions or a desire to hurt themselves gave the following reasons: loss of control over their lives; feeling forgotten or hated by the “outside” world; time was passing too slowly; loss of identity; and feeling that they are no longer human. The correspondence also indicated that the institutional response to the inward violence was often some form of segregation (see Burtch & Ericson, 1979), experienced by prisoners as punishment which perpetuates psychological problems that led to these behaviours in the first place (Comack, 2000). Currently, there are no provisions that ensure that segregations end when the prisoner demonstrates psychological and physical harm from being in solitary confinement (Jackson, 2002). Culhane grew weary of academic conferences and seminars where “evidence” was presented on the effects of solitary confinement. For her, everyone needed to stop conducting study after study to confirm what was well-known: solitary confinement can

be extremely damaging to human beings. In 1994, Jackson interviewed a prisoner who has spent most of his incarceration in segregation. Jackson reflects on this interaction:

He still bore the marks I had observed many years earlier: scar tissue around his neck and on his arms from the multiple slashings and mutilations he had imposed upon himself. Since then, he had endured beatings, gassings, and stabbings that had left more scars on his body. He showed me the blotches under his right eye from repeated tear-gassings in Millhaven Institution and a scar over his eye dating from a beating in which several clubs were broken over his head as he was dragged to the hole...He calculated that he had served eleven years in solitary (2002, 340).

Figure 5 shows the frequency of suicide as an issue identified in the correspondence.

Figure 5: Mentions/Incidents Of Suicide



Nearly two-thirds of prisoners in the sample did not discuss suicide. Suicide is still an issue in prison today. According to last year's report from the Office of the Correctional Investigator (2004) male prisoners are four times more likely to commit suicide than men in Canadian society. Statistics were not available on women who commit suicide; however, I know from the correspondence to Claire and prisoner publications that women attempt to and do commit suicide in prison (see Gaucher, 2002).

Psychological Distress: “Stay Sane and Sensible”

Claire would often sign off her letters with “*stay sane and sensible*” because she understood how damaging imprisonment could be on the human psyche. Psychological distress was raised in 236 letters. Psychological distress is understood here as discussion of loneliness, depression, anxiety, or fear as indicated by the prisoner. It was very common for Claire to try to boost prisoners’ spirits and provide support to them. Claire wrote to a prisoner in the Atlantic region:

I'm hoping that your feelings of desperation haven't got the better of you though I can appreciate how the frustrations mount up and up. Do try and keep strong and while I know how you must think how easy it is for anyone on the outside to tell you to be patient I'm confident you don't include me in that category. Not only am I doing my best to help but you should know that there are many, many people out here who are doing what they can in their own special category and way to help these thorny problems get straightened out peacefully but quickly. Fair enough? (early 1980s, emphasis in original).

Over half (55%) of the prisoners mentioned psychological distress. On average, prisoners discussed this topic two times each. One prisoner discussed psychological distress in 21 letters. Table 10 shows the frequency of this topic in the prisoners’ correspondence.

Table 10: Mentions Of Psychological Distress

Frequency of Topic	n = 100
0	45
1-5	40
6-10	11
11-15+	4
Total	100

Claire routinely explained her limitations as an activist to prisoners who she corresponded with. Some prisoners are so isolated from society and have been for so many years that they lose touch with the lack of power that regular citizens have in our system. Claire kindly but firmly explained to one prisoner in the Prairie region:

I have your very distressing letter, and it seems you have the wrong impression altogether who I am, or what our group can accomplish. All we can ever do for any prisoner is bring the problem to the attention of whoever we hope can do something useful- also to encourage the prisoner (hopeless and frustrating as it all is) to file all the necessary grievances and forms, and in that way exhaust all the orthodox channels. That way it gives us even more chance to press for some attention when it is shown that the prisoner has done everything they can to help themselves (mid 1980s).

Some prisoners corresponding with Claire feared going insane as a result of their incarceration. One prisoner writing in the mid 1980s from a SHU in the Prairie region shared his feelings and experiences:

Been on the brink of insanity so many times that it isn't funny. What scares me is that I'm afraid that I'll become totally unhinged and lady I'm very scared of that. I've seen a lot of guys go insane and it's frightening – I really feel for those guys. The fucking prison system drives us crazy, then they stick us in a padded cell and that's the end of it. Forgotten.

Self-Injury

Self-injury or “slashing” is when a prisoner intentionally cuts or mutilates themselves but without meaning to attempt suicide. Culhane (1979) explains how slashing serves a purpose for prisoners:

It demonstrates the dehumanizing prison atmosphere which reduces men and women to take desperate measures. When a person feels they can no longer cope with their mental suffering, by inducing physical pain they are then able to create a situation which can be erased (74).

Fifty-two letters mentioned incidents of prisoners “slashing”. The self-injury category also includes other forms of self-violence such as intentionally swallowing poisonous chemicals or dangerous foreign objects. Seventy-nine prisoners did not discuss self-injury, or any form of self-mutilation. Table 11 indicates the frequency of this issue as identified by prisoners.

Table 11: Mentions Of Self-Injury

Frequency of Topic	n = 100
0	79
1-5	19
6-10+	2
Total	100

**Racial Discrimination:
“I Wear a Double Burden... Native and Criminal”**

The issue of racism was identified in 50 letters. Eighty-four percent of prisoners did not mention experiencing or witnessing incidents of racism. Racism was recorded each time a prisoner identified an experience where they felt their treatment was in direct result of racial discrimination. Prisoners who identified as First Nations made up 13% of the sample and 15% of prisoners identified as being discriminated against for racist reasons. First Nations prisoners had to fight to have their religious and ethnic cultures respected in prison as the norm was for Christianity to be recognized in these institutions. One issue for First Nations prisoners was the right to practice their Native religions and for some, to possess medicine bundles. Several prisoners corresponding with Claire staged protests such as hunger strikes and work-stoppages to bring attention to their right to practice their own religion, not one imposed on them through Eurocentric customs.

Table 12: Mentions Of Racism

Frequency of Topic	n = 100
0	84
1-5	14
6-10+	2
Total	100

A First Nations prisoner from the Atlantic region wrote:

The First Nations citizens have continued the fight to have our spiritual ways and ceremonies respected and honoured but we continue to be met with resistance from the Government arm. Corrections Canada tell us the warden of the institution had the final decision on our spirituality of what we will be able to practice or not. I refused to step down [from Native Brotherhood] and we wrote and told the warden and Corrections Canada our position. I was then placed in 23 hour lock-up for the good order of the institution not for being a threat to the institution as the policy states you can only be locked up for but it was told to me at the review panel for my release it was for punishment until I agreed to step down (early 1990s).

First Nations prisoners still experience systemic discrimination despite efforts to minimize the number of First Nations people entering into the system. Last year's report from the office of the Correctional Investigator (2004) indicates systemic discriminatory practices against First Nations prisoners seeking parole. While 41% of non-Aboriginals are on conditional release in the community, only 31% of Aboriginals are on such conditional release (Correctional Investigator, 2004).

Prisoner Resistance Strategies

Understanding the violence of the prison environment involves recognizing that many prisoners can sometimes avoid violence while incarcerated. It can be argued that the sample corresponding with Culhane sought non-violent solutions for help and validation. In an environment that seeks to isolate prisoners and keep them from

organizing themselves some prisoners were able to help each other with grievances. Prisoners who corresponded the most with Claire were often able to transcend their own survival needs, collaborating with grass-roots movements on the outside and groups inside prison.

Violent Strategies

With so few resources at their disposal, prisoners can resort to violent strategies such as hostage taking and rioting. Hostage taking was mentioned in 71 letters and riots in 85 letters. Figure 6 and Figure 7 show the frequency of these methods of protest.

Figure 6: Mentions Of Hostage Taking

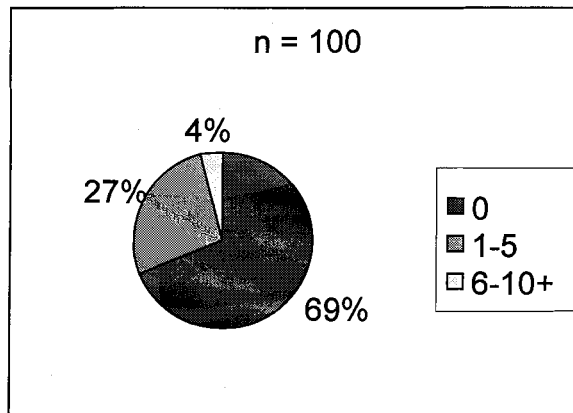
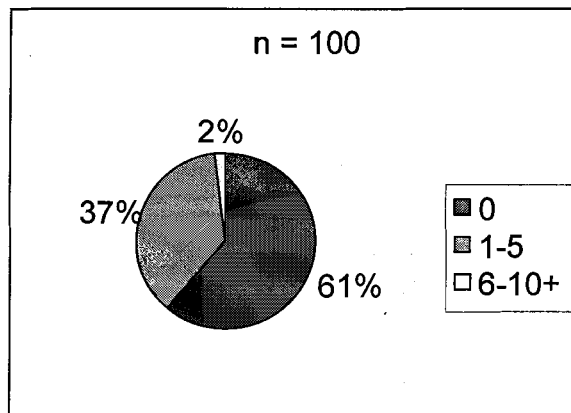


Figure 7: Mentions Of Rioting



One prisoner in the Ontario region expressed his frustration over the response to organized prisoner resistance:

Short of a full scale riot there appears to be no way to get through to the bureaucrats who run these places. The public at least the majority, aren't too interested in our cause, on the contrary it appears public opinion is for more longer and punitive imprisonment. They don't understand or don't care that what they want will backlash on them eventually because men will leave these places more dangerous. Years of being put down and frustrated in prison doesn't help to increase the type of feelings one needs to make it out there (mid 1980s).

A different view is expressed by a prisoner from the Pacific region in the late 1970s:

The guys here don't seem to realize that riots, unless they are good, don't accomplish anything. Here there is little, if any, political consciousness, clearly defined goals or good leadership. My feelings are that in this Institution only with wit and clear thinking can anything be accomplished. As we have painfully learned the bureaucracy will not be moved by violence, but what can be done when they refuse to listen to reason?

Claire always discouraged violence in her letters. She encouraged prisoners to use the grievance procedure to have their issues heard. She argued that riots and other violence in prison can be avoided if prisoners are given meaningful opportunities to have their grievances addressed. By using violence as a technique, the administration is able to justify a punitive response and maintain stereotypical images of violent, out-of-control, demonic prisoners (Culhane, 1991).

Non-Violent Strategies

Many prisoners in the sample applied non-violent resistance strategies such as: hunger strikes, work-stoppages, petitions; participation in Prisoners' Justice Day (PJD) and "inmate committees". Others wrote for newspapers, magazines, and prisoner

publications. Table 13 and Table 14 show the frequency of hunger strikes and work-stoppages as indicated in the prison correspondence.

Table 13: Mentions Of Hunger Strikes

Frequency of Topic	n = 100
0	66
1-5	28
6-10+	6
Total	100

Table 14: Mentions Of Work-Stoppages

Frequency of Topic	n = 100
0	90
1-5	9
6-10+	1
Total	100

In his thesis on correspondence with Claire Culhane, Tyler Dean (1996) confirmed that even non-violent strategies such as work-stoppages and hunger strikes can be harmful to prisoners' well-being. Some lengthy hunger strikes featured in local newspapers drew attention to prisoners' issues; however, participating puts a prisoner's health at risk. Restricting the intake of food is a prisoner's way of gaining some control over their body. By law, you cannot force feed someone and therefore only the prisoner can decide when their protest is over. Claire also fasted on many occasions to show support for a prisoner's cause or to protest an injustice. Work-stoppages make a statement but the prisoner loses pay and often experiences paybacks for their protests. A prisoner in the Ontario region wrote to Claire from the Special Handling Unit:

I also realize that you can't just change things by violence, because all you get there is a reaction, and to use force in our type of system just won't

work to promote change. We need the people behind us, not against us and we can only do that by using their system (late 1970s).

Petitions, discussed in 23 letters, are another form of non-violent resistance mentioned in the correspondence. Petitions were circulated around prisons for various reasons including: to protest segregation conditions; to have a prisoner removed from the “hole”; to end forced transfers; to have Claire’s visiting privileges restored after she was banned; to get “good time” remission back; to request a raise in work pay; to have Claire’s cable television show *Instead of Prisons* aired in the prison; and to work to free a wrongly-convicted prisoner. Table 15 displays the frequency of these petitions in the correspondence. Eighty-three prisoners did not report using a petition to have their grievance heard.

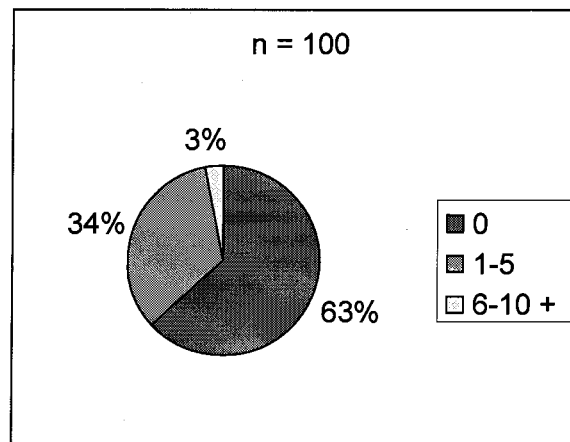
Table 15: Mentions/Use Of Petitions

Frequency of Topic	n = 100
0	83
1-3	17
Total	100

Prisoners’ Justice Day (PJD) is an annual event that falls on August 10th. This non-violent event involves a day of fasting in honour of all prisoners who died unnatural deaths while incarcerated. On Prisoners’ Justice Day, participating prisoners do not work or take part in any programs either. I attended the demonstration in 2004 held at the monument for Claire by Trout Lake in East Vancouver. Keynote speakers included professor emeritus in the School of Criminology Dr. Karlene Faith, ex-prisoners Eddie Rouse, Tom Elton and Brenda Blondell, and University of British Columbia law professor Michael Jackson (see www.prisonjustice.ca). I noticed that participants were

multi-generational. There seems to be a renewed interest in prison issues among younger people. Claire was a founder of this national day to bring attention to current human rights' issues in prisons. The media usually attend this event. (One of Claire's strategies to have prisoners' issues heard was to contact the media to attend these rallies). Although Claire passed away a decade ago, many keynote speakers discussed her contributions to the prisoners' rights movement. PJD was discussed in 94 prisoner letters. Figure 8 displays the frequency of this topic in the prisoner letters.

Figure 8: Mentions/Participation In Prisoners' Justice Day (PJD)



A prisoner wrote Claire about support among prisoners on PJD:

The solidarity of prisoners on August 10th was very impressive. Over 3000 prisoners took part. Next year there will be a lot more of us. At the Kingston reception centre only 7 ate. Only 4 ate at Collins Bay out of a population of 375. No one ate at the Mill [Millhaven Institution] and there was 95 to 100% support from the women's pen (Ontario region, mid 1970s).

Inmate Committees

Several prisoners discussed the work of Inmate Committees (IC) or other prisoner groups. ICs are composed of prisoners elected by other prisoners in the general

population. The IC is to voice the collective concerns of prisoners and to maintain reasonable relations with the administration and staff. Prisoners on these committees were often the subjects of forced involuntary transfers and sentences of segregation due to the political nature of these types of groups. Prisoner groups identified in the correspondence include Native Brotherhoods and the Odyssey Group. Inmate Committees were mentioned in 25 letters and the Native Brotherhood was mentioned in 14 letters.

An Ontario region prisoner reflected on some difficulties of being politically involved in prisoner affairs in the early 1980s, "The worst part is the lack of support and even antagonistic feelings from my peers. They want the world but they can't seem to work or sacrifice to get it". Prisoners serving on ICs have to deal with conflicts with the administration, staff and even other prisoners. A common theme in the correspondence was how prisoner solidarity had broken down since the more politicized times of 1970s. A Prairie region prisoner discussed this in one of his letters:

We were going for things we thought were very important to all of us as a group but we would only eventually get results if we stayed together as a group and not just inmates 'doing time'. The amount of inmates grows each day but as the older 'cons' are being released after 'expiry date' the newer breed aren't willing to pick up the fight and keep things going (early 1980s).

One prisoner in the Prairie region discussed the stress that comes with even peaceful protest when you are a prisoner:

I'm only too aware when an inmate asserts their rights so strongly and effectively they come down hard on you and it's a long long struggle which you finally win 'cause your only doing what's right. However when you do that it takes a lot out of you, causing mental stress and anxiety (late, 1980s).

Prisoners are told that they must adopt the behaviours and values of wider mainstream society yet when prisoners attempt to act democratically, to insist that the administration act fairly and respect prisoners' rights, they are often punished. Mail was highly censored during this time period and prisoners could be punished for mere suspicion. In her correspondence Claire often advised them that if they were organizing something to not reveal too much information in letters.

The Convict as Writer: Prisoner Publications and the Underground Press

Prisoners who corresponded with Claire did so in an attempt to make the problems of the "inside" more visible to those on the "outside". Claire, as head of the PRG, assisted prisoners by making their issues known. Although Claire acknowledged that she had no real power she was able to have policies put into place to protect prisoners by "making a lot of noise" (Culhane, prisoner correspondence, late 1970s).

Prisoners are seldom asked what it is they need to be rehabilitated or even *if* they need to be rehabilitated and they are not often asked how policies have affected them.

Prisoner publications include journals, magazines, newspapers, and newsletters written and produced by prisoners or in conjunction with outside groups. These publications allow prisoners a venue to discuss issues of importance to them. While some of these publications remained within the walls of the institutions, others were distributed or published by outsiders. *The Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* (JPP) was developed by Robert Gaucher, Liz Elliott and Howard Davidson in 1988(Gaucher, 2002). This is an edited journal of papers written by prisoners but it is produced outside of prison. The mandate of the JPP "is to encourage research on a wide range of issues

related to crime, justice, and punishment by prisoners and former prisoners” (JPP title page, 2003).

Ioan Davies (1990) considered that the most powerful prison writing is about violence. Through writing, prisoners could come to terms with the violence that surrounds them as well as the knowledge of the possibility of their own death while incarcerated (Davies, 1990). Understanding violence perpetuated in prison underscores the futility of a system that responds to human problems with more violence and with defeatism. Hearing directly from prisoners’ experiences can show readers the negative consequences of policies and practices that focus on punishment through violence (Lamb, 2003).

Prisoner-written magazines and newspaper articles were discussed by 24 of the prisoners in this sample. *Tightwire* from the Prison for Women, *Olympiad News* from Collins Bay, the *Justice Group* from Stoney Mountain, *Out of Bounds* from William Head, *Off the Wall* from Mountain Institution and the *Odyssey Newsletter* from Millhaven Institution were discussed in this sample of correspondence. Several prisoners would write to Claire with the grievance that they did not have access to these publications and wished to have that changed. Again, it is difficult for prisoners to organize with one another while they are in prison. The administration has a great deal to lose if certain issues are brought to the attention of the public. Both informal and formal publications by prisoners can contribute to a better understanding of how policy can have real life consequences for the incarcerated and to debunk caricatures of prisoners that suggest that they are not intelligent or are child-like. Four percent of prisoners corresponding with Claire produced essays on the merits of penal abolition or alternatives

to incarceration. Nevertheless, not all prisoners thought that Claire had a sound method for working towards penal abolition (see Senger, 1988). One prisoner in the Ontario region reflected on the connection between publications and organizing dissent:

There are many ways of educating the [prison] population, but no matter how you do it, it should be done as covertly as possible, avoiding unnecessary risks that will get you scooped¹⁰ before you even get started. One very good way is through an underground paper, distributed to each cell tier. You can form a small group under the social development program and have your meetings once a week in the room provided for this purpose (early 1980s).

Prisoners Helping Prisoners: “Everything is Against Us from the Start”

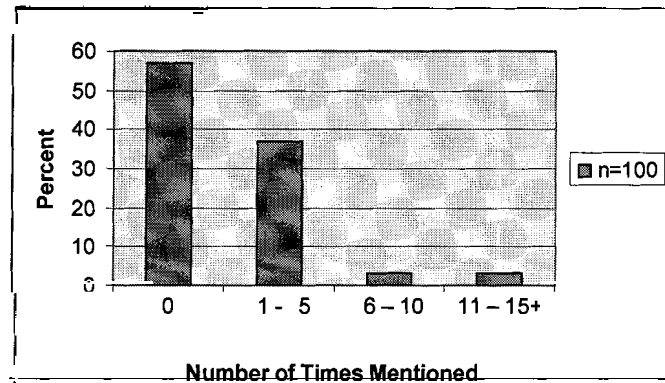
Although prisoners are often obstructed or reprimanded for protesting and organizing dissent, several correspondents with Claire were dedicated to helping their fellow convicts with grievances, legal battles and other issues as noted in 155 letters. An Ontario region prisoner reflected that:

Prisoners who stand out as leaders are subjected to brutal punishment – beatings, gassings, indefinite solitary confinement, denial of visits, tampering with the mail, day to day cell searches, theft of prisoner’s personal property, and unwanted transfers far away from family and friends. Prison administration will go to any length in trying to break a prisoner’s spirit, and discourage leadership in the prison. Other prisoners are terrorized with threats of solitary, loss of privileges, loss of earned remission, denial of paroles, and transfer to mediums. Everything is against us from the start (early 1980s).

Figure 9 details the frequency of helping other prisoners as mentioned in the correspondence. Slightly under half of the prisoners in the sample of 100 files indicated helping another prisoner, thus weakening the stereotype that prisoners’ actions only serve their own needs.

¹⁰ “Scooped” means a forced transfer to another prison.

Figure 9: Prisoners Assisting Prisoners



A prisoner in the Atlantic region explained to Claire what he thinks prisoners need:

I am of the opinion [that] the single two greatest obstacles in overcoming the plight we repeatedly find ourselves in, are the almost total lack of responsible attitudes on behalf of staff and inmate alike and the breakdown and absence of communication of some. Although the system has been totally corrupted that is not to say all within the system are. Many are manipulated unsuspecting puppets. My lack of credibility as a convict will in no way lessen the impact of the message that will be presented. We need help with personal problems, need to feel needed, experience a sense of progress and accomplishment, feel useful, loved and to love. These are all very much a part of being human. You deprive man of things (needs) do not expect him to act much above being very antisocial and animalistic. You people are going to have to implement radical changes revolutionizing governing policies in the foreseeable future (early 1980s).

Specific legal challenges included the “hole” being considered “cruel and unusual punishment”; the accusation of staff “hog tying” and beating a prisoner; the poor conditions in the SHU; and the Visiting & Correspondence department was also accused of being involved in a human rights violation. The results of these legal battles are, however, not clear in the correspondence.

Being Heard: The Grievance Procedure

The complaint and grievance procedure at this institution is treated with a *laissez faire* attitude and time limits for answering grievances and complaints, as laid down in the commissioner's directive, are almost never adhered to (Ontario region, early 1980s, italics in original).

Prisoners writing to Claire were essentially taking part in an informal grievance procedure and their letters were intended to effect change. Claire was entrusted with this explicit or implicit mandate. Before Claire could help prisoners with specific concerns she asked them to file a formal complaint in their specific institution. If a timely and satisfactory resolution did not result, then she would enter into a letter-writing campaign to have the issue heard and dealt with. The first step in the institutional grievance procedure is to fill out an inmate complaint form and submit it to the institutional head. Claire pointed out that many prisoners were not literate or confident to complete this task on their own. She had experiences where she would enter the prison (before she was officially barred) and different prisoners would call out to her through the fence that they could not read the forms or fill them out properly. This automatically silences this segment of the prison population unless they can find someone who will help them. After the complaint has been acknowledged by the administration, if the prisoner is unhappy with the results – they can then move to the second level of the grievance procedure by appealing to the Regional Director. The third and final level of the grievance procedure is directed to the Commissioner of Corrections in Ottawa.

Despite these channels for grievances, problems remain with redress of prisoners' concerns because these avenues are chronically backlogged and some critics argue that they systemically disadvantage female and First Nations prisoners (Correctional Investigator, 2004). There is to date no independent person reviewing decisions made by

CSC in response to filed grievances. CSC was criticized for not making grievance procedures known to prisoners (Culhane, 1979). Silencing prisoners is thus one method of control and punishment imposed by prison staff.

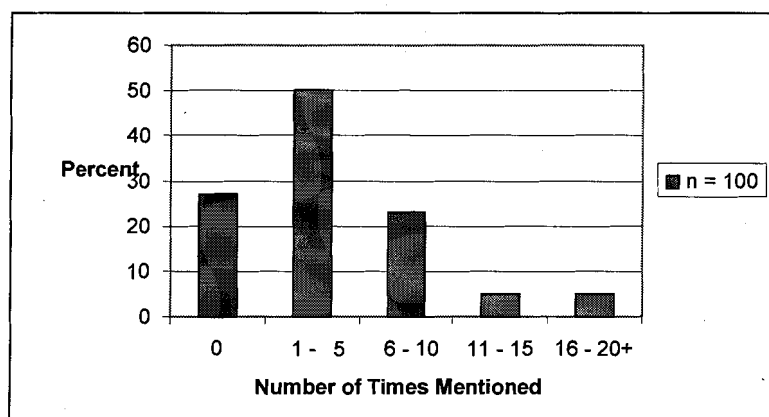
Since 1977, if a prisoner is unhappy with the results of this process they are permitted to file a grievance with an external investigator known as the Correctional Investigator. The Correctional Investigator (CI) is the Ombudsman for federal offenders and is therefore independent of both CSC and the Ministry. The Office investigates individual and group complaints from prisoners and releases an annual report to outline how many complaints were made, the nature of them, how many issues were dealt with by CSC and the problems that CSC still must address. This is a separate process from the grievance procedure and cannot produce binding results. Many prisoners corresponding with Claire viewed the grievance procedure as ineffective and unfair. A prisoner in Québec wrote:

I am enclosing a letter from the former Solicitor General. It really makes me laugh when I read about them being able to avail themselves of the grieving system. That's one of the biggest farces since the correctional investigator. The procedure takes months and sometimes close to a year before it goes from complaint to the three levels (mid 1980s).

Although symbolically the CI is an important ingredient in ensuring that prisoners are treated fairly and humanely, the recommendations that result from these evaluations often have no clout. While on the surface it appears that prisoner grievances are being dealt with and their complaints heard, the process is cumbersome and not always effective. Culhane (1991) argued that the CI should report to Parliament rather than to the Solicitor-General who will likely support the efforts of his own Ministry. This appears to be a conflict of interest. The only institution that has the ability to enforce the

recommendations from the CI is Parliament. The most recent CI report was released on November 18, 2004. This year, four recommendations were directed to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness rather than all recommendations going to the Commissioner of Corrections. The next figure indicates the frequency with which prisoners discussed the grievance procedure with Claire. It was identified as an issue in 454 letters. Only 27% of prisoners did not discuss the grievance procedure.

Figure 10: Formal Grievance Procedure



Claire assisted prisoners in dealing with the bureaucracy of the prison. When Claire assisted prisoners with grievances, her two rules were: do not contact me unless you can take the extra heat that comes your way, and do not lie to me.

“It Meant Everything to Us that You Were There”: Facing the Backlash on Activism

Claire challenged authorities to treat prisoners fairly and humanely and to be accountable to the public. Although most prisoners had a great deal of respect for her, her reputation according to many of the institutional heads, government departments and staff was that she was far too “pro prisoner” and that she created problems in prison.

Some prisoners reported being harassed by staff and the administration because of their connection with Claire. Despite the official rhetoric of openness and accountability, many people working for CSC were threatened by Claire's presence in prisons. One prisoner in the Pacific region wrote Claire in the early 1990s and explained to her:

I was asked why I ran to C. Culhane when my situation worsened. I was asked why I associate with you; what do we discuss; what do we write; why does CC write to me; what purpose does CC serve for me; what do I have in common with CC; what interests do I have in CC; and what does (& has) C.C done for me?

Claire responds to a prisoner in the Ontario region in the late 1970s:

They didn't particularly appreciate it when escorting someone to the hole, to be told 'you be careful or we'll tell Claire'. I tried to explain to them that they were the ones who handed me that kind of 'power' by making me out to be such a big threat - it would never happen if they didn't do the build up themselves.

Claire was often told that she was only a private citizen and that her status as an advocate was not recognized by CSC. Some staff and institutional heads believed that Claire "stirred up and frustrated" prisoners and that she only helped prisoners to promote her "own personal cause" – although this phantom cause was never specified (correspondence from official in Atlantic region, early 1980s). Claire's response was:

- *In my capacity as a private AND CONCERNED citizen, as a community worker, as an author and lecturer, as a medical professional, I am accorded the courtesy due a person of my reputation by officials at all levels of government, civil service and community. I expect to continue to be treated in that manner, particularly by people employed by the Correctional Service of Canada, which is officially committed to a policy of 'openness and accountability' (capitals in original).*
- *Prison records reveal that frustrations and animosities between prisoners and administration existed long before I ever came to the*

scene, exist in prisons where I have no contact, and will continue to exist long after my departure, simply because the problem is a universal one. To suggest, as you do, that I am responsible for any particular prisoner's problems reveal neither substance nor integrity on your part, but only a disgraceful level of deceit and manipulation

- I wish to register my own reaction to conclusions contained in your remark 'one can only speculate, and I do, that your concern is to further your own personal cause, whatever that may be'. Since you are not sufficiently courageous to specify what you think my 'personal cause' may be, let me assure you that I am entirely independent in matters of philosophy, politics, and religion. I am a member of the Prisoners' Rights Group whose goals are to help prisoners help themselves....

Claire's Impact: What Prisoners Wrote

She is a lady who through a long life experience has come to know the world as a place where people live and dream and laugh and suffer and hope. Whenever she comes to visit a prisoner, she comes to share some of her freedom, some of her concern, and to bring some of her hope. In a place where hope is very scarce and self-motivation is a foreign word, she is a welcome visitor indeed (Prisoner in Pacific region, found in a petition to have Claire's visiting and corresponding rights re-instated after she was officially barred from prison, late 1970s).

Prisoners corresponding with Claire often wrote about mistrusting outsiders and shared the opinion that no one on the outside can understand what it means to be incarcerated.

However, many prisoners said that they could connect to Claire even though she had never been a prisoner. A prisoner from the Ontario region wrote:

I've never felt as understood as a prisoner by anyone until tonight hearing you talk with such understanding of one who truly knows the trouble we've all, as cons, seen. Part of the greatest joy of tonight's meeting was a renewal of spirit to continue on into the fight for prisoners' rights and human recognition. I know every prisoner went back to their cells a little straighter and 6 inches taller knowing the fight is not just inside the walls with the Wardens, screws, and attempts to stay alive in a brutal dog-eat-dog crown owned hellhole as prisons are. We feel that you are there, as you've always been, and that anyone who hears what you tell can only see

the honesty and purity of your convictions to rid society of their yoke of error by their failing prison systems (1970s).

Conclusion

One message that I hope readers receive from reading this thesis is that the crimes that brought prisoners to their incarceration do not define them. They are human beings who, regardless of what they have done, must be treated as humanely as possible to stop the cycle of violence. There is, to my knowledge, no research that proves that punishment is effective at deterring criminal behaviour and it is time for social justice activists, including penal abolitionists, to elicit the support of the public for true alternatives to incarceration. Criminal justice policies including corrections are influenced by the socio-political and economic context of society at large. We are now facing a time when many right-wing politicians, for example Conservative party leader Stephen Harper, are promising to follow the Americans in “getting tough on crime” and proposing the enactment of legislation for harsher and longer sentences of incarceration. I believe that one way we can change public opinion is by sharing the lived experiences of prisoners through their writing. Although this thesis is based on historical prisoner correspondence, it is necessary to understand the past to know how to move forward. It is important to keep Claire’s work alive because it reminds us of the negative effects of incarceration – especially when prisoners are not accorded even their basic human rights.

Prisoners corresponding with Claire Culhane were doing so to make their suffering visible to the outside world. By writing to her they were asking for non-violent solutions in violent settings and at the very least she was someone who would always write back. Most prisoners in the sample described violent situations that are almost unfathomable to “outsiders”. Trauma, for many of these prisoners, was an everyday

experience; however, many of the prisoners who wrote to her most regularly understood that to survive you must find ways to overcome the violence that surrounds you. Chapter 5 discusses the limitations of this research project as well as identifies some of the challenges to the penal abolitionist movement.

CHAPTER 5: CHALLENGES TO THE REALIZATION OF PENAL ABOLITIONISM

Preface: A Collaborative Approach

A friend practices law with a defense lawyer who ends his correspondence with this statement:

A liberal society is committed to respect the rights of those who have shown no respect for rights at all, to show mercy to those who are merciless, to treat as human those who have behaved inhumanly. This commitment to observe obligations even when they are not reciprocated is a defining characteristic of any society under the rule of law (Ignatieff, 1978).

Choice of penal policy is a cultural question. It is not a question of instinctive actions and re-actions. It is an area filled with deep moral questions. It is an area for novelists, playwrights, artists – and for all citizens. It is not only for experts, of course not. But it is not only for victims either. It must be a chorus of voices, introducing a forest of concerns, partly concerns that are not easily digested, and also to a large extent not in harmony. The more the field is seen as a cultural one, the less room remains for the simplified solutions (Christie, 2004, 85).

The Importance of Historical Work on Prisons

Ted Palys discusses history by employing the concept of which parts of history get placed in the box (1993, 164) and which parts of history remain hidden from our knowledge. He discusses how it is usually the privileged who write history and that this history is therefore often from the perspective of white men who are of a mid to high socio-economic status. This thesis however focuses on the lived experiences of incarcerated men and women serving sentences in Canadian federal institutions, and

therefore from the perspective of some of the most marginalized members of our society. The only way that we will figure out what to do about corrections in Canada is to look critically at history – even recent history as in the case of the prisoner correspondence, and not just the official account of events. By looking critically at our past it should be obvious that when human beings are treated as animals they will eventually act like animals and may soon begin to feel non-human. We also have very few ethnographic accounts of the process where ex-prisoners “go straight,” how they deter from future criminal activity (but see Anderson, 2002). A just society ensures that human rights are ensured to all – regardless of what they have done. It should be evident that violence begets violence and that violence is more than physical assault – it is an attack on human dignity.

Many prisoners claimed that they were not violent before they entered prison, that they had to become violent to survive in that environment. Some had to pretend to be violent in the beginning to survive and then the use of violence was sometimes adopted as the response to any issue. I also read the correspondence of prisoners who claimed that they never resorted to violence. Some did not know that there was any other way of dealing with issues until reading the advice and wisdom that Culhane offered in her correspondence. Claire, a pacifist, was very direct with prisoners who wrote to her bragging about using violence. She encouraged prisoners to think about the connections between fights for social justice all over the world by including articles for them to read in her correspondence. These articles often led to an exchange of ideas and interpretations of the issues she presented them with. Some of these prisoners in turn enrolled in the prison education program. She helped them to use their minds and hearts

rather than their fists. It is clear to me, after reading and reflecting on over 9,000 of these letters, that it is an exercise in futility to teach people how to stop using violence by confining them in an environment that demands it.

Prisons are essentially closed off from society – partly for safety and partly as punishment and a great deal of what happens inside of these institutions remains hidden. Ironically, my research suggests that most prisoners were more satisfied with the results that Claire was able to get for their grievances than with the official internal grievance system. This satisfaction with Claire as an advocate is partly because she exposed the mistreatment of prisoners to outsiders through her cable television show called *Instead of Prisons*, her books and articles, and her use of civil disobedience on Parliament Hill and at prison gates. Her methods bridged those living inside prison with those living on the outside – she truly brought the outside world in. This shows the need for an independent Ombudsperson in each prison – a point that Culhane repeated in her books and correspondence. She argued that such independent people must liaise between prisoners and the staff and administration to ensure accountability to policies and protocols and fairness. An Ombudsperson could help to lessen the power imbalance between staff and prisoner. Power struggles and desire for domination and control can lead to the use of violence (Pepinsky, 277, 2000).

The Office of the Correctional Investigator is supposed to play the role of Ombudsperson for all federal prisons. Despite this mandate, the recommendations and findings from these investigations cannot produce binding results and this gives the Office more of a symbolic function rather than a useful role. However, the Correctional Investigator explained that he could not be considered an Ombudsman in its true

definition if he enforced the recommendations of his Office (personal communication, 2005).

The Right to Education

Academic research on prison programs has demonstrated that post-secondary education programs in prison can actually lower recidivism rates (Duguid, 2000). Many prisoners respond to post-secondary education because it transforms the hierarchical imposition of control traditionally held over the prisoner by the professional who is paid to “correct” them. Duguid argues that education can be used to transform prisoners’ world views and their own positions in respect to the rest of the world (2000, 102). Education can be used as a means to promote social change and if done in an egalitarian environment, it can assist prisoners in improving their self-images (Duguid, 2000, 102). The key to the success of an educational program in prison is that it must be facilitated by “outsiders”, it should be done in a democratic manner, and it must occur in a separate area of the prison so that it is not influenced by inside politics and hierarchical organization (Duguid, 2000). Several prisoners in my sample participated in the prison education program in B.C. and many discussed how it was one of the only areas in the prison where violent outbursts were almost non-existent.

The End of Punishment? The Abolitionist Vision

Because the public does not hear the anguish of prisoners and their families, because the discourse of the press and popular criminology present offenders as ‘different’, and less than fully human, and because penal violence is generally sanitized, situational, and of low visibility, the conflict between our civilized sensibilities and the often brutal routines of punishment is minimized and made more tolerable (Garland, 1990, 243).

While academics, members of the public, and government and non-government agencies have been critical of the ability of the prison system to actually decrease recidivism rates, articulation of meaningful solutions or alternatives to the prison system is not as forthcoming. Penal abolitionists have articulated alternatives for the retributive system of justice (Cayley, 1998). Most abolitionists do not argue for the total abolishment of prisons but rather for them to be used as a last resort for a very small number of individuals (van Swaaningen, 1997). Christie explains:

Abolitionism in its purest form is not an attainable position. We cannot abolish the penal institution totally. But we can go a long way in that direction... what comes close to my heart might be called *minimalism*. This is close to the abolitionist position, but accepts that in certain cases, punishment is unavoidable. Both abolitionists and minimalists take undesired acts as their point of departure, not acts defined as crimes. And they ask how these acts can be dealt with. Can compensating the injured party help to handle the case, or establishing a truth commission, or helping the offender to ask for forgiveness? A minimalist position opens up choice... punishment becomes one, but only one, among several options. To let the analysis stem from conflicts, rather than from crime, opens up a liberating perspective. It means that we are not captured in a 'penal necessity' (Christie, 2004, 85, italics in original).

Abolitionists recognize that the problem is worsened by excluding offenders from participating in society (van Swaaningen, 1997). They argue for decriminalization of many social problems such as drug addiction that are inappropriately labelled as crimes (van Swaaningen, 1997). Sanctions need to be avoided as much as possible and they can be if there are adequate social policies that address, at least some of the known causes of criminality. Several abolitionists have proposed an "attrition model" (Knopp, 1976, 10) which includes a moratorium on prison construction, decarceration (keep people out of jail), excarceration (provide alternatives to incarceration in the community), and humane

restraint of the demonstrably dangerous few, estimated at 15% of the prison population (Morris, 1989, 35-36; Knopp, 1976; Culhane, 1991).

Challenges to Penal Abolition

The first challenge to penal abolitionism is that abolitionists have not agreed on any one type of vision if the current retributive system was fully dismantled. There are many facets of abolitionism and differing degrees of abolitionism. For example, the eminent prison critic Nils Christie, believes in a type of abolitionism that he terms *minimalism*, whereas Saleh-Hanna and others in a vanguard of younger academic-activists, believe in a full dismantling of what she terms the criminal just-us system. Given this fragmentation, penal abolitionists are thus not committed to the exact same type of abolition, and no complete vision as to how things would operate after the system is dismantled. The main obstacle for the abolitionist vision will be challenging as it ultimately requires the support of the public and the stakeholders who not only make many of the decisions about criminal justice policy but also have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. It will be difficult to elicit the support of the masses without a clear vision of how things will operate. Restorative justice and transformative justice have a great deal of potential to offer alternatives to the retributive system as the values, philosophy and politics of these paradigms are in line with penal abolitionism. The CSC now does have a restorative justice department; however, this department is only a very small facet of the bureaucracy. “The money dedicated to restorative justice amounts to about .007% of the CSC’s budget, which is a meaningful indication of the limits of the Unit’s influence on the system as a whole” (Elliott, 2002, 469).

The second problem is that while most penal abolitionists concede that some people will need to be confined, it is difficult to know where to draw the line between the dangerous few and the majority who could address their criminality in a community setting. For penal abolitionists, those suffering from mental illness, those who participate in the sex trade, those with drug and alcohol addictions should not be penalized through incarceration. It is argued that these crimes are victimless and therefore a term of incarceration is not a helpful solution.

The third issue for penal abolitionism is that when you take control away from the state and give it to community members this assumes that community members share the same vision and have similar values and beliefs. A vision for a more inclusive tomorrow includes re-learning how to relate to each other and form communities (Condello, 2003). There is still racism, sexism, homophobia, drug and alcohol addiction, poverty, oppression, coercion, greed, envy and violence in the community. While it is easy to blame the structures and institutions that make up our society, we cannot forget that these are created and maintained by people. This may be a major obstacle for the long-term realization of abolitionism in Canada.

Limitations of the Study

At first I wanted to interview prisoners who knew Claire; however, I was informed that this may be very limiting as many of them were no longer incarcerated. Furthermore, CSC now rejects eight out of ten research proposals and it was felt that due to the political nature of Claire's work it may be futile to attempt this access (personal communication, Elliott, 2003). I also considered interviewing ex-prisoners who wrote to Claire; however, the more I thought about this, and discussed this with my senior

supervisor, I recognized this might invade their privacy and violate the condition that Claire placed on researching the archive of letters – to keep the identities confidential. I had a policy of not including files of people who I know or have met.

I chose to do a purposive sample based on the volume of correspondence and therefore I am not able to generalize my findings to the entire archive and certainly not to Canadian prisoners in general (see Appendix B for an overview of the issues addressed in each of the files). Generalizing is not the purpose of exploratory qualitative research – a more in-depth understanding of Canadian prisoners' issues and the role of Claire as an activist was the focus of my research. The second limiting factor was the purposive sample because it restricted which SPSS applications I could run on the data. Therefore I could not indicate relationships between different variables. I chose a purposive sample because I was more interested in the process that each correspondent entered into with Claire. I watched relationships building between Culhane and those she corresponded with – a process that may not have been possible if I randomly sampled from the files. Many of the files that did not fit into my sampling process were very small in size and would not have offered the depth in understanding I was seeking.

Working with hand-written, often photocopied or carbon copied letters was challenging because many of them were difficult to read. I had to adjust to 100 different types of cursive, some which were not very legible. In situations where I could not determine what the prisoner was writing about or could not read what was written I naturally could not record the issues in my content analysis. Therefore it is possible that I missed some issues in the correspondence. Another problem was that some of the files appeared to be missing letters. This was frustrating because it was almost like the

equivalency of someone ripping out the centre or ending of a book, or missing a key part of the plot in a movie. It is impossible to say what happened to the letters. They could have not left the institution because of censorship or lost in the mail. It is also possible that they were misplaced at Claire's place given the dozens of letters she received on a daily basis. These letters may also have been misfiled at some point by Culhane or others working on the project.

One great challenge of this research was to refrain from stereotyping any one group. Claire was criticized for having been too pro-prisoner or giving an off-balanced account of affairs. I often found it difficult to read the letters and not feel that all prison guards were sadistic animals who thrive on keeping people in cages and to not romanticize the prisoners' fight for social justice. It must be noted that guards themselves lack "voice" in policy and protocol formation. Also, in this same period of time, guards were often denigrated as "screws". I read hundreds of letters where prisoners were indicating disgust for their keepers. This study is therefore limiting in some respects because the materials that I explored were written by prisoners and Culhane, thus limiting the experiences of front-line prison employees. There are, of course, many sides to each story. What was apparent is that it was very difficult for many of the prisoners corresponding with Claire to have respected prison staff because there was a very strong "us" versus "them" divide. The development of these sentiments make it very hard to understand how a prisoner is supposed to relate to authority figures once they are eventually released back into the community. Because many of the prisoners included in this sample were serving their sentences in maximum-security institutions, their liberty was not only suspended but they were deprived of many other

aspects that others take for granted – contact with their children and partners, choice of when to eat or what to eat, choices about when to sleep and exercise, choice of livelihood and choices over programming. I am not suggesting that they should not have been limited in any way simply that this set-up creates and maintains hate.

It should be acknowledged that the truth of the content of the letters is impossible to determine. Readers may believe that my analysis is limited because it may appear that I took everything that prisoners' wrote about as being fact. However, I am aware that there are many different versions of stories and that it is human nature to show ourselves in the most positive "light" and to be selective in re-telling events. Claire herself was aware of the possibility of being lied to or misled by prisoners who were writing her for help. The PRG after all did have "tell us the truth" as one of their rules for helping prisoners. I was more interested in prisoners' *perceptions* of their surroundings and experiences in their own words because it is prisoners who are expected to change for the better through a sentence of incarceration.

Conclusion

As a penal abolitionist, Claire rejected the use of incarceration as a solution to the crime problem. She advocated for these issues to be dealt with in the community where they stem from. The solution to criminality cannot be found through "correcting" individual offenders but requires much broader structural changes and a much broader understanding of what factors led them to prison. It is the responsibility of critical social researchers to use their resources to challenge the system. It will only be through the ability to combine academic research with community activism that larger structural changes will be possible. Furthermore, it is critical to elicit the support of the public.

Gaining support for alternative programs will only occur if we can educate the public about prisons and prisoners from a perspective that is critical of the status quo. One way is by bringing in prisoners on escorted temporary passes and ex-prisoners to talk to high school and university students about the realities of incarceration. This could help to dispel some of the myths that are created in the media. Although conditions of confinement have improved and prisoners have many of the human rights that the outside community enjoys, incarceration is still inhumane and ineffective at preventing future criminal behaviour (Cayley, 1998).

Researchers, academics, and activists can help to share resources and act as a vehicle to have prisoners' concerns heard by those that have the power to make changes to narrow the disjuncture between rhetoric and reality in prison. These groups should not however speak for prisoners but can provide a forum which includes their voices. Accountability is of utmost importance in penitentiaries as prisoners are extremely marginalized but without public interest in what goes on in prisons there is little chance that CSC can be considered truly accountable or that a necessary attitude shift will take place. The general public needs to be educated about the reality of life in a penitentiary, partly through the voices of prisoners (Gaucher, 2002). The media can be a great vehicle through which information can be disseminated. Historically, the media has decontextualized criminal behaviour and routinely demonized offenders (Saleh-Hanna, 2000). People often accept these sinister, incorrigible images of criminals because most people do not seek out other sources of knowledge or they lack access to the everyday world of imprisonment. The experiences of prison writers are a necessary addition to criminological discourse and a challenge to popular misconceptions about prisoners.

Convict criminology, such as *The Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, has the potential to contribute to an awareness and mobilization for serious penal reforms and perhaps abolition in Canada.

The work of Claire Culhane is not likely to be found in any mainstream criminology textbooks, or published in the most “prestigious” of criminological journals, but her work and her life story (see Lowe, 1992) can make a most important contribution to the discipline of criminology. Claire’s perspectives on social justice and crime can be seen as quite threatening to the discipline of criminology as she questioned the status quo. She challenged many forms of social injustice and misuse of power and demanded that Canadians not be complacent about social justice issues. Claire was opposed to what she termed “groupism” which is judging someone based on caricatures of their profession, or personal or political background. At the core of social injustice is the power that some groups have to control others. While Claire may not be known by the mainstream and her methods and causes not fully understood, among certain circles that often operate on the margins; she is quoted, remembered and revered for her passion, perseverance and her skills in the art of persuasion. She was a woman who would not accept defeat and did not accept “no” for an answer.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Variables and Categories for Content Analysis

Sheet 1

Sample (n=100)	Years of Corresponding	Quantity of Correspondence	Quantity of Institutions	Segregation	Involuntary Transfer
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Sheet 2

Sample (n=100)	Voluntary Transfer	Assault	Harassment / Threats	Destruction of Property	Murder
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Sheet 3

Sample (n=100)	Attempted Murder	Riot	Hostage	Formal Grievance Procedure	Prisoners Helping Prisoners
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Sheet 4

Sample (n=100)	Hunger Strike	Use of Weapons	Suicide	Psychological Distress	Self-Injury
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Sheet 5

Sample (n=100)	Sexual Assault	Special Handling Unit	Protective Custody Unit	Racism
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Appendix B: Description of all Files in Archive

(Compiled by work-study employee, Ms. Jen Kato, 2005).

Year	File Topics
1985	Grievance - Human Rights (unjust treatment: discrimination, denied proper medical treatment and balanced meals; harassment by guards). Denied treatment programs.
1980-81	Legal - Habitual offender sentence (request to suspend habitual sentence).
1984	Grievance - SHU.
1980-81	General - John Howard Society. Proposal for a pre-release program.
1979	Request - Legal aid. Help with legal matters (concerning charges, etc.).
1982	Request - Assistance regarding outstanding charges.
1982	General - Claire's contact with another party.
1976-79	General - Essay regarding prisoner's experiences in the system. Formation of an Inmate Committee. Mutual friends and contacts. Grievance - Overcrowding.
1985	Legal - Wrongful conviction.
1983-84	General - Seventh Step Society.
1976-82	Grievance - Segregation. Health. Legal - court proceedings.
?	General - Essay and poetry regarding prison life.
1977	General - Support for Claire. Dissatisfaction with prison system.
1995	Legal/General - Release of prisoner from detention in another country's prisons.
1984	General - Exceptional People's Olympiad.
1986	Request - Claire's views on Prisoners' Rights. General - Essay written by prisoner.
1986	Grievance - Petitions regarding illegal transfer and dropping of charges against prisoner.
1984-86	In French
1982	General - Contact with lawyer. Legal aid (refusal to take appeal).
1984	General - Cemetery Rd. Publication. Death.
1985-88	Grievance - Family visitation. Mental health examination (suicidal). Legal - Dangerous Offender, case against correctional authorities (cruel and unusual punishment), court proceedings.
1984	Legal - Granted money from Québec's class action fund to seek compensation from Solicitor General for damages suffered following bloody riot.
1981-84	Grievance - SOLITARY CONFINEMENT, inadequate psychiatric assessment/treatment (mental health). Legal - Private evidence/medical confidentiality at public inquiry. Fatality inquiry. Legal/Grievance - Undue force used by correctional officers (unfounded).
1983	General - Claire's International Conference on Prison Abolition. John Howard Society.
1982	General - Exceptional People's Olympiad.
1984-85	Legal - Sentence computation. Legal aid.
1987	Grievance - Dissatisfaction with new CMOI (failure to update progress summary).
1981-95	Grievance - Health/inadequate treatment (pain resulting from previous gunshot wounds). Loss of mail and personal belongings.
1976	Grievance/Legal - Denial of legal aid. Violation of rights.
1985, 87	General - Re-contacting Claire (regarding release on parole). Claire's book.
1985	Legal - Appeal because of wrongful conviction.
1980	Grievance - Violation of privacy (female guards allowed in areas).
1995	Request - Information about release and health (from wife).
1981-82	General - Visits, Reading materials.
1980	Request/Legal - Sentence/eligibility dates.
1980-81	General - Books.
1986	Legal - Preliminary inquiry. Court proceedings. Violation of human rights.
1980	General - Mutual friend.
1981	General - Support for Claire.
1979-80	Grievance - Transfer (forced).

Year	File Topics
1980	General - Newspaper article.
1986	General - Claire's book.
1978-80	Grievance - Transfer.
1985-88	General - Essays/articles regarding sexual offenders, parole and double bunking. Exceptional People's Olympiad. Grievance - Health (dermatologist). Forced transfer of 2 Native prisoners. Lack of education programs. Denial of religious material.
1988	Grievance - Harassment from guard.
1976-78	General - Letters to newspapers. Formation of Inmate Committee. Conditions and injustices in system. Religion. Grievance - Mail tampering.
1979-81	[In French].
1981-85	Grievance - Hunger strike.
1977	General - CC sending copy of her book.
1990-93	General - CC passing on messages from mutual contacts.
1990	General - CC too busy to write, sending "stuff".
1979	General - Contact w/ prisoner's fiancé. Letters sent demanding prisoner's release as a "terminally ill prisoner".
1982	General - Enclosures of CC's report. Brochures for CC's book.
1991	General - Prisoner's concerns regarding false complaints about institutional sex-offender program and his support for the program.
1984	General - Visitation.
1990	General - Thank you to CC Permission to use prisoner's information.
1991	General - CC sending enclosures of articles / clippings, etc. Prison newspaper.
1978-87	Grievance - Conditions in segregation. Transfers. General - Inmate Committee.
1981	Legal - Documents and letters for appeal of parole denial.
1980-85	General - Prison newsletter. Enclosures of letters sent by CC to other parties. Prisoners' Committee dissatisfaction w/ segregation of new prisoners. Grievance - Wife denied visitation unless strip searched.
1991	General.
1979	General - Enclosure regarding Odyssey Newsletter.
1992	Grievance - Hunger strike protesting the psychological and emotional abuse inflicted by CMO and Unit Manager. Being put in for Gating Hearing. Request - Legal assistance. Request for CC to contact the press regarding what is going on inside the prison.
1990-91	General - Status of judicial review for mutual contact.
1986-90	General - CC attending prisoner's hearing. Efforts to move prisoner from restrictive ward. Request for CC to end all contact with prisoner and not attend his hearing.
1989	General - CC giving message on behalf of another prisoner (letter almost illegible).
1981-90	Grievance - Transfer requests. Complaints of harassment.
1977	General - Receipt and circulation of prisoner's statement. CC's thoughts regarding speaking on prisoners' rights.
1987-93	General - Recent release on parole and return to prison. Health of mutual contact. Lifers' Group. The hiring of psychologist by prisoners w/ own funds.
1990-91	General - CC checking on status of grievance.
1994	Grievance - Being denied visitation.
1983-95	Grievance - Segregation. Transfers. Complaints of assault and harassment. General - Suicidal tendencies. Petitions. Prisoners' Justice Day'. Missing/destroyed personal items.
1978-80	Legal - Actively seeking to renounce U.S.A citizenship and take leave of America. Defence Committee. General - Political views (U.S.A, U.S.S.R), CC's book and tour.
1985-87	Request - Claire's book. Legal assistance and information/contacts, visitation.
1985	Grievance - Segregation. Transfer (request). Legal - Day parole.
1984-86	General - Work. P.R.E.A.P.
1980-87	Legal - Appeal. Grievance - Transfer, SHU.
1980	Grievance - Transfer.

Year	File Topics
1987-84	Grievance - Transfer. Health.
1979	General - Meeting prisoner. Correspondence.
1988	Request - For help / info. regarding recent transfer, how to become eligible for parole, obtaining personal belongings, resolving difficulties w/ lawyer. General - Visitation. False allegations on prisoner's file indicating false allegations that are destroying his chances at early parole.
1984	General - Thank you from CC for Christmas card.
1978-81	General - Mutual contacts, CC trying to locate prisoner.
1988	Legal - Wrongful conviction (fabricated charges). General - Actively seeking justice, CC's empathy and inability to help.
1994	General - Ordering CC's book. Move to new range. Educational pursuits.
1992-94	Grievance - Transfer from SHU. General - Transfer granted, Thank you to CC for her help.
1982	Legal - Application for parole. Grievance - Transfer request.
1977-88	General - CC's television appearance. Recent visits.
1993	General / Grievance - Reprimanded by guard for allegedly phoning victims.
1980-81	Request - For CC to obtain records of case from prisoner at another prison who was fighting his case (he is not allowed to correspond w/ other prisoners). Request for help to bring outstanding warrants before the court.
1993	Legal / General - Plans for parole.
1982-83	General - Copy of CC's book. Transfer. Being confined in segregation.
1993	Grievance - Family visitation. E.T.A. Complaint filed for excessive force and injuries caused. Transfer. General - List of lawyers.
1989	General - Upcoming prison social.
1986	General - Thank you to CC for helping gain transfer.
1992	General - Accusations of prison stabbing and its consequences. Upcoming release on M.S.
1995	Legal - Deportation order. Being denied parole b/c C/O says he will serve his full sentence.
1990	General - CC sending letter to police station and needs follow-up from prisoner. Request - from CC for money in future to cover phone bills.
1991	General - CC sending enclosures.
1982	General - Prisoner's advocacy for prisoners' rights and desire to make changes. Request - For information on prisoners' rights and contacts.
1988	General - CC's acceptance of invitation (Elders' Group, Brotherhood). Lawyer contact.
1987	General - Grievance, CC requesting that prisoner send her authorization to share case information.
1989	Grievance / Legal - Requesting explanation as to why wife was strip-searched prior to visitation and why he has been losing good time for behaviours which others do not.
1991-94	General.
1992-93	Grievance - Access to sweat lodge.
1981	[In French].
1989	Request - From CC for copy of article and materials related to maintenance of family unit while incarcerated and parenting.
1983-92	Grievance - Transfer request. General - Complaints of psychological distress.
1987	General - Enclosing copies of letters sent on prisoner's behalf. Possibility of transferring to have private family visits.
1980	General - Enclosing copies of letters sent to help get prisoner back in general population.
1991	Grievance / Request - For advice in getting around barriers for remand inmates (i.e. access to phones, visits, etc.). Being subject to punishment worse than sentenced prisoners (i.e. buckets instead of toilets). General - Prisoners' rights vs. privileges.
1982	Request - For help publishing a book of his poems and getting transcripts.
1995	Legal - Being denied transfer from U.S.A to Canada (Canadian citizen) b/c of money owed to U.S.A state and also denied parole for 15 year sentence b/c he's not a U.S.A citizen.
1980-81	General - Life in SHU. Mutual prisoner contacts. Prisoner transfers from SHU. Charges facing from outburst after being denied phone calls.

Year	File Topics
1986	General - CC recommending contact on subject of segregation.
1986	Legal - Inquiring as to what length of time is considered unreasonable by courts as violation of Charter rights. General - Description of charges against him and commission of offences.
1991	General - CC checking if prisoner had been in touch w/ contact.
1983	Request - Receive copies of warrants. Legal - Sentence computation reviewed and adjusted.
1978	General - Claire's visitation rights withdrawn. Getting into halfway house.
1978	General - Message from mutual friend. Claire's visitation rights withdrawn.
1979-80	Grievance - Grievances not being processed. Request - Help/Representation for investigation into conspiracy, brutality, torture, abduction of fiancé.
1979	Grievance - Denied temporary absence pass to attend family member's funeral.
1984	General - Seven Steps meeting.
1980-85	General - Plans for release. Lack of support for A.A. treatment program. Claire's book. Inmate Welfare Committee.
1985	General - Letter to CBC regarding episodes on the drug Valium. Lists of doctors and medications prescribed.
1977-86	Grievance - Segregation and heating. Delays in correspondence. General - Courses. Request - Lawyer, Transcripts. General - Investigation into death/Coroner's inquiry.
1982-87	Grievance - Brutality and torture of prisoners. Legal - Parole, Deportation. General - Released, Study programs. Organizing group to help prisoners deported from North American prisons.
1983-84	Grievance - Forced transfer. Application to have religious affiliation removed. Problems with chaplaincy, application to enlist services of Minister.
1981-82	Request - Information regarding case. General - Donation to fund release of another prisoner. Legal - Immigration status.
1977-81	General - Escape. Request - Information, Contacts. Grievance - No programs (work), Changes in visiting system inadequate, Hunger strike.
1981	Grievance - Transfer. General - Religious/Ministering on release.
1983-85	Legal/Request - Contact with Canadian Consulate for transfer back to Canada.
1982	General - Upcoming visit from Claire. Legal aid.
1976-77	General - Daily activities. Visits not cleared.
1976	General - Support for Claire.
1981	Grievance - Denied visitation from family member.
1984	General - Thank you for Christmas card.
1987-88	[Partly in French]. General - Inmate offence report. Grievance - Complaints w/ charges against him and against sections of Penitentiary Service Regulations.
1986	General - Difficulties with visitation. Resolution of grievances (i.e. contact with lawyer, property missing from cell, harassment). Legal action against institution and guards about false charges following riot. Request - For information on the legality of arbitrary searches of visitors.
1981	[Partly in French]. General - Making contacts for prisoner to remain in area.
1988	Grievance - Report of false allegations on personal file and inability to have them removed and receive apology.
1989-90	Grievance - Denied transfers to be with family after failing treatment program. Request - For an advocate in area to convince Region to accept his transfer. General - CC's attempts to contact wife/fiancé, Thanking CC after transfer approved
1992-93	Grievance - Being wrongfully denied medical therapy after transfer to R.P.C. General - Thanking CC for her support and believing in her.
1989-91	Grievance - Being subjected to high security treatment and not given any normal remand privileges.
1993	General - Gating decision. CC inquiring into any possibility to appeal case.
1978-85	Grievance - Segregation. Transfers. General - Prisoners' Committee. Assisted other prisoners with legal issues.
1985-86	Legal - Denial of freedom of religious expression. General - Religious practices and beliefs.

Year	File Topics
1978-88	Grievance / Legal - Badly assaulted by police and guards during transfer and fearful that assault will be covered up. General - Mutual contacts. Desire to create organization similar to PRG. General problems in prison (i.e. contraband, killings b/c of doctors/nurses' "games").
1978	General - Mutual friend.
1990-92	Grievance - Transfer request so he can make money before release. Legal - Regarding R.C.M.P. Act. American citizen wanting Deportation Order. Lawyer lied at Immigration Hearing. Request - For legal advice, for CC to contact R.C.M.P., for CC to contact the U.S.A. about transfer package.
1990-91	Legal - Wrongful conviction.
1993	General - CC forwarding info. on prisoner's behalf.
1985	Grievance - Harassment (constantly being searched for drugs without reason, held in segregation). Denied private family.
1990-91	General.
1994	Legal - Appealing conviction (wrongly accused). Request - For financial assistance from P.R.G.
1994	General - Correspondence w/ other parties regarding violation of rights.
1993	Request - For information on crossing border into Canada after release.
1992-92	Legal - Delays in parole decision, appealing decision.
1986	Grievance - Conditions at prison (i.e. 23-hr lockdown, double bunking, no access to programs, etc.).
1993	General - Thanking CC for her support making trip better.
1991	General - CC informing that P.R.G. are not lawyers.
1992-93	Grievance - Cancellation of Trade Certified Mechanics program for lifers. General - Transfer proposal. Upcoming transfer.
1992	Grievance - Involuntary transfer after allegedly sexually assaulting another prisoner.
1978	General - Role / mandate of P.R.G. Contacts for prisoner to seek help.
1984	General - Prisoner's views on penal system in response to CC's article. Request - For CC to help find pen-pals.
1994	General - Canadian prison system in relation to U.S.A., Referral to CC's book.
1980-81	Grievance - Parole (application denied; request for re-examination).
1988	Grievance - Health (rare syndrome), double bunking.
1981	General - Out of Bounds newsletter. Donation from Claire.
1983-85	Grievance - Application for transfer.
1980-82	Grievance - Forced transfer, SHU/Release to general population. Request - Newspaper article for female pen pal.
1987	General - Thank you for CC's help, Upcoming Parole Board hearing.
1984-88	Legal - Claim against Crown (personal property missing), appeal (claim was rejected). Parole (denied). Grievance - Reading materials, right to wear own clothing, assault by staff.
1978	General - CC's denial of visitation rights.
1984	General - Thank you for Christmas card.
1986-88	Request - Advice (whether to serve unjust sentence or end life). Wants choice on death penalty.
1991	Grievance - ETA, private family visits w/ fiancé.
1990	Grievance - On behalf of two inmates who are being denied V&C, over crowding of prisoners in segregation / dissociation / temp. detainment. Induction (member of inmate committee).
1993	General - Communication w/ N.P.B. Grievance regarding treatment of visitor.
1989	General - Visitation.
1981	General - CC accepting prisoner's invitation to speak about "alternatives" at Awareness Club's meeting.
1981	General - Views on the imprisonment especially regarding crimes of fraud, forgery and theft. CC's book.
1991	General - CC providing family member w/ info. on a good lawyer. Mutual contact.
1979-88	Grievance - Segregation, Transfers, SHU. General - Odyssey.
1991	Grievance - Open visit policy (on behalf of all prisoners).
1993-94	Legal - Authorities not abiding by legislation, requesting charges against him, excessive force used during arrest, legal aid lawyer. Grievance - Lacking of Native Liaison worker at prison, improper medical care.
1984	General - Thanking prisoner for group Christmas card.

Year	File Topics
1987-88	General - Prisoner's involvement in issues facing Native prisoners. How he educated himself in prison. His artwork. His views about his release.
1984	General - Thanking prisoner for Christmas card.
1986-93	General - Native Brotherhood Inmate Committee.
1983	General - CC sending enclosure of letter sent to Director.
1980	General - Prisoner's contribution to CBC radio program.
1984	Grievance - CC's contact w/ Inspections and Standards regarding prisoner's dental situation.
1979	General - Prisoner wanting more info about P.R.G. and the Royal Com. Investigation in Kingston, Passing along info. of someone to correspond with.
1982	General - Release of prisoner on an order of habeas corpus.
1991	Grievance - Gaining ETA. General - Granted ETAs.
1990	General - News about appeal being thrown out.
1993	Legal - Problems w/ N.P.B. regarding deportation application. Grievance - Transfer.
1992	General - Visitation.
1989	General - Requesting more info on P.R.G. and offering to help out after release. Personal history. Grievance - Lack of proper medical attention. Loss / tampering of mail left by CC Personal material seized from cell.
1977-82	Legal - Parole. Grievance - Transfer, harassment, medical problems (migraines). General - Drug treatment and problems.
1978	General - Contact with lawyer.
1981	General - Reform of law and Court of Appeal.
1995	General - Work and projects after release.
1982	Legal - Parole, legal aid. General - Religious beliefs. Grievance - Violation of prisoners' rights.
1989-90	Legal - Appeal of sentence. General - Death of family member and gaining ETA.
1984	General - Past meeting of the Odyssey Group.
1986	Grievance - Transfer, fired from job, assaulted. Request - For CC to contact lawyer.
1989	Grievance - CC waiting for copies of grievances for ETAs.
1984	General - CC thanking prisoner for Christmas card.
1985	General - Invitation to CC to attend John Howard Society meeting.
1990-93	General - Inquiring about the aims and structure of P.R.G. on behalf of prisoners. Request - For info. on putting in appeal and for good lawyer. Legal - Federal court actions against various government departments including CSC and his CMOI (related to denial of day parole, appeal of conviction and description of court proceedings and evidence. Grievance - Against CMOI (threats, denial of fund transfer to family, etc.).
1982-84	General - CC sending copy of letter. Requesting that prisoner contact her.
1990	General - CC informing prisoner's wife about options for moving after transfer. Videotape evidence.
1991-93	Legal - Requesting help from CC to transfer to Canada under Prisoner Exchange Treaty after he was approved but transfer was revoked in contradiction w/ Treaty.
1981	General - Eulogy letter written by CC commemorating prisoner's life.
1989-92	General - Native Brotherhood. Grievance - Complaints of assaults, SHU.
1990	General / Grievance - CC requesting copies of grievances regarding extraordinary transportation system. Injunction.
1979	General - Mutual contacts.
1990-91	Grievance - Being denied visitation until wife's legal proceedings finished. General - Advice on upcoming parole hearing.
1984	General - CC thanking prisoner for Christmas card.
1981-82	General / Request - For CC to follow up w/ response from letter written to obtain free booklet from T.V. personality.
1984-94	Grievance - Being denied visitation w/ wife. General - Mutual contact and CC's difficulty contacting. Prisoner's book / writing.
1984-92	Grievance - Being denied visitation, involuntary transfer.

Year	File Topics
1990	General.
1982	General - Complaints to the Human Rights Institute of Canada regarding lack of library material on human rights in prison and complaint against the Health Sciences Centre for withholding document.
1989-91	Grievance - Problems after transfer (lack of treatment programs, employment, etc.), being given drugs w/ negative effects, assaulted by guards (charges laid). Request - For CC to contact lawyer regarding book written by prisoner and help being published. Legal - Appeal (sentence?). Request for manuscript.
1983	General - CC enclosing copies of letters sent regarding prisoner's problems (possibly poor food and tobacco, denied phone calls).
1987	Legal - Sentence calculation.
1988	General - CC's comments on private family visitation program and prisoner's response (Lifers' Organization).
1985	General - Plaque awarded to CC on behalf of John Howard Society.
1984-93	Grievance - Voluntary transfers.
1993	General - Trying to obtain information kit on Canadian prisons. CC's political views. Prisoner's experience in the U.S.A. Canadian Consulate General indicating that prisoner is ineligible to claim Canadian citizenship or transfer to Canada under any treaty.
1990	Grievance - Visitation. General - Explanation of grievance procedural levels; prisoner wanting visits.
1994	Legal - Wanting to transfer to Canada from U.S.A. under transfer agreement.
1987	General - Mandate of P.R.G. and inability to provide financial assistance.
1986	General - Working as barber. Grievance - Trouble receiving personal items from previous prison.
1980	General - CC's thoughts in response to prisoner's letter (being labelled a "threat", etc.).
1983-87	Grievance - Complaints about the grievance system.
1990	General - CC unsure how to respond to prisoner's last letter.
1985	General - Mutual prisoner contact. Upcoming release and CC's concerns about going from SHU right to the street.
1989	General - CC enclosing copy of letter to Humane Society regarding injured bird.
1981	General - Confusion surrounding parole hearing.
1980-81	Legal - Letter to the N.P.B. concerning application for temporary leave of absence.
1983-88	General - Inmate Committee. Segregation and release of fellow prisoners. Involvement of B.C. Civil Liberties. Recent stabbings and death. Thoughts about his time in prison and eventual release
1990	General - Mutual contact (released prisoner). Sending enclosures.
1993-94	Request - For contact info. for prisoner etc. regarding "flagrant miscarriage of justice of Canadian in U.S.A.", for CC to ask for copy of police report. Legal - Imprisoned for spouse's death, destruction of body (and evidence) after death, evidence not tested (blood). Desire for transfer back to Canada to die w/ dignity and near family (failing health and old age).
1991	Legal - International transfer of Canadian prisoners back to Canada.
1989	Grievance / General - Problems surrounding attendance at family member's funeral. General - Prisoner permitted private family conference by prison staff.
1982-94	Grievance - Voluntary transfer; General - Complaints (i.e. double-bunking in segregation, general conditions in segregation, grievances, suicide).
1983-86	Legal - Prisoner facing unjust sentence in U.S.A for accidental murder after gun discharged. General - Short story by Prisoner. Collection of prisoner's short works compiled into a booklet.
1994	General - CC sending enclosures regarding correspondence w/ other parties.
1992	Legal - Legal issues (illegal arrest, evidence tampering, beaten and rammed w/ police car, violation of rights, incomplete investigation, no money to hire attorney for appeal, wrongful conviction, denied medical treatment, etc.).
1990	General - CC not to deal w/ legal document. Forwarding case on to lawyer friend.
1978-82	General.
1983	General.
1980-84	Grievance - Parole denied for lack of treatment (wants treatment but cannot receive funding).
1982-83	Request - Legal information.

Year	File Topics
1977-78	Request - Legal information (contact w/ prisoners).
1978-79	Grievance - Transfer.
1978	General.
1980-83	Grievance - Medical therapy, Psychiatric treatment.
1976-80	General - Native Land Claims. Request - Visit/interview with Claire, locate friend.
1978	General - Release. Request - Meet with Claire.
1983-84	Legal - Appeal. General - Material regarding "vote issue".
1977	Grievance - Unjustly placed in SMU/PIU (Punitive Isolation Unit). Legal - Legal Aid.
1979-81	General/Grievance - Expose regarding conditions (Dental care, food service, rec. facilities, rehabilitation, visiting/correspondence, guards, etc.), PCU. Legal - Day parole (denied).
1975	General - Support for Claire, Request to get involved in union's activities. Grievance - Investigation into procedures of Sentence Administration Office.
1974-75	Grievance - Conditions (Lack of qualified teachers, day passes/work release, Warden's Court [unjust], poor sanitation, working conditions, sexual relations, segregation). Legal - Legal aid.
1981-82	Grievance - Transfer to be with family members (denied).
1986	General - Introduction (segregation, education).
1982-87	General - Religion (religious leader), Claire's book.
1977-82	Request - Edit and make copies of article (satire on the National Parole Service). Contact with trustworthy publisher to publish poetry. Grievance - "Loss" of poems and written work, Refusal of friend for visitation/correspondence.
1981	General.
1985-88	Legal - Wrongful conviction.
1987-88	Grievance - Personal treatment concerning disability.
1986	Grievance - Transfer.
1979-83	General - Sexual health problems (STD's). Grievance - Lack of proper medical treatment/attention. Legal - Parole, appeal.
1982	Grievance - Personal treatment (program regulation).
1981	Legal - Proceedings.
1985-86	Grievance - Transfer (to be with family). Legal - Sentence calculation.
1987-88	General - Newsletter contribution.
1987	Grievance - Religious rights.
1988	General - Support for Claire. Visitation.
1988	Legal - Motion for a writ of certiorari to quash transfer.
1977-79	Legal - Parole. Requests - Permission to join club. General - Artwork.
1979-80	Request - Representation for Inmate Committee. Grievance - Transfer.
1981	Grievance - Transfer. Legal - Application for writ of habeas corpus (re: unlawful detainment).
n/d	General - Essay about institutionalization.
1980-83	General - Native Brotherhood.
1979	Request - Info. on class action, prison reform.
1986	[In French].
1983	General - Court trial (wrongful treatment).
1980-83	General - Solitary confinement. Request - Information and resources (legal).
1983	Legal - Conviction appeal.
1981-84	Request - Literature allowed in prison.
1980	General - Prison reform, assistance (investigation of a death).
1984	General - Tocsin Publication.
1980-81	General - Article by prisoner regarding nuclear war/arms race.
1978-86	Grievance - Hunger strike (for release), cruel and inhumane treatment, lack of medical treatment.
1976-77	General - Inmate committee. Request - Legal (Federal Inquiry).
1986	General - Women prisoners (contacts).

Year	File Topics
1986-87	Grievance - Religious discrimination.
1980-82	[In French].
1984	Legal / Request.
1976-77	Legal - Legal proceedings, application for Legal Aid.
1984	Grievance - Mental health/treatment (schizophrenic). Temporary absence to visit father. Legal - Wrongful conviction.
1985-86	Grievance - Health (dental).
1980	General - References for magazine.
1986	General - Card for Claire.
1987	General - E.T.A. Pass.
1985	Request - Legal advice/aid.
1977-78	Legal - Application for parole, orders for deportation from Canada. Grievance - Recovering belongings. General - Return to home country.
1986	Request - Contacts for Women's Prison Committees.
1986-88	General - Complaints w/ SHU policies.
1977-80	Request - Legal aid/representation. Grievance - Claire denied visitation. Transfer. Legal - Court proceedings.
1981-86	General - Poetry, publication of work, education. Grievance - Visitations.
1977-80	Grievance - Transfer/Release from SHU. Penal Justice Committee.
1982-84	Grievance - Health, transfer from SHU, hunger-strike. Suicide.
1988	Grievance - Transfer. Legal - Unescorted temporary absence application.
1980	Grievance - Personal treatment.
1987	Grievance - Personal treatment.
1980	General - Lost material.
1980	Grievance - (on behalf of prisoners), lack of security, lack of fresh air, meals, coffee.
1976-77	General - Transfer.
1986-87	Grievance - Personal treatment, infringement of rights (re: mail).
1980	Grievance - Segregation.
1983	Request - Locate mother.
1983-84	Grievance - Visitations. General - Conferences/Publications.
1984	Grievance - Wrongful arrest after release on mandatory supervision.
1980	Grievance - Transfer.
1984-86	Request - Legal representation, police investigation, media.
1979-80	Legal - Parole. Grievance - Transfer, treatment by Classification Officer.
1985	Grievance - Personal treatment (re: no notification of family member's death).
1984	Grievance - Discrimination (Job).
1980	General - Transfer.
1982-86	Grievance - Health (Dental care), parole, case review, psychological assessment.
1995	General - Thank you to Claire for helping him to turn life around.
1987	Grievance - Infringement of rights (re: protective custody).
1987	General/Request - Advocacy for Capital Punishment.
1987	Request - Support. Grievance - Non-receipt of mail.
1983	General - Tightwire (References).
1983	Request - Inquiry into curtailment of Champlain service.
1987	Grievance - Computer use for educational purposes.
1986	Request - Legal advice/representation.
1979	Legal - Parole (plans).
1977-85	Grievance - Health, work opportunity, visitations.
1982	General - Escape (newspaper articles).
1983	General - Editorial (Vertical Reality).

Year	File Topics
1982	Grievance - Discrimination (re: Mandatory Supervision).
1980	Grievance - Transfer, Visitations (Family).
1978-87	Grievance - Transfer, SHU, Prisoner's Pay. General - Publications/Editorials.
1979	General - Keeping in touch.
1982	General - Thank you (for request/legal matter).
1986	General/Grievance - SHU. Legal - Parole.
1980	General - Exceptional People's Olympiad.
1987	General - Community education. Transfer.
1985	General - Permission for Claire to withdraw money.
1995	General - Information regarding transfers.
1982-84	Legal - Wrongful conviction, application for the Royal Prerogative of Mercy.
1971-84	Legal - Wrongful conviction (facts, review of case). Grievance - Visiting privileges, parole.
1983-86	Legal - Wrongful conviction (facts, review of case).
1983-84	Legal - Wrongful conviction.
1980	Grievance - Lack of proper medical treatment (needs surgery).
1988-86	General - Correspondence from another country.
1980	General/Legal - Wrongful conviction.
1981	Grievance - Transfer. Personal Safety. Visitations. Mail loss.
1979	General - Claire's contact with mother.
1981	Grievance - Segregation.
1981	Legal/Grievance - Pressure to testify.
1979-87	General/Request - Information on Prisoners' Rights Organization.
1977	[In French].
1983-85	Grievance - Chaplaincy, mail. General - Religious views (capital punishment, etc.).
1978-82	Request - Case information (newspaper).
1980	Grievance/Legal - Liberation (denied justice).
1982	Request - Prison information (for book/creative writing).
1995	General - Thank you.
1980	General - Contact with friend.
1980	Grievance - Mistakenly shot in escape attempt.
1979	General - Suicide.
1979	General - Chaplains discussion group (invitation).
1981-88	Grievance - Personal computer. Admittance to treatment centre. Legal - Damaged belongings.
1981-82	Legal - Royal Prerogative of Mercy (grounds of physical hardship).
1982	General - Prisoner's appreciation for CC's work. Mutual prisoner friend.
1986	General - Release of prisoner friend. Response to media coverage of her case (charges should be reduced).
1984	General - Message from mutual contact.
1989-92	Legal - Request for pardon concerning current conviction due to age and failing health. Parole / Prerogative of Mercy.
1982	General - Received book.
1989	General - CC's visit to mutual friend (prisoner), Lifers Social.
1980-81	General - Contact w/ other parties.
1980-81	General - Prisoner's T.V. interview. Human and prisoners' rights.
1987-89	Grievance - Complaints of privacy issues.
1991-93	General - Wanting to be contacted by religious protection agency. Thanking CC for tape she sent and sending donation to PRG. Open house socials. Severe beating by fellow prisoner. Request - For CC to visit.
1982	General - General thoughts on prison / social change.
1991	General - The Colonist publication.
1990-94	Grievance - Voluntary transfer, harassment, psychological distress.

Year	File Topics
1989	Legal / Request - In urgent need of financial assistance to obtain legal services (Legal Aid) for case concerning Charter violations.
1980	General - Mutual prisoner contacts. Segregation.
1991	General - CC trying to remember prisoner.
1982	General.
1987	Grievance - Constant reassignment of Living Unit Officers resulting in inability to achieve consistency or rapport and denial of previously approved release programs.
1980	Legal - Denied Legal Aid assistance for appeal.
1989	General - CC enclosing copy of letter to warden and passing along lawyer contacts.
1992	Grievance - Involuntary transfer, grievance Coordinator not dealing w/ complaint. Requesting administrative dissociation following involuntary transfer. In segregation based on false allegations. Allegations of racial discrimination.
1992-94	Grievance - Harassment and threats. General - Alternatives to violence.
1982	General - Newspaper articles regarding deportation order against prisoner (prison activist). Awarded trial costs.
1980-81	General - Concerns about PCU.
1988-90	General - Message from mutual contact (prisoner).
1988-93	General.
1981-82	General / Legal - Requesting information or civil lawyer to file writ against sentence. General - Upcoming parole hearing.
1980	Grievance - Employment.
1977-78	General. Request - Newspaper article. Legal aid. Visitations.
1988	Request - Loan for bail.
1977	General - Access to Personal Information.
1986-87	Grievance - Transfer.
1979-80	Grievance - Improper medical treatment (medication withheld).
1982	Request - Information on prisoners' voting rights.
1978-80	General - Visitations. Grievance - Transfer. Request - Info./material.
1981	Grievance - Transfer/Day Parole. Request - Letter of recommendation.
1981	Request - For CC to visit to discuss hardships regarding gender-related issues.
1983	Legal - Death Penalty (request to repeal).
1987-88	Grievance - Visitations. Security Classification Review. Seizure of personal articles.
1981	Grievance - Solitary confinement.
1987-88	Grievance - Hunger strike. Transfer (U.S.A.). Request - Letter to Governor.
1980-81	Request - Information on publishing poetry.
1986-88	Legal - Legal proceedings. Problems finding lawyer.
1980-81	Request - Information about friend.
1977	General - Release. Accommodation.
1982	[In French].
1978	General - Dissatisfaction with system. Regaining friendships.
1987-88	Grievance - Parole. Legal - Illegal arrest.
1980	General - Mutual friends.
1978-79	General - Tarpaper publications.
1978	General - Transfers. Work. Request - Help finding a job.
1988	Request - Investigate violation of prisoners' rights.
1977	Grievance - Restoration of forfeited statutory remission.
1976-87	Grievance - Health (Solitary confinement; lack of medical treatment). Transfer.
1980	General - Native Brotherhood Club.
1984-87	General - Tightwire Magazine. Visitation.
1981-82	Grievance - Transfer (involuntary).
1987	General - Poetry. Release.

Year	File Topics
1987-88	Legal - Civil suit against Mental Health Centre (Health/Treatment). Legal Aid.
1985	General - Visiting group from John Howard Society.
1979-81	Legal - Lawsuit (Brutality and verbal abuse). General - Book Orders.
1979-81	Legal - Lawsuit (Brutality and verbal abuse). General - Publishing Book.
1980-81	Grievance - Transfer (denied).
1983-85	Legal - Parole.
1981	Request - Interpret sentence time.
1976-77	Grievance - Solitary confinement (Cruel and unusual punishment).
1982	Legal - Parole.
1984	General - Thank you for Christmas card.
1984	Request - For Claire to contact him to discuss important legal issue.
1984	General - Tightwire Magazine.
1982	General - Fund for the release of another prisoner.
1987	Grievance - Treatment (Skin frisks). Obtaining information.
1977	Request - Help for himself and girlfriend.
1988	General - Thank you to CC Native Brotherhood.
1979	General - Mutual friend.
1982-84	General - Article clippings. Prisoner's contributions to biker magazine. Grievance - Loss of mail. SHU status. Brutality. Legal - Court proceedings.
1984-87	Legal - Application for certiorari to quash warrants ordering transfer. Parole.
1979-85	Grievance - Inadequate programming for drug treatment. Involuntary transfer. Request for admission to Therapeutic Community. Request - Correspondence.
1988	Legal - Sentence computation. General - Prisoner Committee.
1978-81	Grievance - Health (inadequate treatment, request for examination/treatment).
1988	General - Release from segregation. Request for info. on prison abolition. Reinstatement of Claire's visitation rights.
1980	General - Inmate Committee. Status/transfers of other prisoners.
1980-82	General - Materials/advice/etc. for Labyrinth newsletter. Dissatisfaction with Parole Board.
1985	Grievance.
1978	Grievance - Request denied for transfer to other prison wing. Denied contact with Claire. Request - Meet with Claire.
1987	Grievance - Release from segregation.
1980	Request - Meet with Claire.
1980-86	Grievance - Transfer request.
1986	Grievance - Health (physical and mental incapacitation).
1977	General - Visitation. Mutual friends.
1988	Grievance - False charges (inside). Involuntary transfer. Concerns about impact of charges on release.
1987	Legal - Reasons for judgment (Court of Appeal).
1980-82	Legal - Request for transcripts. Parole.
1986	Request/Legal - Help proving innocence (false confession). Grievance - Safety. Transfer denied. Request - On behalf of fellow prisoner.
1983	General - Mutual friend. Claire's book.
1979	Grievance - Health. Return of personal effects.
1982-83	General - Death/suicide of prisoner. Claire's book and work.
1980	General - Claire's current activities.
1988	Grievance - College course funding.
1981-82	General - Donation to fund for release of another prisoner. Odyssey newsletter (chairman).
1982	General - Donation to fund for release of another prisoner. Inmate Committee. Canadian Constitution.
1982-88	Legal - Parole. Attempting to reduce 25 year sentence. General/Legal - Wishes to change law (25 year sentences). General - Mutual friend. Penal reform. Daily events in prison. Grievance - Transfer, loss of transcripts, double bunking. Reimbursement for university course (denied).

Year	File Topics
1980-81	Grievance - Solitary confinement. Transfer request.
1987-95	General - Inmate Committee, Prisoner slashings. Reform/changes (lack of preventative measures for safety, monitor segregation, challenge security classification, open halfway house, teach women their rights, end degrading treatment, retain confidentiality). Grievance - Transfer.
1976-79	General - Reading materials. Education. Petition. Grievance - Transfer. Legal - Court proceedings.
1978-80	Grievance - Loss of mail/personal belongings. General - Inquiry into death of prisoner (murdered on forced transfer).
1982-83	General - Resignation from Resident Council. Request - Info. regarding Superintendent & Commissioner of Corrections.
1985	Grievance - Physical and mental incapacitation.
1992	General - CC sending enclosures.
?	General.
1986	[In French].
1993	Request - For help with this situation (incarcerated for murder committed while he was apparently on drugs and alcohol, has no recollection, appeal denied). General - CC suggesting human rights contacts.
1983-84	General - Missing attachment from CC's letter. Facing false assault charges after sneaking food from kitchen after being in hole for 20 days. Mutual contact.
1987-88	General - Ordering CC's book on Vietnam. Information about prisoners' files.
?	General - CC requesting acknowledgement of receipt of previous correspondence.
1986-87	Legal - Lawsuit for compensation for head injuries sustained while in prison. Grievance - Denied escorted pass. Request - For CC to contact other parties on his behalf.
1979	General - CC wanting prisoner to get back to her regarding visitation.
1982	General. Grievance - Letter to Commissioner of Corrections proposing changes regarding correctional wages and the economic system.
1985	Request - For CC to get in touch w/ fellow prisoner on hunger strike who cannot reach her. General - Fellow prisoner being punished for drugs found in cell that prisoner placed there w/o his knowledge.
1979	General - Article clippings. Recent meeting with "scientists".
1983	Legal - CC following up w/ info. from NPB (cannot find relevant Section of legislation).
1993	Grievance - Being denied transfer b/c of problems in segregation.
1981	General - CC inquiring into why copies of Labyrinth publication not received.
1989	General - CC's help to mutual prisoner friend. Prisoner's dissatisfaction w/ low rate of pay for prisoners. Grievance - Switched to job w/ lower pay w/o any disciplinary action. Guard getting angry and yelling at wife during visit.
1992	General - CC responding to prisoner's desire for correspondents (by request by mutual prisoner friend).
1995	General. Grievance - Strip searches. Prisoner angry over an addition/amendment to correctional plan given to all prisoners concerning drug use.
1990	Grievance - Visiting procedures imposed on prisoner and his co-accused. Institution has "pre-determined his destination". "Extra special treatment" (i.e. food tampering, harassment, etc.). Attempting to overturn placement in population. Legal - Parole revoked. Request - Difficulty in accessing appropriate library materials to prepare defence.
1983	General - CC hasn't received answers yet for Odyssey Club. CC's upcoming vigil and involvement in Conference.
1985-86	General - Fired from prison news publication's staff as direct result of publishing uncensored issue. Personal problems (i.e. recent break-up, facing serious charges and possible dangerous offender designation). Legal - Discrepancy in sentence (months vs. years).
1985	General - CC sending her condolences for passing of prisoner's wife.
1984-90	Grievance/ legal - Involuntary transfer (federal court interferences).
1989	General - Contacting CC on behalf of fellow prisoner's request regarding bullet incident.
1981	General - Prisoner to send out promotional packages regarding John Howard Society. Death of another prisoner (questionable suicide).

Year	File Topics
1982-91	General. Grievance - Hunger strike in support of prisoner's issue before U.S.A. Supreme Court (Coalition against Death Penalty). Legal - On death row for alleged involvement in shooting during prison transfer although he did not participate. General - Gaining support and publicity for fast. Various papers & publications etc. regarding the death penalty. Honoured w/ Pen Prison Award in poetry.
1980	General - CC's contact w/ "namesake".
1993	General - CC sending enclosures.
1987-88	Request - Contact with woman. General - Meeting with Claire. Smoking ban.
1984	Request - Info. about prisoner (unable to contact him).
1985-86	General - Mutual friend.
1976-77	Request - Help with legal matters after family member's death. Lawyer. Attend other matters (picking up clothes).
1981	Grievance - Wants program to allow him to upgrade education and get job training.
1988	General - Report to the Standing Committee on Justice and Solicitor General.
1979	General - Tarpaper magazine.
1985-86	Legal - Wrongful conviction (Appeal conviction/sentence). Grievance - Claire denied visitation rights.
1980	General - Cheque for t-shirts.
1984	Grievance - Loss of mail. Request - Visit from Claire.
1984	General - Congratulations from Claire on publishing of prisoner's letters (alternative sentencing, prison conditions).
1987	Legal - Appeal. Request - Advice/contact with a lawyer. Investigate into matter of infringement of Spiritual Rights of 3 Native Prisoners (did not receive their Sacred Bundles).
1979-80	General - Midnight Express magazine & contributions by Claire. Grievance - Loss of mail (stamps sent by Claire).
1983-84	General - Request by Claire for investigation into death of another prisoner.
1995	General - Invitation for Claire to attend Annual Pow Wow on behalf of Native Brotherhood.
1982	Legal - Appeal hearing. Grievance - Health (received treatment for vision problem). Lack of Inmate Committee (members in segregation).
1977	Grievance - Request to see "outside" doctor (damage of incarceration). Petition for transfer.
1980-84	Legal - Parole (denied). Grievance - Health (heart attack). Involuntary transfer. Safety (stabblings).
1987	General - People for Claire to contact. Gifts being sent to Claire.
1983	General - Publishing work (regarding prison conditions). Religious beliefs. Poetry.
1985-86	Legal - Parole. Request - Help publishing book of poetry. Grievance - Transfer.
1985-86	General - Dispute between Native prisoners and DIA. Legal - Appeal, funds for trial transcripts.
1977-79	Grievance - Loss of personal belongings, loss of mail. General - Mutual friends. Release.
1985	Legal - Parole.
1987	Grievance - Denied application for permission to marry (violation of Human Rights).
1987	Grievance - Transfer.
1983	General - Christmas.
1984	Request - Contact friend at John Howard Society.
1988	Request - Help gaining freedom. Grievance - Forced drug treatment. General - Religious views (concerning homosexuality).
1981	Request - Legal aid.
1982	General - Court proceedings. Request by Claire to visit witnesses.
1985	General - Claire's tour. Transfers.
1980	General - Parole hearing. Grievance - Transfer.
1979-80	General - Release.
1988	General - Thoughts on penal system.
1993	Request - Advice regarding filing grievance. General - Upcoming parole hearing.

Year	File Topics
1990-91	Request - Legal assistance (attorney) to sue CSC regarding violence by staff. Advice on criminal case and current sentence (prejudicial judge). General - Filing grievance.
1993	Request - Advice / info. regarding parole. General - Follow-up by CC regarding her contact w/ party on prisoner's behalf.
1979	General - CC's book and "crusades". Prison clearances for visitations.
1992	General - Copying of CC's work for institutional paper. Inquiry into book about CC (One Woman Army).
1977-78	General - Employment after release. Establishing contacts for employment. Events after release (re-arrest). Request - To join PRG after release. For CC to appear at hearing.
1994	Request - For appropriate support for transfer to B.C. due to poor prison conditions (overcrowding, lock-down, programs closed).
1987	Request - Advice / research into court decision for prisoner's return to prison after parole violation.
1977	Request - For information on Canadian Penal System.
1979-81	General - Life and problems before prison. Commission of offence. Despair and depression in prison. Affair w/ Classification Officer and desire for exposure of truth. Request - For CC to contact Director of RPC to explain situation & to apply pressure for transfer. Grievance - Transfer (denied). Hunger strike.
1990-91	Grievance - Denied transfer, access to programs and psychologist. Complaints against Classification Officer (unprofessional and vengeful).
1994	General - Sending enclosures regarding call from warden.
1987	Legal - Information regarding sentence computation. File access through Access to Information. General - Status of mutual contacts.
1993	Grievance - Transfer request. General - Transfer granted w/ CC's help.
1990-92	General - CC's offer to attend NPB hearing. Recent transfer to B.C.
1990	General - Enclosures for interest.
1986	General - Invitation to CC to attend Exceptional People's Olympiad. History and general info. about the Olympiad.
1989	Grievance - Being held in the hole beyond length of punishment. Being denied transfer.
1988	Grievance - Denied ETA due to "incompetent" CO. General - Thanking CC for her help in obtaining an ETA and new CO.
1977-79	General - Transfer. Mutual contacts. CC's recent activities and court proceedings.
1994	Request - Information regarding the exchange arrangement from the U.S.A. to Canada.
1979	General - Claire's tour.
1977-81	General - Inmate Committee. Visitation by Claire.
1981-82	Grievance - Suspended visiting privileges.
1981	General - Offence Reports and Notification of Charge.
1980	General - Claire's book. Mutual friend.
1977	Legal - Court proceedings. Deportation.
1979	General - Contacts on behalf of prisoner.
1988	Grievance - Refusal of mail. Threats.
1987	General - Authorization for information. Request - Address of friend.
1984	General/Grievance - Cruel and unusual punishment of 2 other prisoners.
1982	Grievance - Transfer.
1982	General - Visitation. Loss of parole board hearing.
1988	Legal - Wrongful conviction. Request - Support to gain new trial.
1987	General - Authorization for Claire to act on behalf of prisoner regarding Application for the Royal Prerogative of Mercy.
1983-84	Grievance - Police brutality and legal complications. Request - Answer legal questions.
1982	General - Letter in newspaper regarding prisoner's release and subsequent murder (blame should be on doctors and jailers).
1984	Grievance - Segregation (in the "hole"). Health (medical practitioners).
1986	General - Personal approach to prison situation.
1987	General - Authorization for Claire to access information.

Year	File Topics
1982	Request - Help to obtain refund from BC Tel.
1982	Grievance - Transfer (with friend).
1988	Legal - Opposing court of Family Services in their attempt to place children in permanent custody of Social Services.
1985	General - Claire's university lecture tour. University courses.
1983	Legal - Wrongful conviction (false accusations). Parole.
1979	General - Letter of reference.
1984	General - Surrendering for non-payment of fines for trespassing charge. Events leading up to and including detainment at jail.
1977	General - Support for Claire. Conditions.
1978	General - RCMP pays prisoner compensation for false arrest and confinement.
1983	General - Prisoner Flyer (request for funding, contributions by Claire).
1980	Grievance - Errors in sentence computation.
1977-88	Grievance - Transfers (denied). Legal - Parole (denied). Request for re-examination, legal aid.
1983	Grievance - Improper treatment by police (beaten up, arrested, denied phone calls, removal of ID).
1980-85	Grievance - Search of cell and removal of personal belongings. Transfer. Medical care (surgery, delays in hospital admission).
1980-83	General - Release.
1987	General - Request to Director for Native Fellowship Club to hold a ceremonial gathering.
1982	General - Tocsin Magazine (subscription renewal, contributions by Claire).
1982	Grievance - Transfer.
1979-88	Grievance - Prison conditions (radio, food, unnecessary frisks, segregation, visitation, privileges, harassment, peaceful negotiations). General - Inmate Committee (program proposal rejected).
1981-86	Grievance - Segregation, visitation, harassment, involuntary transfers, cruel and unusual treatment. General - Fighting for prisoners' rights (education, medical, free speech, etc.).
1978	Legal - Appeal (sentence).
1984-85	General - John Howard Society seminar.
1987	Grievance - Application for Human Rights (U.S.A.).
1980	Legal/Grievance - Unfair disciplinary hearings (court). Grievance - Transfer.
1987-95	Legal - Insanity (Prisoners' Advisory Review Board). General - Article submitted to the Canadian Journal of Psychiatry.
1980	Grievance - Transfer.
1988-86	Grievance - Transfer.
1983	General - Plans to establish National Justice Association. Prisoner advocacy.
1987	General - Invitation to Exceptional People's Olympiad.
1978-79	Request - Contacts (to get transfer).
1985-86	Grievance - Transfer.
1985	General - Ordering Claire's booked for library (Inmate Committee).
1979, 88	Request - Contact friend.
1985	General - Withdrawing complaint. Thanks for help.
1976-78	Grievance - Cruel and unusual punishment.
1977-82	Grievance - Transfer (to medium security/psychiatric centre). Release from SHU. Case status. Medical (mental health).
1977	Legal - Violation of U.S.A. Human Rights. Denial by U.S.A. Government of their renunciation of U.S.A. citizenship.
1981	Request - Claire's books.
1984	General - Mutual contacts.
1984	General - Thank you for Christmas card.
1988	Request - Support (custody of daughter).
1979	General - Thanks from Claire for card.
?	Grievance - Transfer. Legal - Legal Aid.

Year	File Topics
1981	General - Article published in WIN Publication. Grievance - Severe disciplinary action.
1986	Legal - Parole revocation. Grievance - Fasting (until death).
1983	General - Claire's reason for contacting lawyer.
1981	General - W.C.B.
1978	Grievance - Denied psychiatric counselling. Transfer.
1988	General - Prison news publication.
1981	General - Stabbing incident.
1985-87	Grievance - Transfer. Security classification.
1980	General - (Letter illegible).
19880	Legal - Parole.
1978-79	General - Mutual friend.
1981-86	Legal - Appeal extradition from Canada.
1980-81	Grievance - Mail tampering. Legal - Parole, Legal Aid. General - Poetry, artwork.
1985	General - Newspaper article.
1979	General - Visitation.
1995	Grievance - Medical/health.
1987	General - Thanks for help (harassing phone calls). Update (life after release).
1986-87	Request - Assistance publishing book.
1981	Request - Visitation.
1983-88	General - Baby. Claire's book. Parole. Grievance - Search.
1978	Grievance - Denial of privileges.
1987	General - Prisoners' rights/advocacy/support. Visitation.
1982	General - Formation of National Grievance Committee.
1981	General - Suit fitting.
1986	General/Request - Lawyer contact.
1979	Request - Legal Aid.
1978	General - Visitation.
1981	Grievance - Day parole.
1980	Grievance - Transfer (forced).
1985	Grievance - Transfer (request).
1983	General.
1983-84	General - John Howard Society seminar.
1980-84	Grievance - Transfer (involuntary). Treatment.
1978	Grievance - Maltreatment, visitation (denied). Legal - Refugee status.
1980	General - Support for Claire.
1987	[In French].
1987	General - Working.
1981-83	Request - Information/ideas/contacts for project (Francophone Group), Francophone halfway house.
1981	Grievance - Visitation (denied). Phone calls.
1982-84	Legal - Release on Parole. Compensation for wrongful conviction. General - Donations to Welfare Fund.
1988	Grievance - Segregation. Transfer (request). Removal of Cx officer. Complaints.
1985	Request - Information on parole.
1981	Request - Legal assistance.
1977	Request - Contact prisoners to discuss setting up a National Alliance of Prisoners' Rights Organization.
1985-86	General - Legal Aid.
1980-82	Grievance - SHU.
1982	Grievance - Transfer (request). Segregation. Health.
1982-87	Request - Help altering public to tensions in institution. General - Proposal for halfway house and for survey. Plans to construct a National Grievance procedure to handle all prisoners' complaints/grievances.
1982	General - Support.

Year	File Topics
1978	Grievance - Transfer (request).
1984	General - Capital punishment and longer sentences (article).
?	General - Get well card.
1982	General - Wife not notified of parole hearing.
1983	Grievance - Refused TVs and hobby craft in segregation. Complaints (medications, exercise, transfer, overcrowding, etc.).
1979	Request - Information from Department of Industry, Trade & Commerce.
1987-88	Grievance - Health/Medical problems of prisoners. General - Tightwire Magazine (treatment of female prisoners, health, programming).
1985	Grievance - Treatment. Racism.
1995	General - Newsletter.
1977	General - Project (problems which face prison population).
1984	General - Mutual friend, Exceptional Peoples' Olympiad.
1981	Grievance - Medical health (medication).
1978-79	General - Reading material. Claire's case.
1978-80	Legal - Appeal. Visitation application for Claire. Legal - Retrial.
1981	General - Visitation granted for Claire.
1979	General - Request (by CC) for information on prisoner (regarding rumour that he committed suicide).
1979-81	General - University academic social. Mail problems/undelivered mail. Visitation. Artwork, Prison Arts Foundation and contest (open house, award, displaying info.).
1986	General - HARD (Humane Awareness with Respect and Dignity).
1987	General - Picture sent to Claire.
1978-79	Request - Legal Aid.
1977-78	General - Claire refused visiting rights.
1975-82	Request - Work request. Legal Aid. General - Prisoners' Union Committee.
1981-86	General - Inmates' Committee. Donation to fund for release of another prisoner.
1976, 81	Grievance - Transfer (involuntary). Legal - Lawsuit.
1979, 84	Grievance - Hunger strike (protesting involuntary transfers). General - Reform.
1980, 83	Grievance - Security, transfer. General - Publication.
1980	Legal - Habitual/Dangerous offender.
1980-81	Grievance - Mail loss, involuntary transfers, segregation.
1981	General - Education.
1995	General - Publishing books. Claire's health.
1984-88	Request/General - Information on PRG. Grievance - Claire on visiting list; Legal - Appeals, Lawsuits, Legal Aid. Parole. Inquiry into documents.
1988	Legal - Wrongful conviction.
1983-88	General - Justice Group publication (advocacy).
1979	Grievance - Harassment/threats. Problems with correspondence/mail.
1978	Request - Information for appeal, legal representation.
1980-84	General - Vertical Reality.
1987	General - Poetry.
1977-81	General/Request - Chess partner.
1988	Grievance - Religious concerns regarding meals.
1980-82	Grievance - Harassment and abuse from guards, threats, destruction of personal property, denied contact with Claire, demands on behalf of Inmate Committee. Legal - Charges against guards.
1985	Grievance - Transfer, security, damage to personal property (artwork).
1984	General - Desire to contribute to PRG. Concerns regarding Natives.
1988	Request - Contact with lawyer (concerns regarding Immigration's decision for deportation).
1983	General - Problems with Native Brotherhood group.
1984	General - Thank you for Christmas card.

Year	File Topics
1985	General - Article regarding release.
1980	Grievance - Return of mail (to sender).
1981-84	Grievance - Transfer (to lower security rating). Intimidation by guards (on behalf of Inmate Committee; removed TV sets, altering medications). General - Claire approved for visit. Attempt to get Native Education Council to pay for university courses.
1978-80	General - Mutual friends. Grievance - Loss of mail.
1995	General - Get-well for Claire.
1978-79	Grievance - Transfer (denied).
1977-78	Request - Legal aid. Court proceedings.
1980-83	General - Poetry, Visitation. Grievance - Hunger strike (demands made to Solicitor General including naming official day of mourning for prisoners who have died in Canadian penitentiaries). Transfer.
1977	Request - Info. regarding indeterminate sentence. & info. from presentation to World Health Organization.
1986-87	General - Obtaining info. for trial (transcripts, etc.). Visitation. Legal aid.
1977	Grievance - Health (neglect - infection in leg).
1978	Grievance - Problems adding to visiting list.
1980	Request/Grievance - Copy of Claire's book (not received).
1984	General - Mutual friend.
1982	General - Claire's campaign.
1977-78	Grievance - Failure to return personal belongings. Transfer.
1982	Grievance - Punishment in segregation. Refusal to see family physician.
1984	General - Claire's attendance of Odyssey magazine meeting.
1981	Grievance - Health (difficulties obtaining proper treatment).
1980	General - Info. from lawyer. Native Brotherhood Group meeting.
1984	Request - Contact with mutual friend.
1978	General - Tightwire Publications, materials for publication.
1980-81	Request - Help proving he was framed (tracking down individual for statement, etc.).
1980	General - Keeping in touch.
1981	General - Poetry, Dissatisfaction with long sentences (in general).
1978-79	Request - Job, living accommodations, etc., to relocate after mandatory release.
1980	General - Update on Claire's efforts with Inmate Committee.
1984	General - Thanks for Christmas card.
1982	Grievance - Not allowed to receive Claire's book.
1978-79	Legal - Appeal (denied access to personal info.), appeal rejected (late application).
1980	General - Criticism of Claire's T.V. program and supposed lack of correspondence with certain prisoners.
1987	Grievance - Common-law wife denied contact/allowed day parole.
1978-79	General - Support for Claire. Claire's book. Request - Contact with friend.
1982	Legal - Parole (denied).
1977-78	Legal - Police brutality during questioning of criminal offence.
1979	Grievance - Investigation regarding transfer of prisoner and group of prisoners.
1985	Grievance - Protective custody (threatened transfer back to general population).
1987	Grievance - Mail tampering.
1979	General - Mutual friend. Efforts to make a new life and discover self.
1988	Grievance - Medications cut back.
1985-87	Legal - Sentence calculation. Parole/Temporary Absence.
1981-82	Grievance - Transfer.
1986	Legal - Claim for compensation after injury during recreational activity (denied).
1980-83	Legal - Appeal new policy of NPB. Released on mandatory supervision after 2/3 of sentence (Parole Board ordered re-arrest).
1981-85	Request - Information on capital punishment for publishing. Grievance - Forced transfer. General - Lifers Organization.

Year	File Topics
1980-81	Grievance - Investigation into qualifications of institutional psychologist. Unsuccessful efforts to have gradual release program.
1987	Grievance - Mail denied.
1981-88	Request - Someone to correspond with. Grievance - Look into prisoner's segregation and marriage. General - Trial.
1987	Request - Address/contact. General - Disabled offender status.
1987	Request - Representation on Detention Hearing (by Claire).
1983	General - Mutual friend. Status after transfer.
1977-82	Grievance - Suspension of Inmate Committee. Transfer.
1984	Legal - Bail application, appeal. Request - Legal aid (closer look at his situation).
1977-78	General - Health (ankle healed, eyesight). Work release (loss due to error). Grievance - Claire denied visitation.
1976	General - Attempting to start newspaper (administration stalls). General - Materials for newspaper.
1976-80	General - Claire's book and trip. Mutual friend.
1978	Grievance - Transfer and release into Claire's care.
1982-83	General - Coroner's inquiry (details of prisoner's death). Missing personal belongings.
1977-83	General - Claire's programs. Escape. Expected extradition. Request - To discuss case.
1980	Request - Information on PRG.
1995	Legal - Legal proceedings (detention hearing). Grievance - Segregation. Request/Grievance - Send to RPC.
1983	Grievance - Loss of paperwork for fund for release of another prisoner.
1980	General - Christmas greetings.
1987	Grievance - Claire denied visitation, lack of exercise program, hot meals.
1978	General - Visiting. Reading materials.
1981	General - Pre-release program.
1981	General - Thanks for gift (from Claire). Request - For Claire to join prisoner at parole hearing.
1983	General - Article (secondary education program).
1980	Request - Copy of Claire's book.
1982	General - Article regarding another prisoner's release and murder (responsibility on doctors and parole officers).
1977	General - Claire's paper (regarding the penal system and social health).
1979-81	Legal - Court statements, request to quash conviction as habitual offender.
1977	Request - Information regarding the whereabouts of a friend and address.
1980	Grievance - Delay on several grievances.
1978-79	Grievance - Visitation (denied).
1979-80	General - Death of another prisoner. Claire's book.
1982-83	Grievance - Involuntary transfer (away from family, does not speak the language).
1976-78	Legal - Extradition (appeal hearing against extradition to U.S.A, likely death penalty), Cruel and unjust punishment. Defence Committee.
1980	Grievance - Transfer. Assessment by National Headquarters Review Board.
1979	General - Mutual friends.
1981	Request - Someone to correspond with. General - Claire's book tour.
1979-81	General - Claire's book. Key Hole publishing. Material for newsletter. Grievance - Conditions in institution.
1982	Grievance - Transfer, Clearing of charges in prison stabbing.
1988	Legal - Wrongful conviction.
1987	Legal/Grievance - SHU. Sentence calculation.
1982-83	General - Election for Inmate Committee corrupted by administration.
1988	Grievance - Abuse of grievance procedures. Original grievance for excessive punishment.
1981	Legal - Parole (denied).
1987-89	Legal - Application to classify as dangerous offender. General - Religious/spiritual messages to prisoner from friend.

Year	File Topics
1984	Legal/Grievance - Dissatisfaction with judicial system (discrimination and harassment), investigation and public action.
1983	Request - Names of lawyers, copies of media coverage. "Gating" issue.
1978-82	General - Prison programs. Release plans. Raising donations for release of another prisoner.
1979-80	General - Materials (on Native peoples). Prisoner's love for Claire.
1981-82	Grievance - Seizure of mail. Forced transfer of many prisoners. Gassing incident. General - Copy of Claire's book. Prison Review publication.
?	General - Wanting publication of story of circumstances.
1986	General - Upcoming release. Claire's book.
1977	Request - Dentist.
1977	General - Status (health, appeal, transfer).
1976-77	[In French].
1985	General - Started a drug program for youth.
1980-82	Grievance - Treatment by guards (harassment, blackmail). Legal - Cannot obtain legal aid.
1977	Legal - Wrongful conviction, Legal aid.
1980	General - Mandatory Supervision. Parole conditions (release refused by prisoner).
1983-88	General - Parole hearing. Family (wanting picture). Grievance - Segregation, incident (false allegations).
1981-82	Grievance/Legal - Sentence increased when transferred from U.S.A. to Canada.
1980-82	General - Inmate Committee. Legal - Trial proceedings, appeal (won). Grievance - Transfer.
1981-82	Request - Info./ reading materials.
1981-82	General - Visitors for prisoner. Claire's invitation to participate in national project to set up committees to establish and maintain prison standards.
1978	General - Fight for justice.
1987	General - Mutual friends. Wanting transfer.
1977	Grievance - Transfer (denied). Legal - Parole.
1987	Grievance - Lack help from Classification Officers ("gated" under Bill C-67 because had no treatment, but was denied treatment).
1981	Legal - Gross mistreatment (laying charges against staff).
1984-85	Legal - Appeal deportation order to U.S.A. (where likely to be put to death).
?	General - Newsletter (Claire's contribution).
1983	General - Negotiations to take place (invitation of the Elders). Mutual friend.
1981	Legal - Attempts to be re-sentenced as a juvenile offender (seeking public support).
1977-82	Grievance - Solitary confinement, health (inadequate diet compounding behavioural problems, i.e. hyperactivity).
1986-87	Request - Help stopping deportation.
1978	Request - Info. on PRG. General - Acceptance to University.
1979-82	General - Proposal by Elders Group (to create Midway House for prisoners denied parole). Alternatives to Incarceration Inc. Support for private family visits.
1983	General - Denial of prisoners' voting rights.
1977	General - Indeterminate sentence. Mutual contacts. Legal aid lawyer.
1981-82	Grievance - Being denied temporary absence due to C/O. General - Gaining release on parole. Transfer.
1986	General.
1991	General - Penal system in U.S.A. How CC became interested in prisons.
?	General - Recent visit. Enclosed book and attachments.
1991-92	Legal - Denial of freedom of religious expression (belong to minority faith). Possibly being denied parole b/c of religious beliefs. General - Seeking action due to his strong belief regarding the wrongful conviction of two other prisoners.
1992	Grievance - CMO manipulating applications for parole (request for her removal).
1981-82	General - Thank you from CC for group card. Upcoming transfer. Odyssey Group and newsletter. Mutual friend.

Year	File Topics
1989	Grievance - Refused to move on transfer after family member was hospitalized. Transferred after release from hospital but denied reasonably contact w/ family.
1986	General - Mutual friend.
1986	General - Mutual contacts.
1989	Grievance - Being denied visitation from fiancé after being caught in possession of narcotic and warden accused fiancé.
?	General / Legal - Responding to CC's newspaper ad wanting more info. on transferring from U.S.A. to Canadian prison (Canadian citizen) under the International Exchange arrangement.
1991	Request - For advice and information concerning conditions attached to release on Mandatory Supervision (urinalysis and strip search).
1982	General - Messages from mutual contacts. Request - For 2 copies of CC's book. General - Possibly facing wrongful conviction.
1986	General.
1989	Grievance - CC inquiring into status of grievance regarding problems w/ jobs and farm annex due to alleged charges against wife which had been dropped.
1984	Legal / Request - For information regarding Mandatory Supervision Act (i.e. restrictions imposed on MS). Grievance - Transfer.
1984-88	Grievance - Complaints of conditions in segregation, racism. General - Refusal to take prison programming.
1989	General - CC inquiring into articles in TOCSIN magazine.
1992	General - Release to halfway house. Inquiry into status of CC's attempts to help him get a new trial.
1983-87	General - Moccasins made for CC Contacts for finding Native woman to correspond with. Riot in prison and post-riot negotiations. Earned remission.
1984	General - Reflection on life. Status (transfer, loss of personal effects).
1985	General - Prisoner involvement in war (manufacturing).
1980-81	General - Religion ("born again").
1980-81	General - Elders Group. Canadian-American Treaty on the exchange of prisoners. Abolishing Mandatory Supervision.
1979	General - Criticism of Claire's supposed "cheap shots" of PCU inmates in press.
1983	General - Reasons for not sending Christmas cards.
1983	Legal - Sentence computation.
1984	General - Article regarding release of habitual offender.
?	General - General info. sent to prisoner. Support for human rights. Charter case (pertaining to prisoner's case).
1981	Grievance - Proper medical attention (for leg).
1981	Grievance - Hunger strike (illegal segregation of prisoners).
1995	General - Article regarding private prisons.
1978	General - Thank you to CC Claire's visitation rights withheld.
1982	Grievance - Inmate Committee, improper medical treatment, complaints about physician.
1983-84	General - Mutual friend. Upcoming release. Garden.
1981	Grievance - Receiving individual counselling and tutoring.
1978-87	General - Status (course, work). Legal - Appeal. Request - Re-examination of parole decision.
1989-92	Grievance - Conditions in "super maximum" isolation cells. General - Holding hostages.
1995	General - Congratulations to Claire on awards. Memo on agreement for artists to have work sold.
1980	General - Articles for prisoner.
1976-79	Legal - Parole, day parole granted. Grievance - Transfer for temporary absence. General - Censorship of correspondence.
1985	General - Thank you (from Claire). Donation to PRG. Request - Visitation.
1977-78	General - University course. Mutual friend. Legal - Court proceedings. General - Essay regarding the adverse effects of prolonged isolation.

Year	File Topics
1980	Legal/General - Life threatened in home country (socialist group), fled to Canada (harassment, torture, death threats), committed crime to escape deportation.
1995	Legal - Parole. New Immigration Act. General - Claire's health. Diet plan and weekly cost.
1980-81	General - The Boomerang Newspaper. Material from Claire. Crisis Committee. Legal - Appeal for Plea of Mercy. General - Lifer's Organization (Claire made honorary member).
1980-81	Legal - Parole (plans, letters of support). Grievance/Legal - Appeal prison charges.
1975	Grievance - Improper treatment programs as ordered by judge.
1982	General - 60 Minutes program on prisoner. Claire's book.
1981	General - Material for "State of Emergency" publication.
1984	General - Press release. Ideas for Sociology/Anthropology class.
1988	General - Mutual friend. Brutality of guards.
1978-80	Grievance - Transfer (to home province). General - Reactions to Claire's T.V. program. Visitation.
1979-84	General - Copy of statement. Death of prisoner. Re-establishing contact.
1979-88	Grievance - Forced transfer (because of connection with Inmate Committee). Request - For Claire to make contact. General - Brief on Infinity Lifers Group (parole and sentencing).
1978-79	General - Congratulations (from Claire) on certificate. Role in "incident".
1980	General - Poem.
1984	Request - Information/updates on PRG. Canadian version of document (American Justice). Subscription to bulletins/papers.
1995	General - Wishing Claire well.
1977-81	General - Article to newspaper.
1985	Grievance - Fearful of potential transfer.
1980-81	Grievance/Legal - Want mandatory supervision to be handled by John Howard Society (denied). Grievance - Grievance procedure, need for change, inadequate parole policy/procedures, loss of personal effects.
1977-79	Grievance - Transfer.
1978	Request - Information on PRG. Press release.
1979-82	Grievance - Transfer, Hunger strike (condition in PCU/segregation; no yard, showers, spoiled food, unsatisfactory medical care). Request - For Claire to contact press and tell story.
1984	General - Thank you for Christmas card.
1995	Grievance - Subjected to brutality and denied rights after false suspicions/charges.
1979-83	Grievance - Transfer. General - People's Tribunal to study conditions of penitentiary. Legal - Parole.
1987	Grievance - Case management team (mistreatment). Placed in urinalysis program.
1984-85	Grievance - Forced transfer (result of contact with Claire). General - Visitation.
1983	Grievance - Claire barred from visiting. Protective custody after incomplete newspaper coverage falsely reporting prisoner as a sex offender. General - Escape.
1980-82	General - Petition (violation of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; unjustly detained). Request - Publish petition in Pendulum magazine.
1983-84	Legal - Parole. General - Political beliefs.
1980-83	General - Legal Aid. Release plans.
1979, 83	Grievance - Need for open family visits. General - Congratulations on marriage.
1977	General - Mutual friend.
1978-83	General - Mutual friends. Visiting.
1983	General - Prisoner's actions in struggle for penal abolition. Material for Claire. Letters to newspaper editors.
1977-80	Grievance - Forced transfer. Claire's visits cut off. Request - From common law wife for information/status of prisoner in hospital and his rights. General - Legal Service Commission hearing.
1985	General - Message from mutual friend.
1980	General - Information regarding People Organized to Stop Rape of Imprisoned Persons.
1981	Legal - Sentence computation. General - Unable to see lawyer. Gave birth in prison.
1986	General - Information on forced transfers.

Year	File Topics
1980-87	General - Odyssey Newsletter. Material from Claire. Grievance - Transfer, pass program cancelled, lack of medical treatment, false charges, conditions in segregation. Legal - Parole.
1980-84	General - Special Olympics. Mutual friends. Native Brotherhood social. Legal - Court case. Grievance - Forced medical treatment (rectal exam).
1986	Grievance - Improper medical treatment, transfer, improper treatment due to sexual orientation.
1982	General - Mutual friends.
1976	Grievance - Abuse of power by guards lead to suicides of prisoners.
?	Grievance - Harassment, denied request for correspondence and visitation, loss of personal effects, refused orthopaedics, discrimination from guards. Stabbed guards. Legal - Charges (damaged property, verbal abuse).
1977-86	Grievance - Transfer, denied calls with Claire, medical (problems with medications, operation). Legal - Court proceedings.
1981	General - Mutual friend. Concern over health.
1986	General - Reading materials. New divorce law.
1981	General - Reading materials to Claire.
1987	General - Upcoming visit from Claire. Request - Advice regarding appeal.
1978-81	General - Preparation for upcoming release.
1980	General - Native Brotherhood Group.
1980	Grievance - Protesting legality of forced transfers.
1983	Grievance - Admission of male prisoners infringes civil rights.
1984	General - Shooting death of prisoner during hostage taking.
1983	General - Claire's contact with prisoner's lawyer.
1985	Grievance.
1984	General - Parole date. Mutual friends.
1980-82	Grievance - Failure to receive treatment for temper and violence. Request psychiatric treatment for alcohol dependency.
1982-84	General - Librarian job. Unit representative. Legal - Court proceedings.
1977	General - Recent visit/meeting. Reading materials.
1995	General - Mutual friends, visitation, get well card for Claire after car accident.
1981-82	Grievance - False accusations of threat, Claire denied visitation, transfer (Delay).
1987	Legal - Calculation of sentence.
1986	Request - Visit and correspondence. Legal - Appeal.
1984-85	General - Inmate Committee (agenda-pay system, role of Citizen's Advisory Committee, visiting program). Exceptional People's Olympiad.
1984	Grievance - Forced transfer.
1984, 88	Request - For Claire to make contact with individuals.
1988	Request - Contact with groups/organizations to help relocate and transfer.
1977	Request/Grievance - Help regarding staff smuggling gas from institution.
1985-86	General - Mutual contact. Grievance - Misuse of power by staff, problems with mail delivery system. Prison charges. Transfer concerns.
1986	Legal - Sentence calculation.
1987	Grievance - Fear for safety, physical and sexual abuse, confinement detrimental to prisoner.
1984-86	Grievance - Forced transfer.
1984-85	Legal - Maintaining contact with grandson. Grievance - Abuse by staff (refusal to name prisoner who stabbed him), transfer. General - Lifer's Work Release Program proposal.
1976	General - Habitual Criminal Act (wants abolished).
1985	Request - Information on group to help women unfairly treated by court system.
1976	General - Received Claire's letter.
1979	Grievance - Abuse of rights (work, change in jobs), punishment and unjust/inadequate work conditions.
1980	General - Thanks for the invitation to the Native Arts display/sale and potlatch.
1982-83	Legal - Compensation claim for injury.

Year	File Topics
1977	General - Recent visit.
1977	Grievance/Legal - Unjust punishment for late return from 3 day pass.
1983-88	Request - Information regarding private family visits in Canadian prisons for prisoners in another country, visit. Legal - Court proceedings.
1977-78	General - Work release, visits.
1987	General - Work (electrician).
1984	General - Problems with wife and work after release. Rearrested for false charges.
1986	Grievance - Threats and verbal abuse from guard.
1977, 88	General - Claire's 24-hour vigil fast. Thank you for Christmas card.
1982	General - Recovery of personal belongings. Legal - Preliminary hearing, sentencing.
1979	General - Claire's subscription to Tightwire Publications. Claire's application for visitation.
1984-85	General - Claire's application for visitation.
1985	Legal/Request - Wrongful conviction.
1984, 87	Grievance - Transfer (denied).
1979-80	Request - Information on prisoners' rights. Tightwire Publications.
1995	General - Claire's books. Information on Canada's legal system. Legal - Fabricated evidence used in trial.
1981	General - Prisoner's letter to editor, contact with another prisoner.
1978	Legal - Habitual and Dangerous Criminal Acts, indefinite sentence.
1980-81	Legal - Habitual Offenders Act (cruel and unusual punishment). General - "Instead of Prisons" television program.
1977, 82	General - Unable to contribute to fund for release of another prisoner. Grievance - Food preparation.
1985	General - Mutual contact, Claire's book tour.
1987	Legal - Application for Deportation, parole by exception.
1982-85	General - Poetry, mutual contacts, operation. Request - Visit.
1985	Grievance - Forced transfer/ruined wedding plans.
1977	General - Prisoner's love for Claire, visitation.
1977-78	Legal - Assaulted by police, laying charges.
1983	General - Prisoner's letter to editor (higher education opportunities).
1978	Grievance - Conditions in SHU, lack of psychiatric treatment to 3 fellow prisoners. General - Claire's book.
1983-85	Request - Making contact with Legal Aid. Legal - Conviction and sentence appeal (for false allegations of sexual assault).
1982-83	Grievance - Medical attention (beating from prisoners). Request - Legal aid. Legal - Application for compensation for Victims of Crime Act.
1985-86	Grievance - Lack of drug treatment and anger management programs, transfer.
1985	Legal - Inadequate legal representation during trial.
1980-83	General - Odyssey Group proposed model for mandatory supervision and proposal for "Lifers Only" prison. Conditions at Prisoner. Plan to increase prisoners' wages. Grievance - Strip searches of visitors.
1979-80	General - Odyssey Group, penal abolition, private visiting program (letters from prisoners, concerned citizens and families), prison labour. Grievance - Odyssey Group's anniversary social postponed.
1976	Request - Investigation into harassment.
1981	General - Opinions of Committee of Correctional Standards and Accreditation.
1987	General - Penal abolition, human rights, dispute of fine.
1975	General - Support for Prisoner's Union Committee.
1977-81	Legal/Grievance - Change in release date. Claire denied visitation.
1984-87	Grievance - Medical attention, transcripts confiscated. Request - Lawyer (for appeal and to lay charges against group of prisoners who caused injury).
1979-80	Legal - Parole, sentence computation, charges, breach of parole.
1987-88	General - Prisoner's book, Claire's book.
1986	General - Lawyer to contact.
1986	Grievance - Family visitation.
1986	General - Dissatisfaction with corrections, recommendations to improve system. Suicide.

Year	File Topics
1979-81	Grievance - Transfer (forced due to involvement on Inmate Committee). Legal - Appeal.
1984-85	Request - Representation at hearing. General - Inmate Committee, criticisms of National Parole Board's Mission Statement. Grievance - Release of 2 prisoners from segregation, transfer.
1978-79	Request - Visitation. Grievance - Denied phone calls with Claire. Legal - Request for charges to be dropped in U.S.A.
1980	General - Letter to editor concerning Solicitor-General's visit to prison.
1977	General - Contact after request of mutual contact.
1979	Grievance/Legal - Transportation of prisoners violates United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.
1987	Legal - Injustices at trial (police perjury). Wrongful conviction, Application for Writ of Habeas Corpus and Motion and Affidavit under Constitution.
1984	General - Regarding reply to Claire's letter to Solicitor General critic.
1986-88	General - Kent Times newspaper.
1979-84	Legal - Parole. General - Criticisms of Mandatory Supervision/Parole, university education, visitation, escape, Odyssey Newsletter. Grievance - Loss of personal effects, medical attention (eye condition).
1984	Grievance - Harassment by guards. General - Lawyer for prisoner.
1982	General - Tarpaper publication (contributions by Claire).
1977	General - Prisoner's article in local newspaper, general dissatisfaction with penal system. Grievance - Loss of book shipped to Prisoner. denied visitation.
1980	General - Canadian government in another country, legislation for transfers of prisoners between Canada and the U.S.A.
1980-81	General - Claire's book, segregation and transfers.
1984	General/Legal - Wrongful conviction. General - Claire's ban on visitation rights.
1980-81	Grievance - Harassment by guards, charged for damages to cell (did not damage all articles).
1988	Request - Visitation.
1980	General - Tarpaper publication (contributions by Claire).
1981	Legal - Disputing sentence computation. General - Lawyer contacts.
1983	General - Corrections to mistakes in press.
1980	Request - Reading material/information.
1982-88	Grievance - Windows bolted shut, overcrowding, access to Spiritual Advisor. General - Biding Times publication, granted parole, administrative segregation plan, struggle for religious freedom, Claire's book.
1979-82	General - Tightwire magazine (materials from Claire). Request - Job opportunities (after parole).
1982	General - Hearing and sentencing for kidnapping charge.
1987	General - Claire's book. Request - Address for publisher (book not received).
1978	General - Court proceedings.
1988	General - Accommodation for Claire on a visit.
1980	[In French].
1979-80	Legal - Criminal Code provisions for the supervision and control of public prosecutions by the Attorney General.
1976-84	Grievance - "Atrocious" conditions (concerning hostage-taking incident), segregation, low pay, funding for courses. General - Ordering Claire's book.
1985	General - Newspaper article.
1978	Grievance - Work release denied.
1982-85	Legal - Unjust trial and conviction, new trial, appeal (denial of natural justice).
1981-82	General - Claire's book.
1985	General - Contact with lawyer.
1980	Legal - Parole. Request - Help for female prisoner. General - Tightwire Publications (materials from Claire).
1995	General - Claire's contact with family member, psychiatric treatment.
1978-79	Legal - Convicted on false evidence, improper representation.
1983	General - Court delays.

Year	File Topics
1977-80	Legal - Parole. General - Scrapaper publication (materials from Claire), visitation. Grievance - Denied visitation privileges, hunger strike.
1982-83	Legal - Trial proceedings, being held in prison illegally (sentence finished). Forfeiture of pay to repair damaged property, return of clothing from police.
1976-77	Request - Contacts to correspond with.
1979	Grievance - Discrimination against Native prisoners (not granted transfers). General - Mutual friend. General - Prison drama show Claire attended, Claire's book and tour. General - Claire's charges, help offered to Claire, prisoner's nickname. Grievance - Protective custody. General - Application for legal assistance.
1976-80	General - Claire's television programs. Prisoner's Committee (advocacy, newsletters, etc.), Actions on Aug 10 (PJD), attempt to set up social group. Grievance - Loss of personal belongings.
1977	General - Concerns/Improvements for prison system. Request - Addresses of hospitals in area.
1980	Grievance - Attempt to delay forced transfers.
1977-80	General - Conditions, death of prisoner. Legal - Court case.
1987-88	Grievance - Concern about qualifications of medical staff, female guards violating privacy. Request - Legal Aid (denied).
1976-80	Grievance - Yard access. General - Call off "war against system".
1987	General - Essay on life inside prison.
1977-87	General - Release, mutual friend, prisoner speaking program, visitation, educational programming. Legal - Trial (sentencing, appeal), parole.
1987-88	Grievance - Loss of personal property (radio). General - Education.
1983	General - The Mountaineer newsletter.
1978	Request - For Claire to visit prisoner's mother.
1978-80	Request - Publicity campaign to free another prisoner, help instituting changes. Grievance - Reasons for transfer.
1979	General - Visitation (by Claire).
1985	Grievance - Identification nametags as a violation of Privacy Act (Inmate Committee).
1984	Grievance - Involuntary transfer, deteriorating health.
1981-85	Legal/Grievance - Discrimination against Natives (confiscation of Sacred Medicine Bundles). General - Struggle for freedom (against government, etc.), spiritual fast.
1988	Request - To speak with Claire.
1988	Request - To be added to mailing list and receive newsletter (for Lifer's Group).
1983-84	General - Submission to the Ontario Seventh Step Society (concerns about growth and development, suggestions for goals and objectives). Request - Help for fellow prisoner.
1976-77	General - Visitation, Thank you to Claire for support.
1978-79	General - Education (university courses). Request - Pen pals.
1981-82	Grievance - Transfer to complete program treatment, change in medication (led to violent behaviour).
1979	General - Request from Claire on prisoner's current status.
1978	General - Prison movement.
1978-82	Legal - Parole. Request - Publish pamphlet of a manifesto for establishment of "U.S.A. People's Republic". General - Anti-Imperialist National Prisoner's Assn. Grievance - Harassment for political beliefs.
1979-82	General - Odyssey Group (meetings, SHU, newsletters, etc.). Grievance - Claire's permission to attend meeting revoked. Request - Help getting donations for project to hold events for crippled children.
1983	General - Newspaper publications (prison conditions).
1987	General - Claire's book, Thank you to prisoner for donation and support.
1987	General - Transfer, conditions and treatment, frustration with system.
1982	Grievance - Problems relating to exchange status from U.S.A.
1985	General - John Howard Society, Tocsin magazine.
1984	Legal - Parole. General - Personal history.
1977	General - Reading materials. Legal - Court procedures, Legal Aid.

Year	File Topics
1983-84	Legal - Court proceedings, action to receive psychiatric treatment program. Grievance - Denial of Claire's visitation rights, loss of personal property, transfer.
1978-79	General - Claire's book, General info. about PRG, support of prison movement. Request - Help for prisoners to leave U.S.A.
1984-85	[In French].
1981	[In French].
1980	General - Thanks and support for Claire, upcoming release.
1977	General - Recent visit, news on media coverage of Claire's trip and other cases.
1987-88	General - Hunger strike, conditions and frustrations with system.
1979-83	General - Court procedures, Claire's book, poetry.
1981	General - Odyssey Group (meetings).
1977-78	General - Segregation/conditions, support for Claire. Legal - Alleged charges divulged to public.
1977-84	Legal - Wrongful conviction (confession by another prisoner for crime).
1980	Grievance - Attempt to delay forced transfers.
1985-87	General - Artwork, reading materials. Grievance - Transfer.
1979	General - National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (request to add to mailing list). Grievance - Problems in corresponding with Claire (letters not received).
1980-81	General - Experiences in system.
1985	General - Native Awareness Group, contact that may be of more help.
1978	General - Views on penal reform, suggestions for Claire's book.
1987-88	Legal - Parole (denied). Grievance - Denied visitation to see children. General - Claire's reinstatement of visitation rights.

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