

July 10, 2018

Rachel Parker, Kikawinaw
Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge
PO Box 1929
Maple Creek, Saskatchewan



Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies™
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Dear Ms. Parker:

Re: CAEFS Regional Advocacy

As you are aware, we attended Okimaw Ohci on June 22-23, 2018 to conduct our Regional Advocacy Visits. Thank you for arranging a meeting with Darlene, the acting assistant Kikawinaw and other senior staff to discuss the issues that arose during our visit including the following:

Health Care – Women reported having issues finding information whether they have a doctor's appointment/and or procedure. We have been told that Nursing staff are instructing the women to make an appointment with them to find out whether they have an appointment with the doctor. This process is time consuming and confusing for many of the women. Please clarify the procedure for women at OOHL to find out whether they have a doctor's appointment.

Psychologist – We were disappointed to learn that OOHL is still without a much needed and required psychologist. We have reported of OOHL's lack of psychologist since April 2018 and have received no information on the steps the institution is taking to alleviate this issue. During our visit, we learnt that eighteen women have put in their request for copies of their correctional plan because they believe that psychology forms an integral part of their requirements for their correctional plan. Arrangements must be made to allow women access to a qualified psychologist to allow for the women to receive treatment and counselling. We have serious concerns that OOHL is breaching the legislative requirement set out in section 86 of the *Corrections and Conditions Release Act* to provide every inmate with:

- (a) Essential health care; and
- (b) Reasonable access to non-essential mental health care that will contribute to the inmate's rehabilitation and successful reintegration into the community.

Strip Searches – Women have repeatedly expressed concerns regarding OOHL's randomized strip searches. We were told that strip searches do not happen after visits or private family visits but that being out of the Lodge is suspicion enough to warrant a search. Women stated that they receive sticky notes that state either "yes" or "no" regarding whether a strip search will occur, and some women are selected on consecutive days. Women described this experience being strip searched as "humiliating" and "degrading". Randomized strip searching undermines CSC's objectives of rehabilitation and reintegration because it can discourage women from accessing temporary absences and negatively affect a woman's self-esteem and self-confidence.

Temporary Absences— We received reports that escorted temporary absences are very slow - averaging six months. We heard reports that Management is instructing the women **not** to put in requests or file grievances on this issue because a request or grievance will not make a difference, nor will Management get to it any faster. Section 71 of the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*, entrenches prisoners' rights to contact with the outside community:

(1) In order to promote relationships between inmates and the community, an inmate is entitled to have reasonable contact, including visits and correspondence, with family, friends and other persons from outside the penitentiary, subject to such reasonable limits as are prescribed for protecting the security of the penitentiary or the safety of persons.

Lifers Group – We heard concerns that the Lifers Group lacks meaningful activities and many of the applications for activities are being denied. We implore OOHl to work with the Lifer's Group to organize and develop activities that are culturally relevant and meaningful. We are concerned to hear the Gazebo is still not under construction and the Lifer's Group has received no updates regarding its construction.

Parole Hearings – We were very disappointed to hear the concerning protocols at recent Parole hearings. At one hearing, we were told that four chairs for the victims were left empty. This had a devastating effect on the woman who went before the board. Please advise the policy or authority that allows for this to happen. We have been advised that media were present at a parole hearing and urge the development of policies that prevents attendance from the media. The presence of media at a parole hearing effectively precludes open and honest conversations when confidential matters are being discussed.

Cameras – We are concerned with the installation of additional cameras and were wondering what the catalyst was for this occurrence, recognizing that the healing lodge's original intent was to implore more healing measures rather than other standard correctional processes.

LGBTQ Discrimination – Women reported that an LGBTQ group is hoping to start in September. We look forward to hearing developments from this new group and are willing to assist in any way to ensure that this initiative moves forward in a positive and cultural way.

Cultural – While there are no visiting Elders at OOHl, we have heard from management that OOHl is anticipating changes for July 2018. We are hopeful that with the addition of visiting Elders, there can be ceremonies and sweats that are conducted by women. This would be an important addition to the sweats currently being offered. We are also pleased to hear that women have had increased access to the Spiritual Lodge.

Training – Women were excited for the upcoming heavy equipment training and we are encouraged about new training endeavours and opportunities that OOHl can provide the women within its institutional care.

Involuntary Transfer- We were made aware of an incident in June regarding the sudden, unexpected, involuntary transfer of a minimum-security woman who had been imprisoned for a long-time at OOHl. The woman had not had any security incidents in recent years and we were advised by other women that in the lead up to the transfer, she was being taunted and bullied by another woman. We were further advised that the staff knew that she was being victimized in this way and very little was

done to remedy the situation. We are very concerned about OOHL's response to this situation and the detrimental impact it had on the woman.

Parole hearings postponed – We also heard from women that they were being pressured to waive or postpone their parole dates. This is concerning, particularly considering the findings in the 2017 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada Report 5—Preparing Women Offenders for Release:

5.108 Overall, we found that Correctional Service Canada did not prepare women offenders for parole hearings in a timely manner. Only one quarter of offenders released on parole were released when they were first eligible. The majority remained in custody four months after the date when they were first eligible.

Women reported experiencing heightened stress and anxiety because of delayed parole hearings. Please advise what steps are being taken at OOHL to fulfill the recommendation made by the Auditor General - **5.121** Correctional Service Canada should ensure that women offenders—particularly those assessed with a low risk of reoffending and who have successfully completed their correctional programs—are prepared for their parole hearings by the earliest parole eligibility date, to support their successful reintegration into the community.

Should you require any other information or clarification on any of the above, please do not hesitate to call me at 306-668-0600, or executivedirector@elizabethfrysask.org. We anticipate our next visit to be August 9th and 10th for Prisoner Justice Day.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sue Delanoy

Sue Delanoy, Gillian Gough and Patti Tait
CAEFS Regional Advocates – Prairie Region

- c. Cassandra Churcher, Diana Majury, Savannah Gentile, CAEFS
Kelly Blanchette, Deputy Commissioner for Women, CSC
Dr. Ivan Zinger, Correctional Investigator
Marie-Claude Landry, Chief Commissioner, Canadian Human Rights Commission
Kim Pate, Senator, Standing Senate on Human Rights (in prisons)

Exhibit: National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls		
Location/Phase: <u>Parts 2/3: Quebec</u>		
Witness: <u>Panel 3</u>		
Submitted by: <u>Christa Big Canoe</u>		
Add'l info: <u>P02-03 P02 P0301</u>		
Date: <u>SEP 19 2018</u>		
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<u>LS</u>		<u>30</u>