



WOMEN'S WELLNESS WITHIN

SERVING CRIMINALIZED WOMEN

2019

ANNUAL REPORT

@WITHINWOMENS

WWW.WOMENSWELLNESSWITHIN.ORG

WHO WE ARE

Women's Wellness Within is a registered non-profit organization that advocate for prison abolition and provides support to criminalized women and trans individuals who are pregnant or parenting yong children in Nova Scotia. The group began working together in 2012 and we served our first incarcerated client in 2014. WWW is a registered non-profit organization.

WWW's 90+ members include formerly incarcerated women, doulas, health care providers, lawyers, students, researchers, and mentors. WWW volunteers have security clearance to provide support at the Nova Institution for Women Federal Prison, the Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility Provincial jail, the Nova Scotia Youth Facility and for women on bail and parole in the community.

WWW works in partnership with the Chebucto Family Centre, the Elizabeth Fry Societies of Cape Breton and Mainland Nova Scotia, Mi'kmaq Childhood Development Centre, Mi'kmaq Legal Support Network of Eskasoni First Nation, the IWK Health Centre and the Nova Scotia Health Coalition, the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, and Community Health Boards.





WHAT WE DO



SERVICE

WWW supports individual clients who have experienced criminalization or are currently incarcerated while pregnant or parenting young children. WWW facilitates workshops twice a month on women's health for imprisoned women at the Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility on topics determined by the women inside.



EDUCATION

Education is an important part of WWW's mandate. WWW leads seminars for health professionals and students and speaks publicly to raise consciousness of the rights and reproductive health experiences of criminalized women. WWW sees criminalization through a health lens and aims to improve general understanding of how health intersects with the experience of criminalization, and how this process can be redressed.



ADVOCACY

WWW advocates for access to housing, income, resources, and health care for criminalized women and trans individuals. Advocacy campaigns emphasize developing alternatives to incarceration to advance reproductive justice and women's rights to parent.



RESEARCH

Criminalized women face barriers to access access to basic health services inside and outside carceral facilities. There is a gap in evidence about their unique needs and WWW collaborates to conduct research that generates evidence to guide clinical practice and policy development.

2019 OVERVIEW

- In partnership with Chebucto Family Centre, we facilitated 14 workshops with women imprisoned at the Central Nova Correctional Facility (Burnside) on topics like Art Therapy, Anxiety Relief, Growth and Change, Parenting Through Transitions, Reproductive Health 101, Reproductive Justice, Self-Awareness and Self-Validation, Stress Relief, Spring and New Beginnings, Journal Making, and more.
- We supported clients at Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility, Nova Institution for Women, and in the community.
- We participated at the Community Resource Fair at the Nova Institution for Women in October.
- We purchased Missing Daddy books by prison abolitionist Miriam Kaba for every child in the Black Power Hour Christmas gift program for the children of incarcerated parents.
- We hosted three doula trainings with Mi'kmaq Child Development Centre, Mi'kmaq Legal Support Network, Elizabeth Fry Cape Breton, and for black doulas in collaboration with PLANS (Promoting Leadership in health for African Nova Scotians) and Community of Black Nursing Students.
- We hosted an incredible conference and presented at national and international conferences including Decolonizing Birth, Let's Talk About Sex, Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia.
- In collaboration with the Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia and East Coast Prison Justice and Pro Bono Student Canada, we updated Volume 4 of the Community Resource Guide.
- We brought on our second employee through the Canada Summer Jobs program and supervised 4 student interns.
- We participated in 14 news media interviews and published 7 Op Eds.
- We launched a coalition of academics, clinicians, community representatives and folks with lived experience to fight the exclusion of Hepatitis C treatment from health services for provincially-incarcerated people. We are told the province's position on this issue has now been reversed and that treatment will be funded.
- We provided expert clinical opinion for criminal cases and human rights complaints.
- We received grants from NSPIRG (Nova Scotia Public Research Interest Group), NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the Quakers, Community Health Boards, and PLANS.
- We joined the Canadian Coalition for the Children of Incarcerated Parents

DOULA TRAINING

Building on the success of our first doula training weekend in 2018, we collaborated to host three doula trainings in 2019:

- Clients and staff of Mi'kmaq Legal Support Network and Elizabeth Fry Cape Breton
- Mi'kmaw Child Development Centre
- Black doulas in collaboration with PLANS and Community of Black Nursing Students

These trainings aim to increase representation of black, indigenous, and criminalized women in the doula workforce. We provided training free of cost to participants and a total of 42 individuals attended and completed the trainings.



The training itself is the introductory level curriculum developed by the Doulas of North American (DONA). Demand for this training exceeded our capacity and participant evaluations highlighted strong satisfaction with the training quality, content and actionability.

We received funding support from the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Community Health Boards, and PLANS.





Artwork by Julia Hutt

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

On November 22-23, WWW hosted our third annual conference “Confronting the Carceral State: Autonomy, Community & Liberation” in Halifax, Nova Scotia, sponsored by the NSPIRG and coordinated by volunteer Stevie Fort.

Hosted at the Chebucto Family Centre in Spryfield, this sold-out conference was attended by 60 individuals and provided a full day of topics plus an evening dinner that featured key note speaker Dr. OmiSoore Dryden, the James R. Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies in the Faculty of Medicine at Dalhousie University. The conference also featured a second keynote speaker, Meaghan Thumath, a Trudeau Scholar at the University of Oxford researching the impact of drug policy and child welfare systems on maternal mortality. Other presentations included:

- Why Nova Scotia’s Opioid Strategy Needs and Intersectional Approach – Dr. Fiona S. Martin and Martha Paynter
- Secure Treatment for Youth in Care – Joshua Bearden
- Advocating for NonCitizens Experiencing Criminalization – Fatuma Alyaan
- How to Organize – El Jones

The NSPIRG provided funding for our conference Artist in Residence, Julia Hutt, who produced gorgeous custom artwork for WWW.

RESEARCH

**IN 2019 WE LAID THE
GROUNDWORK FOR A STRONG
COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH
PORTFOLIO THAT WILL BE
IMPLEMENTED IN 2020**

Doula Training

WWW will conduct qualitative research to investigate and understand the goals, outcomes, and ways to improve our doula training program. This work is at the research ethics stage.

Nurse Practitioner Study

Research collaboration with the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the Nova Scotia Health Authority, and the Department of Justice to study the impacts of implementing Nurse Practitioner Care for the East unit of the Burnside jail. This work is at the proposal development and funding stage.

Mother/Child Bonding and Provincial Incarceration

The Department of Justice asked WWW to participate in a provincial consultation with community and other government groups about how provincial corrections could better support maternal child bonds. The consultation took place over two days in Millbrook. The second phase, to be carried out in 2020, will involve WWW leading consultation with mothers.

ADVOCACY

KEY 2019 CAMPAIGNS

ALL DEATHS IN CUSTODY MUST BE REVIEWED

Women's Wellness Within: An Organization Serving Criminalized Women asks that all deaths in custody and public institutions be accompanied by a fatality review. We call for a public inquiry into his death and all deaths of people held in provincial custody. We call for the Province to answer the questions raised by Mr. Hiles' mother Sheila Hiles.

Gregory Hiles was found dead in his cell last in August, 2019 at the East Coast Forensic Hospital. Earlier this summer, Mr. Hiles filed a habeus corpus application against the ECFH over the cruel and unusual treatment to which he was subjected as a patient. He was denied open visits with his mother and his children and experienced isolation and overly restrictive conditions.

We agree with the Nova Scotia Advocate who says "A Fatality Inquiry must determine the specific nature and sources of the injuries causing Mr. Hiles's death. It should further explore what preventative measures are required in order to ensure that similar tragic deaths in custody do not occur at the ECFH. Such an inquiry should take specific account of whether reforms are required to law, policy or practice to ensure that the ECFH is fully meeting its duty to protect the health, safety and eventual community reintegration of forensic patients."

By provincial and international law, including the United Nations Mandela Rules, the Province is required to provide health service to incarcerated people. Mr. Hiles was denied appropriate care. He was treated unjustly. He died because of it. We demand forensic patients and incarcerated people receive health care to community standards.



END REMAND OF PREGNANT PEOPLE AND CAREGIVERS

The Canadian Criminal Code must be amended to provide that non-custodial pre-trial measures are preferred for pregnant people and primary caregivers of young children or people with disabilities.

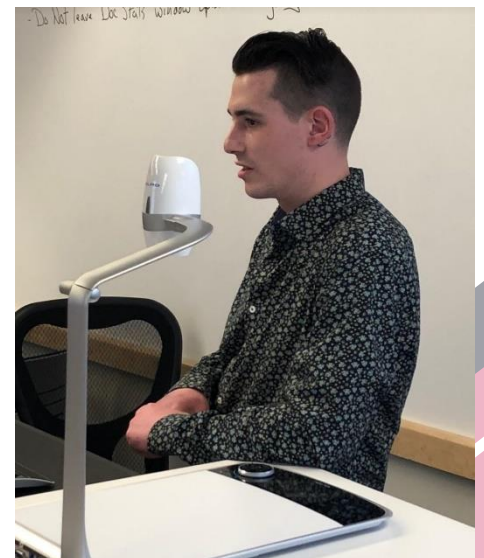
Several countries have taken measures to keep pregnant women and parents with primary care of young children out of prisons. These include Russia, Algeria, China, Iceland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Norway, and Sweden. Some countries, such as Italy and Brazil, specifically recognize that pregnant women and parents who are primary caregivers of young children or of people with disabilities should not be remanded – that is, held in prison before they have been convicted of a crime or sentenced to prison time. Canada is not among these countries.

Canada is a United Nations Member State. The UN voted unanimously to adopt the 2010 Bangkok Rules governing the rights of women prisoners internationally. In adopting the Rules, the UN General Assembly emphasized that, “when sentencing or deciding on pretrial measures for a pregnant woman or a child’s sole or primary caretaker, non-custodial measures should be preferred where possible and appropriate”.

Many people who are remanded do not go on to be convicted. Most people convicted of crimes in Canada are given non-custodial sentences served in the community.

Incarceration is associated with serious psychological, physical, and social harms for pregnant people and primary caregivers of young children, and for the children themselves. To prevent these harms, pregnant people and primary caregivers of young children and people with disabilities should not be incarcerated when they have not yet been, and may never be, convicted of a crime.

We call on the federal government to amend the provisions of the Criminal Code regarding Judicial Interim Release to provide that pregnant people and primary caregivers of young children or people with disabilities, who would otherwise be remanded to prison, be instead placed under house arrest.



APPROVE AN OVERDOSE PREVENTION SITE IN HALIFAX

We at Women's Wellness Within: An Organization Serving Criminalized Women ask that Premier Stephen McNeil approve the opening of an overdose prevention site (OPS) in Halifax.

Women's Wellness Within is a Nova Scotia-based non-profit that provides volunteer support to criminalized women and trans individuals who are pregnant or parenting young children. We witness in our work the disproportionate burden of criminalization and the harsher treatment in the carceral system experienced by individuals who live with addiction.

Women's Wellness Within is calling on Nova Scotia to support the implementation of an OPS in Halifax. Health Canada has approved the opening of overdose prevention and safe consumption sites across the country. Safe consumption models have been proven to be effective in reducing rates of overdose deaths and reduce the rates of infectious disease such as HIV and Hepatitis C, and give individuals who use substances a place to access much needed care and support.

Members of the academic community, lawyers, service providers, and the Halifax Regional Police have voiced their support for the OPS model in Nova Scotia, recognizing the evidence that this will benefit public health and safety.

The fact that community organizations can be granted a federal exemption to approve the implementation of an OPS does not excuse the provincial government from their responsibility to provide evidence-based health services and supports to their most vulnerable citizens.

Minister Delorey has failed to act on this matter, and the publicly funded health system is failing individuals with substance abuse issues in Nova Scotia. It is time to step up and support overdose prevention sites as a model in Nova Scotia that will advance the health, wellness, and safety of Nova Scotians.



IN THE MEDIA

MAR 12

“Eleven premature deaths in Nova Scotia in just seven years.”
NOVA SCOTIA ADVOCATE | INTERVIEWER ROBERT

“Training Indigenous doulas is ‘an act of reconciliation,’
says participant”

CBC NEWS | INTERVIEWER EMMA SMITH

APR 4

AUG 21

“Deportation of former Somali refugee amounts to death sentence, advocates say.”

THE NS ADVOCATE | INTERVIEWER ROBERT DEVET

“Public inquiry sought for man who died in provincial custody at Halifax forensic hospital”

THE STAR | INTERVIEWER YVETTE D’ENTREMONT

AUG 28

SEP 13

“Trans people in prison: Nova Scotia’s approach
THE LAWYER’S DAILY | INTERVIEWER JAIME BRUNET

“Black doulas hope to guide expectant parents through childbirth”

CBC NEWS | INTERVIEWER | ELIZABETH MCMILLAN

DEC 1

DEC 16

“A case of gangrene raises health concerns at the East Coast Forensic Hospital”
HALIFAX EXAMINER | INTERVIEWER EL JONES

OPINION PIECES



“Don’t remand pregnant people and primary caregivers”

IMPACT ETHICS | JAIME BURNET & MARTHA PAYNTER, FEB 21

“Sexual assault in prison: vulnerable women prisoners have few protections and face reprisal for reporting attacks”

HALIFAX EXAMINER | MARTHA PAYNTER, MAY 24

Methadone access in prisons: Stop strip-searching”

IMPACT ETHICS | MATT BONN & MARTHA PAYNTER, NOV 19

“We need to stop incarcerating pregnant people”

HALIFAX EXAMINER | MARTHA PAYNTER, OCT 5

“Hepatitis C treatment gaps in prisons”

IMPACT ETHICS | MARTHA PAYNTER, MAR 29

PARTNERS



IWK Foundation



Mi'kmaw
Native
Friendship
Centre



SPONSORS



Nova Scotia
Advisory Council on
The Status of Women



QUAKERS
Canadian Friends
Service Committee



We are calls for an end to poverty and for affordable housing
Reproductive rights and every life counting
Respect for Mother Earth and her surroundings
Access to treatment and an end to prison crowding
We are a living wage and basic allowance
And we are waving signs and fists not drowning
We are singing songs of peace and shouting
We are generations of resistance that cannot be put down
We extend beyond elections and who's in the White House
We have been to the top of the mountain
We have survived from genocides to witch trials
And they could not burn us out or wipe us out
Or push us aside
We are femmes, butches, Trans, lesbians, women and women
identified
We are standing here with pride
And still we rise, still we rise, still we rise.



- El Jones



Artwork by Julia Hutt

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