



May 6th 2020

For Immediate Release

Re: Elizabeth Fry Week 2020 – Build Communities, Not Prison

Each year, [The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies](#) (CAEFS) celebrates National Elizabeth Fry Week during the week leading up Mother’s Day (this year, May 4th to 10th). The goal is to enhance public awareness and education around criminalized and vulnerable women in Canada.

We continue to mark this week as Elizabeth Fry Week because the majority of women in prison are mothers. For most of these women, they were the sole supporters of their families at the time they were incarcerated. When mothers are sentenced to prison, their children are sentenced to separation. We draw attention to this reality by ending Elizabeth Fry Week on Mother’s Day each year.

This year’s theme is ‘Build Communities, Not Prisons’, and we plan to use this week to put a spotlight on the amazing community building work that all of the locals do –before, during, and after COVID-19 - because we know that the only real alternative to prisons are thriving communities.

During the 2019 fiscal year, our local societies - and their combined staff of nearly 700 - collectively served approximately 90,000 clients and their volunteers donated over 50,000 hours of their time.

This is also a time to imagine what a thriving community may look like when we emerge from the current pandemic. This crisis has exposed serious flaws and gaps our existing systems. It has become glaringly obvious that we need to create a new way of operating- one that reflects the vital lessons we have been learning about how we are all able to contribute to collective safety and care.

While we would usually be hosting events during Elizabeth Fry Week, we are instead responding to our current context by using social media to engage the public to imagine with us, by finishing the sentences below:

A thriving community needs...

When I dream of a world without prisons, I imagine...

Responses will be collected and shared using the hashtags #EFryWeek2020, #BuildCommunitiesNotPrisons, and #ImagineAWorldWithoutPrisons.



"I am hopeful that, through this crisis, we can begin to move toward a practical organizing of our communities where no one is left behind. We need communities that create opportunities for transformative justice. Communities that recognize the harm caused by our colonial past and embark on true and active reconciliation with Indigenous nations. Communities that place a priority on dismantling oppression in all of its forms and build a more just future for everyone". Emilie Coyle, Executive Director of CAEFS

In a time when there is so much uncertainty, we look forward to making this week one that is centered on hope and imagination, working together to envision the communities we need.

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For further information or to contact CAEFS for comment please contact Executive Director (Emilie Coyle) at ecoyle@caefs.ca or at (613) 316-6785.

