



**M S C M**  
Montreal Southwest Community Ministries

# THE SOU'WESTER

MONTREAL-SOUTHWEST COMMUNITY MINISTRIES

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It's a new year and there are many anticipated changes coming for **MSCM**,—most importantly projected funding cuts that will affect many of our programs if we do not increase our donations—not at all unfamiliar to all grass-roots organizations like ours. You will note on page 4 that we have now provided an online method to donate, along with other options. If you donate \$50 or more online, you will receive a tax receipt immediately.

For this issue in the midst of a long, dreary winter we are all experiencing, we have focused on publishing inspirational articles and stories.

We hope you will enjoy and thank you for your continuing support.

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## PRISON CHAPLAINCY PROGRAM GETS FACELIFT

The federal government has awarded a private company a \$2 million contract to deliver religious counselling to prisoners, including minority faith services, as part of a system overhaul quietly rolled out over the last six months.

It comes little more than a year after the government came under fire for cutting loose about 50 part-time minority faith chaplains after a CSC ad for a Wiccan service provider struck a nerve with then public safety minister Vic Toews, who said he was concerned about the use of taxpayer dollars.

Kairos Pneuma Chaplaincy Inc, a company started by a handful of current and former prison chaplains won the bid. Since October, about 30 full- and part-time chaplains of all denominations have been serving prisoners across the country, according to company President, John Tonks.

There are still about 81 chaplains working in the federal prison system and those employed by Kairos only account for about 22% of the total. Most, he said, are still operating under multiple individual contracts signed between various faith communities and the government. But as those contracts expire, he explained, their positions will be replaced under the single contractor Kairos, which

was among at least 3 bidders, has the contract for a year and will have to bid again as the changes roll out over three years.

"This service-delivery model will give the national contractor flexibility to respond to religious and spiritual needs represented by



*The federal government has awarded a private company a \$2 million contract to deliver religious counselling to prisoners, including minority faith services as part of a system overhaul quietly rolled out over the last six months.*

either large or small numbers of offenders," CSC spokeswoman Veronique Rioux said. "This model will respond to both the present and future multi-faith needs of a diverse offender population."

Tonks said it became clear the government "had to recant" on its plan to slash all part-time chaplains. It wasn't just about Wiccans, he said, adding the move created a 'crisis' among offenders over access to faith leaders of their

choice, he said, including among Quebec's Protestant minority that was serviced by part-time chaplains.

"So what the government (decided) is it's more efficient, from their perspective at least, to go to one contractor," he said, adding, "I think there are some advantages of going this direction."

Under the new system, there is more 'equity' among chaplains across the country in terms of pay, benefits and pension, he said. There's also more flexibility in terms of the ratio of men to women and the various denominations.

Tonks describes the program as an 'essential service' now more than ever as the correctional system has become 'more punitive' under the Conservatives.

Last year, the prison chaplain program was said to cost about \$6.4 million, \$1.3 million of which covered part-time—including minority faith—chaplains. It's not clear how much the new delivery model is expected to save.

*Source: Postmedia News*

## DRUG FREE PRISONS BILL SCORNE BY CRITICS

*It is not  
who is right,  
but what is right,  
that is of importance.*

*Thomas H. Huxley*

A new bill to tackle drug use in federal prisons does nothing to address the actual problem and ignores bigger issues like institutional violence, custodial deaths and overcrowding, critics say.

The Drug Free Prisons Act tabled in mid-November gives the Parole Board of Canada new powers to deal with offenders who test positive for drugs or refuse a drug test before they're granted parole, including the power to cancel their release.

It also requires the Parole Board to pay specific attention to whether abstention from drugs and alcohol ought to be a condition for parole.

"Tackling drug use and trade in federal penitentiaries will make the correctional system safer for staff and inmates, while also increasing the success of rehabilitation," Public Safety Minister, Steven Blaney said in a statement.

"This contributes to building safer communities for Canadians."

NDP public safety critic, Randall Garrison, said the title of the bill is a misnomer.

"It doesn't have anything

the NDP would support it.

Practically speaking, prison watchdog Howard Sapers said the bill would apply to few offenders since urine tests are already limited to a small number of randomly selected inmates or in cases where drug use is suspected or for those in drug treatment programs.

"There may be some operational issues with this change as well. CSC has reported on false positive results in urinalysis and offenders have the right to re-test and appeal," he said.

"This all raises some questions about the legality of potentially holding an offender in prison once granted parole for what amounts to nothing more than suspicion."

He suggested the bill is also redundant as the Parole Board already has the power to impose prohibitions on intoxicants and to review or revoke parole if such conditions are violated.

*Source: Postmedia News*



to do with the title: Drug Free Prisons at all," he said. "You can say, ironically, it's the opposite. If someone's doing drugs, they stay in prison."

He called it 'propaganda' aimed at the Conservative base of law-and-order minded supporters, but noted his party would thoroughly review it, and, if it seems to support the successful reintegration of offenders into the community,

## MONITOR WARNS OF COVERT RACISM IN PRISON SYSTEM



*Correctional Investigator Howard Sapers found the non-white population in prison rose 75 per cent.*

The increased numbers of aboriginals and visible minorities in federal prisons is evidence of covert racism, discrimination and cultural bias in Canada's justice system, says Canada's prisons monitor.

In his annual report tabled in Parliament November 27, 2013, Canada's correctional investigator Howard Sapers, said the number of visible minority inmates is partly reflective of the overall demographic change in Canadian society, but also shows that disproportionate representa-

tion of minorities in comparison to their share of the general population is a persistent and growing problem.

According to Sapers' report, Canada's prison population has grown by 2,100 inmates—a 16.5% increase—in the last 10 years. In that time, the overall aboriginal population in the prisons grew by 46%, while the number of aboriginal women increased by 80% and now accounts for 1 in 3 women under federal sentence. The prison population of other visible minorities, including black, Hispanic,

Asian and Indian increased by almost 75%. Meanwhile, the population of white inmates fell by 3%.

The numbers are particularly striking when compared to the general population. Aboriginals account for nearly 1/4 of all prisoners but comprise 4% of the Canadian population.

"I think it raises some very significant questions about our commitment to inclusion, social justice, equity, equality," Sapers said of the findings.

*Source: Postmedia News*

## AN INSPIRATION IN PERSON PROFILE

**T**he **Sou'Wester** was pleased that Barry agreed to be interviewed for our readers. Barry, a lifer, has successfully reintegrated back into the community since 2007. He is working full-time, is a new father and an insightful member of **MSCM's** Steering Committee.

**Q.** Thank you Barry for affording our readers an inside glimpse of what you have been through and where you are now. Can you give us a little background?

**A.** I was incarcerated at the end of my teens and spent 11 years inside, followed by two years in a half-way house. I've been working at my same job for several years now. As well, I have extended my family and have done some travelling.

**Q.** How did you connect with **MSCM**?

**A.** At the very beginning, I met Peter Huish when I was in a medium-security pen. A few years later, while in a minimum-security institution, I found myself doing some work at **MSCM's** first office, developing a program and database for them.

**Q.** Can you explain what kind of support **MSCM** has provided you?

**A.** **MSCM** provided me with support, both socially and spiritually. I was given a chance to connect with citizens of Montreal and my community.

The group was very diverse and catered to no particular race, religion or age group. They truly reflected the face of English Montreal.

**MSCM** was and continues to encourage me to remember how far and from where I came. Don't get me wrong, I did not come from a life of crime—in fact, it was my only charge. From sentencing to maximum, medium and minimum institutions, fences and walls get crossed and blurred.

I did keep dear friends and family members close but having **MSCM** interactions and contacts helped me to keep focus on getting back to 'life'—my life.

**Q.** Your experiences and insights has been invaluable to our Steering Committee by bringing your first-hand knowledge to the table. What has this experience brought you?

**A.** It has given me a chance to see first-hand how people can care and have the best interest of an inmate at heart.

Being a volunteer-based group of people is one thing on paper. Seeing how volunteers juggle their everyday lives to make time to be present and involved in making the transition from the 'inside' to 'out' a smooth and successful one, is enough to come away with. There's no need to factor in the personal expense, but hey, that's volunteering. From the 'inside of a minimum-security pen, that wasn't always apparent at times—

maybe even taken for granted as I went along my confined routine life.

Now, having a busy, family filled life, the experience brings a greater understanding and appreciation.

Being part of the Steering Committee is an honor and I am pleased that my input is sought and valued.

**Q.** You are an example of 'hope' for others who are currently working on reintegrating back into the community. Do you have any insights?

**A.** As individuals we all have our issues or situations. Unfortunately, we have to manage these as life rolls on. Never stop moving forward and don't be discouraged—at the same time dream big and be realistic. LOL but true.

**Q.** What are your future plans?

**A.** Enjoy life! I just had a baby boy three months ago so that's a large part of my life right now and will be for some time.

More travelling and just enjoying the day-to-day on the outside—7 years yesterday!

Believe me—I'm happy and appreciate each and every day!



Barry having fun during a recent vacation.

*"I'm not concerned with your liking or disliking me... all I ask is that you respect me as a human being."*

Jackie Robinson





*"Think of 3 things:  
Whence you came,  
Where you are going,  
and  
To whom you must account."*

*Benjamin Franklin*

**Donations of time  
and service are  
also welcome.  
We are especially  
looking for volunteers  
who would be  
interested in  
accompanying and  
transporting inmates.**

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## **THE REV. PETER HUISH 2013 AWARD OF MERIT**

Joining previous honorees, Marie (2009), Margaret (2010), Michèle (2011) and Jeri (2012), Tony was awarded the Rev. Peter Huish Award of Merit for his outstanding commitment and leadership in the field of community-based restorative justice and engagement.

The first male honoree, Tony's dedication and devotion to all those affected by crime warranted him this Award and we wish to extend our sincere gratitude and congratulations!



*Tony receiving his Award.*

## **MSCM BLESSED BY GENEROUS DONATIONS**

We are very grateful to those who donated \$1,790 in the final two weeks of 2013, in response to an offer by an anonymous supporter to match all donations received in that year-end period. This resulted in total donations of \$3,580 in that short period of time which will make a great difference in our viability in 2014 as we struggle with the risk of funding cuts.

Taken together with the donations received from other donors during the rest of 2013, the total donations received amount to \$4,400. **MSCM** thanks all our donors for their invaluable support.

## **I SUPPORT MSCM AND THEIR PROGRAMS**

Ours is challenging work and there is always more to do than present funds allow. For example, we would like to increase the number of our Community Building Workshops, our in-prison visits to those located in remote institutions that rarely see anybody from the community, and improve our capacity to provide full-time services in the community. Please assist us by your generosity.

***MSCM** has relied upon support from the Community Chaplaincy of Montreal  
(Aumônerie de Communautaire de Montréal) and individual donors like you.*



You can make donations online using your credit card by going to [CanadaHelps.org](http://CanadaHelps.org). Or, you can go to our website and find a direct link at the bottom left-hand side.

**Please make sure you select MSCM in the drop down menu.**

Using this method will provide you with a tax receipt immediately.

*Cheques for less than \$50 can be made payable to **MSCM** directly. Cheques for more than \$50 should be made payable to **Anglican Diocese of Montreal: memo MSCM**.*

*Thank you!*

## PROGRAM AIMS TO FOSTER SKILLS FOR MODERN BUSINESS

### SILICON VALLEY EXPERTS TRAIN INMATES FOR TECH JOBS

The budding entrepreneurs wear blue sweat pants labeled 'prisoner' and huge, flapping blue shirts. Their doors are triple locked, and lunch is a stale peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Complicating matters, participants in this growing Silicon Valley startup incubator are barred from the Internet.

Nonetheless, the program, launched by successful tech entrepreneurs for inmates north of San Francisco in the decaying San Quentin State Prison, has expanded. The reason they're growing is simple: graduates, now trickling out of the penal system, are landing real jobs at real dot-coms. The rigorous, 6-month training teaches carefully selected inmates the ins and outs of designing and launching technology firms, using local experts as volunteer instructors.

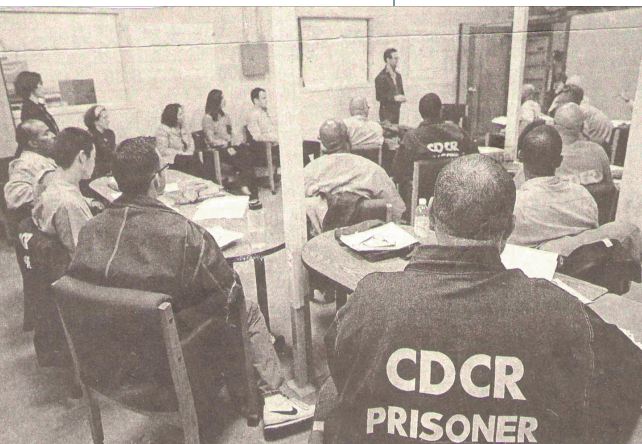
"We believe that when incarcerated people are released into the world, they need the tools to function in today's hightech, wired world," says co-founder Beverly Parenti, who with her husband, Chris Redlitz, has launched thriving companies including AdAuction, the first online media exchange.

The pair were Silicon Valley pioneers in the 1990s, and they tapped their many high-level connections to help with the prison program they started. They started the program after Redlitz was invited into San Quentin in 2011 for a guest lecture and was overwhelmed by the inmates' desire to learn.

After discussions with prison administrators, Parenti and Redlitz decided to add a prison-based firm to their

portfolio, naming it for the precarious journey from prison to home: The Last Mile.

During twice-a-week evening lessons, students—many locked up before smartphones or Google—practise tweeting, brainstorm new companies and discuss business books assigned as homework. Banned from the Internet to prevent networking



with other criminals, they take notes on keyboard-like word processors or with pencil and paper.

The program is still 'bootstrapping', as its organizers say, with just 12 graduates in its first two years and now a few dozen in classes in San Quentin and Twin Towers. But the five graduates released so far are working in the tech sector.

They are guaranteed paid internships if they can finish the rigorous training program, which requires pre-requisite courses, proven social skills and a lifetime oath to lead by positive example.

On a Silicon Valley-style Demo Day, the start-up students present ideas to investors, a demonstration that convinced former California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

Director, Mathew Cate he made the right decision to approve the training course.

"This program will go a long way to not only providing these guys with jobs, but it is my hope that they hire people like them who have changed their lives and are now ready to contribute to society, pay taxes, follow the law, support their families. All those

things contribute to the economy," he told participants after watching the 2013 Demo Day. Inmates also learn the essential start-up skills of blogging, in

part by answering questions on Quora, a website that allows users and experts to communicate, by having volunteers input their entries. Without real businesses to discuss, thousands of readers ask the inmates questions such as: "What does it feel like to murder someone?"

Writing publicly about their crimes, organizers say, helps the inmates move forward once they are released.

Just months after serving 24 years for repeat drug offences and weapons possession, Chris Kenyatta Leal fed his cat and ironed his shirt before hurrying off to his office in San Francisco.

"I always had an entrepreneurial fire in my belly, I just used it in the wrong way," said Leal, 45.

Source: The Associated Press

*"I figured we  
work with  
young  
entrepreneurs  
every day.  
Why not  
here?"*

*Chris Redlitz*



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*"There is an exception to every rule."*

*Anonymous*

#### FOR "MOST HEINOUS" OFFENDERS

### OTTAWA PLANS TO THROW AWAY KEY

Criminals who are convicted of the worst crimes—such as multiple murders or sex assaults on children—could spend the rest of their lives behind bars, with no chance of parole, under planned federal legislation.

Justice Minister Peter MacKay elaborated the government's plan to lock some criminals up and throw away the key.

MacKay said the forthcoming provisions would be applied very narrowly.

"When I say the worst of the worst, the most violent, repeat offenders, we're talking about multiple murders,

multiple sexual assaults on the most vulnerable—our children," he said. "We want to ensure that certain individuals capable and convicted of those offences will never be let out of prison."

McKay acknowledged there are already tools—such as the dangerous offender designation—to keep some criminals from being released.

The government has also scrapped the so-called 'faint-hope clause' that allowed some inmates with life sentences to seek early parole.

Still, the government wants to ensure "there are no loopholes" in the law that criminals can exploit.

"This would both provide surety and public confidence, and that is the intent in bringing about further changes. I can't really say more than that until we have the legislation before Parliament," McKay said.

The planned law will not make society any safer, but is sure to appeal to voters who demand harsher punishment for criminals, said Neil Boyd, a criminologist at Simon Fraser University in BC.

"It's all about catering to the fearful and the angry," Boyd said. "It's symbolic, it's not going to have any effect on the crime rate."

*Source: The Canadian Press*

#### TOP COURT RULES

### PRISONERS CAN BE BARRED FROM RETURN HOME

The Federal government did not violate the constitutional rights of a convicted Montreal drug trafficker when it barred him from serving his prison sentence in Canada, the country's top court ruled.

The Supreme Court of Canada's ruling in the case of Pierino Divito could have broad implications for other Canadians imprisoned abroad who wish to return home to serve their sentences.

Divito, a Canadian citizen, serving prison time in the United States had multiple applications to serve his sentence in Canada approved by US authorities, but the Harper government

rejected them on the grounds that he was "identified as an organized crime member" and his return would constitute a "a potential threat to the safety of Canadians and the security of Canada".

Divito argued that being barred from serving his sentence in Canada violated his mobility rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Under Section 6 of the Charter, 'every citizen of Canada has the right to enter, remain in and leave Canada'.

But the Court dismissed his appeal, saying the provisions of the International Transfer of Offenders Act allows the public safety minister to reject applications from prisoners abroad to return are constitutional.

Legislation passed last year gave the government even more power in rejecting applications from Canadian prisoners abroad to return, said University of Toronto law professor Audrey Macklin, a chair in human rights law who intervened in the case on behalf of the David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights.

Current grounds the minister can take into account when ruling on applications include the prisoner's social or family ties in Canada, health and a broad range of criteria.

*Source: Postmedia News*



## FREE BEHIND BARS

*Mario Easevoli, an inmate and student in the Liberation Prison Project\*, finds moments of freedom through his mediation practice.*

Still I sit between two bunks on my folded, raggedy blanket with a folded towel under my feet in the half-lotus position, earplugs (which I made with toilet tissue, pieces of plastic bag and thread from a sheet) in my ears, eyes near closed, focused on my breath.

Ten minutes pass and gradually all the craziness around me fades away. I feel the breath enter my body and again as it leaves.

Shortly after, someone on one of the top bunks adjacent to where I am sitting drops a towel on my shoulder. I notice but do not budge. After all, it's just another distraction. I gently return to my breathing.

Life, in the middle of chaos, has become still, calm, tranquil. It's almost as if I were no longer in the middle of this place many consider hell. And yet, I have never been more aware of each moment as it is. I

have found what those around me search endlessly for.

Freedom. Enjoyment in each passing moment. For most here, even the notion is a fairytale. Unattainable.

Understanding this causes compassion to swell in my heart. Why can't everyone here experience this for themselves? Why is everyone struggling so hard to only suffer more as a result?



An hour or so passes and I end my meditation and open my eyes. I'm in a different place. I no longer see a jail full of loud, fighting criminals and angry jail officers, but instead, full of suffering beings, wanting to be happy just like me.

It is then that I realize the great opportunity at hand—I am in the middle of intense suffering. It's here that I can really practice.

Here I can really help. But I wonder how?

After I rise and reassure the person who dropped the towel that all is okay, I begin my first daily walk—mindfully. Focusing on my breath and each foot as it touches the cold, hard floor. The walking area is maybe forty feet long, and I traverse it as if almost gliding, feeling light and blissful.

Surely there is a smile on my face as I feel the energy of joy, the energy of mindfulness spread throughout my body with each careful step, recognizing how wondrous life really is.

It isn't long before the same person who dropped the towel joins me—for the first time—quietly, with nothing but a nod and a smile.

We continue to walk silently, mindfully. Both of us enjoying every step we take. Neither of us says a word. We each understand. Here, in the middle of jail, we are free.

For more information contact:  
[www.liberationprisonproject.org](http://www.liberationprisonproject.org)

*\*The "Liberation Prison Project" offers spiritual advice and teachings, as well as books and materials, to people in prison interested in exploring, studying and practicing Buddhism.*

*A Tibetan Buddhist organization and social services project affiliated with the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayan Tradition, since 1996, the project has supported Buddhist practice of over 20,000 prisoners. Active mainly in the US and Australia, established as non-profit organizations in Raleigh, NC and Australian Blue Mountains, they also have branches in New Zealand, Spain, Mexico, Mongolia and Italy.*

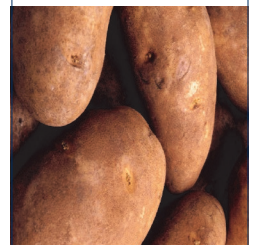
## ARE YOUR POTATOES HEAVY?

A teacher once told each of her students to bring a clear plastic bag and a sack of potatoes to school. For every person they refuse to forgive in their life's experience, they chose a potato, wrote on it the name and date and put it in the plastic bag. Some of their bags were quite heavy.

They were then told to carry this bag with them everywhere for one week, putting it beside their bed at night, on the car seat when driving, next to their desk at work.

The hassle of lugging this around with them made it clear what a weight they were carrying spiritually and how they had to pay attention to it all the time to not forget and keep leaving it in embarrassing places. Naturally, the condition of the potatoes deteriorated to a nasty smelly slime.

This was a great metaphor for the price we pay for keeping our pain and heavy negativity! Too often we think of forgiveness as a gift to the other person, but clearly is for ourselves!





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## LESSONS FROM AN OYSTER

There once was an oyster  
whose story I tell,  
who found that some sand  
had got into his shell.  
It was only a grain,  
but it gave him great pain.  
For oysters have feelings  
Although they're so plain.

Now, did he berate  
the harsh workings of fate  
that had brought him  
to such a deplorable state?  
Did he curse at the government,  
cry for election,  
and claim that the sea should  
have given him protection?  
"No" he said to himself  
as he lay on a shell  
since I cannot remove it  
I shall try to improve it.

Now the years have rolled around,  
as the years always do,  
and he came to his ultimate  
destiny—stew.  
And the small grain of sand  
that had bothered him so  
was a beautiful pearl  
all richly aglow.

Now the tale has a moral,  
for isn't it grand  
what an oyster can do  
with a morsel of sand?

What couldn't we do  
if we'd only begin  
with some of the things  
that get under our skin?

*Source unknown*

## THE LAST LAUGH

- ♦ Experience is simply the name we give our mistakes.
- ♦ Only dead fish go with the flow.
- ♦ If winning isn't everything, why do they keep score?
- ♦ Keep the dream alive—hit the snooze button!