



# Women in prison: the Elizabeth Fry Society

BY ERINN ISENER

The Nova Institute for female prisoners is now the home for two babies, along with its 16 inmates. These babies were born in the prison and are allowed to stay with their mothers until they are two years old.

Before this program was introduced children born to women in prison were taken at birth and given to a family member or put up for adoption. With this new program women who have their babies while in prison take full responsibility for the child. Other inmates are not allowed to touch or hold the babies. If the mother needs assistance, such as when she showers, one of the guards takes over. There is still some debate over the idea of babies in prison and only time will tell if this is a viable solution.

This change in the prison's status you came about in response to movements which demanded that

prisons address women's special needs. In 1990, the federal government released Creating Choices: The Report of the task force on Federally Sentenced Women. The report recommended that regional prisons should use a holistic approach based on five principles: the empowerment of women; the availability of meaningful and responsible choices; the promotion of respect and dignity; supportive environments and shared responsibility for female prisoners.

In light of several suicide attempts by prisoners at Nova Institute during June 1996, representatives of the Atlantic region Elizabeth Fry Societies have questioned the mental health services at the prison, and raised similar concerns regarding case management and inconsistencies in rules.

Nova Institution, which opened in 1995, houses women classified as minimum and medium security. On

September 19, 1996 it was decided that Springhill, a previously all-male institution, would hold women requiring maximum security.

The decision was made after a number of women prisoners rioted at the Nova Institute out of frustration at the staff's failure to address women's special concerns.

In February 1997, Chris Manuge, warden of Nova Institute resigned and was replaced by acting warden Jim Davidson. The circumstances surrounding Ms. Manuge's resignation, though not entirely clear, primarily involved the transfer of maximum security women out of Nova Institute.

However, today women are still incarcerated in Springhill. This supposedly temporary situation has become rather long-term. The environment at Springhill is not productive for the female prisoners. The women are housed in make shift cell

and have minimal access to recreation. They cannot use the gym or courtyard unless all the males have been locked down. Considerable tension between the men and women has been caused by these circumstances.

The women at Springhill have slipped through the cracks of the new system of prisons designed for women. There are no support programs for them and the principles of Creating Choices have not been implemented.

The Atlantic region Elizabeth Fry Societies visit Nova Institute weekly and Springhill three times a month in hopes of improving women's living conditions. Issues and concerns of the female prisoners are noted by Elizabeth Fry staff and communicated to the regional advocate. The regional advocate then discusses these concerns with the warden of the institution.

The female prisoners movement can be traced back to Elizabeth Fry. Fry

was a 19th century English Quaker dedicated to prison reform for women in conflict with the law. In 1813, she was appalled by the conditions under which women and their children were incarcerated. Elizabeth introduced productive work programs within the prison to prepare women for their release; while lobbying the British Parliament for changes in the penal system. Elizabeth Fry also prepared prisoners for their eventual release by teaching them basic hygiene and work skills. When questioned about her work at the prison in 1817, Elizabeth Fry said she believed that "women should be supervised by women".

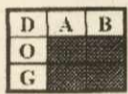
In 1982 a group of concerned women formed the local Elizabeth Fry Society. The organization became affiliated with the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) in 1984. The Halifax branch, located at Bloomfield Center on Agricola street, opened in 1987. It consists of two core staff and forty active volunteers. The mission of the society is to work with and on the behalf of, women in conflict with the law by responding to the needs of women in prison through advocacy, programming, lobbying, and community development.

The society is involved in developing programs and services for women who have been charged with offenses and women who are at risk of coming in to conflict with the law. There are building self-esteem programs, as well as enhancing parenting skills and increasing work skills programs held at their drop-in center and/or at the Halifax Correctional Center.

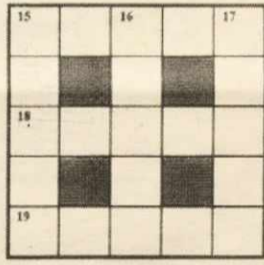
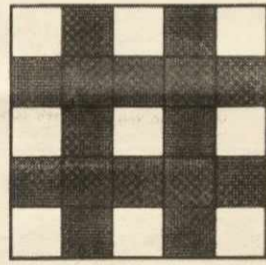
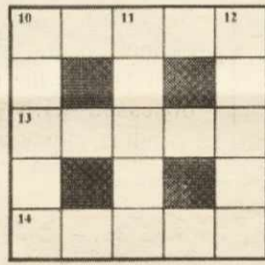
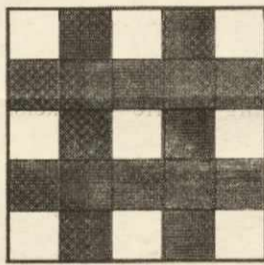
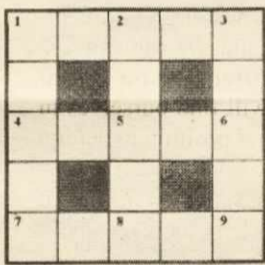
The society also encourages public awareness and understanding of issues related to women in conflict with the law. The society is continuously looking for volunteers. While continuing to be concerned about the multitudes of barriers women face, the Elizabeth Fry Society is thankful for the commitment and skills of volunteers. To become a member, or a volunteer, the Elizabeth Fry Society can be contacted by phone at 454-5041 or by fax 455-5913.

## 3D CROSSWORD PUZZLE # 1 — by Eric Fielding

Answers to this week's puzzle will be published in the Focus section of next week's issue.



A 3D crossword grid has words across, down, and deep. In the example DAB is across, DOG is down, and DEN is deep:



### Across

1. Hidden
4. Ancient Celtic Wizard
7. (C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>5</sub>)<sub>2</sub>O
10. Sail
13. Ancient Mexican Indian
14. Fortune-Telling Card
15. Register
18. Celebration
19. Wanderer

### Down

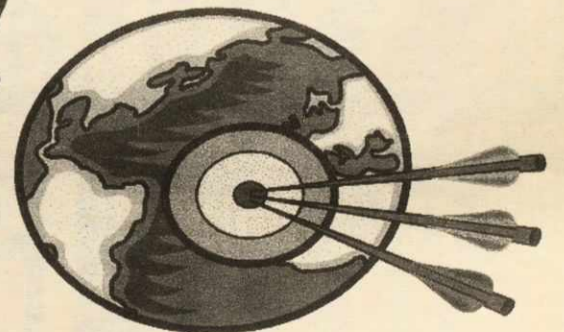
1. Father
2. Irregular
3. Beneath
10. Bacteria
11. Provide
12. Silent
15. Small
16. Kingdom
17. Played A Guitar-Like Instrument

### Deep

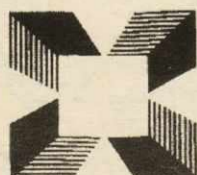
1. To Whom A Cheque Is Made Out
2. Persist
3. Pending
4. Tower Over
5. Extreme
6. Cardassian Gul
7. Taken A Meal
8. Seraglio, Zenana, Purdah, Or Gynaecium
9. Appraised

# WE ARE #1

IN STUDENT TRAVEL  
 IN DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL  
 IN SOUTH TRAVEL  
 IN EUROPEAN TRAVEL  
 AND SO MUCH MORE



3RD FL SUB  
 494-2054



## TRAVEL CUTS

Canadian Universities Travel Service Limited

