

B A R N O N E

Newsletter of Bar None Prison Rideshare

summer 2020

Bar None is an abolitionist prisoner solidarity group based out of Treaty 1 territory, on the land of Anishinaabeg (Ojibway), Ininew (Cree), Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene Peoples, and the homeland of the Métis Nation, in Winnipeg, Manitoba. We view our commitment to prison abolition as related to the dismantling of the ongoing occupation and theft of these lands. The Prison Rideshare is an ongoing project of Bar None to connect people with rides to visit their friends and loved ones who are in prison.

The current uprising

A massive uprising - the largest in the US since the 1992 L.A. riots - is now under way across the US and the world in response to the Minneapolis Police Department's May 25, 2020 murder of George Floyd. Defunding and abolishing the police has become the rebellion's top demand, an historic transformation and leap forward for the abolitionist movement. On June 5, 2020, 15,000 people rallied in Winnipeg with Justice 4 Black Lives Winnipeg (J4BLW) at the Manitoba Legislature and marched through downtown without a permit or police escort. On June 19, 2020, over 1,000 people rallied at the Legislature for justice for Eishia Hudson. At the time of writing, over 60,000 people had signed J4BLW's petition to defund and abolish the Winnipeg Police Service. On June 7, 2020, Minneapolis City Council pledged to disband their city's police department. Local governments across the US and Canada have committed to defunding the police. Our hearts go out to the Black radicals around the world leading this uprising, and the Indigenous people who have been resisting police violence on their lands for hundreds of years, with special gratitude to the rebels in Minneapolis, J4BLW and the family of Eishia Hudson.

In memory of people murdered by Winnipeg Police in 2020 as of June 23rd

Unidentified man, 27 years old, died March 10 2020

Eishia Hudson, 16 years old, died April 8 2020

Jason Collins, 36 years old, died April 9 2020

Stewart Andrews, 22 years old, died April 18 2020

In memory of people who died prematurely in a
Manitoba prison in 2020 as of June 23rd

Shawn Poitra, 29 years old, died in custody at Stony Mountain on January 5, 2020 ("following an illness")

Adrian Young, 39 years old, died in custody at Stony Mountain on March 7, 2020 (no details given)

Patrick Eaglestick, 25 years old, died in custody at Stony Mountain on March 24, 2020 (no details given)

Farron Cory Rowan, 32 years old, died in custody at Stony Mountain on April 26, 2020 (no details given)

Kurt Sidney Harper, died in custody at Stony Mountain on May 18, 2020 (no details given)

Unidentified, 62 year old man died in custody at the Winnipeg Remand Centre on June 9, 2020 (no details given)



April 20, 2020 vigil for Eishia Hudson
Photo by Harrison Powder for Northern Plains
Freelancer.

The COVID-19 Era

Pandemic prisons

Across Canada and especially in B.C. and Québec, over 300 imprisoned people have been infected and at least two have died. While there have been no reported cases of COVID-19 among imprisoned people or guards in Manitoba, prison officials here have used the pandemic to mess with imprisoned people and their families in many ways, including forcing imprisoned people to sign waivers stating that prison officials are not responsible for their health during the pandemic; not giving families a way to pay bail; extensive use of 23.5 hour per day lockups; failing to fix faulty video-call technology for visits; and allowing families' visiting rights to expire due to absence of staff. While most places in Manitoba - from bars to bowling alleys - have been reopened, there has been no word on when prison visits will resume.

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The system is shrinking

From February to May, the number of people imprisoned in provincial jails in Manitoba decreased by 618, from 2,260 to 1,642. (An unknown number of people, however, are being locked up at police stations instead.) New measures taken by Manitoba Justice to keep people out of jail during the pandemic include sped-up bail hearings, stopping the “direct lockup system” (where police put people in Remand before they get a hearing), and judges using their discretion to not lock people up. The speed with which this was accomplished combined with the fact that, by all accounts, Manitoba is just as safe as it would otherwise be, goes to show how illegitimate and arbitrary imprisonment is and how realistic it is to drastically and immediately reduce the number of people locked up. On June 11, the province announced that the “direct lockup system” would be permanently abolished. However, police are now lobbying for increased resources to imprison people in police stations instead, a proposal that must be rejected. The other measures also should be made permanent and significantly expanded. This must be done across the board, without reference to the so-called riskiness of individual imprisoned people, a bogus measure that actually has everything to do with whether or not people have the supports they need when they are released and little to do with their individual character. Real safety comes from funding those supports, not keeping people in jail longer.

#FreeThemAll

Imprisoned people and supporters around the world know that prisons are an inherent menace to public health and are taking action to ensure that either proper safety measures are taken or people are freed. Hunger strikes during the pandemic have taken place in Bordeaux jail and Laval Immigration Holding Centre in Montréal, Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre, prisons in the US, Israel, Nicaragua, Iran, and more. Sean Johnston, currently imprisoned in Warkworth prison in southern Ontario, is suing Correctional Services Canada for failing to protect imprisoned people from COVID-19. A new national Abolition Coalition has organized actions across the country, including a multi-city caravan against imprisonment. On April 18, two people briefly escaped from Headingley jail. On May 29, five children briefly escaped from the Agassiz Youth Centre jail in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba.



credit: Noshin Ahmed, Criminalization and Punishment Education Project, CPEP www.cp-ep.org

Mutual aid pending revolution

Several new initiatives have been set up for people in Winnipeg to give and receive help during the pandemic.

- A new Edmonton-based Indigenous-led penal abolition organization, Free Lands Free Peoples, has organized a Prairie Province Prisoner Support Fund for imprisoned and recently released people in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. To apply for funds or donate, go to <https://ca.gofundme.com/f/prairie-province-prisoner-support-fund>.
- The Prison Libraries Committee of the Manitoba Library Association is delivering care packages to families of imprisoned people and taking suggestions about what to include. To apply for one, email Kirsten Wurman at prison.library@mla.mb.ca.
- Elizabeth Fry Manitoba is seeking donations of clothing, bedding, kitchen and bathroom supplies. Call 204-589-7335 ext 222 to arrange a drop off time.
- Sex Workers of Winnipeg Action Coalition has organized a COVID-19 Relief Fund for Winnipeg sex workers. To apply for funds or donate, go to <https://ca.gofundme.com/f/swvac-covid19-relief-fund>.
- Mutual Aid Society Winnipeg is a Facebook group where people can ask for and provide a wide range of things to each other, including meals, clothing, furniture, air conditioners, masks, and info about where to get things.
- Caring Queerly is a Winnipeg Facebook group similar to Mutual Aid Society Winnipeg but specific to the queer community.

Get Involved

Bar None is entirely volunteers. All who dream of a world without prisons are welcome. Many of us have or had loved ones in prison. We encourage current and former prisoners and their loved ones to join us.

In person visiting at Manitoba prisons is currently suspended indefinitely due to covid-19 so we are not operating the rideshare right now, but we are still organizing against prisons in Manitoba!

- If you would like to get involved with Bar None as an organizer, or would like to be a driver once the rideshare starts up again please contact us at 204 599 8869 or barnone.wpg@gmail.com.
- For the latest updates on the status of the rideshare and other Bar None info please check out barnoneblog.wordpress.com, Prison Visiting Rideshare - Manitoba on Facebook, or [@barnonewpg](https://twitter.com/barnonewpg) on Twitter.
- Do you know someone currently in prison who may be interested in submitting short (200 words or less) writing (poetry, essays, etc.) or drawings for publication in the Bar None newsletter? We would love to hear from them! Please pass along our mailing address: Bar None c/o 231 Isabel Street, Winnipeg, MB, R3A 1H2, to submit pieces for consideration.