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Abstract: *Despite Canada's international reputation as a world leader in women's rights, its own policies and practices continue to target and discriminate against Indigenous women, particularly those who are entangled within the criminal (in)justice and child welfare systems (Monchalin 2016). This article synthesizes international research, with a primary focus on Canada, in order to theorize issues surrounding Indigenous women's experiences of carceral motherhood. By drawing on critical feminist criminological and Indigenous feminist perspectives, I examine issues related to caretaking and incarceration, mothering from prison (visitations), mothering in prison (mother-child programs), and mothering after prison (parole). Despite rejecting the prison as a solution to "the crime problem," I conclude by offering tentative recommendations on how to ameliorate Indigenous women's experiences of carceral motherhood.*

Despite Canada's international reputation as a world leader in women's rights, its own policies and practices continue to discriminate against women, particularly Indigenous women who are caught up in the criminal (in)justice system (McGill 2008). In this article, I bring together secondary research sources in order to contribute to a greater understanding of Indigenous women's experiences of carceral motherhood¹ in the Canadian context (where possible) and also internationally (where Canadian sources were not identified). Specifically, I discuss carceral motherhood from the beginnings of incarceration to after incarceration by exploring issues related to caretaking and incarceration (finding alternate caregivers), mothering *from* prison (to children outside prison), mothering *in* prison (to children inside prison), and mothering *after* prison (parole). There is some Canadian research that discusses these points of time individually in relation to Indigenous carceral motherhood, such as that conducted by Eljdupovic, Mitchell, Curtis, Jaremko Bromwich, Granger-Brown, Arseneau, and Fry (2013), who examine effects of imprisonment (but not post-imprisonment), as well some studies that examine carceral motherhood without an explicit emphasis on *Indigenous* motherhood (Scobie and Gazso 2013; Walsh and Crough 2013). However, I have yet to come across any published research that focuses on Indigenous experiences of carceral motherhood from beginning to end of a prison sentence in the Canadian context. My work attempts to fill this void by gathering and theorizing the research that exists on this topic. The theoretical frameworks that I draw from are Indigenous feminisms and critical feminist criminology that, together, emphasize and critique the interlocking relationships among colonialism, patriarchy, neoliberalism, and the state. Indigenous feminisms attempt to correct the disjuncture

¹ I conceptualize 'carceral motherhood' as the practice of mothering under a sentence of incarceration.

between traditional feminism and Indigenous theories by offering specificity to the lives of Indigenous women—for instance, by analyzing the effects of colonial patriarchy (Anderson 2010)—whereas critical feminist criminology is useful for analyzing marginalized groups' increasing criminalization as it incorporates penal contexts (Doyle and Moore 2011).

While I briefly review select literature that details the experiences of Indigenous children with incarcerated mothers in order to show and comment on the linkages between Canada's dual systems of colonial control—the prison and child welfare systems—I focus primarily on the prison and experiences of Indigenous mothers. As I will show and argue, together, the interlocking child welfare and prison systems constitute and reinforce colonial and patriarchal beliefs, stereotypes, and practices that actively function to dispossess Indigenous mothers of their children (and Indigenous children of their mothers), cultures, and abilities to reproduce healthy and vibrant Indigenous communities. This occurs via their confinement, assimilation, and/or elimination within these interconnected systems. My work contributes to existing scholarship in several ways. First, I amalgamate Canadian (as well as some international) research regarding (Indigenous) experiences of carceral motherhood in order to paint a more complex picture of what these experiences entail. I do this by examining literature pertaining to different times within a prison sentence (including immediately prior to and/or the outset of incarceration, during incarceration, and after incarceration), thereby topically expanding the current research. Second, I theorize about the effects of carceral motherhood on Indigenous families by drawing on Indigenous feminisms and critical feminist criminological perspectives. By doing this, I theoretically extend previously conducted research that only addressed certain time periods of a prison sentence and/or did not focus exclusively on Indigenous experiences. Finally, I put forward recommendations in hopes of ameliorating the current circumstances of those who are experiencing (Indigenous) carceral motherhood.

At this point, I wish to make several things clear. First, I am not Indigenous; rather, I am speaking from the position of a 13th-generation Canadian whose ancestors have occupied this land for 400 years. Thus, while I draw on Indigenous feminisms for my analyses, my perspectives are inevitably limited by my standpoint as a non-Indigenous person. Second, I do not believe that the prison system is a viable solution to “the crime problem,” nor do I believe its abolition will occur any time soon. Therefore, while I provide tentative recommendations for how to best ameliorate Indigenous women's experiences of carceral motherhood in Canada, ideally, I believe the prison system should be abolished. Moreover, I respect the dangers of reform that Dobchuk-Land (2017) and others have put forward—that is, how seemingly progressive criminal (in)justice reforms are often intended to manage rather than to serve Indigenous interests. This is because they tend to be based on colonial perceptions of Indigenous peoples as helpless and in need of outside interventions that typically entail expanding Canadian state control rather than Indigenous self-governance (Dobchuk-Land 2017). Yet I still feel that it is necessary to put forward recommendations in order to help ameliorate the experiences of Indigenous families who are currently experiencing negative effects of carceral motherhood. Following these cautions, then, at the end of this article I make some recommendations that reject the colonial and criminalizing logics that underlie

Canada's criminal (in)justice system, instead highlighting how they are violent and unjust toward Indigenous peoples. While I do not believe that my recommendations are the only ways forward, I hope that they will open up a space for discussion about possibilities for a more just and decolonized society. To begin, I briefly outline the interconnections among stereotypes, residential schools, and the prison and child welfare systems in order to provide the relevant contexts for the remainder of this article.

A (Very) Brief Commentary on Canada's Colonial Relations: Drawing Connections Among Stereotypes, Residential Schools, and the Prison and Child Welfare Systems

Canada has a long and ugly history of colonization that continues today, albeit in different forms from those of the past. Regardless of whether colonial tactics are obvious or more discreet, in order for the colonial project to succeed, assimilation and/or genocide of Indigenous peoples is paramount. Historically, one of the primary ways in which this occurred was within the residential school system, where Indigenous children were forcibly confined after being removed from their family homes and communities (Monchalin 2016; Nichols 2014). While all of these children experienced cultural deprivation, many also experienced extreme forms of abuse, while others even died within these schools (Monchalin 2016). Those who were able to return home were noticeably different physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually to such an extent that they often had trouble reconnecting with their families (Jobin 2016; Monchalin 2016). The teachings at the residential schools—for example, that Indigenous peoples are “dirty” and “sinful savages”—created a disconnect between Indigenous children and their families that instilled a deep sense of loss, confusion, and trauma in relation to Indigenous children's cultural identities and familial belonging (Jobin 2016; Monchalin 2016).

Today, these teachings continue to have dramatic effects on Indigenous peoples as they inform not only how some Indigenous peoples see themselves, but also how many non-Indigenous people perceive them. This is especially true for Indigenous women. For example, many gendered and racialized stereotypes portray Indigenous women as innately immoral, violent, dangerous, and uncontrollable (Landertinger 2015). Furthermore, media often (re)present Indigenous and criminalized women as violating every quality of a “good mother,” instead collectively portraying them as the archetype of an “unfit mother” (neglectful, incompetent, and sometimes outright abusive) (Landertinger 2015; Scobie and Gazso 2013; Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol 2015). Substance (ab)use, particularly when it involves alcohol, is another prominent feature within the discourse around unfit mothers (Kilty and Dej 2012) and is exemplified by slurs that refer to Indigenous mothers as “pregnant drunks” (Landertinger 2015, 66) who are believed to be so inherently selfish that they put their own desires for drugs and alcohol above the needs of their children (Baldry 2009; Landertinger 2015; Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol 2015). Such stereotypes, at play in popular Canadian culture, often function to suppress Indigenous identities, thus contributing to assimilation and cultural genocide. As a result of wanting to avoid these stereotypes, Indigenous women may be less likely to (openly) identify as Indigenous, which ultimately furthers the goal of the colonial project (Jobin 2016).

Although residential schools have finally closed, colonial and racist stereotypes continue to abound, and contribute to the hyper-representation of Indigenous peoples within the child welfare system (Brown and Bloom 2009; Landertinger 2015; Nichols 2014). This system confines Indigenous children at an estimated rate three times higher than residential schools ever did (Landertinger 2015). The child welfare system is exemplary of the intersections of colonialism, patriarchy, and neoliberalism in that it obscures and ceases to examine sociopolitical conditions that disproportionately affect Indigenous women and their families by placing blame squarely on Indigenous mothers for the social inequalities that affect their lives. For example, Indigenous women are disproportionately affected by poverty, which directly relates to other colonial, patriarchal, and neoliberal effects such as low educational attainment as well as un- and underemployment—thereby increasing their likelihood of becoming involved with the child welfare system. This is despite the fact that Indigenous mothers are often convicted of crimes of poverty, such as theft, the resources of which contribute to the overall (financial) well-being of their families (Brown and Bloom 2009; Monchalin 2016), which ironically points to these women's ability, rather than inability, to care for their children. The fact that poverty is essentially criminalized is indicative of the state's decentring of its responsibility for the social welfare of people, accompanied by its emphasis on self-regulation and self-reform, which unfairly holds individuals responsible for historical as well as contemporary social injustices that influence their present situations (Brown and Bloom 2009; Comack 2018).

In addition to the child welfare system, the oppression of Indigenous peoples can also be traced throughout the criminal (in)justice system. Just as Indigenous children disproportionately enter the child welfare system, Indigenous women are similarly hyper-represented in the prison system (Brown and Bloom 2009). In this way, these colonial systems function in tandem by targeting and forcibly separating Indigenous families in a manner that inhibits their social (in terms of cultural knowledge and ways of knowing) and biological reproductive capabilities. As such, the prison can be described as an institution that intends to assimilate Indigenous peoples, particularly Indigenous women, into Canadian culture. This is partially demonstrated by the fact that Indigenous women represent the fastest-growing prison population in Canada and around the world (Monchalin 2016; Nichols 2014). Not only are rates of incarceration for Indigenous women disproportionately high, but Indigenous women are also subject to the most extreme and punitive forms of incarceration in Canada (such as "high-risk" classifications, maximum security placements, and solitary confinement) (Comack 2014; Eljdupovic et al. 2013; Nichols 2014). Moreover, the majority of (Indigenous) women in Canada's penal system are mothers (Landertinger 2015), many of whom are the sole caregivers of their children (Eljdupovic et al. 2013). Therefore, when (Indigenous) mothers enter the prison system, children are left without their mothers and are most often removed from the family home (Landertinger 2015), which ultimately furthers the colonial project's goal of assimilation via children's dispossession of their mothers and cultures (via their placement within non-Indigenous homes) as well as mothers' dispossession of their children, Indigenous cultures,

and communities (via their confinement in non-Indigenous-designed and -operated prisons). In these ways, the hyper-incarceration and extreme punishment of Indigenous women within Canada's penal system, alongside the hyper-representation of Indigenous children within Canada's child welfare system, are clearly effects of the intersections among colonialism, patriarchy, and neoliberalism.

Here too, gendered and racialized stereotypes play a role in the widening, controlling, and punitive nets of the criminal (in)justice system, particularly within the scope of the prison. For instance, there are two particularly harmful stereotypes about incarcerated (Indigenous) mothers—that they are “bad women” and “bad mothers” (because “good women” and “good mothers” do not break the law) (Landertinger 2015; Scobie and Gazso 2013; Walsh and Crough 2013). These stereotypes have tangible effects on the classification and management of incarcerated Indigenous women whereby their needs are conflated with risks (Hannah-Moffat 2001). This perspective helps to explain the staggering 50 percent of women in Canada's maximum-security prisons who are Indigenous, despite the fact that Indigenous women represent only four percent of the general Canadian population (Comack 2014). It also helps to explain why Indigenous women are disproportionately classified as high risk over minor infractions such as non-compliance. An example of this behaviour is refusing to undress in front of male correctional officers, which is often perceived by correctional staff as unruly, yet represents Indigenous women's attempts to resist further victimization that so commonly characterizes their lives (Hannah-Moffat 2001; Landertinger 2015; Monchalin 2016).

Importantly, these stereotypes do not work mutually exclusively in terms of their effects; rather, they work in tandem by justifying and necessitating state management of Indigenous women and their children (Brown and Bloom 2009; Haney 2013; Landertinger 2015; Roberts 2014). This is most likely to occur when stereotypes of Indigenous women as threatening, unruly, and violent intertwine with the perception that Indigenous women are bad and drunk mothers who are believed to be dysfunctional and irresponsible to the extent that they are imagined to pose significant threats to their children (Brown and Bloom 2009; Landertinger 2015; Roberts 2014). For example, even when Indigenous mothers are not abusive to their children, they are constructed as equally accountable as those who are because they are perceived as failing to protect their children (Landertinger 2015). These stereotypical ways of thinking about Indigenous peoples demonstrate the connections between residential schools and two other major colonial state institutions, the prison and the child welfare systems, which all call for the hyper-surveillance, management, and punishment of Indigenous peoples and their families (Brown and Bloom 2009; Landertinger 2015; Roberts 2012; 2014). Not only are such stereotypes and systematic practices informed by racism, colonialism, sexism, patriarchy, and neoliberalism, but they are also so deeply ingrained in Canadian (popular) culture that they function to feed and uphold such logics by diverting attention from state responsibility and placing it back on the individual people who are disproportionately affected by such injustices (Brown and Bloom 2009; Landertinger 2015; Roberts 2014).

The bottom line is that colonialism, patriarchy, and neoliberalism underscore the perpetuation and applicability of these stereotypes that then infiltrate and taint many (if not all) aspects and practices of state institutions. This not only includes Canada's previous residential school system, but also more contemporary institutions such as the child welfare and prison systems that I and others have argued are Canada's new residential schools (Eljdupovic et al. 2013; Struthers-Montford and Moore 2018). Eljdupovic et al. (2013) make a compelling argument in this regard:

Growing up separated from one's parents, without the support of one's cultural community renders Aboriginal children vulnerable in the same manner as their parents were at their age [when they were forced into residential schools]. This creates conditions for the intergenerational transmission of cycles of poverty and violence, with a higher likelihood of related criminality and imprisonment . . . [in that the] number of Aboriginal women who are incarcerated contributes to the number of children in care and the number of Aboriginal children who in turn find themselves in prison. (46)

Here, Eljdupovic et al. (2013) demonstrate the deep cyclical connections among the residential school, prison, and child welfare systems and argue that the hyper-representation of both Indigenous women in the prison system and Indigenous children in the child welfare system is "a largely unrecognized if unintended extension of the failed assimilation project with predictable outcomes for Aboriginal communities and Canada" (55), such as increased likelihood of criminalization and imprisonment. Such interconnections have also been identified in the United States. For instance, Brown and Bloom (2009) argue that "both penal systems and child welfare systems converge to create an ever-expanding carceral population made up of poor [Indigenous] families whose lives are subject to these dual state controls" (152). In other words, these systems have revolving doors that disproportionately affect Indigenous women and their children because they punish the effects of colonialism, patriarchy, and neoliberalism—including poverty, alcohol and drug (ab)use, and low educational attainment—that ironically increase the likelihood of continual contact with both systems in the first place (Brown and Bloom 2009; Landertinger 2015; Monchalin 2016; Roberts 2012; 2014). Together, racialized and gendered stereotypes are used to justify tactics of surveillance, control, and punishment within the interlocking state systems of child welfare and prison, as well as criminally targeting Indigenous women (and their mothering practices), which effectively necessitates the removal of Indigenous children from what are perceived as their unfit mothers and family homes (Brown and Bloom 2009; Cunneen 2007; Landertinger 2015; Roberts 2014).

Beginnings of Incarceration: Indigenous Families and Child Care

A mother's incarceration has many negative consequences. Effects on children include an increased likelihood of living in poverty, poor school performance, dropping out of school, and becoming involved in the criminal (in)justice system (Haney 2013; Schubert

et al. 2011). Mothers' incarceration also catalyzes a substantial number of emotional and behavioural issues in children, such as low self-esteem and poor concentration, that are further compounded by issues of environmental instability, such as repeatedly changing schools and/or foster homes (Brennan 2014; Haney 2013; Newman et al. 2011; Schubert et al. 2016; Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol 2015). In these ways, incarcerating mothers not only forcibly restructures and remakes Indigenous families and relationships (Brennan 2014; Brown and Bloom 2009; Haney 2013; Seabrook & Wyatt-Nichol 2015), but also functions as a pathway for their children into Canada's revolving-door criminal (in)justice system (Eljdupovic et al. 2013).

In terms of incarceration's effects on (Indigenous) mothers, these women not only have to find ways to cope with their (newfound) identity as "criminal," but also their identity as a bad mother (Scobie and Gazso 2013; Walsh and Crough 2013). These shifts in identity tend to create "disconnected mothers" who do not feel that they live up to societal expectations of mothering and, as a response, some may suspend their mothering identities altogether (Scobie and Gazso 2013, 152). Also characterizing these shifts are feelings of self-doubt and guilt in relation to how they believe their imprisonment is affecting their children (Walsh and Crough 2013). These feelings are exacerbated by the fact that often, in the Canadian context, it takes up to ten weeks before incarcerated mothers are able to re-establish contact with their children (Walsh and Crough 2013).

Another immediate impact of incarceration on mothers is that they are forced to identify a suitable alternate caregiver for their child(ren). If this is not possible, their children automatically become wards of the state. This task is often profoundly difficult for Indigenous mothers because they are more likely than non-Indigenous mothers to be single parents, be unable to rely on their children's fathers for childcare or financial support, and have strained relationships with their own families (Baldry 2009; Landertinger 2015; Walsh and Crough 2013). These circumstances contribute to feelings of isolation when mothers are unable to acquire parenting support.

Despite these findings, the majority of incarcerated Indigenous mothers turn to the support of their female family members as temporary caregivers for their child(ren) (Baldry 2009; Brennan 2014; Haney 2013; Newman et al. 2011; Schubert et al. 2016). Thus, like practically all unpaid care work, the care work that sustains mass incarceration is feminized, and places increased pressures on Indigenous women and their families, who may already be living in poverty, stretched beyond their means, and experiencing a host of other social disadvantages (Baldry 2009; Brown and Bloom 2009; Haney 2013; Roberts 2012; 2014; Schubert et al. 2016). Moreover, these circumstances may lead to greater involvement in the child welfare system, which is characterized as a common presence in many Indigenous mothers' lives (Landertinger 2015). This is because Indigenous mothers represent child welfare authorities' most commonly targeted group (Landertinger 2015). Indeed, similar to Indigenous women in prison, Indigenous children are not only hyper-represented in the child welfare system but are also its fastest-growing population (Baldry 2009; Landertinger 2015). Moreover, once child welfare workers enter their home, Indigenous children are

more likely to be removed, placed in permanent (rather than temporary) care, and stay in the system longer (Baldry 2009; Brown and Bloom 2009; Landertinger 2015). These likelihoods are indicative of the intersectional workings of colonialism and patriarchy within Canada's child welfare system. That is, the stereotypes that Indigenous women are incapable of caring for children "properly" often leads to Indigenous children's placement in white family homes where they are stripped of their cultures, and instead taught Canadian ways of living because that is perceived as in their best interest (Landertinger 2015).

However, the removal of Indigenous children from Indigenous caretakers has profoundly negative effects on children's sense of cultural identity. Jobin (2016), inspired by the work of Du Bois (1903), describes these effects as stemming from double consciousness, which occurs when someone struggles with two oppositional identities (the Indigenous self and the colonized self), and the colonized self sees the Indigenous self through "eyes of white disapproval" (49). This is particularly harmful to children because they tend to be more impressionable than adults; they thus begin evaluating themselves against dominant Euro-Canadian standards from which they are incapable of receiving full approval because they are not white (Jobin 2016). This tends to create feelings of worthlessness as well as social distance between Indigenous children and their communities due to increasingly internalized beliefs that Indigenous peoples are inferior (Cunneen 2007; Jobin 2016). Thus, the child welfare system has the effect of assimilating Indigenous children by first removing them from Indigenous adult role models and then suggesting (or explicitly telling them) that their mothers and families are bad. These practices and effects are reminiscent of Canada's residential school system. Ultimately then, both the prison and child welfare systems constitute genocidal practices in which the mother-child bond is forcibly threatened, and in many cases broken and irreparably damaged—the result being that Indigenous families are less likely to live without the continual intrusion of coercive state systems that attempt to control and assimilate them (Brown and Bloom 2009; Landertinger 2015; Roberts 2014).

Mothering from Prison

Many incarcerated mothers emphasize the importance of maintaining the mother-child bond while they are incarcerated (Baldry 2009). Unfortunately, very few Indigenous families are afforded opportunities to maintain this bond and are negatively affected by separation (Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol 2015). For instance, mothers indicate that they lose their sense of purpose when they are forcibly separated from their children (Schubert et al. 2016), while children tend to experience effects related to behavioural, emotional, and environmental factors. Examples of these are poor school performance, aggression, and participating in high-risk activities (including crime); feelings of anger, shame, sadness, confusion, and guilt; and experiences of unstable living arrangements (changing caregivers and schools, for instance, and thus being separated from siblings and other family members) (Brennan 2014; Haney 2013; Newman et al. 2011; Schubert et al. 2016; Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol 2015). These effects are often exacerbated for Indigenous families because their separation may be reminiscent of their experiences in the residen-

tial school system (Struthers-Montford and Moore 2018), thus amplifying intergenerational trauma. These additional and compounded negative effects tend to create conditions in which children of incarcerated Indigenous mothers are more likely than their non-Indigenous counterparts to enter the criminal (in)justice system (Eljdupovic et al. 2013). The same is true for children of incarcerated Indigenous mothers relative to those whose Indigenous mothers are not incarcerated (Eljdupovic et al. 2013). These points are demonstrative of the cyclical and intersectional relationship among colonialism, patriarchy, and the criminal (in)justice system in Canada.

In order to reduce the negative effects of parental incarceration on children,² some prisons have introduced familial visitation programs. For example, Newman et al. (2011) reviewed evaluations of parenting programs for incarcerated mothers and fathers³ in Australia and found that the negative effects of parental incarceration on children's futures could be reduced by their participation in such programs. For instance, these programs showed potential in helping to prevent intergenerational incarceration and in improving children's health outcomes. Newman et al. (2011) also demonstrated the parental benefits of these classes: they helped improve parenting skills, knowledge, and confidence. The programs accomplished this in several ways, such as through the promotion and facilitation of increased contact between children and incarcerated mothers; by offering emotional, social, and financial support and assistance to incarcerated mothers; and by helping mothers ease back into their parental roles upon release. Maintaining family and community ties during parents' incarceration was also correlated with reduced recidivism rates (Newman et al. 2011). Thus, these programs may hold particular importance for Indigenous mothers, who are more likely than non-Indigenous mothers to be classified as high-risk and confined in maximum security and/or segregation units—conditions that do not permit visitations (Comack 2014; Brennan 2014).

Similar to Newman et al. (2011), Schubert et al. (2016) found benefits when examining increased visitation for incarcerated mothers and their children in one prison in the United States. Participants primarily described themselves as Caucasian (n=18), some as African American (n=3), some as Native American (n=2), and one as multiracial (n=1). In their study, Schubert et al. (2016) looked at the benefits and barriers to extended visitation (EV) in comparison to typical visitation (TV). EVs were offered to a select

2 Importantly, the Correctional Service of Canada emphasizes only what it perceives as in the best interests of the child, and only considers program benefits for mothers in terms of reduced recidivism rates (Correctional Service of Canada C). This demonstrates a lack of consideration on the part of prison administrators for incarcerated women's role as mothers, instead presenting them solely as criminal subjects in need of correcting.

3 The demographics of those who attended these parenting programs were not disclosed; however, the authors indicated that for some of the programs, Indigenous consultations occurred, and that approximately 20 percent of all Indigenous young people under the age of 16 (compared to approximately four percent of non-Indigenous children) in New South Wales, Australia have experienced parental incarceration at some point in their lives (Newman et al. 2011). Based on this information, Indigenous parents may participate in such programs.

group of incarcerated mothers who were able to enjoy longer access (approximately four hours) to their children (infant to 17 years) within a highly structured child-friendly environment without the children's alternate primary caregiver. By contrast, TVs were much shorter (approximately one hour) and occurred in an unstructured visitation room *with* the child's alternate primary caregiver. In order to participate in EVs, mothers had to demonstrate exemplary behaviour throughout their incarceration and reside in a living unit that has a specific parenting focus (Schubert et al. 2016).

EV adult participants identified many benefits relative to TVs. For instance, mothers saw EVs as an opportunity to build and maintain relationships with their children (which is especially important for those with infants who, without the program, would not know one another in any meaningful way); have natural physical contact with their children (holding hands, prolonged hugs, sitting on their laps, and giving kisses – all of which are not permitted during TVs); have increased privacy away from alternate primary caregivers and corrections staff (since EVs occurred in the “children's room” rather than the regular visitation room, mothers and children were able to converse about things that may be uncomfortable to discuss in the presence of others); experience increased support for themselves and their children (via the presence of other participating mothers and children); as well as experience personal motivation and growth (mothers felt, for example, that EVs enabled them to become better people, that they were able to exert more control over their behaviours, and that they were increasingly able to practice forgiveness, patience, and confidence in their parenting skills) (Schubert et al. 2016). Despite participant-identified benefits in both Newman et al.'s (2011) and Schubert et al.'s (2016) works, I believe that, for the most part, it is not the individual women who require the most change, but rather the criminal (in)justice system. That is, instead of relying on the logics of retribution and punishment, criminal (in)justice actors should lead with understanding, care, and compassion.

Prison parenting programs such as EV are not without their drawbacks. For instance, Schubert et al. (2016) found that mothers participating in EVs wanted longer visits, more unstructured time to “just talk” and hang out (especially with adolescent children), more age-appropriate activities for children (especially the youngest and oldest ones), overnight visits (to facilitate a more “natural” relationship), and private one-on-one time (which was not permitted). Furthermore, Newman et al. (2011) identified barriers in relation to access and security issues (such as the movement of prisoners within the prison and disciplinary acts); prison culture and population (such as lack of understanding or encouragement from prison staff and pressure from other prisoners to avoid the program); as well as issues with data collection for program evaluation⁴ (which commonly involved things like prisoner release or transfer prior to program completion and difficulty collecting follow-up data).

Unfortunately, despite the potential of parenting programs identified above, not enough of these programs currently exist, and the conditions under which they exist are not conducive to Indigenous women's participation. This is because high-risk classification, placement in maximum security settings, and extreme forms of punishment such as

⁴ Collecting program data is crucial for a program's continuity and amelioration (Newman et al. 2011).

segregation make participation in such programs difficult if not altogether impossible (Comack 2014). When their high-security classifications are combined with perceptions that Indigenous women are dangerous and bad mothers, prison staff may be more likely to believe that Indigenous women do not deserve contact with their children at all. Moreover, because Indigenous women tend to have lower rates of educational success (and thus lower literacy levels) (Monchalin 2016), those who are not classified as high-risk may still disproportionately encounter issues when it comes to learning about such programs via posters and pamphlets because they have trouble reading and/or understanding the information presented to them (Newman et al. 2011).

In fact, Indigenous mothers rarely (if ever) actually see their children while they are incarcerated (Baldry 2009; Bloom and Brown 2011). The rarity of visitations can also partially be accounted for by the institutional setting itself. For instance, due to the relatively small numbers of women's prisons, women are often imprisoned far away from their families, and such geographic dislocation makes travelling to the prison not only time-consuming but financially prohibitive for many children and their alternate caregivers (Baldry 2009; Haney 2013). Moreover, some mothers do not want their children to visit at all because they do not want their children to see them within the prison setting, nor do they want their children to experience the prison's dehumanizing conditions and security practices (Baldry 2009; Brennan 2014; Landertinger 2015; Schubert et al. 2016). Furthermore, prisons often have policies and procedures that actively direct staff to discourage visits, which suggests that the prison administration believe visits are traumatic for children (Schubert et al. 2016; Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol 2015).

Another factor that affects visitation is the feelings of the children who have incarcerated mothers. For instance, some children do not want to visit their mothers in prison and/or respond to their mothers' letters (Bloom and Brown 2011; Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol 2015). For children who visit their mothers, their feelings and behaviours vary. Some children cry and do not want to leave their mothers at the end of visits, while others are angry at their mothers for not being in their everyday lives (Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol 2015). The role of alternate caregivers also plays a pivotal role in visitations. There are some who do not permit children to visit and/or write their mothers (Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol 2015). In some cases, this goes as far as withholding mothers' letters from their children (Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol 2015). The fact that some caregivers think and behave in these ways is likely related to the increase in behavioural issues that children often experience right before and after visitation (Schubert et al. 2016).⁵

For all these reasons, the frequency of visits ranges quite substantially—from weekly to monthly visits, to none at all (Schubert et al. 2016; Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol 2015). However, the vast majority of contact that incarcerated mothers have with their children is through phone calls and letters (Bloom and Brown 2011; Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol

5 It is important to note that despite the (sometimes) ambivalent relationship between alternate primary caregivers and biological mothers, caregivers play a pivotal role in ensuring visitation and transportation arrangements of children to and from visits (Schubert et al. 2016).

2015). Despite all the obstacles, incarcerated Indigenous mothers stress the importance of (re)uniting with their children and families, and that communication and visitation are invaluable to them throughout their incarceration as they enable mothers to strengthen the bond with their children and help prepare them for parenting upon release (Schubert et al. 2016; Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol 2015).

Mothering in Prison

Another way in which some prison administrators try to curb the negative effects of mothers' incarceration on their children is through the implementation of a Mother-Child Program (MCP). The MCP is contentious, with critics arguing that children should not be raised in prisons, while others contend that the program is necessary because it is unfair to separate children from their mothers (Brennan 2014). In Canada, the MCP has been implemented since 1996 (Correctional Service of Canada, C). The stated goal of the program is to "facilitate, maintain and develop the mother-child bond" (Correctional Service of Canada C) by providing "a supportive environment that fosters and promotes stability and continuity for the mother-child relationship" (Correctional Service of Canada B). In Canada's federal women's prisons, there are two versions of the program. The full-time program is for babies and children aged four and under who are able to live with their mothers in prison for the duration of the program as long as certain conditions are met; these include, for example, the mother being on her "best behaviour" (Brennan 2014). By contrast, the part-time program is for children aged five and six (but was formerly available for children aged five to twelve). Child participants in this version of the program are able to have prolonged visits with their mothers on weekends and/or holidays (Brennan 2014). The full-time program is the more popular of the two; the part-time program is rarely used (Brennan 2014). Indeed, the usage of the MCP is in constant flux, and has declined in recent years, with the average rate of participation at only 2.9 mothers per month at any given time across the country (Brennan 2014). Moreover, according to the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC), many prisons do not have any MCP participants at all (Correctional Service of Canada B). Problematically, data on Canada's MCP is very sparse. Without this data, it is impossible to determine how many women and children have participated in the program. It is also impossible to verify whether there has been an increase or decrease in participation at any given institution and, if so, to what factors they are attributed. For example, we do not know whether a participant is new or returning, whether a mother has completed her sentence (and thus is no longer in the prison to participate), whether a mother is no longer eligible (because she no longer meets program requirements), or whether the institution is no longer able to accommodate children (due to changing security classifications or prisoner populations) (Brennan 2014).

Given that the MCP is relatively new in Canada's penal history, it tends to be perceived as progressive, and it is thus often assumed and argued that its contributions to the effects of carceral motherhood are exclusively positive. For example, one of the program's perceived benefits, as stated by CSC, is that the MCP "enables the acquisition of parenting skills" (Correctional Service of Canada A). Another point that CSC makes about the MCP, in

line with current research, is that when mothers are incarcerated, their romantic partners rarely remain active parts of their lives, nor do they remain caregivers to their children. This is in stark contrast to the experiences of incarcerated fathers, whose romantic (female) partners often care for their children throughout the fathers' incarceration (Blanchard 2002). In this way, the MCP has the potential to keep (select) family members together during periods of incarceration. The MCP thus presents an opportunity to decrease the number of children going into permanent or temporary state care. Moreover, the MCP shows promise in reducing the likelihood of mother participants' recidivism as well as child participants' future involvement in the prison system (Brennan 2014). For these reasons, Brennan (2014) argues that Canada's MCP shows promise.

Similar to the mothers in Newman et al.'s (2011) study in Australia, Canadian MCP participants cited the institutional environment as the primary inhibitor of participation (Brennan 2014). There are three main reasons for this. The first reason is institutional crowding, meaning there is not enough room to accommodate prisoners as well as their children. The second reason is the presence of women who are characterized as requiring maximum security settings and CSC's belief that these women make the environment too risky for children. Finally, MCP participants often perceive that prison administration prioritizes punishment over healing and rehabilitation, which, to participants, illustrates that the MCP and familial connections are not priorities.

Moreover, participants noted that the MCP's eligibility criteria changed in 2008. The change was characterized as a backlash response to the prison's reception of one particular prisoner—a pregnant Indigenous woman, Lisa Whitford, who was convicted of killing her abusive partner and was sentenced to four years' imprisonment (Brennan 2014; Stone 2012). Lisa gave birth to her daughter in provincial custody in 2007 and was allowed to keep her baby while she was awaiting trial (Stone 2012). Once she was convicted, she successfully fought to bring her baby with her to Fraser Valley Institution (Stone 2012). Whitford's case drew a lot of media attention that led to a public outcry about certain women being able to keep their babies and/or children with them in prison (Stone 2012).

In response to this negative reaction, the MCP eligibility criteria changed in manners that affect both current and future participants in several ways. First was the exclusion of those who have been convicted of serious crimes—for instance, those that involve violence, children, and/or are sexual in nature—which means many women are immediately ineligible to participate (Brennan 2014). This change also indirectly excludes many potential participants, because if a mother is housed with a woman who committed a serious crime, the mother's child(ren) cannot be placed in that same unit (Brennan 2014). This means that, due to overcrowding and women being housed together, one woman's charges can preclude another woman from participating. Second, the number of potentially eligible children was limited by reducing the age of eligibility from twelve to six years old for the part-time MCP (Brennan 2014). Again, this dramatically reduces the number of families that are eligible for the program. Third, a requirement was introduced for the support of local child and family services, meaning that mothers who were previously involved with these services

are at a disadvantage because of the likelihood of the inclusion of stereotypical biases about (what are perceived of as) inadequate parenting practices in their files. Finally, the MCP program has re-evaluated the participation of mothers who refuse to allow their child(ren) to be searched before entering the prison (Brennan 2014), which essentially forces mothers to permit this practice if they want to participate.

Not only did the public have difficulty with the idea of the MCP, but some prison staff also took issue with it. For instance, some staff claimed that children were being used to smuggle in drugs (Stone 2012). Others stated that the program “complicates their jobs,” thereby, in their minds, the MCP makes prisons unsafe (Stone 2012). Some prison staff have also claimed that because some prisoners have abused children, the MCP enables the exposure of child-participants to abusers and is thus unsafe (Stone 2012; Canadian Press 2014). Yet MCP participants tell a different story. For instance, one mother-participant, Amanda Edgar, who gave birth to her daughter while incarcerated at Fraser Valley Institution, spoke about how she never felt that her baby was in danger within the prison (Canadian Press 2014). Amanda stated that there were seldom any fights in the prison, that drugs were not around her or her baby (Stone 2012), and that she actually received help caring for her baby from both fellow prisoners and staff (Canadian Press 2014).

Overall, since changes were implemented to the MCP between 2008 and 2014, only 14 children have participated in the MCP at the federal level (Canadian Press 2014). Indeed, Howard Sapers, an ombudsperson, estimates that these changes have led to a 60 percent drop in MCP participation (Stone 2012). This is not surprising given the growing number of Indigenous women who are sentenced to prison for violent offenses (Comack 2014) and who are thus likely to be classified as high-risk and/or placed in maximum security (Nichols 2014), rendering many Indigenous mothers ineligible to participate in the MCP. Thus, while the number of female prisoners continues to increase dramatically, participation in the MCP has decreased significantly (Correctional Service of Canada B; Brennan 2014; Comack 2018). As such, while prison parenting programs are commonly represented as progressive and well-intentioned (Haney 2013), their general lack of use and the paucity of eligible (Indigenous) participants, especially in the Canadian context, are concerning, especially in light of the high number of incarcerated Indigenous mothers who are the sole caregivers for their children and who, without participation in the MCP, are likely lose their children to (permanent) state care, thus contributing to the goals of colonialism by forcibly separating and reconstituting Indigenous families via the interlocking prison and child welfare systems (Landertinger 2015; Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol 2015).

Moreover, even when mothers are able to access parenting programs in prison, Haney (2013) argues that motherhood, power, and punishment are often conflated. This is because such programs tend to be characterized by multiple logics (such as security, punishment, and care) that reflect dominant heteronormative ideals and stereotypes about gender, race, and class. This is reflected in the idea of “intensive mothering,” which is characterized by assumptions that children can only be properly cared for by their biological mothers; mothers must always put their children’s needs before their own; care

must be provided 24/7; and mothers are satisfied, fulfilled, and composed by parenting (Scobie and Gazso 2013; Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol 2015). Such idealizations are readily reinforced within the prison setting by, for example, the presentation of fixed ideas to prison officials about how women should feel about motherhood and which mothers should be more heavily surveilled and targeted for reprimand and/or reform as a consequence for not living up to these ideals (Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol 2015). Here, race and culture are often implicated and enable easy identification of which mothers require additional policing (Bloom and Brown 2011; Haney 2013).

Indeed, the punishment of Indigenous and other racialized mothers is seemingly justified by colonial, patriarchal, and neoliberal stereotypes, including bad mother narratives in which these mothers tend to be perceived as selfish (putting their needs above those of their children), careless (not participating in intensive mothering), tired, angry, and ambivalent (Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol 2015). Moreover, good mothers are characterized as what bad mothers are not—white, heterosexual, nurturing, physically affectionate, and selfless; thus it is virtually impossible for incarcerated Indigenous women to be perceived as good mothers. In fact, one of the biggest difficulties of practicing mothering within the prison system is the role strain that is created by constant scrutiny and surveillance of (Indigenous and other racialized) mothers (Haney 2013; Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol 2015; Walsh and Crough 2013). For instance, Haney (2013) found that prison staff routinely undercut mothering practices in two ways. The first is by infantilizing prisoners, thereby making it difficult for them to position themselves as authority figures in relation to their children; and the second is by denying them privacy and one-on-one time with their children, thereby putting their mothering practices on public display at all times (Haney 2013). The first type of undercutting is likely to have profound effects on Indigenous women, as they are more likely to have higher security classifications and are already more frequently subjected to frisks, strip searches, tactics of behavioural control, and surveillance (Comack 2014; Nichols 2014). Here, risk comes into play alongside stereotypes about racialized mothers that indicate to prison staff that Indigenous women are bad mothers in need of heightened surveillance.

The second form of undercutting uses motherhood as a therapeutic method of evaluation. For example, mothers who yell at their children may be perceived as having anger issues, spanking may be interpreted as evidence of control and violence issues, lack of affection and/or physical touch may be perceived as demonstrative of intimacy issues, and the expression of maternal ambivalence may be seen as related to bonding issues (Haney 2013). Not only are these observations assessed in the prison setting, they are also used to determine who is eligible for parole (Haney 2013) and, by extension, who is perceived as a good mother. For Indigenous women, this undercutting reflects the assumption that racialized Others are inherently neglectful, abusive, and dangerous and are thus bad mothers who are likely to harm their children and (again) require increased surveillance of their parenting techniques (Brown and Bloom 2009; Cunneen 2007; Landertinger 2015; Roberts 2014; Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol 2015). In some cases, mothering is even taken

away when women “misbehave” and/or resist institutional authority (such as by failing to practice principles of intensive mothering) (Haney 2013). Thus, mothering is used by the prison as a tool to secure compliance, as mothers are under enormous pressures to conform to the dictates of the prison when they are under constant threat of having their children taken away (Bloom and Brown 2011; Haney 2013).

Mothering After Prison

When incarcerated mothers near the end of their sentences, they may or may not be released on parole. When they are paroled, their ability to (re)integrate into the community without getting involved in further criminal activity is tested (Baldry 2009). For many mothers, renegotiating their mothering roles is a big part of this process (Walsh and Crough 2013). In fact, many mothers describe this process as simultaneously the most challenging and the best part of their release due to the (negative) alteration of the mother-child bond caused by imprisonment (Scobie and Gazso 2013). A related consideration is how Indigenous children feel about (re)connecting with their previously incarcerated mothers. In the cases of many Indigenous mothers, the criminal (in)justice system is a revolving door that contributes to their absence during much of their children’s lives (Baldry 2009; Monchalín 2016). This not only compounds complex feelings on the mother’s side (such as ambivalence toward motherhood and feelings of guilt), but also tends to create negative feelings on the children’s side (such as anger over their mother’s absence) (Brennan 2014; Haney 2013; Kilty and Dej 2012; Newman et al. 2011; Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol 2015). Moreover, children’s age significantly affects the ease or difficulty of regaining access and/or custody for mothers—the younger the children are when their mothers are released, the more difficult reunification tends to be. This is because children often become accustomed to living with other caregivers with whom they want to continue residing (Scobie and Gazso 2013).

Despite much of the negativity in the existing literature on paroled mothers and their children, Walsh and Crough’s (2013) examination of the stories of five previously incarcerated mothers (two of whom identified as Aboriginal, two as white, and one undisclosed) in Alberta, Canada showed hope in relation to mothering identity. They found that mothers perceived their children as powerful motivators for building healthy lives, developing a sense of personal agency, and continuing their healing journeys (Walsh and Crough 2013). Mothers also reported numerous challenges upon their release, which included arranging custody, re-exercising parental authority, and dealing with demanding parole conditions that, if not followed, could prevent them from retrieving their children from foster care (Walsh and Crough 2013).

In general, parole conditions are very restrictive, but when it comes to Indigenous mothers, they are even more so. This is due to the stigma that is attached to race and ethnicity, which are crucial aspects of both women’s imprisonment as well as their (re)integration experiences. This is demonstrated by the fact that Indigenous women are more likely than non-Indigenous women to return to prison for breaching the most minor of conditions (Hannah-Moffat 2001; Martel and Brassard 2008; Monture-Angus 2000). One reason for

this is because of how colonial and patriarchal notions of risk factor into parole decisions. For example, “community functioning” is one measure of risk that disproportionately affects Indigenous peoples’ chances of successfully completing parole. This is because the devastating effects of colonialism are typically invisible, creating the perception that the unhealthy aspects of Indigenous communities are part of the larger “Indian problem” (Monchalin 2016, 145). To be clear, these unhealthy circumstances are primarily (if not exclusively) part of “a colonial problem” (Monchalin 2016, 145).

Moreover, when community functioning is perceived as a risk factor, it often becomes tied to parole conditions that aim to regulate spatial behaviour (such as designating where people on parole should and should not be). Such conditions disproportionately affect Indigenous women who come from (and/or are going back to) what are believed to be primarily dysfunctional communities due to the fact that they may have substandard housing and minimal access to quality education and/or employment opportunities (Shantz et al. 2009; Turnbull and Hannah-Moffat 2009). Moreover, Indigenous women are more likely than non-Indigenous women to have limited financial resources that make residing outside of poverty-stricken areas difficult (Shantz et al. 2009; Turnbull and Hannah-Moffat 2009). In these ways, notions of risk in combination with parole conditions set Indigenous mothers up for failure and function to return them to prison where they will be increasingly assimilated (if not altogether eliminated) and have less (or possibly no) contact with their children.

Together, these parole conditions also disproportionately affect Indigenous mothers whose social support networks are primarily concentrated in the same low-income/high-crime neighbourhoods they are expected to avoid (Shantz et al. 2009). Thus, parole conditions are not designed to promote (re)integration of Indigenous women and/or (re)unification of Indigenous mothers and their children. Instead, parole conditions force Indigenous women to choose whether they want to start over in an area that is unknown to them, with limited financial and social resources (not to mention the increasing cost of rental accommodations), or risk breaking their parole conditions by residing in a low-income/high-crime area. Although some of the studies I have cited here do not focus on Indigenous mothers specifically, I believe that parole conditions function to affect Indigenous mothers and their children negatively by making it harder for Indigenous mothers to secure stable, affordable homes, which further impedes their ability to (re)gain visitation with and/or custody of their children (Baldry 2009; Brown and Bloom 2009; Monchalin 2016; Nichols 2014; Wesley 2012).

In fact, arranging safe, affordable, and stable housing in an area that coincides with one’s spatial regulations and other conditions can be one of the biggest hardships (Indigenous) women face upon release. This issue is further exacerbated when prisons do not provide adequate support prior to release. For instance, Scobie and Gazso (2013) interviewed nine previously incarcerated mothers (six of whom identified as Aboriginal) in British Columbia (BC) and Ontario. They found that locating housing and applying for social assistance prior to release varied, depending on the programs and policies in place at the various institutions.

For example, in BC, women were able to work with a release counsellor who assisted them with these tasks prior to their release; in Ontario, however, women were expected to find their own accommodations (Scobie and Gazso 2013). Ontario's approach often resulted in women staying in shelters, sometimes taking several months before they were able to find suitable housing (Scobie and Gazso 2013). Moreover, participants who stayed in shelters interpreted this situation as jeopardizing their parole conditions, as the women were more likely to (temporarily) reside with other people who had criminal records and (ab)used drugs and alcohol, making it more likely that they would violate their parole conditions and/or recidivate (Scobie and Gazso 2013).

Finding suitable housing upon release often intersects with one of the most common conditions imposed upon people on parole—a regulation that prohibits association with anyone who has a criminal record (Baldry 2009; Turnbull and Hannah-Moffat 2009). This is because Indigenous women are likely to experience significant financial constraints (Monchalin 2016) that increase their likelihood of having shared, rather than solo, rental accommodations. Moreover, because Indigenous peoples are more likely than the overall population to have criminal records (Baldry 2009; Turnbull and Hannah-Moffat 2009), Indigenous women on parole may have even more limited options in terms of residing with their Indigenous friends and families. This association condition may also preclude mothers from interacting with their own (young adult) children, who are also more likely to have criminal records (Newman et al. 2011; Schubert et al. 2016). Therefore, even when Indigenous mothers beat all odds and are granted parole, their newfound “freedom” does not guarantee reunification with their children. For these reasons, association conditions ironically tend to isolate Indigenous women at the very time when they are expected to demonstrate (pro)social behaviours and develop “appropriate” social networks (Shantz et al. 2009).

Parole conditions thus have enormously disproportionate effects on Indigenous mothers' ability both to complete parole successfully as well as to (re)gain access to and/or custody of their children. If they do not have safe and stable homes and a reliable and lawful place of employment, and are in the presence of other people with criminal records and/or in places from which they have been ordered to stay away, they will not be permitted to have visits with or custody of their children (Baldry 2009; Harris et al. 2015). Moreover, they are likely to return to prison for such breaches (Turnbull and Hannah-Moffat 2009). When Indigenous women return to prison, they have greatly reduced (or no) contact with their children once again. As such, abiding by parole conditions is imperative for maintaining the mother-child relationship, both inside and outside the prison walls.

Discussion and Conclusion

By exploring the sparse amount of Canadian and international research regarding (Indigenous) carceral motherhood and by drawing on Indigenous feminist and critical criminological theories, I have demonstrated select connections among colonialism, patriarchy, neoliberalism, and the carceral and child welfare systems. To summarize, neoliberalism

shifts the responsibility for social welfare from the state to individuals, masks historical and contemporary social injustices, and creates a society characterized by hyper-surveillance (Comack 2018; Cunneen 2007). As neoliberalism takes hold, colonial and patriarchal stereotypes become harder to dispute, and become further embedded within Canadian culture. Problematically, these beliefs inform people's thinking about (criminalized) Indigenous women—namely that they are bad mothers who (ab)use drugs, sell their bodies, and neglect their children—which tends to result in the criminalization of Indigenous mothering practices (Landertinger 2015; Roberts 2012; 2014). This in turn functions to place Indigenous women in the prison system and Indigenous children into the child welfare system at alarming rates (Brown and Bloom 2009; Landertinger 2015). Together, these interlocking state institutions break up Indigenous families and disable their abilities to reproduce healthy and vibrant communities. This leads me to argue that, regardless of whether or not the actors within these systems are aware of it, the prison and child welfare systems' policies and practices work in tandem to further the goals of colonialism and patriarchy (that is, to assimilate and/or eliminate Indigenous peoples via confinement and removal from their families and cultures). While this happens to all Indigenous peoples, the focus tends to be on Indigenous mothers and their children. Before turning to my recommendations then, I briefly summarize some key points of each section.

In discussing the beginnings of incarceration, I showed how Indigenous children are hyper-represented in the child welfare system, just as their mothers are within the prison system (Brown and Bloom 2009; Landertinger 2015). Often, Indigenous mothers have profound difficulties in finding suitable caregivers for their children during their incarceration (Landertinger 2015). Even when they are able to find someone, these caregivers are often Indigenous family members, which means there is a higher likelihood of children being removed from these homes due to the dominant perception that Indigenous parenting is not intensive and is thus inadequate (Landertinger 2015).

We need to work on reducing the number of Indigenous mothers entering the prison system, which would have the indirect effect of reducing the number of Indigenous children in the child welfare system. This can be partially accomplished by creating more understanding and acceptance around different kinds of mothering practices (including those that challenge Western notions of intensive mothering) so that more culturally relevant benchmarks for assessing Indigenous parenting practices can be developed. This would require that child welfare agents have extensive training identifying how colonial and patriarchal stereotypes affect their decision-making, especially in regard to Indigenous families. Ideally, this would help eliminate the criminalization of Indigenous mothering practices. Furthermore, when parenting practices are deemed unsafe and the removal of children is actually in the best interests of the child, it is imperative that Indigenous children be placed into the homes of other Indigenous peoples, preferably those of family members or people of the same Indigenous culture. Combined with the previous recommendation, this practice would help combat the colonial effects of the child welfare system.

In terms of mothering *from* prison, Indigenous mothers rarely see their children while they are incarcerated, partially because of the frequent geographical distance between

prisons and families, with the accompanying financial burdens and time constraints this places on children's caregivers, as well as the mixed feelings that mothers, children, caregivers, and prison staff often have about children being exposed to the prison system (Baldry 2009; Brennan 2014; Brown and Bloom 2011; Haney 2013; Landertinger 2015; Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol 2015; Schubert et al. 2016). Various programs have been developed around the world that attempt to combat the negative effects on children of their mothers' incarceration; however, these programs are not without problems, and there should be several changes made in order to realize their full potential.

First, children with incarcerated (Indigenous) mothers, children's primary caregivers, and incarcerated (Indigenous) mothers should receive financial assistance aimed at decreasing the costs associated with maintaining the mother-child bond. This includes the provision of funds for children's transportation to and from visits, for daily living expenses associated with raising children, and for mothers' telephone calls to and from children. Additionally, these three parties should also have an emotional support system that is specifically designed to meet their needs. Ideally this support system would be designed and operated by Indigenous peoples who are not affiliated with CSC to help encourage participants' trust and avoid co-optation. With this in place, those affected by carceral motherhood could better cope with what is likely one of the most difficult times of their lives. Second, the structures of visitations should be reconsidered and changed. Visits should be allowed for longer periods of time (including overnights) and more frequently. More- and less- structured activities that attend to different age groups and cultures should also be experimented with and assessed on an ongoing basis. These changes could help both incarcerated Indigenous mothers and their children maintain their family ties in more positive, culturally relevant, and age-appropriate ways.

When it comes to mothering *in* prison, there are various types of programs that permit incarcerated mothers to have their babies and/or children with them in prison. In Canada, Brennan (2014) argues that the Mother-Child Program (MCP) strengthens the mother-child bond and decreases recidivism rates among mothers, as well as the future criminalization rates of children and the number of children going into foster care. However, the MCP also has many barriers that are likely to affect Indigenous mothers disproportionately. For example, by excluding participants who have committed violent offences, the MCP may greatly reduce, if not eliminate, Indigenous mothers' participation. By not taking offences' contexts into account, the MCP criteria are not reflective of Indigenous women's lived realities. Take Lisa Whitford's story as an example: despite there being no evidence that she was violent toward children, she was perceived as a threat to her baby because she killed her abusive partner in self-defence (Brennan 2014; Stone 2012). This, along with other barriers, ultimately translate to *more*, not fewer, Indigenous children going into state care by virtue of Indigenous mothers' ineligibility to participate in programs like the MCP.

The dramatic reduction in the eligible age of MCP child participants (Brennan 2014) also likely affects Indigenous families in significant ways. This is because Indigenous women are

more likely to be their children's sole caregiver as well as to have more children than their non-Indigenous counterparts (Baldry 2009; Eljdupovic et al. 2013; Landertinger 2015). Thus, while younger children may be able to remain with their incarcerated mothers, older children will likely be put into foster care. This means that rather than bringing Indigenous families together, MCP criteria actually function to fracture Indigenous families further and perpetuate intergenerational trauma. In these ways, the MCP is particularly demonstrative of the colonial and patriarchal relationship between the carceral and child welfare systems.

Based on this information, I believe it is imperative that we re-think notions of risk in more contextualized ways that actually resonate with the lives of Indigenous mothers. Along with others, I perceive risk as firmly rooted within neoliberalism, patriarchy, and colonialism (Hannah-Moffat 2001); therefore, rather than continuing to focus on pre-crime and risk (Cunneen 2007), the prison system should critique and question its own entanglement within neoliberalism, and instead emphasize care and compassion by showing an understanding of what (de)colonialism is. This could be partially accomplished by returning to more dynamic, as opposed to static, security practices that emphasize pro-social relationships and cross-cultural understandings that highlight the importance of context, rather than forcing a one-size-fits-all approach. Taking this into consideration, MCP criteria need to be reevaluated, especially in terms of their exclusion of those who commit violence. By further contextualizing Indigenous women's criminality (that is, violence is most often committed by women when violence is being or has been done to them), while building less-hierarchical and -coercive relationships with prisoners, the prison system could see more Indigenous mothers participating in the MCP.

Finally, many Indigenous mothers have difficulty not only obtaining parole but completing it successfully (Baldry 2009; Hannah-Moffat 2001; Kilty 2012; Monture-Angus 2000; Shantz et al. 2009). When parole is granted, renegotiating parental responsibilities is an important part of an incarcerated mother's release plan (Walsh and Crough 2013). Thus, before leaving prison, Indigenous mothers should receive (more consistent) assistance in finding housing and employment, and in reconnecting with their children. As Scobie and Gazso (2013) found in their study, not all incarcerated women have the same access to such assistance and, as a result, many end up in shelters upon their release from prison. When mothers live in shelters, it is impossible for them to (re)gain access to and/or custody of their children. Creating Indigenous community groups that specialize in mothers' release from prison would be a great start in solving these issues. These groups could act as bridges between incarcerated women and the community by going into prisons and building relationships with women. Ideally, these contacts would provide gender- and culturally relevant services in meaningful ways in order to meet the unique needs of each mother. Because relationships take time to build, it is imperative that this work begin well before release.

Furthermore, parole conditions need to reflect more adequately things like the socioeconomic circumstances within which Indigenous mothers are likely to live rather than being overly harsh and punitive. We also need to find ways to eradicate the colonial,

patriarchal, and neoliberal assumptions that underpin parole conditions. It is unrealistic to tell Indigenous mothers that they can no longer use the only survival skills they know until such time as the system provides relevant and adequate alternatives in the community. Indeed, people on parole often return to much of the same thing as they knew before incarceration. For example, they often return to similar lifestyles (such as engaging in criminal activities to support themselves and their children), people (including those with criminal records, inability to support them, and/or histories of abusing them), places (the streets and/or seemingly dysfunctional and unhealthy communities), housing (which may be shared, unsafe, unstable, and located in poor, high-crime neighbourhoods), and coping mechanisms (such as drugs and alcohol) (Baldry 2009; Monchalin 2016; Scobie and Gazso 2013; Shantz et al. 2009; Turnbull and Hannah-Moffat 2009). We need to work harder to find solutions at the community level that are Indigenous-led and -created so as not to continue imposing colonial solutions on colonial crime problems.

I realize that these recommendations only scratch the tip of the iceberg in terms of what may be possible. Nonetheless, I feel compelled to offer my voice in an area that is so minimally researched and theorized. I hope that my ideas will spark a fire in others to continue this kind of work, as Indigenous mothers are being incarcerated at higher rates than ever (Comack 2018) and their children are increasingly being confined within the child welfare system (Landertinger 2015). Both of these practices of colonial patriarchal confinement need to stop, and I am hopeful that one day they will. Until then, we must think of alternatives to the way things are transpiring within these state systems so that we can move toward a decolonized society. While it is crucial that Indigenous peoples and communities be involved in processes of decolonizing de-criminalization—that is, helping Indigenous mothers out of criminalization where at all possible—it is equally imperative that Canadians and other non-Indigenous people support them in these efforts. Non-Indigenous people must also participate in and support this work because the burden of problem-solving should not be placed exclusively on Indigenous peoples. We can do this by listening, being open, and critically questioning our own roles in maintaining and/or perpetuating colonial and patriarchal stereotypes that permeate not only Canada's criminal (in)justice system but its greater culture.

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