In her book *Surviving Incarceration: Inside Canadian Prisons*, Rose Ricciardelli begins her introduction with an interview from former inmate, who describes that in segregation “instead of going crazy, I did something productive. I started to write rhymes or whatever, poetry... That made my time pass easy” (6). In the first issue of *Prison Journal*, which ran for ten issues from 1981-1992 out of the Matsqui Institution as part of the Simon Fraser Prison Education Programme, English Professor Peter Murphy sees its founding purpose as a forum for dialogue between the inside and “outside” world. Three decades later, however, Canadian scholars Deena Rymhs and Roxanne L. Rimstead – specialists on Indigenous writings from prison – still call for “greater critical interest in prison literature in Canada” in their article “Prison Writing/Writing Prison in Canada”. As of yet, there has been no comprehensive research on *Prison Journal* outside of the SF Prison Education Programme, and little on other Canadian Penal Presses. Inmate H.D. Doleman writes in *Prison Journal* “I’m weary of reading. I want to make my own conclusions, based on my own observed first premises, unimpeded by minor celestial clap-trap” (30). Prison writing needs more support and exploration not just for its content and how it can challenge our prejudices, but for what it can offer prisoners.

For my M.A. Project, I will research Canadian prison literature, examining marginalized voices within marginalized spaces, and comparing lesser-known writings from prison journals to novels. I will use a class-based perspective, as “existing scholarship on prison writing has been largely interested in prison authors who are intellectuals or members of revolutionary movements, [yet] most of Canada’s prison authors are ‘common criminals’ who become writers during their imprisonment” (Rymhs and Rimstead). I will focus on prison writing from *Prison Journal*. I will supplement this with selections from the growing digital archive “The Penal Press: A History of Prison From Within”, which digitizes journals from Canadian prisons. The novels, which could be described as autobiographical fiction, include Rudy Wiebe and Yvonne Johnson’s *Stolen Life: The Journey of a Cree Woman*, Métis writer James Tyman's *Inside Out*, and Stephen Reid’s *Jackrabbit Parole*. After providing the proper ethics review, I will arrange meetings through Dr. Wayne Knights with former inmates who were part of the SF Prison Education Programme. I will also interview some of the former editors of *Prison Journal* to better understand their aims for each issue and the journal overall. Documents from the SF Prison Education Programme, located in SFU’s archives, will help me research informal writings by prisoners. I will be working with my supervisors, Sophie McCall and Deanna Reder, is a who are scholars in Indigenous Studies in Canada. My research will contribute to a growing Canadian body of literature on prison writing, since there has been little comprehensive research on *Prison Journal*, and other Canadian Penal Presses. An English perspective will bring attention to prisoners’ narratives and our position as readers, creating a mirror to investigate and critique our assumptions about the incarcerated.
Bibliography: