

# IMPLEMENTING FEMINIST ATTITUDES IN CORRECTIONAL CENTERS THROUGH INSPIRED MINDS TO REDUCE REOFFENDING

## A. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 01** What are the effects of educational programs, like Creative Writing, on inmates in the Saskatoon Correctional Center?
- 02** What is the significance of implementing feminist attitudes in a Correctional Center classroom?
- 03** What are the benefits of creative writing programs like Inspired Minds on inmates?

## B. THESIS STATEMENT

Inspired Minds provides a safe and non-toxic environment in the correctional center classroom that enables students to express without hesitation and listen without judgement, which helps eliminate toxic masculinity and promote intersectionality.

## C. WHAT IS “INSPIRED MINDS: ALL NATIONS CREATIVE WRITING”?

Inspired Minds is a creative writing program at the Saskatoon Correctional Center (SCC) supervised by Diann Block, Cultural Coordinator of the SCC. Inspired Minds has an annual collection of published works and arts by inmates called *Creative Escape*.

The program started in 2011 in a chapel in SCC where Usask students and professors partnered with the first group men in the program. The men also named the program Inspired Minds.



Fig. 1. Still from Gayles and Lacey-Bordeaux, *Feminism in Prison?* (4:24)  
Richard Edmond Vargas teaching feminism to a group he created called “Success Stories” at a Correctional Center in Soledad, California.

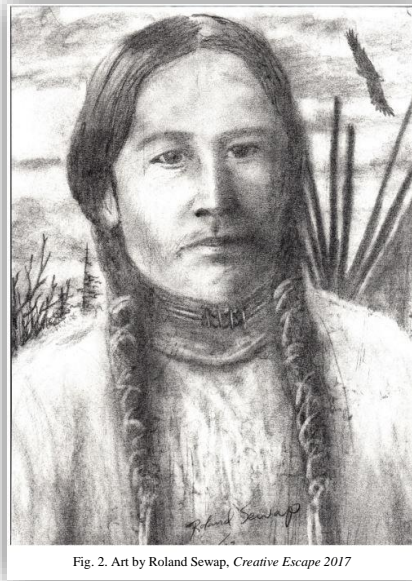


Fig. 2. Art by Roland Sewap, *Creative Escape* 2017

## D. MAIN POINTS

- 01** By preparing and implementing a feminist and safe classroom environment, the students are more willing to participate in class discussions, especially discussions that have sensitive topics. With that, it eliminates toxic masculinity. In a classroom or in group discussions, in general; creating a comfortable environment for students to express freely without judgement; reduced non-violent behaviours.
- 02** When a feminist classroom is implemented successfully, students start to engage in *scriptotherapy* on their assignments. As correctional center facilitators, we would remind the students that they don’t need to write in a personal level. However, it seems that they have gotten comfortable with sharing. Most of them even confessed that writing helps them think and reflect on their life. To them, and to me as well, writing is a form of therapy; writing is a form of escape from their reality.

- 03** Acquiring education, whether it be small ones like Creative Writing, can reduce recidivism and/or reoffending rates. Lockard and Rankins-Robertson maintain that the Prison-University relationship should be mandatory especially in University English Departments. Not only is the partnership representing an “inseparable community service mission” (Lockard and Rankins-Robertson 29) but also representing “education as an intrinsic right” (29).

## E. TERMS USED IN THE RESEARCH PAPER

### Feminism

According to bell hooks in *Feminism is for Everyone*, feminism is “a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression” (viii).

### Toxic Masculinity

In a YouTube video called *Feminism in Prison*, Vargas states “In toxic masculinity, you become a real man by doing these three things: athletic skills (by dominating in that sense), by objectifying women, and by having money ... it really comes down to violence” (Vargas, qu. in Gayles and Lacey-Bordeaux 1:03-1:19).

### Scriptotherapy

Suzette Henke coined the term *scriptotherapy* in *Shattered Objects*. In *Haunted Narratives*, Rippl and others contribute by stating that “in oral as well as written attempts at verbalization, trauma and memory are closely connected with storytelling” (10) and, I argue, reflective writing.

## CONCLUSION

Implementing feminist attitudes in a Correctional Center classroom can help participants engage more in class discussions as well as become comfortable with expressing their voices and their perspectives without judgement from others.

Education in a criminal justice system would increase employment, reduce recidivism and reoffending rates. Further, education improves in-prison behaviour. Programs like Creative Writing can contribute to a therapy—*scriptotherapy*—that works best for those who find writing helpful for coping with trauma.

## WORKS CITED

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