

**Artists go behind bars to explore the complicated world of women and crime.**

**Winnipeg, April 1 2013:** The new provincial women's prison is already overcapacity, the Ashley Smith inquest is on-going and Aboriginal women are represented in disproportionate numbers in Canadian prisons. Canadians need to ask some serious questions about our justice system and theatre is the way to inspire this dialogue! Over the last three years Sarasvati Productions has been exploring the stories behind bars. This May the work will culminate with the world premiere of a new play that explores issues of crime and violence for women. *Jail Baby* features the never untold stories of incarcerated women and why they do what they do.

In partnership with the Elizabeth Fry Society of Manitoba artists Nan Fewchuk, Marsha Knight, Cairn Moore and Hope McIntyre conducted drama sessions with women at the Winnipeg Remand Centre, Portage Correctional Centre for Women, the Edmonton Institution for Women and the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge in Maple Creek. Their stories were collected along with research, interviews with correctional workers, mediation experts, victims associations and families of women offenders. As a result *Jail Baby* examines the complicated and interconnected world of crime, poverty and violence for women, and how it affects generations to come.

"The work on this play has been heart-breaking and inspiring," says playwright and Artistic Director Hope McIntyre. "We have met amazing women and discussed at length what the cause of crime truly is and how to deal with criminal behaviour in order to create a safe and positive community. We are excited to invite an audience in to this dialogue." Several performances of the play will also be followed by panels that will allow the audience to take part in an in-depth analysis of where we are and where Canada should be heading in terms of justice.

Both the play and panels also tackle the racial issues that affect incarcerated women even before they "get inside." According to the Elizabeth Fry Society of Manitoba, Aboriginal women are 9 times as likely to be incarcerated in their lifetime, and make up for approximately 45% of prison populations across the country. This is a shock when one considers that Aboriginal women make up only 2% of the general population. Elizabeth Fry Society of Manitoba Executive Director Tracy Booth is available for interviews on this matter.

*Jail Baby* runs from **May 16-26, 2013** at the **University of Winnipeg Asper Centre for Theatre and Film** (400 Colony Street). Tickets are \$18 or \$12 for students and seniors. To purchase tickets and to see show times, please visit [www.sarasvati.ca](http://www.sarasvati.ca).

**About Sarasvati Productions:** *Sarasvati Dramatic Theatre Producers and Repertory Inc (founded in Winnipeg in 2000) seeks to inspire artists and audiences through the use of theatre and to provide a place where artists can develop and showcase their skills and celebrate their creativity.*

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