

Mega Jails threaten loss of Native inmate programs

Treatment programs in correctional facilities such as those offered by Native Liaison workers may no longer exist with the introduction of mega jails over the next two years.

by Mandy Eason

BURTCH - The provincial jail system will undergo a structure overhaul by 2002 that will result in the closure of smaller correctional facilities such as Burtch and initiate relocation of inmates to mega jails, each housing well over a thousand occupants.

Richard Porter, Native Liaison officer, fears that with the transformation, institution programs such as those he has worked on with Native inmates over the years will be lost.

"In the year 2002, these mega jails will probably all be running at full capacity. The programs we offer now you may not see them in two years."

The first of three mega jails is expected to be fully operational by early next year, according to Porter.

"Maple Hurst Corrections Complex in Milton Ontario, should be running in the early part of 2001," says Porter who added, "the penitentiary near Berry Ontario and another (mega jail) in Lyndsey Ontario will follow."

Porter estimates 16 hundred inmates will be housed in each of the three major correctional facilities. When asked what this means to smaller jails such as Burtch, located minutes away from Six Nations and Brantford Porter said "they are all going to be shut down."

What effect could these mega jails have on mainstream society?

According to Porter we could witness an increase in existing social problems. "Its going to cause more conflict and problems in our community that are already there. There's going to be limited programs and support in these mega jails. The bottom line is that these guys are going to come out

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