

The Dangerous Offender (D.O.) and Long-Term Offender (L.T.O.) designations are comparable to the modern day 60's scoop where the state takes Indigenous children from their parents and tears families apart. How is it that such an advanced country like Canada is supporting indefinite sentences that keep you away from your families and communities indefinitely? These injustices have created hopelessness for Indigenous people such as myself and many others. I am currently employed as Chair of the Indigenous Wellness Community in a Canadian federal penitentiary, which advocates for justice and prison reform.

My current incarceration began with some minor assaults and an isolated confinement charge. An early D.O. application was rejected by a sitting judge. The judge felt a five-year prison sentence was more suitable for the crime of extortion I had been convicted of. A vengeful prosecutor appealed my five-year sentence only six months before my release date. I was not subpoenaed for the hearing and was denied the opportunity to address the court prior to the decision. I received an unforgettable phone call from a lawyer who informed me of my indefinite sentence.

The Supreme Court refused to hear my appeal in a 2:1 vote. Potentially taking someone's liberty for the rest of their lives should be a unanimous decision. When an indefinite sentence is successful by a 2:1 vote, should our highest courts not allow the application to be heard to eliminate any cruel and unusual punishment inflicted upon citizens? By not allowing a criminalized person to be present for the entire Dangerous Offender hearing is a violation of democratic rights. Information that was entered into court was from prison guards that had nefarious motives was not impartial. Such actions create extreme bias towards us. There are long-term consequences of protracted detention, which undermines Indigenous communities.