

## CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

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# Impacts of Indigenous Healing Lodges for Women

*Healing Lodges improve women's dynamic risk and offer unique opportunities for gradual reintegration.*

## Why we did this study

Healing Lodges are environments centred on Indigenous values, traditions, and beliefs. They offer culturally responsive services and programs for Indigenous offenders to encourage healing and rehabilitation. The goal of this study was to examine the impacts that Healing Lodges have on Indigenous offender reintegration and post-release outcomes, as well as the cumulative effect of Indigenous-specific services and interventions.

## What we did

As part of a larger study, this research examines Healing Lodges for women. Indigenous women released from Correctional Service of Canada-operated or Section 81 Healing Lodges ( $N = 134$ ) were compared to a matched control group of Indigenous women released from mainstream institutions ( $N = 134$ ) between April 2013 and March 2018.

## What we found

At intake, women Healing Lodge residents were higher in dynamic risk and lower in reintegration potential. Considerable reductions were observed in dynamic risk for women over the course of their sentence. Compared to Indigenous women released from mainstream institutions, Healing Lodge residents were less likely to be rated high in dynamic risk at release and were more likely to demonstrate improvements in the areas of Personal/Emotional, Substance Abuse, and Associates. These findings indicate that the profile of women Healing Lodge residents differed from Indigenous offenders released from mainstream institutions.

Women Healing Lodge residents showed a greater interest in Indigenous opportunities at intake and participated in culturally-specific services to a greater degree throughout their sentence. This included the development of a Healing Plan, having at least one Elder Review, and having Indigenous services staff assigned to their caseload. Healing Lodge residents were also more likely to be assigned to and complete Indigenous correctional programs and other programs (e.g., employment, vocational training, Indigenous cultural programs) over the course of their full incarceration period.

Compared to their counterparts, Healing Lodge residents participated in more Escorted and Unescorted Temporary Absences as well as work releases. Despite these efforts at gradual reintegration, Healing Lodge residents were less likely to receive a discretionary release. Overall, women released from a Healing Lodge also had commensurate post-release outcomes to women released from other institutions, particularly when controlling for risk and need factors.

A final objective of the study was to examine the relative contribution of Indigenous-specific interventions and services on post-release outcome. Women who demonstrated an interest in Indigenous opportunities at intake (i.e., interest in developing a healing plan, a Section 81 release, or Section 84 release) had a 65% lower risk of return to custody compared to those who did not. The single predictor of returns to custody may be explained by the small sample size for women.

## What it means

Taken together, the results of this study highlight the benefits that Healing Lodges and culturally responsive interventions have in the support of reintegration for Indigenous women offenders. The findings of this study reveal that Healing Lodge residents demonstrated notable improvements in dynamic risk areas as well as greater participation in culturally-specific opportunities. Despite their unique profile, Healing Lodge residents had comparable post-release outcomes to their counterparts. Through qualitative methods, future research will provide a more holistic understanding of Healing Lodges for women.

## For more information

Hanby, L., Ridha, T., Sullivan, R., & Farrell MacDonald, S. (2022). *Indigenous Healing Lodges: Impacts on Offender Reintegration and Community Outcomes* (Research Report R-437). Ottawa, Ontario: Correctional Service of Canada.

To obtain a PDF version of the full report, or for other inquiries, please e-mail the [Research Branch](#). You can also visit the [Research Publications](#) section for a full list of reports and one-page summaries.

