

## CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

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# Eagle Women's Lodge: Resident and Staff Experiences

*Eagle Women's Lodge offers a safe space for healing through Indigenous teachings, values, and beliefs.*

## Why we are doing this study

As the Correctional Service of Canada's newest Healing Lodge operated by a community or partner organization,<sup>1</sup> Eagle Women's Lodge (EWL) opened in September 2019. Through qualitative methods, the goal of the current study is to gain an understanding of the impacts that women's Healing Lodges have on Indigenous offenders, as well as challenges that these sites are currently facing. This research represents a collaboration with the Indigenous Initiatives Directorate and aims to provide a more holistic understanding of EWL through the experiences and perspectives of residents and staff.

## What we are doing

As part of a larger study examining all women's Healing Lodges, individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 residents and 11 staff at EWL in October 2022. Interviews were conducted by two members of the research team, each taking approximately thirty minutes to an hour to complete. The interviews focused on the participants' experiences, involvements, and observations at the Healing Lodge.

## What we have found so far

From the perspectives of residents and staff, EWL offers trauma-informed and gender-responsive care. The Healing Lodge takes a holistic approach including traditional cultural support, ceremonies, programming, individual trauma counselling, and family reunification. There is a sense of gratitude from residents for the opportunity to be at EWL as the therapeutic environment and opportunities allow them to heal, grow, and live an Indigenous way of life. There is an understanding by staff of the unique social history, traumas, and experiences of each resident.

The location of the Healing Lodge was seen as beneficial for those residents who wanted to stay close to their family. The urban location also made it so residents could easily access services and resources in the community, which they praised as an important step in their reintegration. Concerns were raised about the specific location of the lodge in downtown Winnipeg where they were exposed to

situations that could be triggering. However, this was viewed as beneficial in that residents learn how to navigate those situations with the extensive support from EWL.

The positive, supportive relationships between residents and staff promotes a sense of community within EWL. While staff are generally praised positively and many are described as 'going the extra mile', some concerns were raised regarding one-way communications and decision making. Further, a recently implemented consequence chart (which identifies specific consequences for various behaviours) was perceived by residents as lacking in consistency and fairness. From the perspectives of staff, the approach is beneficial in promoting accountability.

EWL opened shortly before the COVID pandemic which resulted in lockdowns, periods of outbreaks and isolation, and public health measures that were described as similar to broader society. The Healing Lodge was innovative in offering and adapting programs and cultural activities. Staff turnover and shortages have been an ongoing challenge for EWL, resulting in increased workloads for staff and reduced Escorted Temporary Absence opportunities for residents. As restrictions lift, EWL has focused on expanding employment and volunteer work and increasing opportunities in the community.

## What it means

Through Indigenous teachings, values, and beliefs, EWL has demonstrated its ability to offer residents a safe space for healing and fostering connection to culture. The experiences of residents and staff reveal a unique environment that provides residents the opportunity to develop and maintain relationships with family, prosocial supports, and community connections. Given its recent implementation, there remain opportunities for EWL to increase capacity and provide an avenue for reintegration designed specifically for Indigenous offenders.

## For more information

Please e-mail the [Research Branch](#). You can also visit the [Research Publications](#) section for a full list of reports and one-page summaries.

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<sup>1</sup> Through an agreement with CSC under Section 81 of the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*.

