

# FORUM

on Corrections Research

September 2002, Volume 14, Number 3

## Featured issues

Focusing on  
Aboriginal  
issues

Perspectives

Profiles

Programs

Reintegration



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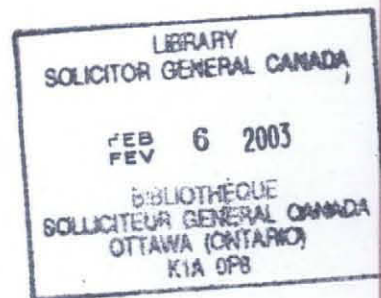
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# FORUM

on Corrections Research



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# Guide for Prospective Authors

## Submissions

To submit an article to FORUM, send two copies of the article and a diskette copy (in Microsoft Word or WordPerfect) to:

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## Style

Articles should be written in plain language. Complicated research and statistical terms should be avoided. However, if they are unavoidable, a clear explanation of the meaning of the term should be provided. FORUM reaches about 6,000 individuals in more than 35 countries, including academics, the public, journalists, corrections staff (from front-line staff to senior managers) and members of the judiciary. Our goal is to present reliable research to a **lay audience**.

## Length

Ideally, articles should be 1,000 to 1,500 words in length (six double-spaced pages). Feature articles must be no longer than 2,000 words.

## Figures and Tables

Figures and tables should be on separate pages at the end of the article. When an article has more than one figure or table, these should be numbered consecutively. Figures, if possible, are preferred over tables. A listing of the pertinent data points should be included with all figures.

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# Aboriginal pathways in federal corrections

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The objective of the Aboriginal Pathways Strategy is to establish a continuum of Aboriginal-specific institutional and community healing programs and services that will contribute to the reduction of the incarceration rate of Aboriginal offenders.

The principles of the initiative will include:

- The diversity of Aboriginal peoples will be respected and specific strategies for Inuit, Métis, First Nations and urban Aboriginal groups will be developed;
- Aboriginal offenders will voluntarily choose to participate in the Aboriginal Pathways process;
- The environment for the Aboriginal Pathways process will be respectful, supportive, healing and will be guided by Elders;
- Each institution with a healing unit will have a program coordinator/champion;
- Aboriginal offenders who participate in the Pathways process will continue to participate in the mainstream correctional process, where Aboriginal alternatives have not yet been developed;
- Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal human resources will be necessary at the onset of the strategy;
- Community intervention strategies will be developed in healing units and healing lodges;
- This strategy will not divert resources from otherwise existing core Aboriginal services; and,
- Effective partnerships and joint initiatives will be the foundation for the success of this strategy.

CSC will pilot the Aboriginal Pathways process with the involvement of the following institutions:

- Stony Mountain Medium Security Institution (Manitoba) officially opened the "Amikimi" (My Path) Healing Range in the spring of 2002.
- Saskatchewan Penitentiary (Saskatchewan) officially opened a healing unit in the summer of 2002.
- LaMacaza Medium Security Institution (Quebec) has opened its healing unit. They are running their second "In Search of your Warrior" program and are planning a third

program. The healing unit is painted with Aboriginal and Inuit designs.

- Programs offered in the healing units will include Ma Ma Wi, ASAP (Alcohol Prevention Program), FLIP (Family Living Improvement Program), Native Studies and Aboriginal Sex Offender Treatment Program, and In Search of your Warrior program.

All the Healing Units are staffed with Aboriginal Elders, Unit Managers, Aboriginal Program Officers and Native Liaison Officers. A Unit Manager is on site to oversee the project.

## Expected results

Some of the general results expected from the Aboriginal Pathways Strategy include:

- Increased respect for Elders, staff and other peers among those involved in the Aboriginal Pathways Strategy;
- Reduced institutional charges;
- Genuine interest and participation; and,
- An increase in the number of transfers to minimum-security institutions and healing lodges.

It is also expected that there will be a reduction in the current discrepancies/gaps between Aboriginal male/female and non-Aboriginal male/female offenders on the following indicators:

- Rates of time served before conditional release;
- Rates of parole grants and parole waiver;
- Rates of revocation;
- Rates of return following 5 years after warrant expiry date; and,
- Security/risk ratings.

Finally, it is expected that there will be an increase in the following indicators:

- Number of Aboriginal communities working with CSC to reintegrate Aboriginal offenders; and
- Number of partnerships CSC establishes in relation to Aboriginal issues. ■

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# Serving the Inuit offender

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**L**abrador Inuit have been reading and writing in Inuktitut for well over two centuries, first in syllabics and later in the Roman orthography. However, the establishment of boarding school dormitories in central Labrador caused a break in the passing on of the oral tradition by the Elders. Often, the boarding school system caused one to lose one's language and culture, thus, causing a broken spirit and a loss of Inuit identity. Some Inuit boarding school students became demoralized, turning to drowning the trauma with alcohol and drugs. In the prison classroom setting, a product of the boarding school system may be encountered.

**I**n the prison classroom there are five types of Inuit that a teacher will encounter; the traditional Inuk who is more unilingual Inuktitut and unicultural, a steep challenge; the bicultural and bilingual Inuk who knows his culture and the Euro-Canadian culture; the unilingual English speaking Inuk who knows his culture; the foster home/adopted Inuk who is unilingual English and more unaware of his culture; the unilingual English Inuk who lives the traditional, cultural and customary ways of the Inuit. Each of these groups require a slightly different delivery style of teaching. In some institutions, the teachers and Inuit Liaison or Elders have established reciprocal respect. They appreciate each other's expertise and knowledge. One ten-minute consultation will eliminate a month's concern.

Inuk inmates who have been involved in the boarding school system are more likely to display anger, frustration and agitation. Historically their school experience has not been pleasant. Sometimes these people will return to their home of origin no longer fitting in, having become "Euro-westernized". This brings about another sense of not belonging, resulting in inner turmoil and rage. Fortunately, many never forget their culture, heritage and Elder teachings, which has contributed to reclaiming their identity today.

It was in the early to mid-1960's that Inuit first went outside of Labrador to attend universities, schools of nursing, marine college and community colleges. The culture shock was phenomenal and traumatic. The homesickness for the daily use of Inuktitut, traditional country food, our Inuit families and Inuit ways of responding and reacting to stimuli was forever present. In the prison school environment, one can observe an

Inuk missing and craving for these familiar things. In this mode, the Inuk may become despondent and listless with the spirit energy being very unstill. Those in institutions need to be supportive and express understanding. Inuit are very resilient and will eventually spring back to being more like themselves.

Despite the availability of better education, Labrador Inuit who become incarcerated in federal prisons have quite limited classroom education. In the Inuit culture, the admired qualities were to be a good hunter/provider and animal-skin seamstress. Parents often took young Inuit men out of school to contribute to the survival of the family and the clan system. With unemployment being so high, they had to help in the pursuit of wild game and fish, fetching and cutting wood, and living in harmony with what the four seasons brought. This is still the case for those who largely live the hunter/gatherer, subsistence way of Inuit life.

Another contributing factor to lack of education is alcoholism dysfunction in the home environment. These youth become high risk for absence from school and delinquency. It is difficult to study while dealing with consistent family violence in the home and moral and spiritual support is not there address school problems. So, comes the dropout to the prison classroom setting. This has become more predominant as the Labrador way of life abruptly shifted from earth-based economy to a money-based one.

Some young Inuit inmates have reached the prison classroom with undiagnosed learning disabilities, having fallen through the cracks long ago. Also having been "on the land people", it is difficult to adjust to the confinement of a square cement room. Having been free spirits all their life, they are not only imprisoned by incarceration, they are imprisoned and abruptly removed from their land and all it represents. Most Inuit offenders do not see family members for the duration of their incarceration. A kind teacher may be the brightest spot of the day. It is important for correctional staff not to mistake this for inappropriate attachment.

Some Inuit may show symptoms of Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE). The proper assessment and diagnosis is difficult to mobilize and access in corrections. There must be effort made to arrive at a correct learning disability assessment in order to



effectively plan out the proper approach to education delivery. There is a need to make reports and assessments more culturally-specific, culturally-appropriate and culturally-relevant. Staff need to be receptive and open-minded enough to seek the Elder's and Native Liaison's expertise and knowledge. The endeavour to do this has a major positive influence on the Inuk's case plan and reintegration.

Inuit inmates are often assessed as low functioning. They can track animals, conduct a successful hunt, and provide food, shelter, warmth, clothing, comfort and education for the family from the land. In his own element, this Inuk is highly functional! The very one viewed as low functioning in the Euro-western culture, in a blinding blizzard may very well save others. In this situation, culture and society, who is low functioning? The Inuit have learned to speak your language, live your culture, understand your thinking and analysis, maybe it is time the Euro-western people learn, understand and be receptive to the Inuit ways.

The attitude from the dominant society has been that Inuit were unintelligent savages. However, there are Inuit in the prison classroom who have been to university, who are brilliant enough to continue but who have been constantly demoralized. With on-going encouragement, some have gone back to university or college. Correctional staff should be encouraging to these Inuit inmates, this may be the conduit for an Inuk to get the courage to return to secondary education.

Inuit must be taught using approaches that are relevant to their society and reality. If this is not accommodated, one is often met with a blank face. The Inuk student can probably not relate to, or identify with, anything the teacher is presenting. It is like listening to a foreign language when one does not understand it. Inuit offenders may doodle because Inuit listen and learn best when doodling. It is constructive to quietly approach the Inuk, asking if he/she understood, acknowledging the look of puzzlement or confusion. The Inuk may appear to be day dreaming or inattentive. Learn to distinguish the difference. For example, if he/she is looking out of the window or up at the ceiling, this can be misinterpreted as inattention, boredom or disinterest.

Body language is one upon which an Inuk highly depends. It may cause misperception and frustration. For example, one of my clients misinterpreted a white man's severe and pronounced tic as a condescending gesture after which he saw or heard nothing, a total mental block.

There are times when the Inuk will need to process from English to Inuktitut. The teacher may be going too fast with the material for the Inuk, enabling him/her to fall behind. Much frustration is likely to accompany this process. Correctional staff need to take time to show Inuit offenders concern because they may not make others aware about what is troubling them until they quit school for no apparent reason.

Inuit are visual and tactile learners. The workmanship and talent in the Inuit's craft is an indication of this. When a young man has watched his father hunt, shoot and harpoon a seal all his life, by age 13 or 16, it is now his turn. Inuit learn by watching and observing. An Inuk teen, at age 16, can dismantle a broken ski-doo, put it back together with homemade adjustments and go hunting in the bush with it. If someone tries to teach him about cars, he'll be lost because he doesn't have, nor need, a car. One must modify the approach to suit the Inuk's reality.

Many Inuit inmates have been taught to be humble by the Elders and the immensity/magnificence of our homeland, which molds and shapes us. To be singled out to read or provide an answer to a question makes one a focus of attention, when, in humility, one has peacefully and acceptingly done what has to be done for the survival of the clan. In a society, which is egalitarian, equal and cooperative, being targeted raises a sense of confrontational helplessness. It leaves the student confused, but he won't volunteer the state of his predicament because he has not been asked - a practice of respect. In the eyes of the more traditional Inuk, the white man has always made the decisions, which were right and final. This left him/her thinking that things were out of one's hands and control. An adaptation and adjustment period to this new kind of life pattern must be given to the Inuk. An example of this is the practice of having no eye contact from the Inuit coming from remote areas. If not understood, this can be misperceived as hiding something or not being truthful when, in fact, it is a show of respect.

There is intergenerational pain and trauma which, has been caused by the Canadian government in the dislocation and dispossession of Inuit, sometimes called "the Arctic exile". The specific needs of this group of Inuit in prisons are not acknowledged or considered in case planning, including in the classroom setting. The needs of this group of Inuit are scar-ridden. When one is aware of the psychological and spiritual trauma of that, it becomes easier to understand the behaviour of this group of Inuit in the class. This trauma is not usually recorded in the Offender Management System and is rarely mentioned in



the community assessments by the parole officer. When teachers can't make sense of some of the reactions and responses, they should visit the Inuit worker. There are only a few across the nation who are doing healing work from the abrupt umbilical cord severance from one's hereditary homeland. More education to the non-Inuit of the Arctic Exile must be given and received. With this group of Inuit inmate students there may be more anger, distrust and uncooperativeness. You may be seen as an extension of the government, which has caused the trauma and upheaval.

Inuit tend to live for today, making it difficult to plan for the future. The feeling is that whatever isn't here yet will be dealt with when the time comes. The clock is quite irrelevant in the North as everything is governed by the weather. One will go hunting weather-permitting, the air ambulance will arrive and depart weather-permitting, the passenger/freight boat will arrive and depart weather-permitting, and one will go fetching wood in the country weather-permitting. Upon first admission to incarceration, an Inuk student will often arrive late for school. Adjustment time to a clock-oriented way of life must be accommodated, at least for the first month of admission.

Another important factor to consider in the southern classroom is the unbearable heat. One is used to the wind, sun, rain and snow embracing one's being. Inuit inmates tend to be the most contented and spirited in the winter while they are in the south. One can often see Inuit in short-sleeve t-shirts in the winter. One cannot learn or grasp anything very well when the body and spirit are in discomfort. Sitting closer to an open door may give the Inuk a bit of circulation and breeze. Even a quiet fan may make all the difference to his attention span.

Another element of interest in the Inuit's adaptation to the school environment is the diet in prisons. When one craves the physical, mental and spiritual nourishment and nurturance of

traditional country foods, sometimes one cannot think of much else. In the North, eating and daily feasting with family, direct or extended, is a spiritual experience.

An Inuk student may attend class hurting from bad or sad family news. If not asked, he will not volunteer his news. You'll probably hear about his dilemma from his classmates. Often Inuit will not volunteer information until asked. One needs to be ever observant and mindful of very subtle changes.

The Inuit inmates are excellent at healthy sports competition. If you want to open a door, ask about their sport activities and Inuit games. Ask about his culture, he knows it best of all. An Inuk will also remain monosyllabic until his trust in you is grounded.

Another one of our strong characteristics is our sense of humour. The Inuit may burst out laughing just as you are passing by. Perhaps a movement, a gesture, a gait reminded them of a very comical individual back home. One may encounter an outburst of giggling when the topic was really serious in English but interpreted in the Inuit mind, the answer is absolutely out of this world. Thus, you may encounter one lone Inuk laughing when the non-Inuit are dead serious. This may be misinterpreted as being aloof, brazen, disrespectful or absolutely neurotic. The Inuk may make a very inappropriate gesture in the south but very appropriate back home. Winking, for example, can be used for mutual agreement on a matter but being fresh and flirtatious in the south.

Another aspect to remember is that Inuit are not First Nations. Inuit are a different race with our own language, culture, traditions and customs. Although, we are all First Peoples of Canada, it is important to acknowledge one's identity. ■

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# Childhood experiences affect Aboriginal offenders

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Assembly of First Nations

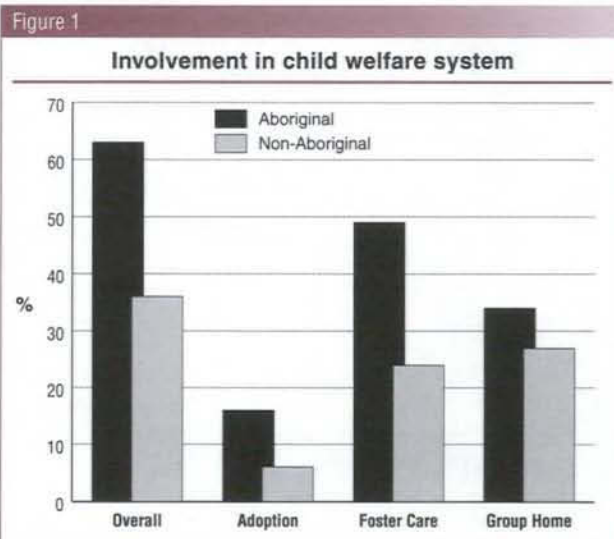
**T**he reasons for the over-representation of the Aboriginal people within the criminal justice system are complex and multi-faceted. Often, a neglected area for examination is the effect that childhood experiences have on criminal behaviour. More specifically, to what extent does lack of attachment or stability during childhood affect criminal behaviour and future relationships?

**T**he research concerning family attachment generally shows that lack of attachment often results in maladaptive and antisocial behaviour among children and adolescents.<sup>5</sup> Further, research has demonstrated that family disruption due to placement in a foster or group home can have negative effects on children and adolescents.<sup>6</sup> Adoption studies have identified some of the same negative effects, although not to the same extent.<sup>7</sup> Negative effects can take various forms, such as behavioural problems, decreases in intellectual and academic functioning, and internalizing behaviours.

There is a lack of information on attachment and family relationships as they relate to Aboriginal people. The present study was conducted to examine the living situations of Aboriginal offenders while growing up - including adoption, foster care, and group homes. Two data sources were utilized: structured personal interviews and information from offender files. Interviews were conducted with a total of 175 Aboriginal and 148 non-Aboriginal offenders from seven federal prairie institutions: Stony Mountain (Manitoba); Saskatchewan Penitentiary - medium, Saskatchewan Penitentiary - maximum, and Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge for Women (Saskatchewan); Drumheller Institution, Edmonton Institution, and Edmonton Institution for Women (Alberta).

## Involvement in child welfare system

As illustrated in Figure 1, significantly larger proportions of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal offenders were involved in the child welfare system when they were children. Overall, 63% of Aboriginal offenders said they had been adopted or placed in foster or group homes at some point in their childhood, compared to 36% of non-Aboriginal offenders.



Larger proportions of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal offenders had been placed in foster care (49% versus 24%) or placed for adoption (16% versus 6%). Although larger proportions of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal offenders were placed into group homes (34% and 27%, respectively), the differences were not statistically significant.

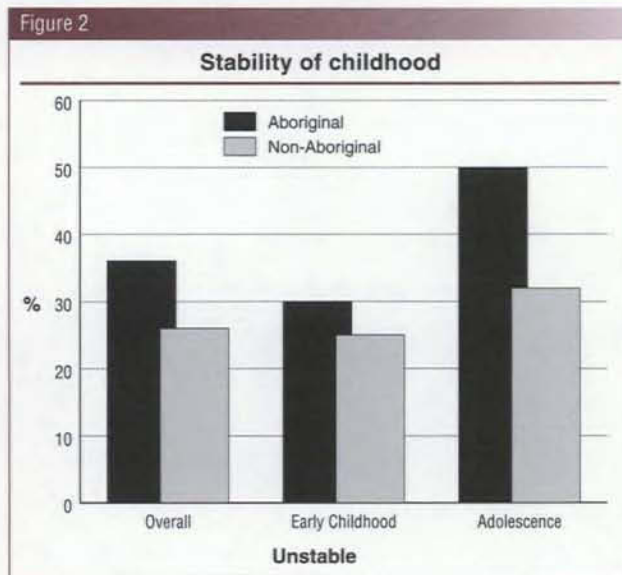
The findings from this study are similar to other studies - finding large proportions of offenders with past involvement in the child welfare system.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the proportions of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders who had been involved in the child welfare system is substantially higher than among those outside the criminal justice system.<sup>9</sup> However, this is clearly an important issue to be addressed among Aboriginal offenders, since about two-thirds have been involved in the child welfare system.

## Stability of childhood

Another important question is whether Aboriginal offenders had a more unstable childhood than non-Aboriginal offenders. As indicated in Figure 2, a significantly larger proportion of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal offenders said they had an unstable childhood (36% versus 26%). This difference was most obvious during the teenage years - one-half



(50%) of Aboriginal offenders reported an unstable adolescence, compared to one-third (32%) of non-Aboriginal offenders. There were no significant differences in perceived stability during early childhood - 30% of Aboriginal and 25% of non-Aboriginal offenders said it was unstable.



Other indicators of stability were also examined. Significantly larger proportions of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal offenders had family violence and drug/alcohol problems in the home environment, a poorer economic situation, and family members involved in criminal activity.

These findings indicate that Aboriginal offenders had more extensive history in the criminal justice system and less stability while growing up than non-Aboriginal offenders. However, this is less often the case when they were young children than when they were adolescents.

In examining only those involved in the child welfare system, the differences in childhood stability between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders disappeared. Among both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders, significantly larger proportions of those involved in the child welfare system reported an unstable childhood compared to those not involved in the child welfare system (Aboriginal - 43% versus 25%; non-Aboriginal - 40% versus 18%).

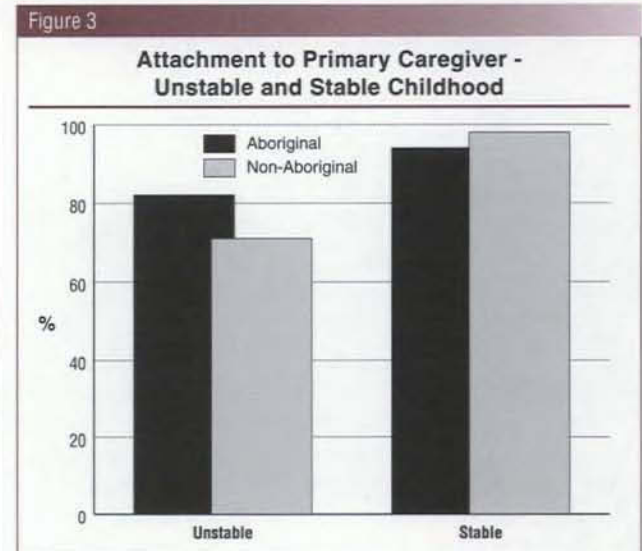
These analyses appear to demonstrate that involvement in the child welfare system is related to instability during childhood and adolescence. This is the case for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders. Since larger proportions of Aboriginal offenders were involved in the child welfare system, this seems to contribute to the differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders in stability of childhood. However, it is important to note that it is not clear whether placement in the child welfare system caused instability or whether placement in

the child welfare system was a result of other factors in the home or involvement in the criminal justice system.

### Attachment during childhood

Most offenders said that the primary person who cared for them was a parent. However, this was much more often the case among non-Aboriginal (80%) than Aboriginal (50%) offenders. A significantly larger proportion of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal offenders were cared for by other relatives (29% versus 9%), such as a grandmother.

Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders reported a great deal of attachment to their primary caregiver during childhood (90% and 91%, respectively). However, as indicated in Figure 3, those who reported an unstable childhood were less attached to their primary caregiver than those who reported a stable childhood. This was the case among Aboriginal (82% versus 94%) and non-Aboriginal offenders (71% versus 98%).



No significant differences existed in attachment to primary caregiver between those involved and not involved in the child welfare system.

### Current relationship with family

Early childhood experiences did not seem to impact on the relationship offenders currently have with their spouse or children, but did impact on their relationship with their family of origin. No significant differences were found in current contact with, or attachment to, a spouse/partner between those who reported a stable adolescence compared to those who reported an unstable adolescence. This was the case for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders. Stability of adolescence also did not seem to affect the current relationship with children. However, differences were found among Aboriginal offenders when examining contact with their



children. Aboriginal offenders with an unstable adolescence reported significantly less regular contact with their children than those who had a stable adolescence (52% versus 71%).

Offenders with an unstable adolescence tended to have a more negative relationship with parents and siblings. This was the case for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders. Among Aboriginal offenders, those who had an unstable adolescence reported significantly less regular contact with their birth father than those with a stable adolescence (28% versus 50%). Interestingly, those with an unstable adolescence actually reported more regular contact with their grandmother than those with a stable adolescence (63% versus 36%). This may be because as a child they lived with their grandmother and maintained this relationship over the years. In terms of attachment, those who had an unstable adolescence said they had less attachment to their birth mother (67% versus 92%) and birth father (46% versus 66%).

### Attachment to Aboriginal culture

A large number of Aboriginal offenders are currently attached to Aboriginal culture and participate in Aboriginal activities. Almost three-quarters (74%) of the Aboriginal offenders said that they were currently attached to Aboriginal culture, that is, they considered it part of their everyday life and felt a sense of belonging. Furthermore, 80% said that they were currently involved in Aboriginal activities, such as circles, ceremonies, sweat lodges and smudges.

Attachment to Aboriginal culture was examined for Aboriginal offenders to determine whether those with little attachment and/or an unstable childhood were more detached from Aboriginal culture than those with a great deal of attachment or a stable childhood. Interestingly, attachment to a primary caregiver during childhood did not seem to influence current attachment to Aboriginal culture. It may not be the attachment per se that influences the cultural attachment, but more so with whom the person was living. If the person was living in a home without access to traditional activities, there may be less attachment to Aboriginal culture. Since large proportions of Aboriginal offenders who were put in care were placed with non-Aboriginal families, they may not have had access to Aboriginal culture.

No significant differences were found in understanding or speaking an Aboriginal language, current attachment to Aboriginal culture, or current involvement in Aboriginal activities between those who had stable and unstable childhood experiences. However, significantly fewer of those who had an unstable childhood said that they were involved in traditional Aboriginal activities while they were growing up (38% versus 59%). It seems that involvement in Aboriginal activities and attachment

to culture may have been re-developed once the offenders entered the correctional facility.

### Conclusion

The findings from this research demonstrate that Aboriginal offenders have unstable childhood experiences, including a great deal of involvement in the child welfare system. Furthermore, involvement in the child welfare system is associated with instability. However, it is unclear whether involvement in the child welfare system is the cause of the instability, or the result of it.

The study also indicates that those with an unstable childhood were less attached to their primary caregiver while growing up, and are less attached to parents and siblings currently. This was similar for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders.

It is clear that attachment to Aboriginal culture is fairly strong among the Aboriginal offenders. However, it seems that the attachment to Aboriginal culture is gained during the institutional experience.

This research helps to demonstrate the importance of focusing on early childhood experiences in correctional programming, as well as the importance of Aboriginal culture in programs and through the use of Elders. ■

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<sup>5</sup> Cernkovich, S. A., and Giordano, P. C. (1987). Family relationships and delinquency. *Criminology* 25(2), 295-321; see also Sim, H. O., and Vuchinich, S. (1996). The declining effects of family stressors on antisocial behavior from childhood to adolescence and early adulthood. *Journal of Family Issues* 17(3), 408-427.

<sup>6</sup> Blome, W. W. (1997). What happens to foster kids: Educational experiences of a random sample of foster care youth and a matched group of non-foster care youth. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal* 14(1), 41-53; see also Brand, A. E., and Brinich, P. M. (1999). Behavior problems and mental health contacts in adopted, foster, and non adopted children. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 40(8), 1221-1229; and Roy, P., Rutter, M., and Pickles, A. (2000). Institutional Care: Risk from Family Background or Pattern of Rearing? *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 41(2), 139-148.

<sup>7</sup> Op. cit. Brand & Brinich (1999).

<sup>8</sup> Johnston, J. C. (1997). *Aboriginal offender survey: Case files and interview sample*. Research Report R-61, Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service Canada; see also MacDonald, M. (1997). Perceptions of Racism in Youth Corrections: The British Columbia Experience. *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 17(2), 329-350.

<sup>9</sup> According to studies conducted in the 1980's (e.g., Hepworth, 1980; Loucks & Timothy, 1981; Special Committee on Indian Self-Government, 1983), approximately 1% of children overall and about 4% of Aboriginal children are involved in child welfare services.



# The validity of the Custody Rating Scale for the initial security classification of Aboriginal women

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Research Branch, Correctional Service of Canada

It has been observed that Aboriginal women incarcerated in federal correctional facilities tend to be placed at higher levels of security than non-Aboriginal women. Although this observation has raised concerns that security classification procedures might not be equitable for Aboriginal women offenders, it remains to be verified that there is systematic bias. This article examines one component of the custody classification process in federal corrections, the application of the Custody Rating Scale for initial security placement.

## Offender Intake Assessment process

According to Section 30 of the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA)*, all offenders must receive a security classification of minimum, medium or maximum. One of the overarching principles, 4(d), set out in the CCRA provides that the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) must use the least restrictive measures consistent with the protection of the public, staff members and offenders. Similarly, Section 18 of the *Corrections and Conditional Release Regulations (CRR)* mandates that the rating must reflect the level of supervision and control that is necessary to safely detain the offender. However, Section 17 enumerates factors that must be considered during the security classification process such as the severity of the inmate's crime, and the inmate's social and criminal history.

## The Custody Rating Scale

The Custody Rating Scale (CRS) is an objective classification instrument that embodies some of the legislated criteria for security classification as set out in Section 17 of the CRR. The CRS is administered to both men and women offenders upon admission to federal corrections. The CRS consists of two subscales: the Institutional Adjustment (IA) subscale, and the Security Risk (SR) subscale. The IA subscale gauges five factors that have been associated with institutional misconduct: history of institutional incidents, escape history, street instability, alcohol/drug use, and age. The SR subscale consists of seven factors shown to be related to future re-offending: number of prior convictions, most serious outstanding charge, severity of current offence, sentence length, street instability, prior parole or statutory release, and age. It should be noted that, within each scale, each item is weighted differently.

Consequently, certain items have more weight in the scoring process than do others. Each subscale provides an initial security rating of minimum, medium or maximum.

## Caseworker review

The CRS is administered by caseworkers (parole officers) at intake. However, all CRS designations are reviewed by correctional caseworkers. If the caseworker is of the opinion that the offender cannot safely be managed at the recommended level of security, he/she has the authority to override the CRS. Similarly, if the caseworker believes that the offender can safely be managed at a lower level of security, then he/she has the ability to under-ride the CRS. Accordingly, caseworker reviewer discretion, independent of the CRS designation itself, could contribute to the overrepresentation of Aboriginal women at higher levels of security.

## Study sample

A study sample was created of 334 federally sentenced women offenders who were admitted to Canadian federal custody between January 1997 and January 1999. Over one-half of the sample were Caucasian (53%), 21% were Aboriginal (<1% Inuit, 6% Métis, 15% First Nations), 15% were Black, and 10% comprised other ethnic groups. For the analyses, Aboriginal women offenders ( $n = 68$ ) were compared with non-Aboriginal women offenders ( $n = 266$ ). The average age of Aboriginal women offenders (32.0 years,  $SD = 8.4$ ), did not significantly differ from that of non-Aboriginal women (33.4 years,  $SD = 9.9$ ).

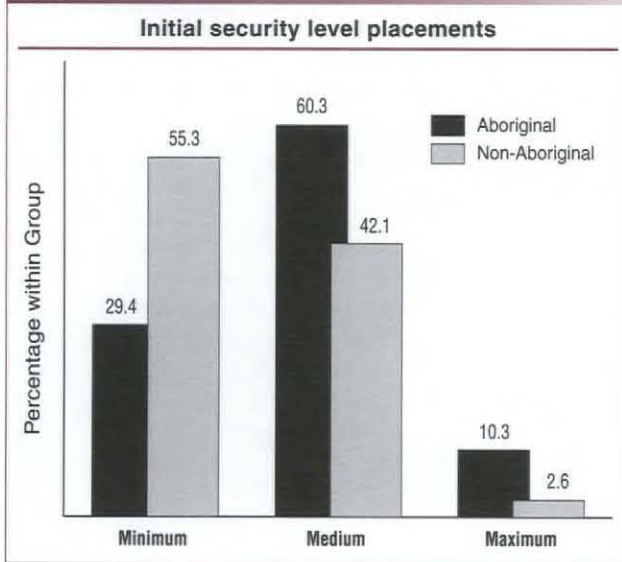
## Results

### Initial security level placements

As a group, Aboriginal women offenders were more likely than non-Aboriginal women offenders to be placed at higher levels of custody. Figure 1 clearly shows that fewer Aboriginal women offenders were placed at minimum security when compared to their non-Aboriginal counterparts (29% versus 55%). On the other hand, larger proportions of Aboriginal women offenders were placed at medium (60% versus 42%) and maximum (10% versus 3%) security. Overall, federally sentenced Aboriginal women were classified as requiring higher levels of custody and control upon admission.



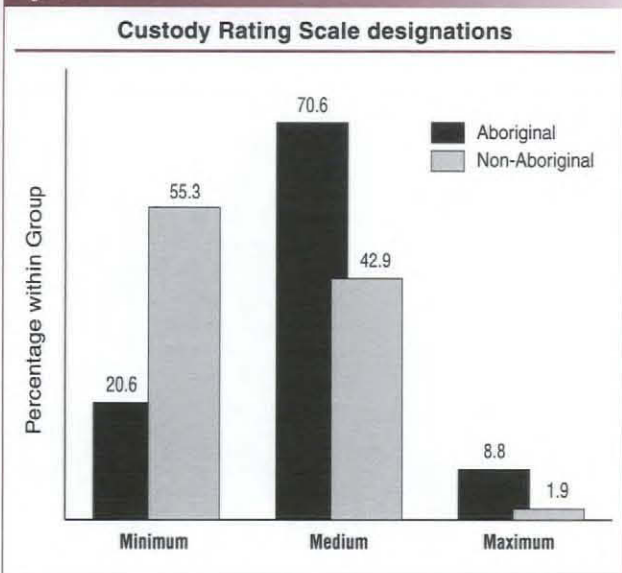
Figure 1



### Custody Rating Scale designations

Aboriginal women offenders, as a group, scored higher on the CRS than non-Aboriginal women. As Figure 2 shows, Aboriginal were less likely than non-Aboriginal women offenders to obtain a CRS security designation of minimum (21% versus 55%), and more likely to obtain a designation of medium (71% versus 43%) or maximum (9% versus 2%). This finding is consistent with their actual security level placements.

Figure 2



### CRS subscales

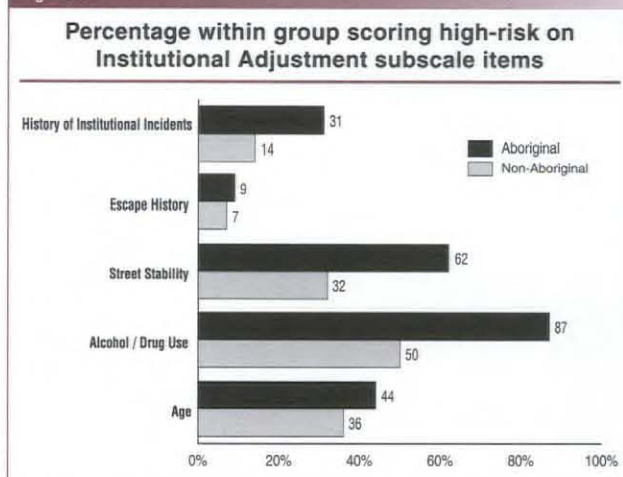
On average, Aboriginal women offenders scored higher on the IA subscale ( $M = 48.56, SD = 29.43$ ) than non-Aboriginal women ( $M = 29.72, SD = 20.54$ ). Similarly, Aboriginal women offender scored higher on the SR subscale ( $M = 70.24, SD = 17.18$ ) than non-Aboriginal women ( $M = 58.74, SD = 24.92$ ).

Notably, substantially more Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal women offenders received maximum-security designations on the IA subscale (9% versus 1%). However, within the SR subscale distribution, Aboriginal women offenders were more likely to receive a designation of medium security (76% versus 44%), and less likely to receive a designation of minimum (23% versus 56%), compared to non-Aboriginal women.

CRS designations are based on the interplay between the IA subscale and the SR subscale. The higher rating between the IA subscale and the SR subscale determines the overall rating. The pattern of results for Aboriginal women offenders provides a clear indication of how each subscale operated. Within the SR subscale, there were many medium ratings but almost no maximum ratings. In the IA subscale distribution, there were relatively few medium ratings, yet there were a considerable number of maximum ratings. Based on the pattern of these results, it is possible to infer that the SR subscale determined medium CRS designations, while the IA subscale determined maximum recommendations.

The primary sources of information for the CRS are the individual items within the IA and the SR scales. Figures 3 and 4 display CRS item contrasts between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women. The percentages represent the proportion of women within each group who had scores above the overall median.

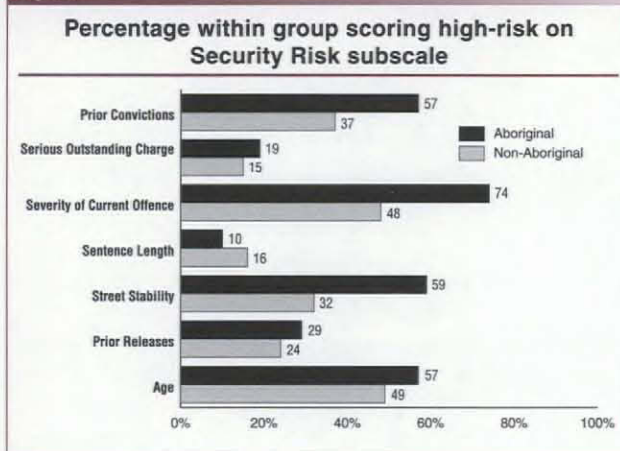
Figure 3



Within the items that compose the IA subscale, Aboriginal women offenders obtained significantly higher scores than non-Aboriginal women on three factors: history of institutional incidents; street (in)stability; and substance abuse. Within the SR subscale, Aboriginal women offenders also obtained significantly higher scores on three items: severity of current offence; prior convictions; and street instability.



Figure 4



### Caseworker review

Overall, staff overrides to the CRS did not contribute to the disproportionate security classification of Aboriginal women. The rates of CRS overrides were examined for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders. The percentage of CRS designations that were overridden within the group of Aboriginal women offenders (19%) was not significantly different from that within the non-Aboriginal group (13%).

Additionally, there were no differences with respect to the character of override decisions (up or down) between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women. For Aboriginal women, CRS overrides to higher security occurred in 6% of the cases, and overrides to lower security occurred in 13% of the cases. By comparison, 7% of non-Aboriginal women received higher security placements than designated by the CRS, and 6% were assigned to lower security placements.

### Summary

One of the benefits of using an objective classification instrument is that it is possible to observe the way in which security placement decisions are being made. Clearly, the notion of caseworker discretion over-classifying Aboriginal women offenders is not operating here. In fact, the results of this study suggest that the overrepresentation of Aboriginal women offenders at higher levels of initial security is mainly attributable to between-group differences on a number of important custody considerations. Upon intake, Aboriginal women offenders relative to their non-Aboriginal counterparts were more likely to have amassed more institutional incidents, displayed greater street instability, abused drugs and alcohol more often, recorded more prior convictions, be under sentence for more serious offences, and be of a younger age at admission. Throughout the criminological literature, the aforementioned characteristics are well-established predictors and correlates of institutional maladjustment and post-release re-offending. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that the CRS, an instrument designed specifically to reflect these concerns would necessarily yield a substantially greater number of higher initial security level placements for a group with such characteristics. ■

<sup>1</sup> 340 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0P9.

<sup>2</sup> Blanchette, K. (1997). *Risk and Need Among Federally-sentenced Female Offenders: A Comparison of Minimum-, Medium-, and Maximum-security Inmates*. Research Report R-58. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

## Access to information

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# Future demographic trends may help Canada's Aboriginal youth

Roger Boe<sup>1</sup>

Research Branch, Correctional Service of Canada

One of the principal reasons why there has been a decrease in overall crime rates in Canada since 1991 is related to changes in our demographics. Each year there are fewer younger people (i.e., those who typically are at much higher crime-risk) in the general population. Also, the annual growth rate of Canada's population has slowed since the 1960s and 1970s. Consequently, overall crime rates have been falling and this in turn has helped drive down the number of people incarcerated in prisons — numbers which have been falling fairly consistently since about 1995.

While slower population growth and an aging population characterize Canada's current and projected demographic trends, this pattern is not true for Canada's Aboriginal population. The Aboriginal growth rates are much higher than the non-Aboriginal population, and these are projected to continue for at least another decade.<sup>2</sup> However, Canada's aging population may work to the longer-term benefit of its Aboriginal peoples, as a dearth of non-Aboriginal youth over the next several decades could open up exceptional opportunities to integrate Aboriginal youth into the labour force, and may help to moderate the high rates of crime and incarceration amongst Aboriginal youth.

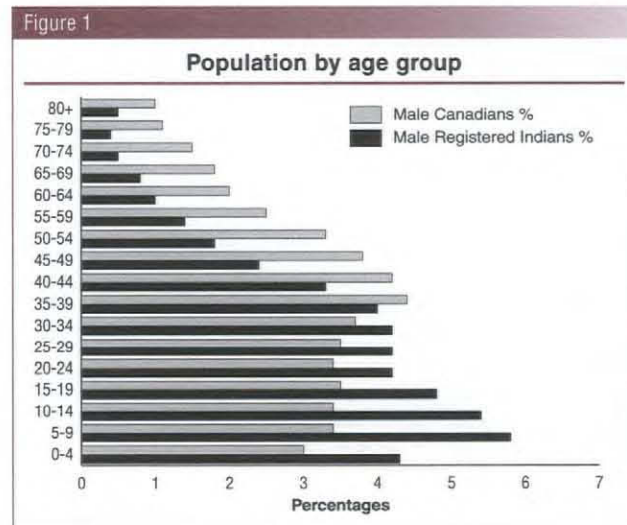
## Demographics contribute to Aboriginal over-representation

The over-representation of Aboriginal peoples in prisons is due, in part, to population demographics. The growth of Canada's Aboriginal population has been much higher in recent decades than the non-Aboriginal population. The Aboriginal population has been experiencing its own recent baby boom, proportionally, quite similar in dimensions to what the non-Aboriginal population experienced just after WW II. This baby boom is occurring just when the first of the baby boomers born to the non-Aboriginal population begin to reach late middle age. For example, Aboriginal birth rates are about 2.7 children per woman<sup>3</sup> versus the current 1.6 children for non-Aboriginal women.

As a result of the high post-war birth rates, an unprecedented number of Canadians entered their teenage and young adult (i.e., 18-29) years during the period from 1960 to 1980. A rapid increase in crime rates coincided with the entry of the baby boomers into their teenage and young adult years. That initial youth trend is now long past. The leading wave of baby boomers are now (in 2002)

passing through their fifty-fifth birthday and the trailing edge have already passed thirty. Because there were one-third fewer babies born to the baby bust generation, the aging of the boomers has resulted in large decreases in the population under age 30 (crime rates in Canada have a significant age bias — typically the population between the ages of 14 to 32 account for the majority of violent and non-violent crimes reported by the police in Canada each year).<sup>4</sup>

Similar to the overall Canadian demographics experienced in the 1960s and 1970s, the Aboriginal population in Canada today is much younger — and as a consequence there are proportionally many more Aboriginal people in the high-risk youth age groups. This can be seen in Figure 1, which illustrates the disproportionate number of male Registered Indians who are less than 30 years of age as compared to males as a whole.



Canada's Aboriginal population is still experiencing a baby boom. As a consequence there continues to be both a higher rate of population growth, and the average age of the Aboriginal population remains much younger than the non-Aboriginal population. Moreover, given the number of young children and the much higher birth rate, large increases in the Aboriginal population are predicted to occur in the next decade.<sup>5</sup> Both the rapid increases and the relative youthfulness of the Aboriginal population contribute to a disproportionate number of Aboriginal peoples in Canadian corrections versus the non-Aboriginal population.



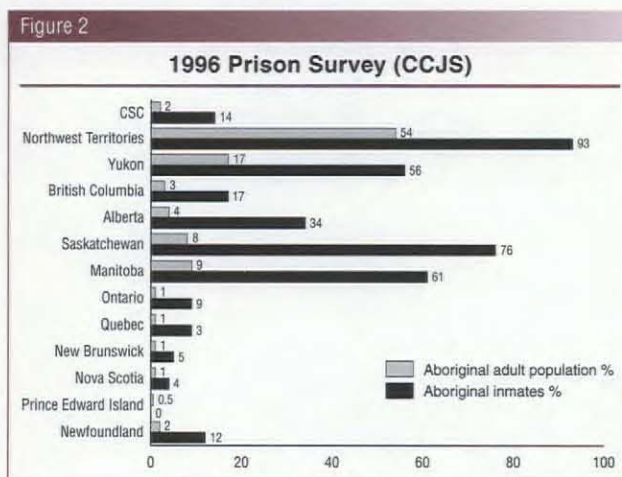
As Canada's population boomed after WW II, it also underwent increased urbanization. More than three-quarters of Canada's population now live in urban areas as compared to less than 60% at the end of WW II. It appears that a similar trend is underway within the Aboriginal population.

There seems to be a growing concentration of the young Aboriginal population in the core of the larger cities, especially throughout the West. This greater urban concentration may greatly increase the risk of contact with the justice system. Approximately 71% of Registered Indians now live off-reserve compared to just 58% in 1978. The urban population has grown steadily since 1951, when 27% of all Aboriginal people lived in large cities as compared to 64.3% in 1996.<sup>6</sup>

Carole LaPrairie<sup>7</sup> identified Aboriginal groups residing in the inner cores of large cities as being the most vulnerable to the commission of crime and criminal justice processing. More recent research by LaPrairie<sup>8</sup> has further reinforced the high contribution-rate of large Western cities to the over-representation of Aboriginal youth in the correctional systems.

### Aboriginal people over-represented in prisons

A national one-day snapshot profile of Canada's adult correctional facilities conducted by Statistics Canada in 1996 (see Figure 2), found that the proportion of Aboriginal inmates was much larger than the proportion of Aboriginal adults in the Canadian population (overall, 17% in adult corrections versus 2% in the Canadian adult population).<sup>9</sup>



The 1996 prison survey also found that the population of adult inmates was significantly younger than the Canadian population as a whole: the median age of Canadians in 1996 was 41 years whereas the median age of adult inmates was 32 years; the median age of inmates in provincial

prisons was 31 years, and in federal penitentiaries it was 34 years.<sup>10</sup>

- Aboriginal men aged 20-24 represented almost one-quarter (22%) of provincial/territorial inmates but only 9% of their population. Aboriginal inmates tended to be even younger than non-Aboriginal inmates.
- Eighteen percent of male federal inmates were between 25 and 29, compared to 10% of adult males in Canada. The median age for Aboriginal inmates was found to be 29 years compared to 32 for non-Aboriginal inmates.

Any attempt to reduce Aboriginal over-representation in crime and incarceration will therefore need to take into account the two major factors which contribute to over-representation – these offenders are mainly young, have multiple disadvantages, and reside disproportionately in the core neighbourhoods of large Western cities.

### From surplus to a deficit of youth

Canada's population profile is currently undergoing the transformation of population aging. Part of this aging of the population is due to the sheer number of baby boomers born between 1947 and 1966, and part reflects the huge disparity in the size of the generations that have come after.

#### The baby boom (1947-1966)<sup>11</sup>

Post-war birth rates peaked around 1958, at about 4 children per woman of childbearing age. Since then, however, the birth rate has declined steadily and quite rapidly until today it stands at 1.6 children per woman of child bearing age. Because of the high post-war birth rates, an unprecedented number of Canadians entered their teenage and young adult years during the period from 1960 to 1980. Now this youth trend is reversing as the leading edge of the baby boomers approaches 60, and the youngest have now passed age 30. The baby boom, both those born in Canada and those born elsewhere, totaled some 9.8 million people in 1996, almost one-third of Canada's population.

#### The baby bust (1967-1979)

The commercial introduction of the birth control pill in 1961, and the rising participation of baby boom women into the labour market, is thought to have led to the rapid decline in fertility rates over the 1960's. The result was a decline in births and a smaller birth cohort, often called the baby bust. According to the 1996 Census of Canada, 5.4 million Canadians were in this cohort.

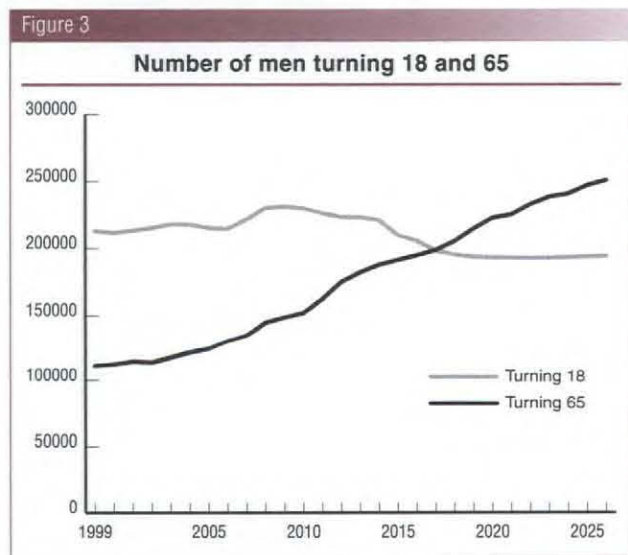
#### The baby boom echo (1980-1995)

These are the children born to the baby boomers. Although the birth rates for the baby boomers



were much lower than for their own parents, enough of them were reproducing by 1980 to create a mini-boom of their own. At its peak in 1990, the echo produced 406,000 babies from a population of 28 million compared with 479,000 from a population of only 18 million in 1959. This generation is also most noticeable in Ontario and the West – Quebec and Atlantic Canada did not have much of a baby boom echo because so many of their boomer generation have moved west. As of 1996, there are 6.9 million members of the echo generation.

Statistical calculation reveals that nearly a third fewer baby boom echo children were born than those babies born during the baby boom period of 1947-66. The longer-term implication of this generational disparity is that there are significantly fewer boomer children around to replace their parents in the labour force, as they begin to retire over the next decade. As shown in Figure 3, around year 2017 the number of Canadians who turn 65 each year will surpass the number who turn 18. Since this is typically the age where older workers retire and youth first enter the labour market on a permanent basis, this cross-over suggests that Canada may face a growing shortage of new workers post-year 2017.<sup>12</sup>



The cross-over when men reaching retirement age first exceed the number reaching the typical labour-market entry age will occur around 2017, and the gap will widen throughout the next decade and more. Each year over the next twenty-five years, the number of persons reaching potential retirement will increase significantly while the number of potential new replacements diminishes slightly. The implications are that sometime after 2017, the labour market demand may enter a “golden age” for youth. And an employment golden age for youth also — all other

things being equal – has implications for a dramatic decline in the crime rate in Canada. Not only will there be far fewer youth in the high-risk age groups, but their economic opportunities will be at an all time high.

### Shortages could enhance economic prospects of Aboriginal youth

Canada’s Aboriginal population is still in the midst of its own baby boom, at least among the Registered Indian population that resides on reserve. However, there are indications that the very high birth rates for the “status” Aboriginal populations are starting to come down. The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development’s (DIAND) latest projections estimate this population will grow by about 2% per year between 1998 and 2008. This growth would occur with an on-reserve growth rate of 3%, and an off-reserve growth rate of just 1%. The off-reserve population is expected to grow at a slower rate because of net migration back to reserve communities, coupled with lower fertility, mortality, and higher out-marriage rates off reserve.<sup>13</sup>

DIAND is also projecting significant increases in the working-age Registered Indian population (20 to 64 years), from 53% in 1998 to 56% ten years later. The current generation of Aboriginal baby boomers just born seems destined to be entering the labour market just as demand for new workers reaches a new high. Those currently in their teen and pre-teen years should face better employment prospects (see Figure 1). If First Nations and other Aboriginal leaders and Elders can prevail on these youth to better their education and job skills, the potential is there for Aboriginal youth to benefit significantly from the predicted labour shortages. This in turn could help to overcome the economic and social marginalization that has characterized previous generations.

As LaPrairie has noted (1996), today’s marginalized Aboriginal youth who have migrated to the major Western urban areas often have few tools for survival or integrating into mainstream society. As a growing number continue to migrate to live in urban settings, their lack of education and employment skills, coupled with substance abuse problems and personal histories of family violence and dysfunction, has contributed to negative peer associations and the adoption of anti-social behaviour.

The next twenty years should result in several changes to the factors in this equation. It is likely we will see an enormous labour market demand for Canada’s shrinking youth population, and this demand would extend to Aboriginal youth – especially those with some education and job



skills. Even today, with Employment Equity legislation as a motivation, public and private sector employers can be found chasing Aboriginal youth – especially those with job skills or a higher education.

However, many Aboriginal youth are being passed-by today because of the factors that LaPrairie has referred to. Canada's leaders need to find ways to ensure that a significantly larger number of the Aboriginal youth in future will

have the basic education and employment skills to take advantage of the opportunities that will surely unfold. This would greatly assist in reducing the marginalization, and the crime and incarceration disparities that currently exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth. Now is an opportune time to begin the planning necessary to ensure demographics trends to work in favour of Aboriginal youth. ■

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<sup>2</sup> There is some need for caution in interpreting Aboriginal population growth since 1985 as some of this growth was due to Bill C-31. For example, in: *Ethnic Mobility and the Demographic Growth of Canada's Aboriginal Populations from 1986 to 1996*, Eric Guimond cautioned: "Probably a major factor is Bill C-31, promulgated in 1985, which changed the rules for transmission of legal Indian status" (Presentation to CSC Research Branch staff, by Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development).

<sup>3</sup> The proportion of young people aged 15-24 (18%) was also greater among the Aboriginal population than in the total population (13%). Moreover, there were 491 Aboriginal children under age 5 for every 1,000 Aboriginal women of childbearing age in 1996, which is about 70% higher than the ratio for the general population. See Boe, R (2000). *Aboriginal Inmates: Demographic Trends and Projections. Forum on Corrections Research, 12(1), 7-9.*

<sup>4</sup> According to Statistics Canada, non-violent crimes are more often committed by persons age 14 to 20 years. In 1997, the largest single age group of persons charged by police with non-violent crimes are persons 16 years of age. The ages for persons charged with violent offences peaks at age 17 with a smaller peak at age 33. The involvement of persons in violent crime over the age of 32 continually decreases with age. *Canadian Crime Statistics (1997). Juristat (85-002), 18(11).*

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada (1995). *Projections of populations with Aboriginal ancestry, Canada, Provinces/Regions and Territories, 1991-2016.* Catalogue 91-5390 XPE.

<sup>6</sup> LaPrairie, C. (2002). *Aboriginal over-representation in the criminal justice system: A tale of nine cities. Canadian Journal of Criminology, April, 181-208.* Also see: Drost, H. (2001). *Labour Market outcomes and Income Distribution of Aboriginal Residents in Canada's Metropolitan Areas.* Prepared for the Policy Conference on Options for Aboriginal Candidates in Canada's Cities. Regina, Saskatchewan.

<sup>7</sup> LaPrairie, C. (1992) *Dimensions of Aboriginal Over-Representation in Correctional Institutions and Implications for Crime Prevention.* Ottawa, ON: Solicitor General of Canada.

<sup>8</sup> Op. cit. LaPrairie (2002).

<sup>9</sup> Trevethan, S., and MacKillop, B (1998). *A One-day Snapshot of Inmates in Canada's Adult Correctional Facilities. Juristat (85-002) 18(8).*

<sup>10</sup> Finn, A., Trevethan, S., Carrier G., and Kowalski, M. (1999). *Female Inmates, Aboriginal Inmates, and Inmates Serving Life Sentences: A One Day Snapshot. Juristat (85-002) 19(5).*

<sup>11</sup> David Foot has defined the baby boom (see Chapter 1, pp. 13-25) as the group in Canada born between 1947 and 1966. The baby boom occurred in only four Western countries – besides Canada, there were post-war baby booms in the United States, Australia and New Zealand. However, Canada's boom was the loudest in the industrialized world. The American baby boom started one year earlier (in 1946) and also ended one year earlier (1965). Foot believes this is because American troops were brought home earlier, in 1945, and babies started appearing in 1946. Canadian troops, on the other hand, came home later so Canadian births did not start to leap upward until 1947. The Canadian boom was also larger – at its peak in 1957, there were 3.7 children per family in the USA, versus over 4 per Canadian family in 1959, and just 3 babies per family in Australia at its peak. 2012 is the year that the leading edge of the baby boom will reach the standard retirement age of 65. From that point, and for the two decades following, the ranks of Canada's seniors will begin a period of rapid growth. See: Foot, D. K., and Stoffman, D. (1996). *Boom, Bust and Echo: How to Profit from the Coming Demographic Shift.* Toronto, ON: Macfarlane Walter & Ross.

<sup>12</sup> These statistics are based on population projections made by Statistics Canada after the 1996 Census. The results of the 2001 Census are just beginning to appear, and show that Canada's population growth between 1996 and 2001 was even lower than anticipated. However, since the vast majority of Canadians who will turn either 18 or 65 in 2016 are living in Canada today, we can be fairly certain that the cross-over depicted in Figure 3 will still be valid when Statistics Canada updates its population projections with the 2001 Census results.

<sup>13</sup> Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (2000). *Registered Indian Population Projections for Canada and Regions 1998-2008.* Ottawa, ON: Author.



# A profile of Aboriginal offenders in federal facilities and serving time in the community

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 Research Branch, Correctional Service of Canada

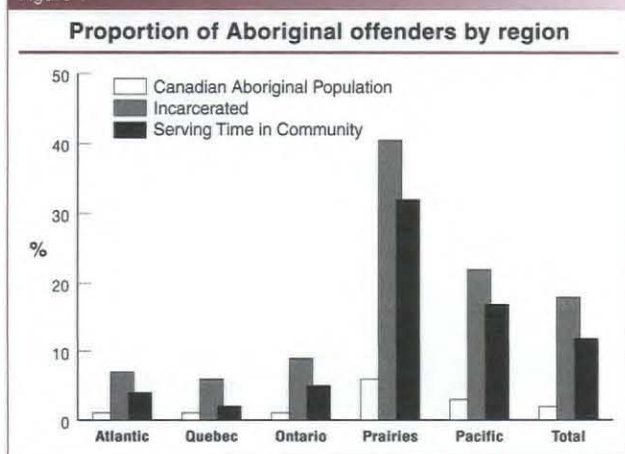
The disproportionate involvement of Aboriginal persons at all stages of the criminal justice system has been recognized for some time.<sup>2</sup> The January 2001 Speech from the Throne discusses the priority of addressing issues facing Aboriginal people by noting that "... Canada must take the measures needed to significantly reduce the percentage of Aboriginal people entering the criminal justice system, so that within a generation it is no higher than the Canadian average".<sup>3</sup> In an attempt to better understand the reasons for the over-representation and the programming needs of Aboriginal offenders, this article profiles Aboriginal offenders incarcerated in federal facilities and serving time in the community.

## Aboriginal offenders are over-represented in all regions

Currently, on any given day, approximately 2,200 Aboriginal offenders are incarcerated in federal facilities, representing 18% of the incarcerated population. Furthermore, approximately 1,100 Aboriginal offenders are serving time in the community, representing 12% of those on conditional release.<sup>4</sup> Since Aboriginal people represent about 2% of the adult population in Canada,<sup>5</sup> it is clear that Aboriginal people are over-represented in the federal correctional system.

As illustrated in Figure 1, Aboriginal offenders are over-represented in all regions of Canada. However, in the Prairie region, 41% of all federally-incarcerated offenders and 32% of offenders serving time in the community are Aboriginal, compared to 6% in the Prairies population.

Figure 1



## Incarcerated Population

### Young, single, uneducated and unemployed males

As illustrated in Table 1, while the largest proportion of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders are male, the Aboriginal offender population is comprised of significantly more women than the non-Aboriginal offender population (4% versus 2%).

Table 1

	Characteristics	
	Aboriginal %	Non-Aboriginal %
Women	4	2 ***
< 35 at admission	69	55 ***
Single at admission	51	48 **
< Grade 8 at admission	26	18 ***
Unemployed at admission	75	66 ***

\*\*\*p < .001; \*\*p < .01; \*p < .05

Aboriginal offenders tend to be younger at admission to federal custody than non-Aboriginal offenders. Sixty-nine percent of Aboriginal offenders are less than 35 at the time of admission, compared to 55% of non-Aboriginal offenders. The mean age at the time of admission is 31 for Aboriginal offenders compared to 34 for non-Aboriginal offenders.

About one-half of all offenders are single at the time of admission to federal custody. However, slightly larger proportions of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal offenders are single (51% versus 48%).

Aboriginal offenders have lower levels of education than non-Aboriginal offenders. One-quarter (26%) of incarcerated Aboriginal offenders have less than a grade 8 education upon admission to the institution, compared to 18% of their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Similarly, Aboriginal offenders are more likely to be unemployed at the time of admission than non-Aboriginal offenders. Three-quarters (75%) of incarcerated Aboriginal offenders are unemployed at the time of admission to federal custody, compared to two-thirds (66%) of non-Aboriginal offenders.

Over two-thirds (68%) of the Aboriginal offenders are First Nations, 28% are Métis, and 4% are Inuit. This is a similar distribution as in the Canadian population (68%, 27%, and 5%, respectively).<sup>6</sup>



Although the results indicate that Aboriginal offenders tend to be younger, less educated and more often unemployed than non-Aboriginal offenders, these differences also exist in the general Canadian population. Therefore, the federal offender population is likely a reflection of what is occurring in society as a whole.<sup>7</sup>

**Incarcerated for violent offences**

Aboriginal offenders are more likely to be incarcerated for crimes against the person than non-Aboriginal offenders. This is the case for 84% of Aboriginal offenders compared to 77% of non-Aboriginal offenders. As illustrated in Table 2, a larger proportion of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal offenders are currently incarcerated for homicide/attempted murder (29% versus 27%), assault (15% versus 9%) and sexual assault (17% versus 14%). Non-Aboriginal offenders are proportionately more often incarcerated for drug-related offences (8% versus 3%), robbery (25% versus 22%) and property-related offences (10% versus 8%).

Table 2

Most Serious Current Offence	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal
	%	%
Homicide/Attempted Murder	29	27 *
Assault	15	9 ***
Sexual Assault	17	14 ***
Robbery	22	25 ***
Other Violent	1	2 **
Property	8	10 **
Drugs	3	8 ***
Impaired Driving	1	<1 (ns)
Other Criminal Code/Federal Statute	4	5 (ns)

\*\*\*p < .001; \*\*p < .01; \*p < .05; ns = not significant

Aboriginal offenders tend to have fewer convictions for the current admission to federal custody. One-third of Aboriginal offenders (31%) have one current conviction, compared to 25% of non-Aboriginal offenders.

Although they are incarcerated for more violent offences, Aboriginal offenders in federal facilities are serving shorter aggregate sentences than non-Aboriginal offenders. The average aggregate sentence for Aboriginal offenders (excluding those serving life sentences) is approximately 5.5 years, compared to 6.1 years for non-Aboriginal offenders.

Aboriginal offenders admitted to federal custody tend to receive higher levels of custody. A larger proportion of Aboriginal offenders (24%) are rated at the maximum level of security on the Custody Rating Scale at the time of admission, as compared to non-Aboriginal offenders (19%). In addition,

while 19% of non-Aboriginal offenders are rated at the minimum level of security, only 10% of Aboriginal offenders are rated at this level.

**Extensive criminal history**

Aboriginal offenders tend to have more extensive criminal histories than non-Aboriginal offenders. In terms of youth court, 64% of incarcerated Aboriginal offenders have a youth court history, compared to 45% of non-Aboriginal offenders. Although the discrepancy is not as great as youth court histories, Aboriginal offenders also have more extensive adult criminal histories. Overall, 90% of incarcerated Aboriginal offenders have a prior adult court history compared to 84% of non-Aboriginal offenders. Aboriginal offenders also have more adult court appearances than non-Aboriginal offenders. Nearly one-half (45%) of Aboriginal offenders have 15 or more prior adult court appearances, compared to 31% of non-Aboriginal offenders.

In addition, a larger proportion of Aboriginal offenders have prior adult dispositions such as community supervision (81% versus 73%), provincial custody (81% versus 70%). However, the same proportion of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders have prior federal custody (33% each).

Finally, a larger proportion of Aboriginal offenders have failed on community-based sanctions (70% versus 58%), received segregation (38% versus 33%), escape/unlawfully at large (35% versus 26%), were reclassified to higher custody level (23% versus 19%), and failed on conditional release (47% versus 41%).

In sum, it appears that Aboriginal offenders have had more extensive contact with the criminal justice system prior to their current incarceration.

Aboriginal offenders are also rated as higher risk to re-offend than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of Aboriginal offenders were rated as high risk to re-offend on the intake assessment, compared to 57% of non-Aboriginal offenders.

Finally, larger proportions of Aboriginal offenders are assessed as having low potential for reintegration. Over two-thirds (69%) of incarcerated Aboriginal offenders are rated as having low reintegration potential at the time of intake, compared to 36% of non-Aboriginal offenders.

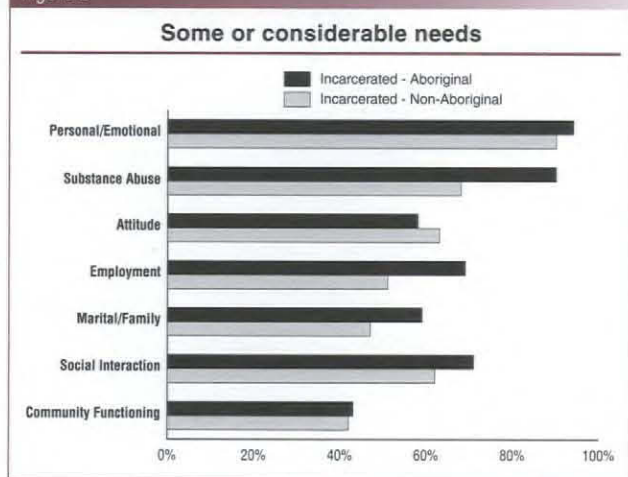
**Present a variety of needs**

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders in federal custody are rated with different needs for programming. Overall, larger proportions of incarcerated Aboriginal offenders are assessed as



being high need (80% versus 64%). As illustrated in Figure 2, larger proportions of incarcerated Aboriginal offenders are rated as having some or considerable need in the areas of personal/emotional, substance abuse, social interaction/associates, employment, and marital/family. Aboriginal offenders have particularly high needs for personal/emotional issues (96%) and substance abuse (92%). In contrast, a larger proportion of non-Aboriginal offenders have high needs in the areas of attitude. No significant differences emerged in the area of community functioning.

Figure 2



### Offenders serving time in the community

Aboriginal offenders serving time in the community have similar socio-demographic and offence profiles as those currently incarcerated, with a few exceptions. Larger proportions of Aboriginal offenders on release are women as compared to those incarcerated (7% versus 4%). Also, Aboriginal offenders serving time in the community tend to have slightly less serious offence profiles. For instance, the most serious current conviction for 74% of those serving time in the

community is a violent offence, compared to 84% of those incarcerated. Furthermore, they tend to have a less extensive criminal history.

At the time of release into the community, differences still exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders. About one-quarter (28%) of the Aboriginal offenders serving time in the community were considered high risk to re-offend at the time of release, compared to 15% of non-Aboriginal offenders. Similarly, larger proportions were considered to have low reintegration potential (23% versus 13%) and low motivation for intervention (17% versus 11%).

Furthermore at the time of release into the community, 29% of Aboriginal offenders compared to 19% of non-Aboriginal offenders were rated as high need overall. In terms of specific needs, larger proportions of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal offenders are considered to have some or considerable need in the area of personal/emotional issues such as psychological well-being or depression (76% versus 59%) and substance abuse (63% versus 36%). Aboriginal offenders are also higher need in the areas of employment (48% versus 33%), marital/family (45% versus 27%), associates/social interaction such as criminal acquaintances (44% versus 36%) and community functioning (29% versus 25%).

### Summary

This profile confirms the results from previous studies that compare Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders in federal and provincial/territorial corrections.<sup>8</sup> The differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders, and the issues facing Aboriginal offenders, point to the importance of providing appropriate programming within federal facilities and upon release to the community to address their needs. This would move towards addressing the call from the Speech from the Throne to reduce the percentage of Aboriginal people entering the criminal justice system. ■

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<sup>2</sup> For example, see Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996). *Bridging the cultural divide: A report on Aboriginal people and criminal justice and Canada*. Ottawa, ON: Ministry of Supply and Services Canada.

<sup>3</sup> Government of Canada (2001). *Speech from the Throne to open the first session of the 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament of Canada*. Ottawa, Ontario.

<sup>4</sup> The data are based on a one-day snapshot of offenders incarcerated in federal facilities or serving time on conditional release in the community in March 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada (1996). *Census of Population*.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> For example, see Motiuk, L., and Nafekh, M. (2000). Aboriginal offenders in federal corrections: A profile. *Forum on Corrections Research*, 12(1), 10-15. Also see Trevethan, S., Tremblay, S., and Carter, J. (2000). *The over-representation of Aboriginal people in the justice system*. Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.



# A needs profile of serious and/or violent Aboriginal youth in prison

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**T**here is significant research in Canada on the needs of Aboriginal offenders in the Canadian criminal justice system.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, there is more recent research on the needs profile of Canada's young offender population, with particular attention to certain sub-groups of offenders, such as girls and Aboriginal young offenders.<sup>3</sup> As with Aboriginal adults, a major policy concern is the over-representation of Aboriginal young offenders in custody. A related policy issue involves young offenders, non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal, who engage in the most serious forms of violence and/or engage in habitual or chronic patterns of offending. It is necessary for correctional facilities to identify and target the multi-problem needs profile of this segment of the young offender population, since these offenders are the ones who are most likely to receive a custody disposition following conviction, and require the most intensive and wide ranging intervention and treatment strategies. We contend that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal serious and/or violent young offenders are typically characterized by a range of serious and entrenched psychological, emotional, behavioral, family, abuse, substance use, education, peer, and identity problems that pose specific challenges for correctional intervention, treatment, and reintegration. The focus of this article is to describe the needs profile of serious and/or violent incarcerated Aboriginal young offenders.<sup>4</sup>

**T**he findings presented in this article derive from the Vancouver *Serious and Violent Incarcerated Young Offenders* Study. The primary focus of this research project is to assess the impact that a period of incarceration has on a young offender's intentions and decisions to recidivate. The project was conducted at two open and two closed custody facilities in the Greater Vancouver Region, British Columbia. In total, 500 incarcerated young offenders agreed to participate in the project. Subjects participated in a one-on-one semi-structured interview that discussed a wide range of issues, including offending history, experiences with all facets of the criminal justice system, education and employment, family life and living situation, drug and/or alcohol use/abuse, physical and mental health, sexual and physical victimization, peers, identity formation, and attitudes towards various sentencing models, including restorative justice initiatives. In addition to the interview, each participant's institutional file was reviewed. This file review provided additional information on each youth and served

to corroborate the information obtained in the interview. The research protocols required that every youth sentenced to one of the participating youth custody facilities be approached, resulting in a response rate of 93%. The primary reasons for not participating in the research project were that the interview time conflicted with either a scheduled visit or a scheduled program.

## Current and Past Offences

Of the 500 participants, 100 (20%) self-identified as being of Aboriginal descent. The 20% of the sample identified as Aboriginal constitutes a substantial over-representation of Aboriginal youth in British Columbia's youth custody facilities. The disproportionality is greater for Aboriginal girls since they represent 35% of the Aboriginal sample, compared to 21% of the non-Aboriginal sample. The gender distinctions for both samples is important since it is increasingly evident that the needs profile of incarcerated serious and/or violent young female offenders is significantly different from males.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, separate needs profiles for Aboriginal female and Aboriginal male offenders are presented. The age range for both samples is between 12 and 18, with the mean age for Aboriginal male offenders being 16.2 and 15.8 for females (14% of the male sample and 12% of the females were 14 years old or younger).

An examination of the offenders' current and past criminal histories for the Aboriginal youth in the sample demonstrate that these youth are in dire need of effective intervention and treatment programs (see Table 1). In terms of their current offence, using the Uniform Crime Reporting system<sup>6</sup> to code the youth's most serious charge that resulted in their current conviction, for the Aboriginal youth, 5% of the males and 9% of the females are incarcerated for murder. This is even more troubling when one considers that of the original 500 participants in the study, 14 youth were convicted of murder and one-half of these are Aboriginal. Equally disturbing is the higher murder figure for Aboriginal females than males. This finding, however, should not be interpreted to suggest that Aboriginal female young offenders are more likely to engage in murder than male young offenders. Rather, this finding is more likely an artifact of when and where the research was conducted. With respect to the youth's current



most serious offence, 41% of males are incarcerated for a violent offence, while this is the case for 34% of the females. While the findings for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal males were similar (41% and 43%, respectively), a smaller proportion of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal girls were incarcerated for a violent offence (34% versus 42%). Corrado, Odgers, and Cohen argue that the high rate of custodial sentences for females convicted only of delinquent offences is a policy concern. They maintain that the use of custody for minor offences reflects judicial and probation officers' concern for both the special needs of female young offenders and patriarchal notions of protection.<sup>7</sup> Specifically, a large portion of the Aboriginal girls in the sample were incarcerated for behaviours related to their participation in the sex trade.

relatively short period of time. Young offenders who have been convicted of at least one violent offence and have at least four prior convictions require the most intensive rehabilitation and treatment strategies as there is a high correlation between serious and/or violent offending and violent recidivism following release from custody.<sup>9</sup> In addition, high levels of chronicity indicate that previous attempts at rehabilitation with these youth have failed.

Given that this sample is exclusively a custodial sample, all offenders received either an open or closed custody disposition. All probation sentences, therefore, are in addition to a period of incarceration. Both Aboriginal male and female young offenders received, on average, 15 months of probation. It is interesting to note that while the

Table 1

Current and past criminal history				
	Aboriginal males	Aboriginal females	Non-Aboriginal males	Non-Aboriginal females
<b>Most serious current offence:</b>				
Murder	4.6%	8.6%	1.4%	2.5%
Sex offences	1.5%	2.9%	1.7%	0.0%
Robbery and assaults	35.4%	22.9%	40.2%	39.3%
Property offences	43.1%	20.0%	36.1%	15.2%
Delinquent offences	15.4%	45.6%	20.6%	43.0%
<b>Most serious lifetime offence:</b>				
Murder	6.2%	8.6%	1.7%	2.5%
Sex offences	4.6%	2.9%	4.1%	2.5%
Robbery and assaults	52.3%	51.5%	68.9%	62.0%
Property offences	35.4%	28.6%	23.6%	26.6%
Delinquent offences	1.5%	8.4%	6.4%	6.4%
<b>Current sentence length:</b>				
Mean amount of probation	15 months	15 months	15.5 months	15.5 months
Mean amount of open custody	65 days	43 days	102 days	77 days
Mean amount of closed custody	139 days	14 days	204 days	427 days
<b>Lifetime sentence length:</b>				
Total time of probation	43 months	31 months	37 months	30 months
Total time of open custody	190 days	82 days	52 days	32 days
Total time of closed custody	219 days	109 days	67 days	30 days

Over their entire criminal careers, 63% of the Aboriginal male and female young offenders have had at least one conviction for a violent offence, which is less than among non-Aboriginal male and female young offenders (75% and 67%, respectively).

Using the cutoff of four or more convictions to establish chronicity,<sup>8</sup> 55% of Aboriginal male offenders and 43% of the Aboriginal female offenders can be classified as a habitual or chronic offender. It is interesting that both genders have a mean age of 14.4 for their first contact with the criminal justice system. However, when you consider the mean number of convictions for these youth by their mean age, these offenders are engaging in a large number of offences in a

non-Aboriginal sample received considerably more time in custody for their current offences, both male and female Aboriginal young offenders have spent significantly more time in custody over their lifetimes. Over their lifetimes, Aboriginal male offenders have been sentenced, in total, to an average of 43 months probation, while Aboriginal female offenders have been sentenced to a total of 31 months of probation. In addition, both Aboriginal male and female offenders have served a significant period of time in custody, especially considering the fact that their mean age is 16. Over their lifetime, Aboriginal male offenders have spent, on average, a total of 409 days in either open or closed custody, while Aboriginal female offenders have spent, on average, a total of



191 days in custody. Not only do these custody and probation figures speak to the seriousness of these Aboriginal offenders and their offences, but it also suggests that custody facilities may have a significant period of time in which to implement treatment and rehabilitation programs to address the needs of these young offenders.

### Education

In terms of education needs, the Aboriginal youth in this sample pose several serious challenges. First, only 46% of Aboriginal males and 54% of Aboriginal females were enrolled in school at the time that they committed their current offence. Similarly, 52% of the non-Aboriginal males and 53% of the non-Aboriginal females were enrolled in school. The mean grade completed, by both those who were enrolled in school and those who are not enrolled in school, for both genders, is grade 8 for the entire sample. Keeping in mind that the mean age of this sample is 16, these youth are two to three academic years behind their peers.

For the Aboriginal youth in the sample, when considering their attendance at school when enrolled, 94% of males report skipping school with 57% of those reporting frequency rates of daily to a few times a week. Fully, 91% of females report skipping school with 71% of those reporting frequency rates of daily to a few times a week. Also, 96% of the boys and 85% of the girls report getting into trouble at school. It should be noted that getting into trouble at school is operationalized as behaviour that could result in suspension or expulsion. The most common forms of trouble for both genders of Aboriginal youth are physical fights with students, teachers, and administrators, drug use, cheating, and truancy. It is also troubling to see the age at which these behaviours begin. Aboriginal male offenders report a mean age of 10 years of age for getting into trouble at school, while Aboriginal girls report a mean onset age of 10.6 years. Another important indicator of poor commitment to school is the number of times that these Aboriginal youth have changed school when not required by academic graduation or grade advancement. Males report changing schools 5.88 times, while females report 4.94 school changes. The educational needs of these Aboriginal young offenders is extremely important given the low commitment to school and the significant degree of academic failure. While in custody, these youth clearly require education programs and strategies that will foster self-esteem, improve their overall reading and writing skills, and build a positive attitude and commitment to education.

### Home Life

An examination of the Aboriginal offender's living situation and family background adds to their complicated needs profile. At the time that they committed their current offence, 42% of males and 35% of females were living with a member of their immediate family. For the non-Aboriginal sample, 49% of the males and 36% of the females were living with a member of their immediate family. It must be noted that for both samples, the majority were living in single-mother households, where the mother was either unemployed or employed in a low-paying job. In addition, for the Aboriginal sample 33% of males and 56% of females were either living alone, on the streets, or as a ward of the state. For the non-Aboriginal youth in the sample, 45% of males and 63% of females were living alone, on the streets, or as a ward of the state. Related to their participation in the sex trade, many of the females in the sample were living in conditions that put them at risk, not only for offending, but for their personal well-being, such as living on the street or with their pimp.

For the entire sample, their primary home is characterized by high levels of dysfunction, both in terms of their relationships with their primary caregivers and the linear family histories of these caregivers. For the Aboriginal youth in the sample, 76% of males and 97% of females report that they have left their primary home on their own volition to live somewhere else. For Aboriginal boys, the earliest age that they decided to leave their primary home is 12.1 years old, while for girls the earliest age is 11.47. Moreover, these youth are leaving their primary homes quite frequently. Aboriginal males have left their home, on average, 9.54 times, while females have left their home 14.97 times. They report being kicked out of their homes an average of 2.53 times beginning at age 14, while females report being kicked out of their homes an average of 3.43 times beginning at age 13.5. Perhaps the most striking finding is the mean number of places, other than their primary home, that these Aboriginal youth have lived at for 3 months or more. Males report living, on average, in 9 places other than their primary home, while females report that they have lived, on average, in 13 other places. This level of mobility, and the weak family, education, peer, and work bonds that high levels of mobility create between a youth and their caregivers form a central aspect of these youth's needs profile. While youth custody facilities are, by their very nature, transitory, and should not be used to provide a degree of stability for offenders, treatment and rehabilitation programs could focus on teaching youth to identify and resolve interpersonal problems in pro-social, productive ways.



In addition to high rates of mobility, Aboriginal serious and violent young offenders are characterized by extremely high levels of family dysfunction (see Table 2). In all categories, Aboriginal youth have higher rates than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. The vast majority of both Aboriginal males and females report that at least one family member suffers from alcoholism and drug abuse. The results also found high rates of family members being a victim of physical abuse, and 58% of the females report at least one family member being a victim of sexual abuse. Moreover, more than two-thirds of the Aboriginal sample report that at least one family member has a criminal report. As such, not only do these youth require more stability in their family life, and strategies and techniques to assist them in developing stronger family bonds, they may also be in need of mentors and/or positive role models from within their families and communities to assist them in making the transition from offender to pro-social members of their communities.

with 94% of males and females reporting using alcohol. Obviously, a key characteristic of these offenders' needs profile is effective substance abuse programs that target the physical, emotional, and psychological addictions of drugs and alcohol. Rehabilitation and treatment strategies are far more problematic and challenging when implemented with drug addicted youth. However, these youth do not present with one need, but a myriad of serious needs.

The treatment of Aboriginal young offenders is likely to be ineffective if the focus is exclusively on the drug and alcohol problems of these youth. For example, both samples of youth have experienced high rate of physical and sexual abuse. Fully, 43% of Aboriginal males and 80% of Aboriginal females report being the victim of physical abuse, while 37% of non-Aboriginal males and 55% of non-Aboriginal females report being a victim of physical abuse. Moreover, 13% of Aboriginal males and 65% of Aboriginal females (compared to 12% of non-Aboriginal males and 45% of non-Aboriginal females) report being a victim of sexual abuse. A youth's sexual and physical abuse history has to be central to any treatment strategy as the interaction between, for example, drug and/or alcohol use, being a victim of sexual and/or physical abuse, and participating in the sex trade has to be considered simultaneously. A multiple needs treatment strategy is even more important given that substance use/abuse and being a victim of abuse are key risk factors for violence and other offending behaviours.<sup>10</sup> This policy challenge is further complicated since it is

not evident how these risk factors and outcome variables interact. In other words, the needs of these youth require a holistic strategy that considers their multi-problem profile, rather than a large number of unrelated programs that deal exclusively with one problem or another. As such, any needs profile of Aboriginal serious and/or violent incarcerated young offenders must take into consideration their high rates of drug and alcohol use and their histories of being physically and/or sexually victimized.

Moreover, Aboriginal incarcerated young offenders present a wide range of mental health concerns and issues surrounding anger management. In evaluating the findings below, it must be kept in mind that these are self-reported mental health measures with the corroboration of official diagnoses. Still, one of the most commonly diagnosed mental disorders for all youth is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). On a self-report indicator of ADHD, 33% of

Table 2

	Family dysfunction			
	Aboriginal males	Aboriginal females	Non-Aboriginal males	Non-Aboriginal females
Alcoholism	85.9%	88.2%	70.6%	45.3%
Drug abuse	73.8%	73.5%	57.1%	55.3%
Victim of physical abuse	53.3%	75.0%	44.5%	55.4%
Victim of sexual abuse	19.3%	57.6%	17.3%	33.8%
Mental disorder	16.1%	29.4%	21.8%	32.0%
Criminal record	78.1%	70.6%	66.9%	69.3%
Foster care	68.9%	81.8%	30.8%	32.9%

### Personal Issues

In terms of their own level of dysfunction, Aboriginal serious and/or violent young offenders present a myriad of problems since 95% of males and 94% of females report using drugs. While this is not surprising in a sample of serious and/or violent young offenders, the types of drugs being used and their frequency is quite alarming. If only those drugs that the Aboriginal offenders use daily or a few times a week are considered, 81% of males and 60% of females report marijuana use, 12% of males and 43% of females report crack use, 8% of males and 17% of females report heroin use, and 6% of males and 31% of females report cocaine use. While the rates of hard drug use is high for both genders, the level of hard drug use is extremely alarming for the Aboriginal females in this sample. Moreover, the age of drug use onset is very young. The age of onset for Aboriginal males is 11.11 years old, while it is 11.91 for Aboriginal females. Age of onset for alcohol use is 11.63 for Aboriginal males and 12.66 for Aboriginal females



Aboriginal males report that, in the past, either a parent, teacher, counsellor, psychologist, or psychiatrist has told them they have ADHD, while 20% actually believe that they suffer from this disorder. For Aboriginal females, 18% have been told they have ADHD, while 16% believe that they have this disorder. Moreover, 61% of Aboriginal males and 62% of Aboriginal females report that they get angry easily and have trouble controlling their tempers. In addition, 23% of the entire Aboriginal sample thinks they have a mental disorder. The most commonly cited disorders include depression, schizophrenia, and anti-social personality disorder. Given these self-report rates, it is surprising that only 50% of Aboriginal males and 60% of Aboriginal females have been sent for a mental health assessment while in custody. Based on other research, the needs profile for Aboriginal serious and/or violent young offenders must include assessment and treatment strategies to deal with a number of mental health issues, such as ADHD, conduct disorder, fetal alcohol syndrome, fetal alcohol effect, and anti-social personality disorder.

A final important consideration in a needs profile of Aboriginal serious and/or violent young offenders is peer groups. Three-quarters of Aboriginal males and 85% of Aboriginal females report that their peer group is delinquent. As discussed above, with respect to family dysfunction, it is important to provide these youth with mentors and role models that can serve to assist youth in developing supportive, pro-social peers.

Aboriginal incarcerated serious and/or violent young offenders are multi-problemated youth. They are not simply drug and/or alcohol addicted, but have poor commitments to school and employment, come from highly dysfunctional homes, have high rates of mobility, weak pro-social bonds, are victims of sexual and/or physical abuse, have a myriad of personality and mental disorders, have poor cognitive and interpersonal skills, delinquent peers groups, and exhibit a chronic offending lifestyle. For Aboriginal females, while similar in many respect to their Aboriginal male counterparts, their needs profile are more strongly connected to life on the street and the sex trade. Female drug and alcohol abuse patterns further increase their risk of being physically and sexually victimized. In order to meet the needs of Aboriginal incarcerated young offenders, a holistic treatment strategy that addresses the entire complex of interrelated problems is required. Moreover, the most effective approaches are likely those that reflect and incorporate the traditions and culture of Aboriginal young offenders. Implementing culturally-sensitive and culturally-centered rehabilitation and treatment strategies, such as the use of sweat-lodges, healing circles, Aboriginal community members as role models or mentors, and smudging, are likely to be more effective in meeting the needs of Aboriginal young offenders in custody. ■

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<sup>2</sup> Griffiths, C. T., and Cunningham, A. H. (2003). *Canadian Criminal Justice: A Primer*. Toronto, ON: Thomson Nelson.

<sup>3</sup> Bell, S. J. (2002). *Young offenders and juvenile justice: A century after the fact*. Toronto, ON: Thomson Nelson.

<sup>4</sup> The data presented in this article derive from two Social Science and Humanities Research Council grants (R-410-98-1246) awarded to Dr. Raymond R. Corrado entitled *A Survey of Serious and Violent Young Offenders' Perceptions of Sentences: An Empirical Examination of the Perceptual Model and Its Linkage to Subsequent Official Offending and Why Young Offenders Return to Prison: A Longitudinal Multi-Path Perceptual and Behavioral Analysis of Serious and Violent Young Offenders*. This research was also supported by funding provided by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

<sup>5</sup> Corrado, R. R., Odgers, C., and Cohen, I. M. (2001). Girls in jail: Punishment or protection. In R. Roesch, R. R. Corrado, and R. J. Dempster (eds.) *Psychology in the courts: International advances in knowledge*. Amsterdam, NL: Harwood Academic.

<sup>6</sup> The Uniform Crime Reporting system refers to police-reported crime data collected by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

<sup>7</sup> Corrado, R. R., Odgers, C., and Cohen, I. M. (2000). The incarceration of female young offenders: Protection for whom? *Canadian Journal of Criminology, April*, 189-207.

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<sup>9</sup> Corrado, R. R., Cohen, I. M., and Marino, F. (Forthcoming). "Pathways to serious violent adolescent offending".

<sup>10</sup> Reppucci, N. D., Fried, C. S., and Schmidt, M. G. (2002). Youth violence: Risk and protective factors. In R. R. Corrado, R. Roesch, S. D. Hart, and J. K. Gierowski (eds.) *Multi-problem violent youth: A foundation for comparative research on needs, interventions, and outcomes*. Amsterdam, NL: IOS Press.



# Profiling federally incarcerated First Nations, Métis and Inuit offenders

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Research suggests that the profile of Aboriginal offenders is quite different from non-Aboriginal offenders.<sup>2</sup> Overall, Aboriginal offenders appear to be younger, have lower levels of education, higher rates of unemployment, greater need for intervention and more extensive criminal backgrounds in comparison to non-Aboriginal offenders. Although there is some evidence to suggest that differences also exist between some Aboriginal groups,<sup>3</sup> few studies have explored this issue in depth. This article compares First Nations, Métis and Inuit offenders and identifies areas that could be used to inform programs and policy.

Data were drawn from a one-day snapshot (August 2000) of all First Nations (N = 1,490), Métis (N = 586), Inuit (N = 100), and non-Aboriginal (N = 10,363) offenders incarcerated in federal correctional facilities. Information was extracted from case files in Correctional Service of Canada's Offender Management System. Offenders were compared along their socio-demographic, case needs and criminal offence/history characteristics.

## Socio-demographics characteristics

A few differences exist between First Nations, Métis and Inuit offenders in socio-demographic characteristics (see Table 1). Over one-half (57%) of Inuit offenders have less than a grade 8 education at the time of admission to the federal correctional facility. In comparison, about one-third (31%) of First Nations offenders and about one-fifth (21%) of Métis offenders have less than a grade 8 education. Métis offenders appear to be similar to non-Aboriginal offenders in educational level.

The average age at the time of admission to a federal correctional facility is significantly older for Inuit offenders (33 years) than First Nations and Métis offenders (about 30½ years). Inuit offenders are also

less likely to be married at admission than First Nations and Métis offenders (28% versus 40% and 43%, respectively). While smaller proportions of Inuit offenders are unemployed at arrest in comparison to First Nations and Métis offenders, these differences are not significant.

## Case need characteristics

Some differences exist between First Nations, Métis and Inuit offenders on their identified needs for programming when entering the federal correctional facility. Significantly larger proportions of Inuit offenders (89%) are rated as high need overall for comprehensive intervention, as compared to First Nations and Métis offenders (78% and 73%, respectively). Significant differences also exist between First Nations and Métis offenders.

When examining specific need areas, First Nations, Métis and Inuit offenders do not differ substantially in the areas of community functioning, personal/emotional orientation, or attitudes (see Table 2). However, significantly larger proportions of First Nations and Métis offenders (70% and 71%, respectively) are rated as having "some or considerable" need in the area of employment as compared to Inuit offenders (57%).

Differences also exist between Aboriginal offender groups on their level of need for interventions targeting pro-criminal associates and social interactions. Métis offenders are more likely to be rated as having "some or considerable" need in the area of pro-criminal associates than First Nations and Inuit offenders (70% versus 65% and 55%, respectively). Significant differences also exist between First Nations and Inuit offenders.

Aboriginal groups tend to have varied levels of need for substance abuse interventions. First Nations offenders are significantly more likely to exhibit "some or considerable" need for substance abuse interventions in comparison to Métis offenders (94% versus 91%).

Findings indicate that Aboriginal offenders differ significantly on their marital/family need rating. Inuit offenders (73%) are significantly more likely to have "some or considerable" need for marital and family interventions than First Nations (60%) and

Table 1

	Socio-demographic characteristics			
	First Nations % (n)	Métis % (n)	Inuit % (n)	Non-Aboriginal % (n)
Less than grade 8 education	31 (309)	21 (80)	57 (44)	*** 20 (1215)
Unemployed at arrest	77 (761)	75 (275)	68 (51)	ns 68 (4130)
Married	40 (586)	43 (252)	28 (28)	* 40 (4102)
Male	96 (1424)	97 (570)	97 (97)	ns 98 (10113)
	<b>M (n)</b>	<b>M (n)</b>	<b>M (n)</b>	<b>M (n)</b>
Age of admission	30.5 (1490)	30.6 (586)	33.1(100)	* 33.9 (10368)

ns = non-significant; \*p < .05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001



Table 2

Some or considerable need	Case needs			
	First Nations % (n)	Métis % (n)	Inuit % (n)	Non-Aboriginal % (n)
Employment	70 (872)	71 (343)	57 (48)	* 58 (4,882)
Marital/Family Associates/Social Interaction	60 (754)	53 (259)	73 (61)	*** 51 (4,324)
Substance Abuse	65 (817)	70 (341)	55 (46)	** 63 (5,282)
Community Functioning	94(1,178)	91 (439)	92 (77)	* 70 (5,889)
Personal/Emotional Attitudes	45 (563)	47 (228)	44 (37)	ns 49 (4,100)
	96(1,201)	95 (460)	99 (83)	ns 91 (7,699)
	53 (656)	56 (272)	52 (44)	ns 62 (5,239)

ns = non-significant; \*p < .05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001

Métis (53%) offenders. Significant differences also exist between First Nations and Métis offenders.

**Current offence characteristics**

Regarding the offences for which offenders are currently incarcerated, significantly larger proportions of First Nations offenders are incarcerated for homicide than Inuit offenders (28% versus 16%). The difference between Métis and Inuit offenders fail to reach significance (see Table 3).

Significantly larger proportions of Inuit offenders (62%) are incarcerated for sexual offences than First Nations or Métis offenders (22% and 16%, respectively). Significantly greater proportions of First Nations offenders are incarcerated for sexual offences and serious assault than Métis offenders.

Significantly greater proportions of Métis offenders are incarcerated for robbery than any other Aboriginal offender group. However, First Nations offenders are also more likely to be convicted of robbery than Inuit offenders. Furthermore, larger proportions of Métis offenders are incarcerated for break and enter, as compared to First Nations offenders.

Furthermore, larger proportions of Métis offenders are convicted of drug-related offences, as compared to First Nations and Inuit offenders. While a larger proportion of First Nations offenders are incarcerated for a drug-related offence than Inuit offenders, the difference fails to reach significance.

Similar proportions of First Nations, Métis and Inuit offenders are designated as maximum security at the time of admission to the federal correctional facility. However, at the time of intake to the federal facility, Inuit offenders are more likely to be rated as "high risk" to re-offend than First Nations and Métis offenders (85% versus 73% and 68%, respectively). Significant differences also exist between First Nations and Métis offenders.

**Criminal history**

Some differences exist between First Nations, Métis and Inuit offenders in terms of their criminal history. Significantly greater proportions of Métis and First Nations offenders have been involved in closed youth custody (46% and 40%, respectively) in comparison to Inuit offenders (18%). Further, although similar in their previous involvement in provincial institutions, significantly greater proportions of Métis offenders (39%) have served a prior federal term in comparison to First Nations offenders (32%). Differences between Métis and Inuit (33%) offenders are not significant.

**Profiles**

**First Nations offenders**

First Nations offenders are admitted to federal institutions in their early 30's. Typically, they are younger at admission than other Aboriginal groups and large proportions have been involved in the youth justice system, highlighting their early criminal involvement. Moreover, large proportions are admitted to federal facilities with low levels of education, underscoring their socio-economic disadvantage.

The criminal characteristics of First Nations point to their violent offending behaviour. Large proportions are incarcerated for murder and serious assaults. These offence characteristics are likely reflective of the myriad of needs First Nations offenders present at admission. First Nations offenders have a high level of need for interventions that target substance abuse, personal/emotional issues, and

Table 3

Current offence (1)	Current offence			
	First Nations % (n)	Métis % (n)	Inuit % (n)	Non-Aboriginal % (n)
Homicide	28 (414)	24 (139)	16 (16)	** 24 (2,447)
Serious assault	39 (578)	33 (191)	40 (40)	* 26 (2,709)
Sex offence	22 (333)	16 (93)	62 (62)	*** 17 (1,736)
Robbery	29 (426)	40 (237)	8 (8)	*** 35 (3,610)
Drug offence	11 (165)	17 (98)	6 (6)	*** 21 (2,193)
Break and enter	32 (477)	38 (222)	35 (35)	* 31 (3,157)
Other Criminal Code offence	61 (914)	64 (373)	53 (53)	ns 62 (6,473)
Designated maximum security at admission	21 (275)	17 (85)	17 (15)	ns 16 (1,311)
High risk to re-offend	73(1,077)	68 (392)	85 (85)	*** 57 (5,727)
	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>M</b>
Aggregate sentence length	1,959.1	2,168.3	1,819.6	* 2,427.2

(1) Offenders may be incarcerated for more than one offence, therefore the total does not equal 100%. ns = non-significant; \*p < .05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001



employment. The multitude of needs suggest that First Nations offenders require comprehensive correctional programming.

### **Métis offenders**

Similar to First Nations offenders, Métis offenders are admitted to federal facilities in their early 30's and have had a lengthy criminal past. However, in contrast to other groups, the offences for which Métis offenders are incarcerated appear to be more varied in nature. Large proportions are incarcerated for robbery, break and enter and drug-related offences. The diverse offending behaviour of Métis offenders is likely associated with the large proportion of Métis living in urban areas.<sup>4</sup>

Métis offenders appear to have similar needs to First Nations offenders. Large proportions require interventions that focus on personal difficulties, substance abuse and employment-related issues. However, unlike other groups, Métis have higher need for programs that address criminal social interactions. The need of Métis offenders for such programs highlights their ties to criminal peers and their disproportionate involvement in pro-criminal social milieus.

### **Inuit offenders**

Unlike other Aboriginal groups, past involvement in the criminal justice system does not appear to be a

prominent feature in the Inuit offender profile. However, there are some important differences in the offending patterns of Inuit offenders. Considerably larger proportions of Inuit offenders are incarcerated for sexual offences than any other offender group. Moreover, most likely due to the type of offences for which they are incarcerated, large proportions of Inuit offenders are rated as high risk to re-offend.

Inuit offenders present a multitude of social and psychological issues upon entry to federal facilities. Large proportions are under educated, experience considerable difficulty personal/emotional issues, substance abuse, and marital/family relations. They are also more often considered in need of comprehensive interventions than other Aboriginal groups. These results emphasize the necessity of offering Inuit offenders a diverse range of programming.

### **Discussion**

The profiles of Aboriginal offenders are diverse. The areas of difference emphasize the need to adapt programs to fit the needs and issues of specific Aboriginal groups. These programs should consider the varied socio-demographic, offence, need and background profiles of each group. ■

<sup>1</sup> 340 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0P9.

<sup>2</sup> For example, see Trevethan, S., Tremblay, S., and Carter, J. (2000). *The over-representation of Aboriginal people in the justice system*. Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada. Also see LaPrairie, C. (1996). *Examining Aboriginal corrections in Canada*. Ottawa, ON: Solicitor General of Canada.

<sup>3</sup> Motiuk, L., and Nafekh, M. (2000). Aboriginal offenders in federal corrections: A profile. *Forum on Corrections Research*, 12(1), 10-15.

<sup>4</sup> Leclair, M. (1996). *Profile of Aboriginal sex offenders*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

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# The role of large cities in the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the federal correctional system

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The over representation of Aboriginal peoples in the Canadian criminal justice system has been a growing concern of correctional policy makers and practitioners. The importance of addressing this issue is reflected in the Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC) corporate objectives: "The Service will work with Aboriginal peoples, partners and the community to advance Government initiatives aimed at reducing the incarceration rates of Aboriginal peoples". Recent research has suggested that over-representation be examined via linkages between relative disadvantage and location of crime.<sup>2</sup> This article examines the role of large cities (in the Prairie region) in the over-representation of Aboriginal peoples in the federal correctional system, and suggests a methodology for empirically defining and assessing location-specific advantage/disadvantage.

This study examined differences in dynamic risk factors (criminogenic need) of Aboriginal offenders who committed their most serious offence in large cities, small cities or rural communities. Place of offence was categorized into three location groupings:<sup>3</sup>

- Large city - population over 100,000;
- Small city - population that is less than 100,000 but more than 10,000;
- Rural community - all other towns and villages, but excluding reserve communities.

The study comprised two sets of analyses. The first set of analyses examined the relationship between dynamic factors and location of offence for Aboriginal offenders. The second set of analyses examined whether the dynamic factors associated with offence locations are more pronounced for the Aboriginal offender population, thus indicating a relative disadvantage. For both sets of analyses, the dynamic risk (criminogenic need) domains of the Offender Intake Assessment (OIA) were utilized. The OIA process is a systematic review and evaluation of an offender's criminal risk and need areas upon admission to a federal correctional facility.<sup>4</sup> The application of the OIA assists in the identification of dynamic factors, thus providing a measure of advantage/disadvantage. Dynamic factors are grouped into seven target domains: employment, marital/family relations, associates/social interaction, substance abuse, community functioning, personal emotional orientation, and

attitudes. Each domain contains an overall dynamic need rating plus a range of individual indicators. An examination of demographic factors, such as age at admission, was also included in the analyses.

## Procedure

All available data for this study were extracted from CSC's automated Offender Management System (OMS). The sample included all male federal offenders admitted on a warrant of committal to a federal correctional facility in the Prairie region between January 1, 1995 and April 30, 2002. Offenders with complete OIA and an offence that occurred in the Prairie region were selected to comprise the study. Based on where the most serious admitting offence occurred,<sup>5</sup> place of offence was categorized into the three location groupings described above. The data extraction criteria were used to create two samples; an Aboriginal offender sample ( $N = 2,750$ ) and a non-Aboriginal sample ( $N = 2,522$ ) matched on offence location. About one-half of the sample were arrested in a large city for their most serious offence (53% Aboriginal; 58% non-Aboriginal), one-third in a rural community (34% Aboriginal; 28% non-Aboriginal), and less than one-fifth in a small city (13% Aboriginal; 14% non-Aboriginal). Results of the study are presented in the sections that follow.

## Differences within the Aboriginal offender population by offence location

The results demonstrated that differences existed between Aboriginal offenders who had committed their most serious offence in a large city, as compared to those who had committed the offence location in a small city or rural community. Although there were no significant differences in the employment, substance abuse, personal/emotional or attitude domains, when individual indicators within each dynamic factor domain were examined, the results provided an interesting picture that better illustrated some of the differences by location. Table 1 summarizes some of the key indicators that were viewed as being related to offending location. These indicators are discussed in the sections that follow.

Aboriginal offenders who committed their most serious offence in a large city were more likely to have programming needs in the areas of



employment. Offenders from the large-city grouping were assessed as more likely to have had difficulties acquiring and maintaining employment when compared to those in the small city or rural community groupings. In particular, those who committed their most serious offence in a large city were more likely to be lacking a skill/trade/profession, to be unemployed at arrest, have no employment history, and to have been laid off. This problem may be compounded by the fact that Aboriginal offenders who committed their most serious offence in large cities were more likely to have criminogenic lifestyles. In addition, offenders who committed their most serious offence in a large city were more likely to have gang affiliations, associate with substance abusers and have drug abuse problems than those in the small cities or rural communities.

Aboriginal offenders who committed their most serious offence in a large city had significantly more difficulty with respect to community functioning compared to those who committed their offences in a small city or rural community. Specifically, those in the large-city grouping were more likely to have experienced difficulties in the areas of maintaining housing and paying bills. The results are not surprising, given the employment and associates related programming needs identified earlier for those in the large-city grouping.

When examining attitudes, it was found that a significantly larger proportion of offenders who committed their most serious offence in a large city had a generally negative attitude towards the criminal justice and correctional systems when compared to the offenders in the other two location groupings. Specifically, those committing their most serious offence in a large city were more likely to be assessed as having poorer attitudes towards laws, police, correctional institutions, and community supervision.

Analyses of the personal/emotional indicators revealed that Aboriginal offenders who had committed their most serious offence in a large city were assessed as risk taking, thrill seeking, unaware of consequences and had low frustration levels to a significantly greater extent than those from small cities or rural areas. Again, these findings are linked to the general

criminogenic lifestyle but are probably exacerbated when living in a large city due to both the increased exposure to criminal opportunity and police presence.

Lastly, when examining the demographic characteristics of Aboriginal offenders, it was found that those who committed their most serious offence in a large city were significantly younger at admission than those in the small city and rural community groupings (average age at admission was 29, 30 and 31 respectively).

The first set of analyses revealed areas in which Aboriginal offenders are assessed as having 'higher' programming needs in large cities versus small cities and rural communities. The second set of analyses examined whether Aboriginal peoples are at relatively more disadvantage in an urban environment compared to non-Aboriginal peoples.

Table 1

Selected need domain indicators for Aboriginal offenders				
Significant need domain indicators	Aboriginal offenders (%)			Total
	Large city	Small city	Rural area	
<b>Employment</b>				
Under grade 8 education***	22%	26%	34%	27%
Lacks a skill area/trade/profession***	74%	71%	65%	71%
Unemployed at time of arrest***	77%	72%	60%	71%
No employment history***	21%	16%	11%	17%
<b>Marital/family relations</b>				
Has been arrested for child abuse**	3%	4%	5%	4%
Has been arrested for incest*	2%	3%	4%	3%
<b>Associates/social interaction</b>				
Has many criminal acquaintances***	80%	72%	59%	72%
Has mostly criminal friends***	57%	44%	33%	47%
Has been affiliated with a gang***	28%	11%	8%	19%
Resides in a criminogenic area***	60%	34%	40%	50%
<b>Substance abuse</b>				
Began using drugs at an early age***	70%	65%	55%	64%
Uses drugs on a regular basis***	62%	56%	49%	56%
Has gone on drug-taking sprees***	58%	48%	36%	49%
Abuses drugs***	85%	80%	73%	80%
<b>Community functioning</b>				
Has unstable accommodation***	51%	48%	32%	44%
Difficulty meeting bills**	46%	44%	39%	43%
<b>Personal/emotional functioning</b>				
Gang member***	20%	7%	4%	13%
Low frustration tolerance*	52%	51%	46%	50%
Takes risks inappropriately***	71%	69%	58%	66%
Thrill-seeker***	37%	35%	29%	34%
<b>Attitude</b>				
Negative towards law**	49%	49%	42%	47%
Negative towards police**	40%	35%	33%	37%
Negative towards corrections***	23%	20%	16%	20%
Negative towards				
community supervision**	35%	35%	29%	33%
Employment has no value*	22%	20%	17%	20%

\*\*\*p<.001; \*\*p<.01; \*p<.05



### Differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders

Similar to the Aboriginal population, within the matched non-Aboriginal sample there were significant differences in dynamic factor domains by offence location. However, these differences were significantly *more predominant* for Aboriginal offenders within certain dynamic factor domains. In particular, Aboriginal offenders were more likely to be unemployed at time of arrest in a large city than their non-Aboriginal counterparts, even though they were not predominantly more likely to lack a skill area, trade or profession. In the large-city grouping, Aboriginal offenders were also more likely to be gang affiliated, be assessed as having criminogenic lifestyles and have mostly criminal friends (see Figures 1 and 2).

A “large-city association” was also linked to substance abuse and community functioning for

the Aboriginal offender population. Specifically, Aboriginal offenders who committed their most serious offence in a large city were more likely to abuse drugs and have unstable accommodations than their non-Aboriginal counterparts (see Figures 3 and 4). Furthermore, Aboriginal offenders in the large-city grouping were more likely to have placed little or no value on employment than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. This was not surprising given the strong “large-city” association with unemployment for the Aboriginal population.

Figure 1

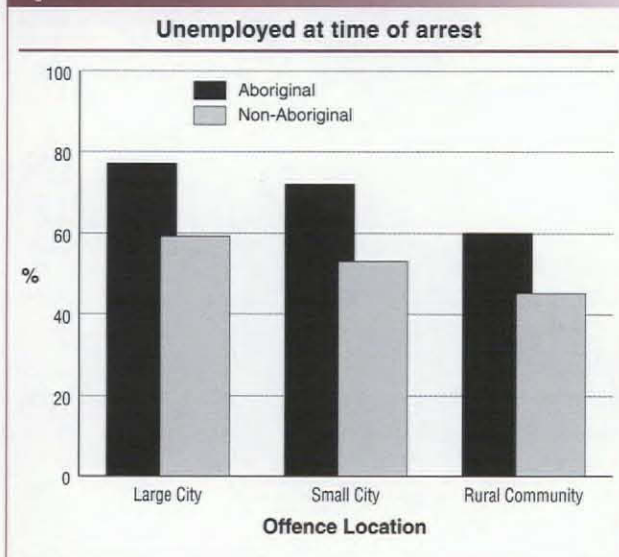


Figure 2

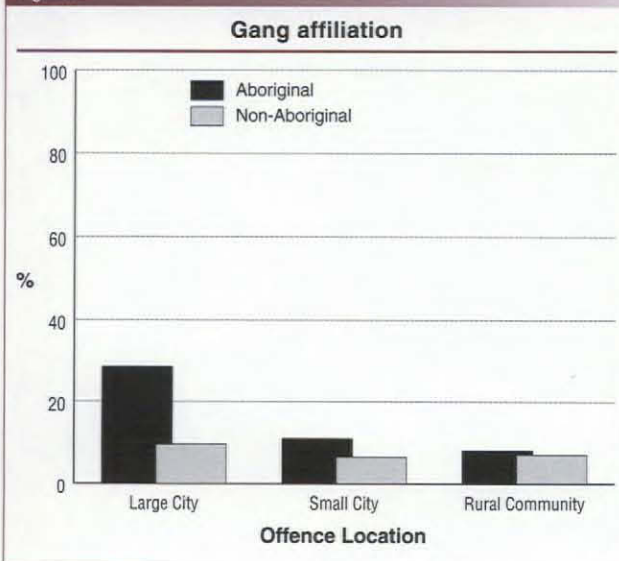


Figure 3

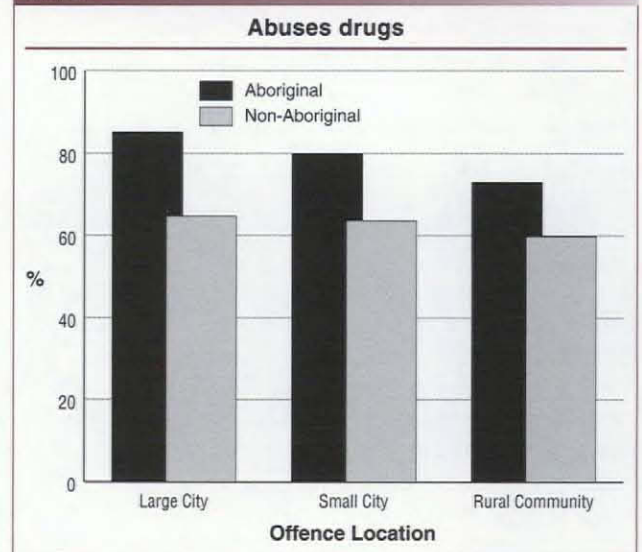
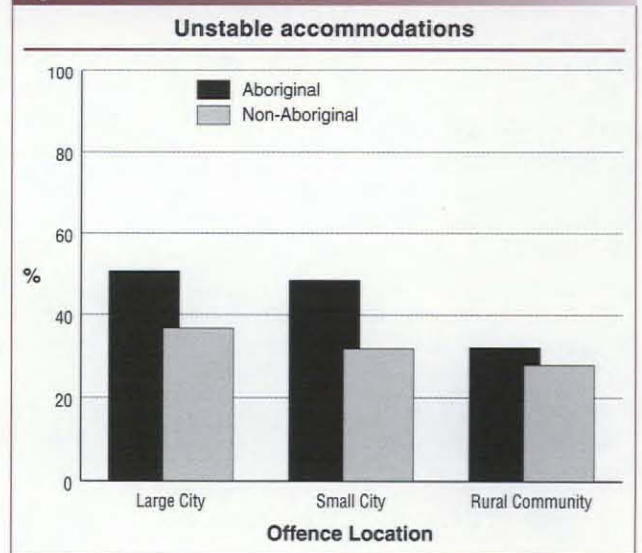


Figure 4



Finally, an examination of demographic factors revealed that there was an association between age at admission and offence location for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders. Both were significantly younger in the large city grouping than in the small city or rural community groupings. However, there were no



between-group differences across offence locations, meaning that the gap between large city, small city and rural community was similar for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders (see Table 2).

Table 2

Average age at admission		
Most serious offence location	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal
Large city	28.9	32.0
Small city	29.9	33.4
Rural area	31.5	34.5

## Conclusions

Results demonstrated that Aboriginal offenders who committed their offences in large cities tended to be younger, more involved in criminal lifestyles, and lacking in employment experience than those who commit their most serious offence in small cities or rural communities. The large-city environment may be a key factor that influences the extent to which certain dynamic criminogenic factors are present for offenders. The study also examined the degree to which large cities in the Prairies contribute to the over-representation of Aboriginal offenders in the criminal justice system. It was found that significant differences in

dynamic factors existed between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders by offence location. Specifically, in large cities, Aboriginal offenders were assessed as having more predominant employment and substance abuse programming needs than the non-Aboriginal sample. Aboriginal offenders were also more likely to have large-city associated dynamic factors present, such as having unstable accommodations, criminogenic lifestyles, many criminal friends and gang affiliations. Overall, results demonstrated an association between dynamic factors and large cities in the Prairie region. This effect is more predominant for Aboriginal offenders in the specified dynamic factor domains.

The research findings suggest a number of implications for CSC and other criminal justice partners. Specifically, results suggest that successful reintegration strategies address the dynamic factors associated with the area to which Aboriginal offenders are conditionally released. For example, ensuring that programming needs in the area of employment are met for offenders reintegrating in a large city. Ultimately, appropriate intervention strategies may be aided by current and prospective research initiatives that build on the scope of these analyses. ■

<sup>1</sup> 340 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0P9.

<sup>2</sup> LaPrairie, C. (2002). Aboriginal over-representation in the criminal justice system: A tale of nine cities, *Canadian Journal of Criminology*, April, 181-208.

<sup>3</sup> These categories are based on information from Statistics Canada.

<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed description of the OIA, see Motiuk, L. L. (1997). Classification for correctional programming: The Offender Intake Assessment process, *Forum on Corrections Research*, 9(1), 18-22.

<sup>5</sup> "Most serious offence" is a classification system used by CSC based on the definition provided by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. The offences are generally categorized by the longest maximum sentence an offence carries with violent offences always taking precedent over non-violent. The offences, classified in order of seriousness are as follows: homicide, attempted murder, sexual offences, robbery, assault, other violent offences, impaired driving, break and enter, other property offences, drug offences.

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# Treatment/healing for sexual offending behaviour among Aboriginal men: Setting direction based on client characteristics

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**T**he Native Clan Organization's Forensic Behavioral Management Clinic (FBMC) has provided assessment and treatment services in Manitoba for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals who have engaged in sexual offending behaviour since 1987. In the early stages of the program we believed that some of the Aboriginal men referred to the program presented with criminogenic needs that differentiated them from other offenders.<sup>2</sup> For these individuals, effective long-term risk management appears to be best accomplished through a blending of sex offender specific treatment and culturally appropriate processes of healing, the evolution and delivery of which have previously been described.<sup>3</sup>

In an effort to further empirically explore the suitability of this approach, and to guide ongoing program development, a client database was established. The database includes 235 variables, selected through a review of the literature and consultation with the clinical team at FBMC, including Aboriginal spiritual helpers. Areas in the database consist of: general offender characteristics, Aboriginal offender specific characteristics, developmental and social history, criminal history, history and pattern of sexual offending behaviour and participation in and response to treatment. Similarities and differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal adult male sexual offenders who had participated in institutional and community based treatment with the FBMC were examined.<sup>4</sup>

**A**lthough this type of comparative research is sometimes viewed with discontent by some Aboriginal communities/people, the objective was not to compare Aboriginal to non-Aboriginal offenders for comparison sake, to deconstruct and analyze the Aboriginal offender, or to hold one group up against another in judgement. Rather, by identifying and understanding the similarities and differences among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders we hoped to enhance our ability to appropriately target treatment to optimally assist offenders manage their risk and live healthy, balanced, pro-social lives. This article provides a summary of some of the findings of the research and highlights the implications for the treatment of Aboriginal sexual offenders.

## The sample

The database consisted of 303 closed treatment cases of adult male sexual offenders referred to the FBMC for institutional and/or community based treatment between 1987-1999. The majority of these offenders were referred by the Correctional Service of Canada, Penitentiaries and Parole (82%). The remaining 18% were referred by a variety of sources including the Manitoba Department of Justice-Probation Services, Winnipeg Child and Family Services and Provincial Departments of Mental Health and Family Services. Of the total sample 40% (n = 121) were Aboriginal and 60% (n = 182) were non-Aboriginal. The indigenous people groups were collapsed into the Aboriginal category as the numbers of Métis (n = 21, 7%) and Inuit (n = 1, 0.3%) offenders were not sufficient to analyze in separate categories.

## Findings

### Aboriginal offender characteristics and identity

The majority of Aboriginal men in the sample spoke English only (55%) and did not possess an Aboriginal language. Of those who did speak an Aboriginal language, the majority spoke Cree (23%), followed by Ojibway (11%) and Saulteaux (6%), languages reflective of the geographical location. The majority of the Aboriginal offenders in the sample were raised on reserve communities (61%), however many relocated to urban centres (49%). Only a small percentage (15%) identified growing up learning/experiencing traditional Aboriginal culture including cultural and spiritual teachings and ceremonies. The experience of a traditional upbringing was of interest in that it may speak to issues such as the impact of colonization, the degree of acculturation and the need for, and role of, culturally relevant programming for Aboriginal men. A very small number of the Aboriginal men in the program attended residential schools (9%, n = 11), likely because the majority of men were too young for this experience. Of the men who were placed in residential schools, the majority identified experiencing physical (91%) and/or emotional (82%) abuse and more than one-third (36%) reported sexual victimization.



### ***Developmental and social histories***

There were some important differences between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders in the FBMC sample with regards to developmental and social histories. While both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men experienced difficult and traumatic experiences in their developmental years, such experiences were more pronounced among the Aboriginal men. In exploring the men's formative years, while the largest percentage of offenders reported being raised by both of their parents, the Aboriginal men were more likely to have been raised by extended family members and to report the experience of parental separation or abandonment (69% versus 52%). Aboriginal offenders were also much more likely to have experienced the tragic loss of a family member through suicide and murder. The Aboriginal men were more likely to report family members having abused substances (81% versus 57%), and as having criminal histories (48% versus 23%), than non-Aboriginal men. They were also more likely to have had knowledge of, or witnessed, domestic abuse and inappropriate sexual boundaries in their formative years.

Overall, a large percentage of the men in our program reported experiencing childhood victimization including physical abuse (65%), sexual abuse (57%), emotional abuse (64%) and neglect (32%). No significant differences were found between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men in regards to being subjected to physical or emotional abuse. However, Aboriginal men were significantly more likely to report having experienced neglect (51% versus 19%) and sexual abuse (65% versus 52%).

### ***Education and employment***

Education levels were explored and considered important in that a limited education may be reflective of difficult early life experiences, which inhibited either access or ability to maintain involvement in schooling. As well, a limited education could contribute to personal adjustment issues later in life and impact areas such as self-esteem, employment and financial stability. Overall, the men in the program had low levels of education with only a small number having completed high school (12%), or having attended a trade school (5%) or university (6%). A striking 23% reported having completed less than grade 8. Aboriginal men evidenced lower levels of education with larger proportions having less than grade 8 (37% versus 13%) and fewer having completed a high school diploma (4% versus 17%). As well, Aboriginal men were less likely to have attended a trade school (3% versus 6%) or university (1% versus 9%). A significant difference was also found between the offender groups with

regard to history of school maladjustment with 49% of Aboriginal men reporting a history of school maladjustment whereas 28% of non-Aboriginal men reported such history.

Employment history was also thought to be an important indicator that may be reflective of personal wellness, life opportunities, self-esteem and emotional stability and financial security. Overall, the employment history of the men was quite limited, with only 33% having a stable employment history. Aboriginal men appeared more disadvantaged in their employment history and were more likely to have no history of employment (26% versus 7%) whereas non-Aboriginal men appear to have a more stable employment history (42% versus 19%).

### ***Substance abuse***

Substance abuse was significant in the treatment population. While both alcohol and drug abuse was apparent among non-Aboriginal men, Aboriginal men demonstrated significantly greater alcohol (95% versus 61%), drug (66% versus 43%) and solvent (26% versus 4%) abuse than did non-Aboriginal men.

### ***Criminal histories***

One-quarter of the men in the treated sample (25%) had convictions as young offenders. Of these, 8% held convictions for violent offence(s) and 6% for sexual offence(s). No differences were found between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men in regards to their official juvenile offending histories. Aboriginal men did however self-disclose a higher number of violent offences as youth, which they were never charged for (68% versus 38%).

As with juvenile criminal histories, no differences were found between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men in their adult criminal histories with regard to the mean number of adult convictions (Aboriginal - 9; non-Aboriginal - 8). More specifically, no significant differences were found in their number of convictions for violent (Aboriginal - 3; non-Aboriginal - 3) and sexual offences (Aboriginal - 2; non-Aboriginal - 3).

In terms of self-disclosed offending behaviour as adults, the Aboriginal men disclosed a greater frequency of engaging in violent offences for which they were never charged, while non-Aboriginal men disclosed committing significantly more sexual offences for which they were never charged.

### ***Patterns of sexual offending behaviour***

There were some interesting differences between the two groups in regards to the characteristics and pattern of their offending behaviour. The



Aboriginal sexual offenders tended to more frequently be perpetrators of rape than any other sex offence while non-Aboriginal sexual offenders were more likely than Aboriginal offenders to be perpetrators of sexual offences against children (more often having infant, pre-pubescent and pubescent age victims), particularly incest. Aboriginal offenders were more likely to offend against female victims whereas non-Aboriginal offenders were more likely to have both male and female victims (23% versus 7%). The offenders tended to sexually abuse victims of the same race, with Aboriginal offenders more often offending against Aboriginal victims and non-Aboriginal offenders more often offending against non-Aboriginal victims. Non-Aboriginal offenders were more likely than Aboriginal offenders to have victims of various ethnic backgrounds. While there were few differences between the two groups in regards to their relationship with/to their victim(s) one notable difference was that non-Aboriginal offenders were more likely to offend against victims with whom they held a non-familial role of trust and authority (e.g., physician, religious leader, teacher, coach). A final difference between the two groups in regards to the profiles of their victims was that the victims of Aboriginal offenders were more likely to have abused alcohol (38% versus 14%) at the time of the offence than were the victims of non-Aboriginal offenders. The fact that victims of Aboriginal offenders, who were most often adult Aboriginal females, should in no way be read or interpreted to place any level of responsibility on to these victims. Rather, this is more likely a reflection of Aboriginal offenders either taking advantage of a victim's state of intoxication or facilitating this state in order to commit an offence.

Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders maintained a high degree of cognitive distortions, pre-treatment, which minimized the seriousness of their offending behaviour and their level of responsibility. The only distortion in which Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders differed was that Aboriginal offenders were more likely to endorse the belief that their offence would not have occurred had they not been intoxicated. Both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men demonstrated an equal ability to challenge their cognitive distortions over the course of treatment and enhance their level of accountability.

Differences were noted between the means of accessing victims between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders. Aboriginal offenders were more likely to identify their offence planning process as including giving their victims alcohol or drugs in order to facilitate offending (33% versus 17%). In contrast, non-Aboriginal offenders were

more likely to give their victims gifts (42% versus 25%) and show them pornography (15% versus 5%).

There were no differences between the two groups in regards to the use of threats during the commission of a sexual offence, with both groups frequently threatening their victims (Aboriginal 76%, non-Aboriginal 72%). Aboriginal offenders were more likely to physically assault their victim during the course of a sexual offence (54% versus 39%). This finding is believed to be connected to the finding that Aboriginal offenders were most likely to engage in the sexual assault of adult women which, when compared to the other offence categories (e.g., hands off offenders, incest offenders, pedophiles, mixed offenders with adult and child victims), was the offence type with the most violence.

Non-Aboriginal sexual offenders tended to demonstrate more sexually deviant interests than Aboriginal offenders. Non-Aboriginal offenders were more likely to report having maintained sexual thoughts and fantasies about their victims and of images of sexual violence. They were also significantly more likely to masturbate to pictures of children. Non-Aboriginal offenders also were more likely to report paraphilias other than their sexual offending behaviour (e.g., exhibitionism, bondage and sexual sadism). No significant differences were found in the sexual preference profiles of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal sexual offenders as determined through phallometric testing.

#### *Treatment outcome*

Therapist ratings revealed few differences between the treatment progress of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men were viewed as making positive and substantial gains in their level of self-disclosure, accountability and insight.

Prior to the introduction of the FBMC's blended traditional healing/contemporary treatment program for Aboriginal sexual offenders, treatment completion rates were higher for non-Aboriginal than Aboriginal offenders (75% versus 58%). However, once culturally relevant and appropriate programming became available, this difference disappeared (completion rate for Aboriginal offenders rose to 87%), as compared to 58% for Aboriginal offenders involved in non-Aboriginal specific programming (see Table 1).

Large proportions of offenders continued to attend treatment at FBMC after the mandate to attend was no longer in place at the expiry date of their sentence (non-Aboriginal 60%, Aboriginal 42%). However, after the implementation of the Blended



group for Aboriginal offenders, the proportion of Aboriginal offenders who maintained their involvement with the clinic after the end of their mandate increased to 59%.

### Clinical implications

From this project we have learned that there is a need to focus on Aboriginal-specific characteristics in the evaluation of Aboriginal offenders. To this end, a more thorough exploration of racial identity and background, exposure to Aboriginal language and culture, level of assimilation and the potential impact of residential school, particularly on second generation family members, should be considered and integrated into offender assessments. Further focus on attachment styles, substance abuse and anger and aggression may also be beneficial in the evaluation of Aboriginal sexual offenders. It will also be important, as sample size allows, to investigate the differences within the Aboriginal groups to identify unique characteristics that may be found among Aboriginal, Métis and Inuit offenders.

**Table 1**  
**Treatment Outcome for Aboriginal Offenders: Aboriginal Blended Sex Offender Program versus Cognitive-Behavioural Sex Offender Program**

Program	Completed		Terminated		Dropped Out		Suspended	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Blended Treatment/Healing	20	87.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	13.0
Cognitive-Behavioural Treatment Group	48	58.0	7	8.0	14	17.0	14	17.0

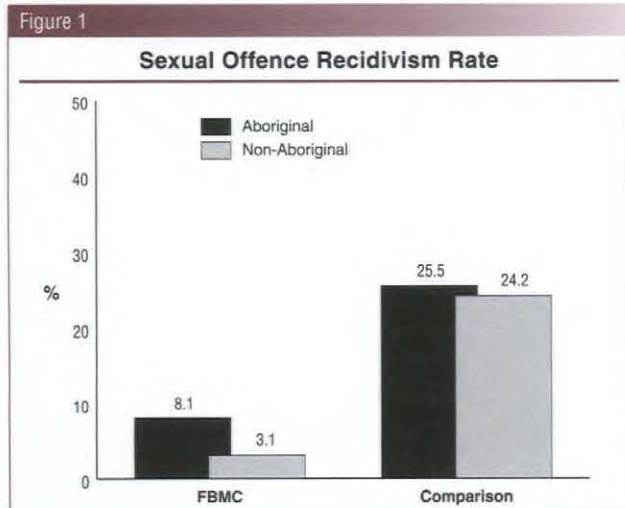
Finally, an examination of sexual re-offending was undertaken, using information from the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC). Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men who participated in treatment at the FBMC (n = 282) and a matched comparison group (n = 196) of offenders from the Regional Psychiatric Centre, Prairie Region were followed for up to 10 years upon release. The comparison group was matched on age of first conviction, date of index offence, age at index offence, number of convictions before index offence and number of sexual offences prior to index offence.

As illustrated in Figure 1, no significant differences were found between the sexual recidivism rates of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men who participated in treatment at the FBMC (8% versus 3%). However, a significant difference was found between the FBMC treated client group and the matched comparison group with regard to sexual offence reconviction. FBMC clients demonstrated a significantly lower re-occurrence of sexual offending behaviour post treatment than the comparison group. Among Aboriginal clients, 8% sexually recidivated compared to 25% of non-clients.

The importance of attending to language was also highlighted. While clinical services delivered in English would not be an impediment for many of the Aboriginal offenders, it is important to be aware of, and attend to, language issues given that 45% of the men spoke an Aboriginal language as their first language. The ability to respond and participate in an assessment and to engage in and benefit from treatment is tied to language and the ability to both comprehend concepts being addressed and to communicate relevant issues. Language is not only related to general comprehension but is also significant because of distinct differences in the construction of Aboriginal languages compared to English.<sup>5</sup>

The data also suggest the importance of addressing family of origin and developmental experiences among Aboriginal offenders. Attending to issues such as loss, abandonment, grief, abuse and attachment issues may be significant to facilitate wellness and risk management. It is also suggested that it will be imperative for programming to support offenders, particularly Aboriginal men, to find ways of relating with their family members in a healthy way. It may be the case that not assisting them to manage these relationships, should family still be functioning in an unhealthy way, may contribute to them being drawn back into family dysfunction and challenge the healthy coping skills they have worked on in programs and in treatment. Assisting Aboriginal offenders to develop healthy social support networks (including and beyond family) also seems to be an important area for treatment.

The data also suggest that life skills are a relevant area for intervention among many Aboriginal offenders. Programs directed at enhancing education and employability seem critical. As





well, given the number of offenders who relocate to an urban environment, the development of skills, to assist those who require them, to live in a functional manner within a larger urban centre would seem to be a very pragmatic and beneficial focus of treatment.

Significant attention to issues related to anger and violence appears key in sexual offender treatment for Aboriginal men. Given the offence type/patterns of Aboriginal offenders, along with attitudes towards women and relationships, these factors seem to be areas of intervention that require further attention. The previously noted suggestion of the importance of attending to family of origin and developmental issues may support this area of work as it is likely that substance abuse, anger and aggression are symptomatic of these core issues. The data also suggest that attention to the area of inappropriate

sexual boundaries and clarifying appropriate boundaries should be incorporated into treatment for Aboriginal sexual offenders.

Finally, it appears that although few Aboriginal offenders were raised with Aboriginal language, culture, teachings and ceremonies, these core aspects of Aboriginal identity are critical to the healing process. The opportunity to participate in programs that introduce Aboriginal culture and spirituality to Aboriginal offenders or allow offenders involved in their culture to continue to develop their understanding and practice seems very important. It also appears that the ability to facilitate Aboriginal men in acquiring skills to manage their risk to sexually re-offend is heightened by a cultural approach as this appears more engaging as more offenders are able to successfully complete this type of blended treatment/healing process. ■

<sup>1</sup> 203 - 138 Portage Avenue East, Winnipeg, Manitoba; R3C 0E1.

<sup>2</sup> Ellerby, L. (1994). Community based treatment of aboriginal sex offenders: Facing realities and exploring possibilities. *Forum on Corrections Research*, 6(3), 23-25.

<sup>3</sup> Ellerby, L., and Stonechild, J. (1998). Blending traditional and contemporary treatment approaches for sexual offenders: A Canadian experience. In W. Marshall, Y. Fernandez, S. Hudson, & T. Ward (eds.) *Sourcebook of treatment programs for sexual offenders* (pp. 399-415). New York, NY: Plenum Press. Also see Ellerby, L., and Ellerby, J. (1998). *Understanding and evaluating the role of Elders and traditional healing in sex offender treatment for Aboriginal offenders*. Technical Series # 18. Ottawa, ON: Solicitor General Canada. Also see Ellerby, L. (2000). *Striving towards balance: A blended treatment/healing approach with Aboriginal sexual offenders*. In J. Proulx & S. Perrault (eds.) *No place for*

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<sup>4</sup> Ellerby, L., and MacPherson, P. (2002). *Exploring the profiles of Aboriginal sexual offenders: Contrasting Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal sexual offenders to determine unique client characteristics and potential implications for sex offender assessment and treatment strategies*. Research Report R-122, Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

<sup>5</sup> Ross, R. (1996). *Returning to the teachings: Exploring Aboriginal justice*. Toronto, ON: Penguin.

## Don't be shy

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# The Tupiq Program: Inuit community development in an institutional program

Ellen Hamilton<sup>1</sup>

Tupiq Program, Fenbrook Institution

*Inuit men sit quietly in a circle around a lit qulliq (an oil lamp carved from stone.) They are nearing the completion of the Tupiq program after what has been 16 weeks of intensive therapy and instruction. They are two thousand miles away from the shores of Canada's Arctic ocean where for centuries, lamps like this one have meant light, warmth and survival to the Inuit who thrived in perhaps the harshest environment on earth. Inuit healer Meeka Arnakaq speaks in a hushed voice to describe the courage, fortitude and tenacity of Inuit, of how struggle and adaptability is as much a part of the culture as ancient legends, caribou hunting and seal skin tents. She is speaking in metaphors, in one of the world's last remaining Aboriginal languages and the men don't miss a word.*

This is a typical scene from the last day of Inuit Healing, one of the components of the Tupiq program, a holistic corrections program specific to the needs of federal Inuit offenders. Since its beginning at Fenbrook Institution in March, 2001, the Tupiq program has attempted to bring the land of the Midnight Sun to the woods of Muskoka and to merge conventional corrections treatment with Inuit culture. The most distinctive feature of the program is the delivery in Inuktitut (the Inuit language) by experienced and skilled Inuit facilitators and Inuit community-based counsellors who work as a team with clinical and adult education specialists.<sup>2</sup>

## Integrating Inuit culture

The name itself, *tupiq*, which means tent in Inuktitut, is symbolic of the holistic nature of the program. It was chosen by federal Inuit offenders to represent the traditional Inuit seal skin tent, known for its strength and adaptability, its simple but ingenious construction held up by three poles and secured by ropes and rocks for protection against the elements. One can pack up a *tupiq*, bring it with you when you venture out into the wilderness. It can be trusted and is an important part of every Inuit hunter's prevention plan against risk. The goal of the Tupiq program is as clear and as crucial — to provide intervention with the same features of practicality, resilience and relevance to Inuit offenders and their communities.

While much of the content of the Tupiq program follows universally accepted relapse prevention theory, it integrates Inuit culture by utilizing Inuit

delivery staff, Inuit healing therapy and Inuit counsellors from the offenders' home communities. As well, the techniques and activities used in the program incorporate Inuit cultural references whenever possible. For instance, it is not uncommon to hear the sound of an Inuit drum emanating from the program room during an emotion management session, or to encounter polar bear hunting on the floe edge as a metaphor used to examine basic problem solving methodology.

## Treatment model

A high intensity treatment program based on a social-learning model, Tupiq provides 255 contact hours per offender in 16 weeks, targeting sexually abusive behaviour within a holistic framework that incorporates cognitive restructuring, social values, emotion management, abuse dynamics and family violence prevention as interrelated factors. The program was designed principally for moderate to moderate-high risk sexual offenders and modelled after the Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC) National Sex Offender Treatment Strategy. Program content and focus can be adapted to high intensity family violence needs through careful screening of group participants. Offenders attend morning and afternoon sessions, the intensity tempered by a multi-faceted, motivational approach and parallel processes of group therapy, skills education and individual counselling.

## Community consultation

There are approximately 120 Inuit offenders incarcerated in CSC facilities across the country. The largest concentration, representing one-third of this population, is accommodated at Fenbrook. In 1999, a needs assessment and consultative process towards the design of an Inuit specific program began in order to meet their correctional and cultural needs.

Over 500 interviews and consultations were held with individuals representing Inuit communities, victim advocates, Inuit women, Inuit offenders, Inuit regional governments and corrections specialists. In particular, a three-day public consultation was held in Iqaluit, Nunavut in March, 2000 which brought together Inuit community representatives and corrections officials to establish guiding principals for the



Tupiq program. These can be summarized under three headings:

1. Integrate Inuit culture and language through program content and personnel.
2. Involve Inuit communities in a real and meaningful way.
3. Focus on changing the offender's behaviour and thinking.

### **Inuit offender profile**

Inuit offenders share many common characteristics and backgrounds. The vast majority (over 90%) are violent offenders and, prior to the Tupiq program, the majority were untreated for crimes of sexual offences. The victims of these crimes are, in most cases, acquaintances of the offenders and substance abuse is present in over 90% of the crimes. The Inuit are detained by the National Parole Board at unusually high rates and have a high refusal and drop out rate in core correctional programs. Only 4% have attained a high school diploma and over 90% require academic upgrading to grade 10. Over 96% of the Inuit offender population speak Inuktitut as a first language and 70% of the parents of offenders speak no English at all. Inuit offenders are almost exclusively from one of 55 small Inuit communities scattered across Canada's Arctic regions where the only access is by costly northern airlines. The majority of Inuit offenders serve their sentence without visits from family or friends and often experience difficulty communicating with them by mail or telephone.

### **Inuit involvement in program design and delivery**

From the beginning of the program development, the decision was made to involve Inuit in a meaningful way in both the design and delivery. To that end, efforts were made to recruit individuals who knew Inuit communities, language, cultural values and skills and were respected in their communities. Inuit program co-facilitators not only train in corrections program theory and deliver program content in Inuktitut but they assist in the development of session plans and steer all content towards compatibility with Inuit cultural values and realities. A corollary benefit of the Tupiq program is the development and enrichment of Inuit community resources; it is expected that Tupiq staff will eventually return to Inuit communities where the expertise they have gained will be used in community-based abuse prevention work.

### **Inuit healing and conventional therapy**

Two types of group therapy coming from two very different perspectives are important components

of the Tupiq program and assist offenders in gaining insight into the causes and consequences of their criminal behaviour. The Self Management Group is a conventional therapeutic approach co-facilitated in English and Inuktitut by the program's clinical director and an Inuit facilitator. The Self Management Group assists offenders to understand and take responsibility for their offence(s) through a series of presentations including, a full disclosure, autobiography, victim empathy, offence pattern and relapse prevention plan. Individual counselling sessions also support program participants during this component. Another, more Inuit specific, therapeutic approach is the Inuit Healing Group, delivered solely in Inuktitut by two Inuit Healers who travel from the fjords of Pangnirtung, Nunavut, to open and close the program with this unique therapeutic approach. Inuit Healing incorporates music, storytelling, poetry, spirituality and visual art into a therapy process designed to gain insight into abusive behaviour.

### **Multi-faceted adult education techniques**

A parallel process to therapy groups is the Skills Group, a cognitive-behavioural adult education approach incorporating motivational and multi-faceted techniques and delivered bilingually by two Inuit co-facilitators. The Skills Group attempts to meet the learning needs of the Inuit offender-participant through practically based, small group activities, art therapy and individualized assignments. Modules include the development, practice and integration of culturally based, pro-social skills in values, goals, cognitive restructuring, dynamics of abuse, emotion management and family violence prevention. As in other components the purpose is to gain insight into criminal and abusive behaviour and to develop relapse prevention planning in the Inuit community context.

### **Community links**

An integral part of the program's efforts to integrate and involve Inuit community life is the Community links component, which matches each offender-participant with a counsellor from his home community, as selected by the local community justice committee or equivalent group. Inuit delivery staff prepare and debrief the community links, providing them with program information and supervising their long-distance telephone session with the offender. Increasingly, the scheduled community links assignments become more personal and specific to crime prevention, culminating in the offender presenting his relapse prevention plan to his link. In a number of cases, the link has initiated community development and sought to initiate support



services needed for a returning offender's safe reintegration. Following each program, a conference call is held with all community links in order to discuss, brainstorm and revise the component and the community involvement in both the program and the reintegration of offenders.

### Evaluation

Currently, the fifth Tupiq program is being delivered at Fenbrook Institution and is in the process of a third-party evaluation, coordinated by CSC's Research Branch. Measurable goals of the program include reducing recidivism, reducing detention rates, increasing safe reintegration to the Inuit community and actively involving Inuit communities in relapse prevention.

As the program has evolved, the commitment to Inuit culture and language remains constant. Inuit communities working with Inuit program staff to enhance cultural content in the Tupiq program

become part of an integral process of crime prevention. Like the sealskin tent it is named after, the Tupiq program aims to provide Inuit offenders a practical and relevant means of reducing risk and a safe return home. ■

*"You might think language is not such a big thing. But the Inuktitut words have power to heal and to change a person. You must gain knowledge to become a better person...these Inuktitut words, these healing words, are important to people who have lost their way."*

*Mariano Aupilardjuk*

*Inuit Elder and consultant to the Tupiq program*

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<sup>2</sup> The Tupiq Team includes: Ellen Hamilton (Program Coordinator); Dana Anderson (Clinical Director); Pitsula Akavak, Myna Ishulutak, and Leena Evic Twerdon (Facilitators); and Meeka and Abraham Arnakaq (Inuit Healers).

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# In Search of Your Warrior Program

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The "In Search of Your Warrior" program is a healing program for Aboriginal men caught in the cycle of violence. It was conceived, developed and implemented through a participatory process at Native Counselling Services of Alberta (NCSA) over a five-year period.

## Program assumptions

The program is based upon the following guiding assumptions:

- Human beings are part of a number of systems such as the family, community and society at large - we affect these systems and in turn, they affect us.
- No matter how tortured an individual's history of violence may be, he is respected as a human being - one who has made "mistakes" from which he can and must learn.<sup>2</sup>
- Traditional Aboriginal teachings and culture will guide individuals back to a non-violent way of life.
- All human beings are inherently good, and their behaviour is shaped by their life experiences.
- Personal change takes time and requires readiness, commitment, desire and patience.
- In order for healing to occur, the spiritual, emotional, physical and psychological parts of the self must be engaged in the healing process.

## Program development

Ten years ago, the Solicitor General of Canada's Aboriginal Corrections Policy Unit partnered with NCSA to produce a video looking at violence from the perspective of men in prison. The result was an in-depth, four-part series on the chronological manifestation of violence entitled "RAGE". In this series, seven men, who were residents of the Stan Daniels Community Correctional Centre (now Stan Daniels Healing Centre - SDHC) discuss their childhood experiences including: how violence, abandonment and neglect shaped their paradigm as children; how they turned from victims to perpetrators; and the escalation of violence in their lives through adulthood and into prison. The videos were directed, written and shot by these residents, and include dramatizations of their experiences with violence.

The RAGE videos surpassed the original objective, in that they provide "a convincing commentary on

the possibility of basic healing, and a graphic illustration of the conditions required for its maintenance".<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the final product is a powerful educational tool that walks the viewer through the evolution of violence and demonstrates the manner in which violence is passed inter-generationally, helping the individual to better understand their own experiences with violence.

Upon completion of the RAGE video series, it became apparent that a debriefing session needed to be devised to accompany the videos, as they elicited a very strong response from the audience. In addition, staff and residents of the SDHC were aware that the videos could be used in a broader context with men in (and out) of prison, to help them move away from their patterns of violent behaviour. It was with this intention that a researcher was brought into the process to find material that would form the sessions to be used with the RAGE videos. Elders, staff of the SDHC, residents and "experts" in the field were all consulted and included in the program development.

The *In Search of Your Warrior Program* includes information, therapeutic sessions and suggested resources for facilitators to use over a 6 to 13 week period that deals specifically with helping individuals break their cycle of violence. The foundation for this program is the culture, teachings and ceremonies of Aboriginal people. With the assistance of an Aboriginal Elder, the appropriate ceremonies and teachings for each particular group of participants are weaved into the delivery of the program and form the basis for the therapeutic interventions that take place.

## The warrior metaphor

The concept of "warrior" has been powerful throughout history in Aboriginal cultures. For this program it provides participants an ideal way of being that they can strive to adopt for themselves. The concept of warrior is applicable for both males and females and includes "the development of such qualities as self-possession, spiritual and psychic awareness/alertness/attentiveness, goodness and caring, endurance, patience, resilience, the capacity to fight for what must be defended and preserved in order to assure a Way of Life".<sup>4</sup>



### Research and program evaluation

Once piloted at the SDHC, NCSA recognized that participant evaluation was needed in order to report what types of changes individuals realized as a result of participating in the In Search of Your Warrior Program. In partnership with the Correctional Service of Canada, a pre- and post-test for program participants was developed as a means of measuring the success of the individual, in a way that was culturally appropriate and specific to this unique program. Special care was taken to include the feedback from Elders who were involved with the program participants, as well as a tool that measured any change in specific areas that an individual sustained. The results of this research are now being analyzed and will be reported at a later date.

In addition, the program curriculum was reviewed and critiqued from an Aboriginal psychological perspective by Dr. Joe Couture. Through this process of evaluation, changes to the program were made.

### Implementation in different environments

NCSA realized that the setting of the program could have a great effect on the amount of change the participants of the program realized. In 1999, the staff and facilitators of In Search of Your

Warrior moved the program to a bush camp for the summer and fall months, with great success. Facilitators have reported that the natural environment and decrease of formal structure has lead to an increase in the amount and depth of personal development made by the participants.

Currently, the *In Search of Your Warrior Program* is being delivered by trained facilitators inside of federal institutions. The manual has been translated into French, making the program available for Aboriginal inmates in Quebec. In addition, community people throughout the Prairie provinces have been trained to deliver the program, developing skills to address issues of violence in their community. Most recently, the NCSA adapted the program for Aboriginal women who are caught in the cycle of violence; a program that is named "Spirit of a Warrior", which has been delivered successfully at Saskatchewan Penitentiary. ■

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<sup>2</sup> Couture, J. (1999), *Psychological Evaluation / Critique of the In Search Of Your Warrior Program Curriculum*. Native Counselling Services of Alberta Unpublished Document.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

## Coming up in *FORUM on Corrections Research*

*The January 2003 issue of Forum will focus on Community Corrections*



# Métis offenders in British Columbia: An examination of needs in the institution and upon release

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As is the case for First Nations and Inuit, Métis people are over-represented in the federal correctional system. While Métis account for 0.7% of the total Canadian adult population, Métis offenders comprise 4% of the federal offender population.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, research suggests that the profile of Métis offenders is distinct from First Nations and non-Aboriginal offenders.<sup>5</sup> This points to the need to examine the issues facing Métis offenders and their diverse needs for correctional programming.

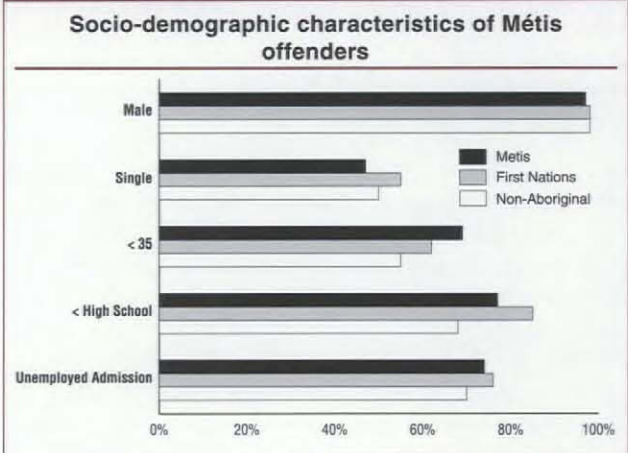
The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC), Métis Provincial Council of British Columbia (MPCBC), and Métis National Council (MNC) established a partnership to examine the needs of Métis offenders. The information could be used to enhance correctional programs and reintegration services to better meet the needs of Métis offenders, their families, and communities. Furthermore, the findings could be used to be better informed about how Section 81 and 84 of the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* (CCRA) can be used to assist Métis offenders in making successful transitions back into the community.

Structured interviews were conducted with 64 Métis federal offenders in British Columbia, and 17 family members. In addition to background information, the interviews focused on current program participation and the needs of offenders and their family. Additional data were extracted from offender files, as was information on comparison groups of First Nations and non-Aboriginal populations in British Columbia.

## Characteristics of Métis offenders

As illustrated in Figure 1, Métis offenders in British Columbia are fairly similar to First Nations and non-Aboriginal offenders on demographic characteristics. As with First Nations and non-Aboriginal offenders, large proportions of Métis offenders were less than 35 years of age (69%), single (47%), had not completed high school (77%), and were unemployed at the time of admission (74%). However, Métis offenders were significantly younger than non-Aboriginal offenders. Approximately two-thirds (69%) of Métis offenders were less than 35 years of age at the time of admission to the federal institution compared to one-half (55%) of non-Aboriginal offenders.

Figure 1



A considerable number of Métis offenders (83%) were currently incarcerated for violent offences. The largest proportions were currently incarcerated for homicide (35%) and robbery (24%). Excluding those serving life sentences, the average aggregate sentence length for Métis offenders was approximately 6½ years. The current criminal offence characteristics of First Nations and non-Aboriginal offenders were similar.

Métis offenders differed somewhat from non-Aboriginal offenders in terms of criminal histories, but not substantially from First Nations offenders. Larger proportions of Métis than non-Aboriginal offenders had youth court convictions (73% versus 55%), previous community supervision (91% versus 74%) and provincial terms (84% versus 70%).

Métis offenders were rated as having some or considerable need in a variety of areas, such as personal/emotional issues (98%), substance abuse (95%), criminal associates/social interaction (84%), attitudes (84%), employment (77%), marital/family issues (74%), and community functioning (70%). Some of these needs were different from other groups. In particular, Métis offenders were more likely to have some or considerable substance abuse (95% versus 76%) and employment (77% versus 62%) needs than non-Aboriginal offenders. A large number of Métis offenders were also classified as "high risk" to re-offend (79%). However, differences



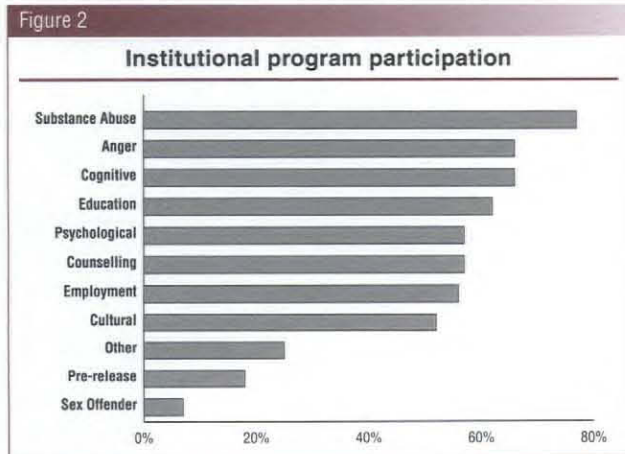
between Métis offenders and other groups on risk were not significant.

Métis offenders differed from First Nations offenders on some areas. While Métis offenders tended to live in urban areas (86%), smaller proportions of First Nations offenders lived in urban areas (75%).<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, there are differences in culture, as shown in Aboriginal language, involvement in Aboriginal activities, and identity.

In sum, Métis federal offenders were in their early 30's, single, had low education and high unemployment, which was similar to First Nations offenders and the Canadian Aboriginal population generally. Furthermore, Métis offenders had more extensive criminal histories and different needs than non-Aboriginal offenders. However, there were fewer differences between Métis and non-Aboriginal offenders than between First Nations and non-Aboriginal offenders. The areas where differences emerged between Métis and First Nations offenders related to where they grew up, and culture. Differences in the characteristics of Métis offenders may point to a need for different interventions for Métis offenders than are currently in use for First Nations offenders.

### Program participation

As illustrated in Figure 2, Métis offenders participated in a wide variety of programs. Almost all of those interviewed (98%) said that they had participated in some form of programming in the institutions. The largest proportion (77%) reported participating in substance abuse programs. Furthermore, approximately two-thirds participated in anger management (66%), cognitive/living skills (66%), and educational programming (62%). Over one-half of the Métis offenders also received psychological services (57%), counselling (57%), and were involved in employment (56%) programs. Smaller proportions participated in pre-release (18%) and sex offender programs (7%). The majority of offenders reported completing a program (90%).

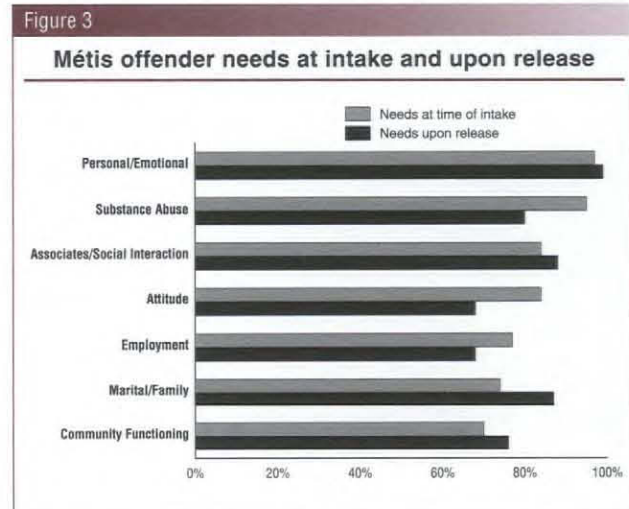


Almost two-thirds (61%) of respondents reported involvement in Aboriginal-specific programming. They reported Aboriginal programs including substance abuse, anger management and specific cultural initiatives. However, only two respondents reported having been involved in Métis-specific programs, such as substance abuse counselling.

Findings demonstrated that respondents with high need at intake were involved in a multitude of programs in the institution. Furthermore, those with high need in specific areas participated in need-appropriate programming. For instance, large proportions of respondents with high need for substance abuse intervention participated in substance abuse (80%) and cognitive/living skills (66%) programs. In addition, considerable proportions of those rated as having high need for employment-related interventions participated in employment (58%) and educational (62%) programs. Although the results suggest that Métis offenders are involved in programs that attempt to address their needs, it is unclear whether the spiritual and cultural needs of Métis offenders were adequately met by correctional programming.

### Needs of Métis offenders

Métis offenders were admitted to federal facilities with a variety of needs for intervention and those who had needs in one area tended to have needs in other areas. As illustrated in Figure 3, as is the case upon admission, Métis offenders also tended to have some or considerable need upon release to the community. However, some need ratings were significantly lower at the time of release than at admission. Respondents appeared to have lower substance abuse (average 3.6 versus 3.2), personal/emotional (average 3.8 versus 3.5) and attitude (average 3.4 versus 3.0) needs at the time of release into the community, suggesting that some of the issues facing Métis offenders were met inside the institutions.





Offenders were also asked about their needs in the institution. As indicated in Table 1, over one-half (54%) of those interviewed felt the need for more knowledge or awareness of their Métis culture. More than one-quarter (28%) also reported the need for more Métis-specific programs and a further 28% reported the need for Métis program facilitators. Put together, these findings suggest that a substantial portion of Métis offenders place importance on culturally-sensitive programming in the institutions. Moreover, respondents appear to require programs tailored to the experience and issues of Métis peoples.

Table 1

Needs of Métis offenders while incarcerated		
	N	%
Métis cultural knowledge/awareness	27	54%
Métis-specific programs	14	28%
Métis facilitators/staff	14	28%
Métis community involvement	3	6%
Other	13	26%

When asked what their needs would be at the time of release, the largest proportion of respondents reported that they would need the support of the Métis community (40%) (Table 2). Respondents also noted the need for financial support (22%), employment (16%), cultural support (15%) and adequate housing (15%). Findings suggest that Métis offenders not only place a great deal of importance on community mechanisms of support, but also acknowledge their need for economic stability upon release.

Table 2

Needs of Métis offenders upon release		
	N	%
Métis community support	22	40%
Support in general	15	27%
Financial support	12	22%
Employment	9	16%
Cultural support	8	15%
Housing support	8	15%
Education	5	9%
Family support	5	9%
Other	14	25%

In general, Métis federal offenders as a group tended to view their needs as unique from the needs of others. Over one-half (57%) reported that their needs were different from those of non-Aboriginal offenders and approximately one-quarter (27%) felt that their needs were unique from the needs of other Aboriginal offenders.

### Needs of family members

Apart from examining the needs of Métis offenders, the needs of the families were also

investigated. Almost one-half (48%) of offenders thought their family members needed more contact with them while incarcerated. In addition, one-fifth of offenders felt that their families needed a better understanding of the offender (21%) and support from others (21%). Smaller proportions noted the need for financial support (14%), adequate housing (5%) and medical benefits (5%). At the time of release, the largest proportion of Métis offenders reported that their families needed a commitment from them to change or avoid trouble while in the community (35%). In addition, over one-quarter (29%) of offender respondents reported that their families needed contact with them, and one-fifth felt their families required support (21%) and counselling (19%) upon release.

Of the 17 family respondents, 14 responded to questions concerning their needs while the offender is incarcerated. Forty-three percent of these family members noted the need for support from other family members and the community at large during the offender's incarceration. Smaller proportions reported the need for contact with the offender (21%), understanding (7%) and counselling (7%). Family members reported similar needs upon release of the offender. Among those who answered questions about their needs at release (n = 12), over one-half (58%) felt they would need supports in place to assist them with the transition of their family member, and one-quarter (25%) would require access to counselling. These findings highlight the importance of professional support services and community involvement to families of Métis offenders. Both offender and family members emphasize the need for access to a comprehensive support network that can provide on-going assistance from the time of incarceration to the point of successful reintegration.

### Conclusion

Profile information indicates that Métis federal offenders in British Columbia are in their early 30's, unemployed at admission, display a wide variety of needs at admission, possess extensive criminal backgrounds and are incarcerated for violent offences. Results also indicated that some profile characteristics of Métis offenders differed from other offender groups, suggesting that Métis offenders may have needs for intervention that are unique from those of First Nations and non-Aboriginal offenders. For instance, Métis and First Nations offenders differed in culture and whether they grew up in urban or rural areas.

Overall, Métis offenders in British Columbia participated in a variety of core programs inside federal facilities. Furthermore, needs presented at



intake were addressed by correctional programming. Findings indicate that Métis offenders also had specific self-identified needs in the institution and upon release. Large proportions reported the need for Métis-oriented programs and enhanced knowledge of their Métis culture while incarcerated. Upon release, large numbers expressed the need for support from the Métis community and economic assistance. However, the degree to which current programs addressed these areas is not available.

Results demonstrated that families were in need of a comprehensive system of supports during the period of incarceration and upon release. Large proportions of offender and family respondents emphasized the importance of formal and informal methods of intervention. Families appeared to require a combination of psychological services and support from community members in order to deal with the difficulties they experience.

Findings have implications for Métis offenders, their families, Métis communities and CSC. Information from this study can be used to improve the implementation of Sections 81 and 84 of the CCRA. Successful reintegration may be enhanced by offering programs that address the specific cultural needs of Métis offenders in the

institutions and community. It may also be imperative to allocate professional support resources to family members who plan to assist in the reintegration process. The emphasis placed on the community by offenders and families highlights the importance of providing Métis communities with a better understanding of Métis offender needs and issues. Ultimately, the successful reintegration of Métis offenders into their communities strengthens the chance of improving the quality of life for all Canadians.

This project was the first phase of a three phase process that examined the specific needs of Métis offenders within the correctional system and as they prepare to be released. The second phase will involve a needs assessment in those communities that Métis offenders have identified as the likely place they will go upon release. This process will examine existing services available and the level of support and assistance these communities are prepared to offer to the offenders and their families in the future. Building on the information from the first two phases, the final phase of the project will work to establish Section 81 and 84 programs and services in the identified communities. This could lead to the establishment of Métis transition houses, training facilities, healing programs, or other services. ■

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<sup>4</sup> Correctional Service of Canada (March 2002). *One-day snapshot of federal offenders*. Unpublished data from Offender Management System.

<sup>5</sup> Motiuk, L., and Nafekh, M. (2000). Aboriginal offenders in federal corrections: A profile. *Forum on Corrections Research*,

12(1), 10-15. Also see Moore, J. P. (2001). *A comparative profile of First Nations, Métis and Inuit federal offenders*, MA Thesis; and Saskatchewan Métis Justice Review Committee (1992). *Report of the Saskatchewan Métis Justice Review Committee*.

<sup>6</sup> The comparative First Nations data are from a report by Trevethan, S., Auger, S., Moore, J. P., MacDonald, M., and Sinclair, J. (2002). *The effect of family disruption among Aboriginal inmates*. Research Report R-113, Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service Canada.



# Inuit sexual offenders: Victim, offence and recidivism characteristics

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Inuit offenders in federal correctional facilities are more likely to be incarcerated for sexual offences than non-Aboriginal offenders, as well as Aboriginal offenders.<sup>3</sup> Currently, over 60% of Inuit offenders are incarcerated for a sexual offence.<sup>4</sup> However, to date, there is a paucity of research that has examined Inuit sexual offending behaviour. This article provides a profile and examination of recidivism patterns of Inuit sexual offenders in comparison to non-Aboriginal sexual offenders.

## Present study

This study compares the profiles of Inuit ( $N = 37$ ) and non-Aboriginal ( $N = 1,937$ ) sex offenders. In addition, a 12-year follow-up of 37 Inuit and 37 non-Aboriginal sex offenders was performed to examine recidivism patterns. The Inuit sex offenders were compared with a random and stratified sample of 37 non-Aboriginal sexual offenders.<sup>5</sup> Data were retrieved from the Offender Management System (OMS)<sup>6</sup> of Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) and the 1991 National Sex Offender Census.<sup>7</sup>

## Results

Overall, Inuit and non-Aboriginal sexual offenders differ in several areas, including age, type of victim, sex, victim age and rates of recidivism. For instance, Inuit sex offenders are significantly younger at the time of admission than non-Aboriginal sexual offenders (average of 31 versus 39 years). This is similar to age differences typically found between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders.<sup>8</sup>

Inuit sex offenders are currently incarcerated for different types of sexual offences than non-Aboriginal sex offenders. The largest percentages of both groups are rapists, with approximately one-half of both groups in this category (see Table 1). However, in spite of the majority of both groups falling into the rapist category, Inuit sex offenders are more often classified as mixed sexual offenders (i.e., offending against both child and adult victims) than the non-Aboriginal group (16% versus 4%).

Although there are no significant differences between Inuit and non-Aboriginal sex offenders on the average number of victims, they do differ in

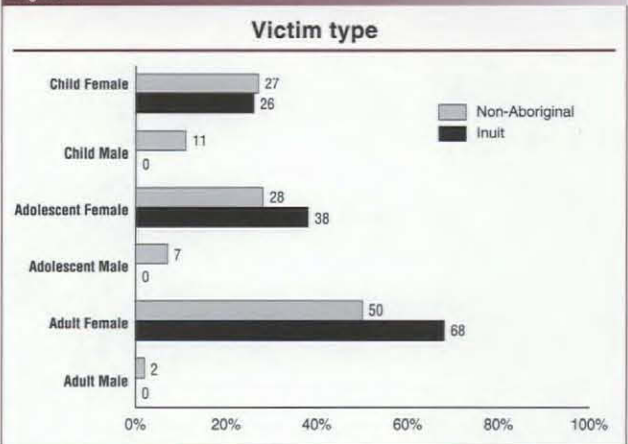
Table 1

	Type of sexual offence				$\chi^2$ ( $\lambda$ )
	Inuit		Non-Aboriginal		
	%	(n)	%	(n)	
Incest Offender	—	(—) <sup>†</sup>	20	(331)	12.74**
Child Molester	—	(—) <sup>†</sup>	27	(455)	
Mixed Offender (child/adult victim)	16	(5)	4	(64)	
Rapist	47	(15)	50	(840)	

\*\* $p < .01$ ; <sup>†</sup> amount too small to be expressed

their choice of victims. As illustrated in Figure 1, no significant differences exist between the proportions of Inuit and non-Aboriginal sex offenders who victimized adult males, adolescent males, adolescent females, or female children. However, significantly larger proportions of Inuit sex offenders victimized adult women (68% versus 50%) and significantly less victimized male children (0% versus 11%). Importantly, no Inuit sex offenders had male victims.

Figure 1



Inuit and non-Aboriginal offenders do not differ significantly on the amount of physical injury to the victim(s). However, Inuit sex offenders were significantly more likely to have the involvement of alcohol and/or other drugs in their current sexual offence as compared with non-Aboriginal sexual offenders (88% versus 61%).

Overall, Inuit and non-Aboriginal sex offenders are similar regarding some characteristics relating to their sexual offences, such as their number of victims. However, there are differences on other

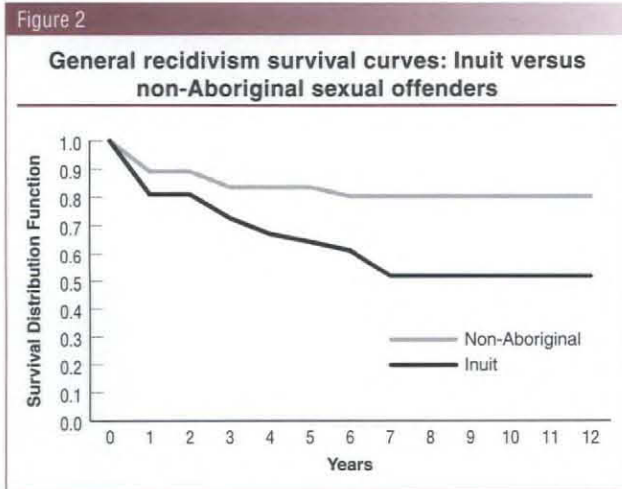


variables such as their age and their victim's sex and age. Some of these differences may be of great importance in the treatment of Inuit sex offenders in order to address risk of re-offending.

### Recidivism

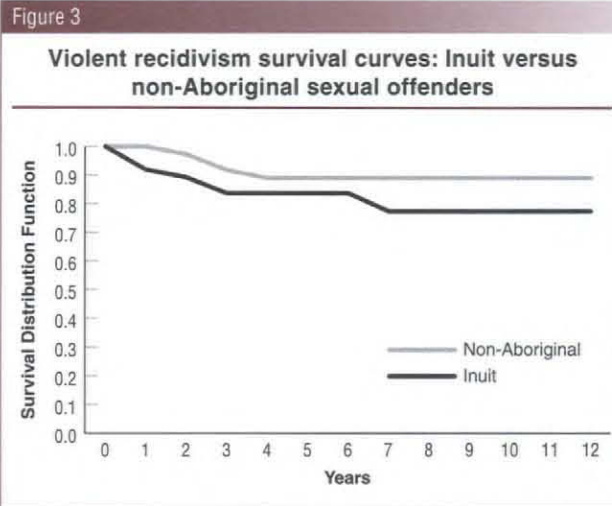
Survival analysis was used to compare recidivism for the 37 Inuit sex offenders and a sample of 37 non-Aboriginal sex offenders, over a 12-year period. An examination of any re-admission to a federal correctional facility (general recidivism),<sup>9</sup> as well as re-admissions for violent and sexual offences was conducted.

Figure 2 indicates the proportion of offenders who have survived without being re-admitted to federal facilities, with the remaining percentage reflecting the recidivism rate. The results indicate that the Inuit sex offenders have significantly higher rates of general recidivism than non-Aboriginal sex offenders. Approximately seven years into the follow-up period, 48% of the Inuit sex offenders who could be followed for 7 years had been re-admitted to a federal facility, compared to approximately 20% of non-Aboriginal sex offenders. The rate of recidivism was greatest in the first three years of the follow-up period among the non-Aboriginal sex offenders. For the Inuit sex offenders, recidivism was greatest up until the seventh year.

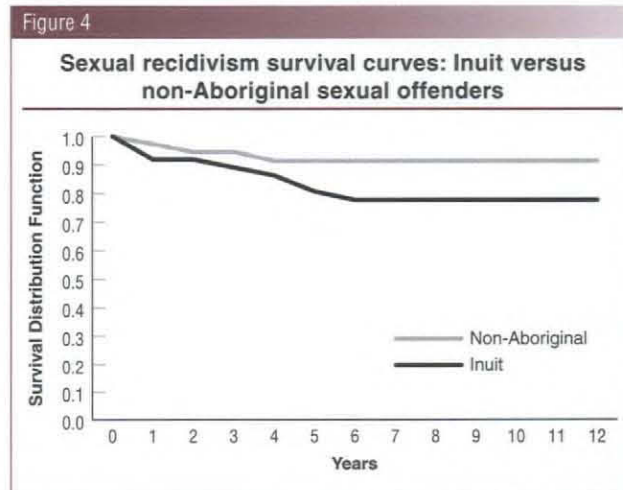


In terms of violent recidivism, although larger proportions of Inuit than non-Aboriginal sex offenders were re-admitted for violent offences, these differences were not statistically significant.<sup>10</sup> Approximately seven years into the follow-up, approximately 20% of Inuit sex offenders were re-admitted to a federal correctional facility compared to 7% of non-Aboriginal sex offenders (see Figure 3).

Differences between Inuit and non-Aboriginal sex offenders on sexual recidivism approached significance ( $p = .07$ ), indicating that the Inuit sex



offenders have higher rates of sexual recidivism than non-Aboriginal sex offenders. As seen in the rates of general and violent recidivism, rates of recidivism were most dramatic in the first four years of follow-up, with recidivism remaining stable for both groups after six years of follow-up. Approximately 22% of Inuit sex offenders sexually recidivated, compared to 5% of non-Aboriginal sex offenders (see Figure 4).



### Discussion

Significantly larger proportions of Inuit than non-Aboriginal sex offenders were re-admitted to federal correctional facilities over the 12-year time-period examined. When examining the specific types of re-offending, differences between the two groups approached significance for sexual recidivism, but was non-significant for violent re-offending. Inuit sex offenders were also found to have certain characteristics that are related to recidivism among sexual offenders (e.g., younger age, mixed sexual offences and a more extensive criminal history). These variables may help explain the higher rates of recidivism for the Inuit sex offender population. ■



- <sup>1</sup> 340 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, Ontario; K1A 0P9. Excerpt from Rastin, C. J. (2002). *A profile and 12-year follow-up of Inuit sexual offenders*. Honours thesis in psychology, Ottawa, ON: University of Ottawa.
- <sup>2</sup> 19<sup>th</sup> floor, R. H. Coats Building, Tunney's Pasture, Ottawa Ontario K1A 0T6.
- <sup>3</sup> Nahanee, T. (1995). *A profile of Aboriginal sex offenders in Canadian federal custody*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada. See also Motiuk, L., and Nafekh, M. (2000). Aboriginal offenders in federal corrections: A profile. *Forum on Corrections Research*, 12(1), 10-15.
- <sup>4</sup> Moore, J. P. (2001). *A comparative profile of North American Indian, Métis and Inuit federal offenders*. Masters thesis in Criminology. Ottawa, ON: University of Ottawa.
- <sup>5</sup> The sample was randomly selected by SAS and stratified to match the number of Inuit sex offenders in the community or institution to the number of non-Aboriginal sex offenders in the community or institution.
- <sup>6</sup> The Offender Management System (OMS), created in 1992, is a system designed to monitor and track offenders under the supervision of the Correctional Service of Canada.
- <sup>7</sup> The National Sex Offender Census examined all federally sentenced sexual offenders (either incarcerated or under

- community supervision) in 1991. Sex offender status was determined by the presence of any of the following characteristics: the offender at the time of the census was serving a sentence for a sexual offence; had been convicted of a prior sexual assault or multiple sexual assaults (receiving either a federal or provincial sentence); committed a sexually-related offence, but was not serving a sentence for a sexual assault at the time of the census; or committed a sexual offence in the past which a conviction was not handed down.
- <sup>8</sup> Trevethan, S, Tremblay, S., and Carter, J. (2000). *The over-representation of Aboriginal people in the justice system*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.
- <sup>9</sup> General recidivism refers to any readmission to a federal institution due to the commission of a new offence. Violent recidivism refers to any readmission to a federal institution due to a violent offence (e.g., assault, attempted murder, other related person-based offences). Sexual recidivism refers to any readmission to a federal institution due to a sexual offence (e.g., sexual assault, sexual interference, sexual exploitation, invitation to sexual touching, indignity to a body).
- <sup>10</sup> Although a substantial difference is evident in the proportions of Inuit and non-Aboriginal offenders who violently recidivated, significant results were likely not achieved due to the small sample size.

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# Examining reintegration potential for Aboriginal offenders

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The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) examines offenders' static and dynamic factors at intake, prior to conditional release, and every six months thereafter. The objective of this article is to more closely examine the discrimination capacity of Reintegration Potential Reassessment (RPR) in order to validate its use with Aboriginal offenders.<sup>2</sup>

Various CSC studies led to the development of Reintegration Potential Reassessment (RPR), which has been proven to effectively predict re-offending.<sup>3</sup> The RPR is used to assist in offender reintegration, while serving to orient interventions so that they provide greater support to those on the path to reintegration. However, the validity of the RPR has not been assessed for Aboriginal offenders, and there is some question as to whether it is appropriate for this cultural context. In addition, studies have found significant differences in the profiles of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders,<sup>4</sup> indicating the importance of examining reintegration potential for use with Aboriginal offenders.

In addition to discussing the validity of the RPR for use with Aboriginal offenders, this article also discusses specific variables that may enhance Aboriginal offender reintegration.

## Methodology

Analyses are based on information from two sources. The first source of data was the CSC Offender Management System. The sample was comprised of 30,041 cases of male offenders who were released on day parole, full parole or statutory release between January 1996 and June 2000. Of these, 25,222 (84%) of the releases involved non-Aboriginal offenders and 4,819 (16%) involved Aboriginal offenders. These cases were followed for up to three years to examine re-admissions to federal custody.

The second source of data came from a study conducted by Johnston.<sup>5</sup> This study focused on 518 randomly chosen Aboriginal offenders in 1996, representing approximately one-third of all incarcerated Aboriginal offenders.

## Offender profile

The analyses confirmed other studies in finding statistically significant differences in the profiles of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders in federal institutions. These differences suggest that

Aboriginal offenders, compared to non-Aboriginal offenders are:

- younger, with an average age of 35 versus 38;
- less likely to be granted day parole (59% versus 66%), but more likely to be granted statutory release (34% versus 26%);
- more likely to be classified as high risk (42% versus 23%);
- more likely to be classified as having high needs (41% versus 26%);
- more likely to be classified as both high risk and high need (30% versus 15%); and,
- rated higher on each of the seven needs and have a greater number of high-level needs (4 on average versus 3).

## Relationship with recidivism

The study also looked at the relationship between certain variables and recidivism among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders.<sup>6</sup> As indicated in Table 1, larger proportions of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal offenders were re-admitted to a federal institution. Within a six-month period, 18% of Aboriginal offenders were re-admitted compared to 11% of non-Aboriginal offenders. These differences remained for longer follow-up periods (33% versus 20% for a one-year follow-up period). No significant differences emerged between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders in whether the re-admissions were for technical violations or new offences.

Although Aboriginal offenders were re-admitted more often than non-Aboriginal offenders for all types of release, the largest differences occurred for those released on full parole (21% versus 9%).

Table 1

Re-admissions to federal custody within six months		
Type of Release	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal
<b>Overall Recidivism</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>11%</b>
Day Parole	14%	7%
Full Parole	21%	9%
Statutory Release	25%	21%

It appears that the RPR is predictive of community supervision outcome for Aboriginal offenders. As illustrated in Table 2, the proportion of recidivists



with high risk and need levels follow fairly similar trends for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders. However, improvements to community assessments could be made for high risk/low need and low risk/high need designations, where larger proportions of Aboriginal offenders recidivated (38% versus 10%; 37% versus 12%).

**Table 2**  
**Percentage of recidivists by level of risk and need**

Risk Level	Aboriginal			Non-Aboriginal		
	Need Level			Need Level		
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
Low	1.7%	2.5%	37.5%	0.8%	5.1%	12.4%
Medium	5.9%	14.8%	31.9%	3.7%	11.7%	20.9%
High	38.2%	15.2%	25.4%	9.6%	10.6%	26.2%

The results also revealed a number of statistically significant differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders:

- the younger the offender, the wider the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders on recidivism;
- although risk and need level predicted recidivism, weaker correlations existed for Aboriginal offenders;
- weaker correlations existed for Aboriginal offenders between individual needs and recidivism, except for needs concerning social interaction and attitude;
- although the number of high needs predicted recidivism, the relationship is more linear among non-Aboriginal offenders.

**Validity and relevance of reintegration potential**

Analyses more closely tied to the actual use of the RPR, including discriminative and predictive validity analyses, reveal the presence of statistically significant differences in the two groups. These differences, more than any others, demonstrate the importance of considering culture. Except for needs concerning social interaction and attitude, all other needs provide better discriminative capacity for non-Aboriginal offenders.

As indicated in Table 3, the number of high needs and the overall need level are the two best predictors of recidivism for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders. For other variables, however, appreciable differences occur with respect to the order of importance and number of best predictors.

Other main points emerging from these analyses are:

**Table 3**  
**Best predictors of recidivism**

Predictors	Aboriginal		Non-Aboriginal	
	Order	Odds-Ratio	Order	Odds-Ratio
Risk Level	5	0.69		
Need Level	2	1.14	2	1.58
Employment Need			4	0.84
Marital/Family Need				
Associates/Social Interaction Need	3	0.88	5	0.69
Substance Abuse Need	6	0.62	3	0.84
Community Functioning Need			6	0.62
Personal/Emotional Need			7	0.42
Attitude Need	4	0.82		
Number of High Needs	1	1.45	1	2.13

- the addition of age to the other variables has the effect of increasing its predictive value for both groups, but more so for Aboriginal offenders;
- the Métis sub-group and the sub-group of Aboriginals excluding the Métis and Inuit also reveal significant differences.

These analyses support the hypothesis that weighting based on standardized regression coefficients, and taking into account the best predictors identified for Aboriginal offenders, could be very promising in terms of improving the RPR's predictive capacity for the Aboriginal offender population. Particular attention should be paid to the relevance of adding the age variable to enhance the predictive value of reintegration potential for Aboriginal offenders. Lastly, consideration should be given to analyses that take into account First Nations, Métis and Inuit sub-groups. In certain cases, more precise data would need to be collected with respect to the status, native community and current residence of Aboriginal offenders in order to examine all of these possibilities.

**Analyses on variables specific to Aboriginal culture**

Data from Johnston's study allowed analyses of a number of areas that may be related to recidivism and/or reintegration back into society. These variables include attendance at a residential school, participation in cultural or spiritual activities, the use of traditional Aboriginal services such as Elders, Aboriginal Liaison Officers and mentoring, as well as participation in Aboriginal-only programs or other programs.

Due to a lack of sufficient data to conduct more sophisticated analyses, only simple correlations could be calculated. Before making a definitive



conclusion as to their impact on reintegration, the findings listed below should be confirmed by studies based on a larger amount of data. The main findings are:

- attendance at residential schools does not appear to be related to recidivism, but this finding may be due to the small sample and the impossibility of taking intergenerational influence into account;
- participation in cultural activities was strongly correlated with a decrease in recidivism, but had a less clear impact on reintegration (since those who participate are lower risk and needs than those who do not participate);
- participation in spiritual activities and Elder's advice were strongly correlated with a decrease in recidivism and likely impacted on reintegration (since those who participate have the same level of risk and needs as those who do not participate);
- participation in programs focusing on employment and education was strongly correlated with a decrease in recidivism, but only for Aboriginal-specific programs;

- participation in programs focusing on social relationships, community needs and emotional needs were strongly correlated with a decrease in recidivism, regardless of whether the programs were specifically for Aboriginals or not;
- the low number of Aboriginals who participate in Aboriginal-specific programs and the positive results associated with participation in these programs seem to confirm Johnston's observation that the low number of participants is not attributable to a lack of motivation, but rather that there is very little access to these programs.

Generally, it can be concluded that some Aboriginal-specific programs and services show promise in terms of being potential predictors of recidivism, but perhaps even more in terms of facilitating reintegration. These programs and services fit quite well into the context of CSC's mission. Although there is still very little access to some of these programs, the early results strongly encourage further development, especially since they respond to demands from Aboriginal groups and are supported by other studies. ■

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<sup>2</sup> For more in-depth information on this project, see Sioui, R., and Thibault, J. (2001). *The relevance of a cultural adaptation for Aboriginals of the Reintegration Potential Reassessment Scale (RPRS)*, Research Report R-109, Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

<sup>3</sup> Motiuk, L. L., and Brown, S. L. (1993). *The validity of offender needs identification and analysis in community corrections*. Research Report R-34, Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada. Also see Motiuk, L. L., and Porporino, F. J. (1989). *Offender risk/needs assessment: A study of conditional releases*. Research Report R-01, Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

<sup>4</sup> Trevelyan, S., Carrière, G., MacKillop, B., Finn, A., Robinson, D., Porporino, F., and Millson, W. (1999). *A one-day snapshot of offenders in Canada's adult correctional facilities*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada. Also see Motiuk, L., and Nafekh, M. (2000). Aboriginal offenders in federal corrections: A profile. *Forum on Corrections Research* 12(1), 10-15.

<sup>5</sup> Johnston, C. (1998). *Aboriginal offender survey: Case files and interview sample*, Research Report R-61. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

<sup>6</sup> Recidivism was based upon any re-admissions to a federal institution within six months of release (including new offences and technical violations).



# An examination of healing lodges for federal offenders in Canada

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One of the Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC) initiatives to reduce the incarceration of Aboriginal people in Canada is through the use of healing lodges. This process is implemented through Section 81 of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA), which allows Aboriginal communities to provide correctional services.

In an effort to better understand federal healing lodges, an examination of the physical aspects of the lodges and a profile of residents was conducted. Interviews were also conducted with 56 staff in the federal correctional institutions, 18 staff in the healing lodges, and 20 residents of healing lodges, in order to examine how they viewed the healing lodge experience and issues facing healing lodges.

## Description of healing lodges

There are currently six healing lodges in operation in Canada for federal offenders (see Table 1). Two healing lodges (Okimaw Ohci and Pê Sâkâstêw) are managed by CSC. The remaining four healing lodges (Stan Daniels, Ochichakkosipi, Wahpeton and Waseskun) are managed by Aboriginal agencies and/or communities.

while others take up to 100 residents. They differ in location from remote to urban areas. Some resemble small correctional facilities while others are very traditional in design. Finally, some offer structured programs while others do not offer programs per se, but instead offer in-depth individual counselling. Okimaw Ohci is the only healing lodge for women offenders and it is also the only facility that accepts both minimum- and medium-security offenders. The other lodges only accept minimum-security offenders.

## Offender profile

From 1995, when the first federal healing lodge opened, until October 2001, 530 offenders have resided in healing lodges. Over the last four years, about 104 offenders have been transferred each year. This number is expected to increase as two new healing lodges are expected to open in 2003 (Kwikwêxwelhp in British Columbia and Willow Cree Healing Lodge in Saskatchewan).

Socio-demographically, residents of healing lodges resemble Aboriginal offenders in minimum security. However, significantly larger proportions

Table 1

Healing lodges currently in operation in Canada				
Healing Lodge	Location	Clients	Opened as Healing Lodge	# of Section 81 Beds
Okimaw Ohci	Maple Creek, Saskatchewan	Women	November 1995	28
Pê Sâkâstêw	Hobbema, Alberta	Men	August 1997	40
Wahpeton Spiritual Healing Lodge	Prince Albert, Saskatchewan	Men	August 1997	5
Stan Daniels Community Corrections Centre	Edmonton, Alberta	Men	June 1999	15-20
Ochichakkosipi Healing Lodge	Crane River, Manitoba	Men	February 2000	24
Waseskun	St. Alphonse-de-Rodriguez, Quebec	Men	August 2001	15

Although healing lodges share a number of characteristics, there is also a great deal of diversity. The main differences are between the CSC-managed and Aboriginal-managed healing lodges. CSC-managed lodges focus on traditional Aboriginal ideologies but are considered minimum-security CSC facilities. Aboriginal-managed lodges are privately-run and operate within certain guidelines as outlined in their contracts with CSC. However, they do not necessarily maintain the structured approach of a CSC facility.

Healing lodges also differ in size, location, design and operation. Some house only a few residents,

of Aboriginal offenders in minimum security are currently serving sentences for sex offences (20% versus 13%). However, the two groups have similar aggregate sentences. Interestingly, residents of healing lodges appear to have a slightly more extensive criminal history than Aboriginal offenders in minimum security. For example, larger proportions of healing lodge residents had been previously segregated for disciplinary infractions (25% versus 17%) and attempted/successful escapes (34% versus 21%). Furthermore, larger proportions of healing lodge residents were rated as higher risk to re-offend (53% versus 45%), higher overall need (64% versus 50%),



and to have lower reintegration potential (45% versus 33%) at the time of admission to the federal facility.

### Healing lodge experience

The majority (80%) of healing lodge residents interviewed said they were very satisfied with their experience at the healing lodge. It was noted that the healing lodge helped them better understand themselves and furthered their healing journey. It was noted that they were less angry and more in control of themselves. Important aspects included Elders, access to sweat lodges, cultural activities, as well as access to outside activities. One respondent indicated:

*[I] don't respond violently anymore. Emotionally, I feel more at peace with myself [and] don't have negative thoughts anymore.*

Furthermore, 95% of the offenders felt that their experiences and interaction with the staff was positive. As one respondent noted:

*[The healing lodge staff are] very interactive. [It's] not like in prison where guards have nothing to do with them. [There is] no tension with staff and inmates [here]. Communication is better, the staff helps the [offenders] deal with their problems.*

Staff from healing lodges and federal facilities seemed to have some common perceptions about healing lodges. Both said that there is a lack of communication between federal institutions and healing lodges. Some concerns were that federal institutions lacked an understanding of the role of healing lodges and Section 81, did not trust the healing lodges' ability to manage offenders and lacked commitment to the implementation of Section 81. Two-thirds (63%) of the federal staff felt that they had a good understanding of Section 81, but less than one-third (30%) felt they had a good understanding of what occurs at healing lodges. Furthermore, almost one-quarter (22%) of the federal staff felt that the healing lodges were not effectively managing offenders.

It was noted that some of the most beneficial aspects of the healing lodge include the Aboriginal culture and tradition. Another benefit was providing residents with the opportunity to heal. As was also noted by the residents, staff felt that improvements to facilities would be useful (e.g., more space, security). They also said that more funding was necessary in order to increase the space, improve programming, hire more staff and interact more fully with the community.

Respondents were asked what federal institutions could do to help healing lodges implement Section 81. It was suggested by a number of respondents that, in order to get a better understanding of healing

lodges and facilitate a good relationship, federal staff should interact with healing lodge staff and residents. Similarly, healing lodge staff could spend more time at federal facilities. It was also suggested that staff from the federal institutions could help train healing lodge staff on the implementation of Section 81.

Many respondents noted that success in a healing lodge will vary depending on the offender and the healing lodges. Some respondents said that healing lodges may work for offenders who are sincere and motivated. Similarly, certain structures of healing lodges may work better for some offenders than others.

Finally, it was suggested that healing lodges have more involvement with families of offenders and communities in general.

### Issues facing healing lodges

It is clear that there are many positive aspects of healing lodges. Many of the lodges are located in beautiful physical settings that may aid offenders along their healing path. The environments appear to be conducive to relaxation, which may allow offenders to open up emotionally and begin dealing with the factors that have contributed to their criminal behaviour. Stan Daniels is different in that it is located in an urban setting, but this allows offenders to be closer to their families and can provide more opportunities for employment, a significantly high need area for many transferred offenders.

In addition to the setting, most healing lodges focus on Aboriginal culture. They all provide access to Elders or spiritual advisors, as well as a variety of cultural activities. As some of the offenders indicated, their awareness of Aboriginal culture appears to have increased while they were at the lodge. This exposure seems to have had a positive impact on them. One of the more striking findings comes from offenders who were fairly ambivalent about Aboriginal culture or traditions prior to coming to the lodge. Once they had an opportunity to learn about their culture, it greatly enhanced how they viewed themselves and others, as well as their behaviour.

In addition to feeling at ease at the lodge, many offenders reported feeling more comfortable with the healing lodge staff because the staff were predominantly Aboriginal, which ultimately may aid them in their healing process. Furthermore, the healing lodge staff appear to have a strong desire and commitment to working with offenders, aiding them in their healing and working with CSC to accomplish this objective. Having staff who believe in what they do creates a positive and accepting environment that should contribute to healing.



Although there are many positive aspects of healing lodges, there were also some issues identified as facing the healing lodges.

### **Resources**

One of the most pressing concerns noted by all Section 81 healing lodges is the lack of resources. At the basic level, Section 81 lodges are in need of some physical improvements. Furthermore, the lack of funding has affected recruitment, training, and retention of lodge staff. Recruitment is especially difficult as Aboriginal people with the required skill sets are in high demand and the lodges cannot afford to pay what the market dictates. In terms of training, most Section 81 lodges do not have the funds to adequately train their staff regarding CSC procedures.

Programming is another area that has been affected by the lack of funds. Smaller facilities do not offer structured programs as they do not have the resources to offer programs given the small number of residents that need them.

### **Transfers**

In addition to Section 81 transfers, non-CSC run healing lodges accept offenders on day parole, full parole, statutory release, as well as provincial offenders. This can be a problem for the lodges in that these different offenders have a variety of conditions that govern their release that may result in confusion and complication. Furthermore, the needs of these offenders may differ substantially, making it difficult for one lodge to accommodate all the differences.

Another issue is who is being informed about transfers, who applies and who eventually receives approval for a transfer. One of the main factors institutional review boards use to determine if the offender is appropriate for a transfer is involvement in cultural practices. Some offenders may be rejected by the institutional review boards based on their lack of cultural involvement, but may still greatly benefit from the healing lodge experience.

### **Relationships**

There appears to be an overall lack of communication between healing lodges and federal correctional facilities. This lack of communication may contribute to issues relating to the identification of potential transfers, the effectiveness of the transfer process, and the likelihood of parole officers encouraging offenders to apply to a healing lodge.

Another issue is the understanding of the role and approach used by healing lodges. Some healing

lodge and federal staff felt that federal institutions lacked an understanding of the role of healing lodges, did not trust the healing lodges' ability to manage offenders, and lacked commitment to the implementation of Section 81. This points to a need for better communication among federal staff and healing lodges, as well as some agreed-upon policies regarding the role of healing lodges.

### **Community involvement**

Community involvement may be one of the main factors that determines the effectiveness of a healing lodge. The extent of community involvement differs from lodge to lodge, with some having little involvement, and others having strong community links. Community involvement is the key to access to cultural activities and Elders as well as offender reintegration. In addition, links with communities can create employment and housing opportunities for the offenders upon release. At this point, there does not appear to be adequate resources for healing lodges to focus on community involvement. However, it is clear that, in order for healing lodges to be effective, this is a crucial component.

### **Conclusion**

It is clear that there are some very positive and effective aspects of healing lodges. The culturally-appropriate environments can contribute to the healing process of the offenders. In addition, the staff at the lodges, which are predominantly Aboriginal, contribute to an environment that is more conducive to building respect and positive relationships. Ultimately, this directly affects the offenders' healing.

The effectiveness of different models of healing lodges with different types of offenders should be examined in more detail. Some offenders may do better in structured environments with set programs, whereas others may need a quiet setting without distractions to begin examining their behaviour and travel along their healing path.

Although there are issues facing healing lodges, many can be resolved by improved communication between the healing lodges and federal facilities. A better understanding of healing lodges among federal staff, and of CSC policies among healing staff, would go a long way towards helping the relationship and, ultimately, improving the services provided to offenders. ■

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# Turning Points: Factors related to the successful reintegration of Aboriginal offenders

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**T**his article examines the success of Aboriginal offenders who, at one time, had been very serious offenders and who had turned their lives around to become law-abiding citizens. The goal was to identify the factors associated with the successful integration of Aboriginal offenders. Interviews were conducted with Aboriginal ex-offenders from Edmonton, Alberta. All had served one or more sentences in a federal penitentiary and had been out of conflict with the law for at least two years. Twelve women and 56 men were interviewed according to a structured questionnaire that guided them through their early years, getting into trouble, getting out of trouble, and staying out of trouble.

## Respondent profile

**A** profile of the ex-offenders who participated in the study was developed in an attempt to understand the experiences reported by the participants and the socio-demographic context in which these experiences occurred.

The largest proportion of respondents (60%) were First Nations. A further 38% were Métis and 2% (1 respondent) were Inuit. The average age of the respondents was 43, with a range of between 21 and 64 years. Eighty percent of the respondents had completed grade 12 or less. More than one-half (58%) reported that they were presently employed, either part-time or full-time. Most of the respondents resided in a city at the time of the study (74%). Finally, two-thirds (66%) reported that their physical health was good or excellent. In addition, about three-quarters (74%) reported good or excellent mental health.

In order to demonstrate the dramatic changes made by the respondents, it is important to understand the extent of their criminal histories. A large proportion of the respondents (84%) reported convictions for violent crimes. For instance, 16 respondents (24%) had criminal records for murder, attempted murder, or manslaughter. It is clear that these ex-offenders were able to successfully reintegrate into the community despite their relatively serious and dangerous crimes.

## The early years

The respondents' living atmospheres in their childhood and adolescence were explored to identify the factors that may have influenced their

criminal behaviour. The majority (59%) reported that they were raised by both parents at some point in their lives.<sup>2</sup> Some respondents had been placed in alternative living arrangements. For example, 40% said they had lived in an orphanage or foster care, while over one-quarter (28%) reported placement in a residential school. Many of the respondents experienced unstable, dysfunctional, and abusive home environments in their early years. Forty percent reported incidents of psychological, physical, sexual abuse, and/or neglect in their childhood. In addition, almost one-half (47%) reported they became violent during their child and adolescent years.

## Getting into trouble

As a result of their early living conditions, many respondents committed a great number of offences and spent large amounts of time in the correctional system. This study found that 62% of the respondents were first charged between the ages of 13 and 17. The majority of first charges were property offences (56%). Over one-half (54%) of the respondents were involved in the youth justice system, while the majority (57%) of those involved in the system spent between one and three years.

As adults, 51% reported between one and 10 convictions. In terms of dispositions, 86% had been sentenced to a federal institution,<sup>3</sup> 85% had been sentenced to a provincial institution, 79% received a fine, and 69% had been sentenced to probation. For those sentenced to an institution, the majority (47%) received a sentence of between one and three years. The sentence to a federal institution was reported as having the greatest impact on the respondents.

Participants were asked to provide explanations for their conflict with the law. Four general categories were developed from their responses: wrong place at the wrong time, an addiction and criminal lifestyle, anger and rebellion, and confusion. When asked about what would have prevented them from getting into trouble, the respondents identified communication and family support as two main factors. The importance of supportive and attentive families with solid communication and problem solving skills is clearly identified as a measure of effective crime prevention and family intervention. One of the challenges facing Aboriginal communities,



governments, and family service agencies in the future, is to ensure that Aboriginal families become stronger and healthier.

### Getting out of trouble

Participants in the study were provided a list of factors identified as influences that have helped people out of trouble. In general, the list of influences provided by the respondents can be grouped into three general categories: culture,<sup>4</sup> programs,<sup>5</sup> and personal.<sup>6</sup> This information has the potential to direct “what works” in research and practice for successful community reintegration. The insights may also act as a basis upon which to design and implement treatment and intervention programs that can initiate and/or reinforce the process of behavioural change.

The largest proportion of the participants (85%) stated that controlling or stopping their alcohol and/or drug abuse was a strong influence for helping them get out of trouble. The second largest proportion (82%) said that family members were an important factor in prompting change. In addition, 72% of respondents noted that the influence of friends helped them get out of trouble. Many of the participants (81%) also explained that they had become sick and tired of being in trouble with the law. Similarly, 76% said they realized there was a better way of life. A sense of personal identity was also cited as important factor for many of the respondents (76%).

Aboriginal culture and spirituality represented a strong theme in the participants’ responses. The respondents emphasized the importance of Elders and Aboriginal-centred ceremonies and programs in institutions as factors of change. For example, 72% of respondents said that Elders had a positive effect on turning their lives around, while 71% had been involved in Aboriginal spirituality and ceremonies within the institutions. Programs administered by outside agencies was also cited as a factor for productive change (71%).

It is likely that a combination of factors, or certain life events, affected these central influences. These influences have important implications for the development and provision of corrections and community intervention strategies. More so, the effective delivery of programs offered upon release, as well as the establishment of community links are critical to successful reintegration for Aboriginal offenders.

### Staying out of trouble

Participants were asked to describe the influences that they believed helped them stay

out of trouble. Almost all respondents (94%) stated that personal values and identity were a strong influence in staying out of trouble. Once again, the family was identified as an important influence by 94% of the participants. In addition, 87% of respondents noted the importance of friends. A large proportion (91%) stated that staying clean and sober helped them stay out of trouble.

Another theme elicited from the participants’ responses focused on helping themselves. The influences of self-improvement activities (90%)<sup>7</sup> and self-help groups (43%)<sup>8</sup> illustrate this point. In addition to helping themselves, respondents also noted that helping others was a factor in staying out of trouble (79%). A large majority of the respondents volunteered their time for various organizations, which clearly demonstrates their willingness to become productive members of society.

Employment (74%), education and training (71%) were also cited by the participants as positive influences. According to some respondents, employment gave focus to their lives and provided them with support from their co-workers. Support for education is further related to the importance associated with learning about Aboriginal history and establishing an identity. Participation in Aboriginal spirituality and ceremonies (71%) and cultural activities (68%)<sup>9</sup> had a significant impact on keeping the respondents crime-free.

It was further revealed that the respondents had no or little concept of Aboriginal culture. For many, their knowledge and experience with Aboriginal culture had been negative. A recurring theme in most of the stories was that a positive Aboriginal culture did exist. In most cases, contact with Elders helped to clarify their misconceptions about Aboriginal culture. This finding reinforces the need to have Elders available to offenders inside and outside the institutions, as well as providing offenders with accurate knowledge about their culture.

The continued and positive support from outside individuals and agencies is clearly important, in addition to, the programs and services available in the community. From these responses, it is evident what areas of community intervention needs to be further developed and expanded.

### Conclusion

The insights provided by the respondents are a valuable contribution to the field of crime prevention in Aboriginal and mainstream communities. A better understanding of successful integration factors will assist criminal justice and



correctional officials to design and implement programs to facilitate the process of healthy change, as well as to improve culture and spiritual awareness among Aboriginal offenders. Finally, it is hoped that the expanded support and respect

for Aboriginal activities and cultural identity inside and outside institutions will reduce the number of Aboriginal persons involved in the criminal justice system. ■

<sup>1</sup> Box 34007 Kingsway Mall PO, Edmonton, Alberta T5G 3G4. This article is an abstract of a report that was prepared on contract for the Research Branch of Correctional Service Canada, and was jointly sponsored by Nechi Training Research and Health Promotions Institute and Native Counselling Services of Alberta.

<sup>2</sup> Respondents may have lived in more than one home with different caregivers each time.

<sup>3</sup> Some respondents who received a federal sentence served their time in provincial institutions.

<sup>4</sup> Culture refers to the positive impact elicited by learning more about Aboriginal history, culture, and spiritual practices.

<sup>5</sup> Programs refer to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal programs offered inside and outside the institutions.

<sup>6</sup> Personal refers to personal changes experienced by the participants.

<sup>7</sup> Self-improvement activities involve taking part in leisure activities that help the rehabilitation process. These may include sports, reading, or spending time with family members.

<sup>8</sup> Self-help groups are activities a person undertakes with a group of people such as healing or friendship circles.

<sup>9</sup> Cultural activities include sweats, sweetgrass, pipe ceremonies, and sacred circles.

## Let's Talk

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# Getting out and staying out: A conceptual framework for the successful reintegration of Aboriginal male young offenders

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The purpose of this research project was to better understand the process of successful reintegration of male Aboriginal young offenders, focusing specifically on those who have been repeatedly involved with the young offender system. Project objectives were to identify key concepts in the development and maintenance of successful behaviours and lifestyles for Aboriginal young offenders; develop a conceptual framework that describes the process; and make recommendations for policy and programming for Aboriginal young offenders, based on the findings that can effect a positive change in the type of programming available to this population of youth.

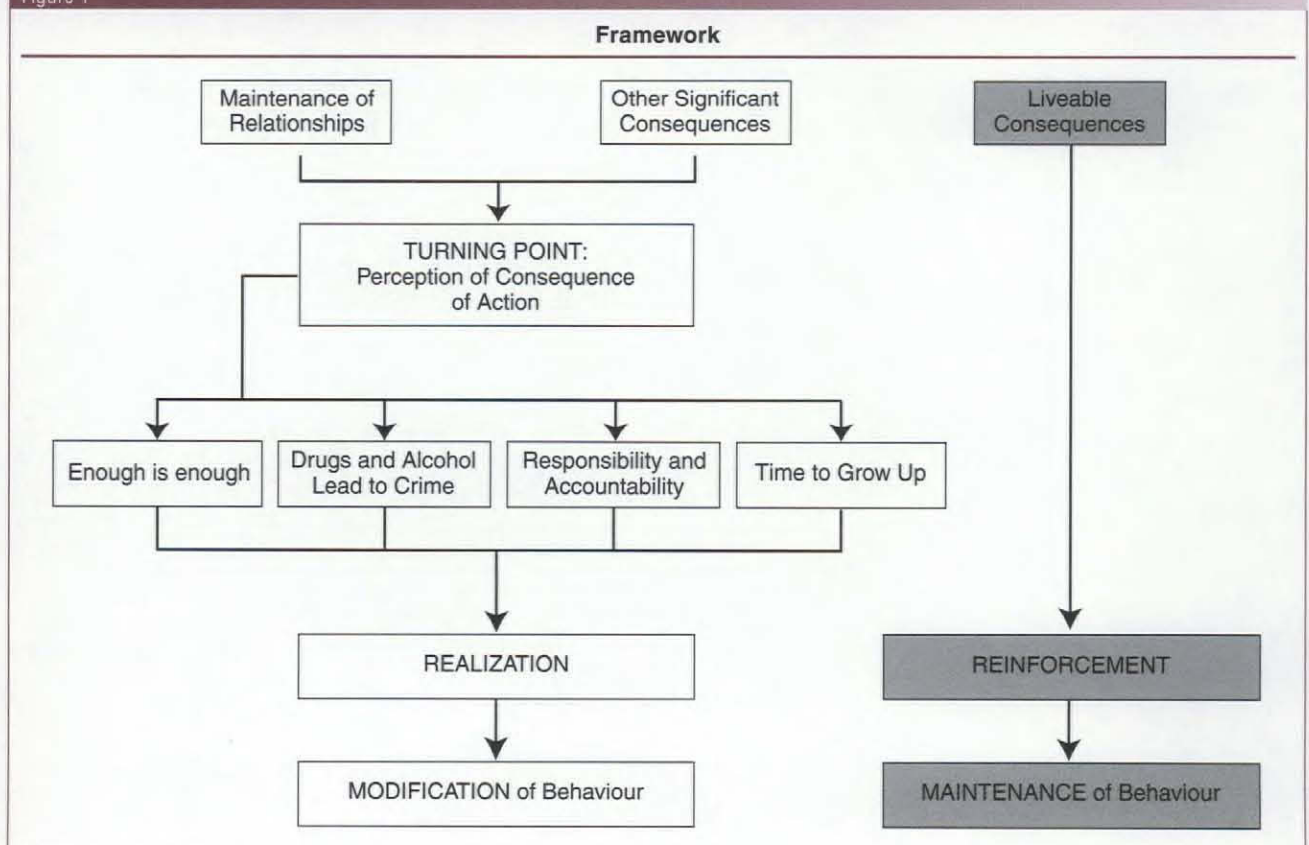
## Method

The grounded theory approach was utilized to study the subjective experiences of successful reintegration of Aboriginal male young offenders and the results therefore reflect the researcher's interpretation of the respondent's perspective of how they achieved success and why.

The respondents were adults reflecting upon their experiences as young offenders and their personal process of reintegration. The sample included six participants that were of Aboriginal ancestry with varying connections to traditional Aboriginal cultures. All spent the majority of their lives in urban settings (most in the city of Edmonton). Five of the participants spent a significant amount of time in youth custody - four experienced both closed and open custody; and one experienced only closed custody. The sixth, although a repeat offender, received community dispositions and did not serve any time in custody. Two participants had been charged as adults but never convicted nor incarcerated; one participant spent time in the provincial adult correctional system.

The interviews were semi-structured in nature, with open-ended questions focusing on three subject areas: getting into trouble, getting out of trouble, and staying out of trouble. Participants

Figure 1





were encouraged to elaborate on the nature of their key relationships, their perspective of what helped them to make changes in their lives and what those changes were. All interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

## **Findings**

The conceptual framework that emerged for the successful reintegration of Aboriginal young offenders was centred around the core concept of “weighing the consequences”. The respondents referred to both meaningful consequences they had experienced in their lives that prompted them to make significant lifestyle changes, as well as consequences they had experienced that only reinforced their criminal lifestyle. Behaviour maintenance versus modification, therefore, was based upon the subjective perspective of the individual, and whether they were willing to sustain the outcome of specific behaviour. Figure 1 illustrates the framework.

### ***Turning Points versus liveable consequences***

For Aboriginal youth caught in the cycle of crime, perceived negative consequences caused turning points or pivotal moments that forced the individual to reflect upon how his actions were affecting his life. The most salient consequence for this population of people is centred on relationships. The respondents unanimously indicated that peer relationships (including intimate/romantic relationships) had the most influence after the age of 10 and throughout their adolescence. Early on in their criminal careers, the maintenance of peer relationships, usually those that exerted negative influences on the individual, was more important than the fear of being caught doing something they knew was wrong and the possibility of going to jail. In fact, for most respondents jail was seen as a manageable consequence by a young person, and an environment that could be made comfortable.

Later on in their lives, other relationships began to become more important than those with negative peers. For many respondents, a girlfriend who did not participate in a criminal lifestyle caused a turning point in the individual’s life. Maintaining that relationship became more important than the negative peers, eventually causing a modification of behaviour. In addition, many respondents were either going to be fathers very soon, or were already caring for their children. Their relationships with their child became the most salient relationship in their lives, eventually causing a modification of behaviour.

The respondents also spoke of other meaningful consequences that caused reflection and change.

These included the prospect of adult incarceration (as opposed to youth custody) as an environment that could not be managed successfully or the permanent consequences of a negative lifestyle (i.e., permanent defects from drug use). While these consequences were less salient than those relating to relationships, they were a part of the change process.

### ***Realization versus reinforcement***

When the respondent spoke about experiencing a turning point in his life, or a need to reflect on his actions, inevitably he then had a realization about his life and the need for change. These realizations can be categorized in four areas.

The first sub-category is where the individual saw himself at a crossroads in his life and said “enough is enough”. Upon sober reflection of his circumstance, he decided that he never wanted to be in this situation again. Often this was associated with being tired of the whole process of crime - feeling it was not fun anymore, feeling paranoid about getting caught, dealing with the remorse he felt as a result of his actions and the lack of excitement he got from crime.

The second sub-category is the realization that “drugs and alcohol lead to crime”. In this area, the respondent made linkages between his substance abuse and the likelihood that he puts himself at risk of being incarcerated again. While most respondents still used drugs and/or alcohol, all made the connection between substance and crime, and most were actively trying to move away from use or abuse.

The third sub-category is the realization that it was “time to grow up”. At the centre of this concept was the individual’s desire to act like an adult and be seen as a responsible adult by the people around him. The respondents indicated that they thought the crimes that they had committed in the past were associated with being a child and, now that they were adults, they needed to act more maturely.

Finally, the fourth sub-category is the realization that the individual wanted to take on responsibility and be accountable for his actions. This area is directly associated with the relationship that the individual has or desires with his child(ren). All respondents indicated that they wanted to be good parents and not make the mistakes that their parent(s) may have made. They expressed an earnest desire to be good fathers and prevent their children from having the experiences they did while growing up.

### ***Behaviour modification versus maintenance***

All respondents indicated that the process of behaviour modification occurs slowly. It is marked



by a gradual adoption of behaviours that are acceptable to the larger society. This process does not happen instantaneously, but rather involves a period of time when the individual hangs on to some questionable behaviour in one area of his life, but takes on positive behaviours in other areas. Most participants demonstrated this by still using alcohol or drugs somewhat regularly; even though they knew that by using they could put themselves in a vulnerable situation, which could result in an arrest for illegal behaviour.

Most important to them, however, is the fact that they had stopped doing crime as a means to get money or excitement, and that they are looking at more legitimate ways of existing in society. In addition, the research has noted another pattern associated with behaviour modification as a result of discussions with the respondents. All the respondents reported having early childhoods that they described as lacking in discipline and adult guidance. This lack of structure seems to have resulted in getting into trouble at a young age and the onset of poor, uninformed decision making. In the process of getting out of trouble, the respondents appear to be young adults creating structure for themselves, taking responsibility for their own actions and learning to make better choices for themselves.

### Discussion

It has become apparent that the most effective way to achieve change in the behaviour of Aboriginal young offenders is to change the dynamic or the peer group that most influences the individual or change the peer group completely. From an ecological perspective, if the peer environment is the one that has the most influence on the individual at the time, young offender service providers need to influence changes that will lead to positive behaviour modification. Effective prison environments, therefore, should focus more on the development of a positive peer environment, and less on the punitive aspects of incarceration.

To enhance the prison environment, service providers can include programs that focus on encouraging the individual to reflect on his life and behaviour, creating the opportunity for realizations on the results of his behaviour. These will only be effective if a meaningful consequence for not making the changes exists as well.

At this time, the prison environment for young people is one of negative peer interactions with very few meaningful consequences or positive interventions. Many times boys are put in jail with marginally bad behaviour, only to be surrounded by negative peers, resulting in even worst behaviour. This research asserts that a more sustainable intervention would be to make changes in the peer dynamic affecting the individual in the community, foregoing incarceration altogether. Models of programs exist in North America that deal specifically with the family, peers and school environments of a young person, attempting to make changes in these areas, which will cause changes in the individual's behaviour.

### Summary

The conceptual framework for the successful reintegration of Aboriginal young offenders can best be described as a process of weighing the consequences. If a consequence is meaningful (perceived negative enough), it prompts the individual to experience a pivotal moment or turning point. The result is the realization that something must change. The results indicate that these changes involve being "fed-up" with circumstances, a change in the way he views his use of drugs and alcohol, an acceptance of responsibility or accountability for specific things in his life and/or a desire to just grow up/feel like an adult. If the consequence of his action is not perceived to be negative, or is negative but manageable, this will reinforce the behaviour and the individual will continue to behave as before.

Through this process of adopting a crime-free lifestyle, the individual is constantly analyzing consequences of behaviour in order to choose a course of action. How he judges whether a consequence is positive or negative is based upon what he considers important. What the individual deems as most important, or a priority in his life - in this case the maintenance of important relationships in his life - appears to be the guiding thought or principle upon which he makes all of his decisions around behaviour. ■

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# The challenge of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome in adult offender populations

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**O**ffenders suffering from Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and its related disorders present a significant challenge within correctional settings. The behavioural and learning characteristics associated with these disorders make it difficult for affected individuals to function effectively in the aggressive and often uncertain environment of a prison. The presence of affected individuals creates issues for institutional staff, program deliverers, parole boards, and those involved in community supervision. How we address these issues is dependent on the number of affected individuals within the correctional system. Unfortunately, to date, no study has been undertaken to estimate the incidence/prevalence of affected individuals within the offender population.

*Collecting incidence/prevalence data is not a simple task. No screening instrument with known reliability and validity is currently available. Affected individuals are usually not diagnosed, diagnosis is problematic with adults and interventions must be put in place to address the needs once a diagnosis has been made. The following paper expands on the challenges faced by researchers.*

**F**etal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and related disorders, such as Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE), are conditions now commonly referred to by the non-diagnostic umbrella term Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD), where prenatal exposure to alcohol is an important factor in problems an individual exhibits throughout development. In an earlier review paper it was argued that individuals suffering from FASD were at high risk for criminal offending and likely represented an important sub-population within the adult prison system with their own unique needs and challenges.<sup>4</sup>

The connection to crime has largely been based on a follow-up study of youth and adults with FAS/FAE from Washington that showed up to 60% get in to some trouble with the law.<sup>5</sup> However, this information tells us little about the number who end up in the adult prison system. Two studies do have some relevance. In one, a group of 81 offenders in a "developmentally disabled, emotionally disturbed (non-psychotic) male inmate" unit of the Washington State Prison

system were administered a scale used to help identify those at high risk for FAS/FAE.<sup>6</sup> Fifteen percent scored in the range typical of FAS/FAE. A lower rate might be expected in a general population of offenders since such a special unit might be expected to contain more cases of FAS/FAE.

A more recent and thorough diagnostic study was carried out in British Columbia on 287 consecutive admissions of youth remanded to a forensic psychiatric inpatient assessment unit over a one-year period.<sup>7</sup> The authors identified 23% (3 cases of FAS and 67 cases of FAE) in their sample. However, this percentage is likely to be high since it includes only young offenders who were remanded to the psychiatric inpatient assessment unit, a group that would be relatively small relative to the entire offender population. At this point in our knowledge all estimates are speculative since no study of incidence/prevalence has been completed with an adult offender population. Nevertheless, even if a rate of less than 5% existed in our adult prison population, the implications would be very important. We do not know how this subgroup of offenders reacts to current correctional management procedures, rehabilitation programs, or community reintegration efforts. Given what we do know about the cognitive, emotional and behavioural deficits observed in individuals with FASD, we can speculate that they are likely to have difficulty with programs that have a cognitive emphasis, low built in redundancy (i.e., little repetition), low structure, and little emphasis on active long-term maintenance.

By adolescence and adulthood, primary difficulties associated with FASD include memory impairment, poor judgement and abstract reasoning, and low adaptive functioning. These contribute to secondary problems such as being easily victimized, unfocused (attention deficit disorder and hyperactivity are common), having difficulties handling money, problems learning from experience, trouble understanding consequences and perceiving social cues, poor frustration tolerance, inappropriate sexual behaviour, substance abuse and mental health



problems. FASD is not restricted to, but often occurs in the context of poverty, family upheaval, neglect and abuse, multiple drug use, and poor health, features that negatively influence the expression of the syndrome from infancy to adulthood.<sup>8</sup> Since one of the key principles of good correctional planning and intervention is the assessment of offender criminogenic needs and risk levels,<sup>9</sup> it is important to identify this sub-population so their needs can be addressed.

### Progress

Recent initiatives by Health Canada's Population and Public Health Branch, in collaboration with First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, and with support from the National Advisory Committee on FAS/FAE, have sought to increase awareness and prevention efforts among the public and health professionals and support research initiatives on the problem. A directory of information and support services available in Canada,<sup>10</sup> as well as newsletters<sup>11</sup> and web-sites (e.g., [www.fas-saf.com](http://www.fas-saf.com)) have been established, and a "Best Practices" review on prevention and intervention is available.<sup>12</sup> A recent publication will do much to educate lawyers and judges about handling FAS/FAE cases during criminal trials.<sup>13</sup> Training efforts directed at professionals and front line workers have also increased. In the long term, these and other initiatives will make it easier to identify those suffering from FAS/FAE and consider their condition at each stage of the criminal justice process. But there is a long way to go. There is little doubt that currently many, if not most, cases of FAS/FAE go undiagnosed and this often prevents the allocation of resources to meet the needs of these individuals. Correctional Service Canada has supported some applied initiatives with offenders. For example, the West Coast Genesis Society, in British Columbia accepts both diagnosed and suspected cases of FAS/FAE and is designing a program for them.<sup>14</sup> Currently, applied efforts are often hampered by a lack of reliable and valid screening tools and the availability of diagnostic services. It will be important for future applied initiatives to build proper evaluation into their programs. This allows vital feedback on improving programs and is a feature important in funding applications. In general, programs should develop a written manual to assure consistency of application and training. Any major aspect of functioning targeted (e.g., improving adaptive functioning, reducing substance abuse, etc.) should be measured pre-post intervention. Long term follow-up is important and can also address issues related to criminality (e.g., parole violations, new crimes, etc.).

Most of us would agree that the best and first goal must be the prevention of FASD. However, it is

also important to simultaneously meet the needs of those currently afflicted with the disability. It is known that a favourable environment and early intervention can do much to ameliorate the consequences of FASD. This still leaves a major problem with those who are undiagnosed or, lacking a favourable early intervention, come in contact with the youth or adult criminal justice system. The challenge is to detect these individuals through screening and diagnosis. Once identified, consideration can be given to their condition at all levels of the criminal justice system<sup>15</sup> and allow the development of appropriate management and intervention strategies that will help them maximize their potential for adaptive living and reduce the long term costs to society of this debilitating disability.

### Diagnosing FAS/FAE: The challenge with adults

Since it was first described,<sup>16</sup> the diagnosis of FAS and related disorders has proven to be a complex process that requires a major effort on the part of caregivers and professionals to track down key elements in the history of an individual that would aid in diagnosis. The best proven approach is to use a team that might include physicians, dysmorphologists (physicians expert in birth defects and abnormalities of the facial features), psychologists, educators, social workers, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, and family advocates.

For a diagnosis of FAS, evidence for the criteria presented in Table 1 must be available. For the diagnosis of FAE, evidence for all criteria need not be present. Variations on the application of the diagnostic criteria can be found in the literature.<sup>17</sup>

Table 1

#### Criteria for a FAS diagnosis

1. Prenatal or postnatal growth retardation.
2. Characteristic facial features (mainly short palpebral fissures (eye slits), short mid-face, poorly formed philtrum (groove between nose and upper lip) and a thin vermilion border of the upper lip).
3. Cognitive impairment or other developmental or behavioural difficulties of a substantial nature.
4. Confirmed excessive alcohol exposure in utero.

There are many difficulties diagnosing adults. Official records from pregnancy, early childhood and school are often unavailable, and older records may not be complete. Memory related pre-natal alcohol use may be inaccurate and self and collateral information may be limited or unavailable. Facial structures change with age and the characteristic features may be lost. Most research on developing diagnostic criteria have been based on children and there are few experts available who are experienced in adult diagnosis.



### Screening as an alternative

Theoretically, one way to identify offenders with FASD is to do a full diagnostic assessment on all incoming offenders. However, this would be prohibitively expensive and neither the expert personnel nor financial resources could possibly be found. The alternative is to develop a reliable and valid screening tool that would identify the much smaller subgroup at "high risk" for FASD who could then be sent for a diagnostic assessment. This is a difficult task. As reviewed elsewhere,<sup>18</sup> a good screening instrument should be relatively cost efficient compared to a diagnostic assessment, be sensitive (have a high rate of FASD detection) and be specific (a low rate of false positives). For example, an IQ test using cut-off scores (e.g., 70) would be a poor screening instrument because the range of IQ scores seen in FASD is so broad that most cases would be missed (insensitive). Nor does it help to use the pattern of sub-tests, as they are not specific enough to FASD.<sup>19</sup> Ideally, information from the screening should be available at the time the offender intake assessment is carried out in order that the information can be used to help meet the needs of the offender during incarceration and when planning reintegration strategies in the community. It should be recognized that a good screening instrument might tell us little about the severity of the problem or provide enough information for diagnostic purposes.

The authors have initiated a research project to develop a potential screening instrument that could be used with adult offenders. The basic strategy is to use a preliminary screener based on an empirically derived checklist of known characteristics of those with FAS/FAE along with historical data to determine who is at "high risk" for having FASD. This assessment will take place during the period immediately after sentencing, but prior to the offender being transferred to a prison. During this period offenders remain in their home communities where collateral contacts can be used to verify information on past behaviours and maternal alcohol use. Those scoring high on the preliminary screener will receive a full diagnostic assessment, at the reception centre. A comparison group of offenders known not to have FASD would also be assessed.

At the reception centre, offenders will complete the standard offender intake assessment process

(lasting about 6 to 8 weeks) with the staff unaware of the results of the preliminary screener. Intake assessment information, which includes assessment of offender needs in the areas of education/employment, community functioning, substance abuse, marital/family relations, attitudes, associates/social interactions, personal/emotional status, and criminal history will then be analyzed to determine if this information, together with data from the preliminary screener, will allow differentiation of those offenders known to have FASD from those who are known not to have FASD. If successful (a validation study would still be needed), the outcome could serve as a screener for identifying those at "high risk" for FASD (thus good candidates for a diagnostic assessment) and also allow some prediction of the general incidence/prevalence of FASD in the overall prison population.

It is anticipated that final planning for the project will be completed in the fall of 2002 with data collection to commence as soon as possible. The project must receive ethical approval before starting and an important ethical issue revolves around the type of intervention that can be offered after an offender has been diagnosed as being FAS/FAE affected. It is being proposed that an advocate be in place at the reception centre(s) where offenders are assessed. The advocate, who will be familiar with FASD, can intervene on behalf of the offender's welfare during the development of correctional plans, including release planning. The advocate can also serve as a general educational resource within the institution for issues related to FASD.

### Summary

Despite these challenges it is hoped that the proposed research initiative will lead to a reliable and valid method of identifying adult offenders who suffer from FASD and help develop estimates of incidence in the federal offender population. It is encouraging that other jurisdictions are showing interest in the research and we are looking forward to collaboration with a number of groups. When we know the magnitude of the challenge, appropriate resources and effective interventions can be directed at reducing the impact of FASD on the lives of individuals affected, and on the communities they will return to. ■



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