

## CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

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# Stan Daniels Healing Centre: Resident, Staff, and Elder Experiences

*The Healing Centre offers a unique experience for healing and gradual reintegration in an urban setting.*

## Why we are doing this study

Stan Daniels Healing Centre (SDHC) is a men's Section 81 facility located in Edmonton, Alberta. The goal of the current study is to provide a holistic understanding of the Healing Centre through the experiences and perspectives of residents, Elders, and staff. In collaboration with the Indigenous Initiatives Sector of Correctional Service Canada (CSC), this research also aims to explore the opportunities offered to residents and the challenges that are currently facing the operation of the site.

## What we are doing

Individual semi-structured interviews (approximately one hour in length) were conducted with eight residents and six Elders and staff at the Healing Centre in August 2023. Two members of the research team conducted the interviews exploring the participants' experiences, involvements, and observations at the Healing Centre. Relationship building, reciprocity, and cultural sensitivity were key principles in the research. Data will later be combined to examine all men's Section 81 facilities as part of a larger study.

## What we have found so far

As the only men's Section 81 facility in an urban centre, SDHC offers the benefits of easy access to services and support in the community, which residents praised as an important step in their reintegration. The location was seen as beneficial for those residents who wanted to stay close to their family. While residents expressed being routinely exposed to potential triggering events such as drugs and crime in the city, this exposure was seen as beneficial by residents by providing the opportunity to practice coping skills while having the support of the Healing Centre. The distance to traditional cultural opportunities (e.g., sweat lodge) outside of the city was viewed by residents as a challenge.

Overall, the cultural focus of SDHC was praised by residents, particularly in comparison to previous institutional experiences. Residents highlighted the coping and life skills they were learning, along with the opportunity to address personal and intergenerational trauma. The In Search of your Warrior program<sup>2</sup> was emphasized as being particularly helpful in this regard.

Participants expressed that the positive, supportive relationships between residents, staff, and Elders promotes a sense of community within SDHC. Many residents emphasized that staff dedicate the time to getting to know the residents and go the extra mile to ensure that support is offered. While Elders are recognized by residents as crucial to their healing, regular and consistent access to Elders was identified as a gap.

The operational challenges at SDHC echo those of other Section 81 facilities in term of capacity, funding, and staff turnover and training. While the Healing Centre has experienced challenges in reaching capacity, staff reported that some policies have changed to fill gaps and provide an avenue for reintegration that may not always be considered (e.g., providing support for residents with higher mental health needs). There was a call by participants for increased funding, both to improve the opportunities provided to residents and to hire and retain more qualified staff. Training was identified as an area for improvement, as there are often delays in receiving training and/or new staff are trained on the job.

## What it means

The experiences of the residents, Elders, and staff reveal a unique environment at SDHC that supports the healing journeys of residents, while addressing their needs through an Indigenous lens. The interventions, relationships, and community connections gradually prepare residents for release in a supportive environment. Of note, the Healing Centre was under new management and in a period of transition at the time of the site visit. Enhancing Elder support and Warrior program availability represented areas of opportunity for SDHC to keep residents engaged in their culture and occupied in a prosocial manner.

## For more information

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

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

<sup>2</sup> This Elder-led program explores the effects of trauma and provides opportunities for spiritual exploration and healing in circle-based format.

