

# Programs for Aboriginal offenders: A national survey

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Following meetings by the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Justice Ministers and the Heads of Corrections, the issue of growth in the prison population was identified and specific recommendations were made to address this concern. In particular, they raised the need for a compendium of “what works” in offender programming as one option to address this issue. The Research Branch of the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) was given the task of compiling an inventory of all adult and youth institutional and community programming in federal and provincial/territorial correctional jurisdictions. A program is defined as ‘any intervention that is systematically applied to offenders with the expectation that it will result in reduced recidivism’. In other words, programs target needs that are linked to criminal behaviour by an offender.

## Overview

All correctional jurisdictions were asked to complete a Treatment Survey or a Best Practices Survey for each correctional program that fit the above description of a program. As of the end of November, 1999, five hundred and eighty-six (586) surveys from ten (10) jurisdictions<sup>2</sup> have been received. Both surveys asked what percentage of offenders who completed the program were Aboriginal. In the case where one hundred per cent of program completers were Aboriginal, or it was explicitly stated elsewhere (such as the title of the program) that the program was Aboriginal specific (see Table 1), the program was designated an Aboriginal offender program. In addition, nine of the ten jurisdictions indicated that Aboriginal offenders participated in some or all of their non-Aboriginal specific correctional programs.<sup>3</sup>

## Federal Programs

Within the Correctional Service of Canada, surveys were submitted for thirteen Aboriginal specific programs. All are institutional programs and the majority (11) are offered in the Prairie region. The Society of Aboriginal Addictions Recovery (SOAR or SOAAR) program, the Aboriginal Alpine Wellness Program, and the Aboriginal Healing Program were nominated as Best Practices. SOAR targets substance abusers, and the Aboriginal Alpine Wellness Program and the Aboriginal Healing Program target sex offenders. The remaining programs target either substance abusers or all

offenders. Some of the programs directed toward all Aboriginal offenders focus on issues such as childhood trauma, childhood histories of residential schools, foster homes and/or boarding schools, cultural issues and traditions, and spirituality.

Data for the non-Aboriginal programs with Aboriginal participants and community programs were unavailable at the time of publication.

## Provincial Programs

### Aboriginal Specific Programs

Newfoundland, Manitoba and Saskatchewan are the three provincial jurisdictions that submitted information on Aboriginal specific programming. Aboriginal programs in Newfoundland are offered at the Labrador Correctional Centre and target sex offenders and male batterers. Manitoba submitted Best Practices surveys for four Aboriginal programs and one Treatment Survey for an Aboriginal Program. One of the Best Practices was an institutional program, two were community programs and one program was offered in both an institution and in the community. The Aboriginal Treatment Survey was a community program. These programs targeted gang members, perpetrators of domestic violence and mentally disordered offenders. The Aboriginal specific programs in Saskatchewan include a Children’s Visiting Program for Aboriginal mothers, a community Anger Management program and a Life Skills program.

### Programs with Aboriginal Participants

Aboriginal offenders participate in three young offender programs offered at the Newfoundland and Labrador Youth Centre (Substance Abuse, Healthy Lifestyles, and Life Skills). At the adult offender level, Aboriginals participated in four community programs. These are: Foundation Group — Criminal Behaviour Awareness; Substance Abuse; Anger Management, and; Intermittent Sentence Workshop. None of these programs were nominated as a Best Practice.

On Prince Edward Island, Aboriginal offenders participated in two programs offered at the Provincial Correctional Centre in Miltonvale (Substance Abuse and Anger Management).

The province submitted the adult Probation Services as a community correctional program. Probation Services had Aboriginal participants. The Community Youth Worker Program and the Alternative Residential Placement Program for young offenders had a small percentage of Aboriginal youth in each program. All of the community programs were submitted as Best Practices.

New Brunswick reported that two per cent of participants in six adult community programs were Aboriginal. These community programs are offered in all five regions of New Brunswick. The community programs are: Anger Management; Community Sex Offender Program; Risk Reduction; Substance Abuse; Partner Abuse, and; Intensive Rehabilitation.

Ontario reported 14 institutional programs with Aboriginal participants. The two programs with Aboriginal participants at the Vanier Centre for Women are Winners Problem Solving and Emotional Control Training. Regarding male Aboriginal

offenders, the Guelph Correctional Centre submitted information on ten programs with Aboriginal participants, while both the Rideau Treatment Centre and the Ontario Correctional Institute Offender Treatment Programme reported that approximately ten per cent of their program participants were Aboriginal. Winners Problem Solving and Rideau Treatment Centre were submitted as Best Practices.

Manitoba submitted nine Best Practices Surveys for programs with Aboriginal offenders, of which four are community programs and one is a young offender program. Manitoba also submitted thirty Treatment Surveys for programs with Aboriginal offenders include 13 community programs and five young offender programs.

Saskatchewan had Aboriginal participants in thirty programs. Fifteen of the programs are delivered in the community and 15 are delivered in institutions. None of these programs were nominated as a Best Practice.

Table 1

**Aboriginal Specific Programs in Canada**

Name	Location	Description
Society of Aboriginal Addictions Recovery (SOAR)	CSC – Atlantic	Substance abuse treatment with a Native Spirituality component.
Society of Aboriginal Addictions Recovery (SOAR)	CSC – Quebec	Accredited program that has been adapted for the clientele (Special Holding Unit). Substance abuse treatment with a Native Spirituality component.
Aboriginal Alpine Wellness Program	CSC – Prairies	Targets sex offenders, specifically perpetrators of incest.
Aboriginal Healing Program	CSC – Prairies	Targets sex offenders. Added features: Native Spiritual and Cultural elements.
Cultural Awareness	CSC – Prairies	Pre-treatment program for all offenders.
First Nations Culture Program	CSC – Prairies	Targets all offenders.
Pathfinding Program	CSC – Prairies	Targets all offenders.
Pre-treatment/Treatment Readiness	CSC – Prairies	Targets substance abusers.
Sacred Circle	CSC – Prairies	Targets substance abuse and Aboriginal culture/spirituality.
Society of Aboriginal Addictions Recovery/ All Nations Addiction Program (SOAR/ANAP)	CSC – Prairies	Substance abuse treatment with a Native Spirituality component.
Society of Aboriginal Addictions Recovery (SOAR)	CSC – Prairies	Substance abuse treatment with a Native Spirituality component.
Wa Wa Ee	CSC – Prairies	Targets any offender with unresolved childhood trauma.
Who Span Gan	CSC – Prairies	Targets all offenders.
Male Batterers Group	Newfoundland	Targets perpetrators of domestic violence.
Sex Offender Level 1	Newfoundland	Targets sex offenders.
Domestic Violence Program	Manitoba	Targets perpetrators of domestic violence.
Gang Intervention Program	Manitoba	Targets gang members and violent offenders.
Making a Difference	Manitoba	Targets mentally disordered offenders
Medicine Wheel Teachings	Manitoba	Targets perpetrators of domestic violence.
Medicine Wheel Teachings	Manitoba	Targets perpetrators of domestic violence.
Meyoyawin Circle Project	Saskatchewan	Targets Aboriginal mothers.
Pluming of the Eagle	Saskatchewan	Targets the development of life skills.
Self Discovery Program	Saskatchewan	Targets violent offenders and issues of anger management.

In British Columbia, Aboriginal offenders participated in two youth correctional programs. The Boulder Bay Youth Program is delivered in the institution (a wilderness camp) to violent and chronic young offenders. The Exodus Substance Abuse Program is a community program delivered in the Langley area.

The Yukon has Aboriginal participants in five of its programs, all of which are institutionally-based. The only program for young offenders, the Youth Sex Offender Treatment Program, is offered in the community as well as in the institution. The adult programs are Substance Abuse Education/Driving Without Impairment (Teslin Correctional Centre); Cognitive Skills (Whitehorse Correctional Centre); Anger and Emotions Management (Whitehorse Correctional Centre), and; Offender Substance Abuse Pre-Release Program (OSAP or OSAPP) (Whitehorse Correctional Centre). The Youth Sex Offender Program and the Substance Abuse Education/Driving Without Impairment Program were submitted as Best Practices.

With the exception of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and the Yukon, the percentage of Aboriginal participants

in correctional programs was relatively low: twenty-five per cent or less.

### Discussion

Thus far, a total of 23 Aboriginal specific programs have been identified (13 federal programs and 10 provincial programs) in the national survey. The preliminary results of the Compendium of Effective Correctional Programs indicate that those provincial jurisdictions where Aboriginal offenders are most over-represented in the correctional system are offering Aboriginal specific programming. At the federal level, the bulk of Aboriginal programming is also offered in the Prairies. Future analyses of correctional program information gathered for the Compendium will provide insight into the extent to which correctional agencies are providing Aboriginal specific programs in their respective jurisdictions. What can be concluded at this point, however, is that Aboriginal programs have been developed and implemented across Canada that hopefully speak to the Aboriginal offender and their respective community. ■

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<sup>2</sup> At the time of publication, Nova Scotia, Quebec and Alberta had not submitted any correctional programming data.

<sup>3</sup> Certain data for the tenth jurisdiction, the Northwest Territories, were unavailable at the time of publication. In addition, certain data were unavailable for some programs in some jurisdictions at the time of publication.

## What's new?.....

*The Federal Solicitor General Lawrence MacAulay announced the establishment of an Addictions Research Division on November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1999. This separate, dedicated research facility will be located in Montague, Prince Edward Island. The Addictions Research Division is being established to encourage and stimulate addiction research in criminal justice and to develop a co-ordinated program of applied research activity across jurisdictions. It will be part of the Research Branch of the Correctional Service of Canada.*