Northern Aboriginal offenders in federal custody: A profile (R-36, 1994)

This study gathers information on the incarcerated population of northern Aboriginal offenders to profile those currently in federal custody.

Events such as the establishment of Nunavut, self-government issues and possible plans for repatriation of northern Aboriginals incarcerated in southern institutions, underscore the need for such study. Applied operational and programming issues come to the fore. Little is known about the language abilities or other needs of this unique group of offenders. By enhancing our knowledge of this population, the desired outcome would be more culturally sensitive treatment, delivered by a more culturally aware line staff as a positive step toward optimizing correctional practices for northern Aboriginals.

This study selected 64 male volunteers, or approximately half of all northern Aboriginal offenders incarcerated in institutions in the Prairie region and the Yellowknife Correctional Centre. The sample represented a range of Aboriginal groups: Inuit, Dene, Métis, Chippewan, Gwich'in and other/mixed groups.

Initially, all 64 offenders were given face-to-face interviews covering such areas as personal background, extent of cultural identity, issues of interest, desire for repatriation to the North, adequacy of correctional programming and sensitivity of staff.

Structured case file reviews were completed for each interviewed offender to profile institutional performance and behaviour, security incidents, needs areas, family background and program participation. Complete criminal histories were gathered using the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) system.

The findings of the study revealed interesting patterns within this study group that have implications and causal factors contributing to their criminogenic behaviour. The offence patterns that landed them in federal custody, in fact, could be viewed as a kind of mirror image of the backgrounds from which they emerged.