

**An Examination of Youth and Gang Affiliation within the Federally
Sentenced Aboriginal Population**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The impetus for this study was the suggestion that, among young federal offenders (25 or under), Aboriginal offenders were more likely to be affiliated with a gang than non-Aboriginal. A previous investigation and profiling of gang members in federal institutions was conducted in order to develop and improve gang intervention strategies. Results warranted a further analysis of Aboriginal offenders affiliated with a gang, namely the Indian Posse, Manitoba Warriors and the Native Syndicate.

The present investigation comprises two studies, which compare Aboriginal male offenders on a variety of static (such as offence severity record and sex offence history) and dynamic (including employment history, associates and attitude) risk criteria. The first study examined gang affiliation while controlling for age, and the second study focused on differences between young and older Aboriginal offenders.

The need to examine differences in age and gang affiliation separately among the Aboriginal federal inmate population became apparent in preliminary analyses. Efforts to determine whether gang affiliation was an artifact of youth showed 80% of all offenders affiliated with a gang (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) in the Prairie region were 25 years of age or younger upon admission to a federal institution. Seventy five percent of this group was of Aboriginal descent. Given the high concentration of young Aboriginal offenders in the gang population, independent analyses were conducted to examine both youth and gang affiliation within the federally sentenced Aboriginal population.

Offender gang affiliation was determined by the Security Division of the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC)¹. CSC's automated Offender Management System (OMS) was then used to extract all available data pertaining to criminal history risk and criminogenic need. Information was available for 2,792 male Aboriginal offenders who were or still are incarcerated in federal institutions. Approximately 6.6% of these Aboriginal males were members of gangs.

Study One matched Aboriginal gang members with Aboriginal non-gang members on age at admission, sentence length and offence type. Preliminary analyses failed to detect between group differences according to gang type. Therefore, all analyses presented in this study consider gang affiliation, amalgamated across gang type.

Comparisons with their matched counterparts revealed Aboriginal gang members had few differences amongst static and dynamic risk indicators, other than those that may be associated with socio-economic factors. Specifically, gang members were more likely to reside in a criminogenic area and have mostly criminal friends and acquaintances. Even though they were less likely to have reading and

¹ Methods and sources of identification are outlined in Commissioner's Directive #576.

writing problems or other learning disabilities, Aboriginal gang members were more likely have no employment history. Gang members were also more likely to be aggressive and hostile, to have used drugs at an early age, and to have negative attitudes towards police and the law.

Regarding static risk factors, gang members were shown as more likely to have had previous youth court experiences that resulted in open or secure custody. Inspections into federal offence histories revealed that Aboriginal gang members were more likely to serve sentences for robbery and assault while less likely to be convicted for a sex related offence. Interestingly, there were no differences in drug possession or drug trafficking convictions between the two groups, a criminal activity highly associated with gang activity.

Results from Study 1 suggest that, when controlling for age, differences in static risk between gang and non-gang members within the federally incarcerated Aboriginal population diminish. However, the differences that do exist support the notion that gang affiliation among Aboriginal offenders is an artifact of youth and socio-economic factors. Although there has been an increase in both violent behavior and gang affiliations within the Aboriginal offender population², the first study suggests youth as a mitigating risk factor. Intervention strategies should therefore address the needs of Aboriginal youth while effectively managing those affiliated with gangs.

The second study examined differences among the federally incarcerated Aboriginal population based on age. Offenders were grouped as under or over the age of 25 years. Similar to the first study, comparisons were drawn across demographics as well as static and dynamic risk factors.

Comparisons on overall static risk ratings yielded statistically reliable results. Interestingly, Aboriginal offenders in the older age group were more likely to have been rated as high risk at admission. However, further inspections into federal offence histories revealed that these offenders were more likely to have served or were serving sentences for sex offences. As offenders with these types of offences have a higher probability of being rated as high risk at admission, these results may be attributed to this difference in offence types. Federal offence comparisons also revealed that the younger Aboriginal offenders were less likely to have been convicted for drug possession and drug trafficking, offences associated with other gangs.

² Research Information Services, 10-2000

An examination of dynamic risk factor level ratings showed that Aboriginal offenders who were 25 years of age or younger at admission had significantly higher needs in areas of employment. Results also showed reliable differences in the other need domains. The younger Aboriginal offenders were noted to have more difficulties in areas of drug abuse and associates, while having lower needs in the area marital/family domain.

Comparisons across all intake assessment indicators further differentiated younger Aboriginal offenders from the older Aboriginal offender population. The most evident differences were found in the area of previous youth court experience. Younger Aboriginal offenders were more likely to have had a previous offence as a young offender (84.1% vs. 36.6%), to have been in open or secure custody, to have had a disciplinary transfer from open to secure custody (16.0% vs. 2.2%) and to have been transferred from secure custody to an adult facility.

In conclusion, the present study highlights key differences between Aboriginal offenders affiliated with an organized crime group and the rest of the incarcerated Aboriginal population while controlling for age. The study also investigates distinctions between “younger” and “older” age groupings within the Aboriginal offender population. Although gang intervention strategies should address risk associated with gang affiliation, these data suggest that strategies should also focus on Aboriginal youth. In particular, intervention strategies should address the needs identified for younger Aboriginal offenders who are involved in drug use and may have a prior youth court record at the time of admission to federal custody.

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AN EXAMINATION OF YOUTH AND GANG AFFILIATION WITHIN THE FEDERALLY SENTENCED ABORIGINAL POPULATION

The over representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system has been a growing concern of correctional policy makers and practitioners. Previous investigations have found that Aboriginal inmates tend to be younger, have less education and are more likely to be unemployed than non-Aboriginal inmates (Finn, Trevethan, Carrière and Kowalski, 1999). It has also been noted that Aboriginal offenders are not a homogenous group as they differ in aspects ranging from cultural diversity to constitutional and legal status (National Parole Board, 1988). As a result, analyses focusing on trends in the Aboriginal offender population are often labored and complicated.

Recent crime prevention initiatives focusing on Aboriginal youth gangs suggest 'gang affiliation' is another basis of comparison that exists within the Aboriginal population³. Aboriginal youth gangs have been identified as negatively impacting the stability of federal institutions in the Prairie region in particular (Report of the Task Force on Security, CSC, 1999). Concerns that problems with this population will persist are well grounded, as Aboriginal youth are one of the fastest growing demographic sectors in Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC) offender population, and gang membership within this group is increasing⁴. This dual trend has raised questions as to whether intervention strategies should focus on gang affiliation or on identifying the treatment needs of Aboriginal youth.

Debates have focused on whether policy initiatives developed to address the issues of gangs in the federal correctional system adequately balance gang management and offender reintegration within the Aboriginal offender population.

³ Stoney Mountain Institution in the Prairie region has pursued program development related to gang membership
The *Crossing Bridges: Bridge City Track Program*, offered by the Saskatoon Tribal Council Urban First Nations Services Incorporated, emphasizes cultural enrichment and Aboriginal history to promote values that will give them an alternative to street life and gang-related activities.

Beverly Towne Community Development Society in Edmonton is implementing a *Youth Options Community Based Coordinator* to work with youth at risk of being involved in gang activity.

⁴ Research Information Services, CSC 10-2000

Current policy designates gang affiliation as a significant risk factor that is considered in decisions relating to: security level at initial penitentiary placement, transfers to reduced security, and conditional release (Commissioners' Directives #576, #782). Under current policy, it is also possible for a gang member to be involuntarily transferred to a federal institution or community facility in another region. While gang members pose safety and security risks, policy directed towards them may in fact target a portion of a larger population; young Aboriginal offenders.

There is a growing body of literature to suggest that gang members comprise a sub-culture of racial minority youth living in impoverished areas (Brotherton, 1996; Laflin, 1996; Laidler & Hunt, 1996; Rosenbaum, 1996). Study one of this report examines whether gang affiliation among Aboriginal inmates is an artifact of youth and socio-economic factors. Differences in static and dynamic risk between gang and non-gang members within this inmate population were analyzed while controlling for age.

In keeping with its Mission Statement, CSC must balance efforts to *"contribute to the protection of society by actively encouraging and assisting [young Aboriginal] offenders to become law-abiding citizens, while exercising reasonable, safe, secure and humane control"* (Mission of the Correctional Service of Canada, CSC 2000). Given that policy has been designed to effectively manage the gang population, the second study profiles and identifies the needs of the younger Aboriginal offender population. Corporate Objective # 4 of CSC is to "create partnerships and strategies that enhance the safe, timely reintegration Aboriginal offenders"⁵. In keeping with this objective and following recommendations outlined in the Report on the Security Task Force (March, 2000), this study serves to examine the problem of gang membership and support the development of innovative Aboriginal programs.

⁵ Corporate Objectives 2000/01, CSC

METHOD

The focus of this report is on male Aboriginal offenders and the differences that exist between that population and two sub-groups; those affiliated with a gang and those aged 25 years or younger. Comparisons with each sub-group and the rest of the Aboriginal offender population were conducted separately in Study 1 and Study 2 of this report. Specifically, between-group comparisons focused on a variety of criteria, including risk (criminal history, victimization pattern, etc.), criminogenic needs, and suicide potential.

For the purposes of this research paper, all available data for federally sentenced Aboriginal offenders were extracted from CSC's automated database (Offender Management System; OMS). As of January 2000, information pertaining to risk and need variables was available for 4,344 male Aboriginal offenders in federal institutions. Of those, 12.1% (527) were affiliated with a gang, and 41.3% (1,792) were 25 years old or younger. Female Aboriginal offenders were not included in the present sample due to their low numbers in federal correctional facilities.

The primary source of information was data derived from the Offender Intake Assessment (OIA) process. The OIA is a comprehensive and integrated evaluation of the offender at the time of admission to the federal system. It involves the collection and analysis of information on each offender's criminal and mental health history, social situation, education, and other factors relevant to determining criminal risk and identifying offender needs. Briefly, the OIA consists of two core components: Criminal Risk Assessment (CRA), and Dynamic Factors Identification and Analysis (DFIA). In addition, a suicide risk potential with nine indicators is included in the assessment process.

The Criminal Risk Assessment (CRA) component of the OIA provides specific information pertaining to past and current offences. The CRA is based primarily on the criminal history record but may also include case-specific information regarding any other pertinent details pertaining to individual risk factors. Based

on these data, the OIA provides an overall global risk rating for each offender at admission to federal custody.

The Dynamic Factors Identification and Analysis (DFIA) involves the identification of the offender's criminogenic needs. More specifically, it considers a wide assortment of case-specific aspects of the offender's personality and life circumstances, and data are clustered into seven target domains with multiple indicators for each: employment (35 indicators), marital/family (31 indicators), associates/social interaction (11 indicators), substance abuse (29 indicators), community functioning (21 indicators), personal/emotional orientation (46 indicators), and attitude (24 indicators)⁶.

Using the DFIA, offenders are rated on each target domain along a four-point continuum. Ratings are commensurate with the assessment of need, ranging from "asset to community adjustment" (not applicable to substance abuse and personal/emotional orientation), to "no need for improvement", to "some need for improvement", to "significant need for improvement". After careful consideration of all indicators in each need domain, case management officers provide an estimate of overall need level. This is provided for each of the seven target areas.

⁶ See Correctional Service Canada's Standard Operating Procedure 700-04 for a complete listing of indicators.

STUDY ONE

Results

Part 1. Characteristics of the Matched Sample

The sample derived for the first study matched Aboriginal gang members (N = 527) with the remaining Aboriginal offender population, controlling for age at first federal admission, sentence length and offence severity. There were notable characteristics for the total matched sample, as three quarters of the sample were under the age of 26 at admission and almost two thirds were serving sentences of 4 years or less. The distribution of Aboriginal offenders was highest in the Prairie region (67.9%), with Aboriginal gang members found almost exclusively in the Prairies (90.3%).

Part 2. Criminal History Background

Offence History

Inspection of federal offence histories revealed that, when compared to their matched Aboriginal counterparts, gang members were more likely to be convicted for robbery offences (42% versus 29%, $p < .0001$), assault (48% versus 39%, $p < .01$) or a weapons offence (23% versus 17%, $p < .05$). Gang members were less likely to have a sexual assault conviction. Interestingly, there were no differences in homicide, drug possession or drug trafficking convictions between the two groups, criminal activities that are traditionally associated with gang activity. Results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Offence History: Gang Members vs. Non-gang Members

OFFENCE	GANG MEMBERSHIP		TOTAL
	MEMBER	NON-MEMBER	
Homicide	4.3%	4.0%	4.2%
Robbery***	42.2%	29.4%	36.0%
Weapons*	23.0%	16.8%	20.0%
Assault**	48.2%	38.6%	43.6%
Sexual Assault***	5.3%	20.8%	12.8%
Drug possession	12.2%	9.6%	11.0%
Drug trafficking	5.8%	7.2%	6.5%

Notes:*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Youth and Adult Criminal History

The OIA process collects extensive information on each offender’s criminal history record (youth and adult court involvement) and sex offence history. Notably, over 80% of the matched sample had previous youth or adult court involvement. This was of particular interest as the average age at admission for the matched sample was only 23. A review of youth criminal history revealed that gang members were more likely to have had previous youth court involvement resulting in community supervision, open custody or secure custody (see Table 2). Gang members were also more likely to have been segregated for disciplinary infractions and have an attempted escape. Interestingly, no between group differences were found on the OIA indicator relating to frequency of criminal activity (no crime free period of 1 year throughout adult offender history).

Table 2. Criminal Histories of Gang and Non-gang Members

OFFENCE	GANG MEMBERSHIP		TOTAL
	MEMBER	NON-MEMBER	
Young offender history			
Previous offences	83.1%	78.5%	81.0%
Community Supervision*	73.6%	66.6%	70.4%
Open Custody***	60.7%	45.2%	53.5%
Secure Custody**	57.9%	47.6%	53.1%
Disciplinary Transfer**	20.0%	10.6%	15.7%
Transfer to Adult Facility**	13.6%	7.0%	10.6%
Adult offender history			
Previous offences	81.4%	85.0%	83.1%
Segregation*	38.4%	30.8%	34.9%
Escape/UAL*	35.4%	27.9%	31.9%
No crime free period for 1 yr.	37.1%	32.1%	34.8%
Violent offence history			
Previous offence(s)	60.2%	56.5%	58.5%
Current offence	51.5%	50.9%	51.2%
Previous sex offence**	8.2%	14.2%	11.0%
Current sex offence***	5.4%	19.8%	12.1%

Notes:*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Offence Severity (Past and Current)

Aboriginal gang members were compared with their matched counterparts across OIA items indicating patterns of victimization and injury. Results indicated that the entire sample had high instances of using violence against their victims (58.5%), although there were no between group differences. Gang members were, however, more likely to have had multiple victims (46.5% versus 30.7%, p<.0001).

Part 3. Intake Assessment of Aboriginal Offenders

Level of Risk

To arrive at a global level of risk at intake, case managers conduct a systematic review of the criminal history record, the offence severity record, and the sex offence history components of the Criminal Risk Assessment (CRA). Contrary to expectation, there were no significant differences between gang members and their matched counterparts.

Table 3. Overall Static Risk Level: Gang and Non-Gang Members

STATIC RISK LEVEL	GANG MEMBERSHIP		TOTAL
	MEMBER	NON-MEMBER	
Low	1.9%	3.0%	2.5%
Medium	34.5%	35.6%	35.0%
High	63.6%	61.3%	62.5%

Level of Need

Upon reflection of the nature and level of needs an offender presented based on the seven target domains of the Dynamic Factors Identification and Analysis (DFIA), a level of need was compiled. Levels were based on case managers' ratings on the domain indicators into one of three need level groupings: low-, medium-, or high-need. As Table 4 shows, there were no significant between group differences found for level of need.

Table 4. Overall Dynamic Factor Level: Gang and Non-Gang Members

NEED LEVEL	GANG MEMBERSHIP		TOTAL
	MEMBER	NON-MEMBER	
Low	1.5%	1.2%	1.4%
Medium	30.9%	27.3%	29.2%
High	67.6%	71.5%	69.4%

Identified Needs

By rating each need dimension, case managers identify those needs areas (for example, employment, etc.) requiring “some need for improvement” or “considerable need for improvement”. Offenders identified as having "some" or "considerable" needs in particular areas are generally referred to treatment to address those needs. Table 5 reveals results of between group comparisons on global need ratings assessed at intake. Notably, there were no significant differences in the areas of employment, associates and substance abuse. In contrast, non-gang members appear to have more identified needs in the areas of marital/family, community functioning, personal/emotional orientation, and attitude. It is possible that gang members satisfy family and personal/emotional needs through affiliation. However, a closer examination of the individual OIA indicators provides a more detailed breakdown of differences within each domain.

Table 5. Percentage of Aboriginal Inmates with Identified Needs

NEED LEVEL	GANG MEMBERSHIP		TOTAL
	MEMBER	NON-MEMBER	
Employment	75.5%	80.4%	77.9%
Marital/family***	36.5%	63.8%	49.8%
Associates ^{NS}	71.9%	75.2%	73.5%
Substance abuse	94.4%	95.0%	94.7%
Community Functioning***	31.6%	58.4%	44.6%
Personal/Emotional*	90.2%	94.0%	92.1%
Attitude***	44.6%	57.6%	50.9%

Notes: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Dynamic Need Indicators

Analyses with their matched counterparts revealed Aboriginal gang members had few differences amongst OIA indicators, other than those that may be associated with socio-economic factors. Specifically, gang members were more likely to reside in a criminogenic area and have mostly criminal friends or acquaintances. Even though they were less likely to have reading and writing problems or learning disabilities, Aboriginal gang members were more likely have no employment history. Gang members were also more likely to be aggressive and hostile, to have used drugs at an early age, and to have negative attitudes towards police and the law (see Table 6 for statistics). It is important to note that while there is a highly significant difference in overall marital/family needs (see Table 5) at the indicator level no between group differences are found. Similarly, the overall ratings yielded results showing non-gang members as more likely to have identified needs in the "attitude" and "personal/emotional" domain while at the indicator level it is the gang members who consistently have more "hits" in these domains.

**Table 6. Selected Employment Domain Indicators Assessed by OIA:
Gang and Non-Gang Members**

Significant Domain Indicators	GANG MEMBERSHIP		TOTAL
	MEMBER	NON-MEMBER	
Employment Domain Indicators			
Has learning disabilities **	12.4%	19.2%	15.5%
Has reading problems **	22.8%	31.6%	26.8%
Has writing problems ***	25.1%	36.8%	30.5%
No employment history ***	37.2%	20.4%	29.4%
Associates/Social Interaction Domain Indicators			
Socially Isolated ***	12.8%	22.3%	17.4%
Many criminal acquaintances ***	90.4%	77.6%	84.5%
Mostly criminal friends***	74.4%	54.7%	65.3%
Resides in criminogenic area***	66.0%	50.1%	58.7%
Substance Abuse Domain Indicators			
Early age drug use **	80.9%	73.4%	77.4%
Personal/Emotional Domain Indicators			
Aggressive ***	71.3%	60.2%	66.1%
Hostile ***	42.3%	30.9%	37.0%
Takes risks inappropriately **	74.5%	66.1%	70.6%
Thrill-seeking **	49.7%	40.5%	45.4%
Sexual attitudes are problematic***	11.7%	25.2%	17.9%
Attitude Domain Indicators			
Negative attitude towards law***	61.5%	48.1%	55.3%
Negative attitude towards police***	58.0%	40.2%	49.8%
Negative attitude towards corrections **	31.6%	21.9%	27.1%
Supportive of instrumental violence***	56.7%	41.5%	49.7%

Notes: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

STUDY TWO

Results

Part 1. Characteristics of the Sample

The sample for the second study divided the total sample of Aboriginal offenders into two groups: those aged 25 years or under at admission and those aged 26 or over. Table 7 presents a distribution of selected characteristics for the Aboriginal inmate sample. Notably, one third of the Aboriginal sample were under the age of 26 at admission. Not surprisingly, the distribution of Aboriginal offenders was highest in the Prairie region (67.9%).

Table 7. Characteristics of Aboriginal Offender Sample

CHARACTERISTIC	ABORIGINAL OFFENDERS (%)		TOTAL
	25 OR UNDER	OVER 25	
Region			
Atlantic	3.8%	2.9%	3.3%
Quebec	4.4%	5.8%	5.2%
Ontario	9.6%	11.2%	10.5%
Prairie	71.7%	65.3%	67.9%
Pacific	10.6%	14.8%	13.1%
Sentence			
<4 years	64.9%	65.1%	65.0%
4-10 years	26.6%	27.2%	27.0%
10+ years	3.2%	3.0%	3.0%
Life	5.3%	4.7%	5.0%

Part 2. Criminal History Background

Offence History

Table 8 presents a percentage distribution of offences by Aboriginal age groups. Several statistical differences were noted in the types of offences between groupings. First, younger Aboriginal offenders⁷ were more likely to have been convicted of robbery (33.7% vs. 24.4%, respectively) or breaking and enter (38.4% vs. 29.7%, respectively). Interestingly, younger Aboriginal offenders were less likely to have been convicted of a drug trafficking offence (6.2% vs. 8.6%). Similarly, sexual assault offences were more characteristic of older Aboriginal offender population. Chi square analyses revealed that significantly fewer young Aboriginal offenders were convicted of a sexual assault (14.6% vs. 30.6%). Table 8 presents a breakdown of offence history by group.

Table 8. Offence History: of Aboriginal Offenders

OFFENCE	ABORIGINAL OFFENDERS (%)		TOTAL
	25 OR UNDER	OVER 25	
Homicide*	5.6%	4.2%	4.8%
Attempted Murder	1.1%	1.8%	1.5%
Manslaughter	8.8%	10.3%	9.7%
Robbery***	33.7%	24.4%	28.3%
Sexual assault***	14.6%	30.6%	24.0%
Forcible confinement	3.8%	4.8%	4.3%
Weapons	18.0%	16.6%	17.1%
Assault	39.7%	39.5%	39.6%
Kidnapping	0.9%	1.1%	1.0%
Break and Enter***	38.4%	29.7%	33.3%
Theft**	27.5%	24.0%	25.4%
Drug possession*	8.2%	10.0%	9.3%
Drug trafficking**	6.2%	8.6%	7.6%
Escape	14.4%	13.7%	14.0%
Other**	67.8%	63.9%	65.5%

Notes: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

⁷ “Younger” or “youth” refers to Aboriginal offenders who were 25 years of age or younger upon admission to a federal institution. Similarly “older” signifies Aboriginal offenders over the age of 25 upon federal admission.

Youth and Adult Criminal History

As mentioned, the OIA process collects extensive information on each offender's criminal history record (youth and adult court involvement) and sex offence history. Table 9 presents the distributed percentages on selected criminal history background variables for Aboriginal inmates with respect to age groupings. In general, an overwhelming proportion of Aboriginal offenders have had prior involvement in the adult and/or youth court system (96%). As young offenders, younger Aboriginal offenders were significantly more likely to have been exposed to the criminal justice system (84.1% vs. 36.6%). As expected, older Aboriginal offenders accumulated more of an adult court and offence history over time. Finally, Table 9 reveals that younger Aboriginal offenders appear to have more frequent and continuous criminal behavior than their older counterparts. More than one third re-offended less than 6 months after their last incarceration in comparison to 25.7% of older Aboriginal offenders.

Table 9. Criminal Histories of Aboriginal Offenders

SIGNIFICANT DOMAIN INDICATORS	ABORIGINAL OFFENDERS		TOTAL
	25 OR UNDER	OVER 25	
VARIABLE			
Young offender history			
Previous offences***	84.1%	36.6%	56.5%
Community Supervision***	75.8%	24.9%	46.5%
Open Custody***	55.2%	17.2%	33.3%
Secure Custody***	53.6%	18.6%	33.4%
Disciplinary Transfer***	16.0%	2.2%	8.0%
Transfer to Adult Facility***	9.1%	1.6%	4.8%
Adult offender history			
Previous offences***	79.8%	95.4%	88.9%
Community Supervision***	64.8%	85.7%	77.0%
Provincial terms(s)***	70.4%	86.2%	79.6%
Federal terms(s)***	18.2%	33.4%	27.1%
Escape/UAL***	27.2%	34.1%	31.2%
Failure on conditional release***	31.3%	45.8%	39.8%
<6 months since last incarceration***	35.1%	25.7%	29.6%
No crime free period for 1 yr.***	35.7%	17.6%	25.1%
Violent offence history			
Previous offence(s)***	51.9%	65.5%	59.9%
Previous sex offence***	9.0%	20.1%	15.5%
Current sex offence***	14.6%	31.1%	24.2%
Previous weapon used offence***	21.6%	28.1%	25.4%
Previous serious injury offence***	15.3%	22.5%	19.5%
Previous serious offence***	15.1%	28.3%	22.7%
Current serious offence***	36.1%	43.4%	40.4%
Previous child victim***	7.9%	12.1%	10.4%
Current child victim***	9.8%	20.1%	15.8%
Previous 3 or more offences***	32.3%	44.9%	39.7%
Current 2 or more offences**	19.0%	14.9%	16.7%

Notes: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Offence Severity (Past and Current)

Table 10 presents selected indicators on the Offence Severity record. Given their low likelihood for sexual offending, it is not surprising that significantly fewer of the younger Aboriginal offenders had child victims. However, younger offenders were more likely to have multiple victims and to have used a weapon.

Table 10. Offence Severity Record: Aboriginal Offenders

ITEM	ABORIGINAL OFFENDERS		TOTAL
	25 OR UNDER	OVER 25	
Child victims ***	9.8%	20.1%	15.9%
Multiple victims (3+)**	19.3%	15.0%	16.8%
Violence against victims	51.6%	50.8%	51.1%
Use of Weapon**	28.7%	24.5%	26.3%
Serious injury	28.2%	25.6%	26.7%
Serious psychological injury***	36.1%	43.4%	40.4%

Notes: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Part 3. Intake Assessment of Aboriginal Offenders

Level of Risk

Table 11 shows how Aboriginal offenders were distributed by criminal risk level with respect to age groupings. Overall, 63.8% of Aboriginal offenders were classified as high risk at intake, and only 4.9% were classified as low risk. Contrary to expectation, significantly more older Aboriginal offenders (65.6%) were classified as high risk in comparison to their younger counterparts (61.2%). This may be attributable to the larger proportion of older Aboriginal offenders who have been convicted of a sex offence. Offenders who are currently serving sentences for offences that caused serious harm must be given a high-risk rating. As well, an overall rating of high criminal risk is given to offenders assessed as having a sex offence history that reflects considerable sex offending (Standard Operating Procedure 700-04).

Table 11. Overall Static Risk Level: Aboriginal Offenders

STATIC RISK LEVEL	ABORIGINAL OFFENDERS		TOTAL
	25 OR UNDER	OVER 25	
Low **	4.3%	5.4%	4.9%
Medium**	34.5%	29.0%	31.3%
High**	61.2%	65.6%	63.8%

Notes: **p<.01

Level of Need

Table 12 displays how the Aboriginal offenders were distributed according to global ratings of dynamic needs with respect to age groupings. No significant differences found between groups.

Table 12. Overall Dynamic Need Level: Aboriginal Offenders

NEED LEVEL	ABORIGINAL OFFENDERS		TOTAL
	25 OR UNDER	OVER 25	
Low	2.0%	3.1%	2.6%
Medium	27.9%	28.1%	28.0%
High	70.2%	68.9%	69.4%

Identified Needs

In Table 13, all seven need areas that were covered by the “Dynamic Factors Identification and Analysis” process were evidenced in the sample. Among the most prominent needs identified for Aboriginal youth were employment (80.3%), associates (75.7%), and substance abuse (94.0%). In contrast, Table 13 shows that older Aboriginal offenders appear to have higher needs in the area of marital/family relations (68.4%).

Table 13. Percentage of Aboriginal Inmates with Identified Needs

NEED DIMENSION	ABORIGINAL OFFENDERS		TOTAL
	25 OR UNDER	OVER 25	
Employment***	80.3%	68.3%	73.2%
Marital/family***	56.0%	68.4%	63.3%
Associates***	75.7%	59.6%	66.6%
Substance abuse**	94.0%	91.8%	92.7%
Community Functioning	50.4%	48.1%	49.1%
Personal/Emotional	93.3%	93.9%	93.6%
Attitude	52.9%	52.5%	52.7%

Notes: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Employment Domain

Employment domain indicators that showed significant between group differences are presented in Table 14. Of the 35 indicators targeting employment needs, 22 significant group differences were found. Although younger Aboriginal offenders were less likely to have completed high school, significantly more older offenders had less than grade 8 education. However, the most marked difference was in employment history, where 28.7% of the younger offenders had no history of employment as compared to one tenth of the older Aboriginal offenders. In addition, the younger offenders were more likely to be unemployed at the time of arrest, have an unstable job history, have been unemployed 90% or more of the time prior to incarceration, and to be assessed as lacking a skill area (84.2% vs. 57.3%). Although older Aboriginal offenders were more likely to have been laid off from work or fired from a job, when those inmates who reported being unemployed 90% of the time (or more) prior to incarceration were excluded from analyses, there were no significant between-group differences.

Table 14. Selected Employment Domain Indicators Assessed by OIA: Aboriginal Offenders

SIGNIFICANT DOMAIN INDICATORS	ABORIGINAL OFFENDERS		TOTAL
	25 OR UNDER	OVER 25	
Less than grade 8 ***	24.5%	30.8%	28.2%
Less than grade 10 *	67.0%	62.0%	64.1%
No high school diploma ***	91.9%	85.1%	87.9%
Has learning disabilities **	15.5%	11.7%	13.3%
Physical problems interfere with learning **	3.4%	6.0%	5.1%
Has concentration problems ***	37.1%	29.7%	32.8%
Lacks a skill area/trade/profession ***	84.2%	57.3%	68.5%
Dissatisfied with skill area/trade/profession ***	60.8%	41.9%	49.8%
Has physical problems that interfere with work***	6.1%	15.2%	11.4%
Unemployed at time of arrest ***	81.1%	66.6%	72.6%
Unemployed 90% or more***	63.6%	35.3%	47.0%
Unemployed 50% or more ***	87.4%	67.1%	75.5%
Has an unstable job history***	90.0%	74.6%	81.0%
No employment history ***	28.7%	9.5%	17.5%
Lacks initiative **	38.2%	32.3%	34.8%
Has quit a job without another ***	37.2%	46.4%	42.5%
Has been laid off from work ***	40.3%	64.5%	54.4%
Has been fired from a job***	18.7%	29.8%	25.2%
Lacks employment benefits***	57.1%	63.8%	61.0%
Jobs lack security***	56.4%	65.2%	61.5%
Has difficulty with co-workers***	3.0%	5.9%	4.7%
Completed an occupational development program***	9.0%	14.5%	12.2%

Notes: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Marital/Family Domain

The marital/family indicators are presented in Table 15. In the marital/family domain, 25 of the 31 indicators were found to distinguish significantly between groups. Notably, one of the most striking differences was found in childhood relations, where young Aboriginal offenders were more likely to not have had a father present during childhood. In addition, the younger offenders were more likely to have been raised in a home characterized by a dysfunctional parental relationship, and were more likely to have criminal family members. Significant differences were also noted in marital relations, where the older offenders were more sexually dissatisfied with their current relationship, reported money problems in the relationship, and were more likely to have abused a spouse in a past or current relationship. Given the nature of their offences, it is not surprising that older Aboriginal offenders were more likely to have been arrested for either child abuse or incest.

Table 15. Selected Marital/Family Domain Indicators Assessed by OIA: Aboriginal Offenders

SIGNIFICANT DOMAIN INDICATORS	ABORIGINAL OFFENDERS		TOTAL
	25 OR UNDER	OVER 25	
Childhood lacked family ties***	44.5%	37.3%	40.3%
Maternal relations negative as a child***	40.6%	32.2%	35.7%
Father absent during childhood***	58.0%	45.0%	50.4%
Paternal relations negative as a child**	55.2%	49.3%	51.8%
Parents relationship dysfunctional during childhood***	71.7%	62.8%	66.5%
Family members involved in crime***	63.6%	56.4%	59.4%
Currently single***	68.9%	56.7%	61.8%
Has been married/common law in the past***	66.9%	91.9%	81.5%
Dissatisfied with current relationship***	13.2%	18.3%	16.1%
Money problems affect relationship(s) past/present***	27.6%	39.3%	34.4%
Sexual problems affect relationship(s) past/present***	7.0%	19.1%	14.0%
Communication problems affects the relationship(s)***	39.7%	61.2%	52.2%
Has been a victim of spousal abuse***	16.0%	26.9%	22.3%
Has been a perpetrator of spousal abuse***	26.7%	54.5%	42.9%
Has no parenting responsibilities***	54.8%	34.4%	42.9%
Unable to handle parenting responsibilities***	14.7%	23.7%	19.9%
Unable to control the child's behaviour appropriately***	5.5%	11.7%	9.1%
Perceives self as unable to control then child's behaviour**	2.4%	4.6%	3.7%
Supervises child improperly***	6.4%	15.5%	11.7%
Does not participate in activities with the child***	10.6%	15.6%	13.5%
Lacks an understanding of child development***	14.1%	22.1%	18.7%
Family is unable to get along as a unit***	19.5%	36.0%	29.1%
Has been arrested for child abuse***	1.1%	6.0%	4.0%
Has been arrested for incest***	0.4%	6.8%	4.2%
Has participated in marital/family therapy***	5.6%	9.6%	7.9%

Notes: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Associates/Social Interaction Domain

Table 16 presents selected associates/social interaction domain indicators for the sample of Aboriginal offenders. Of the 13 indicators targeting social interactions, eight differences between the age groupings were found. A larger proportion of younger Aboriginal offenders had criminal friends and acquaintances. Almost four times as many of the younger Aboriginal offenders had gang affiliations (23.1% and 6.4%, respectively). Accordingly, the younger offenders were more likely to have mostly criminal friends and/or criminal acquaintances and, to associate with substance abusers (92.9% and 85.1%, respectively). In addition, the younger offenders were more likely to reside in a criminogenic area and to be unattached to any prosocial.

Table 16. Selected Associates/Social Interaction Domain Indicators Assessed by OIA: Aboriginal Offenders

SIGNIFICANT DOMAIN INDICATORS	ABORIGINAL OFFENDERS		TOTAL
	25 OR UNDER	OVER 25	
Socially Isolated***	16.9%	23.5%	20.8%
Associates with substance abusers***	92.9%	85.1%	88.3%
Many criminal acquaintances***	81.3%	60.8%	69.4%
Mostly criminal friends***	60.3%	35.7%	46.0%
Gang affiliation***	23.1%	6.4%	13.3%
Resides in criminogenic area***	51.2%	42.0%	45.8%
Unattached to any prosocial groups ***	73.4%	59.9%	65.5%
Easily influenced by others***	57.9%	40.3%	47.6%

Notes: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Substance Abuse Domain

Table 17 presents selected substance abuse domain indicators for Aboriginal inmates. Interestingly, differences between the two age groups exist by substance type. Younger Aboriginal offenders were more likely to abuse drugs

and to engage in frequent drug use. Conversely, older Aboriginal offenders were more likely to drink alcohol to relieve stress and to experience difficulties stemming from alcohol abuse. Overall, the younger offenders were more likely to begin using alcohol or drugs at an early age.

Table 17. Selected Substance Abuse Domain Indicators Assessed by OIA: Aboriginal Offenders

INDICATOR	ABORIGINAL OFFENDERS		TOTAL
	25 OR UNDER	OVER 25	
Drinking use at early age***	80.2%	74.0%	76.5%
Has combined the use of alcohol and drugs***	75.3%	63.8%	68.5%
Drinks to relieve stress***	59.3%	66.5%	63.5%
Drinking interferes with employment***	42.6%	49.3%	46.5%
Drinking interferes with marital/family relations***	59.3%	70.4%	65.8%
Drinking interferes with social relations***	49.5%	58.7%	54.9%
Drinking has resulted in law violations***	77.7%	83.1%	80.8%
Drinking has resulted with health***	22.2%	31.2%	27.5%
Abuses drugs***	85.9%	70.5%	76.9%
Began using drugs at an early age***	75.9%	51.0%	61.4%
Used drugs on a regular basis***	62.8%	46.9%	53.5%
Has gone on drug-taking sprees***	54.0%	44.5%	48.5%
Has combined the use of different drugs***	53.3%	41.6%	46.5%
Uses drugs during leisure time***	74.1%	60.1%	65.9%
Uses drugs in social situations***	77.4%	61.3%	68.0%
Uses drugs to relieve stress***	56.1%	47.1%	50.8%
Drug use has resulted in the law violations***	58.3%	49.7%	53.2%
Prior substance abuse assessments***	49.4%	59.1%	55.1%
Has participated in substance abuse treatment***	57.1%	65.9%	62.3%
Has completed substance abuse treatment***	39.0%	49.7%	45.3%

Notes: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Community Functioning Domain

A selected distribution of the community functioning domain indicators for Aboriginal inmates is presented in Table 18. Few indicators in this need domain were found to differentiate between groups, however differences were found in the areas of self-presentation and monetary issues. The older aboriginal offender groups were more likely to have poor hygiene, physical presentation and have dental problems. With respect to monetary issues, 82.6% of the younger offenders had no credit compared to 69.9% of the older offenders, and 82.6% of the younger offenders had no collateral compared to 68.1%. Older Aboriginal offenders, however, were more likely to have outstanding debts (38.1% vs. 28.4%) and to have previously used social assistance (91.0% vs. 83.1%). Over half of young Aboriginal offenders (54.6%) had unstable living arrangements compared to only 38.8% of their older counterparts.

Table 18. Selected Community Functioning Domain Indicators Assessed by OIA: Aboriginal Offenders

SIGNIFICANT DOMAIN INDICATORS	ABORIGINAL OFFENDERS		TOTAL
	25 OR UNDER	OVER 25	
Unstable accommodation***	54.6%	38.8%	45.4%
Has poor hygiene **	2.8%	5.2%	4.2%
Had poor physical ***	13.6%	28.1%	22.1%
Had dental problems***	16.9%	25.8%	22.1%
Has outstanding debts ***	28.4%	38.1%	34.1%
Has no bank account***	66.5%	56.9%	60.9%
Has no credit***	82.6%	69.9%	75.2%
Has no collateral***	81.8%	68.1%	73.8%
Has no hobbies ***	30.6%	24.4%	26.9%
Does not participate in organized activities**	57.6%	51.7%	54.2%
Has used social assistance***	83.1%	91.0%	87.7%

Notes: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Personal/Emotional Orientation Domain

Table 19 presents a distribution of personal/emotional orientation domain indicators for Aboriginal inmates. Twenty of the 46 personal/emotional orientation indicators differentiated between groups. Table 19 reveals that cognition, behaviour, sexual behaviour, and mental health are primary components underlying many of the observed differences. More specifically, young Aboriginal offenders were more likely to be unable to generate choices, are unable to understand the consequences of their actions, be thrill seeking, and non-reflective. Behaviorally, the younger offenders were more likely to be impulsive.

As shown in Table 19, older Aboriginal offenders showed more difficulty in mental health and intervention issues. For instance, older offenders were more likely to have received outpatient services and been prescribed medication currently and in the past. In addition, the older offenders had a number of sexual indicators identified as needs in comparison to the younger age grouping. The older offenders were more likely to have a sexual performance problem or a sexual identity problem. Furthermore, the older offenders were more likely to have inappropriate sexual preferences and problematic sexual attitudes. This is consistent with the increased likelihood of the older offender group being involved with sexual offences.

Table 19. Selected Personal/Emotional Domain Indicators Assessed by OIA: Aboriginal Offenders

SIGNIFICANT DOMAIN INDICATORS	ABORIGINAL OFFENDERS		TOTAL
	25 OR UNDER	OVER 25	
Gang member***	16.6%	2.8%	8.5%
Unable to generate choices***	71.6%	65.0%	67.7%
Unaware of consequences***	52.3%	45.7%	48.5%
Goal setting is unrealistic*	32.9%	28.3%	30.2%
Impulsive ***	85.3%	73.8%	78.6%
Manages time poorly***	59.9%	47.9%	52.9%
Worries unreasonably *	21.0%	25.3%	23.5%
Takes risks inappropriately***	70.4%	56.4%	62.2%
Thrill-seeking***	45.2%	26.2%	34.1%
Non-reflective**	56.8%	51.2%	53.6%
Not conscientious***	46.9%	39.6%	42.6%
Has difficulty performing sexually***	2.6%	5.4%	4.2%
Sexual identity problem***	2.2%	4.8%	3.7%
Inappropriate sexual preference(s)***	10.2%	23.5%	18.0%
Sexual attitudes are problematic***	18.9%	35.5%	28.6%
Prescribed medication in the past**	21.8%	26.7%	24.7%
Prescribed medication currently***	7.6%	12.6%	10.5%
Past hospitalization***	15.2%	20.2%	18.1%
Received outpatient services in the past*	11.6%	15.2%	13.7%
Received outpatient services prior to admission*	2.7%	4.5%	3.8%

Notes: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Attitude Domain

Table 20 displays selected attitude domain indicators for Aboriginal offenders. Comparisons across indicators of attitude yielded significant differences for nine of the 24 items. In general, it appears as though the younger Aboriginal

offenders hold more negative attitudes towards the criminal justice system in comparison to their older counterparts. Younger Aboriginal offenders were more likely to have negative attitudes towards the law, the police, community supervision, and corrections. The younger offenders were also more likely to view employment as having no value and to lack direction. This is commensurate with findings noted in the "Employment" Domain. Younger Aboriginal offenders are more likely to be disrespectful of personal and public property, and are more supportive of instrumental violence.

Table 20. Selected Attitude Domain Indicators Assessed by OIA: Aboriginal Inmates

SIGNIFICANT DOMAIN INDICATORS	ABORIGINAL OFFENDERS (%)		TOTAL
	25 OR UNDER	OVER 25	
Negative towards law**	51.6%	45.5%	48.0%
Negative towards police***	44.7%	35.5%	39.3%
Negative towards corrections*	24.6%	20.4%	22.1%
Negative towards community supervision**	36.4%	30.8%	33.1%
Employment has no value***	27.2%	16.3%	20.9%
Basic life skills have no value***	14.1%	9.2%	11.2%
Elderly have no value***	3.4%	1.2%	2.1%
Women/men roles are unequal***	18.3%	28.4%	24.2%
Disrespectful of personal belongings***	51.2%	34.6%	41.5%
Disrespectful of public property***	40.0%	25.2%	31.3%
Disrespectful of commercial property***	44.4%	29.3%	35.6%
Supportive of domestic violence***	18.8%	32.7%	26.9%
Supportive of instrumental violence***	47.3%	40.4%	43.3%
Lacks direction***	81.6%	66.9%	73.0%
Non-conforming***	62.0%	55.0%	57.9%

Notes: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Suicide Potential

Of the nine specific indicators used to assess the potential for suicide, only one differentiated between groups. Older Aboriginal offenders were more likely to have suffered the loss of a relationship or death of a relative. Notably, one quarter of the Aboriginal offender sample had a previous suicide attempt. Percentage distributions for the suicide potential indicators are located in Table 21.

Table 21. Suicide Risk Potential Assessed by OIA: Aboriginal Offenders

SIGNIFICANT DOMAIN INDICATORS	ABORIGINAL OFFENDERS (%)		TOTAL
	25 OR UNDER	OVER 25	
May be suicidal	4.6%	5.9%	5.3%
Previous suicide attempt	24.2%	26.1%	25.3%
Has previous intervention	11.4%	13.6%	12.7%
Loss of relationship, death of relative***	8.1%	11.8%	10.3%
Major problem*	6.7%	8.7%	7.9%
Influence of alcohol/drugs	6.1%	7.7%	7.0%
Signs of depression	8.8%	10.9%	10.0%
Expressed suicide intent*	3.6%	4.8%	4.3%
Has suicide plan	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%

Notes: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

CONCLUSIONS

The present report is a split study that examines gang affiliation and age issues within the federally incarcerated Aboriginal offender population. First, an examination of Aboriginal offenders affiliated with an organized crime group was conducted using the rest of the federally incarcerated Aboriginal population while controlling for age. Next, the study investigates differences between "younger" and "older" age groupings within the Aboriginal offender population. The need for a dual focus as such arises from the occurrence of two concurrent trends within Canada; an increase in gang membership amongst younger Aboriginal offenders, and growth of the Aboriginal youth sector in Correctional Service of Canada's offender population. The two trends have raised questions as to whether intervention strategies should focus on gang affiliation or on identifying the treatment needs of Aboriginal youth.

This study found that, when controlling for age, differences in static risk between gang and non-gang members within the federally incarcerated Aboriginal population diminish. Similarly, when examining youth within this population, significant differences amongst the "expected" gang related factors were not present. In particular, younger Aboriginal offenders were less likely to have been convicted for drug possession and drug trafficking, offences associated with other gangs.

Although Aboriginal youth gangs have been identified as negatively impacting the stability of federal institutions in the Prairie region, this study identified youth as a key factor to be considered in intervention strategies. The methodology utilized a historical rather than "snapshot" perspective, which identified age as a mitigating risk factor within the federally sentenced Aboriginal population. This is evidenced in the results that significantly differentiate the younger Aboriginal offender from the older as being more likely to have had previous youth court convictions.

In conclusion, the study shows those policy initiatives, which adequately balance gang management and offender reintegration within the Aboriginal offender population must focus on the needs identified for younger Aboriginal offenders as much as the risk associated with gang affiliation. For effective intervention, strategies should include consultation with Elders and Aboriginal sources and should begin early in the individual's development to prevent contact with the criminal justice system.

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