

HEALING LODGES: A STRONG PREDICTOR OF SUCCESS IN CANADA &
RECOMMENDATIONS MOVING FORWARD.

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Abstract

In response to the vast overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in Canadian corrections, the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) developed initiatives that are intended to provide Indigenous offenders with culturally appropriate services to address their unique needs and reduce the number of Indigenous offenders in corrections. There is strong statistical evidence that validate the notion that culturally specific healing programs can improve the recidivism rates of Indigenous offenders post-release. In turn, this suggests that Indigenous spiritual healing has the capacity to address risk factors and prevent high recidivism rates (Milward, 2011, p. 47). However, healing lodges lack the capacity to effectively deliver culturally appropriate programming to offenders. This systematic literature review examines relevant articles and studies that confirm the effectiveness of healing lodges on Indigenous offenders risk of recidivism. As promising healing lodge sound in terms of deterring offenders away from crime, healing lodges are under-funded, under-staffed, and lack appropriate resources to effectively administer culturally specific programs to Indigenous offenders who need it most. It is recommended that the CSC allocate government funding to support such initiatives and provide greater resources to Indigenous offenders in the system to ensure healing lodges are being utilized. It is recommended that legislature and policy makers revise the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* and that the CSC provides Elders, Indigenous communities and Indigenous offenders with more freedom to effectively facilitate traditional healing methods.

Key words: corrections, cultural relevance, healing lodge, Indigenous offenders, recidivism, restorative justice.

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Kinanaskomitin (I am grateful to you).

PREFACE

My name is Taryn Hamilton and identify as a Métis- Nehiyaw Iskwew (A Cree Indian Woman) from the Barren Lands First Nation in Northern Manitoba. I'm from a remote community in Northern Manitoba but most of my work has been carried out in Treaty 7 Territory. Mount Royal University rests on the traditional territories of the Siksikaitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy), comprised of the Siksika, Kainai, Piikani, and Amskapi Piikani First Nations; the Tsuut'ina First Nation; and the Îyârhe Nakoda, including the Chiniki, Bearspaw, Wesley First Nations, Treaty 7 is also home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III. The university located on land adjacent to where the Bow River meets the Elbow River, traditionally named "Mohkinstsis" by the Blackfoot people. I am proud to be a guest to these neighbour nations. University is where I have developed a love and passion for my people, and an urge to heal them. I wasn't taught the enduring effects of colonialism and intergenerational trauma in high school. It was in university where I discovered my passion for advocacy for Indigenous communities in Canada, where I was taught about how disadvantaged my people are in Canadian society and the justice system. I was presented with many great opportunities and a chance to fight for my people. My attitude comes from the society and community that doesn't value the treatment of my person and soul in its space. My family has survived a few hundred years of genocide and colonial abuse, my matriarchs moved through intergenerational trauma, surviving and thriving. The power of my blood memory is what keeps walking on this journey.

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Introduction

In response to the vast over-representation of Indigenous peoples in Canadian corrections, the Correction Service of Canada (CSC) introduced healing lodges, an initiative with the goal of delivering culturally appropriate programming for Indigenous offenders and reducing the overrepresentation over time (Correctional Service of Canada [CSC], 2013b, para. 2). This study aims to systematically search and review all relevant studies that explore the effectiveness of healing lodges in Canada with the intent to prove its effectiveness in reducing the recidivism rates amongst Indigenous offenders. By exploring the success rates of healing lodges this study aims to advocate for increased government funding for healing lodge initiatives. Presently, healing lodge facilities are under-funded, understaffed and lack the necessary resources to effectively administer culturally appropriate programs greatly desired by Indigenous offenders. Through an extensive systematic literature review, this study is going to examine whether or not the traditional healing systems administered in healing lodges are effective in reducing the recidivism rates of Indigenous offenders. Subsequently, this study will address the issues in funding including the administration of these programs and suggest possible remedies and best practices for success in the future.

Indigenous Overrepresentation in Canadian Corrections

Indigenous peoples are overrepresented in the correctional systems throughout Canada (Rao, 2017, p. 12). In 2016-2017, Indigenous people represented 4.1% of the Canadian adult population but accounted for 27% of the adult admissions to federal correctional services and 28% of adult admissions to provincial/territorial correctional services (Malakieh, 2018, p. 4). In the provinces/ territories, Indigenous males represented 28% of admissions to custody, while

non-Aboriginal males represented for 72% (pg. 5). Indigenous females made up a greater proportion of custody admissions, representing 43% of admissions where as non-Indigenous females represented 57% (p. 5). In 2016-2017, Indigenous adults accounted for 30% of provincial and territorial admissions to custody and 25% of admissions to community supervision (p. 5). Moreover, in federal correctional services, Indigenous adults represented 27% of admissions to custody and 26% of admissions to community supervision (p. 5). In comparison to 2006-2007, Indigenous adults admission to custody have been in an upward trend, increasing from 21% for provincial and territorial and 20% for federal correctional services (p. 5). Overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in correctional systems are much higher in certain provinces, in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, Indigenous adults represent 74% and 76% respectively, making them the highest demographic admitted into custody (p. 5). Saskatchewan and Manitoba also have the highest proportion of Indigenous adults represented in provincial corrections at 14% and 15% respectively (p. 5).

Indigenous overrepresentation is evident in youth correctional facilities throughout the country. In 2016/2017, Indigenous youth represent 8% of the Canadian youth population while accounting for 46% of admissions to youth correctional services, and 42% of community admissions (p. 6). In comparison to 2006/2007, the proportion of Indigenous youth admissions to correctional services increased from 21% and to 35% in 2015/2016 (p. 6). In 2016/2017 for the provinces/territories, Indigenous male youth represented 47% of admission to custody (p. 6). Female Indigenous youth represented 60% of admissions, non-Indigenous female youth represent 40% in 2016/2017 (p. 6). Data from the 2016 Fall Reports of the Auditor General indicated that Indigenous offenders admitted into custody during 2015-2016, 2% were under the

age of 25, 35% had served previous sentences, 64% were incarcerated for violent offence, 74% were serving a sentence of four years or less, and 89% of the offenders admitted into custody were men, and 11% were women (Office of the Auditor General of Canada [OAGC], 2017, para. 3).

Data from Public Safety Canada (2017) revealed that 63.4% of in-custody offenders are classified as medium risk security, whereas Indigenous offenders are most likely to be classified to maximum (16.3% vs. 14.5%) or medium (67.6% vs. 61.9%) security institutions compared to non-Indigenous offenders (p. 55). Statistics show that a lower percentage of Indigenous inmates were classified as minimum security risk compared to non-Indigenous inmates, 16.1% versus 23.7% respectively (p. 55). In 2015/2016, 78.2% of Indigenous male offenders were serving a sentence for a violent offence compared to 66.3% for non-Indigenous offenders and 71.9% of Indigenous female offenders were serving a sentence for a violent offence compared to 43.3% for non-Indigenous women offenders (p. 61). Data from the Parole Board of Canada (n.d.) reveals that 80% of Indigenous offenders reported the lowest successful completion rates from federal parole over the last five years (p. 50). Between 2012-2017, Indigenous offenders had the lowest successful completion rates while on statutory release (p. 53). Trevethan, Crutcher, Moore & Mileto (2007) identified that many Indigenous offenders don't apply for temporary absences or parole compared to non-Indigenous offenders, furthermore, when they do apply they are not granted temporary absence or parole (para.31). The findings indicate that Indigenous offenders spend the majority of their sentence incarcerated which affects their success of community reintegration (para. 31).

Data from the Parole Board of Canada indicates that Indigenous offenders were the most likely demographic to be readmitted on a new federal sentence after completing their sentences on either full parole, warrant expiry or statutory release (p. 56). Furthermore, Indigenous offenders are three times more likely to be charged with a serious offence on full and day parole and two and a half more times more likely to be charged with a serious offence on statutory release (para. 30). Compared to non-Indigenous offenders, Indigenous offenders are 4.2% more likely to recidivate, 7.8% less likely to successfully complete statutory release and 11.8% less likely to successfully complete federal day parole (as cited in Correctional Service Canada, 2013, para. 31). The GSS gathered statistics on Canadians' perceptions of their local police, in the provinces, 43% of Indigenous people reported lower levels of confidence in the criminal justice system, in the territories, 63% of Indigenous people reported lower levels of confidence (Parole Board of Canada, n.d., p. 6).

Restorative Justice

Restorative justice is based on the principle that crime violates and causes harm to an individual and their relationship with others, where the perpetrator acknowledges the harm caused by their actions and becomes accountable for their actions (as cited in Wallace & Wylie, 2013, p. 58). Restorative justice initiatives focus on rehabilitating offenders as a way of reform where offenders are given the opportunity to understand the root causes of their behaviour and successfully reintegrate them into society (as cited in Wallace, & Wiley, 2011, p. 59).

Wallace & Wiley (2011) identified that restorative approaches appear to be effective for serious crimes where victims report a higher level satisfaction in the justice system and decreases recidivism (p. 63). Restorative justice is based on the foundation that crime is a violation or harm

done to individuals, relationships- where the person responsible for causing this harm takes responsibility for their actions, acknowledges their accountability and reparations are made with the victim, offender, and community (Wallace & Wylie, 2013, p. 58). Friends, family members, and the wider community are encouraged to participate, this ensures everyone is able to express their needs and feelings while strengthening bonds within the community-this helps offenders in their post-release efforts (as cited in Wallace & Wylie, 2013, p. 60). Wallace & Wylie (2013) identified that evaluations of restorative justice programs, both the victims and offenders reported feeling more satisfaction with restorative justice compared to criminal justice proceedings (p. 62).

The CSC introduced restorative justice initiatives that embodied the restorative justice paradigm which is established on the traditional and cultural practices of Indigenous peoples, based on the belief that criminality is caused by the alienation of certain members from society (Achtenber, n.d., p. 32). The CSC introduced healing lodges as a way of delivering culturally appropriate correctional services for Indigenous offenders serving federal sentences. This approach shifts from the correctional paradigm to one that includes restoration, reconciliation, healing, spirituality, balance, accountability, and respect (p.4). The process of restorative justice helps restore harmony to the community, the victim, and the offender (Chatterjee, n.d., p. 36)

Correctional Services of Canada Initiatives

The Correctional Service of Canada curated the Strategic Plan for Aboriginal Corrections as a means to address the needs of Indigenous offenders in Canadian corrections (Correctional Service of Canada, 2012, p. 6). The strategic plan implemented in federal corrections is meant to respond to the culturally specific needs of Indigenous offenders, the plan provides culturally

appropriate interventions, collaborations, and addresses the systemic barriers to address the criminogenic needs of offenders and cultural competence in corrections (p. 6). The implemented healing lodges provide Indigenous offenders with traditional teachings, opportunities to connect with Elders, ceremonies, and learn land-based teachings (Correctional Service of Canada, 2013b; Crutcher & Trevethan, n.d.). Programs include individualized plans, interactive relationships with community that's characterized with a focus on release preparations that encompasses an holistic approach to reintegration to the community placing a high value on spiritual leadership (para. 2). The healing lodge initiative responds to the need to provide culturally specific programming to Indigenous offenders expressed by Indigenous communities to address the unique needs of the Indigenous population.

Section 718.2 of the Criminal Code of Canada (1985) requires the courts to consider:

‘e) all available sanctions other than imprisonment that are reasonable in the circumstances, should be considered for all offender, with particular attention to the circumstances of Aboriginal offenders’

Section 81 of the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* (CCRA) states:

81 (1) The Minister, or a person authorized by the Minister, may enter into an agreement with an aboriginal community for the provision of correctional services to aboriginal offenders and for payment by the Minister, or by a person authorized by the Minister, in respect of the provision of those services.

Scope of Agreement

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), an agreement entered into under that subsection may provide for the provision of correctional services to a non-aboriginal offender.

(3) In accordance with any agreement entered into under subsection (1), the Commissioner may transfer an offender to the care and custody of an aboriginal community, with the consent of the offender and of the aboriginal community.

Section 84 of the CCRA states:

If an inmate expressed an interest in being released into an aboriginal community, the Service shall, with the inmate's consent, give the aboriginal community

- (a) Adequate notice of inmate's parole review or their statutory release date, as the case may be; and
- (b) An opportunity to propose a plan for the inmate's release and integration into that community.

The Correctional Service of Canada is focused on enhancing their relationship with Indigenous communities to achieve a balanced relationship between offenders in federal institutions and society (Wilson, n.d.; Combs, 2018). This is meant to give offenders the chance to find resources to work in an Indigenous environment and continue their healing journey in their communities (Wilson, n.d.; Combs, 2018). Within the Correctional Service of Canada framework runs two types of healing lodges; the first are minimum-security CSC facilities that focus on traditional Indigenous ideologies, and the second are ran by Indigenous communities for the Section 81(1) provisions of the (*CCRA*) (Correctional Service of Canada, 2015b; Crutcher & Trevethan, n.d.). Privately, Indigenous operated healing lodges are required to operate within the guidelines of their contracts with the CSC, but CSC ran healing lodges maintain some of the same characteristics of federal institutions (p. 19). Healing lodges facilitated by Indigenous communities are designed by Indigenous communities and incorporate the importance of place and community with an strong emphasis on culture (p. 19). The size of healing lodges

differentiates throughout Canada, some are larger with approximately 100 bed per facilities and some are notably smaller with only 15-20 beds ([CSC], 2015b, p. 19). Section 81 healing lodges typically accept offenders who are labeled as a minimum risk security but other factors such as commitment to an offenders personal healing, their behaviour while in federal institutions, motivation to change, and involvement in traditional culture can influence the lodge's decision to accept an offender (p. 21). Each offender has a personalized healing plan which are plans to work on and improve their emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being (p. 21).

Healing Lodge Offender Profile

At the time of the Correctional Service of Canada's study on the effectiveness of healing lodges (2015b) from 1995-2001, there were 530 offenders who resided in healing lodges (p.23). Section 81 (2) of the CCRA states that Indigenous communities may provide these services to non-Indigenous offenders if they wish to do so. Findings related to risk, incidents, offender needs, and recidivism were found to be relatively the same (p. 23). 85% of offenders residing in healing lodges were men, and 15% offenders were women, of that 87% of total residents in healing lodges were Indigenous while 13% were non-Indigenous (p. 25-26). Majority (49%) of the residents in healing lodges were married or in a common law relationship, and 41% were single (p. 26). 61% of residents has less than a grade 10 education, and 65% of residents were unemployed at the time of their arrest (p. 26). The average age of healing lodge residents at the time of their offence was 32.6 years of age (p. 26). The most serious offences healing lodge residents committed were homicide, assault, sex offences, and robbery, and a larger proportion of healing lodge residents were incarcerated for assault, drug-related offences, and property

offences (p. 26). Average sentence length of healing lodge residents was 4.2 years, the lowest 2 years and the highest 24 years, the average sentence length was 3 years (p. 26).

Data obtained by the Correctional Service of Canada (2015b) indicated that 90% of healing lodge residents had previous adult convictions, demonstrating a greater risk of recidivism and 44% had previous youth convictions (p. 28). 78% of the residents served a previous provincial sentence and 23% of the residents had previously served a federal sentence (p. 28). Residents of healing lodges struggled with recidivism, 36% failed on a prior conditional release and 57% failed previous community-based sanctions (p. 28). While in federal corrections, a large majority of residents were classified to higher level of custody, had attempted to or escaped while incarcerated or on unescorted leave, and segregated for disciplinary infractions (p. 29). 53% of the residents were determined to be high risk to reoffend, however, 30% of residents were considered to have high reintegration potential (p. 29). 64% of residents were rated as “high needs offenders” and 29% were rated medium where they had individual dynamic needs, furthermore, 93% expressed the need for substance abuse and personal/emotional issues (p. 30). 71% expressed need for employment opportunities, 69% expressed the need for social interaction/friends, and 64% needed help for family/marital issues (p.30).

Healing Lodges and Relevant Programming

All programs and activities are curated from planning circles consisting of Elders, surrounding Indigenous communities, organizations and CSC representatives guided by the concept of Indigenous healing (Green, n.d., para. 8-10). Green (n.d.) describes healing as a lifelong process, when healing lodge residents come to the lodge that's the beginning of their healing journey which continues after their release (para. 10). The most widely accepted concept

among Indigenous nations is the worldview that acknowledges the interdependence of all aspects of life meaning that all things are connected this concept is called holism (Benson, et. al., 2015, para. 7). The holism paradigm acknowledges physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual components of each individual where these components are affected by one another (Benson, Sloan, & LaBoucane, para. 8). An assumption of healing lodges and holism is that healing cannot occur in one dimension, this concept asserts that to affect real change in an individual- one must address all these components and go on the journey of “true learning” (para. 9).

Elder’s are central to healing lodges and administering traditional healing methods and culturally specific programming to Indigenous offenders. It was only in 1983 when sweat lodge ceremonies were a permitted practice in Canadian prisons, furthermore it wasn’t until the late 1980s where Elders were recognized as religious personnel and given equal status as other religious leaders (as cited in Hyatt, 2013; [CSC, 2012]). Elders provide “soul healing” and facilitates a culturally specific approach to dealing with addictions and mental health “by addressing the historical trauma” that plagues many Indigenous communities (as cited in Hyatt, 2013, p. 45). Healing from the historical trauma involves an understanding of Indigenous history, spirituality, and culture through participating in ceremony, smudging, learning traditional stories, rituals, teachings and offerings to Creator (as cited in, Hyatt, 2013, p. 45-46). Elders possess spiritual and cultural authority, often with similar life experiences as offenders- offenders may be more responsive to their teachings (Milward, 2011, p. 32). Elders can conceptualize the offenders pain stemming from colonialism, social conditions, and racism in the process of providing understanding and sympathy to an offender let’s the offender know they are valued as a human being (Milward, 2011,p. 32).

“An Elder is any person recognized by an Indigenous community as having knowledge and understanding of the traditional culture of the community, including physical manifestations of the culture of the people and their spiritual and social traditions. Knowledge and wisdom, coupled with the recognition and respect of the people of the community, are essential defining characteristics of an Elder. Some Elders may have additional attributes, such as those of traditional healer. Elders may be identified as such, only by Indigenous communities” (as cited in Couture, n.d., p. 38).

Indigenous traditional cultures are distinct from Nation-to-Nation but generally are embodied through oral tradition and storytelling through Elders, oral tradition covers all aspects of Indigenous life and values (Couture, n.d., p. 38). Traditional healing within Indigenous cultures are characterized by a holistic approach that are full-bodied and inclusive incorporating physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of the individual (p. 38). Culture based programming generally include teaching/ healing circles, sweat lodge, pipe teachings, smudging, sun-dance ceremony, and fasting facilitated by an Elder (p. 39).

Some programs within healing lodges recommended from CSC include; Cognitive Living Skills, Literacy and Education, Substance Abuse Prevention, and Living without Violence are presented in a culturally and gender sensitive space facilitated by Elders (Green, n.d., para. 10). Indigenous studies and history are also taught in the lodges, this gives residents a sense of who they are and the history they have in Canada with the intent to provide residents with pride in their culture and increase their well-being and self esteem (para. 11). Cultural activities may include beadwork, drumming, singing, sewing, quilling, sweat lodges, feasts and dances (para. 12). At healing lodges specifically for Indigenous women, there is a mother and child program, where their children live with them and go to daycare during the day while the women

participates in their programs, children are fundamental to Indigenous people and are considered closest to the Creator, children are central to Indigenous families and communities (para. 13).

The In Search of Your Warrior program offered at various healing lodges is a 7-8 week workshop for violent offenders that helps them understand how their history of violence has shaped their lives, recognizing the root cause of violence is the first step in healing and managing their anger (Nielsen, 2003, p. 78).

Elders are available to residents on a 24-hour basis for support, inspiration, and guidance to both staff and healing lodge residents, providing traditional and contemporary teaching that are held twice a week- oral teachings may include the spiritual purpose of sundance, feasts, fasting and the importance of community, mutual respect, and family (para. 13). Mental health services are available to residents two weeks of each month, psychologists administer counselling, psychological assessments, and one-on-one counselling- all of these services are holistic and meant to address all components of holism and Indigenous healing (para. 14-15). Spiritual circles are held in the Spiritual Lodge every morning, this is a safe place to express thoughts and feelings- the discussions are held in confidence and residents learn patience, respect and self control (para. 16).

Indigenous Offenders Needs and Risk of Recidivism

Understanding an offenders risk of recidivism is important for corrections, crime prevention, the courts and policing. Offenders bear different factors that lead to their risk of recidivism, meaning all offenders do not pose equal risk to reoffend and recognizing these characteristics for conditional release conditions and intervention mechanisms can reduce the likelihood of recidivism (Bonta, Dauvergne, & Rugge, n.d., p. 1). There are many different ways

recidivism is defined, in this paper, recidivism is considered any type of revocation on conditional release, this could be returning to custody for technical violation or a new criminal charge, this can also be any new conviction for a violent offence (Usher Stewart, 2011, p. 9).

The impact of colonization resulted in Indigenous peoples being socially and economically marginalized in Canada, with high rates of incarceration and intergenerational trauma related to experiences in residential schools, these must be considered when examining Indigenous peoples risk to commit crime (Bracken, Deane. & Morrisette, 2009, p. 62). Indigenous offenders bear many of the same risk factors to reoffend as non-Indigenous offenders such as past criminal history, pro-criminal associates, and antisocial behaviour (Gutierrez, Wilson, Rugge, & Bonta, 2013, p. 78) however, Indigenous offenders risks are greater due to their unique history and experiences. Due to colonization, many Indigenous peoples were marginalized and face adversities that other Canadians do not have to endure. For example, Indigenous peoples have higher rates of poverty, higher unemployment rates, employment barriers, higher substance abuse rates, systemic barriers and experience intergenerational trauma which contribute to their risk to offend and likelihood to reoffend (Combs, 2018; Gutierrez, et al., 2013; Hyatt, 2013; Martel, Brassard, & Jaccoud, 2011; Milward, 2011; Rao, 2017). Indigenous peoples were systematically oppressed by government policies especially through the *Indian Act, 1876* that made it illegal for Indigenous peoples to practice their culture, forcefully displaced Nations onto reserves, forcefully made Indigenous children attend residential schools- many children lost their cultural identity, spirituality, language, and self-esteem (Joseph, 2018; Milward, 2011; Rao, 2017).

Hyatt (2013) identified that the current education systems in Canada does not support Indigenous knowledge, ways of knowing, or history, which creates isolation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and diminishes cultural identity further devaluing Indigenous culture (p. 42). Moreover,, Indigenous students face racism, discrimination and prejudice (p. 42). As a result of the legacy of residential schools, many incarcerated Indigenous offenders have not completed high school, this is attributable to the negative environment in which Indigenous children are placed into that leads to the Indigenous students being negatively affected for generations increasing their predictor of criminal behaviour/ deviance in the future (p. 42).

Harris, Cousineau, Page, Sonnichsen, & Varrette (2011) assert that there is minimal differences between the major risk factors used to assess Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders, but Indigenous risk factors should be assessed in a way that reflects personal history and culture (p. 23). Responsivity is an approach where treatment and correctional programming should be delivered in a way that offenders actually benefit from it- this must take into account offender's learning styles, abilities, experiences and cultural needs (as cited in Harris, et al., 2011, p. 20). For Indigenous offenders this could include consultations with Elders, special responsivity programs for FASD (fetal alcohol syndrome), and an greater emphasis on traditional values (p. 20). The authors assert that it's very important to accommodate offenders for their culture and unique experiences- in terms of reintegration initiatives correctional services must promote healing, cultural intervention, and treatment programs that are tailored to Indigenous peoples unique experiences and needs (p. 21).

Indigenous inmates experienced emotional, physical, and sexual abuse in residential schools, foster homes, or even by their own parents who have been abused in the same way,

these effects can be carried out through generations- this is referred to as intergenerational trauma (Milward, 2011, p. 32). The adversities Indigenous peoples experience leads to low self-esteem, where some Indigenous offenders did not develop life necessities skills, and face extreme poverty all while being forced to survive- to escape this, many turn to substance abuse and crime (p. 32). For rehabilitation programs to be effective, the programs must address the historical trauma experienced by the Indigenous population- if these programs were to ignore the multidimensional causes of trauma they would be unsuccessful (p. 32). “Loss of cultural identity is the underlying cause of Indigenous criminality” (as cited in Milward, 2011, p. 34).

Generally, Indigenous offenders tend to have higher recidivism rates compared to non-Indigenous offenders, studies found that Elder participation in cultural and spiritual rehabilitation with Indigenous offenders is associated with a decrease in recidivism which indicates that cultural factors can contribute to their successful reintegration back into community (as cited in Correctional Service of Canada, 2015b, p. 5). Furthermore, culturally appropriate programs for Indigenous offenders may contribute to the successful completion and reintegration into the community while decreasing their risk of reoffending ([CSC], 2012; [CSC], 2015b).

Saulis (n.d.) conducted a pilot study of Indigenous communities in the prairies (Alberta and Saskatchewan) to determine Indigenous communities release potential and some opportunities that will support community-based restorative justice initiatives for newly released offenders (p. 53). The communities in the study had some of the same characteristics, all communities had social/economic problems such as alcohol/drug abuse, disproportionate family dysfunction, single parent families, and significant population growth rates (p. 53). Furthermore,

these communities had 60-70% unemployment rates with increasing criminal activity and youth gangs (p. 53). There was an expressed need for basic services where most community housing conditions were grossly inadequate compared to urban areas (p. 53). In within many communities, 94% of members know people who have been in prison and returned to the community (p. 53). Saulis (n.d.) identified the needs of offenders released from prison, their unique needs include Elder counselling, healing circles, traditional ceremonies and cultural guidance (p. 53). Most of the respondents expressed the need for emotional support, basic needs like housing, financial assistance, and clothing (p. 53). Elders interviewed in Saulis's (n.d.) study mentioned that the role of ceremony, counsellings, and prayer are crucial to the offenders healing and willingness to change-where additional community programming and services must be available (p. 54). This study identified that recently released offenders face more adversities when applying for employment, training, and education within their own communities due to their criminal records, criminal stigma, labelling, safety issues and lack of trust (p. 54). The programs aimed to eradicate these issues include programming that is focused on traditional and cultural services, access to professional treatment programs/ counselling, community acceptance and awareness of the offenders willingness to change (p. 54). Within these communities, there were no specific training, employment or education opportunities for recently released offenders (p. 54). Saulis (n.d.) identified that reintegration potential is dependent of the severity of the offenders offence, family potential economic standing, personal socio-economic status, and the motivation levels of offenders and their effort to successfully reintegrate into their communities (p. 54). Community participants involved in this study believe that reintegration efforts and initiatives will restore balance within their communities, where the community is willing to work

with offenders on their reintegration and rehabilitation efforts (p. 55). Offenders expressed that they take responsibility for their previous actions but require additional supports related to housing and addictions- where they would be more successful if they were provided basic skills training and programming that promotes their healing journey through traditional and cultural programming (p. 55).

Methods

This systematic review used research selected from the literature provided by the Correctional Service of Canada forums on research, data collection and studies conducted and analyzed by the CSC along with current published scholarly peer-reviewed journals. Using the databases provided through Mount Royal Universities library service, this article adopts peer reviewed studies about the effectiveness of healing lodges and their influence on Indigenous offenders recidivism rates. In conducting the process of gathering articles and sources, search terms such as “healing lodge”, “Indigenous recidivism rates”, “Aboriginal recidivism rates”, “culturally appropriate programming”, “Indigenous offender rehabilitation”, “restorative justice”, and “Elders in the criminal justice context” were utilized. By using relevant publications and research forums on the Correctional Service of Canada's website, this study was able to include relevant data and resources from the facilitators who curated healing lodges. The forum on corrections research provided the ability to systematically analyze healing lodges, Indigenous offenders, recidivism rates and risk factors. Articles identified and deemed relevant were put forth for full review and data extraction. The data extracted from each study includes recidivism rates, successful reintegration rates, offender perceptions, healing lodge concepts, program approaches/ facilitation, and identified issues and concerns of healing lodges. This literature

search aims to identify studies pertaining to the effectiveness of healing lodges and recidivism/revocation rates of Indigenous offenders who have completed their sentence in healing lodges from sources/data published from the CSC.

Results

Studies currently available suggest that healing lodges have a positive impact on Indigenous offenders. Research suggests that healing lodges have the potential to decrease Indigenous offenders rates of recidivism, although, some studies have stated that some of these findings are not statistically significant. Data collected from publications provided by the Correctional Service of Canada and peer reviewed scholarly articles were chosen to study the effectiveness of healing lodges and their potential to improve the Indigenous offenders rate of recidivism. Culturally relevant programs made for Indigenous offenders were proven to be more effective in reducing the offenders recidivism rate compared to the traditional programming offered in federal correctional services. Morrisette (2009) asserts for desistance from crime to be successful, offenders must fully understand their history, trauma, and unjust structures in Canadian society that keep them marginalized to build positive associations with their Indigenous identities (p. 75-76). Furthermore, reintroducing them with their Indigenous traditions and culture will allow offenders to adopt pro-social values that does not compromise their identity or minimize their experience of oppression in society (p. 76). The success rates of healing lodges in Canada provide a strong predictor that healing lodges can improve Indigenous offenders rates of recidivism. However, for these programs to work effectively they need increased funding/ resources and given the space to achieve self-determination as a community and individually.

Data from Correctional Service of Canada

The Correctional Services of Canada administers restorative justice intervention for Indigenous offenders that provides victim-offender mediation services. In 2015, the Correctional Service of Canada conducted an analysis of recidivism rates of offenders who participated in the facilitated face-to-face victim-offender mediation program (para. 1). The analysis looked at two test groups; 81 Indigenous offenders who participated in face-to-face meetings before their release from prison and 41 Indigenous offenders who participated in face-to-face meetings after their release from prison and on parole (para. 2). The analysis used two control groups; 81 offenders who did not participate any face-to-face meetings were matched to test group 1 and 41 offenders who did not participate in any face-to-face meetings were matched to test group two (para.2). The results determined that “there was no significant difference between participants and non-participants on rates of recidivism, although the trend over time suggests that the restorative opportunities participants did better on release” (Correctional Service of Canada, 2015, para. 4). Furthermore, offenders without restorative justice opportunities were six times more likely to experience post-release recidivism (para. 4). The results of this study suggest that participating in these programs in correctional institutions may reduce recidivism rates over time, although, these findings are “not statistically significant” (para. 4).

The Correctional Service of Canada (2013b) conducted a follow-up study of 412 Indigenous offenders who attended the Okimaw Ochi Healing Lodge in Saskatchewan revealing that 286 or 69.4% have successfully completed their program, of those, 16 or 6% had been returned to federal custody for committing a new offence while on conditional release (para. 13). The study found that there is an early indication that the healing lodges have a positive impact

for Indigenous offenders as there is relatively low federal recidivism rates among healing lodge participants (para. 14). The Okimaw Ochi (Thunder Hills in Cree) Healing Lodge is a thirty-bed lodge for federally sentenced Indigenous women located in Cypress Hills Saskatchewan, this lodge has been operating since October 1995 (Green, n.d., para. 1). Data from the Okimaw Ochi healing lodge in 1997 indicated that out of the 50 residents who have been released at the time of the study, 6 have reoffended (para. 21).

A study conducted by Pilon, Jewell, Wormith, & Laboucane-Benson (2015) at the Buffalo Sage Wellness House, a section 81 healing lodge in Edmonton, Alberta provided promising results. The study included 48 women who participated in the program, 35 of the women were Indigenous and 13 were non-Indigenous. Of the 40 offenders released from this healing lodge, the overall recidivism rate of conditionally released offenders was 23% and only one released offender returned on a new offence (para. 4-6). The study found that the Buffalo Sage healing lodge was successful in integrating its residents back into society where women found the program to be positive, encompassed a supportive environment, empowered participants helping women with their self-confidence and helped them gain a better understanding of themselves, their past, and history (para. 7). In Wilson (n.d.) a follow-up study of 412 offenders who completed the healing lodge program, 6% have reoffended and returned to custody, this is an early indication of successful and positive impacts (p. 4).

While residing in healing lodges, there was a decrease in the proportion of residents who caused incidents/issues- 31% of residents perpetrated incidents, assaults, or disturbing the peace ([CSC], 2015b, p. 31). In the Correctional Service of Canada (2015b) study, of the 426 of healing lodge residents released, 166 have been readmitted to a federal facility some point after

their release, 82 of them were for technical violations, and 83 of them were for new offences (p. 33). Residents of healing lodges were assessed to be at higher risk to reoffend, on average those released were readmitted 9-11 months after being released (p. 34). In the Correctional Service of Canada's (2012) strategic plan for Indigenous corrections found that Indigenous offenders who successfully participated in healing lodges were more likely to be granted discretionary release than its comparison group who did not participate in healing lodges but both groups experienced conditional release failure at a similar rate (p. 61). This study's findings also showed that offenders who participated in Section 84 releases were found to have lower rates of conditional release failure (p. 68).

Research from Peer-reviewed Scholarly Articles

Gutierrez, Chadwick, & Wanamaker (2018) conducted a meta-analysis which examined the effectiveness of culturally relevant programs for Indigenous offenders compared to conventional programs offered in Canadian correctional facilities (p. 321). This study was based on seven studies and 1,731 Indigenous offenders, they concluded that Indigenous offenders who participated in culturally relevant programs have a significantly lower odds of recidivism compared to those who participated in generic programs offered in correctional institutions (p. 341). Leading them to the conclusion that culturally relevant programming are more effective than generic programs at reducing an offender's risk to reoffend (p. 341).

Usher & Stewart (2011) conducted a meta-analysis on the risk of revictimism on various ethnic groups, their study found that out of a total of 5,755 self-identified Indigenous offenders, the odds of not reoffending were almost one and a half times greater for Indigenous offenders who participated in culturally relevant programs than those who did not participate in programs

(p. 11). The programs the study group participated in ranged from Family Violence Prevention, Living Skills, Indigenous Healing Programs, Substance Abuse, Spirit of a Warrior, and Cognitive Skills Training- all programs had an holistic approach with a focus on Indigenous culture and spirituality (p. 12). There is evidence that Indigenous offenders are exposed to higher rates of unemployment, higher rates of substance abuse, family violence and may be released into communities with higher crime rates- all of these factors are correlated with their criminality (as cited in Usher & Stewart, 2011, p. 21). This should not be construed as evidence for their risk to reoffend as this study suggest that Indigenous treatment programs respond positively to those sort of correctional interventions (p. 21).

In Sioui & Thibault (2001), the recidivism rate for Indigenous offenders who participated in cultural activities was 3.6% compared to those who did not participate in cultural programs which was 32.5% (p. 43). The recidivism rate for those who participated in ceremony was 14.4% compared to those who did not which was 24.2% (p. 42). For inmates who had one-on-one meetings with Elders, their recidivism rate was 12.9% compared to 26.8% of those who did not (p. 44). Nielsen (2003) conducted a study at the Stan Daniels Healing Lodge- their residents had an recidivism rate of 3.5% from 1998-2001, suggesting that implementation of healing lodges can have a positive effect for Indigenous inmates in correctional facilities (p. 81). Bracken, Deane, & Morrisette (2009) asserts for desistance from crime to be successful, offenders must fully understand their history, trauma, and unjust structures in Canadian society that keep them marginalized and to build positive associations with their Indigenous identities (p. 75-76). Furthermore, reintroducing them with their Indigenous traditions and culture will allow offenders

to adopt pro-social values that does not compromise their identity or minimize their experience of oppression in society (p. 76).

Research suggests that restorative justice initiatives can decrease rates of recidivism, Stewart, Thompson, Beaudette, Buck, Laframboise, & Petrellis (2018) compared revocation rates of 112 offenders who participated in face-to-face restorative justice meetings (p. 3913). Findings suggest improvement from offenders who have participated in restorative opportunities during their conditional release (p. 3921). However, the same outcome was not found for those who have participated in face-to-face mediation while incarcerated, but taking part in restorative opportunities while incarcerated did result in improvements in recidivism rates- these results are considered not statistically significant (p. 3921). Offenders participating in community interactions is one of the the most successful predictors of successful reintegration for offenders (as cited in Stewart, et al., 2018, p. 3921). Furthermore, post-release mediation resulted in better outcomes for offenders compared to those incarcerated-these are most effective when these therapeutic interventions are offered in the community (as cited in Stewart, et al., 2018, p. 3922). This study found that CSC offenders who participate in community-facilitated mediation post-release are more likely to complete required correctional programming while citing that previous research indicates successful reintegration and positive outcomes post-release (p. 3922).

Offender's Perceptions of the Healing Lodge Experience

74% of the offenders expressed that healing lodges gave them a better sense of who they are, 83% expressed the lodge helped in their healing process, and majority of participants expressed that sweat lodges, access to land, Elders, and cultural activities made a prominent difference ([CSC], 2015b, p. 40). 80% of residents were satisfied with their experience at the

healing lodge finding independence, freedom, access to Indigenous culture, and working with staff that care were the most beneficial aspects (p. 41). 88% of residents expressed that the healing lodge will help reintegrate them back into their communities (p. 41). The study determined that residents awareness of Indigenous culture increased while at healing lodges and this exposure had an profoundly positive impact on them. Furthermore, a number of residents had little or no prior cultural exposure, once they learned their culture it positively impacted how they viewed themselves, others, and their behaviour- gaining a better understanding of their sense of self and their families origins (p. 48).

Pfeifer and Hart-Mitchell (2001) examined the effectiveness of healing lodges at Wahpeton Healing Lodge in Saskatchewan, offenders expressed comfortability while participating in cultural activities as the staff were more attentive and non-judgemental compared to institutional staff (p. 76). Offenders expressed that the healing lodge was culturally appropriate which enabled them to trust more, provided them with appropriate coping skills and mechanisms to effectively solve their problems, and most importantly stay out of trouble (p. 81).

Trevethan, Crutcher, Moore & Mileto (2007) conducted an in depth study of the Pê Sâkâstêw Centre, a minimum security 60 bed facility in Maskwacis, Alberta (para. 2). The staff and residents identified that there is in fact a positive impact that traditional culture and teachings have on the healing process of offenders (para. 4). Residents are able to participate in cultural activities like vision quests and pow wows, this lodge provides substance abuse prevention, cognitive skills, counselling, anger/ emotion management and the “In Search of Your Warrior” program (para. 3). Residents expressed that escorted temporary absences and unescorted temporary absences used to promote community reintegration was considered effective and

successful (para.4). Healing lodges with close proximities to urban centres allows for offenders to seek employment opportunities and involvement with other Indigenous communities (para. 4). Residents at the lodge were assessed to have greater potential for successful reintegration into the community after being transferred to the healing lodge (para. 8).

Healing Lodges: Expressed Concerns

As promising healing lodge sound in terms of deterring offenders away from crime, healing lodges are under-funded, under-staffed, and lack appropriate resources to effectively administer culturally specific programs to Indigenous offenders who need it most. One issue raised was that healing lodges tend to assume that all Indigenous peoples are the same in terms of language, belief systems, and traditional healing systems. Not all Indigenous peoples are the same and do not have the same experiences and needs. There are similar beliefs, customs and values but Nations are very different from one another. There is an expressed need for Inuit and Métis cultural advisors and programming that is distinctive for Indigenous offenders from different Nations ([CSC], 2015b, p. 52). Section 81 healing lodges lack resources such as Elders and Indigenous staff, there is a need for physical improvements and more physical space for ceremonies and other cultural activities ([CSC, 2015b, p. 52) Section 81 healing lodges lack of funding for staff, which leads to a high turnover rate, furthermore, there is not enough funding for training of staff on CSC procedures, Indigenous cultures, and protocol (CSC, 2015b.; Milward 2011). Lack of funding affects programs, many lodges expressed difficulties planning for events and ceremonies as their budget is not set and fluctuates over time (p. 50). Furthermore, the availability of culturally sensitive resources and programs for Indigenous inmates varied from institution to institution, meaning that all Indigenous offenders do not have the same access

to resources (as cited in Milward, 2011, p. 38). Section 81 healing lodges receive less funding than healing lodges operated by the CSC, and even lower than federal institutions (Combs, 2018, p. 180). Employees receive lower wages and salary, inadequate benefits and experience high staff turnover rates, where funds are commonly allocated to training/ hiring new employees (p. 180). This leads to less committed, less experienced, and poorly trained staff which impacts the lodges ability to effectively administer the programming (p. 180-181). Along with the lack of financial resources, there is an additional need for resources such as addictions support, counseling, housing/ employment, spiritual ceremonies, and employment opportunities (p. 181). Presently in healing lodge facilities there are not enough Indigenous specific rehabilitation programming to meet the needs of Indigenous offenders (as cited in Milward, 2011, p. 39).

There is an lack of communication between section 81 healing lodges and federal institutions, with little effectiveness in the transfer process in terms of offenders applying to healing lodges, and the identification of potential transfers ([CSC], 2015b, p. 52). The Correctional Service of Canada (2015b) recognized that many fail to understand the role and approach of healing lodges, federal institutions and public perception do not trust the healing lodges ability to manage offenders or have an understanding of what actually happens at healing lodges (p. 51). Trevethan, Crutcher, Moore & Mileto (2007) indicated that the lack of communication appears to have contributed to a misunderstanding between federal institutional staff and the role of healing lodges, there is a lack of confidence to manage offenders and commitment to implement section 81 (para. 39). Staff from federal institutions express that they don't have a complete understanding of what happens at healing lodges, and they don't have confidence in healing lodges to effectively manage its residents (para. 39). For healing lodges to

be more effective there must be more community involvement and communication between CSC and Section 81 healing lodges (para. 15).

Martel, Brassard, Jaccoud (2011) recognize that the correctional practice of offender classification has negatively affected Indigenous offenders, commonly Indigenous offenders tend to be more disproportionately classified as high risk and spend their sentence in high security institutions (p. 239). This negatively affects Indigenous offenders and their chances of recidivism as there are less programming for high risk/security inmates excluding them from the very programs designed to reduce their risk to reoffend upon release (p. 239). The classification of Indigenous offenders hinders their ability to apply for such programming, the severity of the offence, past criminal history, mental or physical illness, their potential for violent behaviour, outstanding charges, and offender history determines their security classification (Milward, 2011, p. 42). The higher their security classification, the less likely offenders will be able to participate in culturally appropriate programming (p. 39-42). Milward (2011) identified that Indigenous inmates continue to be recommended for higher security classifications, this scheme is a form of systemic discrimination and negatively affects the offenders rehabilitation and reintegration efforts (p. 43). Many federally sentenced Indigenous women get geographically displaced from their communities, families, and culture, their security over classifications makes it hard for transfers to lower security facility or community facilities (para. 4). Furthermore, there is a lack of appropriate centres, services, programs and assessment tools for federally sentenced women serving their sentences in provincial facilities (Green, n.d., para. 4).

Combs (2013) identified that there is an Section 81 underutilization, the lack of knowledge about Section 84 leads to the individuals lack of involvement which indicates there is

little understanding and awareness of this section and there is confusion on who is responsible for implementing releases (p. 181). Sioui & Thibault identified that despite statistical success, participation in culturally appropriate programming is low (p. 49-51). Combs (2018) identified there is an underutilization of Section 81 in regards to Indigenous female inmates, to be transferred to a healing lodge you must be classified and medium or minimum security meaning that approximately 90% of them are not eligible for these transfers (p. 180).

In *Ewert v Canada*, the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA)* was challenged by Ewert stating that the use of “psychological and actuarial risk assessment tools used by the CSC to assess an offender's psychopathy and risk of recidivism, on the basis that they were developed and tested on predominantly non-Indigenous populations and no that research confirmed they were valid when applied to Indigenous person.” (para.3). Ewert claimed that the CSC has breached s.24(1) of the *CCRA* stating that the CSC has not taken “responsible steps to ensure that any information about an offender that it uses is as accurate, up to date, and complete as possible.” (para.3). The Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) ruled that “the appeal should be allowed in part and that the CSC breached its obligation set out in s.24(1) of the *CCRA* to take all reasonable steps to ensure that any information about an offender that it uses is as accurate as possible”(para.4). The most effective way to address the underutilization is through an “improved clear/specific Commissioner's Directives”, presently there is no direction for the CSC to ensure that these healing lodge programs are utilized, there are internal policies and programs that limit Indigenous offenders access to healing lodges especially Indigenous female offenders (Combs, 2018, p. 186-187). A possible remedy could come from an legislative response, where

the sections can be amended to create a duty on the CSC to facilitate agreements and ensure all Indigenous offenders are able to access these opportunities (p. 187).

Finally, there is little respect for Indigenous Elders, culture, and their belief systems. When coming to provide spiritual guidance to offenders, Elders are required to hand over their sacred items to be searched by security personnel, dishonouring its sacredness when these items are only to be handled by their owners (Hyatt, 2013, p. 44). Another barrier facing offenders access to Elders is the lack of spiritual leaders available to inmates and lack of funding whereas Elders tend to be unpaid for their cultural serviced and intervention (as cited in Hyatt, 2013, p. 44)

Discussion

There is strong statistical evidence that validates the notion that culturally specific healing programs can improve the recidivism rates of Indigenous offenders post-release. In turn, this suggests that Indigenous spiritual healing has the capacity to address risk factors and prevent high recidivism rates (Milward, 2011, p. 47). Milward (2011) established that the Canadian government should invest in better budget allocation to increase the amount of culturally appropriate rehabilitation programming available for Indigenous inmates in halfway houses, community resources, and federal institutions (p. 39-40). As keeping Indigenous inmates in the federal prison system is more expensive than long term funding for effective rehabilitation programs (p. 40). There is a high cost to incarcerate offenders compared the cost to community supervision, funding support should be allocated to culturally appropriate programming and community supervision which would effectively cut costs in the long run and provide means of rehabilitation and reduce recidivism of Indigenous offenders (as cited in Milward, 2011, p. 40).

Milward (2011) recognizes that if the Canadian public were aware of the effectiveness of Indigenous healing lodge approach and the cost-effective approach the public would be more on board with the initiatives and more viable on a long term basis (p. 53). The federal government should secure a political mandate to implement reform to ensure funding is allocated to programs that have the potential to decrease the number of Indigenous offenders in federal institutions (p. 53).

Healing lodges have shown positive and effective success rates to the healing process of Indigenous offenders where Indigenous offenders have acknowledged and recognized the importance of culture in their healing process. Indigenous offenders expressed that positive outcomes of culturally specific programming, now it's time for government and policy makers to recognize its effectiveness and utilize the programs from healing lodges. It is crucial to understand that these healing lodges will be most effective for those who want to desist from crime, healing lodges are not meant to be a scapegoat for those who want an easy way out of their sentence and responsibilities. Healing lodges are for those who have a strong yearning to heal and learn about their traditional culture and practices. For healing lodge initiatives to be effective the CSC must give Indigenous communities and Indigenous offenders a safe space to work towards self determination and self reliance separate from government interference. Research shows that if Indigenous offenders had access to culturally specific programs it would positively impact their release and reintegration potential back into the community. Indigenous offenders lack cultural identity and for programs to be effective there must be community participation where Indigenous offenders membership within society must be acknowledged (Martel, et al., 2011, p. 241)

Future Direction and Recommendations

Indigenous offenders expressed an need for restorative justice programs and economic development programs that give Indigenous offenders opportunities to lead successful and fulfilling lives post release. Sioui and Thibault (2001) found that Elder involvement and interaction in cultural and spiritual activities shows a decrease in recidivism for Indigenous offenders. These findings indicate that cultural factors contribute to the decrease of Indigenous offenders recidivism rates, furthermore, that healing lodges may contribute to the reduction of re-offending and decrease Indigenous incarceration rates (p. 47-49). The idea of “spend now save later” is most effective to reduce the number of Indigenous offenders in federal institutions- where Indigenous communities and the Correctional Service of Canada implement strategies and make a long term investments so Indigenous offenders can successfully reform and re-integrate back into society. Combs (2018) identified that Indigenous people need more control over their correctional programming and move towards the notion of self-determination, as the programs controlled by the CSC have made inadequate efforts to accommodate agreements under Section 81 and 84 of the *CCRA* (p. 186).

To effectively administer culturally specific programming to Indigenous offenders, there needs to be more government funding allocated to healing lodges. Additionally, Indigenous offenders need to have information and resources readily available to them once they’re in the federal institutions. The policies outlined in the *CCRA* need reform where research regarding Indigenous risk factors and security classifications are revised. Indigenous communities and offenders must be provided the space to achieve self determination and reliance separate from the government and exert more control over their affairs. To conclude this discussion section,

recommendations are outlined to advocate for the improved administration of culturally specific programming for Indigenous offenders.

1. It is recommended that the federal government allocate government funding to Section 81 and 84 healing lodges. To increase funding for existing healing lodges and provide healing lodges with equal funding as federal institutions and other initiatives created by the Correctional Service of Canada.
2. It is recommended that the Correctional Service of Canada fund and develop more healing lodge facilities across Canada to ensure these initiatives are readily accessible to those who are willing and determined to turn away from a life of crime. Additionally, it is recommended that the Correctional Service of Canada fund healing lodge initiatives in Inuit and Métis communities to ensure that all Indigenous offenders can obtain access to culturally relevant programs that align with their Nations belief systems.
3. In response to the *Ewert v Canada* Supreme Court decision, it is recommended the legislature and policy makers revise the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* to ensure the CSC are taking responsible steps to ensure information about Indigenous offenders are applied in a respectful and culturally appropriate manner. It is recommended that the *CCRA* revisions include a new classification system for determining Indigenous offenders security classification that is based on research and is culturally relevant for Indigenous needs and risks of criminality. Furthermore, it is recommended that there is increased communication between staff from the CSC federal institutions and Section 81

and 84 healing lodges to ensure that Indigenous offenders are able to obtain healing lodge opportunities and for federal CSC staff to understand the concept and process healing lodges.

4. It is recommended that the CSC provide Indigenous offenders with the resources and information necessary to participate in healing lodges through an improved clear/specific policy mandates to ensure healing lodge programs are being utilized.
5. It is recommended that the Correctional Service of Canada provide Elders, Indigenous communities and Indigenous offenders with more freedom to effectively facilitate traditional healing methods. This includes ensuring Elders practices and protocols are respected and giving communities the chance to achieve self determination in terms of providing culturally relevant programming to Indigenous offenders within their own communities.

Conclusion

The over-representation of Indigenous peoples in Canada's correctional institutions remains to be a significant issue. Through a systematic review of existing literature it was found that Indigenous spiritual healing has the ability to administer and facilitate effective rehabilitation of Indigenous offenders, address the over-representation of incarcerated Indigenous offenders, and successfully reintegrate Indigenous offenders back into the community ultimately, reducing their risk to reoffend after their release. Culturally appropriate programming has proved to produce positive results for Indigenous inmates, contributing to healing, increased self-esteem, and positive changes in their release and reintegration back into

society. The culturally specific programs help with healing, gives offenders a better understanding of who they are as Indigenous peoples, helps them control their violence, develop healthier relationships and parenting skills.

Section 81 and 84 of the CCRA was meant to allow Indigenous inmates to apply for parole and be released under supervised conditions in an Indigenous community- this provides the community with the ability to supervise and effectively allow inmates to reintegrate back into Indigenous communities (as cited in Milward, 2011, p. 34). However, there is an underutilization of these sections in practice. Furthermore, Section 84 healing lodges lack funding and the necessary resources to effectively administer these programs to Indigenous offenders who need it most. The research lead to one main conclusion: there needs to be more funding allocated to Indigenous cultural specific programming for Indigenous offenders. To spend more now and save less later would improve the recidivism rates of Indigenous offenders and in turn, reduce the amount of Indigenous offenders in the criminal justice system. The biggest takeaway from these findings is that re-introducing Indigenous peoples to their traditional culture and heritage, gives Indigenous offenders the opportunity to get back a sense of purpose, pride and identity that has been destroyed through years of attempted cultural genocide. There is strong statistical evidence that validates the notion that culturally specific healing programs can improve the recidivism rates of Indigenous offenders post-release. In turn, this suggests that Indigenous spiritual healing has the capacity to address risk factors and prevent high recidivism rates (Milward, 2011, p. 47).

To improve the Correctional Service of Canada healing lodge initiatives, it's recommended that the government allocate more funding to existing and new healing lodge projects across Canada. It is recommended that legislature and policy makers revise the

Corrections and Conditional Release Act to ensure the CSC are taking responsible steps to ensure information about Indigenous offenders are applied in a respectful and culturally appropriate manner. It is recommended that the CSC provide Indigenous offenders with the necessary resources and information to participate in healing lodges through an improved clear/specific policy mandates to ensure healing lodge programs are being utilized. Lastly, it is recommended that the Correctional Service of Canada provide Elders, Indigenous communities and Indigenous offenders with more freedom to effectively facilitate traditional healing methods.

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