

Aboriginal pathways in federal corrections

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The objective of the Aboriginal Pathways Strategy is to establish a continuum of Aboriginal-specific institutional and community healing programs and services that will contribute to the reduction of the incarceration rate of Aboriginal offenders.

The principles of the initiative will include:

- The diversity of Aboriginal peoples will be respected and specific strategies for Inuit, Métis, First Nations and urban Aboriginal groups will be developed;
- Aboriginal offenders will voluntarily choose to participate in the Aboriginal Pathways process;
- The environment for the Aboriginal Pathways process will be respectful, supportive, healing and will be guided by Elders;
- Each institution with a healing unit will have a program coordinator/champion;
- Aboriginal offenders who participate in the Pathways process will continue to participate in the mainstream correctional process, where Aboriginal alternatives have not yet been developed;
- Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal human resources will be necessary at the onset of the strategy;
- Community intervention strategies will be developed in healing units and healing lodges;
- This strategy will not divert resources from otherwise existing core Aboriginal services; and,
- Effective partnerships and joint initiatives will be the foundation for the success of this strategy.

CSC will pilot the Aboriginal Pathways process with the involvement of the following institutions:

- Stony Mountain Medium Security Institution (Manitoba) officially opened the “Amikimi” (My Path) Healing Range in the spring of 2002.
- Saskatchewan Penitentiary (Saskatchewan) officially opened a healing unit in the summer of 2002.
- LaMacaza Medium Security Institution (Quebec) has opened its healing unit. They are running their second “In Search of your Warrior” program and are planning a third program. The healing unit is painted with Aboriginal and Inuit designs.
- Programs offered in the healing units will include Ma Ma Wi, ASAP (Alcohol Prevention Program), FLIP (Family Living Improvement Program), Native Studies and Aboriginal Sex Offender Treatment Program, and In Search of your Warrior program.

All the Healing Units are staffed with Aboriginal Elders, Unit Managers, Aboriginal Program Officers and Native Liaison Officers. A Unit Manager is on site to oversee the project.

Expected results

Some of the general results expected from the Aboriginal Pathways Strategy include:

- Increased respect for Elders, staff and other peers among those involved in the Aboriginal Pathways Strategy;
- Reduced institutional charges;
- Genuine interest and participation; and,
- An increase in the number of transfers to minimum-security institutions and healing lodges.

It is also expected that there will be a reduction in the current discrepancies/gaps between Aboriginal male/female and non-Aboriginal male/female offenders on the following indicators:

- Rates of time served before conditional release;
- Rates of parole grants and parole waiver;
- Rates of revocation;
- Rates of return following 5 years after warrant expiry date; and,
- Security/risk ratings.

Finally, it is expected that there will be an increase in the following indicators:

- Number of Aboriginal communities working with CSC to reintegrate Aboriginal offenders; and
- Number of partnerships CSC establishes in relation to Aboriginal issues.