

HOMELESSNESS AND INCARCERATION AMONG ABORIGINAL WOMEN: AN INTEGRATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW¹

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ABSTRACT

Aboriginal women have higher rates of homelessness than non-Aboriginal women and they are overrepresented in the prison population. Those who are homeless are at increased risk for incarceration; equally, those just released from prison are particularly vulnerable to homelessness. In this paper we review the historical context and the literature on homelessness and incarceration among Aboriginal women, and summarize best practices or promising programs for interrupting the cycle of homelessness and incarceration. The literature suggests that an effective program contains one or more of the following characteristics. First, it recognizes sociohistorical factors that have contributed to homelessness and criminality. Second, it helps establish a sense of identity and connection with Aboriginal culture, tradition, and spirituality. Third, it addresses the particular needs of women, specifically, the interpersonal violence that Aboriginal women have experienced throughout their lives, and the importance of women's relationships

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with children and family. Finally, the literature recommends much broader social action, beyond targeted programs: upholding treaty agreements, ensuring meaningful participation of Aboriginal people in program planning and implementation and in governance, for example, using a restorative justice process to address transgressions within the community.

Keywords: Aboriginal women, incarceration, homelessness, best practices

Aboriginal women share a legacy of marginalization and oppression due to colonialism, patriarchy, and the effects of Euro-Canadian governance on their families' historical experience, their life experience, and their children's futures (Falth, 1995). They face higher rates of homelessness than non-Aboriginal women (Native Women's Association of Canada [NWAC], 2007a). In the Greater Vancouver Region, for example, Aboriginal people account for 2% of the total population and approximately 30% of the homeless population. Aboriginal women account for 35% of the homeless Aboriginal population while non-Aboriginal women account for 27% of non-Aboriginal homeless populations (NWAC, 2007a).

As well, Aboriginal people are significantly overrepresented in the prison population (Chartrand and McKay, 2006). Aboriginal women constitute about one-third of all provincially incarcerated female prisoners and 20% of the female population in the federal corrections system (Chartrand and McKay, 2006). In some prisons, Aboriginal women constitute an overwhelming 45–99% of the female population (Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, 2009).

Those who are homeless are at increased risk for incarceration; equally, those just released from prison are particularly vulnerable to homelessness (Metraux et al., 2007). Homeless persons have higher recidivism rates than those who have homes (Baldry et al., 2006). In this paper we review the historical context and the literature on homelessness and incarceration among Aboriginal women, and summarize best practice² or promising programs for interrupting the cycle of homelessness and incarceration.

HISTORY AND CONTEXT

The circumstances in which Aboriginal women currently find themselves began in ethnogenocide, colonization, and forced land deportation (Quinn, 2007). Attitudes that maintain the oppression of Aboriginal women arose

2. Best practice in social work refers to engaging in practice activities that are based on research and intended to increase successful outcomes (Gambrell, 2003).

from Western ideologies about racial inferiority and suitable roles for women; the process of colonization upset Aboriginal women's traditional place in society, where they had control over resource distribution and political matters (Jamieson, 1978). As well, behaviours that differed from colonial ideals of feminine conduct were considered "prostitution and deviance." Labelling such behaviours as deviant helped justify assimilation strategies aimed at gaining Aboriginal land and placing Aboriginal peoples among the Canadian working class (Ruttan et al., 2008). Some authors believe that homelessness and incarceration are indicators of a social unrest within Aboriginal communities that originated in colonial trauma (Leach et al., 2008).

The Indian Act reflected this discrimination against Aboriginal women. Jamieson (1978) explains: if an Aboriginal woman married a non-Aboriginal man, or an Aboriginal man from outside the tribe, she could not inherit her birth family's resources; these belonged to the band council, and the woman lost all legal right to them. Aboriginal women lost the right to live with their birth family or in their birth communities after marriage. If a woman had a child out of wedlock with a known non-Aboriginal father, the child would lose his or her Indian status, thereby disinheriting her or him from maternal resources. Although the legislation has changed through Bill C31, its effects still exist: those who were disenfranchised by the Indian Act are still seeking reconciliation with their matrilineal band councils and the Canadian government.

Residential schools, too, have left a permanent mark on survivors. Aboriginal persons who attended residential schools were unable to learn and model healthy gender roles because their models were the priests and nuns who ran the schools (Morrisette, 1994). Those in residential schools frequently experienced physical, sexual, mental, and emotional abuse (Jamieson, 1978), and the schools directly attacked spiritual practices which were deeply ingrained in Aboriginal communities (Chansonneuve, 2005; Waldram, 1997).

The concept of transgenerational trauma explains current social issues as arising from historical trauma and grief across successive generations (Ralph et al., 2006). In Canada, men's physical violence against spouses remained largely unchallenged until laws regarding marital violence were changed in the 1970s; even after this, social inequalities between men and women remained ubiquitous (Brownridge, 2002). The acceptability of violence against women and girls is embedded in a social structure that sanctions exploitation of women (Courtois and Ford, 2009).

Chronic abuse, whether in childhood or adulthood, is often coupled with failures in attachment, and has a profound effect on development, leading to deficits in emotional regulation and impulse control, and problems in forming and maintaining healthy attachments in adulthood (Courtois and Ford, 2009). Chronic abuse can also lead to complex post traumatic stress disorder (CPTSD), which differs from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in that persons who suffer from CPTSD are more likely to be violent and aggressive than those who suffer from PTSD (Courtois and Ford, 2009). The consequence of violence, for some women, is criminalization (Payne, 1992). Federally sentenced Aboriginal women have experienced high rates of interpersonal victimization in childhood and adulthood (Jacobs, 2004).

Aboriginal women in Canada are disadvantaged by social factors and structural inequalities which pose barriers to their optimal wellness (Deiter and Otway, 2001; Elias et al., 2000). Overcrowded and inadequate housing, under- and unemployment, poverty, addictions, violence of all forms, and limited supports are characteristic of the lives of Canada's Aboriginal women (Deiter and Otway, 2001). Such factors correlate with the disproportionately high rates of incarceration and homelessness in the female Aboriginal population (NWAC, 2007b).

Some policies designed to assist Aboriginal peoples have resulted in structural disadvantages for them. Transfer payments to First Nations reserves from the federal government which are allocated to health and social services are not secure; they are classified as a general monetary asset of the First Nations reserve, thus giving band councils the authority to spend the monies however they decide (MacIntosh, 2008). Aboriginal people who live on reserves are vulnerable to poverty due to the lack of essential service provisions as a consequence of gaps in administrative and jurisdictional arrangements between federal and First Nations governments (MacIntosh, 2008). Lack of resources in Aboriginal communities limits their abilities to care for their people, including providing post-incarceration rehabilitation services.

HOMELESSNESS AND ABORIGINAL WOMEN

All Canadian women are subject to social constructs that can contribute to homelessness and criminality: poverty and higher amounts of unpaid work (Status of Women Canada, 2005), violence and abuse (Scott et al., 2002), and lack of adequate social support systems such as welfare and affordable day care (Kraus and Dowling, 2003). The diminished purchasing

power of women severely limits their ability to compete for housing, as it is mainly market-based; current trends towards deregulation further increase women's vulnerability to homelessness (Adkins et al., 2009a). The relationship between the lack of affordable housing and homelessness among Canadian women highlights the inadequacy of social and economic policies for women and children (Morrow et al., 2004). Systemic barriers, personal struggles, and societal stigma interfere with efforts to find safe and affordable housing for all women (Walsh et al., 2009). Recent changes in economic policies, labour market regulation, and family structures have increased Canadian women's housing insecurity; structural as well as individual factors affect women's likelihood of becoming homeless (Adkins et al., 2009b).

Aboriginal women are particularly vulnerable for a number of reasons. As described above, they are caught in a complex interplay of interpersonal, family, communal, economic, and societal factors that have historical links. They have high rates of abuse and stigma across multiple generations (Gorelick, 2007). They are among those with the lowest average income in Canada (Philipps, 1996). Vulnerable populations, such as Aboriginal women, are most affected by cuts to Canada's social spending (Morrow et al., 2004).

As well, Aboriginal people have a limited legal interest in the resources of a reserve; Aboriginal people cannot use personal property on reserves to obtain a mortgage or to secure a debt (Philipps, 1996). The inability to pledge personal collateral, low personal income, conservative lending policies, and negative attitudes towards Aboriginal people create difficulties in obtaining financing; Aboriginal women in particular are at a disadvantage in terms of buying or securing housing (Philipps, 1996).

According to Lambertus (2007), Aboriginal women are often forced to flee their communities because of interpersonal violence and inadequate resources. It is reportedly a common practice for police to place a woman in a domestic violence shelter rather than remove the abuser. Aboriginal women report difficulty holding abusers accountable; perpetrators are frequently released shortly after they are placed in police custody. Women also report greater leniency on the part of police and judges in cases of domestic violence. Housing on reserves is often registered in the male partner's name, so that a woman and her children can be evicted upon the perpetrator's release from prison. If women leave reserves without a sufficiently healthy family network, they have an increased risk of becoming homeless.

Lambertus (2007) notes that some Aboriginal women who leave the reserve enter the sex trade in order to support themselves. In doing so they

are often victims of violence. Some of these women have mental or physical disabilities due to Fœtal Alcohol Syndrome; some have experienced grief because of loss of family members, partners, or friends, or loss of custodial care of children with little or no contact or chance of reuniting. These women report difficulty obtaining shelter, as landlords are concerned not only about their occupations, but require rental histories to secure accommodation. Some landlords in urban centres are reluctant to rent to Aboriginal women as they assume these women have addictions. Lewis (2009) also reports discrimination of Aboriginal women by landlords.

Aboriginal homeless women have often had periods of homelessness in childhood; this normalizes homelessness (Ruttan et al., 2008). Ruttan et al. (2010) describe two common scenarios: in the first, homeless Aboriginal women develop connections primarily with non-Aboriginal street persons who serve as their street family and provide survival resources to them. In the second, women remain connected to their biological families, who are often homeless themselves. This second situation may provide resources for women and their children; however, a woman's substance abuse can strain these relationships so that resources are often withdrawn.

In general, women tend to avoid using emergency shelters, relying instead on survival strategies related to their domestic and sexual roles (Lenon, 2000). Homeless persons face challenges such as addictions and trauma, which can further stigmatize them; this stigmatization can exacerbate legal and housing issues (McNaughton and Sanders, 2007). Aboriginal women are exceptionally vulnerable as they face discrimination from the labour market and educational institutions as well (White et al., 2003).

INCARCERATION AND ABORIGINAL WOMEN

Over the past 20 years, the percentage of Canadian women who are convicted of criminal offences has risen (Cauffman, 2008). Some authors attribute this phenomenon to Canada's decreased social spending, noting that it has created the irony that prisons are the only services in Canada where the needy cannot be turned away (Pollack, 2009).

Poverty and domestic violence are frequent pathways to women's incarceration in Canada (Currie and Focus Consultants, 2004). Crimes are often nonviolent or domestic offences (Johnson and Rodgers, 1993). In provincial institutions, 75% of women were convicted of administrative crimes or fraud, or possession of stolen property and theft, and federal female offenders are more likely to be incarcerated for violent offences involving domes-

tic disputes (Currie and Focus Consultants, 2004). The pattern is similar for Aboriginal women whose crimes are usually motivated by poverty and lack of personal security (Quinn, 2007). Further, Aboriginal women who become involved with criminal justice often lack healthy social support networks (Lambertus, 2007).

Of all female offenders, Aboriginal women are most likely to be incarcerated rather than given conditional release (Martel and Brassard, 2008; NWAC, 2007b). When incarcerated, Aboriginal women typically face long-term geographic separation from their children, families, and communities (NWAC, 2007b). Further, the prison system more frequently segregates Aboriginal women than non-Aboriginal women and they are assessed at higher risk levels and needs (Martel and Brassard, 2008). They also have the lowest grant rate for day and full parole (Currie and Focus Consultants, 2004; Martel and Brassard, 2008).

The harsher sentences and lower rates of parole for Aboriginal women are primarily a result of the lack of resources to secure safe, affordable housing, and lack of community supports upon their release from prison (Currie and Focus Consultants, 2004). Lambertus (2007) agrees, stating that communities lack resources such as mental health and social support services to assist Aboriginal women with reintegration.

METHODS USED TO DETERMINE BEST PRACTICES

In order to determine the best programs for interrupting the cycle of homelessness and incarceration among Aboriginal women, we conducted a systematic literature search. The electronic databases EBSCO, PsycINFO, ProQuest dissertations and theses, ScienceDirect, JSTOR Arts and Sciences II Collection, Google Scholar, and Sociological Abstracts were searched from 1995–2010 using the key terms, “Aboriginal women,” “Indigenous women,” “recidivism,” “homeless*,” “prison,” “domestic violence,” “poverty rates,” “Aboriginal women and income,” “best practices to end recidivism or homelessness,” and “treatments or therapies for Aboriginal offenders.” Canadian government websites such as Corrections Canada and Statistics Canada were reviewed for relevant information. A card catalogue search for relevant books pertaining to the history of Aboriginal women, Aboriginal justice methods, women in conflict with the law, effective methods used to assist Aboriginal offenders rehabilitate, and effective treatments for trauma and abuse was also completed. A Cree Aboriginal Elder was consulted through-

out the literature review to ensure that information was considered in appropriate historical, political, legal, economic, and social contexts.

We found approximately 200 articles containing information relevant to Aboriginal women and homelessness or recidivism. We reviewed the articles and identified major themes consisting of: sociohistorical factors, identity and connection with Aboriginal culture and spirituality, interpersonal violence that Aboriginal women experience throughout their lives, the need to uphold treaty agreements, and ensuring meaningful participation of Aboriginal people in program planning, implementation and governance.

Articles that described processes which addressed needs of Aboriginal women caught in the cycle of homelessness and recidivism were classified as best or promising practices. Literature addressed either homelessness or recidivism, no articles were found that described strategies aimed at breaking the cycle of incarceration and homelessness for Aboriginal women. Much of the available literature has been developed from practices to help women rehabilitate themselves from the point of incarceration or after becoming homeless; less attention is paid to early intervention and no practices were identified from this context within this review. Best or promising practices to assist Aboriginal women in ending the cycle of homelessness and incarceration are categorized as those rehabilitation strategies applied through incarceration rehabilitation strategies, in homeless shelters or in community including structural interventions as summarized in Table 1.

BEST PRACTICES

Howell (2003) contends that much of the theory and practice of psychological therapy is derived from Euro-Western cultural frameworks that may not best serve the interests of Aboriginal peoples. However, some Aboriginal offenders regard programs such as those for domestic violence and anger management as useful because of the skill development offered (Howell, 2003). According to Courtois and Ford (2009) Euro-western-based therapies such as contextual therapy, cognitive behavioural therapy, contextual behaviour trauma therapy, experiential and emotional-focused therapy, sensorimotor psychotherapy, and pharmacotherapy have been shown to be effective in CPTSD. Nonetheless, a movement toward multicultural or culture-centred counselling has emerged to better assist persons from non-dominant cultures (Waldram, 2003).

Culturally appropriate care for Aboriginal people involves identifying and addressing individuals' risk factors and underlying needs in the context

Table 1. Best Practices to End Aboriginal Women's Homelessness and Incarceration

<i>Practice applied through Incarceration Rehabilitation Strategies</i>	<i>Anticipated Outcome/Rationale</i>
Aboriginal Spirituality Program (Fortin, 2004)	Consists of four sections (introduction, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood/alternatives to violence) to provide an in-depth intervention intended to reduce the risk to re-offend with violence, reduce risk to relapse, improve family relations, improve ability to communicate with others, improve coping skills, and adapt Aboriginal culture and spirituality into all aspects of behaviour and everyday life. It is expected that with a more informed base of traditions, Aboriginal women will be better able to manage their lives
Anger and Emotion Management Program (Fortin, 2004)	Consists of 25 two-hour group sessions, structured into six sections. It is based on a cognitive-behavioural approach to anger reduction, meant to teach offenders the skills needed to manage anger and other emotions associated with the occurrence of aggression.
Arts and Crafts (Fortin, 2004)	Gives inmates the opportunity to self express and develop communication skills.
Canine Program (Fortin, 2004)	Offers participants the opportunity to develop specialized skills in animal training, provide useful services for the community, learn a skill which may help them find meaningful employment, and use the skills learned in correctional programs.
Choosing Health in Prison (Fortin, 2004)	Delivered to inmates in the federal system, this program is designed to teach inmates how to develop healthy lifestyles. It is divided into nine sections consisting of eight individual workshops which are 1.5 hours in length and encourage discussion.
Circles of Change Program (Fortin, 2004)	Includes three rehabilitative strategies: relational, cognitive-behavioural, and solution-focused. The modules include: the process of change; increasing the knowledge of Canadian Aboriginal culture; communication styles; self-esteem and self-care issues; problem solving skills; woman's role in her family of origin; healthy and unhealthy relationships; and social injustice.
Horticulture Program (Fortin, 2004)	Offered in some women's institutions, the program's objectives are to foster personal development through self-knowledge and working with others and increase the acquisition of knowledge and development of autonomy. Horticultural knowledge and the ability to organize work increases job readiness skills.
Institutional and Community Relapse Prevention/Maintenance Program for Women (Fortin, 2004)	This is a risk management tool for Community Parole Officers. Entry is continuous and based on risk and needs. The program can also serve as an alternative to suspension.
Keys to Family Literacy Program (Fortin, 2004)	Assists in developing literacy among female inmates and their children. It also helps them to obtain employment when they are released from prison and to better care for their families
Leisure Education Program (Fortin, 2004)	Recreational and leisure activities and involvement both with and in the community are important areas of concern for women offenders. The program promotes health, wellness, and nutrition.
Lifeline Program (Fortin, 2004)	An innovative service provided in partnership with Correctional Services Canada (CSC), the National Parole Board and nongovernmental organizations. It is a correctional concept involving convicted, but paroled, men and women serving life sentences who have been successfully reintegrated into the community for at least five years

<i>Practice applied through Incarceration Rehabilitation Strategies</i>	<i>Anticipated Outcome/Rationale</i>
Mother-Child Programs (Fortin, 2004)	Some women are allowed to have their young children in prison with them depending on space for family housing. The preeminent consideration is the best interests of the child in all decisions relating to participation in the Mother-Child Program. This includes ensuring the safety and security as well as the physical, emotional, and spiritual well being of the child
Community Building Strategies (Fortin, 2004)	Focus on building strong relationships within the correctional institution.
Community Integration Programs (Fortin, 2004)	For offenders on their release from prison. These type of programs assist offenders reintegrate back into the community by providing relevant information around community living, and decreasing stress associated with the transition from prison to the community. This type of programming is monitory within many correctional facilities.
Psychosocial Rehabilitation (PSR) (Fortin, 2004)	Provides inmates with training to better manage and cope with emotions and life challenges, leading to more prosocial outcomes.
Reasoning and Rehabilitation (R&R) (Fortin, 2004)	Consists of 38 sessions that focus on the development of interpersonal reasoning skills for effective life management. The program targets identified cognitive deficit areas in the areas of self-regulation and self-management, assertiveness and social interaction, criminal attitudes and attribution, critical reasoning, and rigid cognitive style.
Recreational Therapy (Fortin, 2004)	These initiatives provide purposeful interventions in some physical, emotional, cognitive and/or social behaviour to bring about change and promote growth and personal development. Leisure education encourages offenders to acquire leisure skills, awareness, and knowledge necessary for initiating, planning, and participating in recreation activities and maintaining a fulfilling and self-directed lifestyle.
Restorative Justice (Goel, 2000)	An Aboriginal developed methodology creating alternatives to the criminal justice system, for addressing crime and deviant behaviour within Aboriginal communities.
Sex Offender Therapy for Women (Fortin, 2004)	This program focus on rehabilitating women who commit sexual offences by offering training in self-management; deviant arousal; cognitive distortions; intimacy, relationships and social functioning; empathy and victim awareness.
Spirit of a Warrior Program (Fortin, 2004)	This six-week full-day program gives women offenders practice in positive living skills and spiritual awareness. It offers exercises that promote a balanced approach to dealing with anger, violence, grief, jealousy, family relationships, and holistic living.
Spirituality and Spiritual Services (Fortin, 2004)	The Interfaith Committee on Chaplaincy functions in an advisory capacity to the CSC and ensures that religious and spiritual care of offenders are being provided for in a manner that meets the standards of what is acceptable.
Survivors of Abuse and Trauma Programs (Fortin, 2004)	Voluntary programs aimed to provide a complement to treatment for women who wish or need to address past issues of victimization. These programs focus on mental health and are complementary to all interventions.
Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT); Women Offender Substance Abuse Program (WOSAP) (Fortin, 2004)	These programs address emotional regulation needs as well as cognitive functioning and/or substance abuse issues of women offenders who suffer from DBT and addresses spiritual renewal, helping women take responsibility for their own choices. The goal of these programs is to prepare women for healthy substance abuse free lives outside of prison.

<i>Practice applied through Incarceration Rehabilitation Strategies</i>	<i>Anticipated Outcome/Rationale</i>
DBT for Abuse and Trauma (Fortin, 2004)	Used to treat inmates residing in all levels of correctional facilities. It focuses on retraining individuals to regulate their thoughts and emotions. Social learning approaches are incorporated to teach positive reinforcement, vocational training, psycho education, and cognitive remediation. Psychotic behaviours and aggression are addressed within this form of treatment
Employability programs (Fortin, 2004)	CSC offers a series of employability programs to increase women's chances of becoming successfully employed when they are released.
Parenting Skills Program (Fortin, 2004)	Creative and flexible approach to literacy while facilitating learning, closely related to parenting programs. The goals of the program are to link literacy with parenting skills, and to encourage positive familial attitudes and behaviours. This is a literacy program to further enhance and expand literacy skills.
Peer Support Program (Fortin, 2004)	This program is an inmate based program for inmates to provide peer support to other inmates.
<i>Practice Applied within Homeless Shelters</i>	
Establish separate shelters for men and women (Lambertus, 2007)	Men and women become homeless for different reasons and have different needs when reestablishing their place within the community. It is important to offer gender appropriate services to homeless persons, and to create environments which will serve the safety needs of clients.
Holistic Training (Lambertus, 2007)	Many shelter workers have identified the need to address service gaps within shelters so that clients receive the resources needed to gain or establish a healthy place within the community. Programming in the areas of: detoxification and treatment programs, first stage and second stage shelters, counselling – mental health, addictions, grief, and life skills training.
Counselling for women in homeless shelters that address addictions, grief, mental health, and relationships (Phillips, 1996)	Many Aboriginal women who end up in homeless shelters suffer from domestic abuse, trauma, and addictions. To recover from the factors that have caused them to become homeless, services targeted at these issues must be developed.
Culturally based treatment programs offered to Aboriginal persons who are incarcerated or homeless address social deviance, or lack of life skills (Ruttan, LaBoucan-Benson & Munro, 2010; Waldram, 1997).	Aboriginal spirituality can be used as form of therapy to assists Aboriginal offenders to reconnect with their emotions, thoughts, and behaviours within the understanding of her or his personal predicament as it has been shaped by historical forces. Culturally based treatment programs are key, not only to recovery from addictions, but also to beginning to understand how history continues to influence current situations including their own experiences. Culturally based treatment programs and culturally based community programs that address needs such as parenting skill, and general wellbeing, are reported by the participants to be effective.
<i>Practice Applied within Community</i>	
Crisis Hot Line (Lambertus, 2007)	To assist Aboriginal women who are dealing with domestic violence, crisis, and trauma, which often result in homelessness, crisis hot lines should be established.

<p>Ensure programs and resources are located and managed so that they meet the needs of clients (Lambertus, 2007)</p>	<p>It is essential to make clients aware of the different services offered within the community. The availability of affordable housing must meet the need for housing to avoid homelessness. Programs that support life skills should be offered in neighbourhoods where clients live; directors should avoid situating programs and services in high crime areas. Service providers should offer one-on-one program information and intake, as some clients will be intimidated by literacy skills. Shelters and other service providers must also ensure the quality of their staff.</p>
<p>Ensure that female medical practitioners administer rape kits (Lambertus, 2007)</p>	<p>Sexual abuse, and sexual assault is most likely committed by male offenders against female victims; to minimize retraumatization of victims female medical practitioners should administer rape kits.</p>
<p>Outstanding Aboriginal land claims need to be settled (Ruttan et al., 2010)</p>	<p>By addressing outstanding land claims a redistribution of wealth between the general Canadian population and Aboriginal peoples will occur with wealth flowing back to Aboriginal persons.</p>
<p>Promote community-driven programs, and maintain funding for these initiatives (Lambertus, 2007)</p>	<p>To reestablish community resources within Aboriginal communities, community-driven programs must be established and maintained to promote self-sufficiency and growth within this population segment.</p>
<p>Promote support systems for persons moving from reserves (Lambertus, 2007)</p>	<p>To decrease the likelihood of persons becoming homeless or involved in illegal activities it is important to maintain and develop positive support systems for the individual who is moving off reserve.</p>

of broader family and environmental concerns (Leach et al., 2008). An overview of the literature reviewed here suggests that an effective program for Aboriginal women has one or more of the following characteristics. First, it recognizes sociohistorical factors that have contributed to homelessness and criminality. Second, it helps establish a sense of identity and connection with Aboriginal culture and spirituality. Third, it addresses the particular needs of women, specifically, the interpersonal violence that Aboriginal women have experienced throughout their lives, and the importance of their relationships with children and family. Finally, the literature recommends much broader social action, beyond targeted programs: upholding treaty agreements, ensuring meaningful participation of Aboriginal people in program planning, implementation, and governance, for example, using a restorative justice process to address transgressions within the community.

Several authors suggest that effective rehabilitation models for Aboriginal offenders must recognize the sociohistorical factors that contribute to delinquent behaviour (Bazemore, 2006; DeHart and Altshuler, 2009). In their 2010 study, Puchala and colleagues report five major considerations. Oppression over several centuries has been internalized and violence may be a release of internalized pain, thus contributing to a cycle of violence through generations. Assimilation has affected the mother-daughter bond in which a girl's attachment to her mother defined her identity as women

and connected her to her female ancestors. Racial discrimination against Aboriginal women has damaged their identity and continues to create a sense of disconnectedness from Aboriginal communities. Finally, Aboriginal males have been acculturated to the patriarchal norms of the dominant society through policies and legislation that have, over many generations, minimized the significance of women's roles.

Programs that establish a stronger cultural identity increase self-esteem and feelings of self worth (Goel, 2000; Waldram, 1993). Aboriginal women must regain a sense of self and identity to address the root causes of recidivism and homelessness (Leach et al., 2008). Martel and Brassard (2008) report that, while in prison, a woman's Aboriginal identity was not an assertive and proud self-identification, but was often a deliberate refusal to self identify. Some women may refuse because of the association with memories of acute poverty or abuse, others because of the stigmatization of Aboriginal persons in prison. Some women, however, began to reconnect with their culture in prison through prison-endorsed programs; this often represented the first time Aboriginal women in the correctional system had exposure to traditional culture (Martel and Brassard, 2008).

Aboriginal women have reported that spirituality is a powerful source of strength when it is separated from Western organized religion (Puchala et al., 2010). The goal of teaching Aboriginal spirituality and culture within correctional facilities is to assist in returning women to a place of honour within the community (Sparling, 1999). Despite the heterogeneity of Aboriginal cultures, common themes can be derived from Aboriginal spiritual practices (Waldram, 1993). Most often, it is an Elder who teaches Aboriginal spirituality and culture to Aboriginal persons who are disconnected from their traditions (Puchala et al., 2010). The Elder provides non-judgemental guidance; she or he may fulfil a role similar to therapists in mainstream society, but also provides spiritual guidance (Howell, 2003). An Elder frequently provides cultural teaching through stories describing Aboriginal societies prior to European influence, and encourages individuals to make the necessary life changes that will lead to healing (Puchala et al., 2010). Elders may incorporate Sweat Lodge ceremonies, spiritual and energy healing, talking circles, prayer, pipe ceremonies, and tent shaking ceremonies (Puchala et al., 2010).

Aboriginal spirituality and culture can create important change through empowerment, meaningful and responsible choice, respect and dignity, and a supportive environment (Sparling, 1999). Waldram (1993; 1997)

reported that many Aboriginal offenders regard programs which contain teachings about Aboriginal spirituality and cultural practices as more effective at reducing recidivism compared with programs that are developed within mainstream Canadian culture. It cannot be assumed, however, that all Aboriginal persons are receptive to Aboriginal culture and spirituality; some Aboriginal persons reject this form of healing because they are ideologically opposed, as in the case of fundamentalist Christians, or others are simply fearful of these practices (Waldram, 1993). However, we know from psychology literature that the development of spirituality and a sense of self are important elements for persons recovering from multiple traumatic life events or who suffer from CPTSD (Courtois and Ford, 2009). By grounding programs in the teachings of Native Elders and building program policy around traditional Native values, Aboriginal participants can develop a sense of pride from their heritage (Capobianco, 2009). Strategies which include Aboriginal ceremonial practices in conjunction with other therapy practices have shown promise (Falth, 1995). However, more empirical research must be conducted to determine the effectiveness of these programs in reducing recidivism (Howell, 2003).

Programs must acknowledge differences in the gender roles of men and women (White et al., 2003). Canada's correctional institutions have undergone some changes to better address the needs of female inmates; however, additional improvements are necessary (Pollack, 2009). For example, male-oriented programs emphasize independence and autonomy, which often conflict with women's roles as caregivers (Lichtenwalter et al., 2010). Women offenders require supportive interpersonal connections to reform their behaviour (Lichtenwalter et al., 2010; Pollack, 2009). White et al. (2003) propose several strategies to promote successful reintegration for Aboriginal female offenders, including programs that create an environment of safety, respect, and dignity; policies and practices that promote healthy connections outside the prison; programs for substance abuse, trauma, and mental health issues; opportunities for women to improve their economic conditions; and systems of community supervision and re-entry to ensure a successful transition into the community.

Aboriginal women experience high rates of interpersonal violence throughout their lifetimes (Puchala et al., 2010). Puchala et al. (2010) contend that treatment services must address the effects of violence and that Elders play a key therapeutic role in assisting women and families in healing from violence, a role that other professionals may not be able to play.

Perhaps the most important relationships for women who come into contact with corrections are those with their children (Bui and Morash, 2010; Cuddeback, 2004; Lichtenwalter et al., 2010; Pollack, 2009). Women thereby avoid feelings of grief, loss, and the shame associated with being separated from their children and no longer responsible for their development (Lichtenwalter et al., 2010). It is also important for women to develop and maintain healthy supportive relationships with family members who may be able to assist with co-parenting while women are receiving treatment (Cecil et al., 2008; Cuddeback, 2004). By maintaining these relationships, mothers are able to provide their children with the necessary guidance and encouragement to make life choices that will not result in involvement with correctional institutions (Cecil et al., 2008; Lichtenwalter et al., 2010). In the United States, programs are funded for women who commit nonviolent crimes, where children under the age of 12 reside with inmates while they are undergoing treatment (Lichtenwalter et al., 2010), but this remains important after release: an increase in community-based services benefits Aboriginal women and children (Capobianco, 2009).

The disproportional number of Aboriginal women in prisons and the pattern of crimes related to poverty and domestic violence speaks to the need for increased community-based programming (Anglin et al., 2009; Lichtenwalter et al., 2010). Programs that develop community and cultural supports could be based in outdoor adventure, service-learning, leadership, and peacemaking models, akin to program structures that have been successful in developing Aboriginal communities (Capobianco, 2009).

Broader societal action is required to end homelessness and incarceration among Aboriginal women. The 2005 United Nations review of compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights found failures in treaty agreements between the Canadian government and Aboriginal peoples (Gorelick, 2007; Thornberry, 2008). The United Nations requested that Canada establish procedures for reviewing human rights violations against Aboriginals. Canada has failed to ratify international agreements to end discrimination against Aboriginal people (Gorelick, 2007).

Steps are being taken working towards ending discrimination (Quantz and Thurston, 2006), as Aboriginal persons continue to advocate for equal treatment in social, political, and economic spheres. Aboriginal people could benefit from the involvement of United Nations parties when addressing discriminatory practices by Canadian governments; however, the government must first ratify agreements and give the United Nations per-

mission to assist with these matters (Gorelick, 2007). Aboriginal groups such as The Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapirrit Kanatami, The Métis National Council, The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, and NWAC receive public funding to advocate for policies for Aboriginal peoples.

Capobianco (2009) argues that meaningful participation, rather than consultation, in community safety and prevention is a key mechanism for facilitating ownership, leadership, skills and capacity, and for changing attitudes, strengthening social networks and building trust between Aboriginal communities and mainstream Canadian society. Safety audits undertaken by women to identify crime and safety issues, participatory rural appraisals, and the direct involvement of community members in planning and implementing neighbourhood projects are important examples of community involvement. Implementing and sustaining prevention strategies and programs requires investment in programs beyond pilot initiatives.

Restorative justice is a viable means to address poverty-based and domestic violence crimes (Edwards and Sharpe, 2004). It is a set of values that guide decisions on policy, programs, and practices, based on the notion that all parties involved in a crime should be included in the response to the crime (Steels, 2007). Crime is defined as harm to individuals and/or communities (Goel, 2009). Offenders are accountable for the harm caused by their offenses and accept responsibility for their actions (Edwards and Sharpe, 2004). Resolutions require that victims be absolved of responsibility for the injuries they have sustained, and receive reparation for those injuries; offenders are active partners in rectifying the imbalance caused by their actions (Edwards and Sharpe, 2004). The community, not the judge, is responsible for sentencing, and healing procedures such as counselling are often part of sentencing (Edwards and Sharpe, 2004).

CONCLUSIONS

In this literature review we identify several promising practices aimed at reducing homelessness and/or recidivism among Aboriginal women. Few however, have been subjected to rigorous evaluation, suggesting an urgent need for additional research in this area. Further, most strategies interventions occur within the institutional setting. As articulated by Falth (1995), no amount of tinkering with prisons can heal Aboriginal women who have been exposed to the criminal justice system. Prisons do not address poverty issues on reserves, memories of genocide, the many forms of violence Aboriginal women have experienced or the indifference or racism of Canada's justice

system. A greater emphasis therefore must be placed on examining those individual, community, and structural factors that increase the likelihood of Aboriginal women becoming homeless and/or involved in the criminal justice system. These investigations must result in the development of effective primary prevention strategies aimed at reducing this risk and improving outcomes for Aboriginal women, their families, and communities.

To effect positive change, the Canadian federal and provincial governments together with Aboriginal partners must examine the historical, social, economic, psychological, and spiritual issues that have contributed to homelessness and crime. The best practices for achieving justice for Aboriginal women and families will probably involve both traditional practices and modern strategies (Goel, 2000). Aboriginal groups have advocated for more culturally appropriate practices such as sentencing circles, mediation, Elders within prisons, and Aboriginal spiritual practices within prisons (Martel and Brassard, 2008). Aboriginal women themselves have played key roles in influencing changes in the Canadian correctional system (Adelberg and NWAC, 1993). It is likely that many different strategies are required to assist Aboriginal women in regaining a place of dignity. Aboriginal communities must lead the process of regaining pride in their cultural identity; however, Aboriginal communities require assistance and support from governments in this effort. This will require a long-term commitment of resources to implement and sustain strategies for healing.

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