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**HEALING THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN
FEDERALLY SENTENCED WOMEN
AND
COMMUNITIES**

A Discussion Paper
prepared by
The Church Council on Justice and Corrections
for
Correctional Service Canada

***"Do not separate yourself
from your community."
The Talmud.***

OCTOBER 1995

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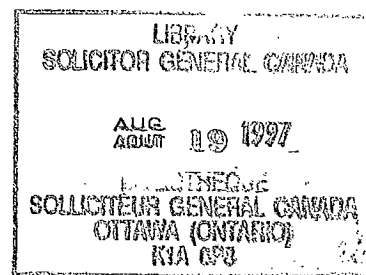
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Mandorla. The Chalice Well, Glastonbury, Somerset, England. Courtesy of Thames & Hudson. Photograph by Reece Winstone.



"A mandorla is that almond-shaped segment that is made when two circles overlap....The mandorla begins the healing of the split. The overlap generally is very tiny at first, only a sliver of a new moon; but it is a beginning. As time passes, the greater the overlap, the greater and more complete is the healing. The mandorla binds together that which was torn apart and made unwhole...

...there are links between the things we have always thought of as opposites... a mandorla is a prototype of conflict resolution, it is the art of healing, if you will...

...take *this* and take *that* - and make a mandorla of them."

*Robert A. Johnson (1991),
Owning Your Own Shadow
Understanding the Dark Side of the Psyche*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

- Background.....	p. 1
- Focus of the Discussion Paper.....	p. 2
- Methodology.....	p. 2

DISCUSSION

A) HEALING BETWEEN FEDERALLY SENTENCED WOMEN AND COMMUNITIES.....	p. 4
- Federally Sentenced Women.....	p. 4
- Communities.....	p.10
- Healing the Relationship.....	p.14
B) THE CURRENT CRISIS IN UNDERSTANDING OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE ISSUES.....	p.16
C) PRESENTATION OF THE WORKING MODEL DEVELOPED FOR DISCUSSION.....	p.19
- Some Background Operating Principles.....	p.20
- The Model (a draft framework).....	p.20
D) ISSUES.....	p.24
- Purpose and aims.....	p.24
- Language.....	p.25
- Justice circles in the community.....	p.26
- Local circles of support and care.....	p.27

<u>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION AND PLANNING</u>	p.31
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INTRODUCTION

Background

The Church Council on Justice and Corrections (CCJC) has had a longstanding concern for the situation of women who become caught up in a criminal justice system that is not equipped to be responsive to their context and realities - even less so than it is for men. In supporting the announced closure of the Kingston Prison for Women, the Council has remained mindful of the need, well documented for the Solicitor General by the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women, to move away from traditional "correctional" approaches for women and to look for ways to involve Canadian communities in creating more effective means to address the issues important to "victim", "offender" and "community".

The Church Council's goal is to advocate for a community-based planning mechanism for women in conflict with the law, that could potentially be activated prior to sentencing at the provincial level, and could enable community participation that would help to avoid incarceration as much as possible. There are, however, numerous social and legal barriers to this objective at this time.

CCJC is presently working towards this objective by advocating for a federal planning strategy that ensures that every federally sentenced woman is placed in the community at the earliest possible date. We believe that this has implications not only for the preparation of each federally sentenced woman herself, from the very beginning of her sentence, but also for community participation to carefully prepare community members, including victims when appropriate, to accept, and if possible facilitate, the woman's successful integration when she is eventually released.

This is a particularly timely subject to integrate into the government's planning for federally sentenced women, given the pressures on current Correctional Service Canada capacity in the new regional facilities for women, the philosophical approach advocated by the Task Force Report "Creating Choices" which CSC has officially adopted, and the corporate task it is about to undertake to consider options for the appropriate "community strategy" component for the implementation of the federally sentenced woman program.

Studies have found that many women in conflict with the law have never felt part of the mainstream community in the first place: the terms "rehabilitation" and "reintegration" do not adequately describe the experiences and needs of all women upon their return from prison. At this particular juncture of planning and implementation, there is both a **need** and an **opportunity** to think

creatively about how best to provide optimum practical conditions for each woman's possible "habilitation" and "integration" into the community to which she will be released; and how to provide the possibility of incorporating such a community-centered focus into all the planning and decision-making of each woman. There is also a need (and an opportunity), because of the small numbers and great diversity of federally sentenced women, to think of how to provide for this capability, or "response-ability", on an "as needed" and "where needed" basis, without creating a needlessly cumbersome, costly and marginalizing additional "correctional" infrastructure.

Focus of the Discussion Paper

In keeping with the above, and in collaboration with the Federally Sentenced Woman Program of Correctional Service Canada, CCJC undertook to produce the present discussion paper on approaches and strategies for creating what was termed, for provisional working purposes, a "community advocacy network for federally sentenced women".

The paper develops the concept of a "vehicle" or "mechanism" for community planning and support that could contribute to a healing relationship between a federally sentenced woman and the community, including those who have been affected by her offence and sentence, such as victims who may wish to participate, family, friends and other community members. In considering the potential implications for concerned parties, the paper examines the strengths that emerge as most important in selecting an option for implementing this concept, as well as the aspects requiring greatest vigilance in order to avoid critical potential pitfalls. It emphasizes implications for preparing federally sentenced women, as well as community members, in a way that empowers them and encourages their active participation.

The paper also addresses itself to some practical considerations in organizing and resourcing the implementation of a plan to make such a process available to federally sentenced women, including ideas for a realistic strategy and concrete steps towards achieving such a strategy.

Methodology

The work began with a review of findings concerning the release planning needs of federally sentenced women as identified in the studies carried out in the process of developing and planning the implementation of **Creating Choices**, as well as in a number of other sources (a list of references is provided in **Appendix 1**). Consideration was then given to the emerging concepts of "restorative justice" and "transformative justice" particularly for the understanding they may offer of "victim" and "community" and the needs that may have to be addressed if there is to be healing

in their relationship with an "offender" (a partial bibliography of readings on "restorative" and "transformative" justice can be found in **Appendix 2**). A selection of program examples was also reviewed for their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the aims of the present exercise, as outlined in this introductory section of the discussion paper (see list of programs considered in **Appendix 3**).

The above information then served as material for a process of reflection and analysis of the most critical barriers to healing the relationship between federally sentenced women and communities. On the basis of these observations, a set of "guiding principles" and "points for vigilance" was tentatively formulated. A "**working model**" was then created, for what was termed, for discussion purposes only, a *community advocacy response-ability mechanism (to be activated as needed for each federally sentenced woman)*.

This provisional working model was then sent out for reaction and review to a variety of community resource persons (approximately 30) in regions across Canada, who were selected because of their interest in federally sentenced women (including several of the women themselves), and in strengthening their community links. The purpose was to draw out the issues that needed to be addressed in the discussion paper, through follow-up correspondence and telephone calls.

In Section A, the paper looks at prior research which has drawn conclusions about the gaps in services to federally sentenced women vis-à-vis their planning and release; the needs of communities including the victims who have suffered from the effects of illegal activity; and the concept of healing their relationship. In Section B, the paper analyses the current "crisis in understanding" of criminal justice issues as it may impinge on the selection of a community strategy that is helpful to that healing. Section C describes a mechanism proposed for discussion and consideration which we believe reflects many of the concerns raised in the previous sections. Section D discusses a number of issues that have been raised through initial review and critique of the working model.

In conclusion, the paper makes a number of recommendations for further discussion and planning.

DISCUSSION

A) HEALING BETWEEN FEDERALLY SENTENCED WOMEN AND COMMUNITIES

Federally Sentenced Women

The Release Study, a survey of federally sentenced women in the community carried out for Solicitor General Canada (Shaw 1989), revealed how complex and comprehensive is the need for pre-release and release community support for the women. It documented numerous gaps in services and community linkages for them, and most particularly for those with the highest needs, resulting in failures due more to difficulties in integrating into the community than to difficulties with the law or with violent behaviour.

In a further report, Paying the Price, Federally Sentenced Women in Context, Shaw examined the links between the offending histories of federally sentenced women, their life experiences and their experiences of imprisonment, and considered what these imply for how we deal with women in conflict with the law in the future. Her study found that women's experiences in prisons, at both the provincial and federal levels, were not assisting them to address the profound changes they needed to make in their lives back out in the community, much to the contrary in fact, and that a different emphasis in our response to them is required.

The findings suggested: more focus on the effects of the criminal behaviour upon the victim and the the community, and how these might be redressed, rather than on the breach of the law itself and of regulations while in prison or on parole; addressing some of the underlying reasons for the offending, rather than establishing blame and emphasizing punishment and retribution; and developing non-coercive approaches using reparation, mediation and victim-oriented responses while avoiding extending the scope of the justice system unnecessarily. Preparation for re-entry into the community should also be non-coercive, supportive, recognizing the need for women to extend their responsibility and work at their own pace. It should allow for gradual improvement rather than absolute adherence to conditions, and include pro-active assistance for the central problems of work training, job finding and support, and addiction, with the related benefits of money, some measure of self-assurance and independence, and the possibility of companionship and support.

Projects should be developed at a local level which provide support and attempt to minimize the disruption of the women's parental involvement with their children. Finally, there needs to be a whole array of networks and resources for high-need women, which can provide continuing sources of support beyond parole or mandatory supervision expiry.

Shaw emphasized the importance for the women that Solicitor General Canada have a "corporate strategy" to develop projects that seem to present better alternatives to current strategies, rather than strictly because they can demonstrate direct reductions in recidivism. The long-range interests would also best be served, for the women themselves and society at large, by an acceptance of the fact that such projects should not have to rely on prison for their justification, by in some way providing a punitive and controlling alternative.

Materials reviewed from other sources revealed a consistent pattern of findings and concerns for the integration of women in conflict with the law into the community, from both the federal and provincial levels:

- any strategy must acknowledge the realities of poverty, abuse, dependency, unemployment, lack of education, parental obligations
- racial and ethnic minority concerns can be even more important than gender
- relations with family are important as they have been found to be a main source of support upon release
- lack of pre-discharge planning can mean that a woman can find herself homeless or in an environment not conducive to sobriety and crimelessness; safe housing and employment are crucial
- loneliness is often an issue, and women suffer greatly from the social stigma attached to their criminalization; women's crimes such as shoplifting, fraud, theft etc. have often been symptomatic of their context. A life of crime may never have been intended; but the effects of criminal sanctions at the provincial level can entrench these women in a criminal identity and lifestyle
- the integration of women into the community becomes a very important crime prevention concern, because of the negative influence that imprisonment has been found to have on future crime; and, as well, because research has shown that children of imprisoned mothers are five times more likely than their peers to be labelled and processed as delinquents (Kinsey, 1993 in Report of the Ontario Women's Issues Task Force, 1995)
- women at the federal level are now in a position of great dependence upon correctional personnel for all their arrangements, and bureaucratic delays often postpone their release; inflexible application of timetables, and administrative control, make the pre-release planning situation too restrictive for self-determination, self-sufficiency, and individual differences in the pace and way they wish to work

- the absence of day parole facilities severely restricts the opportunities for women from remote regions, or towns without such accommodation, to settle back in the community from which they came; many day parolees were placed in an environment that did not suit them because of their age, the location of the house, the lack of support services etc.
- there is a lack of coordination and support in the community to deliver a range of services; there is often a willingness to become involved but linkages must be developed and strengthened
- the same problem affects provincially sentenced women as well, as the average length of stay may be short but is disruptive and ineffective; there is an absence of cohesive networks of service responses, and local solutions are needed, so that the context of service provision for women in conflict with the law can be in the community rather than in institutions
- studies in the U.S. have shown that women are more likely to recidivate when support services are lacking in the community; women can be more safely diverted and released from confinement when these services are available (Chesney-Lind and Immariageon, 1992)
- these studies have shown as well that home confinement and intense supervision are less likely to be successful if they are used as a means of discipline and surveillance; they are only useful if they provide the direct services the women need to address the social and economic problems they face
- the quality of the relationship of the women with those who support them upon release is crucial to their success
- there is a need to avoid the pitfalls of a process that demeans, victimizes or infantilizes the women, as the criminal justice and correctional processes often do, or that reproduces the racism, sexual harassment, intolerance and inhumane conditions often found in these systems
- it is recommended that any strategy developed be "women-centred" i.e. taking into account women's life experience and needs from a female perspective (the Ontario Task Force uses this term to include "work which integrates knowledge of discrimination against women and their generally inferior status socio-economically and does not necessarily imply an analysis grounded on the ethic of care")
- accordingly, it is widely believed that all components of a strategy should be provided in the context of each woman's specific experience and reality, that the context and circumstances should be emphasized more than the legal definition of the offence

- there is a need for a holistic approach because substance abuse and a range of behavioural conditions are often a response to a woman's experiences of violence; a woman's total life experience should be kept at the forefront of all decisions throughout her involvement in the criminal justice system
- the success of any policy for women will depend on local community action; there is therefore a need for policy and guidelines through which local communities can resource and develop solutions to meet the needs of women in conflict with the law
- pilot projects should develop and assess a client specific planning program to provide individualized community sentence planning for women who would otherwise be incarcerated (a provincial recommendation); "the virtual abolition of the imprisonment of women is an achievable goal" (Shaw, The Federal Female Offender, 1989).

It is clear from the research that has been done that most imprisoned women are mired in serious economic, medical, mental health, and social difficulties which are often overlooked and frequently intensified when they are incarcerated. In addition, upon release they often have to adjust to a changed community. There appears to be widespread agreement that prison officials must begin to view the needs of incarcerated women both within and beyond prison from a broader perspective, and collaborate with other organizations that provide services to people in the community in order to connect education and training to meaningful employment after release and to create post-release opportunities for services and emotional support. But what is required to make such new strategies effective?

After conducting a literature review and a thorough program evaluation of therapeutic services at the federal Prison for Women, Kendall (1994) drew a number of conclusions that offer helpful benchmarks for any new initiatives:

- a psychological mode of understanding alone, which concentrates on individualized causes and cures, is insufficient to counter the disadvantages such as racism, sexism and violence that the women must address, because individual women become the sole objects of inquiry and instruments of change, rather than social, political and economic structures in which other community members also participate
- an approach that concentrates primarily on the idea that women are victims, and therefore require therapy in order to recover from past trauma, can risk denying women of any self-

determination, and direct them to continually regress inward and backward into past experience, rather than to move forward and look outward to more political understandings and actions; it also risks concealing women's diversity and differential circumstances

- an approach that relies primarily on an "expert model" creates a power imbalance, even in feminist therapy, presenting as an explanation of women's distress, and often used as justification for intervention: therapists, rather than friends or family, are called upon to intervene because of their expertise; the problems inherent within this are greatly intensified within a coercive environment, where power imbalances and the potential for abuse are already extreme
- within an "expert model", language and cultural barriers are heightened as well, because it is difficult to provide for enough "therapists" to appropriately serve all women who are French, Black, Asian, Indigenous, or who originate from outside countries
- there are serious obstacles to "helping" women through therapy or other means while they are imprisoned (although the research indicates that prisoners can benefit from their interactions with a therapist)
- the benefits result not from the therapeutic technique per se, but from the **practical assistance provided** and the **experience of a supportive human relationship**
- the issues that the women themselves found to be of greatest distress and importance included:
 - negative feelings (of pain, anger, grief, frustration etc.) overwhelmingly rooted in the lack of control they had over every aspect of their lives while imprisoned
 - the lack of real possibilities for taking self-determined actions despite the expectation by staff and the parole board that they would display personal initiative and responsibility
 - the trauma of the process of being stripped of their own identities and being given the label prisoner, a status which they expected would haunt them forever
 - the perception that participation in a program was mandatory if they wanted a positive recommendation for parole (and this was distressing even if it was a program they desired)

- the need for a space to be themselves (a respite from a sense of constant surveillance)
- the need to be in control of their own lives
- the need for an opportunity to value and be valued by others
- the grave restrictions imposed by the prison on the access to means other than therapy for meeting the above three needs (such as through spiritual events, hobbies, exercise, study, and most importantly, visits with friends and family).

Other materials reviewed also point to some useful benchmarks for programs that are most likely to contribute to profound behavioural changes:

- programming which responds to the needs which the women themselves perceive
- emphasis on group communication and expression
- a high level of autonomy
- attention to the helpfulness, especially for women serving long-term sentences, of having some post-release perspective, some reference point on the outside
- more emphasis on community alternatives, with a requirement, therefore, for more effective education strategies to counteract the current lack of, or unwillingness to use, alternative sentencing options, as evidenced by the heavy use of short prison sentences; (Shaw (1991) found that at the provincial level Canada makes far greater use of imprisonment per capita than England or Wales, for example, and particularly for very short sentences under 6 months).

In summary, there appears to be broadbased agreement that the societal and personal realities that bring women into conflict with the law have been overwhelmingly neglected while they are in prison; and that we are all paying the price for this, not only in the human cost to the women themselves, their families and communities, but also in the economic cost of a rising prison population as incarceration continues to be overused as a result of its own contribution to recidivism in unlawful behaviour.

Communities

As members of civic and neighborhood communities, we tend to think that "criminals" are everything we're not and don't want to be, everything we reject and seek to eliminate from society. If only it were all so simple! "If only", in the words of Solzhenitsyn, "there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them" (Solzhenitsyn, 1978).

But, as Fjerkenstad has pointed out in "Meeting the Shadow", many people in conflict with the law make their living "exploiting the hidden realms of human nature we deny through splitting and hypocrisy" (think of prostitution, pornography, trafficking drugs, fencing stolen goods, fraud scams, contract killing, organized crime etc.). "Cleaning out all the criminals won't eliminate these vices - the vices express something essential about human nature, something that needs to be worked alchemically, caught, participated with, not just imprisoned, abandoned, scapegoated." (Fjerkenstad, 1990). "...the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?" (Solzhenitsyn, 1978).

In recent years in the various "communities" of our nation, opposing forces have been raging at each other about those brought to court for unlawful behaviour: the "therapeutic culture" influences our approach to crime for certain select situations related to recognized victimization often connected to gender or race, and this appears to clash with the concurrent "revenge culture." The clash is only apparent however, according to Kaminer (1995); when society's attitude seems to be "if you've got a problem we'll forgive your crime" it can in fact, in this cultural context, be perceived as merely condoning private revenge, a flourishing of self-centredness which, coupled with a fear of crime, has bred an "entitlement to vengeance", a culture of both "private revenge" and "harsh public justice". "In assigning accountability," Kaminer writes, we seem to be drawn to extremes - conferring too much absolution on some people and too much guilt on others."

The problem, of course, is the false dichotomy the current approach to "criminals" offers communities when it becomes manifest that the social context surrounding some unlawful acts warrants a response other than revenge; our criminal law based on punishment offers only the satisfaction of revenge, overwhelming any other need or purpose to which the community may wish to attend. As it stands now, within this false dichotomy both responses give the appearance of legitimizing vengeance and communities are therefore not well served: as Kaminer points out, "if we're sincere about decrying violence, we'd better stop displaying so much pleasure in revenge."

Kaminer puts her finger on the political impasse of our time when it comes to meeting the needs of communities vis-à-vis those who have broken the law: the belief that countervailing approaches to problems, like crime, are not complementary but mutually exclusive, with some focusing on social change and others demanding changes of individuals: - "...as if society changes with the weather, not through the efforts of individuals, as if individuals change in a vacuum." Increasingly, other voices have been emerging who would agree with her. Brown, for example, in objecting to the categorizing of certain highly narcissistic people as "evil" and thus setting them outside the pale, (placing the onus of responsibility for them outside of the community and society that created their high incidence today), nevertheless deplors the "unfortunate tradition in American culture of linking compassion with irresponsibility, pleading diminished capacity and then removing consequences" (Brown, 1986). This is not the direction she proposes.

In calling strongly for compassion for such people, Brown does not wish to hold them not responsible for their actions. But as a clinical psychologist, she has recognized in those described by some as "resistant to treatment", "lacking empathy for the feelings of others", and "consummate users of the rest of the human race", people who were so badly wounded, so early in the development of their sense of selves, that the need to protect themselves against further pain and loss has become the driving force of their lives. They may well elicit in us feelings of revulsion, but it is possible and necessary to go beyond that revulsion: we cannot forget that the kind of psychic and spiritual assault that lies at the basis of narcissism occurs against the backdrop of the levels of violence that are done to people and tolerated in our culture. We must also bear in mind, says Brown, that there is a relationship between that violence and people's defenses against intimacy and the pain it can bring.

Brown refuses a structure for viewing humanity in categories of "good" and "evil" not, as stated earlier, to imply diminished ability to distinguish right from wrong, nor the condoning of their understandable "revenge", but from a quite different perspective: **"Do not separate yourself from your community"**, a saying in Jewish law taken from a line in the Talmud. We are in community with people who engage in behaviours we hate, and we all collude in their creation. By seeing them as "of us" and "among us", as potentially being any of us, it becomes easier to take the step toward communal responsibility for interpersonal damage that occurs in the wake of such a person's life. "We are, all of us, part of creating and continuing a culture in which the abuse of children that lies at the heart of psychological and spiritual damage goes on; even those of us working to change that must also confront the ways in which we participate in it."

To create categories of good and bad human beings is an incitement to irresponsibility in others: it invites us to see certain people and certain behaviours as other than fully human; it generates the ultimate defense of diminished capacity (it's not my fault); it is the entry card to the rationale for oppressing and extinguishing the rights of others.

But it is exceedingly painful for community members to see things otherwise. It is difficult to confront the disowned parts of ourselves and of our communities; when we see it in others, the urge is to push it away, to say, "This is not of me" (Brown, 1986). And traditional understandings of "criminology" have helped us to do so, with labels and abstract constructs that help to distance us from those members of our communities who have engaged in unlawful behaviour. Often, it is disproportionately racial minorities, the poor, the mentally ill, who end up with these labels.

Profound and fundamental re-thinking, however, is transforming our understanding in many disciplines, from space and astronomy to biochemical medicine and genetics. So too in this field are other approaches emerging that throw a radically different perspective on the needs of communities vis-à-vis their relationship to those who have broken the law. Feminist and other critical criminologists have begun to point out that there are other ways of looking at the kinds of problematic situations that get "criminalized". And aboriginal legal critics are rediscovering that "problematic situations" can be handled in a wide variety of much more human, civilized and effective ways than does our adversarial, scapegoating and costly system of today.

There is a growing awareness that some important concerns are not being addressed because community groups and individuals who are affected by the unlawful behaviour are being deprived of the opportunity to discuss their issues i.e. what matters most to them in solving the problems that are related to the conflicts they have been involved in. They are deprived of this opportunity because the "problem" has been removed from its context, and given the generic label and solution to "crime". There is no opportunity for personal involvement, for airing one's feelings and questions, for addressing underlying factors, not just "symptoms"; the entire process is taken over by "the experts". Advocates of "restorative justice" call for an approach that addresses these issues.

Furthermore, just as physicians are increasingly coming to think of most disease as a failure of the ongoing healing process of a healthy body, so too are we beginning to realize that the condition of "peace" in a community is not a static state of "absence of conflict"; it is, among other things, a condition of ongoing conflict resolution and social healing. A healthy community is not one with an absence of problems, but one that is actively and effectively addressing or healing its problems (Peck, 1993). Unlawful behaviour or "crime" can be a signal that community

inclusiveness has broken down. It can present communities with an opportunity to find out more about what has gone wrong, and make available the resources of many to transform tragedy into social healing, and prevention of future harm, (Morris, 1994). This has led some advocates to draw attention to the need for what is more aptly termed "transformative justice".

Community members must not have concealed from them the realities and experiences of these fellow citizen sisters and brothers who have grown up in their midst. "We need to hear the criminal's reasons for attacking us." We can benefit from an opportunity to "face our attacker and have it out". - "If we lock him away and throw away the key, execute or banish her, then nothing will be gained." (Fjerkenstad, 1990).

What of those who have particularly suffered negative effects from the unlawful behaviour? Increasingly we realize that an adversarial approach to justice flies in the face of everything we know about human growth, personal change, moral responsibility, relationships, community building. And because of that, it flies in the face of any real, solidly grounded public protection: to the contrary, it fuels what makes people feel like enemies of each other. But most especially, it almost systematically prevents what we are coming to discover is often needed by those who have been directly affected by the actions that have led to a criminal charge.

The person(s) that the law designates as the victim(s) in each case have real human needs that are seldom met by the justice system; many others surrounding them do as well. In order to recover from the trauma of what they have been through, they may need to have it acknowledged, to express it and have it expressed to them, so it can be released. They may want to find out what kind of person could have done such a thing and why that person committed the act specifically against them. Many are helped by hearing that the person who committed the act feels sorrowful, or apologetic, or that someone is sorry on his or her behalf. Some victims may welcome possibilities for the resolution and healing of their pain, for resolving broken relationships, for some validation and assurance that they are not responsible for another person's violence. If justice processes put more emphasis on the real human needs of all those affected by the unlawful behaviour, there may be far fewer public outcries for harsh legal changes that are unlikely to meet anyone's true interests.

At the moment, however, victims of crime have no other way of expressing their feelings and needs except to denounce the "skimpiness" of a sentence that never seems like enough to reflect the trauma of what they went through, an adversarial process that seems to humiliate them as "victims". And along with this comes public sentiment because there is no real way for the rest of the community to know which real worries and concerns are being

properly addressed. It would seem, therefore, that priority should be given to providing a forum for victim and community participation, if not in the decision-making about the sentence, at least in the preparation for integration back into the community, so that the whole variety of objectives and concerns for "victim", "offender" and "community" can be seen to be addressed.

For the convicted person whose behaviour has broken the law, this kind of forum is also an important route: learning what it has felt like for the persons impacted by the behaviour, "feeling into that place, becoming aware of the whole story, not just playing only his role, the role of the criminal" (Fjerkenstad, 1990). Such a forum can be "transformative" for all, dealing fully with the deep need of convicted persons both to assume responsibility for their act, but also to find healing for its causes, while accepting social controls to prevent a recurrence; and similarly, maximizing the community's needs for both healing and security through empowering and cooperative building processes (Morris, 1994).

Healing the Relationship

So what do we mean by "healing"? In the context of the above understanding of both what the research tells us about federally sentenced women, and the nature of the community's relationship to those who are convicted of unlawful behaviour, it becomes clear that we have drawn two circles, and that the healing process can be depicted in the coming together of the two circles: this is the healing nature of the mandorla, that almond-shaped segment that is made when two circles partly overlap.

This medieval symbol signifies nothing less than the overlap of opposites, or apparent opposites, that we have been describing. In the face of competing demands, the mandorla instructs us how to engage in reconciliation: it reminds us that we partake in the nature of both.

"It has been the nature of our cultural life to set a "good" possibility against a "bad" one and banish the bad one so thoroughly that we lose track of its existence...The mandorla has a wonderfully healing and encouraging function: it begins the healing of the split. The overlap generally is very tiny at first, only a sliver of a new moon; but it is a beginning. As time passes, the greater the overlap, the greater and more complete the healing. The mandorla binds together that which was torn apart and made unwhole" (Johnson, 1991). And in this joining, neither side gives way to be dominated or abdicate to the other: it is a conflict-without-resolution in the sense that both "sides" can find

wholeness in a new understanding of themselves born of their discovery of their relationship to each other:

*"Something we were withholding made us weak,
Until we found it was ourselves."
Robert Frost*

The mandorla is the place of poetry: "it is the duty of a true poet to take the fragmented world that we find ourselves in and to make unity of it." Similarly, "if one has a statement to make, it is good to invite another statement- generally one coming from the shadow- and thus make a mandorla that is greater than either point of view alone." (Johnson, 1991) As in the transformational operations of alchemy, it is a process that ultimately reveals the true nature of the original substance (Fjerkenstad, 1990).

The message of the ancient symbol is unmistakable for our work towards justice: our own healing proceeds from that overlap of what we call good and evil, light and dark. "It is not that the light element alone does the healing; the place where light and dark begin to touch is where the miracles arise. This middle place is a mandorla" (Johnson, 1991).

The ancient alchemists understood this process from darkness to the full-color mandorla, that concert of colors that contains everything. Wrongly done, the many colors of life and facets of different experiences can produce a grayness, with all the colors neutralizing each other into a dull monotony. Correctly done, all the colors of life experience make a magnificent and rich pattern.

"The mandorla is not the place of neutrality or compromise; it is the place of the peacock's tail and rainbows."

Johnson, 1991

B) THE CURRENT CRISIS IN UNDERSTANDING OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE ISSUES

Presently governments across Canada are realizing that there is a growing crisis in the criminal justice system. It is a crisis brought on by such factors as the decline of public confidence in the courts, the growth of public fear of crime, the high profile of violent crime, the costs of overusing incarceration and the increasing awareness of the inability of our present approach to justice to provide community safety or health.

While no one - be they "redneck" or "bleeding heart"- is satisfied with the sentences people get, the crisis is at a deadlock because of the polarization of public views on issues about which there is so much misunderstanding. A key way of breaking through the impasse may be to provide Canadians with greater access to more effective ways of knowing if what is important to them is being done in a particular case, and if the community and victim are getting what they need. At the same time, the first-hand knowledge, by more citizens, of the kind of alienation that is at the heart of the lives of many of those who become caught up in our prison system, can help provide supports for the successful integration of individuals upon release. Expanding this first-hand knowledge to more people can help create a "critical mass" of citizens more willing to transform conditions in a given community and rethink society's approach to justice.

A fundamental change in approach is needed throughout the entire justice process, of course, and the Correctional Service of Canada can only play one small part in it. It is a key part, however, as it finds itself strategically positioned between those who have been sentenced for breaking the law, and the communities, families and individuals who are suffering the effects of their actions and their sentences. Within its mandate to facilitate the successful community integration of released prisoners, it can provide opportunities, when this has not already been done in the community, to bring together as many people as possible affected by the problems related to the effective planning for release, and deal in advance, as directly as feasible, with what they feel are the issues.

In this spirit, CSC could provide mechanisms and resources to encourage this important communication to take place in preparation for release, following the principles and objectives that have been established, for example, for experiments in "Circle Sentencing" in Canada, or "Family Group Conferencing" in New Zealand and Australia, such as, to name but a few:

- to provide a forum for those convicted of unlawful behaviour to tell the story of what they did
- to allow them the opportunity to accept responsibility for their behaviour
- to provide a forum for those suffering from the effects of their acts, and their families and friends, to talk about the consequences of this
- to allow the families and friends of the convicted person to tell how it affected them and how they feel about that person and that person's behaviour
- to allow those people affected an opportunity to acknowledge the shame the incident may have created
- to turn the incident into an opportunity for all involved to learn from the experience
- to achieve a just outcome for those negatively impacted by illegal activity as well as for those who engaged in it
- to deal with the shame and provide for the reintegration of each of the surrounding communities involved
- to deal with the practical issues that may facilitate the successful integration of the sentenced person into the community of her choice upon release

But new models and programs alone will not make a significant difference. No matter what the purpose, if the process and context are stigmatizing, labelling, scapegoating, and do not include some really good "expressive justice" for all those who are suffering the effects of the unlawful behaviour and the sentence, we will just be adding more infrastructure to the same old problems. We have to dig deeper. We must provide opportunities for people to connect what they do in seeking justice back to the soul our common humanity. The adversarial process in which they have been entrenched brings out the worst in people, fosters competition for individual interests and does not facilitate collaboration for the common good. We must fundamentally shift our approach so that we deal with people as whole persons and include all those affected by the problem, each of whom has a piece of the story and of the solution, along with a responsibility for helping to put it together.

Peace in a community is never destroyed only by the "criminal offence" and the one individual "offender". There is everything that led up to the offence, and there are other people who may have

a role to play in dealing with the causes, and preventing future difficulties. Each shares in the responsibility for having a voice in constructing a solution that is good for all parties affected, including the safety of the wider community --if only because such a solution is in everyone's own long-term best interest.

C) PRESENTATION OF THE WORKING MODEL DEVELOPED FOR DISCUSSION

In thinking about this challenge, we attempted to formulate a practical means for achieving the manifold purposes sought, a procedure that could potentially be activated to respond, as needed and requested, to the particular situation of each federally sentenced woman. The focus of this effort would not be to advocate on behalf of the woman's interests and experiences alone, but to give voice as well to the interests and concerns of communities. The aim is to help heal the relationship between each federally sentenced woman and her community, to foster ongoing linkages while she is incarcerated, and to help prepare the woman herself, as well as her community, for her eventual release.

We tried to envision in concrete, practical terms what procedure might best reflect in action all the hopes and considerations emerging from the research reviewed previously in this paper; and the implications of the principles of a "restorative" and "transformative" approach to justice as described in the section on "Communities". We attempted to take into consideration what these implications might mean for the federally sentenced woman herself, for her family and her "circle of care" (i.e. significant others or volunteer advocates), for the people suffering from the effects of any harm done by her illegal activity, and for other community members, as well as for their respective "circles of care". We also tried to be mindful of existing government jurisdictions and legal responsibilities, in an effort to respect those accountabilities and keep them separate and distinct from the "organic" or spontaneous reconstruction of community social bonding we are seeking to stimulate.

We kept in mind as well that, while the current requirement is for a network to serve women sentenced to a period in prison, our long-range aspiration is to develop a mechanism that could be activated prior to sentencing, at the provincial level, and could enable community responses that help to avoid incarceration as much as possible. We chose, therefore, to design the "blueprint" for the draft working model holding up the "ideal", i.e. how the process might look were it to unfold at the earliest possible time -- in order to then extrapolate from this "optimal" scenario, for women already serving their sentence under federal jurisdiction, what could be put in place for them now that could come closest to respecting the purposes, principles and ideals we have attempted to capture in this working model.

Some Background Operating Principles:

1. Women must be involved in the development of and feel ownership for their own release preparation. A woman's sense of relevance, ownership and control are necessary for plans to be successful.
2. Release preparation must be built around identifying and giving assistance to deal with interests and concerns, those of each individual woman, as well as those of the victims (if possible) and the surrounding community. This focus helps to make the plan specific and to address the underlying issues that may be contributing to conflict with the law. The goal is healing.
3. A community meaningful to the woman must be involved to provide support and resources, and to require that supervision and accountability be exercised. Connectedness is a foundation stone of healing. Through the involvement of a woman's primary community, belonging can be reinforced while destructive behaviour is denounced. An essential building block of healing is to have an opportunity to value and be valued by others.
4. Wherever possible, effective and meaningful community participation in a woman's reintegration process should reduce the time spent incarcerated.
5. The development of the release plan should begin at the time of sentencing in order to maximize its impact and benefits. Release planning in the final stages of custody does little to reduce time spent incarcerated and is negatively impacted by the alienating experience of imprisonment.
6. Community involvement and ownership in working to resolve problems will enhance a community's sense of self-esteem and empowerment, as well as contributing to crime prevention.

The Model: (a draft framework)

1. In the woman's "home" community, a "community justice circle" is set up at the time of sentencing to identify respective concerns and expectations, and to develop a plan of community support and involvement in fostering ongoing linkages while the woman is incarcerated and eventually restoring the woman to the community. This might be initiated by the local police, a "community justice worker", or by a community group, i.e. church or other. This is an opportunity offered to the offender and the community, and participation is entirely voluntary.

2. The "community justice circle" would include the offender herself if she can be present and/or members of the community who know her; the victim (if possible) and/or community members who know the victim; and other "neutral" community representatives such as a police officer, business owners, community workers, church members etc.

3. The circle would meet, before the offender is transferred away from that community, to discuss the criminal behaviour, the participants' experience with the offender, what might have led to or caused the behaviour, and what they feel is needed to heal the situation for the victim and the community, as well as to address the offender's concerns and whatever underlying issues are felt to be important. The goal of the meeting would be to come up with a recommended plan of healing and restoration for the woman and for the victim as appropriate. A process for keeping the community involved through volunteers would also be agreed upon. Basic non-hierarchical procedures for conducting a "circle communication process" would be observed (as experimented in a variety of women's healing circles, Native healing circles and recently emerging sentencing circles and family group conferences). This initial meeting would be videotaped.

4. The "plan" along with the videotape would be sent to a "community justice worker" in the community where the woman is to be incarcerated. The "community justice worker" would view the video with the woman and debrief with her as to the implications for the assistance she may require as well as the possibilities available to her for requesting a local circle of support and care to help her and her home community justice circle carry through with the plan.

5. The "community justice worker" would assemble and oversee a local circle of support and care from the community adjacent to the institution where the woman is incarcerated, made up of community members with expertise or interests in the areas identified in the plan (i.e. addictions, abuse support group, community education resources, faith group, cultural associations, community sports etc.) and others with a willingness to encourage and support an advocacy process for accountability and healing. The woman could relate to the members of this "personal network" individually but, periodically, the whole circle and the woman would meet to assess her evolving situation. Communication and support from the "home" community would be encouraged through a wide variety of means including any linkages that can be fostered through the inter-community affiliations of the members of this local circle of support and care, so that people in the home community are better able to prepare for the incarcerated woman's eventual return and provide support and resources for the completion of the "plan" in their midst.

6. While the local circle of support and care may encourage the woman to seek certain professional services, advocate for certain opportunities to be made available and play a facilitating role in this process, the participation of members in this circle of support and care is entirely voluntary. It is likely that the availability of a paid "community justice worker", however, would greatly support the effective coordination and orientation of this volunteer work. But the task of such a worker would be focused only on recruitment, preparation, coordination, education and liaison. Once recruited, each individualized "personal circle" would be "led" by one of the volunteers.

7. Upon completion of the custodial term, the woman returns to her home community to a group of people who are prepared to welcome her and to play a role in her continued healing and support.

8. This "community advocacy response-ability mechanism", as described above, is a voluntary resource to assist the woman and the community with healing and reintegration. It would continue to be the responsibility of each individual woman to deal through the existing channels with correctional and parole authorities. This means that she would decide what, if any, information about her ongoing "circle" network she would share. Correctional officials could attempt to gather information about the woman's experience with the circles through the usual means available to them when conducting community assessments.

The information and resources potentially generated through this community-based network and its process could be an invaluable source of support to the aims and work of correctional and parole authorities. But its locus and accountabilities would be clearly situated in the community and it would be up to the authorities to use their usual methods and criteria for ascertaining reliability and merit.

It nevertheless would be in the interests of the government to provide funding to support the work of the "community justice workers" because of the unique contribution of this mechanism in providing a forum for dealing with community interests and concerns about federally sentenced women and in educating and preparing the community for their release. The potential is also there for this mechanism to pave the way for a similar process that would be situated **prior to sentencing**, which could contribute significantly to a reduction in the use or length of incarceration, and which could potentially be funded in partnership with several levels of government.

9. Where the offence itself has taken place in a community that is not the offender's "home" community, a decision would have to be made about where to locate the community justice circle in order to ensure participation of the people who know her best and have the greatest investment in her eventual release to them. However, because the concerns of the victim are such an integral part of the accountability and healing process, every effort should be made to find means (through video, letters, third party representation etc.) to include and address the victim's experience and its impact on the victim and the victim's community in the plan. Should the offender eventually choose to plan for release to another community altogether, the evolving circles of support could be enlisted to mobilize their combined networking capabilities to seek out linkages on her behalf to her community of destination. The goal is to help the offender, the victim and the community heal from what has happened in the community where the actual offence has taken place, and to facilitate as much as possible a high quality of care and preparation for her eventual release, regardless of her community of destination.

D) - ISSUES

The following section presents and discusses a number of issues that were raised in the initial review and critique of the working model by the community resource people who responded to our request for comments.

Purpose and aims:

- The process described is seen as very much needed and highly consistent with the philosophy advocated in "Creating Choices", with the potential for being holistic, woman-centred, culturally sensitive, supportive of autonomy and self-esteem, community oriented, and oriented towards release. It provides hands-on mechanisms for enlisting the support of communities to create an "environment" that can empower federally sentenced women to make meaningful and responsible choices in order that they may live with dignity and respect.

- It promotes greater strengths where they are needed most, in the community: there are currently more weaknesses in the linkages there than in the programs that have been developing in prisons. It is important that this work begin long before a prisoner is released.

- It has "integrity" in that it is geared to empowering and healing all those affected by the unlawful behaviour: "victims", "offenders" and "communities".

- It can fulfill several important purposes:

- assist the individual woman
- promote a change in society's approach to justice
- contribute to community education by providing more access to first-hand knowledge that can modify perceptions
- raise awareness in tangible ways of the responsibility and accountability issues of communities
- contribute to the quality of life in the community, including safety, community health, and the protection of the public

- Its strength is in its community-based focus, and the involvement of the woman in developing her own community of support. Motivation comes from contact and, from the outset, the woman can be looking to her future, to her release and/or to her ongoing connectedness to the community, in the context of a support network that is "thinking" and planning with her. There may be ways in which it could link her to the community other than in the role of "prisoner". It could potentially provide a "ceremony of

positive integration in a community", a healing from the degradation of imprisonment.

- It incorporates the learnings from the research that perhaps what we can best offer a prisoner is support from a sympathetic listener, practical assistance with such matters as communication with family and friends, parole preparation and housing upon release; a space to be themselves, some degree of control over their own lives, and an opportunity to value, and be valued by, others (Kendall, 1994).

- It is crucial that this core focus not be lost: it is not an "intervention", and its emerging aspirations and expectations are not a "treatment plan"; its function is to bring people together who are related to her situation in various ways but who would not otherwise come together, to address her issues with the community, as defined by the woman herself in dialogue with the community. It is an opportunity for her to hear the needs of others, directly or indirectly, and to potentially benefit from their assistance, but in a forum that is personal, social and voluntary for all concerned: there should be no "competition" with the official "processing" and "treatment" of CSC. On the other hand, its purpose is not merely "social" as in "recreational", nor is it to provide "care" according to a "charity model" that is patronizing; its uniqueness is to give her a voice among "peers" (other community members) and to empower her to increase her stake in the interests of that community.

- This could be a very difficult concept to safeguard. It will be important to provide a process that does not victimize or re-victimize any of the parties involved.

Language:

The language used to describe the model perpetuates stereotypes and misleading constructs that are not helpful to achieving the stated aims. For example:

- "offenders" should be referred to as women who have broken the law or engaged in illegal activity and "victims" should be referred to as those who have been negatively impacted by their actions or are suffering from their negative effects, - to avoid a process that deals with categories of people and distances participants from the human events
- "illegal activity" and "problems" are more helpful terms than the concept of "crime"; "quality of life", "safety" and "community health" are more accurate than "crime prevention"
- the term "care" can be interpreted as paternalistic unless clearly explained

- the word "ownership" (of her release preparation) may be unfairly misleading to the women in the current context; it may be more honest to aspire to her "involvement"
- planning "with" instead of "for" the federally sentenced woman would be more consistent with the empowerment principles.

As well, the overall language should be simplified to engage interest and participation from the community.

Justice circles in the community:

- This is seen as the ideal place to start, and as early as possible from the time of arrest, because of the immediacy of the community response and involvement; however, in the current adversarial context, it presents many problems, psychologically, administratively, logistically.
- The overwhelming influence of the adversarial process on all those affected could make the timing of this early involvement in a justice circle overly traumatic for a woman if she is in the process of facing a lengthy sentence and an abrupt transfer far from children and family. Those negatively impacted by the unlawful behaviour may not be receptive to the process offered by the circle immediately after the sentence has been determined, when there is no longer an opportunity to play a role in the outcome. Yet, in many jurisdictions, the transfer out comes very soon thereafter. Contact visits in the holding institutions are an issue, it is very difficult to make connections.
- On the other hand, some jurisdictions are experimenting with sentencing circles, and some small communities are getting more judges to release women to their custody, even on remand. This could be an appropriate place to start healing and a circle, especially with a first time offender.
- In many cases, a partial circle could be constituted around the woman's early situation, prior to sentencing and/or transfer, with a view to forming a nucleus prepared to make overtures to other appropriate parties as time and developments unfold.
- While other experiences with comparable models have demonstrated the tremendous helpfulness of involving the police in the circle recruitment and/or process, it is crucial that the individual be selected for personal qualities and/or first-hand knowledge of the particular context.
- Specific attention should be given to preparing and supporting those suffering from the negative effects of the illegal activity.
- It is not considered worthwhile to hold a community justice circle without the presence of the woman herself.

- Consequently, until more progress is made in advancing the concept of sentencing circles in provincial jurisdictions, it would seem that many efforts will have to be initiated in the communities surrounding the facilities to which the women are transferred, with attempts being made from there to connect with an appropriate grouping of people in the home community. The identification of appropriate participants would come partly from the woman herself, and ideally also from the nucleus formed before she is transferred. This is where appropriately selected police could also play a helpful role, particularly vis-à-vis the situation and circumstances of those who have been affected by the woman's actions. A temporary absence could be given the woman to attend the circle, as long as it includes members she has also chosen to be part of her support network.

Local circles of support and care:

These are considered an excellent resource for the woman and the community, including those who have been impacted by the illegal activity.

- Circle communication process: it is the ideal vehicle for achieving all the aims with integrity and consideration of all concerned.

- Composition: it should be driven by the woman and her needs: a variety of bridges to different networks and conduits between networks, extended family, mentors, clergy, spiritual supporters, members of her ethnic community, key local agencies - whoever is significant to her or to her situation. Obviously not all women have an identifiable community or an identifiable "victim"; particular circumstances, related to "wife battering", "domestic homicide" or "child abuse" for example, will also require careful considerations and preparation of potential participants. In effect, every situation calls for a tailor-made response: it is a question in each case of seeking out and creating meaningful connections of support, particularly for women without any place, and meaningful surrogates, if necessary, to concretize her sense of accountability.

- Feasibility: it seems overwhelmingly unmanageable to conceive of coordinating the provision of access to such a process for so many women from so many different communities and situations. If one starts exploring the process with only a few pilot cases, however, more can be learned about the nature of the need and the resource requirements as well as making inroads in creating an interest and some momentum for development in various communities. It may also be possible to consider local circles that could include two or several women at a time, in an adapted process that could nevertheless achieve many of the aims and purposes outlined

above. There will also undoubtedly be many situations where the full extent of the process is not needed, or not wanted by the woman.

- Empowerment issues: these are at the heart of the whole process and the most difficult challenge for the integrity that is vital to the healing effects of this community strategy.

It is essential to locate the locus of control with the woman and with the community, and this will no doubt be a difficult learning process for CSC. Otherwise, there is a risk that, within the current correctional context, this community strategy could just add length and further hurdles to the process of the women re-entering society. Should this begin to happen, the integrity of the circle communication process will be lost: the honesty and candour of the information flow will be jeopardized by its feared consequences for the official decision-making and control functions affecting the woman's freedom. Healing would no longer be the goal.

- Confidentiality and trust are therefore seen to be paramount as a premise: the process should be kept at arms-length from the administration and information loop of CSC.

- On the other hand, again for the integrity of the process, the woman may want to benefit from the support of circle members in undergoing her official community assessment, and members must feel free to participate in that procedure at their own discretion and with honesty. In other words, this remains a volunteer program without formal accountability mechanisms, and with the usual standards and ethics to prevail.

- For many of the above reasons, videotaping of either circle is not acceptable. It jeopardizes issues of trust, and raises concerns about privacy and coercive consent.

- Also for the above reasons it is absolutely essential that the process be entirely voluntary on the part of the woman: it is a resource that is offered to her and not a mandatory requirement for release consideration. This should make implementation a more manageable task initially, but will be difficult to safeguard from "subtle pressure" as time goes on.

- This raises the question of who should coordinate access to this possibility for each woman and who should facilitate the actual circle process. While participation will be entirely volunteer, the legwork to initiate the opportunity could be most demanding, as well as the logistics of mobilizing contacts for a circle in the home community, the destination community etc., etc.. However, this is a community driven process and as much as possible, for better or for worse, must be, by definition, left up to community volunteers and the woman herself. Much more thought

should be given to the tools and methods that could be developed to prepare and resource the volunteers.

As each home community or community of destination will deal with a very small number of federally sentenced women, "how to" manuals for mobilizing the process locally would be more feasible than any ongoing position.

In the communities surrounding the facilities, however, a paid coordinating function may eventually be required. While resources will be needed, it remains essential, for the reasons stated above, that the function be kept at arms-length from CSC. Consideration could be given to the administrative model that has been established for chaplaincy through the administration and professional supervision of the independent community-based Interfaith Committee, which now has a standing committee on women's spirituality with a regional network beginning to cluster around each facility. Selection criteria for the "community justice worker" coordinating function must be carefully developed; the credibility of this person with the federally sentenced women is of utmost importance, as well the vision to develop and promote the concept of advocacy for healing of the relationship with the community, rather than advocacy for any one set of individual or interest group goals.

As to the question of facilitating the circles, it is clearly a volunteer function, with each circle to determine its own leadership. Further discussion should examine models of leadership in comparable circle experiences. It is important that the facilitation process empower everyone and that each participant feel some sense of support from some other member(s). A model co-led by a community member and a federally sentenced woman could be considered.

- A key issue will be to situate the process vis-à-vis CSC personnel and develop credibility and trust. A procedure that is held at arms-length from the system's staff could raise many difficulties and concerns. On the other hand, there could be many benefits for them. It is clearly unfair that the painful burden of responsibility for prison unrest and repeat offenders is too often attributed exclusively to them: there is a need to begin to locate the full responsibility back in the community.

- Recruitment: This is clearly also a big challenge: many people will be required to commit time and emotional energy to a demanding process that necessitates investment of self, painful honesty and some self-questioning, empowerment of others and advocacy as well as service and care. "Lasting power" could be a real problem particularly with women serving long sentences. It could also be difficult to attract people willing to open themselves to this approach in communities reliant upon the political economy of prisons and to maintain credibility with

federally sentenced women amidst cross-fertilization of CSC and community networks. Distance from larger more pluralistic and diversified urban centres will also be a problem.

On the other hand, a number of existing networks have been identified where recruitment has good potential for points of contact within a given community: W2 (or P2 or M2W2); Alternatives to Violence community circles; the Interfaith Women's Spirituality network; women's support groups, shelter groups, feminist groups, who already have some of the analysis; various self-help networks at all levels of the community; multi-faith councils; multicultural councils; the Healthy Communities network of the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities; community associations; the network of Native Friendship Centres; the Native Elders Advisory Council; national church denominations and faith groups as well as specific local congregations and faith communities; the World Conference on Religion and Peace (Canada), a United Nations NGO which, in Kitchener, has decided to focus some attention on the situation of federally sentenced women. Recruitment from criminology courses and newspaper ads has been effective in some experiences.

The problem of "lasting power" could perhaps be mitigated by encouraging commitment and accountability for the process for a certain period, such as a year, at which point the commitment would be reviewed by all those affected. More long-lasting relationships have sometimes been enhanced by the commitment of an existing group, such as a church community, to one person over the long haul, because responsibility for emotional investment can be shared. It can also be helpful if people can find replacements for themselves, if need be, from a source that offers a similar conduit into the community. While the problem of distance and scheduling logistics could present mammoth difficulties in some of the new facilities such as Joliette, the entire circle need not meet that often: various forms of contact with individuals are possible in between gatherings.

- Resourcing, preparation, training: This is an important issue for further consideration. The kind of "training" most likely to enhance the human dynamics of the circle communication process must be carefully thought through. Some orientation to the philosophy and aims of "circles" more generally, and of their use as a community strategy for federally sentenced women more particularly, would seem essential to the successful experimentation with this initiative.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION AND PLANNING

This is a concept worth exploring further, but under careful conditions of planning, preparation, and ongoing consultation, as well as supervision, "mentoring", monitoring and chronicling of the process so that it can be assessed and reviewed before further development.

It is recommended

- that circle experiences be initiated with two federally sentenced women in every region, one as close as possible to the determination of her sentence in her home community and one serving her sentence in the federal or federal-provincial facility; this will give each region some experience with the process and the identification of local resources

- that this undertaking be overseen and administered by the Interfaith Committee on Chaplaincy through its standing committee on women's spirituality

- that IFC be given the resources to establish a voluntary advisory network in each region for this purpose, to provide a preparation and training program for skilled planning and facilitation, to supervise, monitor, "mentor" and chronicle the developments and bring all the regional groups together for initial orientation, and one or two consultations

- that a national advisory committee assess and review a progress report on these experiences before any further development takes place.

This mandate would be in keeping with the well established role of Chaplaincy to assist offenders and their families to reintegrate into society and to reconcile with their communities.

Although only ten women will be served by this initial experience, many networks of citizens and criminal justice officials will be reached in the process, potentially stimulating the creation of a constituency of awareness and support in every region for a community strategy for federally sentenced women. It is felt that this particular strategy could

- facilitate the earliest possible release from custody
- maximize healing and successful integration into society
- reduce the potential for recidivism
- respond to the community's concerns vis-à-vis federally sentenced women as they near release.

APPENDIX 1

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APPENDIX 11

Selected readings related to criminal justice, restorative justice and transformative justice.

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APPENDIX 111

A Selection of Program Examples

- Alternatives to Violence Program (AVP), Ontario.
- Atlantic Volunteer Program for Community Integration, New Brunswick.
- Circles of support for the community re-integration of warrant expiry sex offenders, Toronto, Ontario
- Citizen Advocates for Justice, Inc., New York, N.Y.
- Community Initiatives Committee, Burnaby Correctional Center for Women, B.C.
- Continuité famille auprès des détenues (CFAD), Montréal, Québec.
- Justice Works Community, Mothers in Prison Project, Brooklyn, N.Y.
- Lay Advocacy for Women in Prison Project, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.
- LINC, Burnaby, B.C.
- National Network for Women in Prison, California, U.S.A.
- Nine programs rated as successful in reducing women's imprisonment by Chesney-Lind and Immariageon (1992).
- P-2 Program, Montréal, Québec.
- Project Another Chance, Inc., The Right-On Telephone Support Line, Kingston, Ontario.
- The Community Chaplaincy Project of Coverdale Courtwork Services, Halifax, N.S.
- The London Community Parole Project, London, Ontario.
- Strength in Sisterhood (S.I.S.), Vancouver, B.C.
- Victim Offender Mediation Program (VOMP), Langley, B.C.



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