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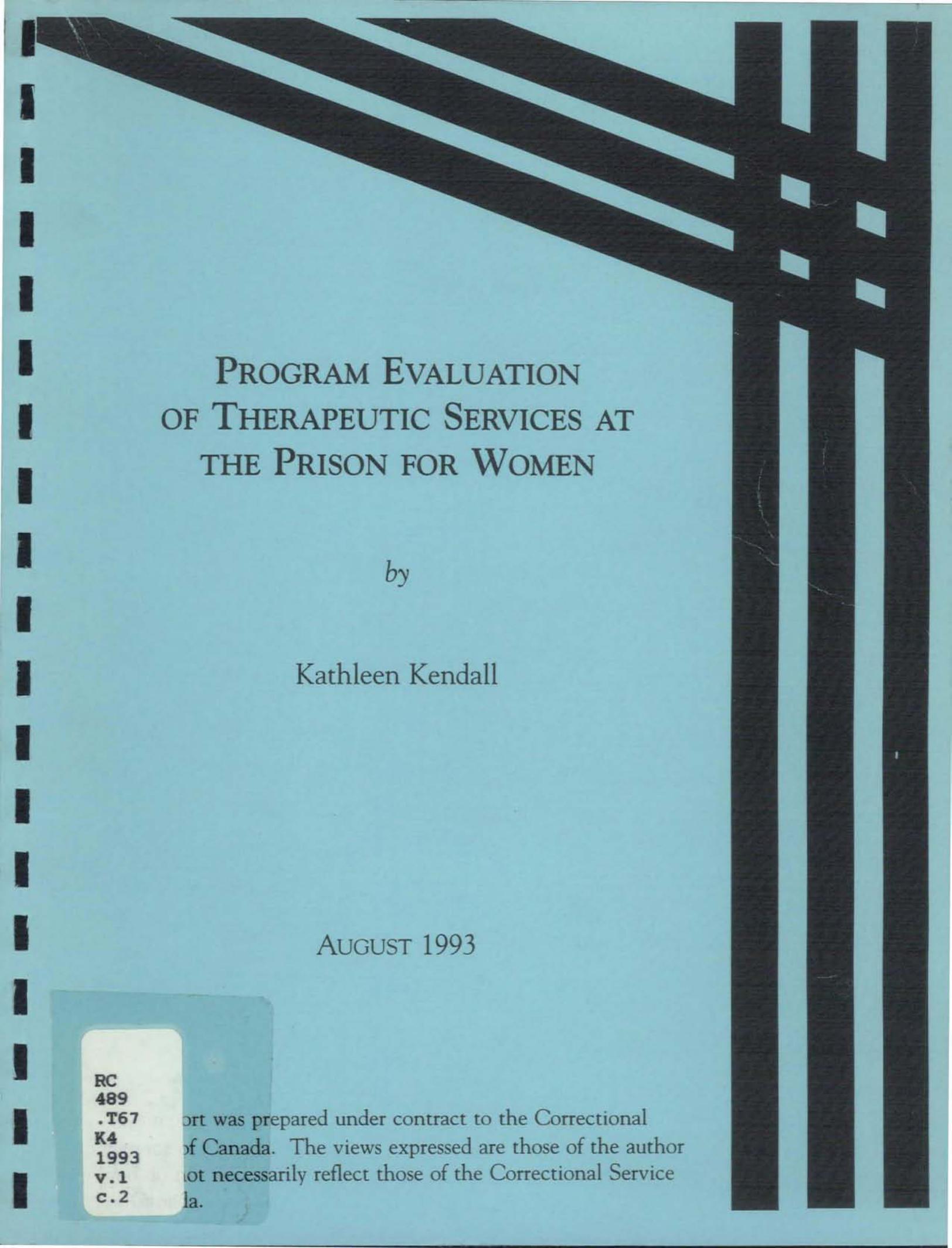
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PROGRAM EVALUATION  
OF THERAPEUTIC SERVICES AT  
THE PRISON FOR WOMEN

*by*

Kathleen Kendall

AUGUST 1993

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Report was prepared under contract to the Correctional  
of Canada. The views expressed are those of the author  
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## Words from Inside the Prison for Women

during interviews with prisoners and staff for this evaluation

*People are afraid to really look at us and listen to us. Their vision and hearing end at the word "prisoner." If they looked closely and listened harder, they'd see that we're really no different than themselves.*

- Prisoner

*The movies and T.V. tell lies about us and people believe all the stereotypes. They need to see past our uniforms. We're no different than anyone else.*

- Staff

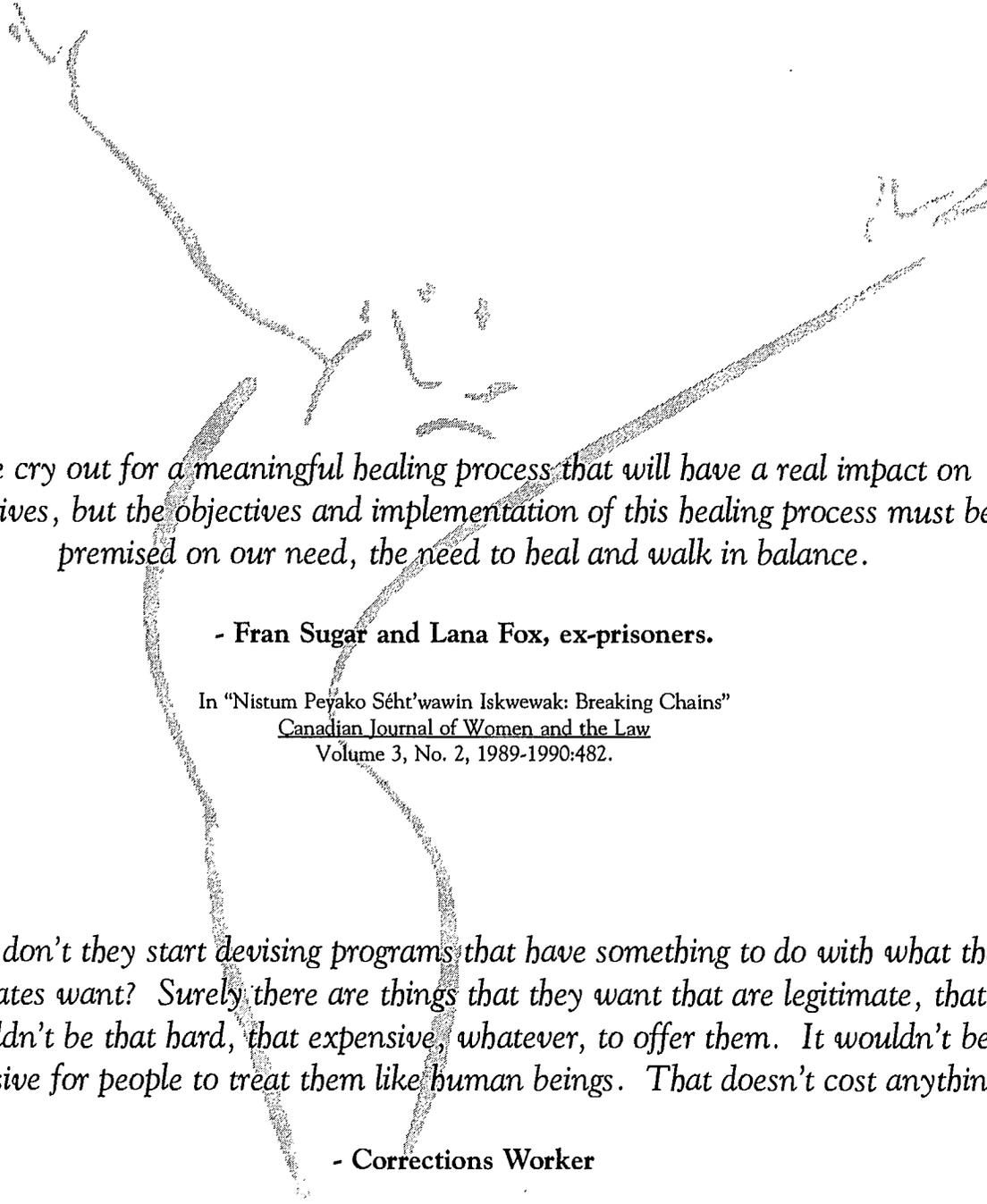


*The only difference between us and staff is luck and these walls.*

- Prisoner

*I often think that if my luck turned the other way,  
I'd be locked in instead of locking others in.*

- Staff



*We cry out for a meaningful healing process that will have a real impact on our lives, but the objectives and implementation of this healing process must be premised on our need, the need to heal and walk in balance.*

**- Fran Sugar and Lana Fox, ex-prisoners.**

In "Nistum Peyako Séht'wawin Iskwewak: Breaking Chains"  
Canadian Journal of Women and the Law  
Volume 3, No. 2, 1989-1990:482.

*Why don't they start devising programs that have something to do with what the inmates want? Surely there are things that they want that are legitimate, that wouldn't be that hard, that expensive, whatever, to offer them. It wouldn't be expensive for people to treat them like human beings. That doesn't cost anything.*

**- Corrections Worker**

Quoted in T. Hattem, brief to the Task Force of Federally Sentenced Women,  
July 14, 1989.

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**PROGRAM EVALUATION OF THERAPEUTIC SERVICES  
AT THE PRISON FOR WOMEN**

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## FORWARD

Lost and feeling anxious, I walk cautiously along one of the hallways inside the infamous Prison for Women. The building is like a maze for me. But, because it is only my second time within the prison walls I do not feel totally void of navigational skills. I wonder how many others have felt such disorientation. Yet, my discomfort is only temporary and superficial because unlike the "residents" I am free to leave whenever I choose. I am under contract to the Correctional Service of Canada to conduct program evaluation at what is euphemistically known as P4W. I am very eager to begin. I have heard and read a great deal about this place. But as I ramble along the prison labyrinth, I realize that much about this place has been missing from written and visual accounts. The richness and diversity of human connections amongst and between prisoners and staff has been given only shallow representation. This realization leaves me feeling overwhelmed at the scope of work which lay ahead. I wonder how, within one evaluation, I will ever capture the myriad of lived realities co-existing inside the limestone walls. I know that it is impossible to study everything. Yet I want to be able to describe and understand as accurately and vividly as possible, the view from inside -- through the eyes of those who live and work here. With these thoughts running through my mind, I finally reach my destination. A young woman sits waiting for me inside a small, stuffy room off to the right of the long corridor. Poor ventilation leaves the smoke from her cigarette hanging lazily in the air -- a hazy wall of grey-white mist divides us. I reflect internally that such a barrier will always remain between us. Having never been imprisoned, I cannot know what it means to not have the choice to leave. I have arranged to meet with this woman and with others for guidance in planning the evaluation. I have come for her advice, her "words of wisdom." And when she speaks, such wisdom is forthcoming:

*I'll talk to you, even though all of the other times I wasn't heard. And even when I was heard, nothing was done. I have been made invisible all my life. But still, I will talk to you because maybe, just maybe, this time will be different. But, your research needs to be more than different, it has to make a difference. You need to see, hear and know us, not as cons, numbers, or statistics but as human beings. Maybe then, it will make a difference. And maybe I won't be invisible anymore.*

She had a great deal more to say that day, and in the days following. Yet, I have carried her initial words around with me to every meeting, every interview, through each article I have poured over, and even now as I piece together this evaluation report. I ask that as you are reading this report, that you too, will honour her words.

## SUMMARY OF EVALUATION REPORT

This volume reports on the findings of a program evaluation of therapeutic services at the Prison for Women undertaken between May 1992 and March 1993. The evaluation fills a previously identified need to evaluate therapeutic services for women inmates, and is meant to inform program development at the Prison for Women, as well as within the new facilities.

The evaluation design consisted of interviews with inmates, staff and program providers, participant observations, and document analysis. An extensive literature review was also conducted, and is available as a separate document (Companion Volume I). The literature review is referred to throughout this report, and the reader is strongly advised to read the two volumes concurrently. Supporting documents, such as interview schedules and program descriptions, are available in Companion Volume II.

This report is not intended to be a definitive statement on therapeutic services with imprisoned women. Rather, it offers guidelines and recommendations based upon the evaluation findings and the most recent literature. The report is arranged according to five main areas of concern which emerged from the research: orientation, correctional planning, therapy/counseling, staff training and release from prison. Specific recommendations are provided for each of these areas.

In this report "therapeutic services" refers to healing and/or soothing activities as defined by the respondents. The term "services" rather than "programs" is used because some of the areas identified by participants as helpful were not programs per se.

Overall, respondents felt that fundamentally, therapeutic services provided women with a space to "just be themselves", be in control of their own lives and/or an opportunity to value and be valued by others. Taken together, these elements also reflect the key principles of feminist therapy - personal autonomy (empowerment) and connection with others. The concept of connection was further reflected in the expressed desire for positive relationships among and between prisoners, staff and program providers. Positive relationships were recognized as those which honoured mutuality and were said to be achieved when people looked beyond such labels as "prisoner" or "guard."

The three perspectives - of prisoners, staff and program providers - are interwoven throughout this report. Often, their views mirror one another.

Many share a common understanding that the existence of mutually respectful relationships underscores the success all programming efforts. The degree to which equitable relationships can be established inside prisons is seriously limited by the fact that prisons are fundamentally based on an unequal distribution of power. However, the issues raised and suggestions forwarded by prisoners, staff and program providers, indicate that mutually respectful relationships can be enhanced within prisons through shared personal and institutional valuing and fostering of such relationships. The specific recommendations forwarded by respondents provide examples of ways in which such relationships may be nurtured.

The scope of areas of concern and suggestions identified by respondents, demonstrate the necessity of an integrated effort which addresses all facets of the prison experience. If the views of prisoners, staff and program providers at the Prison for Women are an indication of what such an approach looks like, it begins with mutual respect.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations may change across time and must be periodically reassessed through processes which listen to the perspectives and experiences of those for whom therapeutic services are designed, and to those who provide such services. While specific recommendations may alter, the need for mutually respectful relationships and self determination, as well as personal, institutional and financial commitment, will remain intrinsic to the entire prison context if the fundamental goals of the mission statement of the Correctional Service of Canada are to be achieved:

*The Correctional Service of Canada, as part of the criminal justice system, contributes to the protection of society by actively encouraging and assisting offenders to become law-abiding citizens while exercising reasonable, safe, secure and humane control.*

### ORIENTATION

**FINDING: The Orientation Process Currently In Place At The Prison For Women Is Inadequate In Meeting The Needs Of Inmates**

#### Recommendation

##### 1.1

A pilot project, the design and implementation of an Orientation Group, be undertaken immediately at the Prison for Women. Group evaluations of this project should be used to inform the design and implementation of orientation groups in the new facilities.

Groups will be comprised of educational and supportive components. Facilitators will meet the criteria for feminist therapists and have familiarity with issues surrounding women's offenses and imprisonment, as well as knowledge of trauma, recovery work and the grieving process (as outlined in the Literature Review, Companion Volume I). Groups should begin at the earliest convenience and continue for approximately three weeks, linking women to appropriate support networks and resources.

**FINDING: The Inmate Handbook Is Not Read Very Often Because It Is Found To Be Too Intimidating**

#### Recommendation

##### 1.2

A pilot project, the design, construction and distribution of a user-friendly handbook, be undertaken at the Prison for Women. Such a handbook would best be developed by inmates with the assistance of staff. Given the impending closure of the Prison for Women, the handbook may best be developed for the new facilities. The process should be informed by the literature on women and adult education and reflect the diversity of the population.

## CORRECTIONAL PLANNING

**FINDING: The Current Classification System At the Prison For Women  
Appears To be Inappropriate For The Inmate Population**

**Recommendation**

**2.1**

A new approach to correctional planning be taken, which emphasizes a full spectrum of individual needs and choices. Such an approach would not attempt to slot women into pre-existing categories, but would rather allow women to determine for themselves, in cooperation with a CSC staff member and community worker, a personal plan. This tripartite model to personal case planning is allied with similar recommendations in the Report of the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women.

**FINDING: Case Management Officers Are Not Sufficiently Informed  
About Program Content, Availability And Schedules**

**Recommendation**

**2.2**

The coordinator of program planning prepare a guidebook outlining the programs that are offered, describing program content and listing schedules of programs. This guidebook should be distributed to all staff, inmates and community workers where appropriate. Program updates should be regularly dispersed. The guidebook should consist of a ring-binder so that updates can be readily inserted.

**FINDING: Case Management Officers Are Not Sufficiently  
Informed About Inmate Program Participation**

**Recommendation**

**2.3**

Contracts with program providers include a mandatory clause in which providers are responsible to inform the appropriate CMOs and/or those involved in case planning, of inmates who participate in and complete their programs. Inmates should be advised that participation will be reported.

## B: THERAPEUTIC GROUPS

**FINDING: Groups Which Received The Most Support Among Inmates Were Those Which Adhered To The Principles Of Feminist Group work - Emphasizing Active Participation And Empowerment - And Which Were Most Compatible With Connected Learning**

### **Recommendation**

#### **4.1**

Groups within the Prison for Women and in the new facilities incorporate the principles of feminist group work and connected learning (detailed in the Literature Review, Companion Volume D).

**FINDING: Ninety-Three Percent Of The Inmates Interviewed Requested That More Groups Be Available. There Is An Identified Need Especially For The Following Groups: Survivors of Abuse, Dealing With Anger, And An Orientation Group**

### **Recommendation**

#### **4.2.1**

The feasibility of implementing the following groups at the Prison for Women be investigated by the appropriate authority: survivors of abuse, dealing with anger, and an orientation group. Where the establishment of such groups is possible, the terms of reference should designate that the contractor meet the criteria for feminist therapists and have familiarity with issues surrounding women's offenses and imprisonment, as well as knowledge of trauma, recovery work and the grieving process (outlined in the Literature Review, Companion Volume D).

#### **4.2.2**

A monitoring system be established in the new facilities to ensure that therapeutic groups consistently meet the needs of the women. A needs analysis be undertaken within the Prison for Women prior to the transition to the new facilities, in order that groups be offered immediately following the opening of the new facilities, and to ensure that the group offerings are consistent with the needs.

**FINDING: There Is An Identified Need Among The Inmates For Higher Intensity Substance Abuse Programming At The Prison for Women**

### **Recommendation**

#### **4.3.1**

The feasibility of implementing a high intensity substance abuse program at the Prison for Women be investigated by the appropriate authority. This investigation should include consultation with inmates, the substance abuse counselor and the literature on women's substance use (discussed Companion Volume D). Any substance abuse groups established at the Prison for Women or within the new facilities should adhere to the principles of feminist group work and be informed by of the literature on women and substance use.

#### **4.3.2**

A project be undertaken by the appropriate authority to determine a system for monitoring the substance abuse needs of women in the new facilities and to implement a process ensuring that the full range of substance abuse needs are met.

**FINDING: The Majority of Inmates Stated That They Were Not Well Informed About The Availability And Content Of Program Offerings**

**Recommendation**

**4.4**

*See Recommendation 2.2*

In addition: The information prepared by the coordinator of program planning should be posted in high visibility areas such as near the inmate telephones in the living units and on bulletin boards throughout the institution. Other innovative ways to communicate program information be explored with the participation of inmates.

A similar process be designed and implemented in the regional facilities to inform inmates about program content and availability.

**FINDING: Many Inmates Requested Greater Access To Therapeutic Groups In The Outside Community. A Review Of The Logbook Indicates That Approximately 7% Of The Inmate Population Leave The Prison In Order To Attend Outside Group Therapy**

**Recommendation**

**4.5**

A project be undertaken by the appropriate authority to examine ways of increasing inmate access to community therapeutic groups within the legal limitations.

*This project may be subsumed on the larger project outlined in recommendation 7.2*

**FINDING: There Was A Perception Among The Inmates That The Coordination Of Program Offerings Was Problematic. Programs Were Said to Often Be Offered All At Once Or None At All**

**Recommendation**

**4.6**

The coordinator of program planning ensure that program coordination is maximized.

**C: ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF THERAPY**

**FINDING: A Wide and Diverse Range of Activities Were Identified As Therapeutic**

**Recommendation**

**5.1**

The diverse range of activities which can be therapeutic be recognized by those working within the Prison for Women and the new facilities. Creativity and variety in program planning be explored, encouraged and supported. Such activities might include: pet therapy, drama, dance and journalling (see the Literature Review, Companion Volume D).

## THERAPY/COUNSELING

### A: INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING

**FINDING: High Overall Satisfaction With The Individual Counselors At The Prison For Women Was Reported**

**Recommendations**

**3.1.1**

Contracts of the current individual counselors be renewed for the 1993-1994 fiscal year.

**3.1.2**

The development of a project linking current counselors with mental health workers in the new facilities and with mental health workers in the communities in which the facilities will be located. The purpose of this project is to share knowledge, experience and resources.

**3.1.3**

Counselors and other mental health workers within the Prison for Women and the new facilities meet the criteria for feminist therapists and have familiarity with issues surrounding women's offenses and imprisonment, as well as knowledge of trauma, recovery work and the grieving process (as outlined in the Literature Review, Companion Volume D).

**FINDING: An Anticipated Need For Increased Therapy Services Immediately Prior To And During The Transitional Period In Which The Prison For Women Closes, And The New Regional Facilities And Healing Lodge Open**

**Recommendations**

**3.2.1**

A monitoring process be established to gauge the need for increased therapeutic services in the period prior to and during the transitional phase. Fiscal resources be reserved in the event that increased services are deemed necessary.

**3.2.2**

A initiative be undertaken by the appropriate authority to facilitate the transition of inmates into the new facilities in the least disruptive manner. Such an initiative would include the availability of individual counseling for those requesting such a service, and groups which have educational and supportive components

**FINDING: Individual Counselors Do Not Reflect The Cultural Diversity of the Inmate Population**

**Recommendation**

**3.3**

A monitoring process be instituted to monitor the cultural diversity of the inmate population and efforts be taken to recruit and employ individual counselors which reflect the diversity of the inmate population.

**FINDING: The Current Client Caseload Review Process Used By Counselors Does Not Adequately Measure Therapist-Client Contacts**

**Recommendation**

**3.4**

The client caseload review process be revised or reconstructed to allow for reliable and valid measurements of all counselor-client contacts. The appropriate designate (i.e. chief staff psychologist) take responsibility to oversee the client caseload review process, ensuring continual monitoring and monthly analysis so that time and resources are used most effectively and efficiently. Where duplication in services is occurring, (i.e. an inmate is unnecessarily seen by more than one therapist) action must be taken to remedy the situation.

**FINDING: Five Women Were On Waiting Lists, And Ten Other Women Were On Waiting Lists But Were Currently Seeing Another Counselor. There Were Reported Waiting Lists For Almost All Of The Individual Counselors - Ranging From Three Months To One Year**

**Recommendation**

**3.5**

The situation of waiting lists be investigated by the appropriate designate(s) in order to determine the exact nature of the problem, and to develop an action plan so that the number of inmates waiting to see an appropriate counselor are reduced and/or eliminated. Potential problems to be considered during the investigation should include duplication of services and the need for more counselors.

**FINDING: The Peer Support Team Received Positive Evaluations As An Additional And Important Form Of Support To Inmates**

**Recommendation**

**3.6**

The Peer Support Team continue training and support to inmates at the Prison for Women. The new facilities include a Peer Support Team.

**FINDING: The Contract Renewal Process is Inadequate. Contractors Receive Very Short Notice As To Whether Or Not Their Contracts Will Be Renewed. This Situation Creates Both An Ethical Dilemma And Personal Hardship**

**Recommendation**

**3.7**

The contract renewal process be revised so that contractors are provided with sufficient notice (3 months) as to whether or not their contracts will be renewed.

**FINDING: Most Inmates Reported That They Would Prefer Counseling With A Woman, Especially For Working Through Issues Around Abuse.**

**Recommendation**

**3.8**

It is preferable that individual counselors in the new facilities be female.

## STAFF TRAINING

**FINDING: Most Of The Staff Interviewed Reported That They Were Unfamiliar With The Availability, Content And Theory Of Both Individual And Group Counseling, Yet Almost All Indicated An Interest In Learning About Them**

### Recommendation

#### 6.1.1

A pilot project be undertaken by the appropriate authority to design a staff training course which would familiarize staff with the therapeutic approach taken by the counselors. This would include, but not be limited to, discussions on: empowerment, mutually respectful relationships, dealing effectively with self anger, feminist therapy, the link between women's offenses and their life histories, trauma and recovery, women and substance use, women's psychology, and women's styles of learning. The course would be piloted at the Prison for Women, and be implemented at the new facilities. Staff working within the new facilities should receive this training prior to their work at the prison, and mandatory "refresher" courses (as well as others) should be offered throughout the terms of their employment.

#### 6.1.2

A pilot project be undertaken to design a process for team building within the new regional facilities. In order that training be reinforced, and that the environment pose the least hardship to prisoners, staff in the new regional facilities must operate as a team, with shared philosophy rooted in mutually respectful relationships and aimed at assisting inmates toward self-empowerment. Shakopee Correctional Facility, Minnesota, has been identified as successful in this regard (Di Pisa, Bertrand, Biron, 1992) and should be contacted by the project consultant.

Staff should be kept informed of the counseling and groups available to inmates:  
*See Recommendation 2.2*

**FINDING: Inmates Felt That Cultural Diversity Among Staff, Reflecting The Inmate Population, Would Assist In The Creation Of A More Healing Environment**

### Recommendation

#### 6.2

Staff be actively recruited and employed to reflect the diversity within the inmate population.

## RELEASE FROM PRISON

**FINDING: Inmates Felt That They Were Insufficiently Prepared For Release**

*See recommendation 2.1*

**FINDING: Inmates Were Unhappy With The Community Integration Program, The Program Designed Specifically For Release Preparation. Inmates Felt That A Peer Support Group, Designed To Prepare Them For Release, Would Be More Appropriate**

**Recommendation**

**7.1**

A pilot project, the design and implementation of a peer support group for women who are soon to be released, be undertaken at the Prison for Women. Group evaluations of this project should be used to inform the feasibility and construction of similar groups in the new facilities.

Groups will be comprised of educational and supportive components. Facilitators will meet the criteria for feminist therapists and have familiarity with issues surrounding women's offenses and imprisonment, as well as knowledge of trauma, recovery work and the grieving process (outlined in the Literature Review, Companion Volume I). Ex-inmates should be invited into the group at the appropriate time, to share knowledge. A primary purpose of the group would be to link women with appropriate community support.

**FINDING: Inmates Indicated That Increased Gradual Access To The Outside Community Would Assist Them In Adjusting Into The Community Once Released**

**Recommendation**

**7.2**

A project be undertaken by the appropriate authority to examine Prison for Women inmate patterns of access to the outside community. The purpose of this undertaking would be to determine ways of increasing inmate access to the outside community within the legal limitations. The findings would apply to inmates in the Prison for Women, as well as in the new facilities. Additional analysis of the communities in which the new facilities will be opening be undertaken to assist in determining strategies for inmate access to the outside community following the closure of the Prison for Women. The analyses would include, but not be limited to: therapeutic groups, individual counseling, ETAs, UTAs, the minimum house, and work placements.

*Recommendation 4.5 may be subsumed under this project.*

**FINDING: Inmates Identified The Acquisition Of Employable Job Skills To Be Essential In Successful Adjustment Following Release From Prison**

**Recommendation**

**7.3**

A needs analysis be undertaken at the Prison for Women to determine the job skills most appropriate for inmate training programs. The job skills will assist inmates in the attainment of employment once released into the community. The needs analysis will be used to inform the design of job skills programs within the Prison for Women and the new regional facilities. The needs analysis will consult the adult education literature on women's learning. In particular, the BRIDGES program be examined for its applicability to female offenders (see Literature Review, Companion Volume I). Additionally, the success of the female minimum facility in providing women with relevant job skills be examined and drawn from.

**FINDING: Inmates Indicated That A Support Group For Ex-Offenders  
Living Outside The Prison Would Assist Them  
In Integrating Into The Community Once Released**

**Recommendation**

**7.4**

The appropriate authority resource support groups for ex-offenders.

## INTRODUCTION

This evaluation report is part of a larger initiative to address the needs of Canada's federally sentenced women. The report follows the landmark publication of *Creating Choices*, the Task Force Report on Federally Sentenced Women, and it coincides with the implementation process of the new regional facilities.

The evaluation was premised on the desire to build upon and extend the knowledge gathered within the pages of the Task Force report and the reports accompanying it. From the outset, the evaluation process had at its heart a commitment toward hearing and understanding the experiences of those who live inside the prison. This was only achievable by asking inmates to share their experiences and expertise. Such an approach is consistent with the spirit of the Task Force Report, and follows the recommendations of others who emphasize the importance of using participatory, women-centered research and evaluation with female prisoners. This evaluation carried these suggestions even further, however, by also including the voices of prison staff. This addition served to provide a more holistic picture of prison dynamics and offered new insight.

In particular, this approach valorized the cornerstone of this report - a shared understanding among imprisoned women, and the women and men who work in the prison, that human relationships are the life force of the prison. Almost every person I spoke with, regardless of their location within the prison, identified a fundamental need to be engaged in relationships grounded in mutual respect. Obviously such relationships were strongest

among peers. Yet, participants provided examples of mutually respectful relationships existing between the women incarcerated in the prison and the staff working there. Such relationships emphasized mutuality over hierarchy and were said to be achieved when people looked beyond prison labels (i.e. "guard" or "inmate") to see independent individuals with their own needs, concerns and responsibilities. However, participants further recognized that the frequency and potential of such relationships were limited by the very nature of prison which is based on an unequal distribution of power. While the degree to which mutually respectful relationships can be established is inhibited by the prison structure, it can nonetheless be enhanced through shared personal and institutional valuing and fostering of such relationships.

The evaluation report consists of three different volumes. This volume forms the main body of the report, including the findings and recommendations. For ease of access to the information, two companion volumes contain additional but essential data. All three volumes are meant to be read concurrently. The reader is referred to the two companion manuals throughout this main report for elaboration upon the principal points. Companion Volume I contains the Literature Review and fleshes out in much more detail some of the suggestions, ideas and definitions raised within the main report. Companion Volume II consists of:

- program descriptions
- sample descriptions
- interview schedules
- letter to inmates regarding the intent and purpose of study

## INTRODUCTION /3

- detailed costs for therapeutic services
- description of counselor/therapist utilization
- evaluation of the substance abuse education program
- participant evaluation of women who are survivors of sexual assault staff training course
- brief preliminary evaluation of the women and fraud group
- summary of an evaluation of the peer support team

This program evaluation is not a definitive statement on therapeutic services with incarcerated women. Rather, it offers some guidelines and suggestions based upon an amalgamation of primary research and evaluation undertaken within the Prison for Women, as well as a review of the most recent literature. To the best of my knowledge this undertaking is the first of its kind, anywhere. As such, much more work needs to be done, and many of the ideas put forward within this report will be improved upon, and perhaps falsified as new research and findings surface. Despite the limitations, this report is a unique contribution toward correctional knowledge, policy, and practice; and is a reflection of the core values underlying the mission statement of the Correctional Service of Canada:

*Core Value 1: We respect the dignity of individuals, the rights of all members of society, and the potential for human growth and development.*

*Core Value 2: We recognize that the offender has the potential to live as a law-abiding citizen.*

*Core Value 3: We believe that our strength and our major resource in achieving our objectives is our staff and that human relationships are the cornerstone of our endeavour.*

*Core Value 4: We believe that sharing of ideas, knowledge, values and experience, nationally and internationally, is essential to the achievement of our Mission.*

*Core Value 5: We believe in managing the Service with openness and integrity and we are accountable to the Solicitor General.*

## EVALUATION PROCESS

### IDENTIFIED NEED

An advisory committee composed of a cross-section of Correctional Service of Canada representatives came together out of a shared concern that program evaluation of therapeutic services be undertaken at the Prison for Women.<sup>1</sup> Such concern was grounded in a series of recent reports which emphasized the need for program evaluation at the Prison for Women (Ross and Fabiano, 1985, 1986; Evans, 1989; Shaw, et al. 1990; Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women, 1990). The committee's aspirations were also congruent with the suggestion of a 1990 Board of Inquiry established to investigate the attempted suicide of an inmate housed at the Prison for Women. The Board recommended that external consultants be hired to assess the efficacy of programs offered at the prison.

The prioritizing of therapeutic services for evaluation was consistent with the Task Force Report on Federally Sentenced Women (1990) and other studies identifying substance abuse and mental health as critical programming needs (Task Force Report, 1990: 105-106; Lightfoot and Lambert, 1991; Elliot

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<sup>1</sup> The Advisory Committee was composed of the following members: Joe Beatty, Director, Pilot Projects, RHQ; R.J. Brown, Regional Administrator, Correctional Programs, RHQ; Mary Cassidy, Warden, Prison for Women, Odette Gravel-Dunberry, Director, Native and Female Offender Programs, NHQ; Wanda Jamieson, Manager, Family Violence Initiative, NHQ; Yvonne Latta, Assistant Deputy Commissioner, RHQ; Heather McLean, Dept. of Psychology, Prison for Women; Jane Miller-Ashton, National Coordinator, Federally Sentenced Women's Initiative, NHQ; and Frank Porporino, Research and Statistics Branch, NHQ. Gordon Cassidy, Director, Executive Master of Business Administration, Queen's University served as an external consultant to the project. Fiona James, Pilot Projects, RHQ, provided additional input.

and Morris, 1987; Berzins and Dunn, 1978; Heney, 1990, Shaw et al. 1990). It was also consonant with the recent relative increase in the number and type of therapeutic services available inside the prison.

Furthermore, the timing of the evaluation was critical. In April of 1990, the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women recommended that the Prison for Women be replaced with five Regional Facilities as well as a Healing Lodge for Aboriginal federally sentenced women. The recommendation was accepted, and immediate action was taken to facilitate the suggested course of action. Program evaluation at the Prison for Women therefore, would be practically significant because it could provide direction for the development and implementation of successful programs in the new regional facilities, as well as within the Prison for Women until its closure.

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

The committee contracted the services of myself, Kathleen Kendall, to design and implement a program evaluation of four therapeutic programs at the Prison for Women, from May 1, 1992 until March 31, 1993. These four programs included: dealing with self-injurious behavior; survivors of sexual assault, substance abuse education and the substance abuse therapeutic unit. As will be discussed in the next section entitled "Work Plan", the actual scope of work broadened beyond these four programs to include all therapeutic services within the Prison for Women, so that a much more comprehensive evaluation was actually undertaken and completed.

The Terms of Reference specified that a formative approach to evaluation be used, describing how well the programs were operating and offering ways to improve them. The evaluation was to measure the degree to which goals were accomplished, identifying the following:

- program content and delivery
- program strengths and weaknesses
- impediments to program effectiveness
- barriers to program implementation
- positive and negative side-effects.

The following considerations were to guide the evaluation process:

- Instruments and designs developed for evaluating male offender programs will not necessarily translate to female offender programs. While existing designs and instruments will be consulted, it will be necessary to construct ones specific to the Prison for Women.
- A holistic approach must be taken.
- Women should not feel pressured into taking programs as a condition of their release or sentence.
- Programs should reflect the social realities of women and be culturally sensitive.
- The diversity of the inmate population must be recognized.
- The community should play an important role in programming.

The deliverables for the consultation were to include: four quarterly reports, a report of the program description, a report of the literature review, evaluation instruments, a draft final report and a final report.

The terms of reference also specified that the final report describe:

- Why the evaluation was undertaken
- Who the intended primary users are
- Key questions the evaluation set out to answer
- The evaluation design and instruments
- Summary of findings; and
- Recommendations for future actions or inquiry and suggestions.

Because the terms of reference focused upon therapeutic services, institutional vocational training and education was outside the scope of the project. I do recognize, however, that involvement in these areas is important to the development of personal empowerment, autonomy and economic security. However, since this evaluation took a holistic approach, many of the findings apply to vocational training and education.

## WORKPLAN

The evaluation was carried out in three main phases: defining the scope of work, evaluation design and data collection, and analysis. The advisory committee and myself met at regular intervals throughout the process. Such meetings were extremely valuable in providing me with feedback, suggestions, and guidance.

**Phase I: Defining the Scope of Work**

Initially, my time was spent defining the scope of the evaluation. The intention of this first phase was to ensure that the evaluation be comprehensive enough to include important information, yet sufficiently narrow to be manageable within the time frame. In this regard, unstructured interviews were conducted with prison staff and inmates in order to determine the key issues and concerns. In total, 72 interviews were completed in this initial phase:

**PHASE I INTERVIEWS: KEY ISSUES AND CONCERNS**

INTERVIEW TYPE	Number
Service providers	19
Inmates	32
Management services	3
Security staff	10
Healthcare	2
Chaplaincy	1
Other staff	5
<b>TOTAL NUMBER</b>	<b>72</b>

During this first phase, I also engaged in participatory observation while inside the prison, undertook a preliminary review of the literature, spoke with other researchers in the field, and analyzed numerous documents.

On the basis of preliminary investigation, it was deemed necessary for the evaluation to be widened beyond the four programs originally identified. This was due to four main considerations. First, the substance abuse

therapeutic unit was no longer being offered to inmates. Second, the survivors of sexual assault and self-injurious behavior programs were found to consist of individual counseling only. Third, inmates self-defined "therapy" in broad terms (discussed in more detail below). And fourth, the key issues and concerns raised in the interviews made it clear that a comprehensive evaluation, rather than a narrowly focused one, would be most useful. The key issues and concerns staff and inmates raised during the preliminary interviews fell into five main themes:

- Program Impacts
- Program Delivery
- Coordination of Programs
- Individual Inmate Program Profile
- Alternatives to Current Approaches

Cultural diversity was deemed integral to each of the above issues, rather than isolated as a separate issue.

### Phase II: Evaluation Design and Data Collection

The second phase of the project involved the development of an evaluation design, instrument construction, and semi-structured interviews. As well, during this phase I continued to make observations within the prison, reviewed the literature, and analyzed appropriate documents. In total, I spoke with twenty staff members and forty inmates (see the section labeled "notes on method" for an account of the interview process, and Companion Volume II for a copy of the interview guides, and sample descriptions).

**PHASE II INTERVIEWS: TOTAL NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS**

Inmates	40
Staff	20
<b>Total Number</b>	<b>60</b>

**Phase III: Analysis**

In the final stage of the evaluation, I analyzed the data, completed the literature review and prepared both a draft and final report (the literature review is available in companion volume I). Interview responses were coded to match with each of the five key issues and concerns. Out of these responses, the following five themes emerged:

- Orientation
- Correctional Planning
- Therapy and Counseling
- Staff Training
- At the Crossroads: Release from Prison

This report draws together findings and analysis from these five main themes.

**NOTES ON METHOD**

As indicated in the accompanying literature review (Companion Volume I) women have traditionally been excluded from the literature on imprisonment. This is especially true of program evaluations, where very few have considered the experience of female inmates (Ross and Fabiano,

1985, 1986; Roberts, 1991; Berzins and Cooper, 1982). Of those evaluations which have been completed with women, none have seriously considered women's experiences as they differ from the experience of men. (Currie, 1986).

Based upon the literature, and in keeping with the evaluation terms of reference, a qualitative design seeking to gauge the richness of inmate and staff experience in their own terms, was deemed most suitable. This approach allows for an understanding of the world as seen by those participating in the evaluation, rather than expecting them to fit their views into narrow pre-determined categories. This type of design is especially suited to a holistic approach where depth and detail are required to gauge how programs function, and to determine what the impacts are. Further, a qualitative design is particularly useful in determining whether a program should be replicated in other settings and how such replication might occur (Patton, 1987).

The limitations posed by time and resources upon this evaluation should be recognized. First, as indicated earlier, institutional vocational training and education were outside the scope of the evaluation. Second, detailed information for each particular therapeutic service was not fully explicated. However, participant evaluations were carried out for two programs: the substance abuse education group and a staff training workshop designed to sensitize staff toward issues for women who are survivors of sexual assault. Additionally, independent evaluations of the Peer Support Team and the Fraud Group were carried out simultaneously by other researchers (summaries of these evaluations are included in Companion Volume II).

Another limitation of this evaluation is that pre-test and post-test measures, and control groups were not employed. It is therefore impossible to ascertain whether participant responses are statistically correlated with program interventions. Further, while findings cannot be directly generalized to other settings and populations, they can provide a sense of direction and useful considerations.

As indicated above the design consisted of semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and document analysis. This process increases both the validity and reliability of research by allowing the evaluator to find corroborations and inconsistencies, as well as to compare different perspectives.

Prior to the interviews, a letter was sent out to all of the inmates explaining the purpose of the evaluation (included in Companion Volume II), and I similarly outlined the evaluation at an inmate committee meeting. I informed staff of the project during a staff assembly. However, many staff and inmates came to know me prior to the interviews, because of my frequent presence inside the prison.

Given the limitations of interviewing inside the prison, such as the flux in population, and the voluntary nature of participation, a convenience sample was used. In total, twenty staff and forty inmates were interviewed (for more detailed information regarding the samples, see Companion Volume II). Interviews varied in length from one and one-half hour to four hours, and took place at all times of the day (including interviews with staff working the "midnight" shift). Respondents were informed of the confidential nature of

the interviews and were told that they were free to refuse answering any questions they felt uncomfortable with. However, I found that with the exception of an unwillingness to rate programs (as discussed below) all respondents answered each question.

The interview schedule consisted mostly of open-ended questions developed to address each of the key issues and concerns identified in Phase I. Separate interview guides were constructed for inmates, service providers and staff (copies of these guides are included in Companion Volume II). During the actual interviews, the interview guides were not strictly adhered to, but rather they served as a point of departure for dialogue. The exact phrasing of questions often varied from the interview guide and respondents often directed the course of dialogue, while nonetheless addressing the questions I had intended to ask. This process allowed respondents to include any information they felt was relevant, and for unanticipated comments to emerge.

Interviews with staff and inmates included a section asking them to rate the quality of programs they had been involved in on a scale of one to five. However, most refused to do so, typically because they felt that they could not reduce their involvement in programs to simple measures and because they perceived such actions to dehumanize the program providers. Because of the small number who completed the ratings, the results are unreliable and, therefore, not included in this report.

The participant observation aspect of the evaluation assisted me to gain a clearer understanding of the context and dynamics in which programs take

place, provided me with an opportunity to witness matters that would otherwise go unnoticed or unspoken, and to experience some of the programs first-hand. Observations were made during my participation in a number of inmate functions, groups and meetings; as well as in more informal settings such as the staff cafeteria, the hallways, the psychology department, and various other locations throughout the prison.

The following documents were assessed to provide both program specific and contextual information: contracts, program curriculums and handouts, administrative records, memos, meeting minutes and documentary films (P4W, To Heal the Spirit, Castle/No Princess, and Prison Mother, Prison Daughter).

Finally an extensive literature review was carried out. People knowledgeable about women prisoners from Canada, the United States and Britain were contacted directly. Literature searches were carried out through the National Criminal Justice Reference Service, PsychLit, Sociofile, Social Sciences Index, and Index Two Legal Periodicals. While the literature review is contained in a separate volume, it is strongly recommended that it be read jointly with this main report.

### AN OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF THERAPY

The preliminary interviews indicated that the term "therapy" was broadly understood by the respondents of all categories to include: individual and group counseling available through the psychology department, substance

abuse counseling and groups, other individual counseling (Sexual Assault Crisis Centre, Psychological Counseling to Native Offenders, Aboriginal Women's Counselor, Black Women's Counselors), psychiatry, the Living Skills Program (Cognitive Skills, Parenting and Community Integration), self-help groups (Alcoholics Anonymous Narcotics Anonymous, New Women in Sobriety, Seven Steps,) peer based support groups (Peer Support Team, Native Sisterhood, Black Women's Collective, French Women's Group, Lifers Group), and the Regional Treatment Centre (Description of these programs are available in Companion Volume II). Some respondents also understood therapy to encompass a wide-range of activities, such as: quilting or ceramics, conversations with friends and staff, family visits and correspondence, and time spent playing with the dog in psychology.

Taken together, all of the activities identified as therapeutic, were ones which respondents said provided women with a space to "just be themselves", be in control of their own lives (self determination) and/or which gave them an opportunity to value and be valued by others. Such an understanding of therapy is broader than traditional usage of the term. Yet, it is reflected in the dictionary definition which states that the word therapy comes from the Greek word *therapeia* meaning healing. The dictionary further lists: "1. specific treatment; 2. cure; 3. something serving to cure or soothe, as a hobby" (The Scribner-Bantam English Dictionary, 1980). Accordingly, in this evaluation, therapeutic refers to healing and/or soothing activities as defined by the respondents. Additionally, the phrase "therapeutic services" rather than "therapeutic programs" was used because some of the areas identified by participants were not programs per se.

**INTENDED PRIMARY USERS**

This program evaluation is intended for a broad audience. Most obviously, it could be useful to Prison for Women administration, staff, program providers, and inmates. It may also be of value to those involved in the development and design of the new regional facilities and the healing lodge for federally sentenced women. Additionally, this evaluation could be useful to prisons elsewhere, federal and regional administrators, criminal justice agencies, women's organizations, prisoner advocates, and academics.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON FEDERALLY SENTENCED WOMEN**

In Canada, responsibility for the justice system is divided between the provincial, territorial and federal governments. The split in corrections is based on a two year rule: people receiving sentences of less than two years become a provincial or territorial responsibility, and those serving two or more years become a federal responsibility. However, exchange-of-service agreements between the provincial and federal governments allow federally sentenced offenders to serve their time in provincial institutions, and for offenders under provincial jurisdiction to serve their sentences in federal institutions (**Basic Facts About Corrections in Canada 1992 Edition**, Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1992).

Women comprise only about 2% of the total federal offender population in Canada. The small number of federally sentenced women - approximately 300 - has been relatively stable across time. Of these 300, about 1/3 are serving their sentences in prison. The remaining numbers of women are under parole or on temporary absences. Approximately half of those serving prison sentences are serving their time at The Prison for Women, the only federal female penitentiary in Canada, located in Kingston, Ontario. Most of the remaining half of women serving federal time in prisons, are housed in various provincial facilities. A few women are located in men's federal institutions due to special circumstances (**Basic Facts About Corrections in Canada 1992 Edition**, Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1992; **Report of the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women**, 1990).

Approximately 82% of federally sentenced women are serving their first term of incarceration. The following table describes the sentence lengths received by federally sentenced women during 1991-1992:

**SENTENCE LENGTH  
ON REGISTER FEDERALLY SENTENCED WOMEN 1991-1992\***

SENTENCE LENGTH	NUMBER
Under 3 Years	74 (23.6%)
3 - 6 Years	114 (36.4%)
6 - 10 Years	42 (13.4%)
10 or More Years	22 (7%)
Life/Indeterminate	61 (19.6%)

\*Includes women serving prison sentences in federal or provincial prisons, women on parole and women on temporary absence

Reference: **Basic Facts About Corrections in Canada 1992 Edition**, Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1992: 35.

The following table describes the types of offences federally sentenced women are serving their sentences for:

**SENTENCE TYPE  
ON REGISTER FEDERALLY SENTENCED WOMEN MARCH 1992\***

OFFENCE TYPE	NUMBER
Homicide	58 (18.5%)
Attempted Murder	3 (1%)
Manslaughter	43 (13.7%)
Sexual Offences	5 (1.6%)
Other Violent Offences	23 (7.3%)
Robbery	45 (14.4%)
Other Nonviolent Offences	61 (19.5%)
Break and Enter	4 (1.3%)
Drugs	71 (22.7%)

\*Includes women serving prison sentences in federal or provincial prisons, women on parole and women on temporary absence

Reference: **Basic Facts About Corrections in Canada 1992 Edition**, Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1992: 37.

The Prison for Women opened in 1934 and subsequently has received a great deal criticism. Since 1938, nine major government committees and task forces have urged the closure of the Prison for Women and recommended a shift toward decentralization. Among the reasons for such a recommendation, has been a recognition that because women have access to only one centralized federal institution, they face severe deprivations when serving their time far from home. A number of reports have also identified grave inadequacies in programming at the Prison for Women.

Most recently, the **Report of the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women**, released in April 1990 recommended the closure of the Prison for Women, and the creation of five smaller regional facilities across Canada, as well as a Healing Lodge for Aboriginal women. The report additionally recommended expanded community-based services for women.

At the time of this report, the implementation of four new regional facilities and a Healing lodge is currently underway. Sites for the new regional facilities have been chosen at the following locations: Truro, Nova Scotia; Kitchener, Ontario; Joliette, Quebec; and Edmonton, Alberta. The Burnaby Correctional Centre for Women (which opened in 1991 in Burnaby, British Columbia) will continue to serve federally sentenced women through the exchange-of-services agreement. A Healing Lodge for Aboriginal federally sentenced women is to be located in Maple Creek, Saskatchewan.

The reader is strongly urged to read the Literature Review, Companion Volume I for a much greater description of federally sentenced women in Canada.

## FINDINGS

In trying to organize the findings into a coherent order, I decided to follow the relational process that respondents described unfolding within the prison between staff and inmates - beginning at the moment an inmate enters into the prison until the time she leaves prison. It became clear from the interviews, however, that the prison experience stays with the women well beyond their actual confinement. Accordingly, this report also includes a chapter related to post-release. The findings are discussed in order of the following five areas of concern: orientation, correctional planning, therapy and counseling, staff training and post-release.

## I. ORIENTATION

***It's been very hard to adjust. They don't tell you anything. Nobody tells me what I'm allowed to do or not do. I got locked out of my cell because I didn't know. I don't even know if you're allowed to get up in the middle of the night. And if you ask someone, they just continue walking past.***  
(Inmate)

***I wandered around three weeks before an orientation occurred. There needs to be an orientation when you first come in. Some sit around in the range for a month before doing anything.***  
(Inmate)

***Most of them are scared out of their minds when they first get here. And I think, "there but for the grace of God go I."***  
(Staff)

***There's so much bad media about what happens inside a prison, and when inmates get here, they look like death. I don't blame them, it must be very scary and I don't think that there's any real help for them when they first come in. They need some kind of support group or something. Someone to show them around, and help them.***  
(Staff)

Many women prisoners reported feeling numb or "in shock", mixed with sensations of fear and frustration, when they first entered the prison. Staff perceptions of what the women were experiencing was congruent with what the inmates stated they felt. Research similarly suggests that the early days of a woman's imprisonment are particularly stressful.

Along with elevated psychological distress, research indicates that female offenders enter prisons with numerous physical health problems (see the literature review in Companion Volume I, page 22). In her study of women serving life sentences, Jose-Kempfner (1990) found that women prisoners go through a grieving process, in the same way that dying people do. Sequentially, the five stages of this process include: denial, anger,

depression, mourning, and acceptance. Accordingly, when an inmate enters the prison, she may be in a distressed state (see Companion Volume I, page 81).

A number of inmates interviewed suggested that their distress could have been reduced had there been a better orientation process in place. According to staff, orientation generally occurs at the Prison for Women approximately once per month, but may take place less often. Newcomers are informed about the orientation through a memo. The orientation package at the time of this evaluation, consisted of a tour of the prison and three videotapes outlining the following: 1) the grievance and complaints system 2) the Northern Treatment Centre and 3) information about the Salvation Army. In addition, departmental representatives may speak about their roles within the institution. The actual number of invited speakers varies, but past sessions have included representatives from the following departments: chaplaincy, IPSO, finance, Corcan, and case management.

Staff commented that by the time an orientation occurs, most inmates have already found their way around the prison. However, staff stated that because inmates arrive at the prison sporadically, it is difficult to arrange more frequent, regularly scheduled orientations.

The comments of inmates corroborated staff sentiments. Inmates reported that the orientation occurred anywhere from three to nine weeks after their arrival. When they were finally given an orientation, they either found it redundant, because they had already discovered things for themselves; or felt that it was very impersonal and therefore, did not assist them in coping.

While women stated that they were provided with a handbook, most felt it too intimidating to read.

It would appear that women are often left without direction or support when they first enter into the prison. There is suggestion in the literature that coping is enhanced through orientation groups. Groups found to be successful elsewhere include educational and supportive components, continue for approximately three weeks, and begin within 72 hours following inmates' arrival to the prison (for detailed information on a successful orientation group in a women's prison, see the Literature Review, Companion Volume I, page 45). A group designed to facilitate a sharing of experience, may therefore ease the isolation and shock encountered by women new to the prison.

While planning would have to consider the sporadic arrival of newcomers and small numbers, similar support groups designed to ease inmates' transition into the prison, could be established at the Prison for Women and within the new facilities. Based upon the comments of respondents and the literature, the following points should be considered in the design and implementation of an orientation group. Groups should be composed of a facilitator, new inmates, and inmates who have been inside for some time. As discussed in the literature review (Companion Volume I) it would be essential that the facilitator meet the criteria for a feminist counselor and have familiarity with issues surrounding women's offenses and imprisonment, as well as knowledge of trauma, recovery work, and the grieving process. Groups should begin at the earliest possible convenience, and continue for approximately three weeks. Group activities are most

beneficial if they are comprised of educational and supportive components. Inmates should be shown around the institutions early on, and be acquainted with various staff members, as well as introduced to inmate support groups. A primary purpose of the group should also be linking together women who share a similar experiences including cultural background (see the section on feminist group work in the Literature Review, Companion Volume I, page 43).

A user-friendly prison handbook should be designed and made available in different languages, and reflect the diversity within the population. Such a handbook would best be developed by inmates with the assistance of staff, and draw upon connected (participatory and shared) styles of learning (see the section on adult education in the Literature Review, Companion Volume I, page 54). The manual should include information on prison rules and regulations, inmate rights, and program descriptions.

The benefits of such groups may include better long-term coping, a reduction in immediate crisis, and improved inmate-staff relations. These advantages out-weigh the short-term costs. An orientation group was the third most requested by inmates during the interviews.

**SUMMARY OF ORIENTATION FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**FINDING: The Orientation Process Currently In Place At The Prison For Women Is Inadequate In Meeting The Needs of Inmates**

**Recommendation**

**1.1**

A pilot project, the design and implementation of an Orientation Group, be undertaken immediately at the Prison for Women. Group evaluations of this project should be used to inform the design and implementation of orientation groups in the new facilities.

Groups will be comprised of educational and supportive components. Facilitators will meet the criteria for feminist therapists and have familiarity with issues surrounding women's offenses and imprisonment, as well as knowledge of trauma, recovery work and the grieving process (as outlined in the Literature Review, Companion Volume I). Groups should begin at the earliest convenience and continue for approximately three weeks, linking women to appropriate support networks and resources.

**FINDING: The Inmate Handbook Is Not Read Very Often Because It Is Found To Be Too Intimidating**

**Recommendation**

**1.2**

A pilot project, the design, construction and distribution of a user-friendly handbook, be undertaken at the Prison for Women. Such a handbook would best be developed by inmates with the assistance of staff. Given the impending closure of the Prison for Women, the handbook may best be developed for the new facilities. The process should be informed by the literature on women and adult education and reflect the diversity of the population.

## II. CORRECTIONAL PLANNING

*Lots of us fall through the cracks and get lost under paperwork.  
(Inmate)*

*It's dehumanizing to be fit into little categories and then labeled.  
It feels like you're on an assembly line and that  
you're not really a person, but a robot.  
(Inmate)*

*The classification instruments and tools currently in use are simply not  
appropriate for women. They don't fit with women's experiences.  
(Staff)*

*It's frustrating and sad when the paperwork takes over and  
human relationships become lost under stacks of reports and files.  
In the end, we all lose by it.  
(Staff)*

Following her entry into the prison, an inmate is supposed to meet with her case management officer (CMO), and together they are to put together a program plan based upon identified needs. Currently, "criminogenic factors" and needs are identified on the basis of existing file information and through a structured interview with inmates, called the Case Management Strategies Interview (CMSI). Information gathered through the CMSI is further used in completing an instrument called the Forcefield Analysis of Needs (FFA) used to determine program priorities. During the course of my involvement in the Prison for Women, a new assessment tool called the front-end assessment was being piloted on a select group of inmates.

Currently at the Prison for Women there are four full-time and one part-time case management officers, four of whom are women and one man. Each CMO has approximately twenty women on her or his caseload. Both inmates and case management officers reported discontent with CMO-inmate relationships. Generally all agreed that delays often prevent CMOs and

inmates from meeting as early as they should.

Overall, for reasons discussed below, inmates reported a great amount of dissatisfaction with their CMOs and the planning process. Many found their CMO to be inaccessible and unapproachable. When inmates finally did meet their CMO, they often described the experience as dehumanizing. They felt that paperwork was given priority over the establishment of a working relationship, and that the classification system attempted to fit them into little boxes. Some expressed outrage at the application of a classification label they considered to be unfair and undignified, and a few women refused to take the programs assigned to them because they believed such programs were unsuited to their needs. As will be discussed further on in this section, a partial solution to these problems may be to redesign the process.

There appears to be further problems with correctional planning. Over three-quarters (78%) of the inmates interviewed said that they had not developed a program plan with their CMOs. Inmate's perceptions differed from those of the CMOs. CMOs reported that program plans were completed for all incoming inmates. A measure of the actual degree to which such plans exist, was beyond the scope of this project. Of the inmates who said they had a plan, most felt that the plan was "given to them" rather than designed with them. Thirty-seven percent of the inmates interviewed stated that their case management officer was unaware of the programs they had taken. Of the sixty-three percent who stated that their CMO knew of the programs they had been involved in, the majority added that this only happened because they took the initiative to inform their CMO. Some commented that their program involvement frequently went unrecorded in their files.

A number of women spoke of the anger, frustration and anxiety that was created when their appearance before the parole board was delayed because case management paperwork was incomplete and/or because they were not informed of program expectations held by the parole board. These bureaucratic omissions and postponements evoked both personal and monetary costs by lengthening prison stays. Women who had returned to the prison stated that their case management officer had not sufficiently assisted them in preparation for their previous release. Both inmates and counselors disclosed that a fair amount of time was spent in counseling sessions dealing with "damage repair" related to perceived shortcomings in case management practices.

It is important to recognize that some inmates spoke very positively of their case management officers - finding them to be very supportive, helpful and approachable. One case management officer in particular, received almost unanimous high praise largely because she was said to treat women with dignity and respect by listening to and valuing what they had to say.

The case management officers spoken with, were themselves displeased with the process. They felt that the amount of paperwork they were required to do prevented them from spending sufficient time with the women on their caseloads, and confirmed inmates perceptions that paperwork was often delayed. They would have preferred more contact with inmates, but felt stretched to the limit with their time and resources. They noted that the quantity of paperwork had increased considerably with a recent organizational change necessitating that they handle work previously taken care of in the community. More importantly, however, the CMOs generally

felt that the current classification system was not appropriate for the Prison for Women population. In particular, the CMSI and FFA, were said to be problematic for the population. Some commented that these instruments were never validated for women. Others stated that the interviews took much longer than the allotted time. Some of the CMOs mentioned unfair criticisms they had received from others, particularly regarding the perceived lower caseload CMOs have at the Prison for Women relative to male institutions. They felt that a classification system, inappropriate to the Prison for Women population, reflected badly upon themselves.

CMOs further pointed out the structural differences between the Prison for Women and most male institutions. The building infrastructure as well as less strict security measures at the Prison for Women were perceived to allow for much easier inmate access to CMOs than at male institutions. This was thought to create more demands on the time and resources of CMOs at the Prison for Women than at other institutions.

Clearly, despite some differing perceptions between CMOs and inmates, neither group is content with the current correctional planning system operating within the Prison for Women. It would appear from the interviews that at least part of the problem may be that the current classification system is not suited to the experiences and needs of the Prison for Women population. Other correctional facilities for women have found similar problems. After completing an extensive review of classification systems in American prisons, Burke and Adams (1991) concluded because classification designs and assessments tools are typically designed for men, they do not adequately meet the needs of women. The authors state that a fundamental

difference between male and female institutions is that women's prisons are typically more habilitation oriented (focused on therapy, parenting, education, employment) while men's prisons are more security oriented. Consequently, classification systems which are designed to suit security oriented male institutions, do not fit with women's prisons whose programs are focused toward habilitation.

Burke and Adams (1991) write that no single model for classification can successfully be used either with women or with men, and that each facility should undertake the development of its own approach according to institutional objectives, population, resources and environment. While they state that no single model can be replicated, they do offer a set of developmental guidelines (practical suggestions) to follow in the review of current classification systems for female offenders, and in the design of new classification systems. The authors emphasize that the key is to match case management practices with the desired goals of the institution.

Others findings suggest that a team approach emphasizing personal, individualized planning, be implemented. For example, **The Task Force Report** (1990: 113) recommended the following:

a team approach to planning, where facility staff and community groups are jointly responsible for encouraging and assisting each woman to develop and manage a personal plan.

Berzins and Cooper (1982) also recommend a personal, individualized approach to planning, and further endorse the tripartite model. The authors suggest that such an approach would narrow the "humanity gap" by fostering

positive human relations between correctional staff and inmates and would further support effective community integration. Such an approach is consistent with the respondents wishes for a more personal and dignified process.

Finally, the CMOs, like the inmates, reported frustration at not being kept informed of the counseling services and groups available to inmates. CMOs additionally stated that they were often unaware of the programs women on their caseload were involved in. Some recommended an improved communications system, to keep them continually updated on the scheduling and content of programs.

**SUMMARY OF CORRECTIONAL PLANNING  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**FINDING: The Current Classification System At The Prison for Women  
Appears To Be Inappropriate For The Inmate Population**

**Recommendation**

**2.1**

A new approach to correctional planning be taken, which emphasizes a full spectrum of individual needs and choices. Such an approach would not attempt to slot women into pre-existing categories, but would rather allow women to determine for themselves, in cooperation with a CSC staff member and community worker, a personal plan. This tripartite model to personal case planning is allied with similar recommendations in the Report of the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women.

**FINDING: Case Management Officers Are Not Sufficiently Informed  
About Program Content, Availability And Schedules**

**Recommendation**

**2.2**

The coordinator of program planning prepare a guidebook outlining the programs that are offered, describing program content and listing schedules of programs. This guidebook should be distributed to all staff, inmates and community workers where appropriate. Program updates should be regularly dispersed. The guidebook should consist of a ring-binder so that updates can be readily inserted.

**FINDING: Case Management Officers Are Not Sufficiently  
Informed About Inmate Program Participation**

**Recommendation**

**2.3**

Contracts with program providers include a mandatory clause in which providers are responsible to inform the appropriate CMOs and/or those involved in case planning, of inmates who participate in and complete their programs. Inmates should be advised that participation will be reported.

### III. THERAPY/COUNSELING

*Through therapy I get rid of the garbage I've kept inside.  
(inmate)*

*[I am] working on my sexual abuse. Building a safe place.  
Talking about my feelings. I never felt safe before.  
(inmate)*

*I've noticed a big change for the better, since they added more people in  
the psychology department. I've seen the difference that they make.  
(staff)*

*I think that sometimes staff don't understand the psychologists. Unless  
you've been abused yourself, maybe you can't really know how important  
it is to have someone who believes you and who believes in you.  
(staff)*

#### INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING

The comments above illuminate the paradox of being behind bars for many of the women who become incarcerated at the Prison for Women. It is a cruel irony that women should have to travel a long and treacherous journey ending inside prison gates before catching a hopeful glimpse of mending their wounds. For the most part, this situation reflects the inadequacies of a social system which repeatedly fails. But it also speaks to the possibilities of healing from past injuries by building upon the strengths women have managed to retain and devise in the face of trauma. The majority of efforts must be focused upon prevention and alternatives - providing women with assistance and support before they get to prison. The harsh social and economic realities which circumscribe the lives of women must be challenged and transformed. Yet, the pain of those inside our prisons cannot be dismissed. Inside the Prison for Women, some are finding comfort in sorting through their past and dealing with their present circumstances despite the the many limitations, controls and hardships of incarceration.

During the time period this evaluation was being conducted, between May, 1992 and March, 1993, there were ten therapists, two staff psychologists, and a student social work intern providing individual counseling at the Prison for Women (see Companion Volume II for descriptions of each of these).<sup>2</sup> This section of the report entitled individual counseling, will refer to this group of thirteen people. With the exception of the staff psychologists and the social work intern, the therapists were under contract and most were coming into the prison on a less than part-time basis. Taken together, there were approximately 5 1/4 full-time individual counseling positions. Two of the individual counselors were male - one was a staff psychologist and the other a contracted counselor.

Overall, the individual counselors working inside the Prison for Women adhere to the principles of feminist therapy. While feminist therapy will be briefly outlined here, the reader is strongly advised to see Companion Volume I for detailed information about feminist therapy. While a range of techniques is used by different feminist therapists, the unifying principle is "a commitment to political, economic, and social equality for both women and men and a commitment to an equalitarian relationship between therapist and client" (Rawling and Carter in Rosewater and Walker, 1985: xx). A feminist therapeutic approach is grounded in the concepts of **empowerment** and **connection**. Empowerment refers to a process designed to assist

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<sup>2</sup> Individual counsellors include: Heather McLean (Staff Psychologist), Alex Loucks (Staff Psychologist), Jill Atkinson (Psychologist), Betty-Anne Howard (Substance Abuse Counsellor), Jan Heney (Survivor Counselling), Julie Darke (Psychological Counselling to Survivors), Lada Tamarack (Survivor Counselling), Brenda Woodcock and Ana Margaret (Sexual Assault Crisis Centre Counsellors), Leon Steiner (Psychological Counsellor for Native Offenders), Gisele Pharand (French Psychologist) and Beth Merriam (Art Therapist). A full description is available in Companion Volume II.

individuals in gaining insight into their life experience, including the ways in which they have been made powerless, identify their strengths and receive support and encouragement to take self-determined action. Connection refers to the valuing of mutually respectful relationships with others. The term connection also encompasses the process used in feminist therapy which links individuals experiences to the broader social, economic and political context.

Within the prison situation, feminist therapists contextualize the crimes women commit within the social, economic and political nexus of their experience. As discussed in the literature review (Companion Volume I: pages 2 & 14) the crimes women have been incarcerated for at the Prison for Women are clearly linked with such factors as sexual and physical abuse, poverty and racism. Accordingly, therapists at the prison work from the understanding that in order for women to realistically deal with their criminal offences, they must also deal with the confounding effects of their past histories (See Companion Volume I, page 15 for a discussion regarding the high prevalence of abuse and the impact of racism upon inmates within the Prison for Women population).

Recognition of abuse, racism, poverty and concomitant phenomenon is central to the therapeutic practices of those providing individual counseling at the Prison for Women. Collectively, the overarching therapeutic understanding and method reflects current knowledge and practice surrounding women's trauma and recovery. In brief, the literature on trauma and recovery defines the core experience of trauma to be a lost sense of power and control. Coping strategies are understood to be employed as

means to regain such losses. Relatedly, the guiding principle of recovery from trauma is empowerment through the restoration of power and control to the survivor. This typically occurs in three stages: establishment of safety, remembrance and mourning, and reconnection with ordinary life. The reader is urged to see Companion Volume I, page 12 for a full discussion of this literature.

The very nature of prison imposes control. Healing within the prison is therefore a formidable task. Yet, inmates reported high overall satisfaction with the counseling they received. Shaw et al. (1990: 33) likewise found that inmates were supportive of the counselors working at the Prison for Women. This high measure of support may be partially explained by the general approach used by the department - rooted in feminist therapy which emphasizes empowerment and mutually respectful relationships, and informed by the literature on trauma and recovery. The literature review indicates that this approach is reflective of the most current literature and mirrors the most appropriate treatment for therapy with the particular characteristics of the Prison for Women population. More importantly, the approach is reflective of what the respondents identified to be therapeutic.

Inmates found the personal qualities of counselors to be very important. Overall, a good counselor was said to be someone who: could be trusted to keep conversations confidential, was available when needed, caring, listening, respectful, supportive, did not push them into dealing with something they were not ready to deal with, and who could understand their experiences. Most said they would prefer counseling with a woman, especially for working through issues around abuse (see Companion Volume

I, page 26 for a discussion regarding therapist gender). A number of respondents mentioned that counselors should have experiential rather than book knowledge only. Some preferred counseling with workers from the Sexual Assault Crisis Centre because they were perceived to be less directly affiliated with the Correctional Service of Canada. A few women indicated that they would like the opportunity to go outside the prison for counseling.

Many women said that they should not be obliged to engage in therapy in order to achieve parole. For therapy to work, they stated, a woman has to want to become involved in therapy, and have the option of disengaging from therapy at any point. Furthermore, women emphasized the importance of being able to choose a therapist they felt comfortable with. The therapists corroborated these views, stating that since the guiding principle of therapy is empowerment, women need to have control over their healing process - deciding for themselves when they will become involved in therapy, and which therapist they will work with.

The benefits of individual counseling cited by inmates included: being heard, increased self esteem, stress release, easier adjustment, prevention of self-injury, being able to work through their abuse, insight into their own behaviours including substance use, learning positive ways of coping, improved communication skills, understanding the reasons for their offence(s), having a place to vent, having a safe place to go, practical assistance and advice, and help with post-release planning.

Both staff and inmates commented that counseling generally helps inmates to adjust, stabilizes the prison environment and prevents crisis situations

from erupting. Many praised the commitment of counselors who were seen to work extra hours, and go "the extra mile." However, some staff commented that they felt therapists were too focused upon abuse issues and that therapy often brought out memories that were better left forgotten. Some staff members felt that the surfacing of painful memories led to situations in which inmates became volatile or self-injured (staff perceptions and knowledge of therapy is also discussed in the section in this report entitled "staff training", pages 58 - 59).

One common worry among staff was that counseling opens up a "Pandora's Box" better left closed. There was a perception that inmates were pushed into dealing with their histories before they were ready to, resulting in hardship and self harm. Yet, most of the literature on recovery from trauma states that remembering trauma is necessary to the healing process. When inmates were asked about "Pandora's Box", 92% responded that they did not deal with issues in counseling that they were unprepared for. Of the remaining 8% who felt pushed into dealing with their past before they were ready, their counseling had taken place a number of years ago.

Inmates reported that their negative feelings (including frustration, pain, anger, anxiety, and grief) were overwhelmingly associated with their everyday experiences of living inside the prison. Most fundamentally, women referred to the "deepest cut" as that which was made during the process of becoming a prisoner. This process was described as one which stripped them of their "own selves." That is, they felt they lost their identities as individual women to a label and stereotype of "prisoner". Accordingly, women perceived that any move they made inside the prison

was judged in relation to their status as "prisoner." For example, if a woman complained of being sick, she may be told that she was trying to "con" staff into unwarranted sympathy or time off work.

Women further stated that their incarceration stripped them of control over their own lives, including their schedule, activities and space. All of these things became dictated by prison rules, regulations and were under the control of prison staff, so that opportunities for self-determined actions were very few. Despite the diminished possibilities for taking self-determined action, women said that they were still expected by correctional staff and the parole board to make positive life choices and to become "responsible citizens." Women commented that the paradox between what they were allowed to do and what they were told to do was crazy-making and that it was reminiscent of earlier experiences in which they had no control over their circumstances, such as abuse. These perceptions are consistent with previous research which indicates that the prison experience often traumatizes or re-traumatizes women (see for example Companion Volume I, page 18).

The women stated that measures could be taken which would reduce the hardship of their incarceration, such as: the implementation of a meaningful orientation process, a dignified planning process allowing them to determine which programs to take and when to take them, freedom to safely express emotions, greater connection with people in the community, and increased contact with friends and family. However, the women emphasized that the ability to control their own lives can begin only when they are given respect and treated as equals. The women identified that the formation of respectful

and equitable relationships carries the potential for self-determination. In seeing their worth reflected in the eyes of others, women can begin to believe in themselves, and to value their own self worth. The Literature Review (Companion Volume I) demonstrates that efforts to foster mutually respectful relationships within prisons are beneficial to both inmates and staff. The next section of this report, entitled "staff training", provides examples of positive staff-inmate interactions currently at the Prison for Women, and offers ways to further enrich such relationships.

Given the stress associated with living inside the prison, and the traumatic histories of many, it is unsurprising that 88% of the incarcerated women interviewed wanted to work with a counselor. When asked about the availability of counseling, 80% of inmates felt that there should be more individual counseling available, while the remaining 20% thought that the present level of counseling should be maintained. None of the inmates suggested that there be fewer counselors.

Despite requests for more counseling, the majority of women were involved in counseling with someone. According to the client caseload, which is a record of who is seeing who for counseling, 67% (n=74) of the total prison population was being seen by somebody for individual counseling. In addition, three other women were either receiving treatment at the Northern Treatment Centre or at St. Thomas Hospital. Five women were on waiting lists, and not currently seeing anyone for individual counseling. Another ten women were on waiting lists, but were presently receiving individual counseling from someone.

Thirty-six percent (n=27) of women were on more than one client caseload (see Companion Volume II, for a description of therapist utilization). When the therapists were asked to explain this situation, they listed a number of factors. First, they stated that while thirteen people provide individual therapy, when taken together, they fill only 5 1/4 full-time positions. Most counselors are not in the prison every day, and some come in only once a week. The counselors stated that arrangements are made for back up with one another in the event of a crisis situation. A woman may therefore be listed on someone's caseload, but be seen only in the event of a crisis (this is discussed further in the following paragraph). Also, counselors indicated that women may be seeing different counselors for different reasons. For example, an inmate might be working on her substance abuse issues with one therapist and focusing upon her sexual abuse with another. Counselors also noted that on occasion, a staff psychologist would have to do an assessment for a woman being seen by another counselor who was not a psychologist, in order to meet the requirements of the parole board. It was also mentioned that developmentally delayed women and other special needs women require the services of more than one counselor. In one instance only co-therapy sessions were held, because the inmate was perceived as dangerous to work with alone.

A further difficulty in ascertaining the actual "duplication" of services, is the fact that individual counselors recorded client-caseload information inconsistently. Confusion surrounded operational definitions of categories listed in the client-caseload reports: "regular sessions", "irregular sessions" and "crisis intervention." It is therefore unknown how many of the 27 women who were listed as being on more than one caseload, were seen regularly by

more than one counselor, were seen only on occasion by more than one counselor, or were seen only in a crisis situation by more than one counselor. In my own observations, counselors were cautious in responding to requests from women not regularly on their caseload.

Consistent use and monitoring of a centralized reporting system in which therapists record the names of all clients and the frequency of visits, and action to maintain uniformity in operational definitions of terms, will assist in ensuring the reliability of client caseload reports. Furthermore, the continued maintenance and analysis of client caseloads, as well as monthly meetings amongst counselors will help to prevent unnecessary duplication.

A systematized reporting process would further assist counselors in identifying women whose needs and requests were not being met. For example, in my interviews, Black women, Aboriginal women, and Francophone women commented that their counseling needs were not fully addressed because counselors with similar cultural backgrounds were either unavailable or too busy. Inmates found the support of the Black Women's Counselor and the Aboriginal Women's Counselor important. However, these women provided supportive assistance rather than formal therapy. The French counselor's contract did not provide for enough time to meet with all of the women requesting her services.

In addition, a few therapists stated that language was often a barrier between clients and themselves, and that the needs of some women go unmet because there are no counselors working in this prison who speak their language. Some of the more common languages therapists said they

encountered include: Spanish, Cantonese, German and Hungarian.

Previous research at the Prison for Women has similarly noted the importance of culturally appropriate support (see the Literature Review, Companion Volume I, Diversity in Feminist Therapy, page 66).

A number of women were frustrated because they were placed on a waiting list for regular therapy sessions. At the time of this report, there is a waiting list for almost all individual counselors ranging from three months to one year. Many inmates and staff requested that more counselors be hired so that there be somebody available in the evenings and on weekends. A few inmates and staff noted that as the closure of the prison draws near and tension mounts, the need for counseling will increase.

Many inmates indicated that they had received support by a peer through the Peer Support Team. The most frequently voiced benefit to such support was: "to be listened to by someone who knows, by someone who has been there." The PST was said to be particularly important to Women of Colour and Aboriginal women because of shared experience. Additionally, PST members were said to be accessible "after hours", when a woman's regular therapist was unavailable (this coincides with previous research, see for example Companion Volume II, excerpt of an evaluation of the PST by Shoshana Pollack; and Companion Volume I, pages 27 and 49).

Because the current individual counselors working at the Prison for Women have received such positive evaluations, it would be very beneficial to have them advise the counselors who will be working in the new facilities. Where

possible, it would be advantageous to have some of the counselors work in the new facilities. The current team hold a wealth of experience and expertise in working with the federally sentenced female population. Many also engage in research and/or community activities related to their work. Individual counselors felt that community involvement was particularly important to them because it provided them with the opportunity to broaden and share their knowledge.

Overall, the counselors at the Prison for Women felt their work to be very rewarding and satisfying. They found counseling inside the Prison for Women to be the most challenging and difficult experience of their careers because of the extreme trauma experienced by many inmates and the limitations imposed by the prison environment. Most stated that their continued commitment to working inside the prison was only possible because of the support provided by other counselors. The literature confirms this view, emphasizing that therapists working with traumatized populations should never work without an adequate support system.

Individual counselors who were under contract voiced a great deal of frustration at the fact that every year they do not know whether or not their contracts will be renewed until the new fiscal year has already begun. This not only causes personal grief, but interferes with the counseling process because ethically, counselors have a responsibility to bring closure to the therapeutic process if sessions are to be discontinued.

Most of the women who had occasion to meet with the psychiatrist found it to be a generally positive experience. The psychiatrist was largely seen for

medication or for psychiatric assessment.

In sum, inmates are very supportive of the individual counseling currently provided at the Prison for Women. The counselors generally work from a therapeutic model which is grounded in women's experiences, and oriented toward healing from trauma. At the root of their approach, is the valuing of mutually respectful relationships (connection) and the aim to empower the women they work with. Within this framework, inmates must have a choice of whether or not to engage in therapy. Inmates should also have the choice to receive counseling from individuals they feel comfortable with, including the opportunity to work with someone who shares their cultural background. It is important too, that counselors have their own support system in place. Monthly meetings among counselors, and regular client caseloads reports will ensure optimal communication and the most beneficial use of time and resources.

**SUMMARY OF INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**FINDING: High Overall Satisfaction With The Individual  
Counselors At The Prison For Women Was Reported**

**Recommendations**

**3.1.1**

Contracts of the current individual counselors be renewed for the 1993-1994 fiscal year.

**3.1.2**

The development of a project linking current counselors with mental health workers in the new facilities and with mental health workers in the communities in which the facilities will be located. The purpose of this project is to share knowledge, experience and resources.

**3.1.3**

Counselors and other mental health workers within the Prison for Women and the new facilities meet the criteria for feminist therapists and have familiarity with issues surrounding women's offenses and imprisonment, as well as knowledge of trauma, recovery work and the grieving process (as outlined in the Literature Review, Companion Volume I).

**FINDING: An Anticipated Need For Increased Therapy Services Immediately  
Prior To and During The Transitional Period In Which The Prison For Women  
Closes, And The New Regional Facilities And Healing Lodge Open**

**Recommendations**

**3.2.1**

A monitoring process be established to gauge the need for increased therapeutic services in the period prior to and during the transitional phase. Fiscal resources be reserved in the event that increased services are deemed necessary.

**3.2.2**

A initiative be undertaken by the appropriate authority to facilitate the transition of inmates into the new facilities in the least disruptive manner. Such an initiative would include the availability of individual counseling for those requesting such a service, and groups which have educational and supportive components

**FINDING: Individual Counselors Do Not Reflect The  
Cultural Diversity Of The Inmate Population**

**Recommendation**

**3.3**

A monitoring process be instituted to monitor the cultural diversity of the inmate population and efforts be taken to recruit and employ individual counselors which reflect the diversity of the inmate population.

**FINDING: The Current Client Caseload Review Process Used By Counselors Does Not Adequately Measure Therapist-Client Contacts**

**Recommendation**

**3.4**

The client caseload review process be revised or reconstructed to allow for reliable and valid measurements of all counselor-client contacts. The appropriate designate (i.e. chief staff psychologist) take responsibility to oversee the client caseload review process, ensuring continual monitoring and monthly analysis so that time and resources are used most effectively and efficiently. Where duplication in services is occurring, (i.e. an inmate is unnecessarily seen by more than one therapist) action must be taken to remedy the situation.

**FINDING: Five Women Were On Waiting Lists, And Ten Other Women Were On Waiting Lists But Were Currently Seeing Another Counselor. There Were Reported Waiting Lists For Almost All Of The Individual Counselors - Ranging From Three Months To One Year**

**Recommendation**

**3.5**

The situation of waiting lists be investigated by the appropriate designate(s) in order to determine the exact nature of the problem, and to develop an action plan so that the number of inmates waiting to see an appropriate counselor are reduced and/or eliminated. Potential problems to be considered during the investigation should include duplication of services and the need for more counselors.

**FINDING: The Peer Support Team Received Positive Evaluations As an Additional And Important Form of Support To Inmates**

**Recommendation**

**3.6**

The Peer Support Team continue training and support to inmates at the Prison for Women. The new facilities include a Peer Support Team.

**FINDING: The Contract Renewal Process Is Inadequate. Contractors Receive Very Short Notice As To Whether Or Not Their Contracts Will Be Renewed. This Situation Creates Both An Ethical Dilemma And Personal Hardship**

**Recommendation**

**3.7**

The contract renewal process be revised so that contractors are provided with sufficient notice (3 months) as to whether or not their contracts will be renewed.

**FINDING: Most Inmates Reported That They Would Prefer Counseling With A Woman, Especially For Working Through Issues Around Abuse.**

**Recommendation**

**3.8**

It is preferable that individual counselors in the new facilities be female.

THERAPEUTIC GROUPS

Lewis-Herman (1992:214) notes the importance of group work for survivors of trauma:

Trauma isolates; the group recreates a sense of belonging. Trauma shames and stigmatizes; the group bears witness and affirms. Trauma degrades the victim; the group exalts her. Trauma dehumanizes the victim; the group restores her humanity.

Such advantages to group work were voiced in the interviews with inmates at the Prison for Women. Group descriptions are provided in Companion Volume II. When inmates were asked to identify what made working in a group a positive experience, 60% of the comments reflected the benefits of working with other inmates: togetherness, bonding, feeling a part of something, feeling affirmed, seeing the perspective and actions of others, learning from the experiences of others, receiving feedback, not being judged and having everyone participate. Twenty-percent felt that confidentiality was most important, 12% of the comments related to qualities in the group leader, and the final 8% stated self motivation. All of these comments reflect the main components of feminist group work (see the Literature Review, Companion Volume I, page 43) and reflect the importance of connection with others (see the Literature Review, Companion Volume I, page 61).

When inmates were asked to define what made working in a group a negative experience, 23% stated lack of choice in participation (i.e. they were told to go to group for parole purposes). Nineteen percent mentioned conflict among group participants, and 15% listed factors that detract from the group focus. Twelve percent noted the breaking of confidences and emphasized

that this was partially related to the fact that group participants all live together. This situation is very different from groups operating on the outside where participants typically only come together for the purposes of group meetings, and then go their separate ways. Other negative factors include: facilitators who only know information from books, the mixing of participants who are at very different levels, and when a group does not meet expectations.

Respondents were also asked what the components of an ideal group would be. They listed: choice in taking the program, holistic (mind, body, spirit), peer based, ongoing, multi-cultural, culturally sensitive, participatory, having a screening process, agreed upon expectations from the outset (especially regarding attendance and confidentiality), a facilitator with life experience related to the theme of the group, and simultaneous individual counseling. These ideal components correspond with feminist group work principles (see the Literature Review, Companion Volume I, page 43) and the adult education literature (see Companion Volume I, page 53).

Inmates were asked during the interviews to rate the groups they had participated in. However, as discussed earlier in the section entitled "notes on method", many refused to do so. Given the small number of those who actually rated the groups, analysis of the ratings would be of limited value. However, overall, most were quite satisfied with the groups they had taken - the degree of satisfaction generally related to the extent to which the ideal components (as described above) were incorporated.

The Peer Support Team, the Sacred Tree, and Project Reconciliation stand

out as groups which received uniform praise. Self empowerment, active participation and emphasis upon connection with others are integral to each of these groups. As alluded to throughout this report, these factors form the core of feminist therapy. More importantly, they have been identified by women as the essential ingredients of healing.

Inmates were least satisfied with the parenting group and community integration - components of the living skills programming. Respondents were unhappy with these groups because: they felt pushed into taking them rather than choosing to do so, they were talked "at" rather than "with", and often felt that the content did not relate to their experience because it was too "white and middle-class." Interestingly, the factors that made these groups a negative experience, are the reverse of those features identified by respondents as healing. It should be recognized that respondents voiced more general satisfaction with the cognitive skills program, also a component of the living skills program.

The inmates commented that there was a need for higher intensity substance abuse programming. Currently, the Northern Treatment Centre (NTC) is the only "intense" substance abuse programming available to inmates at the prison. The NTC, located in Sault Ste. Marie, is a residential treatment centre for provincial and federal offenders. Ninety-one percent of the offenders receiving treatment are men. Only three women in the sample had been at the Northern Treatment Centre. Each of these three women were dissatisfied with the program. Most significantly, they were uncomfortable with the great disproportion of men in the program (see Companion Volume I, page 28 for a discussion on women and substance use).

The remaining substance abuse groups available to women were described by participants as either mostly educational (Mutual Support Substance Abuse, Substance Abuse Education, Bath Substance Abuse Relapse Prevention) or self help (AA, NA, New Women in Sobriety). A number of reports have identified substance abuse programming as a high needs areas for the Prison for Women population (See Companion Volume I, page 34 for a description of findings from these reports).

The substance abuse education group received positive evaluations from participants (evaluation findings are included in Companion Volume II). Summaries of evaluations for the fraud group and peer support team are also included in the Companion Volume II along with descriptions of all the groups.

Ninety-three percent of the inmates interviewed requested that more groups be made available. The remaining 7% felt that the current number of groups was satisfactory. When inmates were asked what groups they would like to see made available, 25% mentioned a group for survivors of abuse, and 25% also suggested a group to help them deal with their anger. An orientation group was recommended by 18%. Other groups respondents listed as ones they would personally find helpful included: relaxation, self esteem, alternatives to violence, assertiveness, relationship building, drama workshops, AIDS educationals, adult children of alcoholics, and support groups designed specifically for lesbians and protective custody inmates.

The majority of inmates stated that they were not well informed about the availability and content of program offerings. Information regarding groups

was typically first learned through peers. A number of women suggested that a communications strategy be implemented to better inform them of the groups offered.

Despite the legal limitations and eligibility criteria, many women also suggested that much more could be done to assist and encourage women in attending community therapeutic/support groups outside the prison. Of all the women interviewed, only one left the prison to attend a group on the outside. A brief review of the logbook which records women's participation in activities outside the prisons, indicates that approximately 5 - 8 women per month leave the prison to participate in a therapeutic group (approximately 7% of the total prison population). Some of these women attend a group more than once a month.

Finally, a number of inmates commented that the current coordination of groups created difficulties in their ability to attend groups and/or benefit from them. This was said to occur because the scheduling was such that groups were either offered simultaneously, or none were offered at all. Sometimes this created a conflict because women had to choose one program over another. In other instances it meant that a woman was spending most of her time in therapeutic groups. In this latter situation, inmates stated that they felt "programmed to death". Yet, on other occasions, when women wanted to take a program, none were available.

**SUMMARY OF THERAPEUTIC GROUPS**  
**FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**FINDING: Groups Which Received The Most Support Among Inmates Were Those Which Adhered To The Principles Of Feminist Group work - Emphasizing Active Participation And Empowerment - And Which Were Most Compatible With Connected Learning**

**Recommendation**

**4.1**

Groups within the Prison for Women and in the new facilities incorporate the principles of feminist group work and connected learning (detailed in the Literature Review, Companion Volume I).

**FINDING: Ninety-Three Percent Of The Inmates Interviewed Requested That More Groups Be Available. There Is An Identified Need Especially For The Following Groups: Survivors of Abuse, Dealing With Anger, And An Orientation Group**

**Recommendation**

**4.2.1**

The feasibility of implementing the following groups at the Prison for Women be investigated by the appropriate authority: survivors of abuse, dealing with anger, and an orientation group. Where the establishment of such groups is possible, the terms of reference should designate that the contractor meet the criteria for feminist therapists and have familiarity with issues surrounding women's offenses and imprisonment, as well as knowledge of trauma, recovery work and the grieving process (outlined in the Literature Review, Companion Volume I).

**4.2.2**

A monitoring system be established in the new facilities to ensure that therapeutic groups consistently meet the needs of the women. A needs analysis be undertaken within the Prison for Women prior to the transition to the new facilities, in order that groups be offered immediately following the opening of the new facilities, and to ensure that the group offerings are consistent with the needs.

**FINDING: There Is An Identified Need Among The Inmates For Higher Intensity Substance Abuse Programming At The Prison for Women**

**Recommendation**

**4.3.1**

The feasibility of implementing a high intensity substance abuse program at the Prison for Women be investigated by the appropriate authority. This investigation should include consultation with inmates, the substance abuse counselor and the literature on women's substance use (discussed Companion Volume I). Any substance abuse groups established at the Prison for Women or within the new facilities should adhere to the principles of feminist group work and be informed by of the literature on women and substance use.

**4.3.2**

A project be undertaken by the appropriate authority to determine a system for monitoring the substance abuse needs of women in the new facilities and to implement a process ensuring that the full range of substance abuse needs are met.

**FINDING: The Majority of Inmates Stated That They Were Not Well Informed About The Availability And Content Of Program Offerings**

**Recommendation**

4.4

*See Recommendation 2.2*

In addition: The information prepared by the coordinator of program planning should be posted in high visibility areas such as near the inmate telephones in the living units and on bulletin boards throughout the institution. Other innovative ways to communicate program information be explored with the participation of inmates.

A similar process be designed and implemented in the regional facilities to inform inmates about program content and availability.

**FINDING: Many Inmates Requested Greater Access To Therapeutic Groups In The Outside Community. A Review Of The Logbook Indicates That Approximately 7% Of The Inmate Population Leave The Prison In Order To Attend Outside Group Therapy**

**Recommendation**

4.5

A project be undertaken by the appropriate authority to examine ways of increasing inmate access to community therapeutic groups within the legal limitations.

*This project may be subsumed on the larger project outlined in recommendation 7.2*

**FINDING: There Was A Perception Among The Inmates That The Coordination Of Program Offerings Was Problematic. Programs Were Said To Often Be Offered All At Once Or None At All**

**Recommendation**

4.6

The coordinator of program planning ensure that program coordination is maximized.

ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF THERAPY

Respondents were given the opportunity to list and discuss anything they regarded to be therapeutic. In response, a diverse range of examples were mentioned. For example, many found their interactions with the dog which was kept in psychology to be soothing because she provided them with "unconditional love" and affection (the literature supports the benefits of "pet therapy" in prisons, see for example Cusack, 1988). Respondents also mentioned: spiritual activities, visits and correspondence with family and friends, hobbies (i.e. ceramics, quilting), creative writing and journalling, drama, and recreational sports. Taken together, these activities were said to variously offer women: love, affection, companionship, acceptance, self-expression, self-worth and a sense of achievement.

Almost every prisoner interviewed additionally mentioned that there were one or more staff members, (nurses, correctional officers, teachers) with whom they spoke informally about their lives. Such conversations were often seen as therapeutic.

When asked what it was about the examples they listed as therapeutic or healing that made them that way, respondents variously stated that they provided women with a space to "just be themselves," be in control of their own lives, and/or an opportunity to value and be valued by another. These key factors of self determination (empowerment) and connection to others continually resurfaced throughout the interviews with respondents as critical to their well-being.

**SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF THERAPY**  
**FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**FINDING: A Wide and Diverse Range of Activities  
Were Identified As Therapeutic**

**Recommendation**

**5.1**

The diverse range of activities which can be therapeutic be recognized by those working within the Prison for Women and the new facilities. Creativity and variety in program planning be explored, encouraged and supported. Such activities might include: pet therapy, drama, dance and journalling (see the Literature Review, Companion Volume I).

## IV. STAFF TRAINING

*One guard helped me alot  
because she understands about my abuse and what it means.  
(inmate)*

*It's about flesh and bones. Humanity and people.  
(inmate)*

*You know, sometimes it's really difficult because you care about the  
women inside here, and you know that they're in such pain. And when  
they get out, it's more of the same. It hurts because you get to take it  
personally. So then you learn to be a little colder. It's survival.  
(staff)*

*I wish that I had more training. You can always learn something from  
every course. And we are professionals,  
so we should be educating ourselves.  
(staff)*

When I began this evaluation I was struck by the positive rapport I observed existing between many staff and inmates. Previous studies I had read only focused upon the negative conditions of inmate-staff relations or ignored staff altogether. Yet, in my interviews with inmates, many mentioned individual staff members who had been particularly helpful and supportive. Likewise, staff often talked about inmates quite positively. I frequently saw staff and inmates engage in friendly discussion, especially in the wings. Inmates were pleased to see staff attend some of their functions such as the peer support team graduation and the vigil held in remembrance for the women murdered in the Montreal massacre. I was also pleasantly surprised that a few staff members had taken the Peer Support Team training with inmates (see Companion Volume I, page 22 for a discussion of the positive impact of staff within PST training).

Recently, the Correctional Service of Canada implemented a policy allowing

correctional officer (CO2s) to be involved in the case management planning process. Many of the correctional officers I interviewed commented that while there were many logistical problems with this initiative, CO2 involvement has helped to foster more positive relationships with inmates. Relatedly, a few inmates commented that they received a lot of practical help from their CO2s.

These examples do not suggest that the staff-inmate interactions are unproblematic. In fact, the difficulties are many and have been detailed earlier in this report and elsewhere (see companion Volume I, page 18). Yet, what the interviews and my observations indicate is that there is good-will which can be built upon in efforts toward establishing a more empowering and equitable environment.

For example, as indicated previously in this report, most staff acknowledged their own desire to engage in mutually respectful relationships with other staff as well as inmates. This potential should be supported and enhanced so that all staff carry a shared understanding of and commitment toward the establishment of mutually respectful relationships. This process would assist in the creation of a more supportive atmosphere for prisoners, and an enhanced working environment for staff.

One way to help foster mutually respectful relationships may be for counselors to share their knowledge with other staff. For example, the majority of staff interviewed reported that they were unfamiliar with the availability, content and theory of both individual and group counseling, yet almost all voiced an interest in learning.

Staff knowledge of such issues as post traumatic stress and its sequelae would for example, help staff to avoid situations which could trigger flashbacks, it may assist them in understanding why inmates self-injure and why they frequently complain of diverse physical symptoms. It could also help staff to more clearly comprehend the practices of counselors.

Most staff stated that they would like to take more training sessions, and many of these requested courses focusing upon issues related to survivors of abuse, self-injury and anger management (how to effectively deal with their own anger and frustration). Staff who attended a two-day training session designed to sensitize them to survivor issues responded very positively to the course (see Companion Volume II for participant evaluations of this course).

The reader is urged to refer to Companion Volume I regarding the importance of staff awareness around issues of trauma (in particular, see page 18) and the positive effects upon inmates of staff training in human relations (see page 21).

It must be stressed that such training in no way prepares staff to provide formal therapy to inmates. The literature suggests that therapy work with a population such as the women inside the prison, must only be done by therapists with training and/or experience specifically related to women's issues of trauma (see Companion Volume I, page 27).

In sum, a shared understanding of mutually respectful relationships would appear to assist in the creation of a safer environment for inmates, and a more pleasant working environment for staff. Another strategy is to ensure

that staff members reflect the cultural diversity of the inmate population. A number of Aboriginal women commented that they appreciated having Aboriginal women on staff, and would like to see many more. Women of Colour inmates stated that they often felt alienated from the staff because there were no Women of Colour on staff. It was suggested by a number of inmates that staff be recruited to reflect the diversity within the inmate population.

**SUMMARY OF STAFF TRAINING**  
**FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**FINDING: Most Of The Staff Interviewed Reported That They Were Unfamiliar With The Availability, Content And Theory Of Both Individual And Group Counseling, Yet Almost All Indicated An Interest In Learning About Them**

**Recommendation**

**6.1.1**

A pilot project be undertaken by the appropriate authority to design a staff training course which would familiarize staff with the therapeutic approach taken by the counselors. This would include, but not be limited to, discussions on: empowerment, mutually respectful relationships, dealing effectively with self anger, feminist therapy, the link between women's offenses and their life histories, trauma and recovery, women and substance use, women's psychology, and women's styles of learning. The course would be piloted at the Prison for Women, and be implemented at the new facilities. Staff working within the new facilities should receive this training prior to their work at the prison, and mandatory "refresher" courses (as well as others) should be offered throughout the terms of their employment.

**6.1.2**

A pilot project be undertaken to design a process for team building within the new regional facilities. In order that training be reinforced, and that the environment pose the least hardship to prisoners, staff in the new regional facilities must operate as a team, with shared philosophy rooted in mutually respectful relationships and aimed at assisting inmates toward self-empowerment. Shakopee Correctional Facility, Minnesota, has been identified as successful in this regard (Di Pisa, Bertrand, Biron, 1992) and should be contacted by the project consultant.

Staff should be kept informed of the counseling and groups available to inmates:  
*See Recommendation 2.2*

**FINDING: Inmates Felt That Cultural Diversity Among Staff, Reflecting The Inmate Population, Would Assist In The Creation Of A More Healing Environment**

**Recommendation**

**6.2**

Staff be actively recruited and employed to reflect the diversity within the inmate population.

## V: AT THE CROSSROADS: RELEASE FROM PRISON

*We are set up to fail.  
(inmate)*

*It's very lonely out there on the outside.  
The experience of being a prisoner remains with you like a ghost.  
Always haunting you. You're never really free from prison.  
(inmate)*

*It's sad to see them come back again.  
(staff)*

*There needs to be a better system for the inmates, once they get outside.  
It must be scary to have spent so much time inside and then be expected  
just to get on with your life.  
(staff)*

This report has come full circle. During my year involvement at The Prison for Women, I saw some women leave the prison, only to return shortly afterward. Many of the women I talked with raised concerns that they would be unprepared for release from prison. Most cited that problems related to post-relapse began when they first entered the prison - at the program planning stage. As discussed earlier, both staff and inmates were displeased with the correctional planning process. In theory, women are supposed to be linked up with community services at the location inmates are to be released to. In practice, however, the linkages do not adequately occur.

There are a number of ways that an inmate's adjustment into the community can be facilitated. For example, the community integration program is intended specifically to help prepare inmates for release. As indicated earlier, however, respondents were unhappy with this group. Attendance at community groups or functions outside the prison, while an inmate is incarcerated, can also assist in adjustment. As mentioned previously, a

quick logbook review indicated that 7% of the population was attending some form of counseling outside the prison. Because it was beyond the scope of this evaluation, I did not measure how many women access the outside community in other ways, including: ETAs, UTAs, the minimum house, and work placement. However, many of the inmates interviewed reported that they would like to see improved access to each of these. Inmates commented further that community groups who come inside the prison, such as the Elizabeth Fry Society and the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, are often very helpful in offering support and sometimes follow-up assistance upon release. A team approach to planning, emphasizing increased community involvement, may additionally assist inmates in bridging the gap between prison and the community (see for example this report page 30).

Many prisoners mentioned that in order to stay out of prison once released, it is essential that they be provided with the opportunity to develop job skills which would assist them in finding employment. In this regard, they felt that the prison was very negligent.

Inmates also identified the need for a support group, where ex-inmates who "made it" on the outside, could meet with those still on the inside. They felt that ex-inmates could provide them with the most practical information and realistic expectations on how to prepare for release and what to expect once released. Seeing someone who was successful, would also provide them with optimism. More importantly however, respondents emphasized that the value in meeting with ex-prisoners came from the shared experience of imprisonment (see also Companion Volume II, page 57 regarding the

importance of peer support groups among women inside prison).

When asked what would help them to adjust back into the community once released, many women mentioned a support group for ex-inmates for the same reasons that they wanted such a group inside the prison. Most fundamentally, such groups would provide an opportunity to be with others who had shared their experiences of incarceration. Such groups have been shown to be very helpful elsewhere. For example, Eaton (1993) writes that ex-prisoner groups and organizations in Britain provide women with a critical bridge between the prison and the outside community.

A number of women said that they would like individual counseling and substance abuse counseling available upon release, but stated that they should be able to choose their counselor, rather than be limited to the one under contract to CSC. Some women wanted to join a group for survivors once released. Other mentioned assistance with practical matters like job hunting, child care, housing and money management.

**SUMMARY OF AT THE CROSSROADS: RELEASE FROM PRISON**  
**FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**FINDING: Inmates Felt That They Were  
Insufficiently Prepared For Release**

*See recommendation 2.1*

**FINDING: Inmates Were Unhappy With The Community Integration Program,  
The Program Designed Specifically For Release Preparation.  
Inmates Felt That A Peer Support Group,  
Designed To Prepare Them For Release, Would Be More Appropriate**

**Recommendation**

**7.1**

A pilot project, the design and implementation of a peer support group for women who are soon to be released, be undertaken at the Prison for Women. Group evaluations of this project should be used to inform the feasibility and construction of similar groups in the new facilities.

Groups will be comprised of educational and supportive components. Facilitators will meet the criteria for feminist therapists and have familiarity with issues surrounding women's offenses and imprisonment, as well as knowledge of trauma, recovery work and the grieving process (outlined in the Literature Review, Companion Volume I). Ex-inmates should be invited into the group at the appropriate time, to share knowledge. A primary purpose of the group would be to link women with appropriate community support.

**FINDING: Inmates Indicated That Increased Gradual Access To The Outside  
Community Would Assist Them In Adjusting Into The Community Once Released**

**Recommendation**

**7.2**

A project be undertaken by the appropriate authority to examine Prison for Women inmate patterns of access to the outside community. The purpose of this undertaking would be to determine ways of increasing inmate access to the outside community within the legal limitations. The findings would apply to inmates in the Prison for Women, as well as in the new facilities. Additional analysis of the communities in which the new facilities will be opening be undertaken to assist in determining strategies for inmate access to the outside community following the closure of the Prison for Women. The analyses would include, but not be limited to: therapeutic groups, individual counseling, ETAs, UTAs, the minimum house, and work placements.

*Recommendation 4.5 may be subsumed under this project.*

**FINDING: Inmates Identified The Acquisition Of Employable Job Skills To Be Essential In Successful Adjustment Following Release From Prison**

**Recommendation**

**7.3**

A needs analysis be undertaken at the Prison for Women to determine the job skills most appropriate for inmate training programs. The job skills will assist inmates in the attainment of employment once released into the community. The needs analysis will be used to inform the design of job skills programs within the Prison for Women and the new regional facilities. The needs analysis will consult the adult education literature on women's learning. In particular, the BRIDGES program be examined for its applicability to female offenders (see Literature Review, Companion Volume I). Additionally, the success of the female minimum facility in providing women with relevant job skills be examined and drawn from.

**FINDING: Inmates Indicated That a Support Group for Ex-Offenders Living Outside The Prison Would Assist Them In Integrating Into The Community Once Released**

**Recommendation**

**7.4**

The appropriate authority resource support groups for ex-offenders.

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