

Culturally Responsive Hearings for Black Parole Candidates

What is a Culturally Responsive Hearing?

The Parole Board of Canada (PBC) understands the important role that culture, community and history play in the successful reintegration of incarcerated individuals into the community.

A Culturally Responsive Hearing (CRH) is a hearing that is supported by a Cultural Advisor from the same diverse community as the person being reviewed for parole.

During a CRH for Black parole candidates, a PBC Cultural Advisor attends the hearing to give support and information to Board members.

What is the Role of a Cultural Advisor?

A PBC Cultural Advisor is not involved in the decision-making process itself. The Cultural Advisor's role is to give Board members information about the specific cultures, values and traditions of Black communities.

The Cultural Advisor can also talk about historical considerations, challenges and opportunities for that community that may be relevant for Board members in their decision-making.

What happens at a Culturally Responsive Hearing?

A CRH follows the same decision-making criteria as a normal hearing, but the format can be different depending on the individual.

For example, the hearing can be held in a circle seating format, or the Cultural Advisor may include a specific cultural protocol, such as a ceremony.

When invited by a Board member, the Cultural Advisor will offer their wisdom, perspective and guidance during the hearing.

The Cultural Advisor can talk at your hearing about:

- your lived experience;
- your understanding of traditions and spirituality;
- your progress towards healing and rehabilitation;
- your community reintegration; and
- the community's readiness to receive you, if this applies.

The PBC Cultural Advisor may be present when Board members deliberate to discuss your case but is not involved in the decision-making process.

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Who is at the hearing?

- Parole Officer
- Your assistant (if you have one)
- PBC Cultural Advisor
- PBC Hearing Officer(s)
- PBC Board member(s)
- Registered victim(s)
- Other observers (CSC and/or PBC staff members, support person(s), members of the public, and/or media).

How to Apply for a Culturally Responsive Hearing?

To apply, ask your Parole Officer or a member of your Case Management Team (CMT) for the form – ***Request for a Culturally Responsive Hearing***. They can also help you fill it out, if needed.

Once the form is filled, give it to your Parole Officer or your CMT at least **28 days before your hearing**. You will be told in writing if your request is approved or not.

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