

# CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

## CSC Research Progress Overview : 2023-2024

### Introduction

The Research Branch of the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) is a centralized research unit operating within the Policy Sector at National Headquarters. As an in-house research unit, it is uniquely positioned to provide relevant, operationally meaningful and applied correctional research in support of CSC's mission and mandate.

In its 2023-2024 Annual Report, the Office of the Correctional Investigator (OCI) recommended that CSC ensure effective communication of progress and updates on research and development activities pertaining to assessment and classification as well as research informing decision-making related to federally-incarcerated Indigenous peoples. To this end, key initiatives for the 2023-2024 fiscal year are summarized below.

### Assessment and Classification Tools

The Custody Rating Scale (CRS) is the actuarial tool used at intake to assist in discerning initial security level within CSC. In 2023-2024, the Research Branch published a series of studies that examined the validity of the tool for use among various offender subgroups, including Indigenous men (McKendy et al., 2023a) and Indigenous women (McKendy, et al., 2023b; see also: McKendy, et al., 2023c; McKendy, et al., 2023d; McKendy, et al., 2023e). Patterns of discordance between the actuarial tool and final security decisions were also examined across race/ethnic groups (McKendy, et al., 2023f). This research was completed under the guidance of an expert external advisory panel comprised of academics. Findings across studies demonstrated that the CRS holds predictive validity at initial intake across offender subgroups. During the project, the potential for enhancing security decision-making and outcomes through a culturally responsive lens was noted.

Discussion of these findings has informed work between the CSC's Research Branch and the Deputy Commissioner of Indigenous Corrections (DCIC) to support enhancements to the security classification process for federally sentenced Indigenous peoples. Specifically, a guidance tool is under development to support front-line staff consideration of Indigenous social history, as well as strengths and protective factors when making security classification decisions.

Moreover, insights from previous research, including the work completed under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the University of Regina, the recent comprehensive review of the literature conducted by Olver et al. (2023), as well as findings from the CRS studies and expert panel recommendations, are informing current strategies to enhance risk assessment and the security classification process for federally sentenced Indigenous peoples.

Specifically, research is underway to examine the possibility of integrating dynamic with static factors when examining risk and exploring the predictive validity of statistically determined cut-off values to improve decision-making. This work also includes exploring different models to further improve the predictive validity and reliability of dynamic risk ratings for Indigenous and non-Indigenous men and women. Previous findings indicated that greater predictability can be achieved by using statistically determined cut-off values over structured professional judgement (Wilton, et al., 2017). The study aims to demonstrate how these ratings differ in their relationship to revocations of conditional release to the community.



# CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

## Informing Culturally Responsive Operations

In 2023-2024 the Research Branch also released a series of publications focusing on Healing Lodges (Hanby, et al., 2022; Hanby, et al., 2023; Ridha, et al., 2023).

Healing Lodges are environments that are centered on Indigenous values, traditions and beliefs. Within a correctional context, Healing Lodges offer culturally relevant environments and interventions for Indigenous peoples to address factors that led to their incarceration, as well as prepare them for release in the community.

This qualitative work was unique in its inclusion of all ten Healing Lodges currently in operation as well as in capturing the voices of residents, Elders/Spiritual Advisors, and staff (Hanby & Derkzen, 2023; Hanby, & Derkzen, 2024; Hanby & Hawthorn, 2024; Hanby & Reist, 2023; Hanby & Ridha, 2022a; Hanby & Ridha, 2022b; Hanby & Ridha, 2022c; Hanby & Smeth, 2024; Hanby & Smeth, 2023a; Hanby & Smeth, 2023b). Findings from this work shed light on operational best practices and challenges, including those related to resourcing, community engagement, resident population, and staffing.

The reports have been shared extensively and discussed with internal partners and collaborators within CSC to inform decisions and support renewed calls for action for the ongoing support of culturally responsive environments and interventions for Indigenous peoples.

## Partnerships, Engagement and Staff Training

The Research Branch continues to engage with external, independent experts to develop evidence-informed and culturally responsive approaches to strengthen and enhance the assessment and classification process for federally sentenced Indigenous peoples.

The Research Branch has worked in close collaboration with the Women Offender Sector and an Indigenous scholar external to CSC to develop a research framework to assess the impact of the revised Indigenous Women Offender Correctional Program (IWOCPP). This collaborative work is informing decisions that incorporate Indigenous research principles and knowledge and has helped guide the selection of measures and tools that support culturally responsive and trauma-informed data collection practices. This research also explores strength-based measures in assessing the impact of cultural interventions.

Research staff training on OCAP is scheduled for March 2025. OCAP, which stands for Ownership, Control, Access and Possession – is a set of principles that aims to ensure that First Nations communities have control over their data and information. OCAP training provided by the First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC) is designed to educate researchers and other individuals who work with First Nations data on the importance of these principles and how they can be applied to their work.

Moreover, the Research Branch is partnering with external experts to build capacity for research co-development and co-design. This initiative directly supports the Branch's commitment to incorporate diverse perspectives in the development of research approaches and practices to inform culturally responsive operations.

Finally, the Research Branch is also in the process of establishing an Indigenous Research Advisory Circle. The role of the Advisory Circle will be to guide and advise culturally respectful and informed research involving federally sentenced Indigenous peoples. Establishing an Advisory Circle represents an important commitment in CSC's reconciliation journey to build respectful and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous partners. The Advisory Circle will engage Indigenous Elders, Indigenous researchers/scholars/academics, and Indigenous community practitioners and leaders in meaningful dialogue in support of culturally responsive research and will provide guidance on the integration of Indigenous perspectives, knowledge, teachings, values, oral traditions, and worldviews into research approaches and practice.



## CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

The Advisory Circle is being developed under the guidance and advice of an Elder. The first in-person meeting is expected to be held in the Spring 2025.

**For more information**

To obtain full PDF versions of the CSC reports mentioned in this summary, or for other inquiries, please email the [Research Branch](#).

You can also visit the [Research Publications](#) section for a full list of reports and one-page summaries.

**References**

Hanby, L. & Derkzen, D. (2023). *Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge: Resident, Elder, and Staff Experiences (ERR-23-11)*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

Hanby, L. & Derkzen, D. (2024). *Stan Daniels Healing Centre: Resident, Staff, and Elder Experiences (ERR-24-03)*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

Hanby, L. & Hawthorn, D. (2024). *Waseskun Healing Centre: Experiences and Perspectives (ERR-23-38)*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

Hanby, L., Reist, R., Smeth, A., Cram, S., & Derkzen, D. (2023). *A qualitative study of experiences at women's Healing Lodges (Research Report R-470)*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service Canada.

Hanby, L. & Reist, R. (2023). *Buffalo Sage Wellness House: Resident, Elder, and Staff Experiences (ERR-23-09)*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

Hanby, L., Ridha, T., Sullivan, R., & Farrell MacDonald, S. (2022). *Indigenous Healing Lodges: Impacts on offender reintegration and community outcomes. (Research Report R-437)*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service Ontario.

Hanby, L. & Ridha, T. (2022a). *Willow Cree Healing Lodge: Resident, Elder, and Staff Experiences (ERR-20-12)*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

Hanby, L. & Ridha, T. (2022b). *Pê Sâkâstêw Centre: Resident, Elder, and Staff Experiences (ERR-20-11)*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

Hanby, L. & Ridha, T. (2022c). *Kwikwêxwelhp Healing Village: Resident, Elder and Staff Experiences (ERR-20-10)*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

Hanby, L. & Smeth, A. (2024). *Experiences at O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi Healing Lodge (ERR-24-04)*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

Hanby, L. & Smeth, A. (2023a). *Experiences at Prince Albert Grand Council Spiritual Healing Lodge (ERR-23-28)*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

Hanby, L. & Smeth, A. (2023b). *Eagle Women's Lodge: Resident and Staff Experiences (ERR-23-10)*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.



## CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

McKendy, L., Woodard, A. & Keown, L.A. (2023b). *Revalidation of the Custody Rating Scale for Indigenous Women Offenders (Research Report R-476)*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

McKendy, L., Woodard, A. & Keown, L.A. (2023d). *Revalidation of the Custody Rating Scale for Non-Indigenous Women Offenders (Research Report R-475)*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada

McKendy, L., Woodard, A. & Keown, L.A. (2023e). *Validation of the Custody Rating Scale for Black Men Offenders (Research Report R-474)*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada

McKendy, L., Woodard, A. & Keown, L.A. (2023a). *Revalidation of the Custody Rating Scale for Indigenous Men Offenders (Research Report R-473)*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada

McKendy, L., Woodard, A. & Keown, L.A. (2023c). *Revalidation of the Custody Rating Scale for Men Offenders (Research Report R-472)*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada

McKendy, L., Woodard, A. & Keown, L.A. (2023f). *Concordance Between the Custody Rating Scale (CRS) and Offender Security Level (OSL) Among Men Offenders (Research Report R-471)*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

Olver, M.E., Stockdale, K.C., Woods, P., Temeer, J., Prince, J. (2024). *Too Risky to Use, or Too Risky Not to? Lessons Learned From Over 30 Years of Research on Forensic Risk Assessment With Indigenous Persons*. *Psychological Bulletin*, vol.150 (5), 487-553.

Ridha, T., Hanby, L., & Sullivan, R. (2023). *Experiences at Men's CSC-operated Healing Lodges: A Qualitative Examination (Research Report R-444)*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

Wilton, G., Stewart, L. A., & Motiuk, L. (2017). *Can the Predictive Validity of the Dynamic Factors Identification and Analysis – Revised Be Improved by Calculated Ratings?* (Research Report R-400). Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

