

Culturally Responsive Hearings for Indigenous 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 an Elder or Cultural Advisor from an Indigenous community. Indigenous individuals and non-Indigenous individuals who have demonstrated a commitment to an Indigenous way of life may request a CRH.

During a CRH, a PBC Elder or Cultural Advisor attends the hearing to give support and information to Board members.

Community-Assisted Hearings (CAH) are also available to individuals seeking release to an Indigenous community under section 84 of the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*.

CAH hearings allow members of the Indigenous community where the release is being proposed to participate in the hearing, for example by explaining their role in your proposed community reintegration plan.

What is the Role of a Cultural Advisor / Elder?

A PBC Elder or Cultural Advisor is not involved in the decision-making process itself. Their role is to give Board members information about the specific cultures, values and traditions

of the Indigenous community the parole candidate is connected to.

They 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 during 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 Elder/Cultural Advisor may include cultural protocols, such as a ceremony or a prayer.

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

The Elder or Cultural Advisor can talk at the hearing about:

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

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A PBC Elder or Cultural Advisor may be present when Board member deliberate to discuss your case, but they are not involved in the decision-making process.

Who is at the hearing:

- Parole Officer
- Your assistant (if you have one)
- PBC Elder or 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 (CRH)?

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.

How to Apply for a Community-Assisted Hearing (CAH)

To apply, ask your Parole Officer or a member of your CMT for the PBC form – ***Request for a Community-Assisted 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 **three (3) months before your hearing**. You will be told in writing if your request is approved or not.

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