



## *Foundational Document*

### *Federally sentenced Aboriginal women in maximum security: what happened to the promises of “creating choices”?*

SkyBlue Morin  
January 1999

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# **Federally sentenced Aboriginal women in maximum security: what happened to the promises of “creating choices”?<sup>1</sup>**

SkyBlue Morin

*January 1999*

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During the period when Ms. Morin conducted her interviews (December 1997 through February 1998) the population of women classified as maximum security fluctuated between about 40 and 50 of whom about 40-47% were of Aboriginal descent. Within one year, by January 1999, this number dropped below 30 and has remained so since that time. In the summer of 1999, the number of women classified as maximum security dropped to 25 of whom 6 (24%) were Aboriginal.

Of the 17 women interviewed by Ms. Morin, only eight (8) women are currently incarcerated: two (2) are classified as maximum security and six (6) are classified as medium security.

It should also be noted that prior to the time of these interviews, the Correctional Service was experiencing difficulty obtaining the services of Elders available to work on a consistent basis with this population. This has since been rectified.

The companion study by Donna McDonagh, Ph.D. of non-Aboriginal women classified as maximum security (Not Letting the Time do You) indicates that program/treatment motivation and participation is a serious issue. Programs and services are available on a continuous basis to maximum security women, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal; however, actual participation fluctuates widely. Nevertheless, the Service remains concerned about the issues raised by Ms. Morin and will address them during the implementation phase of the Intensive Intervention Strategy.

Women Offender Sector  
Correctional Service of Canada  
September 1999

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## **Introduction**

This report is a reflection of interviews that took place between December 1997 and February 1998 in Springhill Institution, Prison for Women, the Regional Psychiatric Centre (Prairies) and Saskatchewan Penitentiary. The report presents opinions, observations and suggestions of federally sentenced maximum security Aboriginal women and CSC staff on the procedures, policies and programs that CSC has in place to help reduce the security levels of Aboriginal women. This research project provided prisoners with an opportunity to express their views. It offers CSC recommendations and insights into better serving the Aboriginal women in maximum security. This report is also a reflection of what Aboriginal women have to say about their security level. It states what needs to be done to help them achieve a reduced security level, in order to transfer out of maximum security and eventually be released into the community.

This report is divided into a variety of sections that focus on different areas relevant to Aboriginal women in prison. Background information is provided on current legislation and policy as it applies to the Aboriginal women. The research method and other information on how the interviews were conducted are covered under “Research Methodology”. What the Aboriginal women had to say regarding a number of areas and what CSC staff had to say is covered extensively. The final section of this report discusses “Findings and Identified Needs”, “Conclusion” and “Recommendations”.

## **2. Background**

The following background information section identifies the current legislation and policy framework of CSC as it directly impacts on incarcerated Aboriginal women.

### ***Corrections and Conditional Release Act***

The Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA) states in Section 4(h): “that correctional policies, programs and practices respect gender, ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences and be responsive to the special needs of women and aboriginal peoples...”. Sections 79 to 84 explicitly discuss the needs of Aboriginal prisoners, including: programs, agreements, advisory committees, spiritual leaders and Elders, parole plans and other aspects that are designed to address the distinct needs of the Aboriginal prisoner. In addition, Section 74 states that “The Service shall provide inmates with the opportunity to contribute to decisions of the Service affecting the inmate population as a whole, or affecting a group within the inmate population...”.

### ***Commissioner’s Directives***

CSC’s Commissioner’s Directives #702 states the following in regards to policy objectives, spiritual practices and Aboriginal Liaison Services for Aboriginal offender programs:

### *Policy Objectives*

1. To ensure that Aboriginal Offenders are provided with an equitable opportunity to practice their culture and traditions without discrimination and with an opportunity to implement traditional Aboriginal healing practices.
2. To recognize and respect that Aboriginal cultures and traditional practices contribute to the holistic healing of the Aboriginal Offender and his or her eventual reintegration into society.
3. To recognize that Aboriginal Offenders have the collective and individual right to maintain and develop their distinct identities and characteristics including the right to identify themselves as Aboriginal.
4. To ensure and recognize that Aboriginal Offenders have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs including the preservation, protection and access to cultural sites, ceremonial objects and traditional medicines.
5. To ensure that the needs of all Aboriginal Offenders are identified and that programs and services are developed and maintained to meet those needs.

### *Spiritual Practices*

27. The institutional head, following consultation with Aboriginal inmates, Elders and communities, shall make arrangements for one or more Elders to provide spiritual leadership, including teaching, counselling and the conduct of traditional ceremonies, to Aboriginal inmates.

### *Aboriginal Liaison Services*

28. The institutional head, following consultation with Aboriginal offenders, Elders and communities, shall make arrangements for one or more liaison personnel to assist in providing leadership, teaching, cultural awareness, counselling and general service to Aboriginal offenders.

### ***CSC's Objectives***

CSC's Strategic Objective 2.3 states: "to provide programs to assist offenders in meeting their individual needs, in order to enhance their potential for reintegration as law-abiding citizens". Linked is CSC's 1998/99 Corporate Objectives, which states: "significantly increase the number of aboriginal offenders safely and successfully reintegrated".

### ***Creating Choices: The Report of the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women***

*Creating Choices* was adopted by the government in 1990 and was the basis for the development of the women offender program. *Creating Choices* recognized that a

comprehensive approach to the unique program needs of federally sentenced women is required. Creating Choices lists the following “Principles for Change” which have guided the implementation of the regional women’s facilities and the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge:

- Principle #1: Empowerment
- Principle #2: Meaningful and Responsible Choices
- Principle #3: Respect and Dignity
- Principle #4: Supportive Environment
- Principle #5: Shared Responsibility (among levels of government, service agencies, volunteer organizations, businesses and community for the development of support systems and the continuity of service).

This comprehensive approach needs to include federally sentenced Aboriginal women (FSAW), as the research data shows that they have been neglected. FSAW are not dealt with in a manner that is empowering to them. Their contact with staff has been one of feeling powerless. They have not been provided with meaningful and responsible choices, as they have had to repeat the same programs and take some programs that they believe were not necessary. They indicate that their institutional environments have not been supportive. Many FSAW asked “What happened to the promises of Creating Choices?”.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### ***Research Method***

The data included in this research report were obtained from 17 of the 20 Aboriginal women identified as maximum security at the time of the interviews, and 8 CSC staff who work directly with them. Two Aboriginal women in the maximum security population were provincially sentenced but were serving their time in a federal facility and therefore included in this research. The interviews took place between December 1997 and February 1998. The Aboriginal women were interviewed once, while some staff were interviewed more than once because they worked directly with more than one FSAW (each staff interview focused on one Aboriginal woman). Only one of the CSC staff was Aboriginal.

The Aboriginal women who volunteered for this study were asked to sign an informed consent form to insure that they understood the purpose of the interview and to allow them the opportunity to decide whether or not they would participate in the interview process. All information gathered in the interview is confidential. Names are not associated with any complaint or recommendation that appears in this research report. Before each interview took place it was communicated to each Aboriginal woman the reason for the interview: “to gather information that will assist CSC in helping maximum security Aboriginal women reduce their security levels”. This was an opportunity for the women to identify

their needs and comment on how these needs are, and could be, addressed (in accordance with Section 74 of the CCRA which states: “The Service shall provide inmates with the opportunity to contribute to decisions of the Service affecting the inmate population as a whole, or affecting a group within the inmate population, except decisions relating to security matters.”). The interview process took approximately one and a one-half hours per person. The women were informed that they could end the interview at any point.

A semi-structured interview method was used for both the Aboriginal women and the CSC staff in order to elicit self-reports of the opinions, beliefs or response to the various questions. This technique involved in-depth interviews with the Aboriginal women that asked a number of questions including: personal background information; questions relating to their security level; factors in the Custody Rating Scale used to determine a criminal risk rating; need factors such as physical, emotional, situational, societal, etc.; programs and their usefulness in reducing security levels; questions regarding the staff; accommodation options and other factors that help reduce their security level.

Interviews of the Aboriginal women and CSC staff were conducted as follows:

INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED BETWEEN DECEMBER 1997 AND FEBRUARY 1998

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Number of Aboriginal Women Interviewed</i>	<i>Number of Interviews Conducted With CSC Staff / Contractors</i>
Springhill Institution Springhill, Nova Scotia	2	3
Prison for Women Kingston, Ontario	2	3
Saskatchewan Penitentiary Prince Albert, Saskatchewan	9	7
Regional Psychiatric Centre Saskatoon, Saskatchewan	4	4
Total	17	17

### ***Risk Assessment***

Once an initial assessment and orientation has been completed for a prisoner, it is systematically reviewed and analyzed to arrive at a measure of risk posed by the prisoner. Several research-based tools and policy guidelines are used that focus on historical or “static” factors that are correlated to the risk for re-offending, such as:

- The Criminal History Record (including young offender history where available)
- The Offence Severity Record
- Guidelines to assess “serious harm”

The Criminal Risk Rating of either “high”, “medium” or “low” is based on the results of the above mentioned analytical tools and policy instruments.



### ***Needs Assessment***

The identification and analysis of prisoners' need is based on a systematic assessment of factors related to each of the following seven criminogenic need areas:

- Employment
- Marital/Family
- Associates/Social Interaction
- Substance Abuse
- Community Functioning
- Personal/Emotional Orientation
- Attitude

The objective of the needs assessment is to gain a detailed understanding of both strengths and problems related to each of the above need areas and their relationship to the history of criminal behaviour. This assessment provides the basis for the Correctional Plan. Program requirements are developed to assist each person to achieve reductions in security level, eventual release, and long-term success in the community.

## **4. Research Analysis**

Some common themes that resulted from the research data are:

### ***Racism and Discrimination***

FSAW stated they were not treated with respect and dignity, but viewed with prejudice because they were prisoners. Some staff had a prejudiced view of the FSAW. A psychologist working in one of the institutions stated the FSAW were “animals”. Some FSAW stated that identifying themselves as Aboriginal did more harm than good.

### ***Breeches of Confidentiality***

FSAW felt there are breeches of confidentiality because staff talk to prisoners about other prisoners. Consequently, there is no confidentiality in the prisons because everyone (staff and prisoners) finds out what is going on with any one of the FSAW. CSC needs to be more adamant in their keeping of confidentiality.

### ***Authority Based Programming***

Withholding programs is used as punishment against FSAW to get them to conform and obey CSC staff. This authority based programming and interaction aimed at controlling the prisoner results in non-cooperation by FSAW, who believe program availability and

permission to participate should be available to all prisoners and not conditional on staff perceptions. FSAW are frustrated because correctional staff recognize only their negative behaviour and not the positive. Because programs are withheld or delayed, FSAW cannot address their Correctional Plans and remain incarcerated longer, many until their statutory release dates. CSC needs to monitor their prisons to ensure they are providing the required programming to prisoners. An essential requirement is that institutions allow FSAW to take programs, not withhold programs and not delay the implementation of programs, etc..

### ***Young Offender Record History***

FSAW's young offender histories have been included in the assessment of security classification as required by Commissioner's Directive #505 . There is no recognition of personal growth, change in behaviour and emotional maturity. Some FSAW are between the ages of 30 to 40 years, but their young offender history is still used against them. CSC needs to determine a cut-off point in gathering data against offenders, by excluding young offender record history.

## **5. Federally Sentenced Aboriginal Women's Perspective**

### ***Intake Assessment and Correctional Plan***

- 100 % of the Aboriginal women and the staff interviewed identified the need for "one to one" counselling. The Aboriginal women reported that they could not disclose certain information in group counselling. CSC staff indicated that "one to one" counselling was the best form for disclosure for Aboriginal women.
- 100% of the Aboriginal women identified the need for more contact with Elders. Elder counselling must be made available on a full-time basis and be recognized in the Correctional Plan. Elder intervention must also be available when disagreements arise.
- 13 of the Aboriginal women (76%) identified the need for individually based Intake Assessment and Correctional Plans. Some Aboriginal women have special needs such as: fetal alcohol syndrome/effects, battered women's syndrome characteristics, suicidal tendencies, etc. that require individual assessment and a specialized correctional plan. These tools are also used in gauging parole requirements.
- 13 of the Aboriginal women (76%) stated that parole hearings are delayed or waived because the Intake Assessment information was dated and Correctional Plans were incomplete. It is imperative that the Intake Assessment and the Correctional Plans be timely and up to date.
- 13 of the Aboriginal women (76%) indicated security levels are not explained to them. In order for the Aboriginal women to work on lowering their security level, reasons for changes in security levels needs to be explained, as well as deciphering

how the Correctional Plan relates to increase or decrease security levels.

Discussion

- Young Offender records are included in the Intake Assessment. Some women felt that there is no recognition of personal growth, change in behaviour and emotional maturity. Many Aboriginal women are 25 to 40 years old and feel they have made changes in their behaviour in the last 10 to 25 years.

***Programs and Delivery***

- 100% of the Aboriginal women stated that Aboriginal ceremonies need to be recognized as part of the Correctional Plan (for their healing effects in dealing with the Aboriginal women).
- 100% of the Aboriginal women stated that programs facilitated by Correctional Officer II's (CO2's) do not work. CO2's as facilitators only creates anger and animosity among prisoners.
- 16 of the Aboriginal women (94%) indicated the need for intensive treatment programs for alcohol and drug abuse, similar to a 28 day treatment centre program with an intensive relapse prevention program as follow-up.
- 13 of the Aboriginal women (76%) stated that Aboriginal women need a specialized treatment program to address slashing and suicidal behaviour.
- 13 of the Aboriginal women (76%) stated that Aboriginal women need specialized programs based on individual needs that address grief and loss, living without violence and the effects of family violence, dysfunctional family systems, the cycle of abuse, a couples counselling program to address co-dependency and self-esteem building.
- 13 of the Aboriginal women (76%) stated that CSC needs to provide more culturally relevant programs that are recognized in the Correctional Plan and facilitated by Aboriginal people.
- 13 of the Aboriginal women (76%) stated that program repetition or restart should not occur upon transfer.
- 13 of the Aboriginal women (76%) stated that programs need to be completed in phases or steps. This allows the Aboriginal women to deal with specific areas, finish them and have a sense of accomplishment. Positive behaviour needs to be recognized, not only the negative behaviour.
- 4 of the Aboriginal women (24%) stated that Aboriginal women need to access post secondary or university education. Some Aboriginal women have grade ten to twelve education.

- 4 of the Aboriginal women (24%) stated that Aboriginal women need a parenting skills program, to learn to parent their children during visits and upon release. Many Aboriginal women have been absentee parents because of incarceration and have not been able to learn parenting skills through family role modelling or support.
- 2 of the Aboriginal women (12%) stated that Prison for Women needs to address delays in providing the required programs.
- 2 of the Aboriginal women (12%) stated that Prison for Women needs to increase Native Liaison services and Elder counselling, both of which need to be recognized in the Correctional Plan.

#### Discussion

- Programs should have a spiritual base, as well as emotional support. They should not focus so much on anger and negative behaviour, but on positive behaviour, as well.
- Aboriginal women believe they should not be forced to take programs, but should be able to take them when they are ready. It is imperative that federal institutions implement specialized programming that is culturally and gender specific for Aboriginal women. Programs with a woman-centred approach containing Aboriginal culture and spirituality as the focus are required in all institutions where Aboriginal women are incarcerated.
- Programs that would help Aboriginal women include: suicidal and slashing prevention; intensive treatment programs for alcohol and drug addictions; relapse prevention programs; “Breaking Barriers” program with peer support counselors; full-time Elder counselling and more ceremonies for healing; community reintegration programs with support systems; programs to learn about domestic violence and the cycle of abuse; parenting skills programs; others.
- Extensive programming in self-esteem building would instil in the Aboriginal women a pride and belief in themselves. Programming around co-dependency, abusive relationships and “Living Without Violence” will educate the women about these complex relationships and could prevent them from returning to abusive relationships upon their release.

#### *Needs: Physical, Emotional, Situational, Societal, Etc.*

- 13 of the Aboriginal women (76%) stated they want better health care and, at times, the staff disregards their requests. In some instances, for Aboriginal women to get medical attention they take extreme measures, like slashing themselves.

- 13 of the Aboriginal women (76%) stated they need to be assessed by an Aboriginal psychologist, who is culturally sensitive. Some psychologists are difficult to understand due to language barrier; others are hard to connect with due to a cultural barrier.
- 10 of the Aboriginal women (58%) stated that Aboriginal culture needs to be treated with respect. Some women reported that time limits have been put on the ceremonies. It was reported that food offerings from ceremonies have been thrown in the garbage when it is to be respected and burned.
- 4 of the Aboriginal women (24%) stated that “Independent Living Programs” need to be established to assist those who have become institutionalized and cannot live beyond the confines of an institutional environment. Securing community resources and support for prisoners need to be addressed.
- 3 of the Aboriginal women (18%) stated that Aboriginal women want peer support counsellors and a “Breaking Barriers” program.

#### Discussion

- Both prisoners and staff stated more cultural programming such as sweats (at least once a week) were needed. Aboriginal women wanted the sweat grounds recognized as a safe place because of its sacredness and to be allowed to go there whenever they needed space and quiet.

#### *Obstacles in Reducing Security Level*

- 100% of the Aboriginal women stated that there is a lack of communication between management, the primary worker and the prisoner. When this occurs, it is the Aboriginal women that get blamed for being manipulative. This displacement of authority is oppressive.
- 100% of the Aboriginal women spoke of swearing and angry outbursts when staff “push their buttons”. They indicated that swearing is used as a coping mechanism by the women for which they receive numerous charges. If they cannot swear to release anger, this anger is stored, and usually results in violence against others or in self-injurious behaviour (slashing).
- 100% of the Aboriginal women stated that CSC staff do not take slashing seriously. Most staff view it as “trying to get attention”, rather than a coping mechanism for relief from the pressure of being incarcerated and a release for internal pain and anger.
- 13 of the Aboriginal women (76%) stated that CSC needs to ensure that core programs are available in all institutions. Completion of core programs: “Cognitive Skills”, “Anger Management”, “Substance Abuse” are required in the Correctional Plan to lower security levels, but are not provided in some institutions.

- 13 of the Aboriginal women (76%) stated that being straightforward, direct and speaking their mind are seen as being manipulative and argumentative.
- 13 of the Aboriginal women (76%) stated that they were not given a chance. An application for transfer to the Healing Lodge was never processed. Some Aboriginal women stated they remained charge free and had not been involved in any conflicts but were told by staff that their attitudes were not good enough. Others were told they were being anti-social and keeping too much to themselves when they were trying to avoid trouble.

#### Discussion

- There were two provincially sentenced Aboriginal women in the federal system that were not provided with programs to address their Correctional Plan. They were told by staff that this was due to the delay in federal/provincial paper work requirements.

#### *Statements Regarding Staff*

- 100% of the Aboriginal women stated that qualified facilitators (not social drinkers) are required for substance abuse programs. Correctional staff, present or former will not be accepted as facilitators. Facilitators should be from outside agencies, individuals who are non-authoritarian in their facilitation style. Facilitators with similar experiences or backgrounds (e.g. ex-prisoners, poverty and/or having lived on the street) would be appropriate.
- 15 of the Aboriginal women (88%) stated they had taken steps to reduce their security levels but were not supported by staff for various reasons.
- 13 of the Aboriginal women (76%) stated that CSC needs to hire more Aboriginal staff who practice their culture and are not judgmental.
- 13 of the Aboriginal women (76%) felt pre-judged by staff, citing a lack of empathy and compassion.
- 13 of the Aboriginal women (76%) indicated that the staff were not very helpful, especially the CO2's.
- 13 of the Aboriginal women (76%) indicated they had controlled their behaviour and had requested programs but staff did not respond to their needs or provide the programs.
- 13 of Aboriginal women (76 %) stated that the services of a full-time Aboriginal Psychologist were needed. This would eliminate the prejudice that the Aboriginal women believe occurs with a non-Aboriginal psychologist.

- 9 of the Aboriginal women (53%) indicated that Correctional Plans delays were due to CMOI staff not working with them more closely. CMOI staff must be readily available to the Aboriginal women.
- 2 of the Aboriginal women (12%) reported receiving support from staff and program facilitators in reducing their security levels.

### *Institutions and/or Environment*

- All of the Aboriginal women at the Regional Psychiatric Centre stated that this institution needs to increase Native Liaison services, Elder counselling and recognize the healing benefits of Aboriginal ceremonies in the Correctional Plan.
- All of the Aboriginal women at Saskatchewan Penitentiary stated that this institution needs to increase Native Liaison services, Elder counselling and recognize the healing benefits of Aboriginal ceremonies in the Correctional Plan. Saskatchewan Penitentiary needs to address delays and provide the required programs for Aboriginal women to address their Correctional Plans.
- All the Aboriginal women at Springhill Institution stated that this institution needs to increase Native Liaison services, Elder counselling and provide the required programs for Aboriginal women to work on their Correctional Plans.
- 100% of the Aboriginal women stated that medium security women's facilities need to expand so they can also house Aboriginal women in maximum security.
- 100% of the Aboriginal women wanted more yard space to allow more sports activities outside their respective institutions.
- 13 of the Aboriginal women (76%) wanted more access to sweatlodge grounds for quiet time.
- 6 of the Aboriginal women (35%) believed that there is a need for a women's facility for Aboriginal women who are maximum security instead of warehousing them in maximum security prisons for men (e.g. Saskatchewan Penitentiary and Springhill Institution). These institutions do not provide the women with the required programs to attain lower security.
- 4 of the Aboriginal women (24%) required access to a telephone to contact the Correctional Investigator, but were not allowed the access by staff.
- 3 of the Aboriginal women (18%) have accumulated charges for talking to their boyfriends or common-law partners incarcerated (Saskatchewan Penitentiary and Springhill Institution).



- 2 of the Aboriginal women (12%) stated that the Prison for Women needs to provide the required programs for Aboriginal women to address their Correctional Plan and they need to increase Elder counselling services.

#### Discussion

- Aboriginal women indicated they wanted more access to more recreation, a gym, larger recreation yards and more time outdoors.
- The women indicated that a maximum security treatment centre for women would be more appropriate. They stated the Regional Psychiatric Centre needed to operate with more flexibility. Two Aboriginal women indicated it was not the facility that needed changing, but the staff's view of the Aboriginal women. The women's unit is too small for movement and interaction is too close for some women.
- Many Aboriginal women recommended that the Healing Lodge in Maple Creek be used as a model. It is a place where they can work on themselves, in their own culture and in a home environment, not in a cage. Most Aboriginal women stated they wanted to serve their sentence in a facility that has access to events, socials and programs.
- Some Aboriginal women said they would like to serve their sentence in a facility like Edmonton Institution for Women. Staff thought the Edmonton Institution for Women, if it were maximum security, would be ideal as it has computer training, programs, silk-screening and cooking classes.
- The Aboriginal women suggested CSC build maximum security wings onto the present women's medium security institutions, so that they could be incarcerated with other women. Aboriginal women indicated their ranges needed rooms with sound barriers. Saskatchewan Penitentiary needs to get rid of the ranges, as there is no way to keep out the noise of television sets, radios, people talking, etc. At times, the women need space to be alone and quiet, but the ranges are too closed-in. The women indicated they want access to the sweatlodge grounds for private quiet time.
- Many Aboriginal women, in all the prisons, expressed concerns that the correctional institutions were not adhering to the recommendations of "Creating Choices".
- One Aboriginal woman in maximum security from out of province wanted to serve her sentence in a maximum security institution closer to family.
- The Aboriginal women indicated they would like to serve their sentence in a women's prison, not male institutions that warehouse women. They wanted a facility that was organized and consistent in its daily approach to Aboriginal women. They did not want the rules to change from day to day.



***Family, Community Support and Re-Integration***

- 100% of the Aboriginal women stated that CSC needs to arrange for Elder’s counseling. There is a need for the continued participation in cultural programs and events prior to release. These can be arranged through Native Liaison services, Aboriginal staff, or community agencies, such as Friendship Centres.
- 15 of the Aboriginal women (88%) need community re-integration programs prior to release and for a longer duration of time. Also required is follow-up, once the women are in the community.
- 13 of the Aboriginal women (76%) need more Native Liaison services for counseling and assistance with family matters. In one of the institutions the Native Liaison is available only two half days a week. They expressed the need for a full-time Native Liaison officer.
- 9 of the Aboriginal women (53%) stated they need to gain credibility through escorted temporary absences (ETA’s) and unescorted temporary absences (UTA’s). These are used to monitor escape risk and address security level classification in the Correctional Plan. Aboriginal women could visit family in their home communities through organized agencies.
- 9 of the Aboriginal women (53%) believed that community re-integration programs and community support systems must be available at the community level. This type of support would aid in deterring re-offending.
- 9 of the Aboriginal women (53%) needed more family and community contact with volunteers and agencies, through events and socials established by various individuals and organizations. This would prepare the Aboriginal women for connecting with family and establish community contacts for support.
- 4 of the Aboriginal women (24%) stated the need for pre-release plans to assist in community re-integration.
- 4 of the Aboriginal women (24%) stated programs not completed in the institution must be available in the community for completion.
- 4 of the Aboriginal women (24%) stated that intensive treatment for alcohol and drug abuse and intensive relapse prevention programs, as follow-up support, is required after release.
- 1 Aboriginal woman stated that CSC needs to provide finances for family to visit women incarcerated out of their home province, or provide finances for the relocation of families that need to be in the same community as the incarcerated woman (e.g. incarcerated mothers with small children).

**Discussion**

- Aboriginal women believe that community resources need to be provided and community support established prior to and upon release.
- “Creating Choices” advocated the importance of bringing FSAW closer to their families. Some Aboriginal women have been incarcerated farther away from their families. Over half of CSC staff indicated that Aboriginal women need to continue with family support and visits. Some Aboriginal women have as many as four children. Aboriginal women could visit their families, in their home communities, organized through agencies. Visits with family would not be just for compassionate leave, such as funerals.
- Community reintegration programs should begin while the women are incarcerated, with follow-up into the community upon release. This directive is outlined in Section 5 of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act which states “...the Correctional Service of Canada, which shall be responsible for... (b) the provision of programs that contribute to the rehabilitation of offenders and to their successful reintegration into the community; (c) the preparation of inmates for release...”. However, this has not been the practice. Community resources need to be provided and community support established prior to and upon release.

**6 CSC Staff’s Perspective**

Note: Interviews were conducted with 8 staff members. Many of the questions were related to specific Aboriginal women, as a result, some staff were interviewed more than once because they were working with more than one prisoner. For this reason percentages are not provided.

***The Reasons Women are Classified as Maximum Security***

- All of the staff interviewed stated that drug addition is an obstacle as substance abuse is still occurring in some of the institutions. The staff stated that the women will do anything to get drugs. Some have visitors bring in the drugs or hurt themselves to be transferred to the Regional Psychiatric Centre on an emergency basis.
- Most of the staff stated that violent behaviour towards them and other persons are grounds for classifying a prisoner as maximum security. One CMOI indicated that violent behaviour, being disruptive, being an escape risk, and having mental health problems were all grounds for being maximum security.
- Most of the staff stated that incarcerated women must recognize authority and be able to accept “no” as a response and face their problems without excuses.

- Most of the staff believed that Aboriginal women cannot be helped if they do not listen or do not follow the rules. Remaining charge free is an indicator that Aboriginal women are adhering to rules and regulations.
- Some staff stated that there were times they did not support an Aboriginal woman for reduced security if they believed she was not ready for a lower security environment, or if the woman received behavioural charges and did nothing to help herself reduce her security level.
- Some staff stated that some of the Aboriginal women are institutionalized, and therefore a move from a maximum institution like the Regional Psychiatric Centre to a medium security facility like the Healing Lodge needs to be done gradually and cautiously.

#### ***Intake Assessment and Correctional Plan***

- All of the staff stated that the risk level of an Aboriginal woman is determined by the Custody Rating Scale through Community Assessment, Police Report, Psychological Reports and the CPIC. Psychological reports address the mental health of the Aboriginal women, while health care determines the physical health of the individual. In some institutions, risk was determined by the previous institution's intake assessment. The custody rating increased for some of the Aboriginal women because of their young age, the seriousness of harm caused and the severity of the offence.
- Most of the staff stated that the assessments should be individually based and that progress summaries be more flexible. Progress summaries occur every 3 months and are used as a temporary measure for transfer eligibility.
- Some staff indicated CO2's should be involved in progress summaries and activity reports, and that the positive behaviour of Aboriginal women be highlighted.
- Some staff stated that Aboriginal women needed to work on personal and emotional needs in their Correctional Plan. Some staff believe Aboriginal women have not addressed their emotional problems.

#### ***Programs and Delivery***

- Most of the staff stated that Aboriginal women needed “Living Skills” and “Anger Management” to deal with their spontaneous behaviour so they do not over react to situations. An Aboriginal based “Anger Management” program would be useful so that the women can get past the racial barrier and learn about anger from their own cultural perspective.
- Most of the staff stated that more intense programming could help the Aboriginal women. The needs of the Aboriginal women should drive the program requirements, not vice versa.

- Most of the staff indicated that well-trained, qualified facilitators are needed to facilitate programs. They indicated that security staff should not be program facilitators, for this causes behaviour problems with the prisoners.
- Most of the staff stated that Aboriginal women need to refrain from drug use and take intensive substance programs and treatment that will address their drug addictions.
- Some staff indicated that some Aboriginal women sabotage core programs (“Substance Abuse”, “Cog Skills” and “Anger Management”) by not co-operating with facilitators. Staff recognizes that some program facilitators are intimidated by the Aboriginal women.
- Some staff indicated they usually support Aboriginal women to lower security, by encouraging them to complete their programs. If the Aboriginal woman took steps but did not complete them, some staff reported they would still be supported and encouraged to work towards reducing their security level.

#### ***Risk Level for Re-Incarceration***

- All of the staff interviewed believed a return to alcohol and drug abuse increased the risk for Aboriginal women to re-offend. Many Aboriginal women were addicted to hard drugs, such as cocaine. Staff identified substance abuse as the main criminogenic factor for most of the Aboriginal women.
- More than half of the staff stated that getting involved in abusive relationships (as a result of having low self-esteem) or returning to abusive relationships because of fear, contributes to the women re-offending. Staff indicated that Aboriginal women need to stay away from abusive relationships and “street” associates.
- Most of the staff stated that in order for Aboriginal women to address their need factors, they must take programs to lower security levels in their Correctional Plan. They need to be serious about the programming: learning, practising, internalizing and demonstrating change. CSC can assist Aboriginal women by identifying the programs required, pointing out problem areas and providing intensive counselling (including psychological counselling).
- Most of the staff stated that the Aboriginal women have to lower their security level by learning new social skills and having more open communication and positive interaction with staff and the other prisoners. Those Aboriginal women who are associated with gangs need to disassociate themselves from that lifestyle in order to reduce their security level.
- Most of the staff stated that some Aboriginal women required extensive “one to one” counselling. They also recommend intensive treatment for some of the Aboriginal women for alcohol and drug abuse.

### *Obstacles in Reducing Security Level*

- All of the staff interviewed indicated the biggest obstacle for Aboriginal women was remaining charge free and controlling aggressive behaviour. Staff indicated that Aboriginal women “act out” to stay in, or return, to the institution where common-law husbands are incarcerated.
- Some staff stated that there should not be a discrepancy between security level review for males (every 12 months) and the security level review for females (every 3 months). Staff felt that every 6 to 12 months would be more appropriate and a better gauge for prisoner’s behaviour. The ideal would be every 6 months with progress summaries in between.

### *The Institution and/or Environment*

- Some staff stated that the Aboriginal women should have their own separate facility (a woman’s institution) with a courtyard and multi-level security. Staff indicated that the Aboriginal women should serve their sentence in a “maximum run” women’s institution where procedures are followed and movement is monitored to reduce safety risks.

Some staff suggest that the Regional Psychiatric Centre be expanded as it is too closed-in, or the Aboriginal women have their own separate facility. The staff indicated that the women’s unit was too small for the nine women incarcerated there (the unit is designed to hold as many as twelve).

- The staff indicated that the Aboriginal women who are not motivated should be separated from those who are. This would eliminate muscling and/or sabotaging each other.
- Staff stated that the set up of the facility should be living units with wide open communal areas (not cells on a range). The institution should operate like a maximum security institution with a pass system. “Lock up” when not at work and prisoner movement more controlled. Staff believe that this might motivate Aboriginal women to attend programs and obtain counselling in order to reduce their security level and transfer out.
- The type of institution where staff would like Aboriginal women serve their sentences are:
  - in a very secure women’s institution;
  - in a facility similar to the Northern Treatment Centre in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario for a duration of six months or more; or
  - in a Regional Treatment or Psychiatric Centre.

- Some staff felt that CSC could help the Aboriginal women by ensuring that common-law partners are not housed in the same institution, as the women find it difficult to concentrate on their personal growth. Aboriginal women have been charged numerous times for yelling at the male prisoners across the yard. The women need to be in a separate women's institution.
- Some staff felt that Aboriginal women should serve their sentence in a women's treatment facility that is multi-level in security. This would allow for experiencing decreased or increased security without having to be transferred from facility to facility in different provinces. The facility should have nurses and a psychiatrist as the primary workers.
- Some staff identified a need for the Aboriginal women to have their own cultural/Aboriginal room.

### *Family and Community Support*

- Most of the staff stated that returning to old friends and associates and communities would increase the risks for Aboriginal women re-offending. Many Aboriginal women have no support system upon release other than old friends, old relationships and associates.
- Most of the staff stated that the Aboriginal women need to follow the conditions of their release and that CSC needed to provide supervision and support for the Aboriginal women. They suggested a half-way house with living skills, programs on survival of child abuse, family violence, life changes, and Elders to meet their cultural needs.
- To avoid re-incarceration, some staff believed that Aboriginal women have to take responsibility for their actions and have faith that they can make it in the community. Extensive programming in self-esteem building would teach Aboriginal women to have faith in themselves. They need to take advantage of community resources and support systems, and remain active in Aboriginal activities and events. Some staff felt that CSC needed to provide access to more support systems and integrate the women back into society gradually.
- Some staff indicated that CSC needs to assist the Aboriginal women in finding employment. Aboriginal women need to learn some marketable trade and gain some employment skills to assist them in their search for employment upon release.

## 7. Research Findings and Identified Needs

### *What Presently Works in Reducing Security Levels*

Research findings and identified needs that help (or would help) Aboriginal women reduce their security levels are the following:

- Correctional Plans that are clearly explained to the women as to how they work in increasing or lowering security levels and why certain programs are required. Regular consultation with the Aboriginal women to update them on their progress and discuss their Correctional Plan.
- New and interesting programs based on healing and experiential learning that are culturally sensitive and are delivered by Aboriginal facilitators and Elders. Presently, this is not the case in most instances.
- Facilitators that are creative in making their programs interesting, flexible and not authoritarian nor judgmental; however, presently they are authoritarian and some are judgmental.
- Full-time Elder counselling services and Aboriginal ceremonies would help; but are not presently available full-time.
- On-going and in-depth treatment programs for alcohol and drug abuse; however, this is not available. Preventing drugs coming into the institution helps the women stay drug-free and avoids charges.
- Staff and program facilitators that give support and encouragement to the women; however, they are not always readily available.
- Community re-integration programs that are taken prior to release and for extensive periods. Well developed pre-release plans that identify community contact and support systems. These are not presently available.
- Women gain credibility through escorted and unescorted temporary absences; however, these are few and far between.
- Family and community contact through socials and events organized by various individuals and organizations. These are also few in number and do not occur regularly.
- Remaining charge-free.
- Aboriginal women encouraging each other to stay out of the institution (peer support).
- Separating women who are motivated from those who are not motivated. This also eliminates muscling or sabotaging each other.



***What Does Not Work in Reducing Security Levels***

The following practices do not work in reducing Aboriginal women's security level:

- Correctional Plans that are not properly understood. Listing numerous programs that have to be completed overwhelms Aboriginal women. This makes the Correctional Plan intimidating and the women become frustrated with their Correctional Plan.
- Correctional Plans that are not individually based. Some women have special needs that need to be addressed in their Correctional Plan.
- Correctional Plans that are delayed and not up-to-date.
- Not explaining security levels or reasons for changes in security levels to the women.
- Having CO2's or former CO2's as facilitators creates animosity with the Aboriginal women who consider the programs to be security based and not treatment based.
- Intellectually based programs (e.g. "Cog Skills") are boring and repeating them over and over again adds to the boredom.
- Programs that are not culturally appropriate.
- Delays in providing the required programs and withholding programs to punish the women to get them to conform and obey CSC staff.
- Not all correctional institutions are supportive environments. Discrimination and racism has been recognized which does not encourage the Aboriginal women to reduce their security level.
- Inconsistency in the day to day rules and procedures of an institution creates difficulty for Aboriginal women to adjust to a daily routine or have any trust in the system.
- Transferring the Aboriginal women from institution to institution, from province to province (Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan) to the detriment of their family contact and support.
- Breaches of confidentiality when staff talk to women prisoners about other sentenced women. There is no confidentiality in the prisons because everyone (staff and sentenced women) finds out what is going on with any one of the Aboriginal women.
- Housing women next to men's facilities creates problems; for example, a number of women accumulating charges for talking or yelling to their boyfriends or common-law partners.
- Lack of communication between management, primary workers and prisoners.



- Treating the women with a lack of respect and dignity. Discriminating against the women because they are Aboriginal.
- Substance abuse that is still occurring in some of the institutions.

## 8. Conclusion

CSC has explicit policy and guidelines in regards to FSAW, this report demonstrates that CSC is not adhering to its own policies and guidelines with respect to Aboriginal women at the maximum security level. The Corrections and Conditional Release Act, Commissioner's Directives, CSC's Corporate Missions Objectives, and Creating Choices are policies and guidelines that recognize Aboriginal culture and spiritual beliefs; however, the Aboriginal women in maximum security are stating that these programs and services are either not available or are insufficient because they are not readily accessible. The Aboriginal women in maximum security facilities face many hardships due to the improper utilization of these explicit strategies.

The FSAW and the staff were key in this study in identifying the problems associated with reducing the security levels of the Aboriginal women. These two groups have targeted very similar issues, concerns and recommendations that would enable the attainment of lower security levels by the Aboriginal women in maximum security. In addition, these groups identify the necessary role of culture and tradition.

The FSAW are not dealt with in an empowering manner. This situation contributes to instances such as self-injurious behaviour, substance abuse and behavioural problems. Strictly applying the various strategies available would provide for solutions and healing.

Those being detained and those employed by the institutions must at some point have overlapping goals. These goals must be communication, understanding and respect. This report will give one a better understanding of what the FSAW and staff believe are the issues of the Aboriginal women in maximum security. Implementing the recommendations contained in this report will acknowledge the Aboriginal women and CSC staff's views as to what is required to assist the Aboriginal women in reducing their security level in order that they may transfer out of maximum security.

CSC has a responsibility and an obligation to FSAW to review the recommendations contained in this report and implement them, so that correctional programming can respect the ethnic, cultural and spiritual beliefs of FSAW. Recognizing Aboriginal culture and spiritual beliefs and implementing the recommendations will address some of the discrimination and racism that FSAW face in the correctional system.

CSC's responsibility for prisoners is identified under its Corporate Mission Objectives: to rehabilitate inmates and get them out of their incarceration, as soon as possible, as well as to develop and implement research based programs targeting the specific needs of inmates to promote successful reintegration into society. CSC and its' institutions have neglected their responsibility of implementing specific programming that is culturally and gender specific.

The Corrections and Conditional Release Act states that correctional programs must respect gender, ethnic, cultural, spiritual and linguistic differences among the inmate population; however, not all institutions have provided this for FSAW. Correctional institutions must have gender specific and specialized programming for FSAW that have Aboriginal culture and spirituality as the focus.

Creating Choices recognized that a more comprehensive approach to the unique program needs of FSAW was needed. CSC has not fully adhered to the recommendations of Creating Choices as it relates to FSAW, as the research data shows that they have been neglected. FSAW are not dealt with in a manner that is empowering to them. Their contact with staff has been one of feeling powerless. They have not been provided with meaningful and responsible choices, as they have had to repeat the same programs and take some programs that they believe were not necessary. The Aboriginal women also indicated that their institutional environments have not been supportive.

CSC's Commissioner's Directive #702 states the manner in which Aboriginal peoples are to be dealt with in federal penitentiaries. CSC has not been completely adhering to this policy when dealing with FSAW.

CSC's responsibility and obligation to FSAW has not been fulfilled, but has been remiss in respecting their ethnic, cultural and spiritual beliefs. Although the CSC Corporate Missions Objectives, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, Creating Choices recommendations and Commissioner's Directives have mandated intentions to implement programs that recognize Aboriginal culture and spiritual beliefs, discrimination and racism against FSAW have been cited. Against these odds, FSAW have not been able to reintegrate into their home communities and society successfully.

## **9. Recommendations**

### *Recommendation 1:*

Many FSAW are between the ages of 25 to 40 years, and their young offender history is still used against them. Young Offender records need to be omitted from the intake assessment. CSC needs to determine a cut-off point in gathering criminal data against FSAW to allow for maturity and personal growth.

### *Recommendation 2:*

FSAW indicated that security levels are not explained to them. In order for FSAW to work on decreasing their security level, reasons for changes in security levels needs to be explained, as well as deciphering how the Correctional Plan works to increase or decrease security levels.

### *Recommendation 3:*

FSAW indicated the Intake Assessment, Correctional Plans and Specialized Programs need to be based on individual needs, as they are the assessment tool used for parole requirements. Some FSAW have special needs, for example: effects of family violence, dysfunctional family systems, cycle of abuse, incest and sexual abuses, couples counselling, fetal alcohol syndrome characteristics, battered women's syndrome characteristics, suicidal tendencies, etc..

### *Recommendation 4:*

Because the Intake Assessment is not individually based, it is discriminatory to FSAW. To be recognized on the Correctional Plan are: the healing effects of ceremonies and the support of Elders; full-time Elder counselling (intervention in disagreements among FSAW should have the assistance of the Elder); culturally relevant programming; and, “one to one” counselling. CSC staff indicated that “one to one” counselling was the best form of disclosure for FSAW as they cannot disclose in groups.

### *Recommendation 5:*

FSAW indicated that parole hearings are delayed or waived because the Intake Assessment has outdated information and the Correctional Plans are not completed. It is imperative that: the Intake Assessment and the Correctional Plans be done in a timely manner and kept up to date; and that CMO1 staff be more readily available.

### *Recommendation 6:*

FSAW need to be serviced and assessed by an Aboriginal psychologist, who will be culturally sensitive. This will eliminate some of the prejudice that FSAW have experienced. One psychologist had a prejudiced attitude about FSAW.

*Recommendation 7:*

FSAW need to be allowed to access the Correctional Investigator. There is a 1-800 number, but they are not allowed to use the telephone.

*Recommendation 8:*

CSC needs to provide the required programs and address delay in all institutions - especially Saskatchewan Penitentiary, Springhill Institution and Prison for Women. Their completion is required to get to lower security, for example, Cog Skills, Anger Management, Substance Abuse are required on the Correctional Plan but are not provided in some institutions.

*Recommendation 9:*

FSAW should not have to repeat the same programs over and over, or start over in their programs at each institution that they are transferred to. This causes boredom and hopelessness.

*Recommendation 10:*

Programs need to be completed in phases or steps, so FSAW can deal with specific areas, finish them and have a sense of accomplishment. Positive behaviour needs to be recognized, not only the negative behaviour.

*Recommendation 11:*

FSAW want better health care. At times, their requests are disregarded by the staff. In order for FSAW to get medical attention, they need to take extreme measures, like slash themselves.

*Recommendation 12:*

Qualified facilitators, not social drinkers, are required for facilitating substance abuse programs. Guards or former guards are not accepted as facilitators. Facilitators should be outside agencies or individuals and need to be flexible in their facilitating, not authoritarian. Facilitators with similar experiences, like ex-prisoners, poverty and/or having lived on the street, would be more believable.

*Recommendation 13:*

FSAW stated the Aboriginal culture needs to be treated with respect, as it is presently ridiculed by CSC staff. At times, time limits have been put on the ceremonies. Traditional food from ceremonies is thrown in the garbage when it is to be burned.

*Recommendation 14:*

FSAW want more Native Liaison services for counselling and assistance with family concerns, more Elder counselling, and recognition of the healing benefits of Aboriginal ceremonies in all institutions, especially the Regional Psychiatric Centre, Prison for Women

and Springhill Institution. In one of the institutions, the Native Liaison is provided only two half days a week. Hiring additional Native Liaison and ensuring they are Aboriginal would be ideal.

*Recommendation 15:*

CSC needs to hire more Aboriginal staff who practice their culture and don't have a judgmental attitude against prisoners.

*Recommendation 16:*

FSAW need a specialized treatment program to address behaviour related to slashing and suicide attempts.

*Recommendation 17:*

FSAW need intensive treatment for alcohol and drug abuse similar to a 28 day treatment centre program and intensive relapse prevention programs as follow-up, while incarcerated and upon release.

*Recommendation 18:*

FSAW want peer support counsellors, and a “breaking barriers” program.

*Recommendation 19:*

FSAW need a parenting skills program, to learn to parent their children during visits and upon release. Many FSAW have been absentee parents because of incarceration, and have not been able to learn parenting skills through family role modelling or support.

*Recommendation 20:*

FSAW need to access post secondary or university education. Some FSAW have grade ten to twelve education.

*Recommendation 21:*

Independent Living Programs need to be established to assist FSAW who become institutionalized and cannot live beyond the confines of an institutional environment. Securing community resources and support for institutionalized prisoners needs to be addressed.

*Recommendation 22:*

CSC needs to provide finances for family to visit FSAW incarcerated out of their home province, or provide finances for the relocation of families that need to be in the same community as the FSAW; for example, incarcerated mothers with small children.

*Recommendation 23:*

FSAW need to gain credibility through escorted temporary absences (e.t.a.'s) and unescorted temporary absences (u.t.a's) to monitor escape risk and address security level classification in the Correctional Plan. FSAW could visit their families, in their home communities, organized through agencies. Visits with family would not just be for funerals.

*Recommendation 24:*

Over half of FSAW need more community contact with volunteers and organizations, and more access to events and socials with family and community supporters. This prepares FSAW with knowledge on contacts and organizations available for community support.

*Recommendation 25:*

FSAW need pre-release plans and community re-integration programs to begin prior to release for a longer duration of time, and with continued follow-up into the community upon release. FSAW believe that community resources need to be provided and community support established prior to and upon release.

*Recommendation 26:*

CSC needs to arrange for Elders counselling and continued participation in cultural programs and cultural events for FSAW prior to release. These can be arranged through community agencies, such as friendship centres.

*Recommendation 27:*

There is a need for a women's treatment facility for FSAW that is multi-level security based which would deter transfers from institution to institution. This facility could be next to the Regional Psychiatric Centre which already specializes in treatment programs.

*Recommendation 28:*

Medium security women's facilities need to build annexes to their facilities that can house maximum security FSAW. The FSAW suggested CSC build maximum security wings onto the present women's medium security institutions, so that they could be incarcerated with other women.

*Recommendation 29:*

More yard space is required for FSAW to be able to have sports activities outside their respective institutions.

*Recommendation 30:*

More access to sweatlodge grounds for quiet time needs to be provided for FSAW.

## References

- Correctional Service of Canada. *Guidelines for Parenting Skills Programs for Federally Sentenced Women*. (Ottawa, Ontario: January 1995).
- Correctional Service of Canada. *Commissioner's Directives*. (Ottawa, Ontario).
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- Native Women's Association of Canada. *Aboriginal Women's Healing Lodge*. (Ottawa, Ontario: 1993).
- Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women. *Creating Choices: The Report of the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women*. (Ottawa, Ontario: April 1990).

**Appendix I**

PERCENTAGE TABLE FOR INTERVIEWS ON ABORIGINAL WOMEN IN MAXIMUM SECURITY		
	<b>Total number of Aboriginal women interviewed</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
17 out of	17	100%
16 out of	17	94%
15 out of	17	88%
14 out of	17	82%
13 out of	17	76%
12 out of	17	70%
11 out of	17	64%
10 out of	17	58% (actual 57.8%)
9 out of	17	53% (actual 52.9%)
8 out of	17	47%
7 out of	17	41%
6 out of	17	35%
5 out of	17	29%
4 out of	17	24%
3 out of	17	18%
2 out of	17	12%
1 out of	17	6%



## Appendix II

### QUESTIONNAIRE FORMAT

Subject # \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_ FPS#: \_\_\_\_\_  
Interview Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**DEFINITION:** Semi-Structured Interview - A data collection method in which an interviewer asks questions to elicit self-reports of opinions, attitudes, values, beliefs or behaviours. The response format is open-ended, that is, there is no fixed response to the question. This differs from a more structured interview. In a semi-structured interview you can provide a list of options from which the respondent can choose to guide the interview process. In a structured interview the categories or topics in which information is gathered are already determined.

**Interviewer Instructions:** The interviewer should communicate before the interview begins who they are and the reason the interview is taking place. Purpose: To gather information from maximum security women that will assist CSC in helping maximum-security women reduce their security levels. The interviewer should read the consent form to the federally sentenced women and indicate that their signed consent is required before the interview can begin.

Before beginning, do a “check-in” that will establish some rapport with the women. For example, the interviewer may want to ask how the woman is doing today and/or how her day is going. After the “check-in”, indicate the start of the interview with some background questions followed by other types of questions. The interviewer should ask for permission to begin and if the woman is ready.

#### Section A: Background

Name, Age, Race, Education, Marital Status, Number of Children  
Index Offense, Sentence Length, Criminal History, Career Goals

**Section B:** Interviewer indicates the completion of the first section of the interview, and is now going to ask questions related to her security level. The interviewer may want to ask if the offender has any questions.

In this section, ask the woman how they feel about the factors included in the custodial rating scale used to determine a criminal risk rating. Refer to the Intake Assessment manual for definitions of these factors. Explain what is meant by a risk and need factor if they do not know.

### **Appendix III**

#### **QUESTIONNAIRE: ABORIGINAL WOMEN**

##### **Section B**

1. Why do you feel that you are a female offender? (Code: all reasons for example there may be situational, physical, emotional, and societal reasons among others..)
2. Why do you think you have been classified as maximum security?
3. How do you think CSC can help you with the reasons you are classified maximum security?
4. What things can you do to help yourself? How have you tried to help yourself reduce your security level?

##### **Section C**

1. What criteria do you think should be used to classify women as maximum security?
2. How often do you think these criteria should be reviewed?
3. What things do you think should be included in the intake assessment to determine risk and need levels?

##### **Section D**

Interviewer Instructions: During the next set of questions, provide positive feedback when the women attempt to identify their risk and need factors. Ask the women about the seven levels of need that are included in the intake assessment. Explain what is meant by a risk and need factor if they do not know.

1. When you are in the community what things increase your risk level for committing new offences?
2. What things can CSC do to prevent you from committing a new offence?
3. What types of things do you do or will do when you are released to help you stay in the community?
4. What things, such as programs, have helped or would help you reduce your security level?

#### Section E

Note: Code this section into need categories, such as physical, emotional situational, societal etc.. Ask the woman about all the need factors in the intake assessment manual. Explain what is meant by a need factor if they do not know.

1. What needs do you have that if they were addressed would help reduce your security level from maximum to medium?
2. How can CSC help you with the needs that you have in order to reduce your security level?
3. How do you think you can help yourself address your need factors?

#### Section F

1. Whose responsibility is it to try to reduce the security levels of maximum women: CSC's, the individual women's or both? (Why?)
2. Have there been times when you have taken steps to reduce your security level and felt that you were not being supported? Explain. Code what actions are seen as hindering them or not supportive in reducing their security levels.
3. In general, what do you feel is the biggest obstacle standing in the way of reducing your security level?

#### Section G

Interviewer Instructions: Have a list of programs that are available to the women so that you can get feedback on their use in reducing security levels. Be familiar with the procedures and policies surrounding security level reduction so that you can discuss them with the women.

1. What things does CSC have in place already, that you like, that helps you reduce your security level? Why?
2. What things does CSC already have in place to help reduce your security level, that you do not like? Why?

#### Section H

1. Are there things about the staff that you feel help you to reduce your security level? Ask for suggestions on characteristics of staff that are beneficial in helping the women reduce their security levels (i.e. consistency).
2. Do you have any suggestions on how programs can be delivered that will help the most in reducing security levels?

Section I

1. How could the set up of the facility be changed to help you reduce your security level?
2. In what type of facility would you like to serve your sentence as a maximum security women?
3. Do the other women help or support you in your efforts to reduce your security level?

Section J

1. Has there been anyone in your life that has been positive influence for you or acted as a mentor when you were trying to get your life on track? What were their characteristics and how did they help you? Interviewer's Instructions: Ask the woman if she has any questions or anything she wants to add before the interview is finished. Thank her for her co-operation, indicating her input is valuable. Provide a debriefing and mention again, what you will be doing with the information you have collected.

## Appendix IV

### QUESTIONNAIRE: CSC STAFF

#### Section B

1. Why do you think that \_\_\_\_\_ is a female offender? (Code: all reasons for example there may be situational, physical, emotional, and societal reasons among others.)
2. Why do you think she has been classified as maximum security?
3. How do you think CSC can help her with the reasons she is classified maximum security?
4. What things can she do to help herself? How has she tried to help herself reduce her security level?

#### Section C

1. What criteria do you think should be used to classify women as maximum security?
2. How often do you think these criteria should be reviewed?
3. What things do you think should be included in the intake assessment to determine risk and need levels?

#### Section D

Interviewer Instructions: Ask the staff about the seven levels of need that are included in the intake assessment.

1. When she is in the community what things increase her risk level for committing new offences?
2. What things can CSC do to prevent her from committing a new offence?
3. What types of things can she do when she is released to help herself stay in the community?
4. What things such as programs do you think have helped or would help her to reduce her security level?

#### Section E

Note: Code this section into need categories, such as physical, emotional situational, societal etc.. Ask the staff about the need factors in the intake assessment manual.

1. What needs does she have that if they were addressed would help reduce her security level from maximum to medium?
2. How can CSC help her with the needs that she has in order to reduce her security level?
3. How do you think she can help herself address her need factors?

#### Section F

1. Whose responsibility is it to try to reduce the security levels of maximum women: CSC's, the individual women's or both? (Why?)
2. Have there been times when the offender has taken steps to reduce her security level and felt that she was not receiving any support? Explain. Code what actions are seen as hindering them or not supportive in reducing their security levels.
3. In general, what do you feel is the biggest obstacle standing in the way of \_\_\_\_\_ reducing her security level?

#### Section G

1. Do you have any suggestions on how programs can be delivered that will help the most in reducing security levels?

#### Section H

1. How could the set up of the facility be changed to help her reduce her security level?
2. In what type of facility would you like to see the woman serve her sentence as a maximum security women?

Interviewer Instructions: Indicate that is all the questions. Ask the staff if she has any questions or anything she would like to add before the interview is finished. Thank her for her co-operation, indicating her input is valuable. Provide a debriefing and mention again, what you will be doing with the information you have collected.