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Research in Brief

Exploration of Staff Training Needs Regarding Inuit Offenders

KEY WORDS: *Inuit, offender, staff training*

What it means

The positive feedback provided by staff highlights helpful ways that the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) can enhance the effectiveness of its interactions and work with Inuit offenders. Multiple suggestions were provided by staff that could assist them in meeting their professional needs and enhance the effectiveness of cultural awareness training.

What we found

Through an examination of topics such as staff learning needs, current skills and knowledge, potential training goals, learning expectations, training curriculum, and delivery methods, issues were identified that can inform future training efforts. The following are examples of specific suggestions from staff:

- Staff expressed the importance of increased knowledge of Inuit culture to perform their jobs effectively. In particular, they reported a desire to learn more about Inuit culture, customs, history, traditions, and specific criminogenic needs.
- Staff felt that standard skills training in communication would limit misunderstandings and discrepancies between staff and offenders due to language barriers.
- Staff emphasized practicing cultural competence to establish respect and awareness of another culture and build trust with Inuit offenders.
- Knowledgeable and culturally competent staff should act as a resource to answer questions from other staff regarding cultural differences.
- Staff spoke of creative low-cost solutions to training, combining written information (e.g., one-pagers), online training, and in-person training.

- Staff advocated for continuous learning and awareness development rather than a one-time training approach.

While not specifically raised during the focus group sessions, “cultural safety” has been identified in the literature as a key goal for any professional working with cultural groups that differ from their own culture. Specifically, knowledge of, and competence in, the Inuit culture would create opportunities for the building of trust, meaningful relationships, and, ultimately, more effective correctional interventions.

Why we did this study

Building on a 2004 examination of the institutional and community reintegration needs of federally-sentenced Inuit offenders,¹ the Research Branch undertook an examination of staff training needs in regards to working with Inuit offenders.

What we did

To inform this research, we conducted focus groups and interviews with Inuit offenders and staff who work with Inuit offenders at Dorchester Penitentiary, Fenbrook Institution, and La Macaza Institution, as well as other key informants both within and outside of CSC.

For more information

Please e-mail the [Research Branch](#) or contact us by phone at (613) 995-3975.

You can also visit the website for a full list of research publications.

Prepared by: David D. Varis & Miriah McIsaac

¹ Trevethan, S., Moore, J.-P., Naqitarvik, L., Watson, A., & Saunders, D. (2004). *The needs of Inuit offenders in Federal correctional facilities*. (Research Report, R-142). Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.