

Mr. Bernheim described the scandalous events at Kingston's Women's Penitentiary which showed the justice system's lack of accountability. The report describing the events was changed by national authorities, as was video footage of the events. When the truth was revealed, it was found Correctional Services had not followed its own laws. Health staff involved in the incident did not speak to police, who did not investigate until the next day.

"That kind of silence is unacceptable," said Mr. Berheim. His solution to the lack of accountability was this: "If we can be more involved in the (justice) system, then the system will be more accountable."

## **T-2 ABORIGINAL JUSTICE: BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS IN A NEW REALITY**

Reviewed by: **Ruthanne Urquhart**

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The issue of policing with regard to Aboriginal Canadians has always been both sensitive and awkward to approach from any angle, but, after more than 30 justice inquiries over 10 years and almost 20 years of research, the First Nations Policing Policy (FNPP) seems to be one about which most of the parties involved can agree.

Pierre Goulet, Aboriginal Policing Directorate, Ministry of the Solicitor General, Ottawa, reported that 107 FNPP agreements have been signed to date, involving more than 60 percent of Aboriginal Peoples across Canada. The FNPP is optional for both jurisdictions and bands; the one area of Canada not yet on board is Newfoundland, although there are two officers currently stationed at Davis Inlet.

The FNPP offers three options of execution: full-fledged self-administered policing; policing provided through existing police service (often RCMP); and whatever is agreed to by the three parties involved (First Nations, provincial, federal).

The cost of the administration of the FNPP is shared by the provincial (48 percent) and the federal (52 percent) governments.

Norma Green, Kikawinaw, Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge, Maple Creek, Saskatchewan, spoke about the 1996 task force report, *Creating Choices*, concerning Aboriginal women in the prison system. Native women constitute six percent of the population of Canada, but make up 17 percent of the prison population.

The staff at Okimaw Ohci go through a rigorous training period. After dealing with personal issues, they go through two months of self-development and three months of correctional training. They are then hired and go through intensive position-specific training.

The mandate of Okimaw Ohci, above and beyond the aims and functions of any prison, is healing. To that end, the facility offers a sweat lodge and healing circle activities for residents. As well, residents may enroll in CPR, Red Cross and parenting courses in order to qualify to have their

children with them. The healing mandate extends even to the renaming of standard prison programs –“Anger Management” becomes “Living Without Violence”.

Okimaw Ohci encourages resident interaction with the communities surrounding the facility, offering dances, feasts, sweats, healing, and naming and adoption ceremonies. Residents whose sentences and incarceration status permit do regular volunteer work in the community.

Local Elders representing different bands are involved with the Healing Lodge’s residents, offering traditional healing and counselling, and in various ways giving residents a sense of belonging within the band and community. Involving Elders from various bands is one way the Lodge encourages residents to make choices for their futures.

“Life is a living prayer,” said Ms. Green.

Moderator Romolla Trebilcock, National Co-ordinator, Aboriginal Justice Learning Network, Department of Justice, spoke about the vital importance of resource tools and the Aboriginal Justice Learning Network (AJLN) in providing Native and other peoples with information about Aboriginal concerns.

The AJLN is not the traditional First Nations/provincial/federal effort, but involves a broader group of volunteers—professionals, experts, interested parties from all walks of life—both Native and non-Native. It will provide cross-culture information and literature, counselling and services such as dispute resolution.

### **T-3 HEALING, SPIRIT AND RECOVERY: FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION**

Reviewed by: **Diane Vroom**

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In keeping with the day’s theme of ‘creating hope’ this session looked at how people change their lives. With the problem of over-representation of Aboriginal people in correctional institutions, and high recidivism rates of Aboriginal offenders, the session sparked discussion about how the justice system can improve the way its institutions deal with Aboriginals.

A videa called ‘To Heal the Spirit’ showed how three Aboriginal offenders turned their lives around through positive influences. The video was meant to be a catalyst to discuss the main factors that lead people to crime and factors that help them not to re-offend. By examining these factors, people who work within the criminal justice system can determine what the system needs to do to help other Aboriginals escape a life of crime. The video recognized stories about offenders who became law-abiding citizens after many years of criminal activity and in doing so showed correction officials ‘what works’ when dealing with Aboriginal offenders.

Iris Bear, Director of Training at the Nechi Institute in Saint Albert, Alberta, was one of the main players in the video. She works with Aboriginal offenders at the Nechi Institute located just