

Exploring Women-Centred, Holistic, and Trauma-Informed Programming for  
Provincially Incarcerated Women in Canada:  
A Case Study of the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre

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A Thesis Submitted to  
Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Arts in Criminology

April 2019, Halifax, Nova Scotia

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## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to the women I have come to know and admire over the course of this thesis and related work. Thank you for lending your time, your trust, and your stories.

“Here’s to strong women! We may know them. We may be them. We may raise them.”

*-Unknown*

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Abstract

This thesis considers current program implementation at a provincial jail in New Brunswick, Canada, to explore the research question: how do women offenders experience services and supports relating to the women-centred programming regime implemented at The New Brunswick Women's Correction Centre (NBWCC)? Women-centred programming, which combines a trauma-informed approach with holistic health principles, was originally designed for Federal prisons, and was only recently adopted by this provincial jail. This qualitative research project involves semi-structured interviews with a sample of women. Women offenders' comments are analyzed using feminist criminological perspective. Data were analyzed thematically to reveal two overarching response categories: 'Lack (or Inadequacy) of Programming' and 'Lack of Mental Health Supports'. Research results suggest that although the interviewed women perceive a lack of programming and services, the majority report an improvement in their overall health status post incarceration, a finding that is not noted in a recent 2018 provincial governmental report.

Date: April 29, 2019

## Acknowledgements

My completion of this thesis was realized by the unwavering support of many individuals. First, I acknowledge my thesis supervisor, Dr. Audrey MacNevin for her careful guidance and expertise on this work. Through this project's inception, Audrey offered continuous direction to the component of women's health and women's voice in this project, which I strived to maintain as a central component of this thesis. Second, to the member of my thesis committee, Dr. Jamie Livingston, for his thoughtful insight into the mental health component and guidance in navigating the correctional setting of this work. Thank you to Dr. Dieleman for being the External Examiner on this thesis. I would also like to extend my thanks to members of Corrections in New Brunswick, in every capacity, who have endorsed this project and helped ensure its completion. Thank you to all of the various governing bodies who provided funding to me as a student.

Next, I would like to offer my thanks to my family, friends, and loved ones who provided encouragement, sacrificed their time, and offered unconditional love even during the most difficult days. Mom, Dad, Kayla, Brett, and Vix: thank you for supporting me as I realized my love of learning and found a bit of myself along the way. We have come a long way from those difficult phone calls and visits as I began my journey as an undergraduate. Thanks Mom and Dad for your sacrifices, I am eternally grateful.

Lastly, I offer my deepest thanks to my former supervisor, and dear friend, Dr. Susan Reid. Were it not for her gentle nudge toward this program, and genuine devotion to helping me achieve, I would not be celebrating in this success. Her passion for teaching – and for her students – is unmatched. She made time for calls, visits, and emails when she simply did not have any time to spare. I am blessed that our paths crossed and that I have met a friend, mentor, and role model that I will cherish for life. I thank her for noticing my que-cards so many years ago. Look where that simple act has taken us.

Thank you all, for joining me in this passionate work.

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## Introduction

“Given the urgency we all feel, or should feel, about the increased criminalization of women and girls worldwide, my hope is that we will truly engage and work to correct what is fundamentally flawed and wrong about current attempts to reform and correct or change individual and/or groups of women, when it is the laws and policies within which we all work that are increasingly coming in to conflict with people, especially poor, racialized, and disabled women. We have no choice but to challenge our pre-conceptions and therefore our approaches, responsibilities, language—in short, everything, about how we are working and envisioning the future.”

- *The Honourable Senator Kim Pate*

In Canada women represent approximately 50% of the general population (CSC, 2017b). In the criminal justice system, women make up less than 25% of those who are accused of a crime, while even smaller percentages reflect the number of women sentenced or remanded into provincial/territorial and federal custody: 11% and 6% respectively (CSC, 2017b, para. 5). It is important to note that even though these percentages of women are small compared to those of men, Indigenous women in Canada are disproportionately represented in the population of women offenders (CSC, 2017b). According to the Office of the Correctional Investigator (OCI)<sup>1</sup>, as of March 31 2018, Indigenous offenders represented 28% of the total federal in-custody population, despite comprising just 4.3% of the general adult population in Canada (Zinger, 2018, p. 60). This over-representation points to the fact that the number of Indigenous women in conflict with the law outweighs their representation in the general population.

There is a trend in global corrections for women toward what is referred to as gender responsive corrections. Gender responsiveness is defined as: “creating an environment through

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<sup>1</sup> The Office of the Correctional Investigator, or OCI, is mandated by Part III of the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* (CCRA) as an Ombudsman for federal offenders. The overarching responsibility of the Office is to investigate and bring resolution to individual offender complaints, and to review and make recommendations on the Correctional Service's policies and procedures. The current correctional Investigator is Dr. Ivan Zinger. For more information see: <https://www.oci-bec.gc.ca/cnt/roles-eng.aspx>

site selection, staff selection, program development, content, and material that reflects an understanding of the lives of women and girls and address their strengths and their challenges” (Covington, 2012, p. 24). Many women who enter the prison system in Canada represent the margins of society, many with disadvantaged backgrounds, poor educations, high prevalence of mental health challenges, and low socioeconomic statuses (van den Bergh, Gatherer, Fraser, & Moller, 2011). Some of the life circumstances of women that this framework seeks to address through specialized program and service delivery includes motherhood, suicide and self-harm, mental health concerns, substance abuse, and a history of trauma and victimization (CSC, 2017b).

Rule 12 of the *United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders* (Bangkok Rules) states that individualized, trauma-informed, gender-sensitive, and extensive mental health programs need be available for all women offenders with mental health care needs in prison or non-custodial settings (Limsira, 2011). This rule speaks to the necessity of trauma-informed and gender-specific training for all correctional personnel who work with incarcerated women. The Bangkok rules serve to protect the rights of women in conflict with the law, prioritizing the vulnerability of women and their dependent children, pregnant women, personal hygiene, preventative health-care measures, foreign nationals, juvenile female offenders, gender-sensitive risk assessment, medical confidentiality, and many other issues faced by women (Limsira, 2011).

Correctional Service Canada (CSC) operates the federal correctional system, which incarcerates offenders sentenced to two years or more, and monitors offenders serving community sentences (on parole or statutory release); this system is referred to as long-term

corrections or prison (Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies [CAEFS], 2010; Reitano, 2016). Provincial and Territorial Correctional systems incarcerates offenders serving custodial sentences of two years less a day, monitors offenders in the community on probation, and holds offenders awaiting trial or awaiting sentencing (on remand); this system is referred to as short-stay corrections or jail (Reitano, 2016; Martin, Murphy, Chan, Ramsden, Granger-Brown, Macaulay, Kahlon, Ogilvie, & Hislop, 2009). The New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre (NBWCC), a provincial correctional facility, which is commonly referred to as a jail, is the case explored in this thesis.

The federal correctional system in Canada (administered by CSC) incarcerates women in conflict with the law under a system called Women-Centred Programming, placing the onus on the individual offender through operationalizing the concept of shared-responsibility. This concept of self-governance is characteristic of neoliberal<sup>2</sup> crime-control policy, vastly different than welfare models of the past (Hannah-Moffat, 2001, p. 173). Moreover, the choices that women in conflict with the law are empowered to make are predetermined by those who create Correctional Service Canada women-centred federal correctional policy for women offenders. As a consequence, this research project focuses on women's self-reported experiences of programming and services in a provincial setting and considers the interplay between women-centred programming and the ways that these programs/ policies/ services govern women in particular ways. Specifically, this thesis examines one province's effort to implement these (federal) women-centred services in a provincial jail setting. It considers how provincially incarcerated women view their needs and experience services and supports in a provincial

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<sup>2</sup> Johnson and Crocker (2010), building upon the work of Rose and other scholars, consider the recent shift from socialized frameworks for risk and responsibility, to a more individual system of management. Neoliberalism, or advanced liberalism, has been created in recent decades by a range of state and non-state actors, modeled on competitive and individualistic capitalist markets (Johnson & Crocker, 2010, p. 14).

correctional institution that has adopted a programming model based on the Canadian long-term or federal women-centred approach, which meshes tenets of women-centred programming, holism, and trauma-informed best practices for women offenders.

In order to explore women-centred correctional policy created by Correctional Service Canada (CSC), there are a few concepts that need to be understood: the women-centred approach, trauma-informed interventions, and the holistic health paradigm. Correctional Service Canada policy-makers consider those correctional programs that reflect the social realities of women and respond to the individual needs of each woman to be “women-centred correctional programs” (CSC, 2010, p.4; CSC, 1990, Chapter 9). Additionally, Correctional Service Canada claims to have adopted a holistic approach to correctional programming for women, stating that their programs are holistic because they are multi-dimensional (CSC, 2010, p. 5). In earlier documents, such as their 1990 *Creating Choices* document – which is explored in-depth later in this thesis – CSC defined holistic approaches as involving recognition of the woman as a whole person, and acknowledgement that aspects of psychological well-being may affect the woman in other ways, such as the presentation of physical ailments (CSC, 1990, Chapter 9).

Trauma-informed services are services that (i) take into account the impact of trauma on a woman’s thinking, feelings, and behaviours (ii) avoid triggering trauma reactions and/or re-traumatizing an individual, (iii) adjust the behaviour of counsellors, other staff members, and the organization to support each woman’s coping capacity, and (iv) allow survivors to manage their trauma symptoms successfully so that they are able to access, retain, and benefit from services (Fallot & Harris, 2008 as cited in CSC, 2012, p. 27). The core values of trauma-informed services are safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment (CSC, 2012, p. 27). Each of these key terms (the women-centred approach, trauma-informed interventions, and the

holistic health paradigm) informs the series of questions posed to the women offenders who form the basis of this research project.

### **Language**

In creating a trauma-informed environment in women's corrections, Covington (2012) recognizes the impact of language. Women offenders are referred to in various ways: women offenders, women inmates, incarcerates, female prisoners, and so on. These terms can have harmful connotations and contribute to the dehumanizing nature of the prison environment (Covington, 2012; *Creating Choices*, 1995). In an attempt to not contribute to the hostility of the prison environment, I will try to honour the term "women" or "women in conflict with the law" to refer to the women offenders. The practice of referring to clients as "the women" is commonplace in women's corrections (*Creating Choices*, 1995). In circumstances where I must be more specific to avoid confusion with the correctional staff and/or the researcher (who are also women), I will use the term "women/woman offender(s)". The degree of specificity will depend on the circumstances and situations that I am describing the women. In circumstances where I feel I must use the identifier of "offender" to maintain clarity for the reader, it will always be paired with the suffix of "woman" first, as these individuals are women first and foremost before they are offenders. The language used in most recent Canadian publications, such as *Gender Responsive Corrections for Women in Canada: The Road to Successful Reintegration* (2017), which was jointly written by Federal and Provincial/Territorial correctional agencies is consistent with "women in conflict with the law" (CSC, 2017a, para. 8, Introduction).

At present, there is an overwhelming need for research analyzing the extent to which these concepts from the federal mandate, which will be explained in the context section of this document, are compatible with the provincial level of women's corrections in Canada.

The central questions that therefore guide this project are as follows:

1. Examine the programming at the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre (NBCC) with a view to:
  - a. determine the women's experiences with the programming regime
  - b. elucidate the concepts that are considered to be unique about the programming at this particular correctional institution (i.e., what about this Centre is viewed as women-centred by the women offenders?)
  - c. elucidate the concepts that are considered to be unique about the overall approach of staff and institutional climate at this particular correctional institution (i.e., what about this Centre is viewed as trauma-informed by the women offenders?)
  - d. consider the women offenders' self-reported holistic health needs: psychological, physical, and spiritual wellbeing
  - e. consider if the women offenders deem this programming as helpful or a hindrance to their overall health status
  - f. outline the specific programming offerings, compared and contrasted with those demonstrated in CSC's women-centred, holistic and trauma-informed institutions
  - g. describe what programs are offered, compared and contrasted with those adhering to CSC's women-centred, holistic and trauma-informed interventions



- h. consider if this institution's approach considered to be women-centred, according to the women offenders of NBWCC? And/or, in light of the standard defined by CSC.
2. Preliminarily consider examples of what makes this provincial correctional institution for women compatible and/or incompatible with the women-centred model which exists in federal corrections for women in Canada, particularly I will:
  - a. Consider the compatibility of a holistic health environment, necessary for a women-centred approach to take place, with the safety and security mandate of this correctional setting, and
  - b. consider any incompatibilities that arise that suggest the prison environment cannot be fully women-centred

Through the exploration of these questions, this research project ultimately notes disparities between the provincial level of corrections and the federal CSC women-centred framework. The views and experiences of the women offenders at NBWCC at a particular point in time constitute the primary data in terms of how they express their needs, experience programming, health services, and supports under the current programming model.

### **Thesis Structure**

This thesis is divided into six chapters structured as follows. Chapter one includes a literature review, which includes a brief overview of the history of women's incarceration in Canada, noting monumental commissions and reports. This chapter highlights the construct of gender-informed corrections, in comparing it to the gender-neutral approach traditionally designed for men. This chapter also includes an explanation of several terms that are integral to

the understanding of women-centred corrections: women-centredness, holistic health, and trauma-informed. During the review of pertinent literature on women's corrections in the thesis, this research set out to identify on what basis Correctional Service Canada (CSC) has selected holism as a means to base their women-centred programming regime. This is an important piece in the collective picture, because principles of holism are said to be at the core of the women-centred correctional regime at the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre (NBWCC). Chapter one offers a review of the current state of both provincial and federal women's corrections in Canada. I suggest that although women's unique needs are being acknowledged in the current programming regime, mobilizing these needs to govern women can be incredibly problematic. This leads into the problem statement and the unique contributions to knowledge addressed by this proposed research project.

Chapter two presents the key concepts of the overarching theoretical lens: critical feminist theory. In considering tenants of social control, in the prison setting, and interpreting comments through the lens of this theory, a critical feminist approach considered. When assessing how women's needs are used to govern them and considering what the potential effects of that governing may be, a feminist lens is held most centrally. Hannah-Moffat (2001) has argued that women-centredness is merely a mask for social control in the correctional system, and suggests that access to trauma-informed programs, mental health care, and community-based initiatives are a better focus for correctional programming (p. 4). Those who create Correctional Service Canada correctional policies and programs for women have regressively shifted away from therapeutic regimes, toward principles of risk-management and control (Hannah-Moffat, 2001, p. 18). Many critical feminists consider the creation of a women-centered mandate in Canadian corrections to have historical ties to practices used to portray women as fallen or

broken, which are means of further punishing women in conflict with the law for not adhering to societally accepted feminine roles. CSC's political interpretation of the terms "shared responsibility" and "empowerment" in the women-centred mandate reveal neoliberal strategies of governing, which responsabilize Canadian women in conflict with the law (Hannah-Moffat, 2000, p. 512). This concept of placing the onus on the individual was described by Rose (2000) as responsabilization. Responsibilization, risk-need conflation, and the appropriation of choice are explored. This chapter also reflects on how these concepts relate to the data, the lens they lend through which to interpret the data, and how they allow me to question the data further.

Chapter three outlines the research methods and methodological considerations applied in this thesis. This thesis engaged in a qualitative methodology through semi-structured interviews. Chapter three offers justification for the decisions in choosing this methodology and methods of data collection. The research questions and objectives guiding the research are also explained. Of particular emphasis in this chapter is the vulnerability of this population – women in conflict with the law – and the steps taken to not exacerbate these vulnerabilities. Primary research included semi-structured interviews with a sample of women offenders at NBWCC to explore their experiences with programming. Participants were asked to consider the extent to which they believe their health needs were currently being met through the women-centred and holistic framework (See Appendix A). More specifically, the interview questions asked women offenders to consider their perceptions of how women-centredness is or is not addressing their various holistic health needs: psychological, physical, and spiritual wellbeing. I am aware that 'social' is not traditionally recognized as a component of holism as we know it (Howell, Auger, Gomes, Brown, & Leon, 2016), and thus the fitting of 'social' as a tenant of a holistic approach is

critically considered. This chapter describes the participants in the research, sampling methods, and the process of data collection.

Chapter four begins presents the story of the case under study. This chapter presents the findings of the research, and moves into an analysis of the findings. Findings presented include the women's definitions of the key terms of interest in this study: women-centred programming, health and holistic health, and trauma-informed corrections. Some analysis is given on these findings, as to prepare for the analysis of major and sub-themes in the following Chapter.

Chapter five lays out the notable themes found in the data through the process of coding and thematic analysis. Before considering the two major over-arching themes found, several subthemes are explored, including the prison industrial complex, jail as punishment not for punishment, and other pertinent themes. Lastly, the two major themes found are unpacked: (1) a perceived lack of, or inadequacy of programming, and (2) a perceived lack of mental health supports. Interestingly, the findings also reflect that there is a general improvement in women's overall health statuses upon incarceration: counter to what is noted in a recent 2018 New Brunswick governmental report. This chapter threads the empirical findings, social control theory with a critical feminist lens, and current so-called evidence-based standards of programming to analyze the findings of the research. Analysis shows that although there is a widespread perception that programming and mental health supports are lacking, the women offer many recommendations as to how to remedy these inadequacies.

Lastly, Chapter six offers a discussion, recommendations, an evaluation of the research questions, directions for future research, and some concluding remarks.



## Chapter One: A Brief History of the Incarceration of Women in Canada

### Overview of Canada's Correctional Systems

**Differentiating Federal and Provincial/Territorial Corrections.** Canada has traditionally relied on custody, with a purpose of punishment and penitence (O'Regan & Reid, 2017). Until the Royal Commission to Investigate the Penal System of Canada in 1938 recommended a shift toward rehabilitation, Canada relied on harsh corporal punishments and custodial terms (O'Regan & Reid, 2017). The main objective of the correctional system is to maintain safety of the public (O'Regan & Reid, 2017; CSC, 2017a; MacPherson, 2018). Under the *British North America Act* (BNA Act) of 1867, the responsibilities of the correctional system are divided between federal and provincial/territorial levels of government and separates adults from youth. The provincial/territorial system for adults manages offenders 18 years of age and older sentenced to two years less a day or on remand, and the federal system for offenders 18 years of age and older sentenced to two years or more (Reitano, 2016; CSC, 2017a). The federal correctional system in Canada is managed by Correctional Service Canada (CSC). The provincial/ territorial correctional systems are managed independently by specific legislation in each province and territory (O'Regan & Reid, 2017).

The Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA) specifies the policies designed to maintain public safety, outline the responsibilities of correctional staff, and manage the population of offenders (O'Regan & Reid, 2017). Under the CCRA, Corrections Service Canada (CSC) is responsible for managing federal offenders, preparing them for their release, delivery of rehabilitation programs, supervision of federal offenders on conditional release in the community, and educating the public on the role of CSC (O'Regan & Reid, 2017). The Office of

the Correctional Investigator (OCI), an independent body, is also managed under the CCRA, designed as a regulatory body to ensure CSC is held responsible to its legislated mandate (O'Regan & Reid, 2017). The OCI provides investigative and review of circumstances wherein federal offenders have complained of “decisions, recommendations, acts or omissions” by Correctional Service Canada (CSC) (Sapers, 2016, p. 2). Under any circumstance where an offender has experienced serious injury (self-inflicted or other) or death, the OCI is responsible to review the incident (Sapers, 2016). Recent areas of concern in the 2015/2016 Report of the Office of the Correctional Investigator included offender health care, deaths in custody, conditions of confinement for offenders, reintegration into the community, correctional services for Indigenous persons, and correctional services for women offenders (Sapers, 2016). The most frequent complaint processed by this Office in 2015/2016 was about health care (772 out of over 6000 complaints, 11.9%) (Sapers, 2016).

**A Snapshot of Provincial/ Territorial Corrections.** 37% of those entering provincial adult correctional facilities in New Brunswick are on remand<sup>3</sup> (Reitano, 2016, para. 8). Individuals in provincial/territorial custody tend to spend a short amount of time in custody, with 30% of adult offenders being released from custody in one week or less, and 59% being released after one month or less (Reitano, 2016, para. 13). Brown et al (2015) offer a comprehensive glimpse at the clientele of the provincial correctional system in Ontario. In this province, 63% of offenders are on remand or awaiting trial, those sentenced to a provincial sentence of two years or less account for 32% of offenders, while the remaining 5% is made up of offenders held on immigration warrants, parole violations, custody transfers, and youth warrants (Brown et al.,

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<sup>3</sup> Remand is a term commonly used to describe the process of detaining a person who has been arrested and charged with an offense until their trial. This process is also described as pre-trial detention.

2015, p. 30). Women's correctional institutions can be overcrowded, and create additional stressors for the women such living in a hyper-securitized environment designed for male offenders (Brown et al., 2015).

**Trends Among Women in Conflict with the Law.** While the number of women in conflict with the law in proportion to the overall population of individuals in conflict with the law in Canada is small, the proportion of Indigenous women behind bars exceeds their representation in the general population of Canada at a much more alarming rate (CSC, 2017a). As mentioned, this concerning proportion of Indigenous women incarcerated at a higher rate than they are present in the community is referred to as an overrepresentation in the correctional system (CSC, 2017a). In Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) report, Section 36, it is stated: "we call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to work with Aboriginal communities to provide culturally relevant services to inmates on issues such as substance abuse, family and domestic violence, and overcoming the experience of having been sexually abused". If we are ever to achieve a point of truth and reconciliation, the alarming rates of Indigenous women in conflict with the law must be repeated: over the last ten years, the number of Indigenous women who are federally sentenced increased by 60% (from 168 women in 2009 to 270 women in 2018) (Zinger, 2018, p. 61).

94% of women in the care of provincial/territorial corrections present with substance abuse needs, while 74% of federally incarcerated women present with substance abuse at intake deemed to be a contributing factor in their criminality (CSC, 2017a). According to Statistics Canada, women in federal and provincial/territorial custody tend to have lower education levels, low rates of employment, and typically are younger than average women in the general Canadian population. Many women in conflict with the law have children and are the primary caregivers of



their children; a recent federal inquiry unveiled that 75% of women in conflict with the law are mothers of children under the age of 18, and 67% of women reported being single care givers at the time of arrest (CSC, 2017a).

Women in Canadian federal prisons have historically endured a correctional system that is designed and managed for the 95% majority of offenders who are men (Arbour, 1996). Many government documents and commissions of inquiry dating back to 1938 have addressed the way women offenders have been treated unfairly and disadvantaged in the penal system because of their underrepresentation in offending (Arbour, 1996). Arbour adds that the welfare of women offenders has always come secondary to that of the larger male population. Correctional policies and practices for women offenders in Canada have generally been modified from what was considered appropriate for male offenders, placing women in the position of being a correctional afterthought (Parkes and Pate, 2006). In this sense, correctional programs and services offered to women offenders have been hand-me-downs of programs designed for men.

Canadian provincial correctional facilities house women offenders sentenced to less than two years, and thus can be referred to as short-stay corrections (Martin, Murphy, Chan, Ramsden, Granger-Brown, Macaulay, Kahlon, Ogilvie, & Hislop, 2009). The pattern of offending for many women incarcerated in short-stay correctional facilities includes illegal activities associated with drug and substance misuse/abuse. An alarming 40% of women released from short-stay corrections find their way back to prison within two years post-release (Martin et al., 2009, p. 44). Post-release from short-stay corrections, many women remain marginalized, and cycle back into the correctional system. Martin et al. (2009) infer that this marginalization, and overall poor determinants of health, lead many women back into a life of crime to make money, seek shelter, and feed their addiction(s).

Martin et al. (2009) further that women in prison tend to have poorer health, a higher presence of psychiatric illness, greater rates of HIV, and several other health ailments at a more prevalent rate than the general population of Canadian women. Much international research demonstrates that the woman offender population have higher rates of mental health challenges than the male offender population (Brown, Hirdes, & Fries, 2015; Lynch, Fritch, & Heath, 2012). Lafortune (2010) examined the prevalence of mental health challenges among 671 men and women in a provincial correctional setting in Quebec; of which, 6.4% of the women offenders had diagnoses of schizophrenia, and 26.3% a diagnosis of depressive disorder. In cohesion with these findings, Brown et al. (2015) measured the prevalence of severe symptoms of a mental health problem among a sample of 522 offenders in Federal and Provincial correctional settings in Ontario, finding 41.1% of Ontario offenders to have at least one current, severe symptom of a mental health problem (p. 27). These scholars relied on the standardized RAI-MH instrument to measure mental health symptoms ranging from sleep disruptions to hallucinations. These findings demonstrate the high need of mental health supports for all individuals in the prison system, particularly for the minority of Canadian women behind bars. The Office of the Correctional Investigator (2018) found that nearly one in three women met the criteria of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: this demonstrates the marked and drastic experiences of trauma that many women in conflict with the law face.

### **Monumental Commissions of Inquiry and Reports on Women Offenders**

**Early Deplorable Conditions.** Arbour (1996) posits that from the onset of the incarceration of women, the welfare of women offender was secondary to that of the majority population of men. Women were often housed in large prisons for men, and the treatment of

women offenders was not remarkably different from the treatment of men offenders. On occasion, yet not systematically, matrons or mother figures were employed to manage the women offender populations (Arbour, 1996). The only criteria for hiring matrons to oversee women offender's care was the matron herself being a woman; this led to many matrons and nurses who were employed in correctional settings being desperate and impoverished women who could not find work elsewhere (Hannah-Moffat, 2010).

The Provincial Penitentiary was one of the first correctional institutions in Canada to house women for long periods of time. The Brown Commission of 1849 arose out of public concerns about reported flogging of women and children at the Provincial Penitentiary (later known as Kingston Penitentiary). This commission confirmed many abuses and mismanagement of women offenders, deplorable living conditions for women, and a general lack of accountability of administrations at the Provincial Penitentiary (Arbour, 1996). The report of the Brown Commission put forth many recommendations, including the construction of a separate living unit for women offenders. This report was heralded as monumental in providing rationale for the construction of a separate correctional centre for women, however its vision of separate housing for women offenders was not operationalized until sixty-five years later.

**A Prison Built for Women.** In 1913, sixty-five years after the Brown Commission, a free-standing women's prison was constructed within the Provincial Penitentiary, now known as the Kingston Penitentiary. Advocacy for a separate women's prison did not cease until 1925, when the construction of the successor to the women's prison in Kingston Penitentiary (Arbour, 1996). However, despite these early cries for a women-only facility, women would not be housed in such a correctional facility in Canada until 1934 (Hannah-Moffat, 2010).

The Briggar, Nickle and Draper Commission of 1921 and the follow-up Nickle Commission were two reports instrumental in advocating for a separate prison for women (Arbour, 1996, p. 127). The former was appointed to consider and advise revisions of general regulations within the penitentiary. The latter commission was a follow-up to speak directly to the state and management of women offenders. The Briggar-Nickle-Draper Commission recommended that a separate institution, administered by a woman warden be developed, however it was not until the Nickle Commission that the recommendation of a special regime designed for women was put forth (Hannah-Moffat, 2010). Hannah-Moffat (2010) reiterates that the Nickle Commission of 1921 was the first federal commission to report directly on the specific needs and issues of women offenders. Nickle advocated that the “Female Unit” be decommissioned and replaced with a new prison upholding modern prison standards of the time. For example, the omission of foreboding stone walls in the new design, and minimal security measures to prevent escapes and intrusions from outsiders. Nickle also recommended programs for women offenders, and the hiring of a French-speaking matron for women. One of the most emphasized points of this commission was the separate classification and accommodations for women offenders; including adequate segregation from offenders and staff that are men. Nickle also voiced many forward-thinking concerns that are still relevant today, including his frustration with a penal regime that emphasizes repression rather than reintegration, the sale of offenders’ handiwork, and the inadequacy of medical care.

Following the Nickle Commission, the construction of the Prison for Women began in 1925. The new prison was not a cottage-style facility traditionally associated with maternal prisons, and instead was a congregate-style building. Within this new facility was a T-shaped complex, surrounded by a sixteen-foot limestone wall (Hannah-Moffat, 2010, p. 86). The

arguments of economics and practicalities of governing large numbers of offenders were common rationale to justify harsher prison designs. P4W was completed in 1932, however it was used to house men offenders in 1933 due to overcrowding. It was not until 1934 that P4W housed its first women offenders. Many scholars, including Hannah-Moffat (2010) agree that it is difficult to ascertain which elements of the Nickle commission were implemented, as there are few accounts of rehabilitative programming at P4W in its infancy years of operation. Moreover, she furthers that between 1934- 1970, programming for women consisted of mostly vocational, educational, and leisure programming with an aim to structure the women offenders' time (p. 87). Traditional maternal guidance and kindness were at the core of administrative strategies, often translating into domestic skills programming.

Many administrators of P4W are documented in having views of the women offenders being people who made mistakes, not inherently bad individuals, and worthy of care and compassion over punishment (Hannah-Moffat, 2010). However, during this same period prison records from the 1950s show that political prisoners, substance abusers, and internment prisoners were subjected to segregation and denied access to programming (Hannah-Moffat, 2010, p. 89). Many forms of treatment, including force-feeding, overt forms of coercion, and cruel treatment were inconsistent with the wider political logic of welfare-based governance of the era.

**The Emergence of Women Offender's Rights.** The Archambault Report in 1938 was monumental in that it was the earliest to acknowledge women offenders' rights as equal to those of men offenders (Arbour, 1996). This report condemned P4W and recommended offenders be transferred to provincial correctional facilities. Archambault believed that the prison should serve to not only protect society, but to transform offenders into law-abiding citizens (Hannah-Moffat, 2010). Archambault argued that the state had been failing to meet this duty of reformation,

directly faulting the prison administrators for using dictatorial methods to manage the facilities. In this 1938 report, Archambault recommended that it would be costly and undesirable to construct a penitentiary exclusively for women, and instead to manage women in reformatories (Hannah-Moffat, 2010).

The Gibson Report in 1947 restated the recommendations but forth by Archambault. The state made few substantial improvements to women's corrections, apart from minor additions of radio reception, improved gardens, tennis courts, and other privileges in an attempt to improve the lives of women offenders (Hannah-Moffat, 2010). By the 1940s, local women from the community of Kingston began to play a more active role in delivering recreational and educational programming to balance out the plentiful institutional employment opportunities in production for offenders (Hannah-Moffat, 2010). Hannah-Moffat (2010) highlighted that the feminine focused maternal programs and duties were mainstay until the 1950s, when the first widespread implementation of expert-based rehabilitative strategies emerged.

The Ouimet Report in 1969 emphasized various systemic barriers facing women, and renewed the interest in equal rights (Arbour, 1996). This report recognized that the small population of women offenders was an advantage; delivering programming to this small group would ease if the federal population of women offenders was decentralized into provincial facilities. The report also pushed for a uniform mode of operations at each facility. It was not until the 1970s, following a long history of inquiries into the unequal rights for women, that there was a renewed interest in women's corrections.

**Toward Decentralized Prisons for Women.** The National Advisory Committee on the Female Offender (NACFO-Clarke Report) was established in 1974 to consider the future of women offenders (Arbour, 1996). This committee was also formed to make recommendations

toward a comprehensive plan of institutional and community services that would be proportional to the unique security and programming needs of women offenders. The Clarke Report consisted of rigorous statistical analysis and consultation with experts, and confirmed in its findings the uniqueness of women's offending and women offender's needs; self-confidence issues, weak family bonds, and self-injurious behaviour. The Clarke Report emphasized the concerning geographic isolation of women offenders housed far away from their homes, an absence of Francophone and Aboriginal services, a lack of appropriate programs, and an archaic architectural structure among other issues. The overarching recommendation was that the Prison for Women should be closed.

In response to The Clarke Report of 1977, The Joint Committee to Study Alternatives for the Housing of Federal Female Offender (Chinnery Report, 1978) and The National Planning Committee on the Female Offender (Needham Report, 1978) were formed to dig into feasible options to resolve the documented issues (Arbour, 1996). The Needham Report was poignant in noting that given Canada's vast geographic makeup and few numbers of women offenders, there was no evident solution, and instead a compromise was to be reached. The proposed solution was to close P4W or make improvements to the prison, establish at least one community-based residential centre, and establish an Exchange of Service Agreement between provincial and federal correctional bodies.

**Ideological Shifts of the 1970s and 1980s.** The women's movement of the 1970s launched ideological and political attacks on maternal and first-wave feminist visions (Hannah-Moffat, 2010, p. 132). Driven by the liberal notion of equality, reformers pushed for formal rules and regulations, therapeutic interventions, due process, and release mechanisms to help women transition back into the community. The overarching goal of the liberal feminist movement was

to eradicate gender bias in penality, therefore creating a gender-neutral penal strategy. The 1970 *Royal Commission on the Status of Women* was the first feminist report to situate the issue of women's corrections within a wider scope of injustices against women in Canada. The 1977 MacGuigan Report stated that the Prison for Women (P4W) at Kingston was "unfit for bears, much less women" (Hannah-Moffat, 2010, p. 137). One of biggest issues that was noted in this report, and subsequent reports, was the over-classification of minimum risk women by housing them in maximum security facilities. Hannah-Moffat (2010) furthers that although the government pooled a great deal of resources into reforming women's imprisonment, such as through the instatement of the National Advisory Committee on the Female Offender (NACFO report of 1977), the conditions of confinement for women failed to improve or gain political and social traction on the oppression of women behind bars.

Driven by this lack of progress, and determined to push for the just treatment of women offenders, feminist prison reformers filed a formal complaint to the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) (Hannah-Moffat, 2010, p. 135). This complaint was launched by Women for Justice, a group that was the first to bring together advocates of women offenders from inside and outside of the field of corrections. Other like-minded groups joined this fight, including the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies and the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF). The Human Rights Commission complaint filed by Women for Justice, alleged sexual discrimination against women for reasons including poor facilities and programming, geographic dislocation, and an absence of psychiatric support. The complaint was upheld, and it was declared that nearly all aspects of women's corrections, including programming, treatment of federal women offenders, and facilities were inferior to those for men (Hannah-Moffat, 2010, p. 136).



The early 1980s saw intense litigation on behalf of offender's rights, particularly women offenders, which ultimately led to the creation of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA) (Arbour, 1996, p. 130). Despite the government instating a Permanent National Advisory Committee on the Federal Female Offender in 1982 and the specialized Division of Native and Female Offender Programs in 1985, these concerns were echoed in the later Daubney Report and in *Creating Choices* reports (Arbour, 1996). It was not until the late 1980s and early 1990s that debates on treatment and programming shifted focus from those that emphasized stereotypically feminine roles and expectations for women. The Women for Justice filed another challenge of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the late 1980s because conditions for women offenders at the Prison for Women (P4W) remained unimproved. This complaint filed in 1987 was never brought before the court, as it was postponed pending the recommendations of the 1990 Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women.

**Creating Choices: 1990 Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women.** The Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women (TFFSW) was launched in 1989. This task force included the concerns of women offenders and their advocates, and pushed for a new, less coercive model of corrections, which was accepted by the Canadian government (Parkes and Pate, 2006). The recommendations put forth are known as *Creating Choices*. *Creating Choices* is a document embodying feminist healing principles such as women-centred and holistic programming (CSC, 1990; Glube et al., 2006; Pollack, 2005). This report laid the groundwork for the five federal women's correctional institutions, pushed for the closure of P4W, advocated women-centred rehabilitative programming, and proposed a community-centred approach for monitoring women offenders in the community. All of these changes were heralded as monumental to changing the way women had been incarcerated in Canada (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). The report called for

recognition that women offenders did not pose a serious risk to society, and that prison should empower women to take control of their own lives (CSC, 1990; Pollock, 2005).

Prison reformers had changed their rhetoric from relying on maternal metaphors, to narratives of empowerment and choice (Hannah-Moffat, 2010). Hannah-Moffat (2010) furthers that feminist reformers, Correctional Service Canada, and Indigenous women's groups worked together to operationalize this women-centred version of corrections. There was no particular event or incident that led to the inception of the Task Force, but rather there was a combination of prolonged social and political pressure from feminists, reformers, aboriginal advocates, and the media for the mistreatment of federal offenders. Although sentiments of change were sparked through the task force, events at the Prison for Women (P4W) in the years that followed would mobilize these proposed changes into a complete restructuring of prisons and jails for women in Canada (Pollack, 2005). The Task Force will be reviewed in detail later in this chapter.

**The Arbour Commission of 1996.** Through its tenure as a federal penitentiary, the Prison for Women (P4W) at Kingston Penitentiary was under scrutiny several times throughout its history, culminating with a *Royal Commission of Inquiry into Certain Events at the Prison for Women* in 1996. This inquiry put forth many recommendations, such as the establishment of a Deputy Commissioner for Women, and the necessity of a shift toward regional institutions specifically designed to meet the unique programming and security needs of women inmates.

**Context of the Events at P4W.** On April 22, 1994, six inmates took part in a physical altercation with four members of the correctional staff of the Prison for Women in Kingston. Directly after the incident, all six inmates were placed in the Segregation Unit of the prison. On April 26, 1994, correctional staff members protested outside of the Prison for Women, insisting that the six inmates involved in the physical altercation be transferred out of their institution.

This rapid sequence of traumatic events led to the Warden of the Prison for Women bringing in an Institutional Emergency Response Team (IERT) from Kingston Penitentiary, an all-male institution, on April 26, 1994. The Institutional Emergency Response Team was an all-male squad who were required to conduct cell extractions and strip searches of the eight women who remained in the Segregation Unit at that time; six were part of the April 22 incident and the remaining two were in segregation prior to the sequence of events. As per protocol, all events from the time the women were extracted from their cells to the conduction of the strip searches were videotaped. After all searches were complete, the eight women remained in the Segregation Unit in restraints and leg irons until seven of the eight women were subject to non-consensual body cavity searches later during the evening of April 27<sup>th</sup>.

On December 1<sup>st</sup> 1994, five of the six women involved in the April 22<sup>nd</sup> incident agreed to plead guilty to the criminal charges that followed the incidents; they appeared in court 21 days later. The women involved were released from the Segregation Unit between December 7<sup>th</sup> 1994 and January 19<sup>th</sup> 1995. On January 20<sup>th</sup> 1995 Correctional Service Canada released a report of a Board of Investigation that failed to give attention to many key and questionable aspects of the events that followed the April 22<sup>nd</sup> incident. As a response to the poorly described incidents, the Correctional Investigator made a special report on February 14<sup>th</sup> 1995 that was much more critical of the responses made to the incidents on April 22<sup>nd</sup>. The Solicitor General publicized his intentions to conduct an inquiry into the matter on February 21<sup>st</sup> 1995.

The Governor General in Council appointed the commission to The Honourable Louise Arbour on April 10<sup>th</sup> 1995. The commissioner was asked to report on the incidents that began on April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1994 at the Prison for Women in Kingston, Ontario. The responses of Correctional Service Canada were also part of the inquiry, including the procedures that were in place for

responding to incidents in April 1994 and the proportionality of their actions that followed the incident. The segregation of the inmates involved in the incident as a result thereof and the all-male emergency response team who responded to the incident was also part of the inquiry (Arbour, 1996).

***Findings of the Report.*** Prior to conducting the inquiry, Honourable Louise Arbour was required to establish her own findings of fact regarding the incidents that occurred April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1994. In her general findings, Justice Arbour concluded that it “is nearly impossible for this Commission to determine what happened – largely due to the inadequacies of the investigations carried out by the Correctional Service immediately after the incidents” (Arbour, 1996, p. 24). The Correctional Service staff believed that the physical altercation between the six inmates and four guards on April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1994 was aimed at killing the guards (Arbour, 1996). Upon the conduction of this inquiry, it was revealed that the inmates did not intend to kill the prison guards with malicious intent; rather they themselves were victims of harsh cruelty (Arbour, 1996). Furthermore, The Use of Force Report was oversimplified and included no report from a health care provider, improper reporting after the use of mace, and no proof that the inmates were informed they were entitled to give their respective versions of a Use of Force Report following the incident of April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1994 (Arbour, 1996).

Among the many abuses of the inmates were the strip searches conducted long after they were admitted into the Segregation Unit. If such searches were necessary, they should have been conducted immediately after the incident (Arbour, 1996). The body cavity searches were highly unnecessary and were conducted without consent of the inmates. The inmates’ right to counsel was vastly ignored following the incident (Arbour, 1996). Another breach of the inmates’ rights included the prohibition of daily exercise in the Segregation Unit from April 22<sup>nd</sup> till May 24<sup>th</sup>,

including but not limited to the women involved in the incident on April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1994 (Arbour, 1996). The Honourable Louise Arbour noted that “virtually none of the rights, privileges and conditions of confinement available in the general prison population or ordinarily available in segregation were provided” (1996, p. 92).

***Recommendations of the Report.*** Many recommendations were made by Justice Arbour in response to her Commission of Inquiry. She recommended that the position of Deputy Commissioner for Women be created, which was to be filled by an individual familiar with women’s experiences in the criminal justice field (Arbour, 1996). This Deputy Commissioner would be responsible for revising the laws and policies that apply to women’s institutions, and consult various women’s groups to develop social programming for incarcerated women. Above all else, this individual was to over-see the release and reintegration of women.

Many recommendations were made to protect female inmates by restricting the nature of cross-gender staffing in institutions. This provision included the restriction of male staff from patrolling cells at night, and announcing their presence when entering the living quarters of female inmates (Arbour, 1996). It was also recommended that male Incarceration Emergency Response Teams (IERT) were not to be sent into women’s prisons and that there should be IERTs composed of female staff to handle serious emergency issues regarding women. Men were not to strip search women, as they were exclusively to be conducted by a female physician in appropriate surroundings, if the inmate provides her consent after acknowledging her right to counsel.

It was also recommended that all federally sentenced Aboriginal women have access to CSC’s Healing Lodge, and that other culturally relevant programs be made available to them. All Correctional Service Canada employees are to be aware of and properly informed of inmates’

rights. When segregation is used, it must be monitored and administered according to the law, and long-term segregation use ceased. It was also recommended that the use of videotaping continue, to insure records are kept of future events. These recommendations were made among many others, including 14 main recommendations stemming from the Commission of Inquiry into Certain Events at The Prison for Women in Kingston. Justice Arbour recommended that The Prison for Women be shut down, which it was almost immediately after the release of her inquiry.

### **The Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women**

**The Creation of Women-Centered Corrections in Canada.** Cheney (2010) discussed the work of Dr. Mary Gordon, who was the first English Lady Inspector of Prisons, from 1908 to 1921. Gordon conveyed her forward-thinking attitude toward the treatment of incarcerated women in her 1922 book *Penal Discipline*, which associated her with feminist and suffragist movements of the time (Cheney, 2010). Mary Gordon was an advocate for rehabilitation, and focused on issues such as substance abuse, sex trade work and victimization while acknowledging that various aspects of women's health, such as depression, self-harm, poor physical health and low self-esteem were shared characteristics among women offenders. Gordon held early predictions that static security for women was not an effective means to operate prisons, and that women require an individualized approach tailored to their risks and needs to give the women a voice and a chance to be heard. From the early part of this century until present day, there have been calls to ensure that the special circumstances of women in conflict with the law be considered in all planning and programming decisions.

The Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women (TFFSW) was launched in 1989. This task force included the concerns of women offenders and their advocates, and pushed for a new,

less coercive model of Federal corrections, which was accepted by the Canadian government (Parkes and Pate, 2006). The recommendations put forth from this task force report is known as *Creating Choices*, a document embodying feminist healing principles such as women-centred and holistic programming (CSC, 1990; Glube et al., 2006; Pollack, 2005). This report laid the groundwork for the five federal women's correctional institutions in Canada, pushed for the closure of The Prison for Women (P4W) at Kingston, advocated women-centred rehabilitative programming, and proposed a community-centred approach for monitoring women offenders in the community. The primary mode of programming would include health care, mental health services, addictions treatment, mother/ child programs, spirituality programs, family visits, educational programs, vocational programs, and Aboriginal programming (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). All of these changes were heralded as monumental to changing the way women had been incarcerated in Canada (Hannah-Moffat, 2001; TFFSW, 1990, p. 138-147). The report called for recognition that women offenders did not pose a serious risk to society, and that prison should empower women to take control of their own lives (CSC, 1990; Pollock, 2005). To date, there remains the five federal women's correctional facilities (prisons) built in accordance with women-centred principles of *Creating Choices*: Nova Institute for Women (Nova Scotia); Joliette Institution for Women (Quebec); Grand Valley Institution for Women (Ontario); Fraser Valley Institution (British Columbia); and Edmonton Institution for Women (Alberta). The Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge is located in Maple Creek, Saskatchewan.

The *Creating Choices* is said to have been a collaborative effort between Correctional Service Canada, Indigenous leaders, feminist reformers, and community advocacy groups. These groups, working together to create an alternative version of punishment, to be known as women-centred corrections (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). The Task Force was unlike any other government

committee in Canada, made up of forty-one people (Shaw, 1993). No previous commissions of inquiry into the state of corrections for women had included so many formerly incarcerated women, community advocacy groups, and Aboriginal advocates (Shaw, 1993). Many of the agencies involved were skeptical of this women-centred prototype to alter the traditional punitive mode of governance (Hannah-Moffat, 2001).

The mandate of the Task Force was to examine the way women in conflict with the law at federal correctional facilities were treated for the entire duration of their care in corrections, and develop a plan that spoke to the needs of women. The TFFSW came in response to a combination of factors: recent deaths of offenders at P4W; pressures on the Canadian government to meet Indigenous peoples demands for self-government, cultural autonomy, and equal treatment in the criminal justice system; and a general push by the public and advocacy groups to cease the government ignoring federally sentenced women (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). In adopting a primarily feminist approach, the TFFSW was driven by an understanding of women-centredness to be experiences of domestic violence against women, poverty, racism, and sexual abuse as central factors in women's criminality (TFFSW, 1990, p. 83).

Problematically, community advocacy groups such as The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS), who co-chaired the Task Force, reported feeling left out of the implementation process (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). Many groups withdrew their support for *Creating Choices* when it came time for implementation, particularly because of the government's failure to foster community strategies as outlined in the document, and an overall fear that the principles would not be implemented in the way they were designed (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). By limiting the involvement of non-CSC agencies in implementing *Creating*



Choices, and thus limiting the possibilities for change, this correctional regime is accused of being another traditional bureaucratic model of corrections (Hannah-Moffat, 2001).

**The Principles of *Creating Choices*.** The core principles of the *Creating Choices* document are empowerment, meaningful and responsible choices, respect and dignity, shared responsibility, and a supportive environment (CSC, 1990, Chapter 10). These core principles guided CSC's restructuring of the federal women's corrections model to better respond to the unique needs of women offenders. These principles are particularly salient because they are the core of women-centredness as it exists in the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre, and trauma-informed principles designed by Covington and implemented in the same site.

Empowerment is "meant to highlight that the structural inequities experienced by women prisoners are similar to broader gender inequities (TFFSW, 1990, p. 105-106). This principle is directed by the perception that all women – those in conflict with the law and otherwise – lack self-esteem through personal challenges and structural arrangements of society and as a result have limited power to direct their lives (TFFSW, 1990).

Meaningful choices are broken into two major types: the choices offered to the woman offender by the correctional institution in terms of programming, the choices the woman makes while at the correctional institution, and decisions the woman makes on release (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). Meaningful choices are considered choices that relate to the woman offender's needs, past experiences, belief system, spirituality, skills/ abilities, and future realities (TFFSW, 1990, p. 108).

Respect and dignity are based on the premise of mutual respect among women offenders and correctional staff and between women offenders, to foster a sense of self-respect and respect for others necessary to take responsibility for the future (TFFSW, 1990, p. 109). This principle is

in direct contrast to traditionally arbitrary and humiliating rules in corrections, which is said to contribute to a sense of powerlessness (Hannah-Moffat, 2001).

A supportive environment is considered one in which facets of political, physical, financial, emotional, psychological, and spiritual supports are available (TFFSW, 1990, p. 110). Particularly important in a supportive environment as it is defined by CSC, includes supports for Aboriginal women (Hannah-Moffat, 2001).

Shared responsibility outlines the shared onus of the woman offender to take responsibility for her actions – past, present, and future – in a comprehensive environment including the community, correctional staff, volunteer services, private/ business services, and government (TFFSW, 1990, p. 111). This sharing of responsibility is said to be cohesive with Aboriginal teachings, and a holistic approach (TFFSW, 1990). Holistic approaches will be considered in following chapters.

### **Women-Centred Programming at Present**

Of particular importance to the analysis later in this thesis is considering the discrepancy of how “programming” is interpreted and defined at this site compared to the women-centred programming outline from Correctional Service Canada (CSC). These concepts will be defined here. Even CSC’s understanding includes a wide array of programs and services and thus I decided not to narrow what was considered a “program” and instead look for the boundary drawn by the women in their responses. They considered programs to be any and all opportunities beyond their basic day-to-day functions such as eating and sleeping.

### **CSC’s Parameters of Programs**

*Programming.* Correctional Service Canada, responsible for the governance of federally sentenced persons in conflict with the law, offer several helpful definitions to understand what they classify as correctional programs, education programs, social programs, and risks/needs. Risk is a measure of how likely it is that the offender will reoffend (recidivate) (CSC, 2014d). Needs are factors that may have contributed to an offender's criminal behaviour and can impact the offender's ability to successfully transition back into the community (reintegrate) (CSC, 2014d). Outlining the specific program offerings that make up the regime of a "women-centred" prison is particularly salient given this research discussing a provincial jail's interpretation and modifications of such programs.

Correctional programs focus on risk factors contributing to criminal behaviour and are based on behavioural and social learning theories (CSC, 2014d). They aim to reduce reoffending by helping offenders make positive changes to address their risk factors. Correctional programs take precedence over other programs, since they tend to address violence and other safety concerns. Offenders demonstrating a high educational need will also have educational programming marked as high priority if the length of their sentence permits (CSC, 2013b). Education programs seek to improve offenders' literacy and education skills; in improving education levels, these programs also help improve the degree of benefit offenders receive from other programs (CSC, 2013b). Social programs – fostering personal interaction, communication skills, and positive lifestyle skills – seek to build an offender's capacity for change.

All types of programs and services are part of CSC's legal mandate to provide services that address criminal behaviour, based on evidence-based literature of what works to reduce recidivism (re-offending). Their programming focuses on four key areas: correctional programs, educational programs, social programs, and vocational programs. Outside of these key areas,

CSC has policies and directives targeting the over-incarceration of Aboriginal Women, and ethno-cultural supports for individuals of minority groups in conflict with the law (CSC, 2014d).

### **Definitions of Key Terms**

**CSC Women-Centred Corrections.** Women-centred is defined as: “the empathetic, accepting, supportive, encouraging, challenging, and non-confrontational approach used to recognize the social, political, and economic contexts of women's lives as well as their unique individual needs in relation to the world in which they live” (CSC, 2017a, glossary). Correctional Service Canada (CSC) has been recognized internationally for its progressive women-centred policies for federally sentenced women (Glube et al., 2006; Pollack, 2005). This women-centred policy is CSC’s version of a gender-specific/ gender-informed/ woman-focused correctional model. Women-centred programming is designed to meet the various difficulties faced uniquely by women through therapeutic intervention (Pollack, 2005). Some of these difficulties include parenting stress, histories of trauma, mental health challenges, adverse social situations, and experiences of intimate partner violence (Gobeil, Blanchette, & Stewart, 2016).

**Operational Definition: Women-Centred Corrections.** Correctional Service Canada (CSC) operational documents utilizing the concept of women-centred programming and women-centredness often do not offer an operationalized definition of what they consider to be a women-centred approach. In the 1990 *Creating Choices* document, Correctional Service Canada defined programs that are women-centred to be those that “reflect the social realities of women and respond to the individual needs of each woman” (TFFSW, 1990, Chapter 9).

The definition of women-centred programming becomes clearer when looking at situations that are not considered to be federally regulated under women-centred programming<sup>4</sup>. The New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre (NBWCC) has adopted CSC's Federal women-centred guidelines but is still in the early stages of program implementation. For my research project as an undergraduate, I used purposive sampling in order to include women with a range of experiences at other institutions to elucidate their experiences at NBWCC in its early years of service. During a focus groups with women offenders at NBWCC, one of the women stated that "the grass is always greener at Nova". By this, she meant that from her perspective, life in all aspects is better for offenders in that federal women's prison compared to a provincial one. Ironically, this comment of the grass being greener in Federal was echoed by one of the senior staff members of NBWCC, wherein the phrase was used to refer to staff perspectives of the lives of federally employed correctional staff being preferable to provincially employed correctional staff.

**Holism Per CSC.** Correctional Service Canada (CSC) has selected holism as a means to base their women-centred programming regime (TFFSW, 1990; Hannah-Moffat, 2001; CSC, 2017a). The re-structuring of the approach to women's corrections with *Creating Choices* was based on the principle of holism, or recognizing the woman as a whole person is comprised of mind, body, and spirit. CSC has adopted, but not added to, the Aboriginal notion of holistic approaches as the starting point for their women-centred correctional regime. Holism being at the core of the women-centred correctional regime is an important piece of the collective picture and

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<sup>4</sup> It is important to highlight that women-centred programming, as it is considered federally, does not exist in the same way and under the same title in provincial correctional institutions. Thus, my experiences as a student-researcher exploring provincial corrections in New Brunswick, and as a volunteer at the federal women's prison in Truro, have allowed me to draw a clear distinction between provincial and federal women's correctional facilities in Canada and what it means to be women-centred within the confines of prison.

understanding the ways in which holism is operationalized will help to identify the ways it exists at the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre (NBWCC). Holistic health needs, as considered by CSC and thus NBWCC, are considered to be psychological, physical, spiritual, and social well-being (NBWCC 2016a; TFFSW, 1990). The most recent definition of holism available at the time this thesis was written is as followed: "the interventions approach that considers an individual's overall spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical, well-being" (CSC, 2017a, Glossary).

***Dichotomy of Holism and the Social Environment.*** I am aware that 'social' is not traditionally recognized as a component of holism as we know it (Howell, Auger, Gomes, Brown, & Leon, 2016). Holistic health, as it stems from the traditional Aboriginal health model, encompasses four dimensions of health: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being (Howell et al., 2016). Traditional Aboriginal ways of healing translate into correctional programming in many ways, such as sweat lodges offered for healing rather than just pharmaceutical options (Bell & Flight, 2006). However, Correctional Service Canada (CSC) has repeatedly intertwined the concept of the social environment with the traditional holistic components of mind, body, and spirit. In the *Program Strategy for Federally Sentenced Women*, 'holistic' is defined as a principle of programming for women offenders (Fortin, 2004). Moreover, Fortin (2004) on behalf of CSC, advocates that programming must recognize the importance of the link between all areas of women's lives; self-awareness, relationships with others, sexuality, and spirituality (p. 6). Later in the same document, Fortin (2004) makes a short reference to a holistic approach being the mind, body, spirit; omitting the inclusion of relationships with others (p. 25). In CSC's description of their Restorative Justice Program, which is one of many programming opportunities for women offenders, CSC states that their

program is holistic in that it takes into consideration “the full breadth of each individual participant as well as the larger context in which they function” (CSC, 2012).

In other documents, such as *An Evaluation of the Spirit of a Warrior Program for Women Offenders*, Bell and Fight (2006) state that holism is based on the premise of every aspect of life being connected and related; mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual elements of one’s self. In some explanations of holism, CSC adds the involvement of ‘social’ to the traditional ‘mind, body, spirit’ notion, and in other circumstances, they adopt a more traditionally recognized definition. CSC in earlier publications (2012) specifically lists that their holistic approach acknowledges the physical, psychological, mental, spiritual, emotional, and social environment and context in which each individual lives, yet in a CSC (2017) publication, holistic interventions are considered those that speak to spiritual, emotional, mental, and/or physical well-being. Thus, there is ambiguity in defining holistic approaches, and whether or not the social environment plays a role in how holism is operationalized into the interventions and programs offered in correctional facilities that operationalize on CSC’s understanding.

**Operational Definition: Holistic Health.** During my exploratory research project as an undergraduate, I discerned various elements that make up a woman’s holistic health, and how these elements of health are allegedly met through women-centred programming. Again, the definition of holism can be clarified when we look at situations that are not considered to be federally regulated under women-centred programming. The New Brunswick Women’s Correctional Centre (NBWCC) has adopted this federal guideline but is still in the early stages of program implementation, and given the ambiguity of CSC’s understanding of holism, this is a key area of inquest for the present research.

In my earlier research with a focus group of women offenders at NBWCC, several women of Aboriginal ancestry voiced that there are no resources for Aboriginal women; namely, infrequent sweat lodges and no elder. This can be interpreted as a spiritual need that is not being met. Other women voiced that they did not play a role in choosing or preparing their meals as they did in Federal prison. Many women stated that their limited food choices at NBWCC, combined with their limited leisure and yard time, contributed to the deterioration of their physical health. One woman stated that her favorite time of the day was leisure time, as she got to use her earphones, listen to the radio, and walk around her unit. When the unit was in lock-down or on shift-change for the staff, the opportunity to clear her head by walking with her radio is suspended – this activity can be interpreted as having both psychological and physical health benefits. Several other women spoke about programming opportunities at Nova benefiting their social well-being, such as cooking classes and budgeting with other women in their units.

These comments show that a women-centred approach suggests a non-negotiable meeting of the various health needs of women: spiritual, physical, psychological, and social well-being: holistic health. When one of these elements of health is not met, impacts can be felt on other facets of health, and thus holistic health is not being met. Under the women-centred approach, the four elements of health are inextricably linked.

**Trauma-Informed Corrections.** Trauma is typically a response to violence or some other overwhelmingly negative incident (Covington, 2012). Trauma is not only an event, but also the response to an event; a normal reaction to an abnormal or extreme situation (Covington, 2012). According to CSC's most recent definition (2017), trauma-informed services: "take into account the impact of trauma on a woman's thinking, feelings, and behaviours; avoid triggering trauma reactions and/or re-traumatizing an individual; adjust the actions and interactions of all



staff to be responsive and support each woman's coping capacity; and allow survivors to manage their trauma symptoms successfully so that they are able to access, retain, and benefit from services” (CSC, 2017a, Glossary).

There are several core values of trauma-informed services, particularly in social services: safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment (Harris & Falot, 2001). Feelings of security and safety are paramount for women clients and staff working in correctional environments (Harris & Falot, 2001). Harris and Falot (2001) further that establishing trust is achieved through following through on promises and keeping clear boundaries, which can lead to more openness from women survivors of trauma. Allowing women in conflict with the law to make their own choices, and having these choices be respected is essential in reinstating a sense of control, which is often lost in circumstances of trauma.

Collaboration between women in conflict with the law and the staff/ leaders of the institution must occur so that a more level playing field, or reduced power imbalance can be felt by the women clients, who often times have been dominated and regarded as inferior in traumatic episodes. Lastly, if all of these elements are honoured, the culture of fear and dependence can be broken, and replaced with a lifestyle of self-awareness and empowerment. It should be noted that these core principles of trauma-informed services were designed in cohesion with the principles of Creating Choices: empowerment, meaningful and responsible choices, respect and dignity, shared responsibility, and supportive environment (TFFSW, 1990; Harris & Falot, 2001). Covington (2012) posits that even though many correctional settings were not designed to be trauma informed, environments that are safer physically and emotionally for survivors of trauma are possible to create. The best way to achieve this, per Covington (2012) is to educate staff on trauma so that their approach can be conducive to trauma healing.

**Operational Definition: Trauma-Informed Corrections.** In my earlier research, the focus groups included a check-in and a checkout with the participants before and after the focus group. This offered an opportunity to find some common ground, and to talk about something to which everyone can contribute. For example, we explored what we wanted to be when we grew up. In the check-in of the first focus group with women offenders, one of the co-researchers disclosed to the group her journey with mental health challenges and abuse. This sparked a wide and diverse open dialogue about early experiences of physical abuse, sexual abuse, ongoing psychological abuse, battles with prostitution/ turning tricks, mental illness, addiction, and poverty. During this conversation, all parties, participants and researchers, had something to contribute. Our experiences of trauma were as common ground as a check-in item may have been. The women offenders acknowledged that our experiences as women who have experienced trauma made us privy to understanding their journeys as women in conflict with the law. This is the most substantial example I have experienced first-hand of how integral a trauma-informed environment is for women offenders and correctional staff in carceral settings.

### **Gender Informed Corrections**

The trend in global corrections is toward gender responsive interventions as a more effective means to reduce recidivism over standard (non-gender specific) correctional interventions (CSC, 2017a). Gender responsive is defined as: “the ability to consider the demographics and histories of the women offender population in delivering interventions, programs, and services as well as recognize how their various life factors have impacted their overall patterns of offending” (CSC, 2017a, Glossary). Male-oriented correctional models, which can be said to be any correctional model or mode of operation that is not considered to be

gender-specific/ gender responsive, are extremely limited when implemented for smaller populations of women offenders with diverse and complex needs (CSC, 2017a). There has been much agreement between varying government agencies, including federal, provincial, territorial, and stakeholders to uphold a system that is not a replication of a system for men (CSC, 2017a).

It has been a little over a decade since “gender-informed” and “gender-responsive” correctional interventions for women have come to fruition in Canada, and close to thirty years since *Creating Choices*. The first United Nations standards for the treatment of women offenders were established in December 2010 with the *United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders* (Bangkok Rules) (CSC, 2017a). 193 countries who are members of the United Nations, including Canada, voted in support of the Bangkok Rules wherein acknowledging women’s gender specific needs that need to be respected and addressed (CSC, 2017a).

Gender-informed interventions incorporate elements of evidence-based correctional practice, including cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), but also approaches mindful of the needs of women, including strengths-based approaches and feminist paradigms (Gobeil et al., 2016). These treatment strategies seek to address issues beyond abuse and self-harm and look to social inequalities as the starting point for understanding women’s health. Many scholars agree that gender-informed corrections are the most efficient means to address women’s pathways to offending. Mainly, because evidence demonstrates high levels of early trauma among women in conflict with the law, suggesting that experiences of trauma are a related factor in women’s criminality and managing past experiences of trauma should be integrated in recidivism reduction techniques (Tam & Derkzen, 2014; Gobeil et al., 2016).

**Efficiency of Gender-Informed Corrections.** Stewart and Gobeil (2015) present the findings of their review of evidence of what interventions work to reduce reoffending by women. Substance abuse treatment in-custody or therapeutic community programs utilizing cognitive-behavioral interventions were found to be effective (Stewart & Gobeil, 2015). Specifically, they note the following gender-responsive programs to be effective: programs that draw upon existing strengths and competencies of the offenders, programs that promote acquiring skills cognitive-behaviorally, community opioid maintenance programs, booster programs that promote the continuation of treatment in the community, and gender-responsive approaches compared to gender-neutral approaches.

These scholars note that appropriate treatment targets for women offenders overlap with targets for men offenders. Each group of offenders experiences some common issues such as antisocial attitudes, relations with antisocial peers, and substance abuse (Stewart & Gobeil, 2015). Moreover, some of these gender-responsive approaches to address risk factors through therapeutic or cognitive-behavioural approaches, and drawing upon existing competences of the offender, may also aid in reducing recidivism of men offenders.

Gobeil, Blanchette, and Stewart (2016) conducted a meta-analysis of research from the US, UK, and Canada to consider the effectiveness of gender-informed compared to gender-neutral correctional programs. These scholars refer to programs specifying women's unique needs as "gender-specific", while a non-specific regime that is designed for use with men populations and often implemented in settings where women offenders are present as "gender-neutral". Moreover, these "gender-neutral" approaches are designed for the male majority, and thus are in fact gendered to the needs of men offenders. Gobeil et al. (2016) drew upon studies including nearly 22,000 women offenders who participated in gender-informed correctional

programs, which showed up to thirty percent greater odds of community success for those who participated in gender-informed programs versus those who participated in gender-neutral programs (Gobeil et al., 2016, p. 301). They found that gender-informed interventions are significantly more likely to reduce recidivism.

This finding is consistent with the dominant literature, stating that women respond more positively to gender-informed interventions that recognize risks and needs, such as the individual's backgrounds and gender-related issues, consisting of strengths-based approaches. The findings of Gobeil et al. (2016) are valuable because there is limited research conducted on the effectiveness of correctional interventions for women, and few comparisons of gender-specific and gender-neutral approaches.

**Implications in Recidivism Reduction.** Some scholars suggest that incarceration is designed to change negative behaviors and cognitive constructs; however, this goal cannot be attained without addressing the offenders' past experiences and unresolved issues stemming from abuse and trauma (Ramsden, Martin, McMillan, Granger-Brown, & Tole, 2014). Ramsden et al (2014) argue that planning for reintegration is poor in most correctional facilities globally, which leaves individuals in conflict with the law feeling as though they have no control or power over their fate. Given the recurring finding of past history of trauma and abuse among women incarcerated in short-term corrections, as well as the extensive interplay of trauma and abuse and the offence cycles of many women offenders leading to their recidivism (Gobeil et al., 2016; Martin et al., 2009), the need for a trauma-informed and women-centred approach at the provincial level of corrections in Canada, and not just federal, is paramount.

In summary, many scholars have noted the benefits of gender-specific correctional regimes for women that respond to the significant mental health needs of women offenders

(MacDonald, 2013; Gobeil et al., 2016). Programs that draw upon the existing strengths of the offenders (strengths-based approaches) are cohesive with women-centred approaches (Stewart & Gobeil, 2015).

This notion of strengths-based practice is entrenched in the women-centred regime as the latter is essentially a system of self-governance, tailored to each woman, and asking each woman offender to look inward to find empowerment and strength to choose a path counter to criminality (Hannah-Moffat, 2010). Correctional Service Canada has followed this trend in their regime for federally incarcerated women; however, the Canadian provinces are yet to uniformly implement women-centred and trauma-informed approaches in provincial correctional institutions (Crichton and Ricciardelli, 2016; Hannah-Moffat, 2010). Although CSC claims to have based their women-centred approach on the mind, body, spirit connection of the holistic approach, the extent to which the current approach addresses the holistic health needs of women offenders remains unclear (Hannah-Moffat, 2010).

### **Background of Provincial Corrections in New Brunswick**

In the province of New Brunswick there are five adult provincial correctional institutions. Combined, these facilities house approximately 500 people in conflict with the law at any given time (MacPherson, 2018, p. 76). The average cost to the province of New Brunswick annually is \$66,000 per offender. The average duration of custodial sentences is 76 days (MacPherson, 2018, p. 94). There were 3,685 adult admissions into adult provincial correctional institutions in New Brunswick in 2016-2017. Of these admissions, 53% were sentenced and 47% were on remand or other (MacPherson, 2018, p. 95). The most common reason for incarceration in provincial facilities in New Brunswick is theft under \$5,000 (13.2% total of admissions, serving

an average of 71 days), failure to comply with conditional sentence (12.5% total of admissions, serving an average of 28 days), and breach of probation (11.0% total of admissions, serving an average of 37 days) (MacPherson, 2018, p. 96).

In addition to the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre, other provincial correctional institutions include the Dalhousie Correctional Centre, Madawaska Regional Correctional Centre, Saint John Regional Correctional Centre, and the Southeast Regional Correctional Centre (GNB, 2018). For a geographical distribution of the correctional institutions across the province of New Brunswick, see Figure I in appendix, obtained from the Report of the Auditor General (MacPherson, 2018, p. 122).

**The History of The New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre (NBWCC).** The New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre (NBWCC) is located within the New Brunswick Youth Centre (NBYC) in Miramichi, New Brunswick, Canada. The NBWCC opened its doors in January of 2012, and has a total capacity of 56, with an average daily population of 35 women offenders (New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre [NBWCC], 2016). Upon opening in 2012, women offenders were transferred from Saint John Regional Correctional Centre and Madawaska Regional Correctional Centre, and the male offenders who were housed in the vacant portion of the New Brunswick Youth Centre prior to its conversion to a women's facility were sent to the Dalhousie Correctional Centre (CBC, 2011).

***United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Concerns.*** Ahead of its 2012 opening, The New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre (NBWCC) had been under-fire several times over concern about its location in proximity to The New Brunswick Youth Centre (NBYC) in Miramichi. According to the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate of New Brunswick, the NBWCC opening at a site shared with the NBYC is a violation of section 37 the

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Bosse, 2015). The Department of Public Safety confirmed in 2011 that women offenders would be transferred to the youth centre the following year (CBC, 2011).

The transferred women in conflict with the law came from Saint John and Madawaska jails, and the males, which previously were housed in the vacant cells of the New Brunswick Youth Centre, were sent to the then new Dalhousie jail (CBC, 2011). In 2012, 29 women in conflict with the law were transferred from the Saint John Regional Correctional Centre to the re-purposed facility in Miramichi, sparking outcry from offender-advocacy groups such as The Elizabeth Fry Society (CBC, 2011). Co-ordinator for the Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John, Denise Durette, voiced that the isolated geographic location of Miramichi is a hinderance to families and supporters of women from the province's southern cities (CBC, 2012). Pollack (2009) argues that federal sentences causes offenders that are mothers to be away from their children for longer periods, and for offenders to be disconnected from family, community, and the labor market. Given the geographic isolation of many correctional jails and prisons in proximity to major Canadian cities, offender's disconnection from the community and social exclusion are exacerbated (Pollack, 2009). These concerns are definitely applicable to the location of the Miramichi facility in relation to the Province's major city-centres of Saint John, Moncton, and Fredericton. In tandem with this point, the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate New Brunswick has been calling for the creation of a new secure youth site, located closer to the Saint John/ Moncton/ Fredericton areas, in an effort to deliver a greater family and community connection for youth in conflict with the law (Bosse, 2016).

The Department of Public Safety's decision to transfer the women was based on securing women in conflict with the law better access to educational and rehabilitative programming



implemented by staff who are well-trained, such as those at the Youth Centre (NBYC) (CBC, 2012). In the Child and Youth Advocate *More Care Less Court* report, Article 37 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is explained. The most pertinent liberty outlined in Article 37 is “every child deprived of liberty shall be separated from adults” (as cited in Bosse, 2016, p. 113). Despite the administration’s continued efforts to minimize contact of young persons of the Youth Centre and women offenders of the Women’s Centre, visual contact of clients still persists, and transportation of youth and adults in vehicles is reported to exist (Bosse, 2016). Canada has made a reservation to this Article and is approaching a 10-year history of co-detaining children and adults (Bosse, 2016). This report puts forth the recommendation of the government giving greater effect to the principle of separate systems for adult and youth criminal systems by discontinuing to house adults and youth in conflict with the law at the same facility and creating a separate facility for youths.

The Department of Public Safety New Brunswick Director of Institutional Services, Heather Harrison, announced that this is an interim solution, viewed by the New Brunswick government as temporary while other options are pursued for the future (CBC, 2011). The Department of Public Safety have reassured the public that adult inmates never interact with young offenders at the facilities (CBC, 2011), but several agencies have called for the practice to cease (Bosse, 2016). Former Child and Youth Advocate for New Brunswick, Bernard Richard called for the New Brunswick Youth Centre (NBYC) to be closed, transferring the young offenders to a more suitable site. At the time of this thesis being written, the facility has been open for seven (7) years (2012-2019).

**The Structure of NBWCC.** There are four designated units for the women: units 4, 5, 6, and 7. Unit 7 is for new admissions, offenders on remand, and methadone clients. Unit 4 and

Unit 6 are general population, whereas Unit 5 is the trustee unit. See Figure II in appendix (New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre [NBWCC], 2016b) for the designated pathway for offender unit designation during their time at the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre (NBWCC). Moreover, the NBWCC is a multi-level institution<sup>5</sup>, with a circular architecture designed to house women in varying living units from intake to release<sup>6</sup>. The New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre is unique in that they have adopted Correctional Service Canada's Women-Centred Programming model. This model involves a staff training regime with a module on Aboriginal culture, case management and release planning, empowerment, mental health, substance abuse, trauma, and suicide. This training is said to be gender responsive and has been provincially modified to fit NBWCC.

**Intake and Risk Assessment at NBWCC.** At intake, women offenders sent to the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre (NBWCC) are taken into the admissions office and asked a series of questions as staff complete intake forms and medical assessments (NBWCC, 2016b). Women offenders are given orientation booklets at this time. Case plans may be updated monthly, case conferences take place as necessary, and discharge planning is ongoing during the woman's stay. These tasks are primarily handled by the Institutional Programmers. At NBWCC there are currently two programmers, sharing one full-time position.

New Brunswick policy states that security classification is an ongoing process of collecting and assessing information that pertains to the security rating and perceived needs of a client (Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies [CAEFS], 2010). The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies posits in their *Handbook to Offenders in New Brunswick*

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<sup>5</sup> Multi-level refers to security status: minimum-security, medium-security, and maximum-security statuses. Some facilities are designated to a specific security level, while others such as NBWCC, are multi-level serving all.

<sup>6</sup> The living quarters are designed so that the women will move from unit-to-unit during their incarceration, beginning in unit 7, and finishing in unit 5 upon release – as a goal.

states that one's classification is meant to reflect the perceived risk that the offender poses to society, which is broken down into three types: minimum, medium, and maximum security (2010). Classification is to be decided by a classification committee, often including the Deputy Superintendent, correctional officers, probation officers, and the Program Supervisor (CAEFS, 2010).

**Clinical, Health Care, and Trauma-Informed Services at NBWCC.** In a presentation from the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre (NBWCC), it is stated that NBWCC has two full-time nurses, two casual nurses, a weekly medical clinic with a General Physician, a bi-weekly psychiatric clinic with a Psychiatric Physician, a weekly clinic with a Public Health Nurse, and a bi-weekly methadone clinic with a General Physician.

In the Auditor General New Brunswick Report, *Addiction and Mental Health Services in Provincial Adult Correctional Institutions*, MacPherson (2018) found many problematic elements with the existing addiction and mental health services in provincial corrections in New Brunswick. Specifically, MacPherson (2018) found that New Brunswick corrections does not have mental health clinical staff within adult correctional facilities in the province (p. 100), and instead relies on the Regional Health Authorities to provide mental health care and intervention. However, it was found that correctional officers who complete the corrections program at the New Brunswick Community College undergo suicide and mental health awareness training, titled ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) (MacPherson, 2018, p. 104).

In Canadian correctional institutions there is a high prevalence of mental health challenges and substance abuse addiction (MacPherson, 2018). New Brunswick has been found to be among the least effective in providing addiction and mental health treatment to offenders, thus meaning that offenders are released back into the community without receiving adequate

treatment to mitigate their health risks and the risks they may pose to the public (MacPherson, 2018). The major findings of the lack of treatment for provincial inmates includes; limited treatment provided for crisis management, no addiction treatment, no counselling or therapy for mental health challenges, no clear definition of roles and responsibilities between departments, no implementation of best practice protocols for screening and assessment, and poor continuity of care in the community (MacPherson, 2018).

These major challenges were not found to be isolated incidents at any particular provincial jail, rather they were a systemic issue of unclear role definition among New Brunswick governmental agencies including the Regional Health Authorities, Department of Health, Department of Justice and Public Safety, and other stakeholders (MacPherson, 2018). These departments are actively working on an action plan to improve services for persons in conflict with the law in New Brunswick adult corrections (MacPherson, 2018). An overall lack of resources by New Brunswick Corrections has contributed to the lack of adequate mental health care (MacPherson, 2018). These recent findings are particularly salient to this thesis, and the exploration of women offenders' experiences of programming and health services in a New Brunswick jail.

The *Provincial Human Rights in Action Project* developed a manual for women who are currently serving provincial sentences, tailored to the respective provincial or territorial legislation and correctional policies of each region. This manual was created in partnership with The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, and is a user-friendly document designed to advocate for the rights of women in conflict with the law in provincial jails through offering supports and opportunities for themselves and their peers. This document is particularly helpful

in outlining the rights of women in conflict with the law, and these women can do when they feel their rights have been infringed upon.

The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies posits in their *Handbook to Offenders in New Brunswick* that correctional facilities in New Brunswick are to provide their clients with basic medical services and emergency dental care, which can be accessed by submitting a request slip to staff. The main instances during which an offender will access health-care services while incarcerated are on admittance to the jail, when/if the offender reports an illness or injury, and when a staff member files an incident report of illness/injury (CAEFS, 2010). At intake, a nurse assesses each woman for “any acute or chronic physiological, emotional or mental conditions”, and starts an ongoing document referred to as a nursing care-plan (CAEFS, 2010, p. 45). If symptoms of mental illness are noted by the nurse, the offender will be seen as soon as possible by the doctor, and if a history of mental illness is noted, the doctor will refer the woman to a psychiatric consult as part of the intake assessment if they deem it necessary (as cited in New Brunswick Public Safety, *Adult Institutional Policy March*, 2001). These rights and processes are important to be aware of as the women offenders share their experiences with health services and supports in the interview process of this thesis.

Correctional Service Canada (CSC) has embedded trauma-informed training in their women-centred regime. This is based on *Becoming Trauma Informed* by Stephanie Covington (2012) and includes a background on women in conflict with the law, understanding trauma, the process and effects of trauma, trauma-informed services, non-verbal communication, triggers, calming and grounding strategies, vicarious trauma and work-related stress, escalation and de-escalation, and self-care. This training has also been modified by staff at the New Brunswick Women’s Correctional Centre to be a two-day training course called, *Becoming Trauma*

*Informed: A training Program for Correctional Professionals.* This training module features five main sections: (1) overview of women in the criminal justice system, violence in today's world, and overview of training, (2) understanding trauma, the process of trauma, escalation/de-escalation, and the effects of trauma, (3) vicarious trauma and work-related stress, (4) trauma-informed services, non-verbal communication, triggers, and calming/ grounding strategies, and (5) trauma-informed environment for staff members, self-care, and Objective Reflective Interpretive Decisive (O.R.I.D) activity (NBWCC, 2016a).

The values of trauma-informed services are safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment (NBWCC, 2016a). In this training module, some of the trauma-informed services at NBWCC that contribute to a trauma-informed workplace include the Wellness Committee, Workplace Safety Committee, debriefing after a major incident, First Aid and CPR training, flu shots, and Employer Funded Assistant Program (EFAP) (NBWCC, 2016a). Although the NBWCC (2016a) staff training manual provides excellent insight into identifying trauma, trauma and experiences of violence, triggers, de-escalation, and other factors that are integral in delivering trauma-informed services, this document does not offer much indication of the programs and services at the Centre that are considered to be trauma informed. Thus, the interviews with the women offenders were helpful to identify these services.

**Programming at NBWCC.** Some of the programs listed on the NBWCC information presentation (2016b) include financial information, GED classes (high school equivalency), fitness classes (Zumba and yoga), Work Essential Skills Program (WES), trades training in partnership with the New Brunswick Community College (automotive, carpentry, electrical, plumbing, welding), *Stiletto to Moccasins* Program, Chaplin services, Alcoholics Anonymous, Mommy Read to Me, *Courage to Change* Program, sewing program, knitting program, guitar

program, life-skills cooking program, gardening program, and *Leaving in Style*. Current volunteer connections to the community that are listed include partnerships with the S.P.C.A., dog shows, air shows, lawn mowing, and work with local seniors.

The programs that have been brought to my attention since 2016 are listed in Table 1, in appendix, by title, internal or external resources funding the program, the agency providing the service, and if it is currently active as of Summer 2018. Although this may not be an exhaustive list, it is based on the information that was available as of Summer 2018, and my prior knowledge based on visiting the centre as a volunteer and researcher since 2016. What is concerning, and potentially problematic about the above-listed programming regime is the number of outside agencies that are providing structured programming that is regularly provided and consistent. This will be considered further in the interviews, through probing around the topic of “programming” to elucidate the program offerings at NBWCC that coincide with a women-centred and trauma-informed approach.

### **Problem Statement**

The literature on women’s corrections in Canada has largely focused on the five federal institutions and the transformative potential of the women-centred mandate that includes trauma-informed services. To date, the research has not sufficiently examined programming at a provincial level. This is, in part, due to the fact that there is no uniform correctional regime for women’s provincial corrections in Canada; correctional programming varies from each province or territory (Crichton and Ricciardelli, 2016; CSC, 2017a). Perceptions of regional needs and resources by government, voters and prison management shape correctional programming (Crichton and Ricciardelli, 2016). As such, there is a need for research analyzing the extent to

which the concepts (holism, women-centred programming, and trauma-informed interventions) from the federal correctional system are at work within, and are compatible with, the provincial level of women's corrections so that short-term correctional settings in Canada can more effectively deliver correctional interventions. The hope is that, through exploring women's experiences with programming in the particular setting of NBWCC, a better picture of what is needed in this level of corrections will be painted.

This research intends to fill this void by examining the programming at a provincial correctional institution in New Brunswick. This research is significant because: (i) such research has not been conducted in Canada previously, (ii) it contributes to a better understanding of the compatibility of the Canadian federal women-centred approach within Canadian provincial jail settings for women, (iii) it contributes to the evaluative research on the extent to which the current programming is meeting the health needs of women offenders as it intends to, and (iv) it may lead to policy and programming revisions at provincial women's correctional settings in other provinces.

The extent to which the women-centred approach is informed by empirical research on effective interventions for women has been questioned by critical feminists. Some critics say that this approach is merely a punitive approach dressed up in therapeutic language that allows utmost social control of the women through responsabilization: criminological feminism will be the theoretical lens used to interpret the results of this research (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). Responsibilization involves a system of self-governance, wherein the individual offender is responsible for her own reformation (Rose, 2000). The holistic health framework, which displaces the biomedical model of women's health, views the complete woman (mind, body and spirit) and is necessary to consider in light of holistic health principles being deemed the central



to women-centred policy by Correctional Service Canada policy makers (*Creating Choices*, 1995). More specifically, it is the (in)compatibility of the holistic framework, which is necessary for the creation of a truly women-centred approach, with the overarching punitive nature of the correctional system that this proposed research seeks to explore.

Moreover, this research inquires how holism exists in women-centred corrections, and seeks to explore women offender's actual experiences of health, and how they feel their psychological, spiritual, social, and physical health needs are being met through the women-centred programming regime. It is not the stance of holism that this research is critical of, but, the extent to which the principles of holism and holistic health have been operationalized in the prison setting beyond statements in correctional policy documents.

An example of the overarching punitive and securitized nature of Canadian women's prisons from Pollack's (2009) research is a comment from one woman offender who said that, if offenders do not participate daily in their healing program, they can be charged, resulting in being punished, or denied access to certain rights and privileges. In the offender's own words, this is "healing on their [CSC's] terms" (Pollack, 2009, p. 121). By this, she means that women must adopt the routines, strategies, and methods employed at the Healing Lodge (one of the five federal women's correctional facilities in Canada), or risk being further penalized for disobeying (Pollack, 2009). Additional punishment is hung over the women's heads for not adhering to the stringent women-centred program requirements. Women offenders who participated in Pollack's (2009) research questioned the effectiveness of mandated therapy in a hostile environment focused on punishment. This correctional programming is prepackaged and predetermined, with the only remaining control in the hands of the program facilitator for choosing how they run the program on the predetermined topic.

## **Chapter Two: Theory**

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the main concepts used as a lens through which to analyze the collected data. The overarching theoretical perspective is a feminist criminological perspective. This is helpful in considering the ways in which women in conflict with the law are governed in Canada, and what the potential outcomes of the governance may be. It also frames an understanding of the way(s) in which gender – specifically for women – is governed and regulated by the laws and the criminal justice system in Canada.

### **A Feminist Criminological Perspective**

A feminist criminological perspective, which challenges how women and their needs are constructed and responded to in provincial corrections, is used in this research. Feminist paradigms draw upon women's ways of knowing, which is in contrast to society's generic male-dominated ways of thinking and of understanding crime (Daley & Chesney-Lind, 1988). More specifically, in considering a feminist perspective, Pollock (2005) and other feminist scholars have stated that, although Canada has adopted a seemingly progressive women-centred correctional mandate, the correctional system remains repressive, as its primary goal is punishment. Hannah-Moffat (1995) argues that the core premises of gender-responsiveness (GR), also called gender-specific corrections, build on the differences between women and men, which translates into an organising principle for women's penal policy, programs and research. Moreover, this difference is used to govern women. These understandings of what behaviours incarcerated women should and should not engage in are morally justified based on values and norms of greater society, and often are not based on actual risk to the public or to correctional staff. Hannah-Moffat (2001) suggests that some progress has been made by prioritizing gender

and women's needs at the forefront of penal policy mandate, yet the issue arises of how gender is being used to govern women and what the potential effects of that governing may be.

Within incarcerated populations, women have historically been a minority compared to men, and thus many correctional facilities were designed for men with only small sections dedicated to women (Ahmed, Angel, Martell, Pyne, & Keenan, 2016). In Canadian provincial correctional facilities, for women sentenced to less than 2 years, the percentage of women offenders increased from 9% between 1999 and 2000 to 12% between 2008 and 2009 (Dauvergne, 2012). In Canadian federal correctional facilities, for women sentenced to 2 years or more, the percentage of women offenders increased from 5% to 6% over the same time span (Dauvergne, 2012).

**Womanhood.** According to Hannah-Moffat (2001), the creation of a women-centered mandate in Canadian corrections has historical ties to practices used to portray women as fallen or broken, which are means of further punishing women in conflict with the law for not adhering to societally accepted feminine roles (p. 5). Pollack (2005) has argued that CSC's mental health agenda is consistent with disciplinary processes that prioritize self-regulation of disorderly women in conflict with the law who need taming (p. 72). Moreover, these scholars both argue that CSC correctional mental health policies of the women-centred programming regime privilege psychological discourses, which are mobilized to regulate the women offenders, rather than empower or support them.

In light of these views which critique CSC's use of the concept of empowerment for self-governance, many activists have argued that the original principles of the *Creating Choices* document, which proposed a women-centred approach, have not been fully implemented, or in some respects, have been dropped from the blue-print entirely. Hannah-Moffat (2000) argues

that CSC's forms of punishment have been reconfigured by reassigning some of the Correctional Service Canada's roles, to the women offenders, thus employing a system of responsabilization as a mode of governance (p. 512). CSC's political interpretation of the terms "shared responsibility" and "empowerment" in the women-centred mandate reveal neoliberal strategies of governing, which responsabilize Canadian women in conflict with the law (Hannah-Moffat, 2000, p. 512). The concept of responsabilization will be reviewed later in this chapter. Considering the particular ways that women's roles are feminized in the case study site is of particular interest, including: program offerings, leisure activities, and revenue generating activities in the carceral setting.

**The 'Unempowerable' Woman.** The gender-responsive (GR) model assumes all women offenders are willing and motivated to engage in potentially rehabilitative programming. While this model incorporates the needs and experiences of women offenders, the GR framework fails to actively recognise women offenders' experiences and techniques of resisting (Hannah-Moffat, 2010). Moreover, she argues that there are women who do not neatly fit into this correctional framework, and are 'unempowerable', which ultimately leads to these offenders being deemed a security risk because of their non-conformity to institutional policies and procedures. This may include women who do not identify with the prescribed choices as being meaningful, empowering, or otherwise helpful: their choice to not adhere to this rhetoric may be viewed as rebellious.

This view is clearly the case of the institution passively placing the onus back on to the offender, as she has failed to follow the policies and procedures, rather than the institution and institutional staff failing to uphold the goal of empowering all incarcerated women to make changes. In corrections (and greater society) violence and aggression at the hands of women is

often pathologised, disciplined and censured even when it is in their own defense (Hannah-Moffat, 2010). Based on Hannah-Moffat, one could argue that prison serves as an exclusionary measure of penal governance to separate those deemed too unruly and dangerous for society, and those who simply do not adhere to society's generalized standard of non-violent women. This hyper-awareness of risk is all encapsulating in the women's prison system, and it is inconsistent with or disproportionate to the actual risk that women offenders pose (Hannah-Moffat, 2010).

**High-Risk High-Need Classification.** One of the most problematic elements of the control of women offenders through penal governance is the meshing of the risk/needs classification. The problematic nature of this meshing, and the impacts that this has on social control in Canadian prisons can be viewed through a feminist criminological lens, with a view to highlight the ways risk and need are conflated and used to govern women in conflict with the law. Hannah-Moffat (2015) posits that such combinations that conflate "risk" with "need" often result in an unruly marriage between risk and need which makes it difficult to distinguish risk factors from need factors and, subsequently, may result in an elevated risk classification (Hannah-Moffat, 2015). Hannah-Moffat (2015) posits that it is important to separate risks and needs because the logic of each factor informs a different administrative and managerial approach; security approaches for risk, and welfare approaches for needs. The crossing of these two constructs, security and welfare, is evident in the women-centred programming regime that classifies women offenders based on risks and needs.

When the lines between risks and needs become blurred, the institution is given free reign to govern the women offenders in any way they deem necessary to manage their perceived risk, and to justify these actions as risk management addressing the needs of the women. Hannah-Moffat (2010) argues that many women incarcerated in Canadian federal prisons who have

substantial mental health needs, a history of past trauma, or acting-out behaviours are often classified as 'high-risk high-need'. She furthers that offenders given this designation are typically separated from the general population of offenders, housed in secure and/or segregated units and/or placed on behavioural contracts (Hannah-Moffat, 2010).

This is an example of a security-based response to a perceived threat of risk. Hannah-Moffat (2010) argues that women-centred policy in responding to such a posed risk is a complete reversal of the logic of gender-responsive penalty that is embodied in the *Creating Choices* document. The consequences of coupled risks/needs are evident in the rising number of women who are considered to be high-risk high-need; this population receives the most stringent penal governance, surveillance, and isolation from other offenders (Hannah-Moffat, 2010). Since the development of the gender-responsive risk-need criteria by Correctional Service Canada (CSC), the proportion of federal women offenders categorised as 'high-risk high-needs' has doubled from 1997 to 2006, in addition, more women are said to have higher levels of need in most risk-need areas (marital family, employment/education, substance abuse, personal/emotional, attitudes, and associates/social interactions) (Statistics Canada, 2008). Coupling risk with need also may make obligatory measures for 'risk' management, appear as though they satisfy the women's deemed 'needs' and thus, may result in less resistance from offenders.

Employing a feminist criminological perspective helps to consider the constructions of perceived risk posed by provincially incarcerated women at the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre (NBWCC), particularly how these constructions of risk are conflated with the perceived needs of the women. The feminist criminological perspective is a helpful lens through which to consider how these needs and risks are managed, governed, and responded to in the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre (NBWCC). Having no one better to judge

the needs of the women than the women offenders themselves, it is interesting to consider how the women perceive their needs are being met or not met, and to hear the women's perspectives of why or why not they believe that is the case.

**The All-Pervasive Risk of Women Offenders.** Based on Statistics Canada data, the most common offense by women offenders charged with property crimes is theft of less than \$5000, and fraud (Pollack, 2009). These types of crimes, considered to be income-generating offenses, often support addictions and are much more common among women offenders than heinous and violent offences. Pollack (2009) and Hannah-Moffat (2010) note that the fastest growing group of incarcerated women is Aboriginal, and Aboriginal women are disproportionately labelled high-risk and high-need. One must question then, if women offenders do not pose as high of security risk as male offenders, why are they treated with eight-foot high chain link fences and menial hourly checks? This is the state acting in penal governance to women offenders as a collective group of dangerous, stigmatized, criminals.

An example of stringent scheduling from Pollack's (2009) research is a comment from a woman in conflict with the law who said that if offenders do not participate daily in their healing program, they can be charged. This means being punished or being denied access to certain rights and privileges. In the offender's own words, this is "healing on their [CSC's] terms" (Pollack, 2009, p. 121). By this, she means that women must adopt the routines, strategies, and methods employed at a healing lodge (one of two healing lodges, apart from the five federal women's correctional facilities in Canada), or risk being further penalized for disobeying (Pollack, 2009). This is a vivid example of penal governance, as further penalty is hung over the women's heads for not adhering to the stringent women-centred program requirements. Women offenders who participated in Pollack's (2009) research questioned the effectiveness of mandated

therapy in a hostile environment focused on punishment. This correctional programming is pre-packaged and predetermined for women's federal facilities, with the only remaining control in the hands of the program facilitator for choosing how they run the program on the predetermined topic.

**Self-Governance: A Neoliberal Tool of Social Control.** The theoretical framework of neoliberalism is a helpful tool to consider the governance of women in conflict with the law under the women-centred correctional framework in Canada. In sync with many other scholars, Johnson and Crocker (2010) argue that under neoliberalism, individuals deemed to be posing risk are governed through criminal justice responses. Although neoliberalism is not directly used to interpret the results of this thesis, the concept of self-governance is particularly helpful.

**Responsibilization.** This concept of placing the onus on the individual was described by Rose (2000) to be responsibilization. Rose (2000) has argued that responsibilization underpins the marked shift away from strategies of welfare and collective issues, to a focus on individual choice and responsibility characteristic of the neoliberal framework of our society (p. 324). Individual autonomy is aligned with tenets of personal responsibility, and self-governance; an advanced liberal (neoliberal) ideal of responsibilization (Rose, 2000, p. 329). CSC women-centred policy makers have created an operational document that is implemented by various levels of staff in the prisons themselves to govern the women offenders through regulated choices. Drawing on the work of Rose and Hannah-Moffat, I argue that responsibilization is also paramount in the women-centred mandate, as onus has been placed on the women offenders to manage their own risk, and restricting women to only make choices that are deemed to be meaningful by CSC policy makers, or face consequences of additional punishment.



*The Appropriation of Empowerment, Choice, and Therapeutic Intervention.* Hannah-Moffat has argued that risk management under CSC's women-centred mandate is the responsibility of the individual women offenders; the individual is expected to engage in self-governing strategies to minimize her "riskiness" (Hannah-Moffat, 2001, p. 186). Language of *choice* and *responsibility* has been entrenched in CSC operational documents for women-centred policy; but, the responsibility is not on the correctional managers, correctional staff, or senior management to eliminate the risk posed by the women offenders (risk, that is, according to CSC intake assessment staff); it is the responsibility of the individual women to minimize their own risk. This concept of responsabilization can be used as a tool to explore how the notion of empowerment has been appropriated by CSC policy makers to portray women offenders as free agents capable of minimizing the risk that they supposedly pose to themselves and to society.

*Empowerment.* Garland (1996, 2001) and other scholars have suggested that a new form of governing at a distance, or at arm's length, has emerged. This includes a new mode of governing women offenders through CSC's so-called women-centred policy with its own forms of knowledge, its own objectives, its own techniques and apparatuses. Hannah-Moffat (2001) builds on the work of Rose and Garland to demonstrate how those who create CSC policy have relied on empowerment in this new mode of governing at a distance (p. 170). Hannah-Moffat (2001) argues that the neoliberal notion of the self as a self-governing subject portrays the individual as a rational, free, responsible, and prudent consumer who is capable of minimizing and managing risk (p. 164). According to Hannah-Moffat (2001), the process of responsabilization is occurring with the devolution of the state's responsibility for crime prevention and offender reform of various levels of Canadian women's correctional penalty (p. 164).

Hannah-Moffat (2001) further argues that part of the appeal of empowerment is for those who already have power, as this strategic use of empowerment enables those in power to informally govern marginalized populations through encouraging these marginalized persons to be active players in their own reform (p. 169). This notion of empowerment also suggests the false ideal that an alternative to past regimes of penal governance is being offered. The notion of empowerment targets the capacities of the powerless. Hannah-Moffat (2001) argues that this entrenched use of the concept of empowerment suggests a greater reliance on systems of self-governance in the prison context, and the adoption of empowerment discourses is strategic to advance neoliberal agenda of responsabilizing citizens (p. 169). Hannah-Moffat (2001) critiques CSC's use of empowerment, and suggests

"a woman-centered empowerment model of punishment feminizes the discourse and practices of imprisonment without fundamentally challenging or restructuring the disciplinary relations of power in prisons. This is born out of CSC's approach to adopting an empowerment discourse in state narratives on women's penalty. Ironically, CSC claims it is committed to empowering women prisoners; yet empowerment for CSC is not about fundamental restructuring relations of disciplinary power in the prison, but rather about adding a new dimension to existing relations by using empowerment strategies to responsabilize prisoners" (p.170).

In this quote, Hannah-Moffat points out the essential incompatibility between notions of empowerment and the purpose of the correctional environment is that the prison serves as a mode of repression. There is a deep power imbalance between the "keepers" and the "kept", as the keepers (CSC correctional staff) are reluctant to relinquish their control to facilitate empowerment of the kept (women offenders) (Hannah-Moffat, 2001, p. 170). Hannah-Moffat has argued that feminist and Aboriginal understandings of women's disempowerment and its remedy cannot be neatly incorporated into Correctional Service Canada women-centred policies. Thus, independently of these feminist and Aboriginal groups, CSC has redefined and constructed

empowerment and the concept of shared responsibility so that these concepts are compatible with the CSC policy makers' strategy of penal governance (Hannah-Moffat, 2001, p. 171).

*Choice.* Hannah-Moffat (2001) states that there is an important distinction to make between the emphasis away from choice and responsibility for choice, and more recent circumstances of government policy makers creating the conditions for responsible choice (p. 173). In context of CSC women-centred corrections, Hannah-Moffat argues that empowerment becomes a tool of self-governance that requires the women offenders to take responsibility for their actions, not to satisfy the offender's own rehabilitative objectives, but those of CSC policy makers. According to Hannah-Moffat, the choices that women who are in conflict with the law are empowered to make are predetermined and strictly limited by the wider penal policy of Canadian corrections. Choices deemed meaningful for women offenders to make are limited only to those that CSC policy implementers and the respective senior management of each regional institution for women interpret as being meaningful and responsible.

Programming choices to accept treatment, such as in a group for example are deemed meaningful and responsible by those who implement women-centred policy, while a woman's choice to participate in a hunger strike, which she might consider to be meaningful and responsible or perhaps empowering, and are not deemed to be a responsible choice. The correctional officers of the given institution can regulate women's choices. Hannah-Moffat clarifies this argument in stating that authorities can regulate women through the decisions that the women themselves make, without resorting to more overt expressions of power exertion that are less favorable to the public eye. Power is exercised through strategies that encourage women in conflict with the law to take responsibility for their actions. Hannah-Moffat (2001) argues that

women offenders are still targets of punitive interventions, but the “accountability for reformative results shifts from the state (as in a welfare-based model) to the offender” (p. 174).

*Therapeutics for Regulation.* Hannah-Moffat (2010) suggests that prioritizing gender-based issues and women’s culture at the forefront of penal policy mandates is progress, yet the issue arises of how gender is being used to govern women and what the potential effects of that governing may be. Pollack (2005) has argued that correctional mental health policy in Canada privileges a psychological discourse, which serves to regulate women in conflict with the law rather than empower or support them (p. 72). More specifically, Pollack explores the construction of women offenders as disordered and in need of taming, according to CSC’s pathologizing mental health approach (Pollack, 2005, p. 72). According to Pollack, the dismantling of social welfare systems, privatization of institutions, and growing prison industrialized complex all set the stage for the disciplinary use of therapeutic discourse by CSC women-centred policy makers (Pollack, 2005, p. 76). Pollack (2005) explains that some mental-health informed feminists advocate for the loosening of mental health professional’s grips on expert discourses and push for the acknowledgment of the skills and awareness of incarcerated women (p. 82).

### **Chapter Three: Methods**

This chapter describes the research methods used for this research project. I begin with a review of epistemology. Next, I explain the background of qualitative research, as it relates to the present research, highlighting why this was the most suitable method of inquiry. As this research is a case study of the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre (NBWCC), I outline what a case study is and why it was selected for this project. This chapter then details my positionality as a researcher, and the relevant background playing into site selection. Then, it describes the overarching research objectives and questions, the sampling methods, the participants, the instruments utilized, and data collection strategies. Next, I describe the process of data analysis implemented in this thesis: thematic data analysis. Then, I describe the data management strategies, and notable ethical considerations. Lastly, this chapter concludes with an examination of the scope and limitations of the present research.

#### **Epistemology**

Methodology is a theorized approach to investigating the social world (Durella, 2019). Applied to the present research, the methodological question that must be considered is how one can go about examining the reality related to a specific problem faced by a group of people (women in conflict with the law). Mason (2018) asks what might represent knowledge or evidence of the entities or social reality that the research seeks to investigate. In the case of the present research, I set out to explore how women in conflict with the law view their needs and experience services and supports in a provincial correctional facility that has adopted a particular programming model. This can be made knowable through conversation with the women about their lived experiences with health in prison, the women-centred programming, as it exists in

provincial corrections (and elsewhere for comparison). Women in conflict with the law are knowers and validators, while I as a researcher am an interpreter.

### **Qualitative Research**

To fully explore this topic, this research utilizes a qualitative approach. Qualitative research has become a multidisciplinary enterprise, ranging from an art form to social science inquiry (Saldaña, 2016). A definition of qualitative research is simply to say that a research process attends to the qualities of things, including the vibrancy and richness of the subject of inquiry (Mason, 2018). As suggested by Mason (2018), the epistemological position for this research – or what might represent knowledge or evidence of the social entities or social realities that the researcher seeks to investigate – will be made knowable through conversations with the women offenders about their lived experiences. By employing a qualitative method, this research will seek to uncover underlying meaning and signs of social problems relating to this particular program in this particular setting. This research will provide qualitative data from primary sources of semi-structured interviews with women offenders.

Phenomenological studies focus on the essence of lived experiences (Durella, 2019). The goal is often to “explore the structure of an interaction, event, or experiences” (Durella, 2019, p. 96). One of the methods to explore the phenomenon in question is through in-depth sequenced interviews with a small number of participants. Case study seeks to explore a bounded system or unit, in this case, the New Brunswick Women’s Correctional Centre (NBWCC). Of particular focus is the uniqueness of a unit or entity, or larger trends the unit or entity may reveal (Durella, 2019). An accepted method to explore such unit/entity/ object of exploration is personal or group interviews, observations, and document review (Durella, 2019). As suggested by Durella (2019),

phenomenological studies, in which detailed in-depth interviews are an acceptable method of data collection, fewer participants may be required than in a grounded theory study in which the researcher uses multiple sources of data and data collection.

Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggest that the most credible interviewees are those with first-hand experience. Qualitative interviews generate in-depth and detailed data, as to provide both specific evidence and deeper meanings. Rubin and Rubin (2005) argue that qualitative interviews allow for a vivid example to be constructed, with multiple themes and concepts contributing to the overall understanding of the phenomenon. Personal interviews, as noted in Nelund (2010), allow the participants to share their individual experiences and are thus especially helpful in obtaining multiple perspectives and experiences that make up a particular case. For these reasons, I concluded that personal qualitative interviews would be the most preferred method of data collection for this particular study.

**Goals of Qualitative Research: Beyond Generalizability.** Particularly in qualitative research, the premises of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability are more attainable goals than generalizability (Mason, 2018). Moreover, credibility can be obtained through establishing a match between the constructed realities of the stakeholders (participants), and the realities represented by the evaluator (researcher) that are attributed to the stakeholders (Lincoln & Guba, 1995). In the present research, this was obtained through conducting member checks with the participants by sharing the interview notes with the individual who expressed the comments for them to confirm. Dependability involves the conventional notion of reliability, which will be met through ensuring a lineage between the collected data and the findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This involved close review of the interview notes during the coding project, and consultation with the emergent themes of related research in this area to check that the

information in the raw data is translating into the findings and overarching themes during the coding process and in my discussion of findings. Transferability is comparable to the positivist notion of generalizability (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Transferability is relative, and thus in attempt to honour this principle, I have attempted to provide the thickest, richest, and most detailed descriptions are provided from the method of data collection (interviews), while keeping in mind that these are to satisfy the specific research questions of this research project at this particular point in time.

Confirmability refers to assuring that the data and interpretations are more than just creations of the educator's (researcher's) mind and are entrenched in contexts outside the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). To satisfy this need, and in keeping with the guidelines set out by the Department of Criminology at Saint Mary's University, this thesis was reviewed at several points during the process, by a supervisor and a second-reader who are extremely knowledgeable of the research subject matter. I have also made every effort to be reflexive in this process and to express any potential biases that emerged in analytic memos. Meeting these factors have contributed to the overall trustworthiness of this research.

### **Case Study**

This research entailed a cross-sectional case study approach, using the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre (NBWCC) in Miramichi, New Brunswick, Canada as the case. This design was chosen because it would allow for a consideration of the provincially modified version of CSC's women-centred regime, at a particular point in time, while this institution is in the early stages of program implementation. This institution was chosen for consideration



because of their adaptation of the CSC federal mandate to fit their provincial correctional institution.

**Why Case Study?** A case study involves a method of analysis for examining a problem, through collecting detailed information on a particular person, group, or organization at a point in time (Yin, 2009; Durella, 2019). The case study approach can answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions and is particularly helpful when the researcher must consider the contextual conditions of the phenomenon being studied (Yin, 2009).

More specifically, when the boundaries of the phenomenon and the context are not clearly distinct, the case study approach can be helpful to better understand both (Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) furthers that the case study can contribute to knowledge of individual, group, organizational, political, social, and related phenomena because the case study approach allows researchers to retain holistic and meaningful characteristics about real-life circumstances. This method can be used for exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory purposes. The single subject of inquiry is the women offender’s experiences with the programming at the NBWCC at the present time. This programming may include services and supports offered to the women (i.e., Alcoholics Anonymous, Chaplaincy services, fitness classes). Because of the centrality of both holistic health and trauma-informed practice to women-centred programming, which is newly implemented at NBWCC, the women’s health experiences and understandings of trauma-informed practices are encapsulated with their experiences with the current programming model.

### **Women’s Ways of Knowing**

Pollack and Eldridge (2015) posit that feminist researchers have challenged hegemonic positivism in the social sciences, in order to develop other ways of knowing. Largely driven by

critiques from women of color, Indigenous women, lesbian feminists, and other marginalized groups, collectively feminists have challenged the notion of a universal woman's experience (Pollack & Eldridge, 2015). Considered in the context of the present research, it is important to reengage with the idea of no universal prison experience, and thus the principle of generalizability is not a helpful goal or potential outcome of this study. The work of Pollack and Eldridge moves beyond giving voice to women who are marginalized – as this traditionally has ties to conventional qualitative notions of academic scholars being privileged. Instead, their research works toward collaborative knowledge production.

**Co-Production of Knowledge.** Women in conflict with the law often speak through a researcher's voice: rarely are platforms offered for these women to speak about themselves or contribute methodologically or theoretically to a research project (Pollack & Eldridge, 2015). The most idyllic solution in conducting qualitative research that centres on the lived experiences of women in conflict with the law is to shift from conducting research *about* the women, to conducting research *with* the women (Pollack & Eldridge, 2015). Many feminist scholars agree that mediating these problems begins with conducting research *with* criminalized women, and addressing ethical and epistemological concerns relating to power, voice, and representation that arise when members of the ivory tower conduct research about marginalized populations.

Although truly participatory research was not possible given the time constraints of this thesis, or given the need for a specific and clear topic to conduct research on before beginning the research, principles of conducting research *with* have been carried through in various aspects of the present project. "Member checking" (Durella, 2019, p. 276) was built in to the research process in order to present the women with an opportunity to view how I had written their words and make additional comments/changes/revisions in any way they saw fit. Each interview

volunteer took a different amount of time reviewing the notes taken during her interview. Ranging from over an hour to a few minutes of review time, all twelve women verbally expressed that they appreciated the opportunity to do so. I also designed the interview framework and protocol around seeking the women's definitions of each of the key terms. Understanding these terms as they are portrayed and defined in operational documents is of course pertinent, but what is more the focus of this inquiry is how the women have come to understand these terms. Constructing questions that placed the researcher in the position of learner, and the woman-volunteer as the informer was deliberate.

I have attempted to minimize us versus them dichotomy and have instead looked to the women to share their knowledge. At each phase of the research, I have been careful with my word choice to position the women as the creator, sharer, and producer of the knowledge that this research seeks to unpack. This research could not be conducted without the lived experience, and the sharing of those lived experiences, because I, myself, am not a knower, having never been criminalized. Thus, all I can hope to do is to share, to portray, and to examine the stories shared with me in the way I think the creators of knowledge have intended. The (white) academic voice as the "authorized knower" (Pollack & Eldridge, 2015, p. 137) is challenged in this project. Finding innovative ways to engage the women as knowledge producers, while upholding the timeline of this Master's thesis have not been without challenges, and thus my voice remains privileged despite steps to mitigate the degree to which my voice strays from the stories, contexts, and understandings shared with me by the women.

### **Positionality**

Pollack and Eldridge (2015) are helpful in understanding researcher positionality. Brown (2009) in *The Culture of Punishment* considers the construct of the penal spectator to refer to individuals who observe people's pain of incarceration at a distance, subsequently perpetuating the practices and ideologies of punishment while observing. As Pollack and Eldridge (2015) posit, there is no place outside of penal spectatorship that transcends the prison industrial complex. The prison industrial complex is described as a complex web of racism, profit, and social control (Sudbury, 2014). There are deep colonial roots of the prison industrial complex, as it is built on ancestral lands of indigenous peoples, and has contributed to the tragic process of colonization (Sudbury, 2014). More specifically, women in conflict with the law often do not have a choice in whether to work to earn a very small wage, to buy often over-priced items from the prison or jail commissary (Sudbury, 2014).

**Power Dynamics in Research.** No research is conducted in a vacuum, and thus we all bring who we are into the work we do as researchers. Some argue that our very positions in the academy privilege us (Durella, 2019), and undoubtedly influence our interactions with those not in such positions of power. The basic suggestion made by Durella (2019) is particularly helpful to describe how I navigated my positionality in the present research: "with whom you work requires you to consider their unique needs" (p. 245).

Durella (2019) makes several helpful suggestions for mitigating researcher and research effects as part of a reflexive practice (p. 312). In mitigating one's own assumptions, preconceptions, and biases, it is helpful to incorporate a process of member-checking and to ask open-ended questions. In acknowledging the impact of one's presence on the research setting and research participants, spend time on-site, conduct research off-site if possible, and to "hang out, fit in" where possible (Durella, 2019, p. 312). Every effort was made to establish a presence for

myself at the research site, not only to establish a better rapport and reputation with the women, but also to establish a familiarity that would minimize the ripple in the institutional operations that my research would have. This was done through participating in the ongoing peer-support meetings, and carrying on my commitment as a volunteer to attend social events at the jail.

### **Site Selection as a Process**

Durella (2019) offers a comprehensive explanation of site selection as a process. First, identifying field location(s) through considering potential site(s) intuitively and asking “what are my connections to the site(s)/ why is this site a fit for my study” (p. 154). Next, sampling and selection through identifying sampling strategies presented as part of discussion on site selection and moving “...from holistic to systematic approach” (p. 154). Lastly, gaining access and entry through articulating a step-by-step process and “contact with gate-keeper, access and approval, initial discussions, and creation of a schedule” (p. 154).

The selection of the New Brunswick Women’s Correctional Centre (NBWCC) for the site of the present research was a long-term process beginning when I was an undergraduate student. Because of the historical relationship between St. Thomas University and the New Brunswick Youth Centre (NBYC), which is a shared site with the NBWCC, pathways of gaining access to the site were long established before my time. Modifying these pathways for work with the women offender population was a natural progression as faculty and students from St. Thomas became interested and willing to conduct research at the site. With many thanks to Dr. Susan Reid of St. Thomas University for her guidance during my time as an undergraduate, I felt capable and prepared to navigate this site again as a Master’s student of Saint Mary’s University.

During my time as an undergraduate, and the years that followed working on various projects supported by the Department of Justice and Public Safety New Brunswick, I developed a rapport with the Chief Superintendent for Corrections in New Brunswick. The Chief Superintendent for Corrections offered his written support and approval of this research, which was submitted as part of the approval to the Research Ethics Board at Saint Mary's University. Overseeing the Superintendents for the provincial jails in New Brunswick, the Chief was welcoming to me continuing to work with the women clients of NBWCC as I began my studies as a Master's student and a new project in this regard. Fortunately, I was able to converse with the senior management of the NBWCC, Deputy Superintendent and the Superintendent, to discuss my plans for my Master's research and to obtain their permissions for such work. Because of the securitized nature of any correctional setting, these members of senior management were integral in finding accommodations within their institutional schedule for the present research to be conducted. Without their gracious accommodations, and the continued overarching support of the officials in corrections and Dr. Reid, this research simply would not have been possible within the timeline of a Master's degree.

### **Research Objectives**

The primary goal of this research was to examine how women in conflict with the law at the provincial level view their needs, and experience services and supports in a provincial correctional institution that has adopted a particular programming model, Correctional Service Canada (CSC) women-centred regime. Of particular interest was the extent to which this programming model, which prioritizes holistic health, is meeting the health needs of women incarcerated in a short-term provincial women's correctional setting. Programming for this

project will include any services and supports offered to the women. Therefore, this research asks one overarching question: what are the experiences of provincially incarcerated women with the programming at the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre (NBWCC), in particular, how is this meeting or not meeting their health needs.

### **Research Questions**

Through the exploration of this question, this research seeks to draw examples of the compatibility or incompatibility of the provincial level of corrections and this National CSC framework. In order to satisfy this research goal this research will respond to several research questions:

1. Examine the programming at the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre with a view to:
  - a. determine the women's experiences with the programming regime
  - b. elucidate the concepts that are considered to be unique about the programming at this particular correctional institution (i.e., what about this centre is viewed as women-centred by the women offenders?)
  - c. elucidate the concepts that are considered to be unique about the overall approach of staff and institutional climate at this particular correctional institution (i.e., what about this centre is viewed as trauma-informed by the women offenders?)
  - d. consider the women offenders' self-reported holistic health needs: psychological, physical, and spiritual well-being
  - e. consider if the women offenders deem this programming as helpful or a hindrance to their overall health status

- f. outline the specific programming offerings, compared and contrasted with those demonstrated in CSC's women-centred and trauma-informed institutions
  - g. describe what programs are offered, compared and contrasted with those adhering to CSC's women-centred and trauma-informed interventions
  - h. consider if this institution's approach considered to be women-centred, according to the women offenders of NBWCC? And/or, in light of the standard defined by CSC
2. Preliminarily consider examples of what makes this provincial correctional institution for women compatible and/or incompatible with the women-centred model which exists in federal corrections for women in Canada, particularly I will:
- a. Consider the compatibility of a holistic health environment, necessary for a women-centred approach to take place, with the safety and security mandate of this correctional setting, and
  - b. consider any incompatibilities that arise that suggest the prison environment cannot be fully women-centred

Through exploring these research questions and sub-questions this research aimed to examine the experiences of the women offenders at NBWCC at a particular point in time, with particular interest in how these women view their needs, experience programming, health services, and experience supports under the current programming model.

### **Data Collection Strategies**

Prior to the data collection phase of this thesis, I had a cursory understanding of how the women-centred program is designed to work at the NBWCC. This understanding was shaped by



my exploratory project as an undergraduate, which was designed to consider the ways in which women offenders, staff, and senior management at the institution view the NBWCC as different from other correctional institutions. This thesis set out to consider more specifically how the women offenders understand and define the following terms that have been noted as paramount in gender-specific corrections: women-centred programming, holistic health, and trauma-informed. These topics of inquiry were selected because of their ability to naturally progress into conversation about what is being done to implement these terms through client perspectives. This research can potentially inform what is needed for these various types of programming to be delivered more uniformly in the provincial prison system in Canada, from a ground-level perspective. The primary research (semi-structured interviews with women offenders) could thus point to a collaborative picture of what is needed.

Many scholars agree that there is not one uniform feminist method for doing social research (Comack, 1996). Comack (1996) posits in her monumental book *Women in Trouble*, putting women's voices on paper "runs the risk of missing the nuances of their speech and the emotions behind it" (p. 162). For this reason, she suggests replicating the tone of speech in the best way possible, such as using italics or emphasis on comments made with emotion behind them, and noting when an emotional reaction was made (i.e., laughing, crying) in parenthesis when appropriate. Since the focus of this study is on the women's words, it was important to write their words as accurately as I could type them during the interview – and to not take the role of editor of speech with unwarranted intrusion (Comack, 1996) – and include phrases such as "you know" and "eh" as comments that requested understanding.

**The Power of Language.** As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, creating a trauma-informed environment in women's corrections is inextricably connected with the use of

empowering or dehumanizing language (Covington, 2012). In literature dating back to the 1980s, Spender (1985) and others posit that feminist writers must be sensitive to the ways in which language can attribute meaning and can structure our understanding of the world around us. The constructed phrase of “women in conflict with the law” surfaced in the 1980s as a term preferred by many women’s groups, and although it is not without criticism, this phrase does not permanently label or denigrate the woman in question. In an attempt to not contribute to the overwhelming hostility ever-present in the prison environment, I will try to honour the term “women” or “women in conflict with the law” to refer to the women offenders. The practice of referring to clients as “the women” is commonplace in women’s corrections (*Creating Choices*, 1995). In circumstances where I must be more specific to avoid confusion with staff and the researcher (who are also women), I will use the term “women offender”. In circumstances where I feel I must use the identifier of “offender”, it will always be paired with the person-centred suffix of “woman” first, as these individuals are women first and foremost before they are offenders. The use of any terminology other than “women” and/or “women in conflict with the law” within this thesis is done so to provide clarity to the potential reader, and not to add additional hardship or promote dehumanizing language.

**Sampling Procedures.** The current study was collected by way of a convenience sample, and women who were incarcerated at the centre on the date I visited to distribute the information sheet (Appendix B) were invited as potential participants. A convenience sample is also known as availability sampling, and typically involves obtaining participants wherever they can be found, with low inclusion criteria. Participation was limited to those who spoke English, and would ultimately be limited to those deemed eligible (for any behavioral and or security reasons senior staff deemed applicable). These information sheets detailed the topic of my research and

were used as a tool to invite all women who wished to attend an information session about the research to do so by attending a meeting happening at the Centre. Selection of eligible invitees for participation was completed by the Programmer, who deemed all 12 women who volunteered to attend the information session were eligible to do so. After all 12 women consented to participate in individual interviews, the Programmer approved all 12 to participate and she contacted them with an interview date and time.

This research was timely in that it coincided with a regularly scheduled Women's Matters meeting. After reviewing the information sheet provided, any woman who wished to participate was told to contact the programmer on the women's side to sign up. After reviewing the list of women who wished to attend the information session, the women's programmer contacted me with an approved list of 12 women who wished to hear more about the research. The programmer was aware of all information provided on the information sheet, informed consent form, and that I was aiming to conduct between 10-15 interviews as an estimated figure.

*Women's Matters.* Women's Matters is a newly minted women-in-conflict-with-the-law-led leadership group that takes place in the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre. In the wake of various research projects conducted at the Centre, academics affiliated with many ongoing research projects had been informed of how beneficial the women viewed their time spent talking with other women about issues that mattered to them. This transpired into a women-in-conflict-with-the-law-led, ally-supported opportunity for the women to conduct meetings, discuss issues that matter to them, and to generate training/program opportunities: Women's Matters. Women's Matters is based on the peer-support principles of Youth Matters<sup>1</sup>, a youth-led leadership group that brings together young people in conflict with the law and pro-social peers (Reid & Gillis, 2016 in Smandych & Winterdyk, 2016).

After hearing the lack of peer-support and offender-led initiatives that exist at the level of provincial corrections, correctional staff and academics involved in criminological research in New Brunswick consulted senior administration of the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre to develop a model based on the women-offender's suggestions.

A common phrase used by the women to describe this peer-support initiative is "Women Supporting Women". Women's Matters held its first meeting in March 2016, with my exploratory research about the NBWCC as an undergraduate student. Since that time, there have been meetings, planned activities, socials, leadership teams created, various research projects, and reintegrative clothing initiatives (STUnningly Successful); all driven toward the principles of Women's Matters. Any and all women at the Centre are welcome to participate in any and every Women's Matters initiative, as long as they are given approval by NBWCC administration. The group of women who attends each meeting, event, and social is unique and ever changing.

The background of this leadership and peer-support group is particularly salient to the present research because I believe it played a major role in why twelve women volunteered to participate. In the information session with the women, many voiced that they wished to participate and share their thoughts in the hope that it would benefit future incarcerated women and potentially lead to positive changes; concepts rooted in peer-support<sup>ii</sup> and a sense of agency.

**Details of the Information Session Meeting.** Given that the population of women offenders at NBWCC is transient, it was anticipated that not all of the women would be eligible to participate in the present research. Thus, a convenience sample was drawn from those incarcerated at the time of the research who both volunteered and were deemed eligible by the programmer on the women's side at NBWCC. Because of the familiarity of the Women's Matters meetings at the Centre, only a brief introduction was required. Instead, most of the

interaction with the interested women was focused on understanding the research process and voluntary nature of the project. At the meeting, copies of the information sheet (see Appendix B) were provided and reviewed again.

After sharing a light snack, our Promise, and our check-in – components relating to group confidentiality and safe spaces that we recite every meeting - we went through the informed consent form (see Appendix C). These were distributed and explained line by line. Time was provided for any individual questions, as interested participants reviewed the forms again on their own and discussed any points of clarification with me. Clear instructions were given to return the informed consent form, either signed or unsigned, depending on if she wished to participate. Either way, the individuals were all to hand in their consent forms.

Of the 12 women who were approved to attend the meeting, all 12 wished to participate in a semi-structured interview and handed in a signed informed consent form at the end of the meeting. In keeping with the confidentiality of participant's involvement in this research, the fact that all 12 women choose to participate was not shared with the participants or announced in any capacity. Instead, I informed the programmer after the information session that all women had consented to proceed with an individual interview, and they were scheduled in the private meeting rooms for dates I would be at the Centre at the end of summer, 2018. After reviewing the informed consent forms, allowing time for individual review and questions, and time to sign the consent forms and return them to me, we began a group activity in traditional style of a Women's Matters meeting.

## **Instrument**

The interviews were focused around the topic of health and programming and designed to explore how health is defined and experienced by women offenders in this particular setting and other carceral settings the participants may have experienced. Interview questions probed the women offender's perceptions of their overall health status, specifically in terms of their psychological, physical, and spiritual facets of health (see Appendix A). Questions were structured around the understanding of health and holistic health, gender-specific/ women-centred programming at the NBWCC, and the use of trauma-informed interventions. These concepts of holistic health were also addressed in the interviews with the women offenders, through creating a space for open reflection on health care needs and how these are being addressed at NBWCC. This was explored by asking the women a series of questions relating to each facet of holistic health and providing an opportunity for them to reflect on how they have come to understand (or define) these terms. There was discussion about each facet of health, and room to add comments, if these needs are or are not being met in this particular setting.

This was also made possible through creating a space for women to draw upon past experiences of other women-centred and non-gender-specific institutions, in circumstances when a woman has disclosed that this was an experience of theirs. Lastly, these interviews served as a platform for the women offenders to make suggestions as to how the programming can better contribute to their overall health and well-being. The interviews also asked the women offenders to express their thoughts on the value and/or importance of women-centred approaches and trauma-informed approaches for women in conflict with the law, based on their lived experiences.

Although creating a safe space for reflection can be difficult in the confines of prison or jail, it can be as simple as being sensitive to the issues being discussed and doing what you can to

limit the potentially negative effects on the women who participate (Comack, 1996, p. 157). Comack (1996) explains that leading up to her research with women in conflict with the law who identified as trauma-survivors, she partook in a workshop designed for counselors of abuse survivors. While she recognized that counseling would be beyond her role as a researcher, this training was helpful in increasing her sensitivity to the related issues and particularly, to some strategies used by feminist counselors when speaking with women who have survived abuse. Comparably, as a coach of young women ranging from 5 to 45 years of age, I have undergone many personal development and training modules for coaching and working with women. These courses have covered a mileage of issues, ranging from Managing Anxiety in Athletes, Life Balance: Women and Leadership Program, Mentoring Younger Coaches, First-Aid, many conferences on health promotion, and sitting on a board for the advancement of women in leadership/sport/recreation realms. Although my participation was driven by my volunteer engagements as a coach, this training is invaluable in my understanding of women's health, health promotion, and particularly, women's reasons for disengaging and engaging in health and leisure activities.

**Semi-Structured Interview Protocol.** I designed a semi-structured interview protocol based on the research questions being posed. The protocol was designed to assess the health statuses of the women offenders, changes in health behaviours pre-incarceration and during incarceration, the offender's understanding of women-centredness, the offender's understanding of trauma-informed interventions, and programming at the centre. Fusch and Ness (2015) suggest that interview questions in qualitative research should be structured to facilitate conducting the same interview protocol with multiple participants. The interview protocol includes probes to direct the conversation and avoid one-word or short responses. An example of

probes used are: “can you tell me a little bit more about that” or “why do you say [good/ not good]”, for example (Appendix A).

**Member Checking.** Each women participant had an opportunity to review the notes from her interview with me, so she could suggest any changes she saw fit, including additions, subtractions, or modifications to how her comments were conveyed in the notes. Immediately following each interview, I printed the notes with my personal portable printer. This was wired to my laptop computer and not transmitting on any wireless server. After the notes had finished printed, I presented the woman with her options for review, and explained that she may take as long as she wish to review the notes. The template of the interview was an abridged version of the interview protocol, with just the probing questions removed. This was intentional so that it would refresh the women’s memories of the question topic for each answer she provided.

Keeping in mind the limited literacy level of many women in conflict with the law, I decided to give each woman the option to read the notes on her own, or to have them read to her, as she followed along. Most of the 12 women reviewed the notes and made minor changes (i.e., adding details to a story she shared). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, each interview volunteer took a different amount of time to “member check” (Durella, 2019, p. 276) the notes taken during her interview, ranging from over an hour to a few minutes of review time. All twelve women who participated in interviews verbally expressed that they appreciated the opportunity to do so. This will serve as a measure of member-checking to validate the themes as they appear to the researcher (Ahmed, Angel, Martell, Pyne, & Keenan, 2016). The interview notes are the main source of data, with any additional notes on emergent themes during the research (documented as analytic memos) to be further examined during the coding process.



**Data Saturation.** It was difficult to ascertain a realistic goal of how many interviews to conduct, and thus I decided on 10-15 interviews. Although I set this as a perhaps lofty ideal, to interview 24% - 36% of the offender population (10/42 or 15/42), I was successful in conducting 12 interviews (29% of the offender population). I relied on the construct of data saturation to know when I had conducted a sufficient number of interviews to have rich and intricate data. Many scholars agree that there is no universal method to reach data saturation. However, several general principles are agreed upon: data saturation is indicated when no new themes, no new data, and no new coding appear in subsequent interviews (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I looked for these criteria to determine the stopping point, or point of data saturation to conclude the interviews with the women offender population. Early on in the data collection phase, as early as interview number two I could notice similar themes, patterns, and comments that had been repeated from one interview to the next.

Much like people's individual experiences, each individual interview was taken in a slightly different direction as stories were shared. Fortunately, the sample of women who volunteered to participate included women who identified with varying ethnic backgrounds (Indigenous women, Caucasian women, Asian women), women of varying ages, varying criminal histories, and women with varying health needs (spirituality, physical, psychological), and varying first-language preferences (Francophone and Anglophone). After conducting several interviews, and although noting a repletion in the major themes, it became very important to me to continue the interviews until all 12 had been conducted in order to better paint a more representative picture. I modified my goal of data saturation to include a re-assessment phase after the 12 interviews, at which point I determined I had enough repetition of themes and data that the interview phase could formally conclude.

**Data Recording Strategies.** Many scholars choose to use audio recordings during qualitative interviewing, and then to transcribe the recording verbatim (Colbert, Sekula, Zoucha, & Cohen, 2013; Sandoval, Baumgartner, & Clark, 2016). However, given the safety and security mandate of correctional settings, the option to audio record interviews may not translate to all correctional settings. At the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre, no recording devices of any kind are permitted. Use of a laptop computer may also be limited in some settings. I anticipated that I may not have been permitted to use my laptop computer during the interviews, and thus, I planned to write notes by hand during the interviews. Fortunately, I was able to bring both my laptop computer and my portable printer into each interview. This allowed for much more detailed notes to be taken than would have been possible taking the notes by hand.

**Analytic Memos.** Analytic memos are comparable to researcher journal entries conveying thoughts on participants, phenomenon, or the process under investigation (Saldana, 2016, p. 54). Saldaña (2016) posits that the researcher should anticipate these bits of information, stemming from hunches, intuition, dilemmas, noted biases, and other thoughts will lead to richer and more powerful explanation of the participants and their realities. Analytic memo writing took place concurrently with coding, as there is a reciprocal relationship between the evolution of the researcher coming to understand the phenomenon of the study, and the development of a coding method.

The code is meant to trigger reflection on the deeper and complex meaning that it evokes, allowing the researcher to think critically (Mason, 2018). Analytic memos emerging during coding were kept on the left-hand column of the Microsoft Word document file, and paper memos taken during all other stages of the process (which were transcribed and added to a separate file for later reflection) were kept. Each memo was dated, given a brief title, given a

short prompt about the context or background of the memo if applicable, and coded per the content. Ultimately, analytic memo writing is the transitional process from coding to the academically written final report of the study (Saldaña, 2016). Immediately following each interview, I allowed time to privately write any reflections in a Word file to capture any thoughts or dilemmas I was facing, or to elaborate on comments shared during the interview while they were fresh in my mind.

### **Participant Portraits**

Given the nature of qualitative interviews, our conversations tended to cover many topics beyond the specific questions of the interview protocol. Information offered by the women included their ages, sentencing status, recent offences, and many other details. Although not particularly helpful to the present topic of inquiry, these details can help to paint a portrait of the women who participated in this research.

Since women and their offending patterns are sometimes vastly different, such data can speak to the actual participants in this sample, rather than averages and statistics that may or may not pertain to this population. The average age of participants in this study was 32 years of age (ranging from 19 to 51 years of age). Of the women who participated, half were sentenced, and half were on remand (6 and 6), 4 were first time offenders while 8 were repeat offenders, and 1 woman had experience in federal prison. Many women described their past offending, and without describing any in detail, they ranged from drug offences, property offences, robbery, breaches of conditions, driving violations, assaults, possessions of various illegal items and/or substances, and serious violent offences.

## **Data Analysis Processes**

First, I will describe the data analysis processes, including pre-coding, coding, and thematic analysis. It is particularly important to describe the work conducted before coding, as it has framed the thematic coding process: reviewing all the data and revisiting literature; developing preliminary codes; noting themes and key concepts; and noting common themes and the relationships among them (thematic analysis). The following discussion sets the stage before the empirical findings of the interviews are presented and examined in the next chapter.

**Precoding.** Precoding involves circling, highlighting, underlining, or otherwise noting significant passages and quotes that appear salient and worthy of attention (Saldaña, 2016). This can begin as the data is collected and formatted, rather than after the fieldwork is completed. Since the interview notes were typed in a Microsoft Word document, I was able to review them quite quickly following each interview. This would be while they were fresh in my mind, and immediately following the member-checking phase that followed each interview. Precoding took place as I waited for the next interviewee to be brought to the private room, and thus I had a few minutes to sit by myself and review. I found myself sometimes jumping from different interviews, as some were longer than others, and some naturally had more data that could be pre-coded. I noted any preliminary codes in the right-hand margin of the page and noted any corresponding analytic memos on the left-hand margin of the page. The interviews ranged in duration from 50 minutes to 2 hours and 22 minutes, with an average length of 1 hour 33 minutes. The number of pages of notes taken during each interview also varied dramatically, from 8 pages to 17 pages, with an average of 10 pages taken during each interview.

**Coding.** Coding is the transitional process wherein the researcher navigates their way from the data collection phase to more extensive data analysis (Saldana, 2016). Saldana (2016)

acknowledges that is no superior method of coding to analyze qualitative data, and thus the determination of how to code the data must be based on the research questions, methodologies, fieldwork parameters, and context of the research in question. Further, Saldana (2016) notes that a code in qualitative inquiry is usually a word or short phrase that assigns a symbolic meaning to a portion of language-based or visually represented data. Coding is more than just labeling - it is also linking, leading the researcher from the data to the idea and to all other pieces of data that pertain to the idea. The coding process is not linear, and thus will involve coding and recoding as categories become more refined. As the data becomes consolidated, the research transcends the particular reality of the individual pieces of data, moving toward a thematic, theoretical, and conceptual understanding of the underlying meaning of the data (Saldana, 2016). I coded the interview notes into themes and categories, and then reflected on their possible meanings. This is consistent with qualitative coding techniques that look for similarities and dissimilarities in an excerpt and between excerpts.

**The Codebook.** The number of codes that can emerge varies vastly, and often changes as analysis progresses during the coding process, and thus a codebook should be kept as a separate file (Saldana, 2016). Durella (2019) and Braun and Clark (2006) recognize the importance of developing a codebook to manage types of codes and their assigned meanings. In the codebook I kept, there are a list of codes, their content descriptions, and examples to illustrate examples of the code from the data. This was reviewed periodically, noting evolutions and adding new content as codes were added and revised.

**Preliminary Data Analysis.** The preliminary stage of data analysis may include, but is not limited to, organizing data, transcribing data files, becoming familiar with the data, and becoming familiar with the ethical principles for handling and sorting data (Durella, 2019).

Reading and rereading textual material at this stage of data analysis sets up the conditions that allow for later thematic data analysis (Durella, 2019).

Many scholars have shared how the work conducted before coding has framed the thematic coding process: reviewing all the data, and revisiting literature review to refine the labeling process. Next, developing preliminary codes, key concepts, and themes and the relationships between them. Once the initial set of concepts is generated, the researcher may code transcribed data file by applying or attaching the concepts to segments of text (Durella, 2019). Codes, quite simply, are tags or labels used to assign units of meaning to the descriptive information gathered during a study. Codes may be attached to chunks of data that varies in size, words, phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs (Durella, 2019). Codes, as noted by Durella (2019):

...form part of a larger meaning structure as analysis and interpretation progresses. Codes form the basic building blocks of data transformation from participant interview responses or observation field notes to arranged text in a theorized pattern that tells a story about a group of people. (p. 279)

Segmenting, coding, and clustering text essentially occurs as the researcher explores which groups of words or word makes sense to them, given their fieldwork experiences and the context of the research (Durella, 2019). There have been criticisms of coding, such as suggesting it is reductionist, and fails in being objective (Saldana, 2016, p. 44); but coding in the context of the present research will be considered nothing more than a method of description and sorting to convey a message about the women involved in the study.

When the researcher notes patterns emerging in segmented data that has been grouped by codes, they may move into the thematizing stage of data analysis (Durella, 2019). During this stage, categorized data is generated from smaller coded data segments, into the largest associations of data: a theorized story of the subject being studied. Themes signal major plot

turns that occur in the story being told about the data. A complete list of codes and code families, thematically organized, is helpful for research dissemination but also can be functional to manage code definitions (Durella, 2019). By the end of the thematic coding process (see following section), all comments corresponding with each code were added to a master codebook file so that the data and codes could be viewed simultaneously.

**Thematic Analysis.** Thematic analysis was selected as the mode of data analysis because it is flexible and can be descriptive. Many scholars (Durella, 2019; Schebe et al., 2018; Braun & Clark, 2006) agree that thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analyzing, and reporting emergent themes within a set of data. The process, as described by Braun and Clark (2006), involves becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing the themes found, defining and naming the themes, and producing the report. In thematic data analysis, one segments the data, categorizes and codes the data, and links coded data segments to identify emergent themes (Durella, 2019). Durella (2019) suggests the overarching goal of this phase of research is reducing large quantities of data into more manageable segments of information (p. 273).

Given that the notes taken during the interviews were taken on my laptop computer, only minor changes had to be made before coding could commence. For example, changes often included stylistic changes to the document (i.e., bullet points, spacing, deletion of accidentally repeated words), and any changes suggested by the participant during the member-checking phase.

Comack (1996) posits that putting women's voices on paper runs the risk of missing nuances of speech and the emotions behind them. She suggests replicating the tone of speech in the best way possible, such as using italics or emphasis on comments made with emotion behind

them, and noting when an emotional reaction was made (i.e., laughing, crying) in parenthesis when appropriate. Since the focus of this study is on the women's words, I was diligent to write the women's words as accurately as I could type them during the interview and include phrases such as "you know?" and "eh?" as comments that requested confirmation of understanding. I avoided editing, omitting, or otherwise intruding on the comments offered by the women, in an attempt to keep the comments as authentic as possible (Comack, 1996).

I typed all field notes and analytic memos associated with the present research, so that they could be coded in the same manner as the interview notes. I then read through each piece of data to familiarize myself with the data. This was done over the course of several separate sittings, immediately following the interviews and weeks later once all interviews had been conducted. I then read through the participants' responses and identified initial codes that related to the research questions. After reading through and noting the initial codes, I read through again and noted themes as they emerged. This phase is most concerned with ensuring that the written narrative can be interpreted by multiple audiences (Durella, 2018). Thus, I documented as much context surrounding my notes as possible, to ensure the story could be understood by others who lack first-hand knowledge of the setting and the interactions. At this phase, it is helpful to return to the relevant literature, and particularly similar research findings, to put forth a theory based on the present findings, and to relate this theory back to existing literature while interpreting any new information/ implications.

### **Data Management**

Once the written consent forms were collected after the information session meeting, they were reviewed in private and a list of potential participants was generated in a Word file. This



list was shared with the Program Coordinator, so it could be reviewed and edited to remove any women offenders who she deemed ineligible, for any reason particular reason. The revised list (un-changed, with the original 12 women approved for interviews) was returned to me, and the approved women were contacted by the programmer and invited to participate in an individual interview. The consent forms were only handled by me, and kept in my possession while I was at the Centre. Upon leaving, they were transported in my vehicle, back to my home office in Truro Nova Scotia where they were kept in a locked filing cabinet. After the final draft of the thesis is in print, the hard copies of the written consent forms will be destroyed by paper shredder as per Research Ethics Board suggestion.

During the data collection phase, any collected data, such as the interview notes and the printed copies of these notes, were kept in my possession and not left unattended. In keeping with the principles of confidentiality, all notes taken on my laptop during the interview were kept in my possession at all times. The printed versions of the notes were also kept in my sole possession the entire time, to avoid the data being shared with officers and staff at the NBWCC and to ensure anonymity of the women's comments.

The data was transported in my personal vehicle back to Nova Scotia. Hard copies of collected data were kept in a locked filing cabinet in my home office in Truro Nova Scotia. Collected data was transferred onto a zip-drive, as to not tote the information around on my laptop computer. After the final draft of the thesis is in print, the hard copies of the data will be destroyed by paper shredder, as per Research Ethics Board suggestion. It is important to note that no information gathered from the interviews was ever kept in linkage with the consent forms. Instead, each was kept in separate locked cabinets.

## Ethics

Speaking with vulnerable populations, such as incarcerated individuals, requires the researcher to build trust with the participants and to be self-reflexive during each stage of the research process (Bosworth, 2005). Thus, in accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS 2 Core), research that is considered to be minimal risk is “research in which the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation in the research is not greater than those encountered by participants in the aspects of their everyday life that relate to the research” (TCPS 2, Ch.2, B). It is possible that participants may become uncomfortable when discussing their past experiences with health and programming, and, in order to remedy this, contact information for the Social Worker at NBWCC was provided to the women on their copy of the written consent form. A copy of the signed written consent form was presented to each woman at the start of her interview.

**Informed Consent.** To avoid pressures of coercion, women were told that if they were interested in attending the information session, not to tell me directly at the present time, but to contact the Programmer and let her know. This was to be completed at a time when I was not present. The women were informed that their decision to not participate would not be followed by any consequences from myself, the correctional officers, or staff at NBWCC.

Since incarcerated women are a vulnerable group, the participants were asked again before the commencement of the interviews if they wished to voluntarily participate in the study. They were informed that if they wanted to cease their participation at any point during the study, they were free to do so and would face no repercussions. The participants were assured that if they decided not to participate in the study, they would face no punishments from the institution, and would be escorted back to their unit by a NBWCC staff member immediately. If the women

did volunteer to participate in the study, they were ensured that they would have the opportunity to view any information written by me, and given an opportunity to revoke any statements they made if they wished for them to not be included in the research. They were told that no names or identifiers would be attached to any statements that I wrote down at any point during the study, and any comments contributed by the women would remain completely anonymous. The participants were ensured that no information about their prior offences or past criminal histories would be attached to their confidential responses, and/or mentioned in detail in the report.

**Confidentiality.** My original intention was to generate a list of aliases or a numbered system to use for reference, and to keep record of the participants who volunteered to participate and returned their consent forms. An issue arose when I realized that given the qualitative nature of this research, and the lengthy responses, it may become possible for a potential reader of this thesis to string together the comments of one individual referred to with an alias and paint a collaborative picture of an individual (Nelund, 2010). This could potentially lead to their identification and would thus limit the certainty of confidentiality. As described in Mason (2018), qualitative analyses often based on holistic analyses and presentation of what may be personal or identifiable information, and thus an issue of confidentiality arises.

To minimize this, several steps were taken to ensure anonymity by removing names and not opting to assign a pseudonym. Thus, in the analysis section of my report I will not refer to comments by a pseudonym, but instead mention the woman's age and another non-specific fact relevant to her experience. For example, in the analysis section a quote or paraphrased comment offered by a woman in conflict with the law will read: "quote" – A first time offender in her 30's.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, at no point did the women who participated in the information session have an opportunity to hear or see how many women had signed and turned

in their consent forms. This allowed for me the researcher, and the Programmer of OBWCC to be the only two individuals to know the list of women who had consented to participate in interviews. Since the women were brought in one-by-one, and escorted by the Programmer herself to one of the visitor rooms, it was an ambiguous visit that was not identifiable to other women on their unit as this was the procedure followed for any visit by family, legal representation, and so on. Fellow staff also did not know for what purpose the women were being brought to the meeting room for, and thus they would not be able to distinguish who participated in this research. Women from each of the four units participated, and thus their participation was further generalized as a private meeting just like any other. If the women wished to share their involvement with the other women on their units, with staff, or anyone else they wished, that was their choice to do so.

### **Scope and Limitations**

This research has a specific focus on the correctional programming that is considered to be women-centred, trauma-informed, and cohesive with a holistic health paradigm. Given the time constraints of this Master's thesis, this research will not consider long-term trends of the institution, follow up with participants post release, or consider the general trends of admission and discharge: this research is a cross-sectional case-study of a particular point in time at the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre (NBWCC). This research focuses exclusively on provincial (short-term) corrections. This research does not examine the women offenders' past criminality and offences, to comply with ethical principles of working with incarcerated persons, and thus considers instead the women's experiences with the programming that is considered to be women-centred at NBWCC, and their opinions on the various components of that

programming. There is a lack of prior research studies relating to provincial correctional programming for women offenders in Canada, specifically dealing with women-centred, holistic, and trauma-informed principles, which is essentially the gap in the literature that this research seeks to fill.

Within the correctional setting, the tools which researchers are permitted to use to collect data are vastly restricted. Typically, researchers are not permitted to take audio recordings of their meetings with offenders (Harner & Riley, 2013), and thus researchers must find other ways to record the information. According to Harner and Riley (2013), transcribing the notes on a laptop is a common tool that may be permitted in some institutions, along with hand-written notes to compare for validity. In my past experience at NBWCC, the administration is comfortable with allowing their researchers to utilize both of these tools for data collection, and this was the case in the present research. Although uncommonly allowed, it is most ideal to record interviews audio/visually and to transcribe the notes.

This research seeks to provide a snapshot of a particular time of the offending pathway of women offenders at a particular institution. Given the potential injustices, abuses, and hostility that unfortunately occurs in many correctional settings, it is possible that during incarceration may not be the best time to obtain a clear picture of how the women offenders view their health statuses and the programming regime at NBWCC. I acknowledge that conducting this research with a group of post-release offenders may be optimal, however given the confidentiality of these women's identities, it would be very difficult to obtain a potential sample unless in partnership with the probation/parole systems, half-way houses, or other community settings.

Furthermore, there are often widespread hardships faced by offenders transitioning into the community, such as new employment, parole or probation restrictions, and financial

hardships. It is for these reasons that I believe it would be very difficult to incentivize enough women to make time to participate in the research and have chosen to conduct the present research in a carceral setting. I also acknowledge that the method of convenience sampling is not optimal as it may lead to sampling bias because certain staff members played a role in determining who was eligible to participate.

In sum, there are a few limitations for this research that result from the safety and security mandate of the institution, and the limited time available to conduct the research. Given the lack of research devoted to the concerns outlined in this proposal, however, and the unavoidable nature of these constraints, the research still strives to uphold the goal of pointing to important considerations for future programming for women's correctional institutions.

Although demographic information was not collected about the participants, such as ethnic background, many women shared with me their self-identified backgrounds. Several women self-identified as Indigenous at various points during their interviews. One individual self-identified as a member of the LGBTQ2 community. One individual self-identified as a Francophone. No members of the group self-identified as African Canadian at any point during their interview or spoke of any other ethnic background. Thus, it is possible that not all perspectives may have been represented in the sample.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

The case explored in this thesis concerns how women in conflict with the law, at a specific point in time, view their needs and how they experience programming and support at a particular carceral setting that has adopted a unique programming model. The focus of this chapter is to share the experiences and responses of the women, using as close to their original words and phrasing as possible. I describe the key people and events that make up the case by calling upon background information of the research site. After this, the findings are presented.

It is important to remember that this thesis set out to explore programming and services, as the women clients perceive them. It is important to remember that the provincial/ territorial correctional system is not obligated to offer any form of women-centred programming, and that the particular site of the research has done so with well-intended motives of better meeting the needs of the women clients. At the time this thesis was written, I have not come across a provincial/ territorial jail who has attempted to modify this federal program to be implemented in a 2 year less a day centre/ facility, and thus without question there are bound to be challenges faced on many levels of implementation. In presenting and discussing the findings of this research, I hope to contribute to their overall goal of better meeting the needs of provincially incarcerated women in New Brunswick and other similar settings who may use this framework in the future. The way I plan to achieve this is by exploring raw and honest comments offered by the women who live within the confines of such a framework every single day.

### **Findings: Participant Definitions of Key Terms**

I began this thesis in the background chapters with an exploration of how I have come to define women-centredness, holistic health, and trauma-informed corrections. These definitions

corroborated those of Correctional Service Canada's (CSC) and operational documents that offered definitions of these constructs or how they are implemented in either Federal prisons or Provincial jails. Because this research set out to consider women's experiences with this programming model, and how they experience supports and services related to this model, it was of utmost importance to consider how the women have come to understand – or (not)understand – and define these terms.

As noted in my methods chapter, I designed the interview framework and interview protocol with the idea of seeking the women's definitions of each of the key terms. Constructing questions that placed me in the position of learner, and the woman volunteer, as the informer was deliberate. I attempted to minimize the *us-versus-them* dichotomy and instead was careful with my word choice to posit the women as the creator, sharer, and producer of the knowledge that this research seeks to unpack. This research could not be conducted without the lived experience, and the sharing of those lived experiences, because I myself am not a knower. In this chapter I hope to share, to portray, and to examine the stories shared with me in the way I think the creators of knowledge have intended.

Most women looked inward for their definitions and spoke about how their experience(s) helped them to understand a particular phrase or concept, or how they view themselves as portraying the phrase or concept. For example, some women had difficulty providing a definition for some terms entirely, and instead spoke in terms of how they viewed themselves as portraying that construct. This was the case for some women in speaking about the various facets of health, as they skipped over offering a definition and preferred to speak about their own mental health, physical health, or spiritual wellness.



Given the nature of qualitative interviewing, participants were probed where possible, but in circumstances where the women seemed to share all they wished about a particular topic it was not conversationally desirable to backtrack for a definition. Because most of the women defined the terms in relation to how they have experienced the terms themselves, not all responses are provided below. I have strived to present one tangible definition offered, and one more personal definition in which a woman relied on her own experience. Rather than presenting the definitions with any descriptive information (i.e., age range, return or first-time offender: “*A first time offender in her 20’s*”), because many of the definition-seeking questions led to such detailed and personal responses about each facet of health, the definitions are presented stand-alone. Moreover, this is another layer of protection to the women’s confidentiality as participants. Later in this chapter, when specific and overarching themes are explored, light background information about the participant, as demonstrated above, will be provided where suitable to frame the response.

### **Women’s Understandings of Health.**

***Women’s Health Ratings.*** The women were asked to rate their current health status on a scale of 1-10, with 1 being very poor health and 10 being the best it could possibly be (see Interview Protocol). The average response was just over 6 out of 10, with responses ranging from 4 to 10. The women’s responses varied greatly, and thus a sample of responses are provided below:

“5. Right in the middle. There could be things that were better. It could also be worse. I am not as healthy as I should be, but I’m not dying. I could be suicidal but I’m not. But I don’t love life. Never had a time in my life where I loved life. [Probed – “what would it look like if you did love life”] The word happy would stand out for me. When I was depressed, I didn’t want to be happy. I was scared to be happy. Just that one word ... “happy”.”

“8. Before I came here my health was probably a 6 /10 ... because I now eat 3 meals a day and I don't smoke. I'm going to do this when I'm out - not smoke.”

The women all framed their health ratings based on health factors that are important to them, and how those factors are being met. For example, one woman offered a high rating and said that her teeth were to be fixed. Another said she was healthier now than when she came in because she was eating three meals per day. Many women said their health was ok because it could be worse, perhaps thinking of a circumstance where they would feel someone would have a lower health status than them at present. This data allude to an underlying theme of a better health status than when they were in the community, one of the most substantial findings of this thesis, which runs counter to a recent provincial government report.

***Physical Health.*** During the phase of the interviews when we began to discuss the specific facets of health, many women wanted to skip ahead to discussing their own experience with these realms. Because of this, 4 of the 12 women did not offer a definition/ explanation of how they have come to define physical health. The comments varied, and thus a strategic sample is presented below to show variance of the women's responses:

“Physical health is poor. Maybe it's the food or a lack of interest. I don't have any motivation to go out in the yard. I complain that my clothes are becoming XL... but I won't go to the gym. I am the kind of person who picks at their food. I get canteen and devour that. My bowels aren't regular, but I'm sure they would be if I went to the gym. I go out and I walk, and that's the most I do.”

“Physical health is whether you eat right, are active, the general well-being of your body.”

Many women included in their definitions the importance of nutrition and exercise. Both of these concepts are prevalent themes, returning throughout varying parts of the interviews. The data reflect that most women would consider physical health to include proper diet, exercise, sleep, and ability to carry out daily functions. Upon thematic analysis, it has shown that a Lack of

Physical Activity and a Lack of Yard Time are major recurring themes that resonated with many of the women interviewed. These themes fed into one of the two major overarching themes present in the data: A Perceived Lack of (or Inadequacy of) Programming.

***Mental Health.*** Again, with this facet of health some women wanted to skip ahead to discussing their own experience with these realms: 2 of the 12 women did not offer a definition/explanation of how they have come to define mental health. A sample of comments are presented below:

“I look at mental health as an illness. Not everybody thinks you need medication, but I think you do. It’s not the same for everyone, but I think if you have mental health challenges, you need them. Definition is sickness. If I had good mental health, I would be not a depressed person, not have to take medication, someone who doesn’t have trauma as a young child. Growing up with a loving family you would have good mental health. [Probed - can you get good mental health?] Yes but it takes a lot of work, counselling and medication. Counselling and get down to the reason why you have bad mental health.”

“Mental health is being able to cope with day-to-day activities and routines.”

“Mental health, it is very crucial here, but it is not provided. There are a lot of people who get into trouble because of mental health issues. It’s sad because there are some people who need to go to prison for real, but there should be some type of assessment before anyone can be sentenced for real. Because you don’t know their history, anything about them, just what is given to you in front of you. You have to really study an individual before your final outcome of your assessment is decided.”

Many women chose to consider mental health as a state of wellness (either well or not well), an ability to cope with day-to-day pressures, and coping strategies. Based on the women’s views, the data suggest a definition of mental health that may include one’s way of dealing with daily pressures, and how you handle those pressures and challenges. These comments, among others, were coded on many levels but most notably, what would become the second most substantial theme to arise from the data: A Lack of Mental Health Supports. This finding is deeply rooted in

recent governmental explorations into the state of the health of corrections-involved persons (MacPherson, 2018).

***Spiritual Health.*** In this section, 2 out of 12 women did not offer a definition. However, these comments were perhaps the most diverse of the definition-seeking questions. A sample is provided to illustrate the diversity in the data:

“Some people would describe spiritual as being religious, but spirituality to me is more than just religion. To me it is something more. I’m not saying that they are not the same, but there is a higher understanding of spirituality. Spirituality you are more in-tune with everything around you – like a 6th sense. Feeling the energy around you.”

“I don’t know. Just started to go to Church. I want to believe. I’m doing the bible study. I feel more spiritual than I used to. I’m sceptical. I’m interested.”

The data suggest that most women participants equated a sense of spirituality with God and faith, suggesting a definition that may include views on a higher power, faith, and religious diversity.

***Holistic Health.*** Many of the women said they were not familiar with the term at first, but after we discussed it, they offered their own examples. This is reflected in the data set below with “[then discussed]” referring to an excerpt of conversation removed to show the evolution of their response from initially hearing the term to after discussing it. In these circumstances, typically women related the term back to how they viewed their own holistic health. A sample of comments are presented below:

“Thinking of a clock, my mental health may be the biggest gear, but all gears are turning together. So when a part is rusty, or missing, the whole clock isn’t working right. So it may be a little slow right now, and a few minutes behind. Could even be going counter clock-wise at the moment \*laughs\*, needs new batteries, to be charged up.”

“No haven’t heard. [then discussed] Not good. I didn’t know what it is for one. If they did have holistic health here, many of the girls who leave here would have a better case plan and wouldn’t come back.”

To use one of the women's own analogies, holistic health can be described as a clock with many interrelated and inter-reliant mechanisms. The data reflect that the women would define holistic health as the interconnectedness of their mental health, physical health, and spiritual wellness, and alternative (natural) healing remedies. As expected, some women were confused about this term and what it means. This section too relates to one of the major themes – A Lack or Inadequacy of Programming – as many women remained unclear about holistic health and how it fits into women's corrections. Of course, this is problematic as it is one of the main pillars of a women-centred programming regime. The data speak to the void that exists between written programming policy, and implementation of those programs at an operational level.

**Women-Centred Programming Per the Women of NBWCC.** Some of the women offered definitions as soon as the term was mentioned, presumably hearing the word “programming” and using it as a springboard. Some women seemed confused, and needed a bit more of a discussion to probe for their thoughts on the phrase. I tried to not be limiting in the way I spoke of any programs or supports, in an attempt to have the women define their own boundaries of what this included at the site. There were 3 of the 12 women who directly stated that they were familiar with the term, whether they favoured it or not.

Many women defined the term by exclusion, that is, by saying what women-centred programming is not, and then explaining what the site would need for it to be women-centred. The suggestions presented by the women, although presented here in their comments, will be explored further in the recommendations and conclusion sections of this thesis. This is to avoid having these critical suggestions lost in the body of this thesis chapter, and instead honour the ways the women wish to improve their living environment to better fit their needs for

programming and services. A sample of the women's understandings of the term, women-centred programming, are presented below:

“Haven't heard of that term. [then discussed] We've been told many times that certain rules have been put into place because of how the men's institutions work. So why did our diets change when the men came here in November? Why do the pregnant women that come in here not get any more attention than others... some are SO [emphasis in speech] hungry, and they only get an extra snack at night time, and that is not enough? If they were women-centred would that happen? I've heard “because of the men/ kids” being used for why there are a lot of the rules. We lost access to a traditional mop because one of the youth hit another with the mop bucket handle.”

“Yeah okay. What does it mean? It's a jail. I don't know what else you mean. It's a jail. [then discussed] “Oh my God, there would be less women here”. They would have the programs to give them. If they had addictions, counselling, mental health counselling all the counselling they could give to help the women here.”

“No it doesn't ring a bell here. Our programming consists of a booklet that you sit in your cell and do yourself. There used to be group programming that they would do together, staff have told me, but the funding isn't there anymore. They used to do the programming in the library, and people could apply for it, and I think they did groups once per week. I think it was one of the programmers who did it, but now she has so many different jobs to do.”

The comments captured in the data presented above speak to a wide array of women's needs that are and are not being met. The underlying theme of a lack of programming is coming through fiercely, more so when the comments are read sequentially, and that sentiment is reiterated in each passage. These comments, the (lack of) programming, and a comparison of what services, programs, and supports are laid out in CSC's women-centred framework will be unpacked in the analysis of key themes section below.

**Trauma-Informed Environments Per the Women of NBWCC.** All 12 women said that they recognized being trauma-informed in a correctional setting is important, but that they did not believe it was currently happening at the research site. Half of the women said they were not

familiar with the term when they first heard it at the start of the discussion on this topic. One woman said that she thought the staff at the Centre tried, even though in her opinion they didn't succeed. A sample of comments are below:

“It's not. There is no information about trauma in this place at all. No one deals with it at all. Our polyvictimization<sup>7</sup> research was the only thing related to trauma that has gone on here since I was here. Trauma-informed means that there should be a group or a one-on-one counsellor that is able to sit down with you and help you deal with your trauma.”

“Not sure what that is. [then discussed] I think it is important and helpful. Now that you say it, I can see it in the way that some guards speak to people that they are practicing that. The majority of them, how they approach someone when they are having a hard day or how they speak to them.”

The data truly speak to a major theme that will be discussed later in this chapter: The Perceived Lack of Mental Health Supports. Many women offered comments about a perceived lack of resources and what they would like to see in place. This will also be considered in the recommendations and conclusion sections at the end of this chapter, as to contribute in the most meaningful way possible to the message this thesis seeks to leave with the reader. A definition that can be inferred from these passages is that a trauma-informed correctional environment would include caring staff, clinical services, staff training in trauma, and programs that are conducive to helping women un-pack and address their past traumas.

## **Chapter 5: Analysis of Major Themes**

In this chapter, the findings are analyzed in light of the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 3. Although some themes emerging from the data (i.e. women's reported

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<sup>7</sup> The polyvictimization research was a project funded by the Family Violence Initiative Fund through the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), in order to explore women's experiences of domestic violence, intimate partner violence, and childhood trauma. A survey was offered to the entire population of women, with several women volunteering for participation in in-depth focus groups. Thus, many women at varying points in time participated in this research initiative in a variety of ways.

understandings of key concepts) have been discussed in the previous chapter, it is important to present the major themes in a comprehensive way so that they can be understood through rich examples and framed by my interpretation. A narrative explanation of the major themes is presented below, offering interpretations and quotes to situate each theme within the broader context of this thesis, and the context of the feminist criminological perspective.

Some codes were inductive, derived directly from the data, while others were deductive, based on the research questions, other research, and concepts from a feminist criminological perspective. Initial codes were revisited after the entire data were coded. Codes were combined and further split; as this happened broader themes were simultaneously noted. Codes were distilled into an elite group of major themes that capture the nature of the research questions. A select few themes stood out with twelve or more comments contributing to the theme. Although twelve may seem like an arbitrary number given that some women contributed more than one comment to some of the themes, it seemed like a good point of saturation to determine if this theme was a more commonly agreed upon point/ opinion/ or observation than the other themes. This is not to say that less major themes made up of ten, or three, or one comment are not less significant or do not carry weight with other women involved in this research, and thus I felt compelled to share the themes that stood out most to me at varying points of data collection and analysis, in a table provided in the appendices.

Six themes stood out as significant, with two of these themes taking charge as most substantial. Major themes, in order of frequency from most-frequent to least-frequent, include: (1) Lack of, or Inadequacy of Programming; (2) Lack of Mental Health Support; (3) Improvement in Overall Health Since Becoming Incarcerated; (4) Lack of Active Leisure-Based Programming; (5) Perceived Inconsistent Treatment; and (6) Religion-Specific Concerns. The



two most significant themes, each weighted with 23 and 22 coded comments respectively are Lack of Mental Health Supports and Lack of, or Inadequacy of Programming. Thus, these two themes and a sample of relating sub-themes that contributed to their make-up will be explored more in-depth in the key themes section that follows.

It is important to note that the theme of Lack of Mental Health Supports does not accurately reflect the women's views on the impact of the jail on their general health statuses which they felt improved in coming to jail, as there were 19 coded comments making up this theme. It can be inferred that although the women feel strongly that coming to jail has improved their overall health status, they are not satisfied with the mental health and clinical treatment/supports available to them in this setting.

### **Lack of, or Inadequacy of Programming**

**Lack of Programming.** One of the most substantive themes in the data concerns a lack of programming. Thinking back to CSC's definition of programs and services from earlier in this thesis, programs can be broad and include correctional, educational, and many other types of programs. A light-hearted comment from one of the women can sum up the women's views on the current programming regime:

I think the best programming we have here is the TV programming. At least we can watch Dr. Phil and we learn something. – *A return offender in her 20's*

I remembered reading a similar comment in Comack's (1996) *Women in Trouble*, which reads:

“[what do you do all day?] Just sit around and watch T.V. It's boring.” (p. 130)

This question was asked of a woman who was at a remand centre where Comack was conducting her research in the late 1990's. The comment shared with me above was offered by a woman who may or may not have been alive when Comack's research was conducted, yet still that

theme of wasted time – and acknowledgement of it being so – is still just as pressing. This distraction by television is a tool of penal governance to keep the women entertained, distracted, and disoriented as time (usually unbeknownst to the women) passes.

The following discussion presents various comments from the women interviewed that contribute to the overall theme of a lack of programming. Many facets of programming are described as lacking, particularly correctional programming which is made up of self-help booklets. Other programs that are also viewed as lacking include educational programming, (because it is typically only G.E.D offerings), addictions support, physical activity programs, and social programs.

One woman offered a comprehensive list of programs (formulated into Table 2, attached as appendix) that she had either heard of or encountered in her time at the Centre: “over the year that I have been here, I have heard about some other programs, but they have and haven’t come up”. The woman described 15 programs, including: wood shop program, knitting, a gardening program, cooking, peer-education through the John Howard Society of Canada, yoga, a prison ministry group on Tuesdays, *Women’s Matters*, a church program on Sundays, the Elder, New Brunswick Community College nursing students visiting to explore health concerns, the library, the General Education Program (G.E.D), the self-help booklets, and the Work Place Essential Skills (W.E.S). Of these programs, 13 have been offered during her time and 2 have not been. Of the programs that were offered during her time (87% of the total number of programs this individual listed upon recall of her year-long incarceration), many of them were noted to be inconsistent, restricted to only offenders on unit five, infrequently offered, or only recently undertaken. Of the 87% of programs that were listed as occurring during the past year (13 out of

15), only 38% (5) were noted to be consistent, open to all women, or occurring beyond a span of a few one-off sessions.

Of particular importance to the analysis of programming in this chapter is considering the discrepancy of how “programming” is interpreted and defined at this site setting compared to the women-centred programming outline from Correctional Service Canada (CSC). Even CSC’s understanding is broad and includes a wide array of programs and services and thus I decided not to narrow what was considered a “program” and instead look for the boundary drawn by the women in their responses. The women who participated in this research considered programs to be any and all opportunities beyond their basic day-to-day functions such as eating and sleeping.

One woman described this discrepancy between the federal and provincial offerings. She acted in court to shed light on the grave situation:

I tried to talk about the lack of programming in here when I was in court. If people are suicidal then they need programs to help them here. I was just at a bail hearing and I even went up to the witness stand and I finally spoke my opinion. I stood up for all provincial jails. In federal you can get programs, but here there is nothing. – *A return offender in her 30s*

This speaks to not only the light-hearted desire for ways to fill their days – beyond television programming – but a desire to be supported in mental health crises, and in other regards. There is solidarity in sparking change not only for themselves, but for future cohorts of women in conflict with the law.

**Inadequacy of Programming.** As previously mentioned, the current active correctional program at the NBWCC takes the form of self-help booklets. These are reported to be adapted from a former program that was conducted in a group:

Our programming consists of a booklet that you sit in your cell and do yourself. There used to be group programming that they would do together, staff have told me, but the funding isn’t there anymore. They used to do the programming in the library, and people

could apply for it, and I think they did groups once per week. – *A return offender in her 20's*

*Reliance on Responsibilization.* The current program is, by definition, a system of responsabilization as it is self-regulated programming with few incentives/ rewards. This is also an example of governing at a distance (Garland, 2001; Rose, 2000), where correctional officials remotely offer correctional programs on an individual basis that they control. Drawing on the work of Rose and Hannah-Moffat (2002; 2001) outlined in the theory chapter, the onus is placed on the women offenders to manage their own risk, and to only make choices that are deemed to be meaningful by those who create the program. While they may choose not to participate in the self-directed program, that decision may pan out un-favorably for them in court.

Irwin and Owen (2005) posit that at times, women in conflict with the law feel regulatory programs and general running of the facility in accordance with arbitrary rules make it difficult to comply. They further that there is evidence that prisoners often feel trapped in a maze of rules that are extensive and seem inconsistently and arbitrarily enforced. One woman explains:

“It is a photocopy about five inches [in length]. The women do it because they want the certificate to take to court.” – *A first time older offender*

This may be interpreted as some women completing the self-help booklets – not to benefit from the content – but to jump through a hoop that may make their court proceedings play out more favorably. Completing self-help modules that play into stereotypical needs for women, such as self-esteem and experiences with trauma, is systematic penal governance of women's experiences that are viewed as problematic or in need of governing through correctional policy.

**CSC's Correctional Programs.** Correctional Service Canada (2014) provides the details of their correctional program offerings for women offenders on their web page. Subdivided by engagement programs, moderate intensity programs, high intensity programs, self-management

programs, Women's Modular Intervention, and Women's Sex Offender Program, a total of 6 correctional programs for women are listed (CSC, 2014d). There are other programs that are designed to meet the unique culture, tradition, and spirituality of Aboriginal women; the Aboriginal Women's Engagement Program, Aboriginal Women Offender – Moderate Intensity Program, Aboriginal Women Offender – High Intensity Program, and Aboriginal Women Offender – Self-Management Program. The website claims that these programs, designed to meet the specific problems faced by women, utilize a modern holistic approach (CSC, 2014d). The moderate intensity programs are distinguished from the high intensity programs by their duration, the number of sessions, the lessons, and the materials used; offenders are thus assessed and placed on a regime that is considered appropriate for them.

Although these programs will be outlined below to draw a distinction between programming opportunities that may exist in a federal prison compared to a provincial jail (the research site), it is important to note that this research project did not consider the operation of the program offerings at the federal level. Moreover, what can be gained from viewing Table 3 in appendix is insight into what written policy states for program offerings within federal correctional facilities for women – but likely not un-problematically. Interestingly, CSC (2014d) notes that there is variance even between federal facilities:

All federal institutions have programs, but not all programs are offered at all CSC institutions. Programs offered at an institution are determined based on the programming needs of the offender population at that particular institution (CSC, 2014d).

Table 3 presents what is claimed to exist for correctional programming at the Federal level. This programming model is referred to as women-centred, trauma-informed, and holistic (CSC, 2014). It is “guided by the most recent evidence in correctional research, relevant theory and current practices”, based on “research of what-works”, and designed by CSC to best meet

the needs of women clients (CSC, 2016, paragraph 1). Correctional Service Canada (CSC) claims to be a world leader in developing, implementing, and delivering effective correctional programs, particularly through identifying risk factors and delivering programming in a culturally-relevant manner (CSC, 2014). Thus, it is helpful – in considering a research site that has attempted to offer a regime that is rooted in women-centredness, trauma-informed practice, and holistic approaches – to outline the framework so that comparisons can be drawn. As a reminder, NBWCC (the research site) is a provincial correctional facility, and thus not obliged to offer any such programming beyond providing basic necessities of life, health, and education for their clients. At present, there is no uniform correctional program at the provincial/territorial level in Canada (Crichton and Ricciardelli, 2016). Based on the findings of this research project, the only version of a correctional program offered at the research site is the self-help program booklets.

**Other Programs and Services.** The programs outlined in Table 3 are specifically listed as correctional program offerings at the federal level. There are many other programs and services listed by CSC as falling outside of these parameters, including Educational Programs, Social Programs (Community Integration Program, Social Integration Program for Women, and Parenting Skills Training Program), Vocational Programs, Chaplaincy Services, Employment Training, Health Services, and Private Family Visiting. In the descriptions that follow, each will be briefly introduced so that comparisons can be made based on the programs and services described by the women in their interviews. The findings of how these (or similar) program offerings exist at the research site are presented below in bold text (**example**), so as to distinguish them from CSC’s understandings and definitions which are presented in non-bold text (example).

At the federal level, health services are based on the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA), which states that CSC is responsible for providing each offender under their care with essential health care and reasonable access to non-essential mental health care that will contribute to an individual's rehabilitation and successful reintegration (CSC, 2017a).

**In contrast, the provincial system abides by the *Mental Health Strategy for Corrections in Canada: A Federal-Provincial-Territorial Partnership* as recognized in the 2018 auditor general report. A key finding from this research project is the inadequacy of the clinical mental health regime at NBWCC, which is discussed in the next section of this chapter, as the second major theme.**

Employment training at the federal level is said to include *CORCAN: Employment and Employability Skills Training* (CSC, 2016). CSC refers to the CORCAN program as fulfilling the vocational programming and employment training sectors of their program offerings. The business subjects taught to offenders include manufacturing, textiles, construction, and services. These are often fostered through vocational training while offenders are incarcerated and may extend into the community.

**NBWCC offers no employment or chore-type work that involves any type of formal training, transferable credential, or job preparation. This finding further supports the idea that the current regime is feeding into the prison industrial complex common in many North American prison and jail settings. However, it has been noted that many women fill the informal roles of helping with laundry and gardening, but it is not clear whether any credentials or formal training are offered for their services, as it is clear no financial payment is offered.**

Chaplaincy services at the federal level are provided to offer a setting in which women in conflict with the law can explore spirituality and religion (CSC, 2013a). Chaplains, employed by CSC, work with volunteers to help offenders find wholeness and accept responsibility, contributing to a smoother reintegration to society. The right to practice religion is granted to all Canadians under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (section 2). Chaplains offer resources to ensure all offenders have their traditions offered, and space to practice their faith (CSC, 2013a).

**Women who participated in this research state that at the NBWCC they feel quite satisfied overall with the religious supports, but feel they are lacking in some tangible supports for their spirituality. The specific religious materials that have been denied are explored shortly in the major theme speaking to religiosity. The data suggest that many women feel their spiritual wellness is being neglected at present. For example, one of the women interviewed states:**

**I consider myself to be very spiritual. And I feel like I am being suppressed in here. I don't belong here but I don't know where I belong anymore. This is a greater purpose for me being here. Other than just sitting in there and watching music videos, I just sit there like a zombie. Doing nothing. – A return offender in her 40's**

At the Federal level, Private Family Visiting is key to maintaining family and community ties throughout an offender's sentence, and ultimately supports their return to the community (CSC, 2017c). The Canadian Families and Corrections Network (CFCN) assists family members of those in conflict with the law in connecting with resources, services, and information. This agency helps to support many initiatives, such as mother-child programs, and the Family Liaison Worker program currently operating at Nova Institute for Women in Truro (Canadian Families and Corrections Network [CFCN], 2018).



Several women displayed mixed feelings about access to their children, visitations with their children, and experiencing social supports relating to their children. A common sentiment was the coldness of viewing the children behind bars, and this led many to not want to have their children/ family view them in that light at all. It is laid out in Section I, Sub-section 1, Rule 2 of the *United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Offenders*, commonly referred to as the Bangkok Rules, that “women with care taking responsibilities for children shall be permitted to make arrangements for those children, including the possibility of a reasonable suspension of detention, taking into account the best interests of the children” (p. 10). One woman expressed that she was pleased with the work facilitated by the system to ensure she was able to maintain contact with her son as quickly as possible. She states:

I did find when I had to contact social workers when my son was put in care, that phone calls were approved quickly and put through. I’m not sure if that would have happened on a men’s side. They set up his care plan meeting pretty quickly and I was able to participate in it. – *A return offender in her 30’s*

Another woman expressed that apart from what she has learned on her own, she had never learned any type of parenting skills or budgeting skills required to provide for a child. She believes this to be why she has found herself in conflict with the law on so many occasions and wishes there were resources to help mothers. She says:

We need more programs on things we can find resources to help ourselves with. So we don’t have to depend on a man or our parents, or kick in a door just to feed our children. I’ve always had to do it myself and every time it has landed me here. – *A return offender in her 20’s*

Another woman expressed the concerns of visitations with children/ grandchildren behind glass. Section I, sub-section 8, rule 28 of the Bangkok Rules describes contact with the outside world. It specifically states that visits involving children shall take place in an

**environment that allows for a positive experience, in terms of staff attitudes, open contact between the mother and child, and extended contact with children where possible (Limsira, 2010, p. 15).**

**I wish they would get rid of the glass for family visits. My two grandbabies have always lived with me. My babies can't come because there is glass and they would freak out. – *A first time older offender***

**Considering this example in light of penal governance, keeping the women from having visits free of contact restrictions such as glass windows is a way to maintain control, carefully disguised under the umbrella of safety. This is more so a practice of correctional settings in general, since the data also demonstrate that the women perceive the officers and staff as caring and prioritizing mothers connecting with their children when possible. The question arises, if most women in conflict with the law do not pose a great security and safety risk (Pollack, 2009; Hannah-Moffat, 2001, 2010; Glube et al., 2006), then why must restrictive measures of control be implemented for visitations with children? The simple answer when interpreting through a feminist criminological perspective, is to maintain control by restricting the women in ways security and safety do not require.**

Education programs include Adult Basic Education Program [ABE] (multi-level, covering grades 1-12), General Educational Development Program [GED] (includes tests in five major subject areas, resulting in a high-school diploma), English or French as a Second Language Program (for those who cannot speak/write/read either of Canada's official languages), Keys to Family Literacy Program (linking literacy with parenting skills in women's facilities), and Post-Secondary Prerequisite/ Education Programs (for those who have a high-school diploma to participate in post-secondary studies, vocational programs, college or

university courses) (CSC, 2013b). Offenders in CSC's custody who have less than a grade 12 education must participate in an education program, which is the same practice at NBWCC.

**Few women discussed the educational programming at the research site, but there were a handful of comments reflecting satisfaction, such as this one:**

**I gained my GED in here and I was very grateful. I tried at Nova and I didn't get it. I tried three times in here and I finally got it and I am really proud of that. – A return offender in her 40's**

**Regulations laid out in the *Commissioner's Directive: Education Programs and Services for Inmates* states that participants must pay for their own course fees in post-secondary situations. I have learned over the course of this research that this has been the case with women residing at NBWCC, who have been able to complete university courses through correspondence with the help of friends/loved ones coordinating the mail and staff at the Centre scanning the reading materials. Other educational programs were noted, such as partnerships with the local college and Workplace Essential Skills Program (WES).**

At the Federal level, social programs can take many forms, but often include recreation, leisure activities, and overall personal and social growth (CSC, 2014c). Social programs available for women in conflict with federal law are the Social Integration Program for Women and the Parenting Skills Training Program. The former targets community-living issues (such as social supports, networks, employment, and children) and entails 14 group sessions and 2 individual sessions of 2-2.5 hours each. The Parenting program is designed for women who have, or hope to have, contact with their children, and often includes the offender's partner in 18 group sessions and 2 workshops of 2.5 hours each.

**The women interviewed at the NBWCC mentioned several programs that would fall under this umbrella: cooking program, yoga, Zumba, scheduled gym time, and a handful**

of others. Unfortunately, the programs mentioned, apart from the gardening and knitting programs, were reported to be inconsistently offered, or no-longer offered. Considering these offerings through a feminist criminological lens, many programs are offered without much substance or measurable outcomes of potential change and reduction in recidivism rates. Women are provided with menial tasks to fill their days, but no substantial programs to advance their employability credentials, address criminality, or otherwise help them get ahead as women, particularly women who are already at a disadvantage because they are in conflict with the law.

### **Lack of Mental Health Programming**

It is important to draw a clear distinction between the two major themes found, because clinical health, although classified as a service, is guaranteed in the *United Nations Rights of the Prisoner* (1977). It is not a program offering that can be interpreted as a nicety, or as optional. These minimum standards are to be upheld by all countries who have ratified this Charter, of which Canada is one.

In the Auditor General New Brunswick Report *Addiction and Mental Health Services in Provincial Adult Correctional Institutions*, MacPherson (2018) found many problematic elements with the existing addiction and mental health services in provincial corrections in New Brunswick. Specifically, she found that New Brunswick corrections does not have mental health clinical staff within adult correctional facilities in the province (p. 100), and instead has an agreement with the Regional Health Authorities for the health authorities to provide mental health care and intervention. In Canadian correctional institutions there is a high prevalence of mental health challenges and substance abuse addiction (MacPherson, 2018). New Brunswick

has been found to be among the least effective in providing addiction and mental health treatment to offenders, thus meaning that offenders are released back into the community without receiving adequate treatment to mitigate their health risks and the risks they may pose to the public (MacPherson, 2018). There are an alarming number of codes (and comments) in the data that support the 2018 Auditor General Findings, and contributing to this theme. One particularly notable comment is:

The number one thing is counselling. We have ZILCH. Not just a group to talk about things publicly. Now they are asking if we need grief counsellors because of a death, but you can't ask before someone dies? They have a psychologist. Not even a practitioner. – *A first time offender in her 40's*

**Trauma-Informed Services.** Feminist scholars have argued that essentialist notions of the role of abuse in the lives of women, which renders women responsible for how they cope with such abuse, leads to a criminal justice system that condones the incarceration of women for their own treatment (Balfour, 2006, p. 743). Moreover, victimization and criminalization occurring on a linear continuum is an essentialist understanding of the role of abuse in the lives of women: one cannot assume that one unquestionably leads to the other. The overarching concern is rendering women responsible for how they respond to the array of abuses they may face. Balfour argues that this psychologizing and individualizing of women sidesteps the question of why abused women are sentenced to correctional punishment (Balfour, 2006, p. 743). A more complex understanding of the victimization-criminalization continuum, which includes the classist, gendered, and cultural experiences is needed in considering women's lives and criminal pathways.

One woman shares how she witnessed a woman tell her story about being sexually assaulted:

I know they try. But there are certain times that someone who didn't like hearing people speak French because she was raped by a French guy, and she asked them to not speak in French around her. The staff said they should be able to speak their mother tongue and continued. Certain issues staff are compassionate toward, some are not. If someone is crying you want to comfort them and hug them as women that is what we want to do. But you can't hug them here. Sometimes people re-live things and different events because they are sober for the first time. It is not always a different sign of detox. – *A return offender in her 30's*

The witness did not share that the offender was informed of their right to legal counsel or not, but it is assumed given the demeanor of the officers that they were not the most helpful for the woman. To reiterate, this is one of the suggestions outlined in the Bangkok rules for the Treatment of Women Offenders. It is likely that these staff did not yet undergo the training, or did not take much from it if they had.

Relating this to the arguments of Balfour (2006), one could argue that the officers who were speaking French and making the woman offender feel uncomfortable may not have understood the gravity of the woman's reaction, and that it was rooted in a wider-systemic experience of violence against women. Repositioning women's narratives, which are rooted in the brute repression by the state, needs to be forefront in transforming women's stories into political action. Balfour (2006) explains that equality-seeking groups, such as the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) and the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS), have mobilized women's narratives of abuse to present submissions to the United Nations Human Rights Committee in an effort to expose state injustices through correctional policies and policing practices. She notes this is an example of the power knowledge change nexus (p. 745).

### **Improvement in Overall Health Since Becoming Incarcerated**

This is the third most substantial theme. Although it has been discussed previously, it is important to reiterate this finding as it is counter to the most recent provincial governmental report of 2018. Many women credited this change to not smoking, refraining from substance use, having a regular sleep routine, and receiving three meals per day. One woman described her improvement in her health since becoming incarcerated:

“I was drinking probably every day. But I was going to work. I am an addict. My body could function and still work. It was a routine that I was used to. I saw my father and my mother do it, so I guess I am doing it too. For sure in the morning, I don’t have that feeling of going to be sick. But when I get up I go to get breakfast and then I don’t have anything to look forward to. I don’t usually have breakfast. I just get something at work and I have things to look forward to after work, seeing friends, and going home. Here I feel good waking up still. But, it’s not like I’m sleeping in a good bed. I’m trying to make the days go faster – *A return offender in her 20s*”

Although this speaks to women’s self-rated health statuses being stronger while they are behind bars than in the community, women stated that their access to adequate health care professionals was limited. This speaks to a wider systemic barrier of access to gender-specific health care that this population of women are facing.

**Women’s Health Concerns.** Section 6 of the Bangkok rules, on Health Care Services, (b) Gender-specific health care, Rule 10(1) states that gender-specific health-care services shall be provided to all women offenders, meeting at least the equivalent standard of what is available in the community. Pap-tests and cervical exams for women’s reproductive wellness are readily available in the community, and free of charge in many clinics. This should be a minimum-standard service offered to women in conflict with the law should they request these types of exams. This is also specifically stated in Section 6 (g) Preventative health-care services, Rule 18, which states:

Preventive health-care measures of particular relevance to women, such as Papanicolaou tests and screening for breast and gynaecological cancer, shall be offered to women prisoners on an equal basis with women of the same age in the community (p. 13).

It does not appear that women interviewed receive the routine check-ups when requested, as one woman said:

You can't even get a pap test in here, or a mammogram and these are thing you are supposed to get. So when I think of that I don't think women's needs are being met. I feel like I'm being institutionalized here. I've been here for a year and they just keep telling me to book an appointment when I am out - *A first time offender in her 20's*

Concerningly, it appears that some women are advised to seek gynecological medical support once they return the community and are told that such services are beyond the scope of what can be provided at the jail. This is counter to the minimum standard outlined by the United Nations in the Bangkok rules (Rule 10 outlined above), as the correctional site should be upholding the same standard of service that is offered in the community. If this group of women does not have the support to seek such gender-specific health care in the community (such as information on where they can access this care), then the institutional health-care is contributing yet another barrier for this marginalized population of women to face upon their eventual release.

Considering this situation with a feminist criminological perspective, this population of women offenders may face additional barriers to access while they are in the community: such as searching for employment, fighting for care of their children, stigmatization due to their criminal records, and an overarching lack of social supports that promote wellness post-incarceration. These social determinants of health – poverty, employment, physical environments, etcetera – are exacerbated in the community as issues of safety and survival preside over health-care measures (Besney, Angel, Pyne, Martell, Keenan and Ahmed, 2018). One group of Canadian scholars found that while women are incarcerated and some of these barriers are temporarily



mediated, it is an opportunity to engage in preventative health care and improve overall well-being (Besney et al., 2018).

### **Lack of Active Leisure-Based Programming**

There is an overwhelming theme of a Lack of Active Leisure-Based Programming. Many women shared their concerns relating to physical inactivity and weight gain. Women offenders typically gain more weight on intake than males (Johnson, Milner, & Greer, 2018). Furthermore, offenders are more likely to be obese than non-imprisoned females (Herbert, Plugge, Foster, & Doll, 2012; in Johnson et al., 2018). In consideration of the women's expressed lack of physical activity and generally sedentary daily routine, a common thread among the interviews is that the women value TV – an activity that is not pro-social, not clinical, is passive – and otherwise value unstructured programming above all else. One can interpret the reported sedentary lifestyle while incarcerated as stemming largely from a lack of active leisure opportunities and the marked weight gain reported by the women as a particularly troublesome barrier to their health statuses.

Not only does the current correctional regime rely on self-regulation, but the opportunities for physical activity reflects a system of strategic choice. The data speak to an undesirable night-time gym time that is more convenient for staff because they rarely have to take women, and that remains unchanged despite women complaining that the time was inconvenient. One woman described:

I can count on one hand the amount of times we have gone to the gym all summer. A lot of women, even on other units don't understand why they changed it. It used to be from 9:50 – 10:30am. On the weekends it was at 7:30am and 8:20am. Now across the board its 9pm or 10pm for unit 5. Other units... unit 4 doesn't even exist... they have the 9:50am time slot. Since unit 4 isn't there, we were told we can ask the guard on our unit to take

us to the gym during that time. But we don't like telling people what to do. That isn't our job. – *A first time offender in her 40's*

The onus is currently on the women to not only motivate themselves to take advantage of their gym time, but to mobilize a collective voice about the inconvenient time. Through a feminist criminological lens, this can be interpreted as women being governed by a policy that limits their movement and access to physical activity, thus contributing to feelings of lethargy and low self-confidence, particularly due to weight-gain.

Another concerning example that relates to the institutional factor of the shared nature of the site is the lack of gym time and yard time. There is one comment that was echoed by 5 women: walking “crack-to-crack”/ “line-to-line”/ “zigzags” in front of the unit for their yard time.

My health has changed because now when I'm in here, at most I'm outside for 1 hour max a day and we can only walk from crack to crack. [I probed “How big is that?” for reference] About 15 of me and I'm five feet. Just do that back and forth. – *A first time offender in her 20's*

Interestingly, one woman also shared the fact that that the site just got a brand-new walking track. However, the women are allowed only to walk in front of their own units: unit 4 in front of unit 4, unit 5 in front of unit 5, and so on. It can be presumed that this is because the youth would be able to see the women should they walk the rest of the way around the track, or if the women were to use the grass on the other side of the wooden fence that stands in front of the track in front of their units. The site is under the obligation to not allow any opportunities for contact between the youth and adult women offenders, but the fact still remains that these conditions are not optimal for either group. The number of “youth movements” significantly limits the level of independence the women can have. The concept of the prison industrial complex can be helpful in understanding why the New Brunswick government has decided to couple these two facilities

into the shared site: it results in lower staffing costs, lower building maintenance/ power/ and heating costs of operating one site and not two, and the cost-saving measures of adapting an existing site. In the name of saving money, women and young people in conflict with the law are paying the price.

Although perhaps the women's limited access to the gym stems from the problematic nature of the site being shared with a youth jail, one must consider why the women are not granted access when the youth are not present. One woman who had experience at a Federal prison offered a comment to demonstrate the marked contrast in autonomy over physical health and leisure:

At Nova, leisure is set between 6-9pm, and in the morning, and you can walk from your house down to the leisure in the gym or fitness rooms. There is karaoke and other events planned by an inmate committee. Here you only get 40 minutes. Sometimes less when meds come. At Nova you walked yourself to the gym, so even if no one in your house wanted to go you still could walk over and go – *A return offender in her 40s*

This woman helps to demonstrate the level of independence offered to women incarcerated at this federal prison. This change is drastically different from the provincial site, as the women at the research site are not permitted to leave their unit without staff escorting them; particularly, not to travel to the main building to use the gym at their own convenience. If women offenders pose less of a security risk than their male counter-parts (Pollack, 2005), why are they met with the same limitations in movement. This example is underpinned by feminist notions of inherently dangerous and risky women in conflict with the law, who need to be strictly regulated to maintain safety. The threat to safety actually posed by many of the women is not actualized.

Social wellness, although not part of the interview protocol, is a potential outcome of leisure-based programming. Social supports are shown to have several probable health-related benefits (Davidson, 2014). These benefits can include lowering stress levels and raising self-

esteem. Because of the lack of opportunity for social connection, one can assume that social supports are low, apart from the peer-support opportunities previously mentioned. One woman describes what a women-centred program would be:

To me, a women-centred program means that there is a group of women. The program is presented to them with someone teaching you. Not a booklet on trauma, alcoholism, drug dependency – *A first time older offender*

Further, a balanced diet and regular exercise are considered key components for older adults in conflict with the law (Wangmo, Handtke, Bretschneider, & Elger, 2018). These scholars note the importance of adapting to any dietary concerns. Findings from this research project show that the women are quite willing to improve their health statuses and are looking for the support to do so. The support does not appear present at the time of this research, and thus women are facing tremendous barriers to thriving in all aspects of health while behind bars.

### **Perceived Inconsistent Treatment**

**Jail as Punishment, not for Punishment.** A column written by an offender at Burnside Jail, a provincial jail in Nova Scotia, and made public by a well-known prison advocate, offers insight into the daily life behind provincial bars (CBC, September 8 2018). Many of the concerns published in this article resonate with the themes in my data: concerns of lengthy lock-downs, feeling ware-housed, lack of programming, inadequacy of health care, visits with children behind glass, and many other concerns. This particular offender, and those who stand with him across North America, have spoken out in peaceful protest of the current state of corrections (CBC, 2018). One statement in the article is particularly salient in terms of the research findings: people are sent to jail *as* punishment, not *for* punishment. This is suggesting the term incarcerated is in fact the punishment decided by the court, officer, or whatever powers that be, and the offender's

treatment while serving time should not place an additional burden of hardship. Considered through a feminist criminological lens: women in conflict with the law who are othered and viewed by the public as unruly must face additional taming and limitations, beyond being physically placed behind bars and deprived of their liberties. One woman who participated in my research echoed these sentiments:

There's no sense of justice. We are already in jail. Why give us more punishment? – *A 33-year-old return offender*

***Inconsistencies Relating to Time.*** Findings from this study demonstrate an underlying concern over the consistency of institutional factors. There are many comments from the women interviewed that illustrate this concern including: limitations on opportunities for the women because of the youth, the schedule, and inconsistent management of institutional time. Several women described how the outlined institutional schedule is not always strictly adhered to:

Jail time is early. When we go to bed at 10:55, at 25 to eleven they tell us that we have fifteen minutes. They cut off time. That's jail time. All the clocks in the units are set ahead at least seven minutes faster. They steal our time from us. – *A return offender in her 30's*

I wrote several analytic memos about how important it was for me to remember my watch (or rely on the time-piece on my laptop). During nearly every interview, at different points in time women would ask me what time it was. I thought at first, they were seeing how long they had been participating in the interview, but I soon realized the query was more to measure how much time they have left. The women are hyperaware of the early nature of institutional time, and that programs and services can be cut short. Some women corroborated this realization by asking if they could come back again after lunch, dinner, or the next day – depending on whatever caused their interview to pause – almost expecting to be told that the interview would be left incomplete. In any circumstance that institutional factors forced a pause, I allowed additional time to finish

the interview protocol, the member checking process, and time for any additional conversation that may arise. This did stretch out the interview process much longer than originally intended, but I did not want to contribute to their feelings of false promises or having their opportunities revoked from them. The underlying nature of uncertainty can be interpreted through a feminist criminological perspective as women are governed by stringent adherence to schedules. Women are governed – in particular ways that enforce certain behaviours over others – as clocks are changed, time is inaccurately portrayed to the women, and time is often leveraged to achieve desirable outcomes for staff.

Several women voiced their concerns over factors on the youth side (NBYC, a shared site with NBWCC) causing issues with programming, gym time, and many other opportunities for the women.

Not a lot of consistency with any of it. Sometimes we are late or miss programs because we don't get unlocked. During some of the programs we have had to get up and leave if there is a code on the youth side. – *A first time offender in her 20's*

Interestingly, many analytic memos that I wrote pertained to the unpredictability of this setting. I recorded many comments about waiting for different amounts of time. For example, one interview would end, and I may be waiting for 1 minute to up to 30 minutes or informed that it was too close to a meal time and that I must take a break for a certain amount of time. Occasionally, there would be a youth “movement” while I waited in the private visitation room for an offender to be brought over. This could cause a vast array of delays, and I was fortunate it did not lead to any interviews being cancelled altogether, as I had heard can happen with the women's programming.

Frequent mention from the women interviewed about these youth movements, and the various comments reflected in the data lead me to say that the Centre is very serious about not

having sight or sound between the youth and the women at any point in time. Even though this may seem encouraging in that the staff are diligent in making the best of their shared site, it is still a violation of the *United National Convention on the Rights of the Child* section 37<sup>8</sup> (Bosse, 2016). This violation was reviewed in greater detail in earlier chapters of this thesis, but it is important to note because the disjuncture in the schedules for the two sites is not merely a limiting inconvenience.

### **Adequacy of Spiritual Supports**

The data show that the general spiritual offerings at the site are adequate and satisfactory. But, in terms of meeting specific needs of women identifying with specific religions, the data suggest that resources and programs are lacking:

I had gotten a bible and a rosary sent to me by my parents. In the admissions booklet it says you are allowed to have religious items that you are allowed. I was denied them in admissions because they were not brand new. “But she sent me what I was baptised with”. They do not have a Catholic Priest here, but someone was looking into it to see if someone could come in. – *A first time offender in her 40’s*

Another woman, unfortunately, faced a similar situation:

[religiosity support] Is lacking, they do have church and Pastor Chris. But they use a different bible. I know we are all worshipping God, but I was brought up Pentecostal and we use the King James version. I’m not saying they don’t give me a Bible, are using a new version, but it would be nice to have some spiritual guidance with the King James version. We only have one bible and it is ripped. – *A first time older offender*

*The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners* Section 42 says that as far as practicable, every prisoner shall be allowed to satisfy the needs of religious life by

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<sup>8</sup> Article 37 of the United Nations on the Rights of the Child states that “every child deprived of liberty shall be separated from adults” (as cited in Bosse, 2016, p. 113). Despite the administration of NBWCC and NBYC making effort to minimize contact of clients from each site, visual contact of clients still persists, and transportation of youth and adults in vehicles is reported to exist (Bosse, 2016).

attending the services within institutions and having possession of books of religious observance and instruction. These women's religious articles were unavailable to them, or withheld from them, leaving it up to the women to interpret the Christian services and bibles should they wish to express themselves religiously. This lack of accommodation of religious needs should not be occurring, especially when many churches and supporters will give out free religious materials to anyone interested, but this may involve additional labours of seeking out these resources by staff.

**Cultural Supports for Indigenous Women.** The rates of incarcerated women in Canada have been continually increasing, in part due to neoliberal ideologies of criminalizing the poor, marginalized, and cutting social welfare supports (Balfour, 2006, p.735). Specifically, the rates of Indigenous women in Canada who are incarcerated has increased astronomically in recent years (Balfour, 2006); Zinger, 2018). Because of these disturbing trends of the over-incarceration of Indigenous women in Canada, one would suspect that programs and resources are adapting to support this population. However, the data reflect that, although there are culturally relevant practices for Indigenous women – such as drumming ceremonies and sweats – the sweats are too infrequent and not available to all women who wish to attend. Several women offered concerning remarks about the criteria used to select eligible women to attend the sweats:

Recently there was a sweat, and a number of us put our names in for it. But we were told there was limited space. But it was all based on who had lighter skin and hair that couldn't go – they just based it on assumptions. I know they were trying to accommodate, but if there was that much interest, why not run two of them. It caused some tension on the unit. – *A return offender in her 40's*

Another woman offered a comment that was almost identical, while two more women described how only “natives” were able to attend. Several women commented on the infrequency of sweats, including the woman below:



Only have sweats once or twice a year. The one last week was the first one this year. Only Aboriginal-looking women get to participate. No one with blue eyes. And I am half native with blue eyes, so they won't even believe me. – *A return offender in her 30's*

Section II, *Rules Applicable to Special Categories*, sub-section 5, Rule 54 of the Bangkok rules sets out specific requirements for the incarceration of minority and Indigenous women. This rule states that prison administrations shall recognize that women who identify with different religions and cultural backgrounds have unique needs and may face discrimination in various forms in their access to gender and culturally relevant programs and services (Limsira, 2010). This document suggests counteracting these disadvantages through providing programs and services that address these needs, in consultation with women offenders themselves and any other relevant groups. The data reflect that, at present, there is dissatisfaction with the frequency of sweats, and the number of spots offered to women who wish to participate, and the criteria on which eligibility to attend is based. The solution suggested by many women, while it would remove control from the staff who currently decide who can and cannot attend, would be to offer more frequent sweats and to have them available to all who wish to participate. There appears to be a deep layer of penal governance at work in the delivery of religious and cultural supports: the women's attendance hinges on decisions made by staff. Therefore, the women's behaviour may influence whether or not they are invited to attend these ceremonies, the women's looks may influence who is invited, and these opportunities may be leveraged by staff who decide who can attend.

### **Women's Programming Suggestions**

Many criminologists are familiar with the theory of the revolving door syndrome. As the term implies, offenders are released only to quickly find themselves in conflict with the law

again, and back in the door of prison/ jail. One woman explained that because women do not leave the centre with any more resources than they came in with, there is a revolving door pattern at work:

I've heard from quite a few girls that at Nova they teach you where to go when you are in trouble, and you find yourself rehabilitated. Here, they throw us out and we are back in 6 months. It is like a revolving door. When they get in here and see how much of a day care it is, they think, well that's a joke why don't I just go rob a bank? – *A repeat offender in her 20's*

Although the women typically described the programming by exclusion (i.e., programming here is not “example” and therefore it should be “example”), there were 7 detailed comments of specific suggestions for programming, and a sample is presented below:

There is nothing here at all for women. When women are so much more multi-taskers with our thinking – I know I can – so I'm sure everyone else can. It is a spectrum for women of what we can do, but we aren't given any access. I would love to learn more about Human Rights, Criminal Justice System, Archeology, everything. But we don't have that. They tell me to go to the library, but what do we have here, romance? But how stupid is that? But they are telling this educated woman to go in the library and learn about what her interests are. Nothing knowledgeable in here. There should be more knowledgeable books. I would say people who are sentenced here for long periods of time, should have access to computers for online courses. That would be helpful. Not everyone in here is going to stay in here long-term, but if someone was for a year or two... have that chance you know. And also have access to information. Instead of continuously requesting information and they tell you they made it and put it in your personals but when you go to court there is nothing in there except the junk you came in with. – *A return offender in her 40's*

Another woman said this:

Programming would be better if it were a group thing. I was at another facility and there was a philosophy of addicts helping addicts. In another way, that is just victims helping victims. Likely 90% of us have been victims of some type of abuse. So that abuse builds up as anger and hatred and eventually we just blow up on someone. They didn't want to do it, obviously they are showing remorse for, but at the time it seemed like the only way. A lot of the time I have been charged with something that I was faced no other option to deal with. – *A return offender in her 20's*

The data suggest that the women are seeking more resources to better themselves through skill-building, knowledge building, clinical mental health support, stronger mother-child programming, group programming, programming that is not self-directed, cooking classes, more accessible physical health programming, addictions support, holistic health support, and confidence building while inside so that they do not find themselves back behind bars. These women profoundly expressed that they acknowledge that a lack of these resources undermines their ability to achieve rehabilitation and maintain low rates of recidivism. Therefore, through sharing these suggestions this thesis is entirely a call to action to change the current regime.

## **Chapter Six: Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusions**

This chapter presents a discussion is provided that considers the implications of the research findings in terms of future research required, and I present relating recommendations. Lastly, conclusions are presented.

### **Discussion**

In this thesis, I describe the findings of a qualitative research study which considered women's experiences with a particular programming model at a correctional facility for women in conflict with the law. As argued, research on programming at the provincial/ territorial level of corrections in Canada is lacking, and research exploring the needs of women in conflict with the law is rare compared to that which focuses on male offenders. This research speaks to the void of knowledge in provincial/territorial corrections, on programming, services, and health needs of women clients. To my knowledge at the time this thesis was written, there has not been similar work considering these needs through qualitative research that encapsulates women's voices. This sets my research and findings apart.

The minimum standards outlined by the United Nations, such as in the Bangkok rules and through other conventions, are sometimes rooted in the experience of women offenders, and always serve to offer basic protections from further harm ensuing. These standards must be upheld to not exacerbate the existing (and problematic) criminal justice system that tends to be disempowering and silencing of women's experiences of sexual abuse. On average in Canada one woman or girl is killed every 2.5 days – a trend that has been demonstrated for the past four decades (Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability, 2019, p. 8). Canada's Strategy to Prevent Gender-Based Violence 2017-2018 year in review (Monsef, 2018) posits that

low reporting rates of sexual assaults across Canada remains a serious issue: it is estimated that fewer than 5 per every 100 sexual assaults (5%) are reported to police (p. 12). This report urges that better support for survivors of sexual assault be offered through all levels of government, law enforcement, and community agencies. All facets of our criminal justice system must take these instances seriously if we are to change these grave statistics, and an ideological shift is necessary for staff who recount instances such as those outlined above so that survivors can be better supported.

Arguably, the most substantial issue standing in the way of achieving women-centred goals at the NBWCC is the fact that the site is shared with youth. The other main barrier is a lack of mandated programming for the provincial/ territorial jail system. The system is simply not required to offer as many programs or allotted as many staff to facilitate them, as the federal correctional system. These barriers of insufficient staff and staff education will be large hurdles to overcome as the site continues to improve their services for their clients.

Although the recent 2018 Auditor General New Brunswick Report expressed dissatisfaction with the health-care services now offered in the current provincial correctional regime, my data reflect that there is a marked difference in how the women clients view the offerings. They express a marked dissatisfaction with the clinical mental health services and psychological services, but an acknowledgement of how the current regime contributes to better overall health status compared to that pre-incarceration. This research uniquely contributes to the understanding of health services from a client perspective, particularly through the theme “Improvement in Overall Health Since Becoming Incarcerated”.

In the current study, the two main themes prevailing from most interviews are “Lack of Mental Health Supports” and “Lack of, or Inadequacy of Programming”. These themes, among

the other 5 major themes have been interpreted within the overarching theory of criminological feminist perspective. Some of the main linkages are explored below.

**The Women-Centred Prison Environment.** The *Creating Choices* document outlined in its blue print for the new regional facilities that they were to follow a different architectural design and follow less-intrusive security measures than traditional institutions; in reality, the architecture has not changed, and in one case the proposed design was changed because of public outcry from Ontarians (Hannah-Moffat, 1995). In CSC (Correctional Service Canada) documents outlining the Kitchener Ontario facility, it states that an eight-foot chain link security fence would enclose the perimeter of the building, with state-of-the-art electronic detection devices bordering the internal perimeter (Hannah-Moffat, 1995). These security measures, designed for high risk and dangerous individuals, appear out of place in Federal women's prisons, particularly given their mandate for less-intrusive security. In this same document, it states that the number one priority of the correctional system is to protect society – not to protect the offender. This situates the offender as the threat, and thus the object of control (Hannah-Moffat, 1995). To the public, prisons are symbols of punishment and deprivation of liberty; they represent a space that contains and regulates people's behavior to make those who are not in prison feel safer (Pollack, 2009).

Within prison and jail environments that operate as women-centred facilities, there are problematic contradictions of empowerment/ support in a correctional system preoccupied with safety and security (Pollack, 2009; Hannah-Moffat, 2001). The extent to which offenders can be helped is limited by the ideological moral standard of prison and jail remaining houses of punishment, not treatment. Despite the empowerment policy rhetoric that has permeated the incarceration of women, prisons and jails remain first and foremost a place of punishment and

hyper-control, and the programming/treatment/opportunities for rehabilitation choices are pre-determined (or non-existent) based on what policy makers think the public will deem as acceptable for perceived hardened criminals.

Provincial/ territorial jails for women in Canada are infamous for their lack of programming and support, as they tend to function primarily as temporary warehouses for offenders on remand or sentenced (Pollack, 2009). The notion of Canadian federal women's prisons being therapeutic, healing, and supportive superficially makes federal prisons appear to be better options than provincial jails and remand facilities (Pollack, 2009). This inequity of programmatic supports offered in provincial/territorial jails compared to federal prisons has left many women in conflict with the law willing to serve longer prison sentences in federal facilities to access resources; some judges are willing to sentence some offenders in this way (Pollack, 2009). Not only is this disturbing, but an example of penal governance by the court sanctioning system, which is corralling female offenders into one stream that is standardized and funded much more than the other. With standardized programming, policy, funding, and federal dollars, comes federal surveillance of offenders. This promise of women getting more resources by serving a longer sentence is problematic for the above notions of heightened state control, but also that it has increased the number of women doing federal time, which comes at the financial expense of the public. This sentiment is echoed in the theme of Lack of Programming, as women drew comparisons between federal and provincial offerings: favoring the opportunities presented in the former.

**Constraints Limiting Programming in Provincial Corrections.** Given the time constraints and typical short-stay in provincial corrections it is difficult to mobilize any type of long-term or overly structured program. But all women in conflict with the law enter the

correctional system in Canada at the provincial level (either sentenced, or on remand, and perhaps later sent to a federal prison if sentenced as such). The New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre (NBWCC) has taken a giant leap in the right direction through modifying the women-centred regime, although more support is needed in implementing this regime to the fullest extent in this particular setting. The more provincial and territorial facilities can emulate the processes in federal prisons, such as through program offerings where applicable, risk classification procedures, and health care services (psychological, physical, spiritual, and social), the more these facilities would emulate the so-called evidence-based practices that are operational in the federal system.

**Mothering and Exclusionary Control.** Pollack (2009) argues that federal sentences require offenders that are mothers to be away from their children for longer periods, and for offenders to be disconnected from family, community, and the labour market. Given the geographic isolation compared to major Canadian cities, and the unnecessary security of federal prisons, offender's disconnection from the community and social exclusion are exacerbated. This is very much an issue of gender being employed to govern women who are deemed risky to the community are housed in prison, depriving them of liberty, apparently for their own good, but more so this measure appears to ease the mind of the public. These principles of disconnecting mothers from their children, families, and communities is particularly salient given the geographic location of the provincial jail in New Brunswick in the rural Northern region of the province – away from the major epicentres. This is also echoed in the overarching theme of a Lack of Programming, as women feel programming to connect with their children is lacking or over securitized.



As Stanley Cohen, expert Sociologist described, exclusionary control refers to the social control of isolation, including the rebuilding of federal prisons in isolated communities away from major cities, which demonstrates societies' boundary and clear separation of deviant and non-deviant bodies (Downes, Rock, Chinkin, and Gearty, 2007). In this explanation, Cohen also advocated that this type of exclusionary control is morally guided and coupled with harsh stigma and status degradation of offenders upon reintegration. Inside the institution lies a system of tight surveillance and control that assures the public that the state is serious about harshly dealing with those who have wronged society. Why we as a society morally choose to deprive offenders of their liberties is all disguised under a blurred system of apparent risks that offenders pose to society, and needs that offenders have.

**Gendered Experiences of Risk and Need.** Hannah-Moffat (2010) posits that classification is integral to effective correctional management and evidence-based correctional programming. Gender-responsive advocates have argued that in order for women have access to appropriate programs, women offenders need to be appropriately classified (Hannah-Moffat, 2010). Within gender-responsive correctional regimes, women offenders are typically marked as an 'at risk' group, requiring the subdivision and categorization per levels of high risk, medium risk, or low risk (Hannah-Moffat, 2010). Many factors contribute to risk assessment, including self-injurious behaviour, relationships, children, past victimisations, and mental health (Hannah-Moffat, 1995). Hannah-Moffat (1995) argues that the core premises of gender-responsiveness (GR) build on the differences between women and men, which translate into an organising principle for women's penal policy, programs and research. Moreover, this difference is used to govern women. These understandings of what behaviours incarcerated women should and should not engage in are morally justified based on values and norms of greater society, and often are

not based on actual perceived risk to the public or to correctional staff. Considering this in light of the themes, the majority of the (limited) program offerings are reserved for women on unit five who are deemed to be lower risk. Although the distribution of women may not be only based on risk, but on number of women at the Centre, perceived risk posed by the collective women who live in each living unit determines the programming opportunities they are allowed to participate in.

**The Social Actors.** There are various social actors involved in CSC's women-centred corrections for federally sentenced women in Canada. There is a specific set of social actors who create CSC women-centred policy and programs, and another set of social actors responsible for implementing these policies and programs. Considering this through criminological feminist perspective, correctional managers and correctional officers play an important role in the maintenance of safety and security in each of CSC's women-centred correctional facilities, and these individuals have the authority to restrict the women offender's movement, access to programming, and therefore the women's ability to make choices for themselves. These individuals are also responsible for dishing out punishments, particularly for choices that they do not interpret to be meaningful and responsible, following the definitions outlined by those who created the women-centred correctional policy (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). Moreover, this entails prioritizing certain programs and opportunities over others, in selecting programs from the women-centred policy. These are just a few examples of the social actors within women-centred corrections, and these same principles translate to provincial/ territorial jails.

Officers having supreme control over women offenders is not supported in criminological literature; instead, it favours evidence-based policies of contingent reinforcement (Gendreau, Listwan, Kuhns, & Exum, 2014). This is important to note because currently officers have the

authority to halt, delay, and dictate many factors pertaining to programming. Contingent reinforcement is based on the principles of operant conditioning, wherein reinforcement is contingent upon a behaviour (Gendreau et al., 2014). The reinforcement serves to strengthen or suppress the behaviour. If trying to reinforce a positive behaviour the reinforcement would be something desirable to the individual, for example: if an individual displays behaviour A (i.e., helping to care for the lawns), then the individual receives reinforcement A (i.e., the individual gets a sun hat, their own water bottle, and a popsicle). It is important to note that although these practices are recognized within the literature, there are few examples of these types of reinforcement operationalized.

### **Recommendations**

I am grateful that the women who participated in this research offered so many suggestions to improve the current programming and services that are women-centred at the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre (NBWCC). These suggestions were explored above, but mainly speak to addictions and mental health counselling, and better health resources to meet women's needs. Smandych and Winterdyk (2016) suggested "developing women's policy with women's voices" (p. 137). This is a key area – engagement with women and their ideas – that is missing in current policy and programming offerings.

**Suggestions to Improve Isolation.** Co-ordinator for the Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John, Denise Durette, considers the isolated geographic location of Miramichi a hindrance for some families and supporters of incarcerated women from the province's southern cities (CBC, 2012). Pollack (2009) argues that federal sentences causes offenders who are mothers to be away from their children for longer periods, and for offenders to be disconnected from family,

community, and the labor market. Given the geographic isolation of many correctional jails and prisons in proximity to major Canadian cities, offenders' disconnection from the community and social exclusion are exacerbated (Pollack, 2009).

These principles are definitely applicable to the location of the Miramichi facility in relation to the province's easily accessible city-centres of Saint John, Moncton, and Fredericton for comparison. In tandem with this point, the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate New Brunswick has been calling for the creation of a new secure youth site, located closer to the Saint John/ Moncton/ Fredericton areas, in an effort to deliver a greater family and community connection for youth in conflict with the law (Bosse, 2016). Although this will not improve the isolation of the women interviewed for this project, it will free up the Centre for women's use entirely, which may increase family-visitation opportunities.

**Short-Stay Correctional Programming Suggestions.** Given the time constraints and typical short-stay in provincial corrections, it is difficult to mobilize any type of long-term or overly structured program. But all women in conflict with the law enter the correctional system in Canada at the Provincial level (either sentenced, or on remand, and may later be sent to a Federal prison if sentenced as such). Given this problematic reality, it would appear to be much more efficient to operate the provincial facilities as similar to the federal prisons as possible, such as through program offerings where applicable, risk classification procedures, and leisure opportunities. This would help to better prepare those offenders who find themselves sentenced federally, but also offenders deemed to serve provincial time, as the federal regimes are said to be evidence-based and empirically evaluated. The New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre has taken a giant leap in the right direction through modifying the women-centred regime,

although more support is needed in implementing this regime to the fullest extent in this particular setting.

### **Evaluation of the Research Questions**

Through the exploration of the following research questions, this research has drawn examples of the disparities between the provincial level of corrections and the National CSC women-centred framework. In order to satisfy this research goal this research responded to several research questions:

1. Examine the programming at the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre with a view to:
  - a. determine the women's experiences with the programming regime
  - b. elucidate the concepts that are considered to be unique about the programming at this particular correctional institution (i.e., what about this centre is viewed as women-centred by the women offenders?)
  - c. elucidate the concepts that are considered to be unique about the overall approach of staff and institutional climate at this particular correctional institution (i.e., what about this centre is viewed as trauma-informed by the women offenders?)
  - d. consider the women offenders' self-reported holistic health needs: psychological, physical, and spiritual wellbeing
  - e. consider if the women offenders deem this programming as helpful or hindering to their overall health status
  - f. outline the specific programming offerings, compared and contrasted with those demonstrated in CSC's women-centred and trauma-informed institutions

- g. describe what programs are offered, compared and contrasted with those adhering to CSC's women-centred and trauma-informed interventions
  - h. consider if this institution's approach considered to be women-centred, according to the women offenders of NBWCC? And/or, in light of the standard defined by CSC
2. Preliminarily consider examples of what makes this provincial correctional institution for women compatible and/or incompatible with the women-centred model which exists in federal corrections for women in Canada. In particular:
- a. Consider the compatibility of a holistic health environment, necessary for a women-centred approach to take place, with the safety and security mandate of this correctional setting, and
  - b. consider any incompatibilities that arise that suggest the prison environment cannot be fully women-centred.

Through exploring these research questions and sub-questions this research examined the experiences of the women offenders at NBWCC at a particular point in time, with particular interest in how these women view their needs, experience programming, health services, and experience supports under the current programming model. This research collected rich data on how the women define and have come to understand their programs and services, and makes significant contributions to areas for potential improvement.

### **Directions for Future Research**

The Department of Public Safety's decision to transfer the women was based on securing women in conflict with the law better access to educational and rehabilitative programming implemented by staff who are well-trained, such as those at the Youth Centre (CBC, 2012).

Albeit well intended, as the data suggest this current situation is extremely limiting for the women offenders. Despite the administration's continued efforts to minimize contact of young persons of the Youth Centre and women offenders of the Women's Centre, visual contact of clients still persists, and transportation of youth with adult offenders in vehicles is reported (Bosse, 2016). Canada has made a reservation to this United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 38, and is approaching a 10-year history of co-detaining children and adults (Bosse, 2016). This solution was said to be interim, but at the time this thesis was written (2018) the violation of Article 37 was still occurring. It is my hope that research will be conducted by the Canadian government to give greater effect to the principle of separate systems for adult and youth criminal justice systems, and discontinuing to house adults and youth in conflict with the law at the same facility. Perhaps the most pressing of the suggestions for future research is to explore other options in New Brunswick and to find a more sustainable long-term solution.

More research must be conducted on the needs of provincially incarcerated women. The scales of the federal and provincial/territorial systems are so vastly different that it is a monstrous undertaking to attempt to retrofit one plan to work in the other's setting. More research must contribute to the extent to which this approach currently exists, and can exist in the future, in the provincial/territorial setting. Ideally, a separate, evidence-based model must be created, based on the women's accounts of the programs, services, and supports they need behind bars.

As recent as days before this chapter was written, reports and commissions speak to the unique needs of Indigenous women, women of color, young adults, seniors, and LGBTQ individuals. Canada's new Correctional Service Canada Commissioner, Anne Kelly, has been tasked with improving the outcomes for these vulnerable populations behind bars, ensuring that all offenders have access to services and treatment once they return to the community. She is

also concerned that there is supervised access of offenders to email, that institutional barriers for families visiting a loved one behind bars are minimized, that use of segregation be further reduced, that addiction is viewed and treated as a medical problem, plus many other factors that would improve the lives of persons in conflict with the law (Kelly, 2018). I am hopeful that these agendas will be met with evidence-based research and delivered uniformly to all levels of corrections in Canada in time. Future research must prioritize how best to meet the needs of individual people, regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity, instead of focusing programmes on specific groups and expecting individuals to fit these categories uniformly.

I recommend that certain research questions be revisited and explored in greater detail. Particularly, examples of what is considered to be unique about this jail (question 1 [c]) so that it can be better differentiated or equated with similar sites. Inquire specifically about the programs that are helpful or hindersome to the women's overall health statuses (question 1[e]), as comments point preliminarily to a hindersome consequence of the self-guided booklets.

## **Conclusion**

My goal for this project was to point out the areas of suggested improvement, and to identify services worthy of praise, according to the women's comments. This conclusion may appear to be abrupt compared to other components of this thesis, but this is intentional. The work on this topic is only just beginning. The field of evidence-based corrections in provincial and territorial jails is stagnant and needs to be revisited with pressing urgency.

I would like to conclude this work by respectfully citing a powerful metaphor from Comack (1996):

I equated this work with that of quilt making. As we have seen from listening to the women's accounts, each piece which makes up this quilt is unique. If we were to carry



this analogy further, then it would be also said that, as the quilt has taken shape, its colours have become varied as well. Sometimes they are bright with anger or with hope. Sometimes they are muted with sadness or with remorse. My arrangement of this quilt represents an attempt to find the patterns and make them visible. While the quilt may be more or less completed, some key questions still remain: once abuse has been named, once we acknowledge its prevalence in the lives of women who end up behind bars, then what do we do about it? Can law and the criminal justice system be relied upon to effectively deal with the issue of abuse? What implications does this work hold for the feminist movement to end violence against women? Since we have only just begun to listen to what the women have to say, we are not ready for answers yet (p. 149).

This passage spoke to me as I conducted research at varying points of the research process. I kept returning to this concept of a quilt, and how all the pieces would fit together to paint a collaborative picture - a picture that is raw and unedited. Perhaps it's a little too revealing in spots, and blurry and undiscovered in others. I hoped to create this picture with the help of women who had no reason to share their stories with me, apart from that they genuinely cared to contribute to improving the lives of their fellow women. The quilt has some areas that are perhaps worn and in need of repair, while other areas shine as examples that are holding up and keeping the blanket together. I hope to be passionate about continuing this work as long as women find themselves in conflict – or trouble with – the law.

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## Appendix A

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR WOMEN OFFENDERS

#### Opening Script

- Meghan MacEachern, second-year master's student at Saint Mary's University
- Looking to learn about women-centred programming at the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre (NBWCC), and women offender's health needs.
  - thank you for agreeing to talk with my today.
- Purpose of this interview is to learn more about your experiences with the programming here, and to learn how you define the terms relating to women's incarceration;
  - how the current program is working/ or not working, and is impacting your health status,
  - programming can include services and supports offered to you here beyond special events and holiday activities,
- There are no right or wrong answers
  - feel comfortable saying how you really feel, and what you really think about the topics we discuss.
- You being here is completely your choice, and you are free to leave at any point. Please read this [pass participant a previously signed copy of the informed consent form], and if you do not wish to participate you can be escorted back to your unit.
- Everything you say will remain confidential, meaning no one will know that the comments I gather today have come from you.

- I will be taking notes during the interview, and I will be happy to show them to you at any point. At the end of the interview, all of the notes will be shown to you, for your approval.

### **Questions about Demographics**

- ➔ Age
- ➔ Sentenced or remand
- ➔ First time offence, or return.
  - Prior sentence(s) Federal or provincial?

### **Questions to Explore Health and Holistic Health**

- ➔ How do you consider your health to be today?
  - If vague - could you tell me more about that?
- ➔ How would you describe your mental health, or your mind's wellbeing?
  - If vague - can you tell me a little bit more about \*that/ particular fact shared\*?
  - Do you feel that you have enough support for this area of your health (i.e., access to mental health care, social workers, psychiatrists)? If yes, why, if not why not
- ➔ How would you describe your physical health, or your body's well being? If vague - can you tell me a little bit more about \*that/ particular fact shared\*?
  - Do you feel that you have enough support for this area of your health (i.e., access to a doctor, access to physical activity, proper nutrition, access to personal hygiene items)? If yes, why, if not why not



- ➔ How would you describe your spiritual wellness? Do you consider yourself to be spiritual? If yes, why? If no, why not?
  - Do you feel that you have enough support for this area of your health (i.e., access to chapel services, access to sweats, access to an elder, other)? If yes, why, if not why not
- ➔ Have you ever heard of the term “holistic health”? Would you mind describing to me what that means to you? If hesitant – tell them what holistic health is and allow for discussion.
- ➔ Tell me about your holistic (mind, body, spirit) health status right now. Request a rating on a simple 10-point scale ranging from 10 being “really well” to 0 being “not-well”.
  - If well - ask for elaboration on why they think they are doing well – particular examples
  - If not well- ask for elaboration on why they are not doing well – particular examples
  - Tell me about your health status prior to incarceration? Is there anything in particular you credit to causing this change (or to maintaining your health if still “well”, or contributing to you being “not-well” if declining health status)
- ➔ Tell me about the positive activities, or activities that you found were helpful to your overall health and wellbeing that you were doing prior to incarceration? How has this changed since incarceration?

### **Questions to Explore Women-Centredness**

- ➔ NBWCC is a women-centred institution. How do you define women-centredness?

- Could you describe what a women-centred program is? If difficult – ask them to reflect on the programs they attend on a daily basis
    - A program can include any structured service or support offered to you by the NBWCC or outside volunteers (this would include regular scheduled programs with an intended purpose, and not special events such as for a holiday)
  - Do you think this is important? If yes, why, if not why not. Have you experienced women-centredness elsewhere?
    - If hesitant – explain what women-centred programming is, and allow for discussion.
    - If participant mentions programming at a prior institution - probe at differences between gender-informed and gender-neutral correctional regimes. Are there opportunities here that you did not have at another site? Or opportunities that you had else where that you do not have here? How does this affect you?
- ➔ Do institutional factors (i.e., scheduling, security checks, lock downs during shift change, etc) interfere with programming? If so, in what ways? If no, please expand how the institution manages programming and other security-related responsibilities as the same time.

### **Questions to Explore Trauma-Informed Interventions**

- ➔ NBWCC is a trauma-informed institution. What would you say it means to be “trauma-informed”?
- If hesitant – explain what trauma-informed practice is and allow for discussion

- Do you think this is important? Do you think this was being done at another institution you were at? If yes, why, if not why not
  - Probe for examples
  - Do you think understanding trauma would be helpful for officers/staff working with women offenders?

### **Closing Script**

- Is there anything else you wish to add today, or any questions you wish to go back to, and elaborate on?
- This concludes our interview.
- I will print these notes, and please review them carefully. Should you not like the way something is written, please cross it out/add to it, and initial the bottom of each page once you have reviewed it.
- Remember, only you and I will see these notes.
- Thank you again for your time today.
- Should you have any questions about this interview, or the research project that I am working on, please speak with one of the officers on your unit and they can help get you in touch with me.
- The final copy of this research project will be placed in the library for you to view, if you wish, once it is completed.

**Appendix B**  
**Saint Mary's University Department of Criminology and Sociology**

**Exploring Women-Centred, Holistic, and Trauma-Informed Programming for Provincially  
Incarcerated Women in Canada: A Case Study of the New Brunswick Women's  
Correctional Centre**

Meghan MacEachern – Masters Criminology Student

Dr. Audrey MacNevin – Faculty Supervisor

Dear Participant,

I am inviting you to participate in a research study that will explore how programming at the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre (NBWCC) is influencing the mental, physical, spiritual, and social health of the women offenders. You will be asked about your experiences at NBWCC. I would like to know how you define certain terms relating to this programming, and how you feel these concepts have been put into practice at NBWCC. I hope that this research may serve as a review of the programming at NBWCC.

The setting for this study will be non-judgmental, as I am not concerned with your past offences, history, or background. I wish to discuss with you, and to hear your thoughts only on your current situation at the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre (NBWCC), and if it applies to you, your previous experiences with programming at any other institution(s).

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Any person who is 18 years of age or older, speaks English, and is approved by senior staff of NBWCC for security reasons, is welcome to participate. The information and comments that you contribute will remain completely confidential and there will be no reference made to any individual person who chooses to participate in the study. No reference will be made in the final report of this research to any individual who chooses to participate in this study.

You have the right to withdraw your consent, or stop participating in the study at any point, without penalty or consequence. Any comments that you make during the interview, that I write down, you will be able to see after they have been typed. If you choose to end the interview, you may choose to not have your comments included if you wish to do so, or to still have them included in the research. You may refuse to answer any question asked of you, and may do so without penalty or consequence.

The information that I collect through this study will be kept in a locked cabinet in my home office. Once all the information has been considered, and the final report written, the information collected will be shredded and destroyed.

Some of the questions in this study may ask you to reflect upon your participation in programs that relate to your mental health, addictions, life-style and social interactions. You will be asked about health-benefitting activities, and changes to your lifestyle since being incarcerated. If this makes you uncomfortable, you will be able to withdraw from answering any of such questions. If you feel that the research made you uncomfortable, you should feel that you can contact the

social worker here at NBWCC. You can let your unit Correctional Officers know if you would like to do so, and they can get you in contact with the social worker.

I wish to assure you that this study has been reviewed and has received ethics clearance by the Research Ethics Board at Saint Mary's University. Permission was granted by the Superintendent at the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre. The final decision of whether or not you would like to participate is yours, and by signing the attached consent form, you are giving your consent to participate.

If you wish to participate, please let the programmer know and you will be invited to attend a meeting on the evening of Monday August 27<sup>th</sup> 2018 to learn more about the research. The interviews will take place on Tuesday and Wednesday.

You will face no consequences or penalties if you choose to not participate. Showing up for the meeting with your signed informed consent form means that you are giving your consent to participate in this study. After our meeting on Monday, I will have your unit supervisor contact you with a date and time for your interview.

Thank you very much for your help in this research,

Yours sincerely,

Meghan MacEachern  
Masters Student

Audrey MacNevin, PhD  
Faculty Supervisor

**Appendix C**  
**Saint Mary's University, 923 Robie Street, Halifax, NS B3H 3C3**  
**Department of Criminology and Sociology**

**Exploring Women-Centred, Holistic, and Trauma-Informed Programming for Provincially  
Incarcerated Women in Canada: A Case Study of the New Brunswick Women's  
Correctional Centre**

**SMU REB File Number : #18-199**

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As part of my masters thesis, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. MacNevin. You are being invited to participate in a research project exploring how programming at the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre (NBWCC) is influencing the mental, physical, spiritual, and social health of the women offenders. By signing the bottom of this form, you confirm: that you have read the information sheet provided to you; you understand that you can help by participating in an interview; and should take about 20-60 minutes of your time. The interviews will take place in a private room at NBWCC, in late August of 2018. There will be video feed to control at NBWCC, but they will not be able to hear anything you say.

In signing the bottom of this page, you also acknowledge that you are taking part in this research because you want to. You can stop participating at any time, and you do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to. At any point, if you choose to stop the interview, you may choose to have your comments destroyed, or to have them still be included in the research. If you wish to end the interview, you will be escorted back to your unit by staff. No one will know which comments you contributed to this study except the student researcher, and those who you tell your comments to. By helping with this study, you will be sharing which aspects of the programming at NBWCC you like, and which things you feel could be improved upon. By helping, you will contribute to this program review. You may feel that you have benefitted by participating in this research because you have shared your experiences. Any women offender at NBWCC who wishes to participate, is over the age of 18, and is able to speak English is invited to participate. Senior staff of the centre will determine who is of a security classification eligible to participate. Once the list of participants is made, the selected participants will be contacted with the time of their interview. It is possible that not all women who volunteer will be selected to participate in an interview, because there is only so much time available for this research to be conducted.

There is a risk that you might be made uncomfortable by some emotional aspects of the programs we discuss, such as reflecting upon mental health, addictions, life-style and social interactions programs. If you do become uncomfortable, you may contact the social worker at the NBWCC to speak with. You may do so by asking a staff member on your unit to contact the social worker on your behalf, and Pam will follow up with you in private. I am required to report to staff at the NBWCC any intention of a research participant to hurt themselves or someone else, and any instances of child abuse I am required to report by law.

Any comments that you make will be written down and shown to you after the interview finishes. If you agree with the way your comments are reflected on paper, they will be included in the study. You may choose to not have your comments included if you wish or refuse to answer any question asked of you. You know that any answers you give, or statements you make will not be linked up with your name at any point of the research or report. No personal information will be collected. Only anonymized comments will be recorded, meaning only comments that could have been shared by any member of the offender population. You will have an opportunity to make suggestions to the interview notes, and to change/add anything you shared. Just you and I (Meghan, the student researcher) will see these interview notes until they are confirmed by you, and the notes will never be linked with your name. After the notes are confirmed by you, they may be shared with my supervisor and committee member at Saint Mary's University, Dr. MacNevin and Dr. Livingston. An electronic copy of the interview notes will be kept on a zip-drive. The signed consent forms will be kept separate from the interview notes and stored in a locked cabinet in my home office. Only the student researcher will be able to view the consent forms. The informed consent documents and data are not linked, but both will be stored in my home office. After the final report is completed, all data will be destroyed by cross-cut paper shredders, and kept locked in the student researcher's home office until then. Once the final report is completed, likely by the Fall of 2018, a copy will be placed in the library at NBWCC for you to view, if you wish. If you have any questions during this process, you may contact the student researcher or faculty supervisor at any point, by asking the staff on your until to contact us with your questions or concerns on your behalf. I am not being paid or otherwise benefitting financially for conducting this research.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions or concerns about ethical matters, you may contact the Chair of the Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board at [ethics@smu.ca](mailto:ethics@smu.ca) or 1(902) 420-5728.

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I understand what this study is about, appreciate the risks and benefits, and that by consenting I agree to take part in this research study and do not waive any rights to legal recourse in the event of research-related harm.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can end my participation at any time without penalty.

I have had adequate time to think about the research study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

Participant

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_ Name(Printed) : \_\_\_\_\_ Date : \_\_\_\_\_ (Day/Month/Year)

Principal Investigator

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_ Name(Printed) : \_\_\_\_\_ Date : \_\_\_\_\_ (Day/Month/Year)

**Figure 1.**

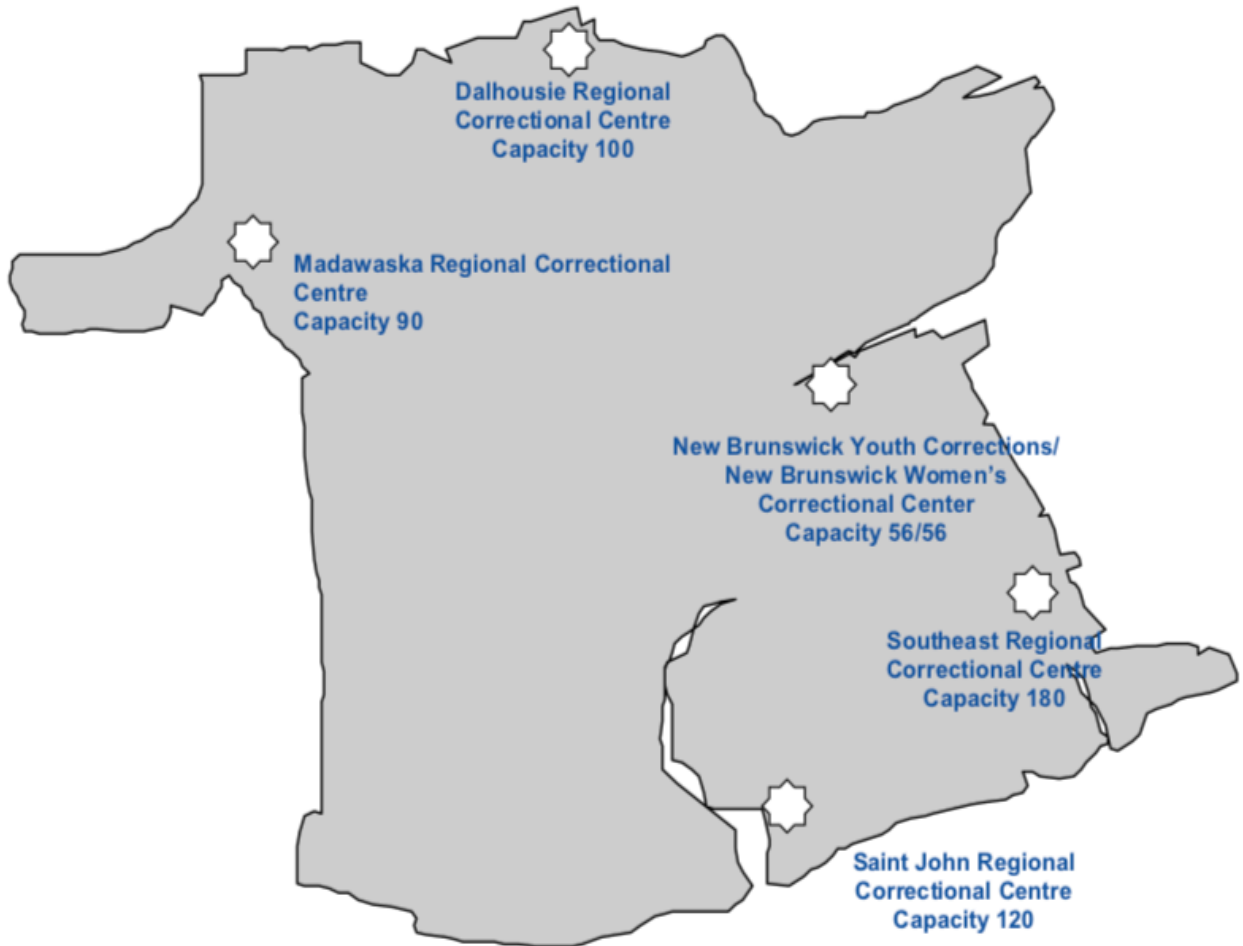
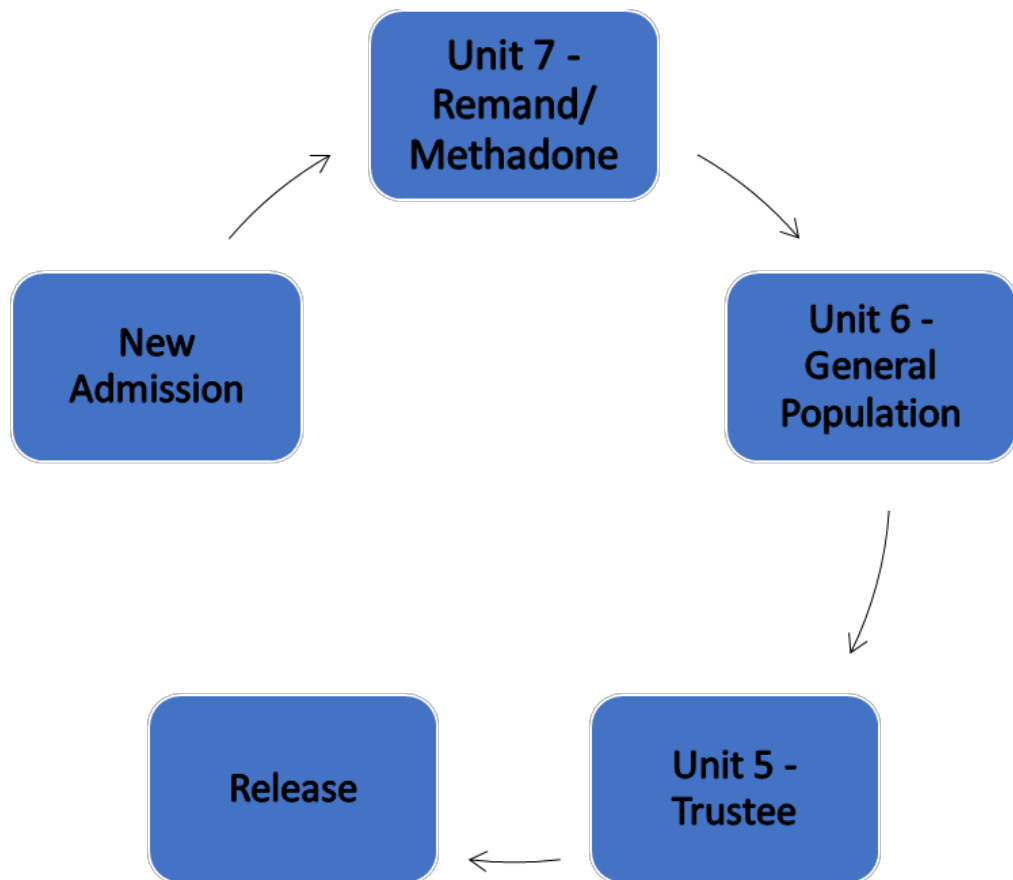




Figure 2.



**Table 1. Programs Known as of 2018**

<b>Program or Service Title</b>	<b>Internal or External Resources</b>	<b>Agency Providing</b>	<b>Currently Active (yes/no) as of Summer 2018</b>
Knitting program	Internal	NBWCC staff	Yes
Guitar program	Internal	NBWCC staff	No
Sewing program	Internal	NBWCC staff	No
Chaplin services	External	Volunteers	Yes
Trades training (automotive, carpentry, electrical, plumbing, welding)	External	New Brunswick Community College	No
Life-skills cooking program	Internal	NBWCC	No
Leaving in Style	Internal	NBWCC	Yes
Gardening program	Internal and External partnership	Staff and Volunteers (Jolly Farmer)	Yes
Financial information	Internal	NBWCC	No
Work Essential Skills Program (WES)	External	Undetermined	Yes
GED classes (high school equivalency)	Internal	Two formalized GED teachers	Yes

Fitness classes (Zumba and yoga)	Internal	NBWCC staff	No
Alcoholics Anonymous	External	Alcoholics Anonymous Volunteers	Yes
Apprenticeships	External	Post Secondary Education Training and Labour (PETL)	No
John Howard Society Program	External	John Howard Society Members and Volunteers	Yes
Women's Matters Meetings	External	Volunteer academics of St. Thomas University	Yes
Annual STUnningly Successful	External	Volunteer academics affiliated with St. Thomas University	Yes
<i>Mommy Read to Me</i>	Internal	NBWCC	No
<i>Courage to Change</i> Program	Internal	NBWCC	No
Independent Self-Help Booklets	Internal	Provided by NBWCC programmer	Yes

Native Spirituality – smudging ceremony and sweat lodge	Internal	NBWCC Elder	Yes
Family Visitation OCS	Internal	NBWCC	Yes
Work opportunities (gardening, snow removal, lawn mowing)	Internal	NBWCC	Yes
Library	Internal	NBWCC – funded entirely by volunteers	Yes
Canine Companionship Visits	Internal	NBWCC Programmer	Yes
Stilettoes to Moccasins	Undetermined	Undetermined	No

**Table 2. Programs Known to a Woman Offender**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Was Offered</b>	<b>Was Not Offered</b>
Wood Shop Program		X
Knitting	X  But only got re-started 2 months ago	
A Gardening Program	X  But only for offenders on unit 5, and only those with lower security	
Cooking	X  Has happened twice	
Peer-educators who work with John Howard Society	X	
5-6 weeks of weekly yoga	X  Ended in December of last year and haven't had it since	
Church programs on Thursdays - Christian Prison Ministry Group	X  When there is enough staffing for them to come	

Another church Program every other Sunday - “coach” who is a Pastor figure	X	
<i>Women’s Matters Meetings</i>	X Monthly	
The Elder	X  She did a sweat last week, the first I’ve been to since I’ve been here. She also does smudges and teachings. Some guards will come in on their days off and do a smudge... so that is nice.	
NBCC Miramichi L.P.N Student Program	X  They came every Wednesday to listen to our suggestions and discuss any topics we wanted - pregnancy, STI’s, Yoga, depression...	

	and they would bring info back and coloring sheets.	
The Library	X	
The Self-Help Booklets	X	
General Education Development (G.E.D)	X	
Workplace Essential Skills (W.E.S)		X

**Table 3. C.S.C Correctional Programs**

<b>Type of Correctional Program</b>	<b>Target Audience of Program</b>	<b>Program Length</b>	<b>Key Goals of Program</b>
Engagement Programs	All women offenders, as the program is designed to boost the motivation to make positive changes and to play an active role in rehabilitation	These programs include 12 sessions of 2 hours each.	Of key interest is highlighting problematic behaviours and relationships. The program version designed for Aboriginal women includes guidance from an Elder.
Moderate Intensity Programs	Women offenders who are deemed to have a moderate to high risk of reoffending.	This program consists of 40 group sessions and 5 individual sessions of 2.5 hours each.	This program builds on the Women's Engagement Program, working through short-term and long-term goals to changing problematic behaviours. Again, the Aboriginal version of this program focuses on input from Elders and culturally relevant



			teachings and ceremonies (CSC, 2014d).
High-Intensity Programs	Women who are deemed “high-risk-high-need” and thus are marked as a high-risk to reoffend (CSC, 2014d).	This program includes 52 group sessions and 5 individual sessions of 2 hours each.	This program builds on skills learned in other programs, and fosters problem solving and conflict resolution skills. The Aboriginal version of this program includes input from an Elder, and includes culturally relevant teachings to build a positive cultural identity.
Self-Management Programs	Women offenders who may require additional support to implement the teachings of other programs, or women in the community who may require additional support (CSC, 2014d).	The program involves 12 sessions of 2 hours each.	In this program, women develop, strengthen, implement, and maintain their self-management plans that were developed in earlier programs. The version designed for Aboriginal women has a focus on healing as well as self-management, and looks

			to Elders to guide the process.
Women's Modular Intervention Program	Women offenders living in structured houses (secure) living units, deemed to have a moderate or high risk of reoffending.	This program includes 15 modules, 5 of which are designed specifically for Aboriginal women (CSC, 2014d). Each module includes 4 sessions, of 1 hour each, in either an individual or a group session.	Of particular focus in this program is the development of healing and self-management plans and targeting problematic and/or criminal behaviours.
Women's Sex Offender Program	Women offenders who have been charged with offences of a sexual nature, and are deemed to have a moderate to high risk of reoffending. Those with a	The program includes 59 group sessions and 7 individual sessions, each lasting 1 hour.	A psychologist conducts an assessment of each woman, and the program facilitator frequently consults the psychologist at varying points of the program (CSC, 2014d). In the case of Aboriginal women participating in the program,

	<p>moderate risk will take this program, and those deemed to have a high risk of reoffending will take this program alongside the Moderate Intensity Program.</p>		<p>Elders are also consulted. The program focuses on experiences of trauma, physical health issues, relationship issues, and addressing problematic behaviours to eliminate sexual offending and related criminal behaviour(s).</p>
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<sup>i</sup> Youth Matters has the mandate of engaging non-traditional leaders, such as those in conflict with the law, as these are often young people with great abilities and a sense of agency but have not been given the support to exercise these skills. The decision to develop a Youth Matters chapter within the New Brunswick Youth Correctional Centre (NBYC) came after a provincial conference attended by young offenders and staff from the Centre.

The youth were so inspired that local university students worked with the incarcerated youth to support them hosting a conference inside the NBYC to explore topics of institutional bullying and substance abuse. At the end of the 2012 conference, the young people requested a chapter of Youth Matters be established within the youth jail (Reid & Gillis, 2016 in Smandych & Winterdyk, 2016). The youth set out the following principles to govern the Youth Matters activities at the jail: non-judgmental, inclusive, safe and meaningful, and every voice heard. Funding received from agencies including Status of Women in Canada and the Meighen Family

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Foundation, weekly meetings have been able to continue at the Centre with youth-resident participation on a voluntary basis.<sup>i</sup>

<sup>ii</sup> *Effectiveness of Peer Support Programming*. Bagnall et al. (2015) conducted a systemic review to examine the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of peer-based interventions in the penal setting. Peer-based interventions can take a variety of forms such as prisoners providing education and advice to other prisoners to help them reach various health and social goals within the institutional environment and in the community. They explain that participants can relate to one another and thus influence a vulnerable population that is often resistant to the professional advice offered in the institution. This benefits both participants and the wider prison system. Across the globe peer support networks operate as AIDS/HIV programs, substance misuse programs, support for new offenders, emotional support schemes, and various other health promotion regimes in parts of the globe where the World Health Organization's mandate is promoted. Bagnall et al. (2015) note that peer education interventions are effective in diminishing risky behaviours among offenders.

This review also reported the Canadian Peer Support Team (PST), based on a holistic, health care and women centered approach, which is specifically targeted at improving the self-esteem and autonomy of women, and being culturally sensitive of women's needs. The PST program was noted to improve the deliverers' self-respect, self-awareness as well as aid in the development of skills to deal with their own offending and health issues. Most reports suggested that the peer-mentor role gives the offenders a sense of purpose in the prison. Peer-based interventions are viewed as an acceptable form of support services in the prison environment and are noted to have a positive practical and emotional effect on the participants (Bagnall et al., 2015, p. 17).

