



Issues Facing (Indigenous) Women in the Federal Correctional System

Briefing to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women

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The Correctional Investigator
Canada

L'Enquêteur correctionnel
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Outline

1. Mandate of the Office of the Correctional Investigator
2. Profile of Federally Sentenced Women in Custody
3. Issues of Concern in Indigenous Women's Corrections
4. Directions for Reform



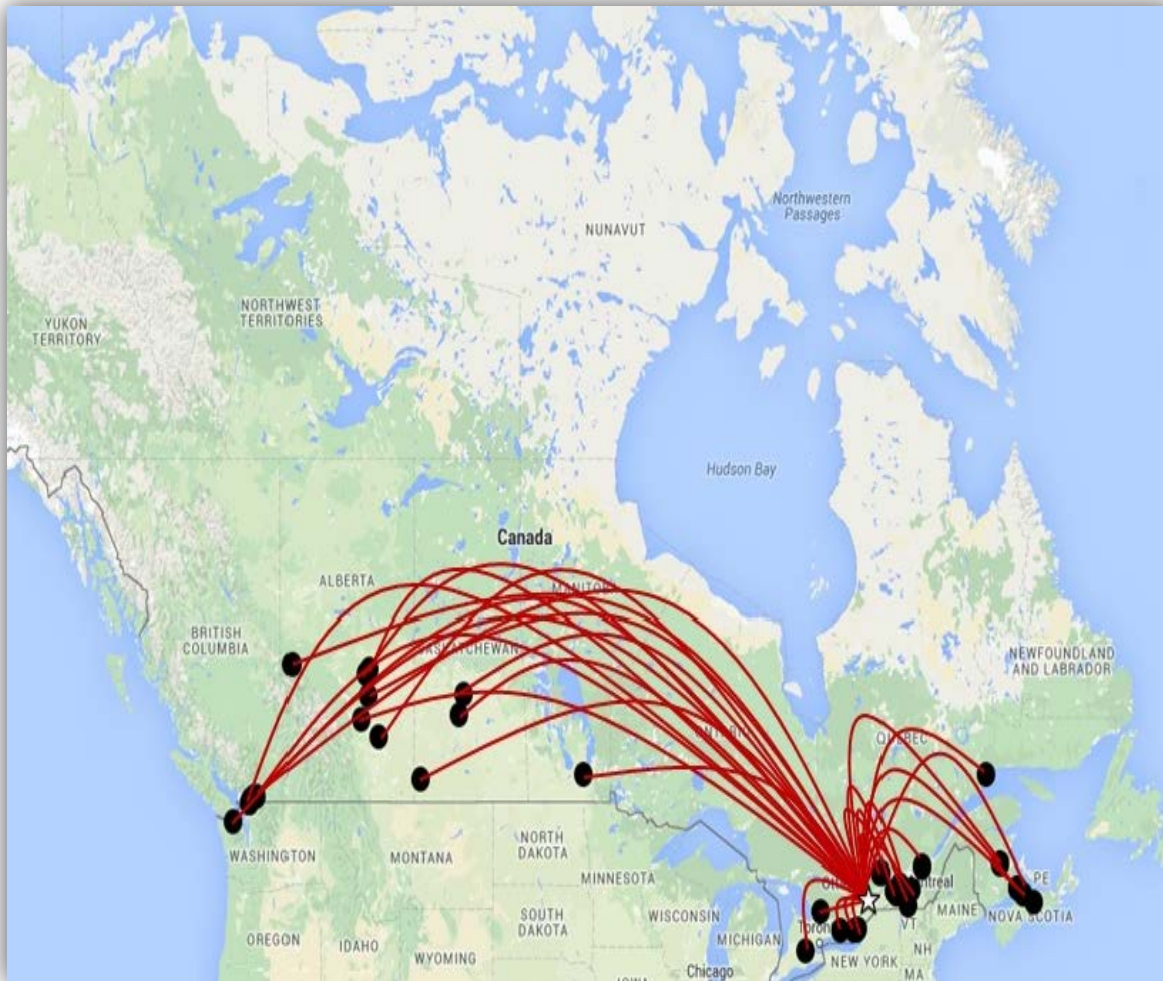
Role and Mandate

Mission Statement

“As the ombudsman for federally sentenced offenders, the Office of the Correctional Investigator serves Canadians and contributes to safe, lawful and humane corrections through independent oversight of the Correctional Service of Canada by providing accessible, impartial and timely investigation of individual and systemic concerns.”



2016-17 Annual Statistics



By the Numbers – 2016/17

- \$4.3 M budget
- 36 FTEs
- 361 days spent in penitentiaries
- 6,768 offender complaints
- 2,183 interviews with offenders and staff
- 1,436 use of force reviews
- 119 deaths in custody and serious bodily injury reviews
- 22,282 toll-free phone contacts
- 1,639 hours on toll-free line



Areas of Concern Most Frequently Identified by Federally Sentenced Women

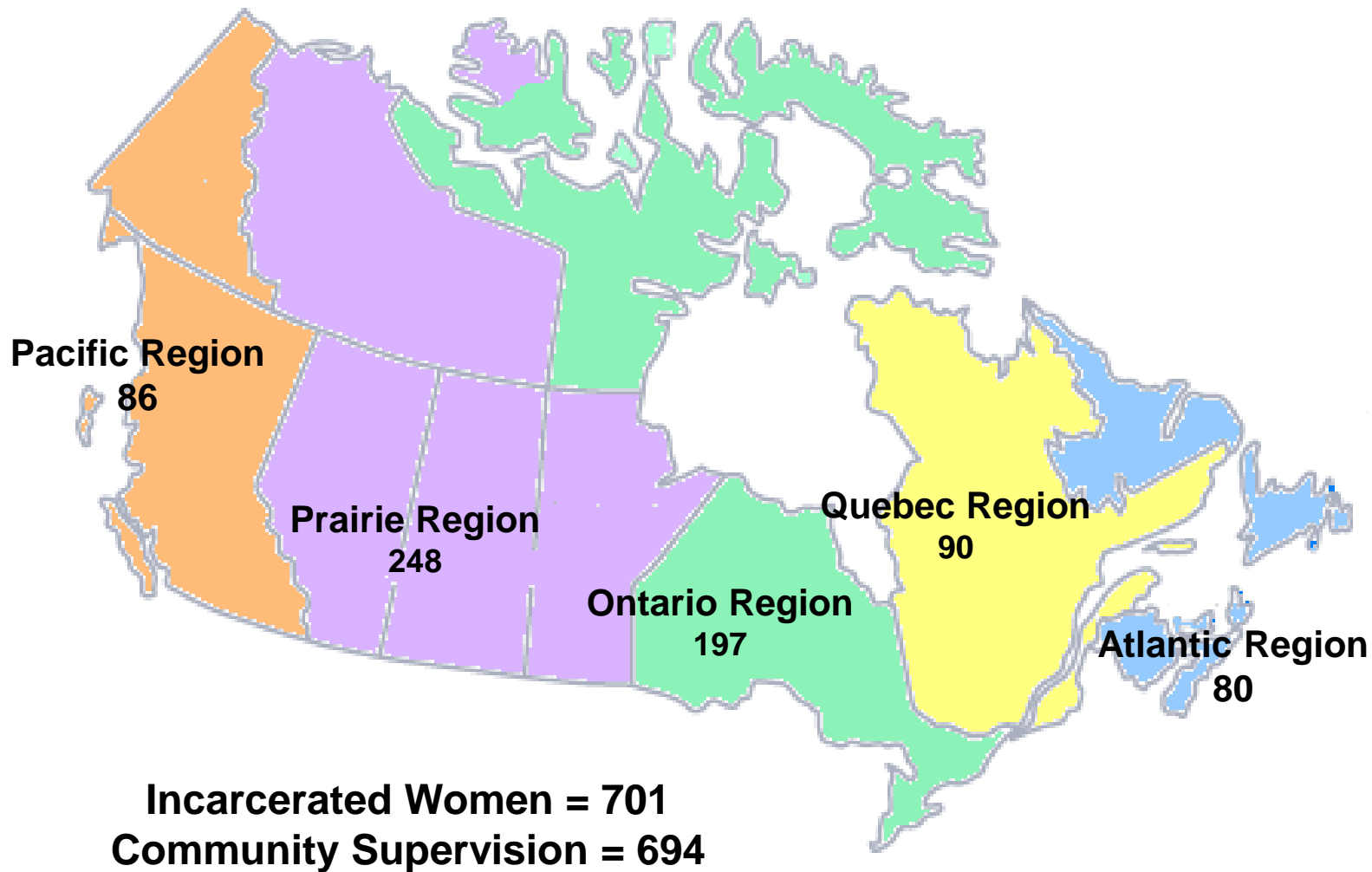
Category	#	%
Women Offenders		
Conditions of Confinement	123	17.20%
Health Care	82	11.47%
Cell Effects	46	6.43%
Staff	45	6.29%
Mental Health	37	5.17%
Administrative Segregation	32	4.48%
Visits	27	3.77%
Temporary Absence	24	3.36%
Security Classification	22	3.08%
Parole Decisions	22	3.08%



Profile of Federally Sentenced Women in Custody



Federally Incarcerated Women Population Distribution



Source: Corporate Reporting System, November 2017



Profile of Federally Sentenced Women

Compared to men, incarcerated women are:

- Twice as likely to have a serious mental health diagnosis.
- Twice as likely to be serving a sentence for drug-related offences.
- More likely to be serving a shorter sentence (2 to 4 years).
- More likely to be supporting dependents on the outside.
- Higher motivation for correctional intervention and higher potential for reintegration.



Mental Health Needs Profile

- Almost 80% of incarcerated women meet criteria for some current mental disorder:
 - Alcohol/Substance use disorder (lifetime) 76%
 - Anxiety disorders 54%
 - Anti-Personality Disorder (APD - lifetime) 49%
 - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) 33%
 - Mood disorders 22%
 - Eating disorders 11%
 - Psychotic disorders 5%
- Nearly half have an active psychotropic medication prescription.
- Almost 6% of incoming women have an IQ below 70 and 12.7 % score in the borderline range.
- Almost ¼ of complex mental health cases (chronic self-injury, suicidal) in federal corrections are women.



Reintegration Challenges Facing Women

66%

Have no Credit
History

63%

Have Financial
Debt

47%

Can't Afford a
Residence

39%

Do not have
References for
Housing

37%

Do not have
References for a
Job



Prison Work and Employment



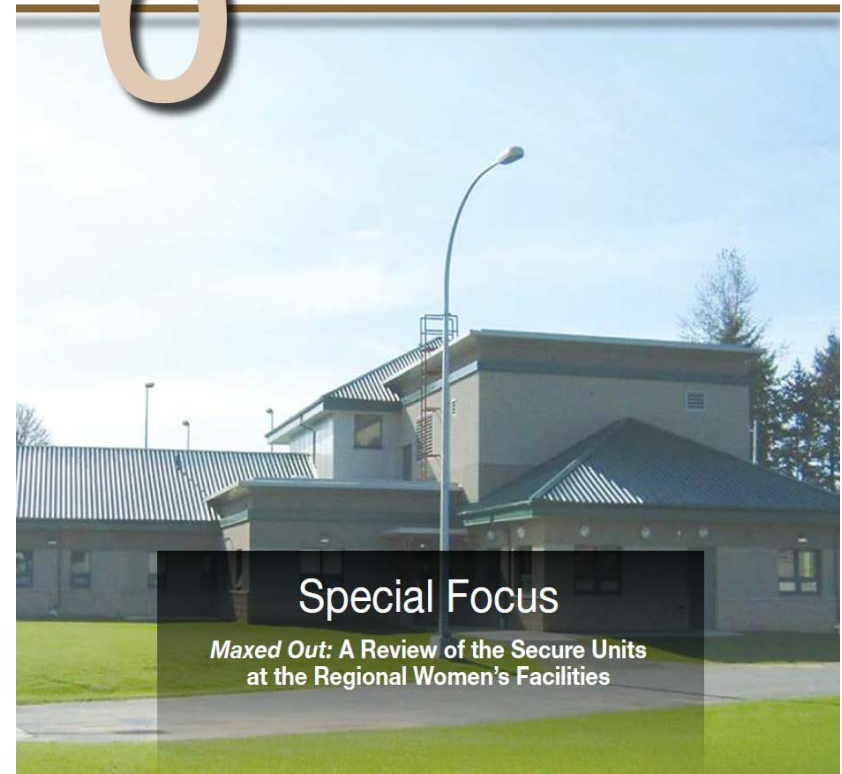
Review of Secure Units (Maximum Security)

Methodology

- Interviewed 41 of 62 maximum security women at all five regional facilities.
- Thematic semi-structured interviews:
 - Interventions
 - Staff
 - Environment/Safety
 - Mental Health
 - Segregation

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FEDERALLY SENTENCED
WOMEN



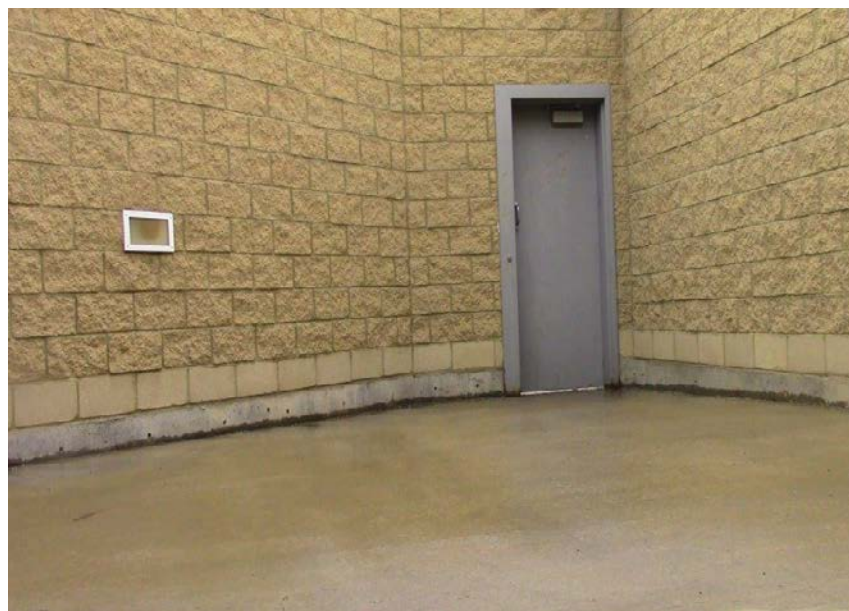
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Review of Secure Units

Key Findings

- Inappropriate infrastructure.
- Use of secure units to manage a few women who are seriously mentally ill.
- Impact of segregation
- Gender-based classification system for off-unit movement.
- Lack of meaningful employment.



Annual Report Recommendations

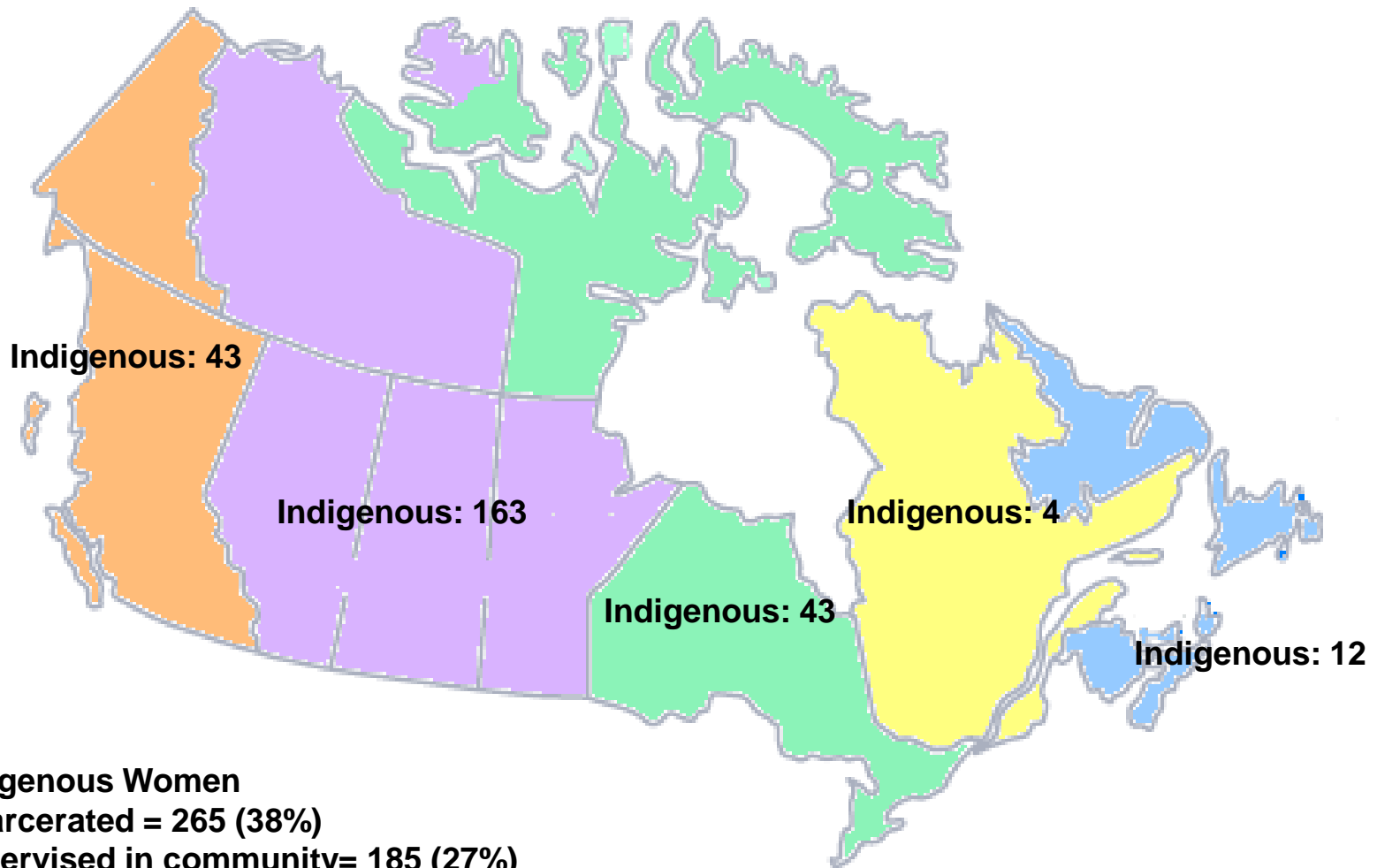
1. Reduce number of women in Secure Units and restrict its use to separate women who would otherwise be placed in segregation.
2. Expand community treatment capacity for FSW by 12 beds.
3. Expand capacity of the Structured Living Environments.
4. Prohibit placements of significantly mentally ill women in all-male Treatment Centres.
5. Rescind the level system for maximum security women.
6. Trauma-informed care approach lacking.



Issues of Concern in Indigenous Women's Corrections



Federally Incarcerated Indigenous Women



Source: Corporate Reporting System, November 2017



Indigenous Women in Federal Custody

Sentence characteristics of Indigenous women compared to non-Indigenous women:

- Tend to be younger (average age of 34 years versus 38).
- More likely to be serving a Schedule 1 (violence) offence (58% versus 32%).
- More likely to be gang affiliated (10% versus 0.9%).
- Tend to have lower levels of education at admission.



Indigenous Women in Federal Custody

Social Histories

- Over half attended or had a family member attend a residential school.
- Nearly half were removed from family home (e.g. adopted, foster care, or group home).
- Almost all indicate report past traumatic experiences (physical or sexual abuse), and substance use history.
- High rates of involvement in prostitution at an early age.
- Almost half (47%) indicated a history of injection drug use.



Indigenous Women in Federal Custody

Correctional outcomes compared to non-Indigenous women:

- Over-represented in:
 - Incidents of self-injury.
 - Segregation.
 - Use of force incidents.
 - Maximum security.
- Assessed as higher risk, more likely to break institutional rules.
- Less frequently granted day or full parole, and more likely to be returned to custody (suspension and revocation).
- More likely to be released at Statutory Release (2/3 sentence).



Directions for Reform

- Return women's corrections to key principles of *Creating Choices (1990)*.
- Deputy Commissioner for Indigenous Corrections.
- Greater use of Aboriginal-specific provisions of the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* (sections 81 and 84).
- Culturally appropriate and trauma-informed models of care.
- Enhanced role/participation of Elders in decision-making.
- Classification scales/tools sensitive to Indigenous backgrounds.
- Greater appreciation and application of *Gladue* factors in corrections decision-making.
- Increase opportunities for meaningful vocational training and post secondary education.





“It is said that no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones.”

- Nelson Mandela

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