



Parole Board
of Canada

Commission des libérations
conditionnelles du Canada

Diversity, Gender and Parole Decision-Making

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Canada 

Who We Are and What We Do





Mission



- Contributes to the protection of society by facilitating, as appropriate, the timely reintegration of offenders and the sustained rehabilitation of individuals into society as law-abiding citizens.
- Makes independent, quality conditional release, record suspension and expungement decisions, as well as clemency recommendations, in a transparent and accountable manner, while respecting diversity and the rights of offenders and victims.



What is Parole?

- Parole is a carefully constructed bridge between incarceration and return to the community. It contributes to the protection of society by allowing some individuals to continue to serve part of their sentence outside of the institution in the community under supervision, and subject to conditions of release.
- In Canada, all individuals sentenced to incarceration are eligible for parole consideration at some point in their sentence.

Diversity and Gender in Parole Decision-Making



- Responsive decision-making requires awareness and consideration of the needs of specific populations such as **Indigenous peoples** and other groups (e.g. **women, Black individuals**, etc.).

Over-represented populations



- Indigenous peoples make up 4.9% of Canada's population but 32% of the federal inmate population. Indigenous women make up almost 50% of all federally sentenced women.
- Black people make up 3.5% of Canada's population but 9.8% of the federal inmate population.





Indigenous Cultural Considerations

- The over representation of Indigenous peoples in Canada's criminal legal system is directly connected to the negative impact of colonization in combination with ongoing dispossession and systemic racism.





Impact of Colonization

- Residential schools
- Displacement from ancestral lands
- Cultural genocide
- Over-representation in foster care
- Geographic isolation
- Limited educational opportunities
- Assimilation policies and the effects of colonization
- Intergenerational trauma



Black Cultural Considerations



- Canada has a history of enslavement and racial segregation which continues to have an impact on Black people and communities.



Women inmates at Kingston Penitentiary, at the turn of the century.



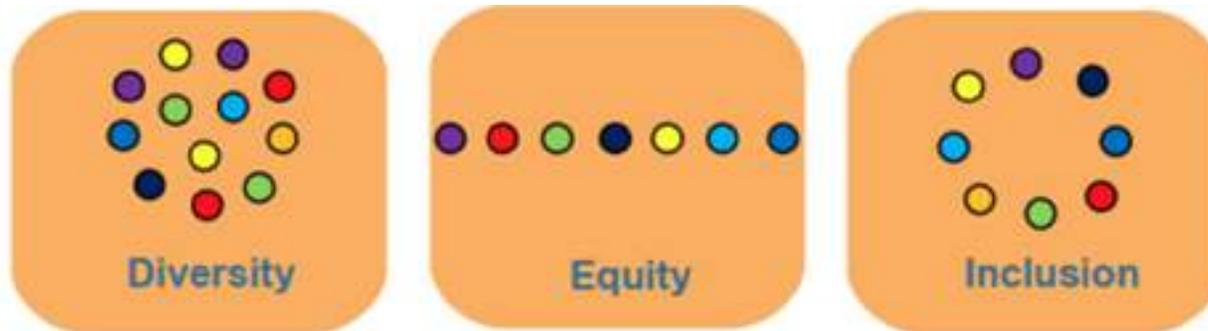
Diversity Initiatives

- Chairperson's Indigenous Circle
- Indigenous Cultural Responsiveness Training
- Elder-Assisted and Community-Assisted Hearings
- Hearings with a Cultural Advisor
- Working Groups on Diversity and Systemic Racism, and Women Offenders
- Outreach and In-reach

Working Group on Diversity and Systemic Racism



- In 2021, the PBC convened a *Working Group on Diversity and Systemic Racism* to conduct an overarching review in order to understand how the conditional release process can be more responsive to the needs of Indigenous, Black, and other racialized people with the goal of improving their outcomes and experience.





Commitment to training

- The PBC continually reviews and updates Board member training to ensure the appropriate level of focus on cultural competency. The PBC is committed to bias-free and evidence-based decision-making.



Collaboration with Partners



- Outreach is a corporate priority and significant progress has been made towards bolstering engagement with new and existing partners and stakeholders.
- The PBC participates in many internal and external working groups and committees, such as the Chairperson's Indigenous Circle.





Targeted Outreach

- The PBC conducts in-reach within institutions across Canada to explain the PBC's mandate to individuals sentenced to incarceration, to raise awareness of parole, and to prepare them for upcoming reviews.
- Targeted in-reach includes vulnerable populations such as Indigenous individuals, women, and other racialized individuals.

Culturally-Adapted Process for Indigenous Individuals



- The PBC offers alternate models of hearings for Indigenous individuals, namely Elder-Assisted Hearings and Community-Assisted Hearings.



Culturally-Adapted Process for Black Individuals



- In the Atlantic region, Black individuals may request a Cultural-Advisor Assisted Hearing.



Responsive Decision-Making



- When making conditional release decisions, Board members consider systemic and background factors that have played a part in bringing the individual into interaction with the criminal justice system, in particular when reviewing cases involving Indigenous and Black individuals.





Responsive Decision-Making

- The cumulative circumstances and disadvantages faced by Indigenous peoples are often referred to in the context of “Indigenous social history”.
- Systemic and background factors are to be considered separately, but also in relation to risk factors.
- Systemic and background factors will not lead to aggravated risk.

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What are these?

Karley Scott, 2022-09-07T19:27:31.023

Responsive Decision-Making



- Anti-Black racism is a real phenomenon in Canadian society.
- Impact of Race and Culture Assessments are used to inform sentencing judges.





Gender Considerations

- Women have different pathways, histories and experiences leading to their involvement with the criminal justice system.
- Research shows that women involved in the criminal justice system tend to have long histories of physical and sexual abuse, poverty, mental health issues, substance abuse, and that these factors play a greater role in offending.

Women Offender Working Group



- Guiding Principles that serve as a foundation for working with women during the conditional release process:
 - Gender-Responsive
 - Culturally Aware
 - Trauma-Informed
 - Holistic
 - Partnership-Based



Key Recommendations



1. Focus on preparing women for parole hearings
2. Modify hearing practices to foster a safe environment
3. Adopt gender and culturally responsive decision-making
4. Modify training to expand Board members' expertise to work with women in a gender and trauma-informed manner
5. Monitor implementation
6. Implement corporate changes to ensure oversight and accountability
7. Collaborate with partners to improve processes for women

Trauma-Informed Approach



- The PBC applies a trauma-informed approach at hearings by creating a safe environment; demonstrating trustworthiness and transparency; fostering opportunities for collaboration and mutuality; encouraging empowerment and peer support; and acknowledging cultural, historical and gender issues.





Questions and Answers Session





Thank You!

For more information
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Canada.ca/Parole

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