

REPORT
of
INUIT GROUP
BOWDEN INSTITUTION
INNISFAIL, Alberta
September 11, 1966

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Yellowknife, N.W.T.

PREAMBLE

This report has risen out of urgent and necessity. First; we have been cut off from our family due to the great cost and distance. This causes undue hardship and sometimes causes in breaking up of family. Secondly; For this being a Federal Institution the Government of the NWT (GNWT) have had no input to represent the interest of the Inuit inmates' needs and special circumstances. Thirdly and most importantly; Contrary to Commissioners Derectives respecting Inuit inmates under the Native Offenders Program Policy, The Case Management Officers continue to alienate and intimidate Inuit inmates emotionally and psychologically. This kind of abusive treatment has been and will continue to exist as along as dedicated Case Management Officer is not hired for the Inuit.

INUIT GROUP

At the outset it should be made clear that this report has derived from Inuit Group in trying to represent our concerns collectively for majority of us face very similar situations and circumstances when it comes to programs, parole hearings and Correctional plan schedules. We are now attempting to disseminate available information factually to you and other representatives of the Inuit. These informations can easily be substantiated if and when you can visit and interview Inuit inmates and conduct informal or formal inquiry or an investigation.

FEDERAL INMATE CRITERIA

When we were incarcerated; the Yellowknife Correctional Centre advised us that because we are Serving more than two year we are required to be sent south. This will allow us to take required programs in order to be eligible for parole on our third term. They also advised us that there is optional programs available which will allow us to be better prepared to lead more positive and productive lifestyles once released in our community.

ASSESSMENT

Also at that time in Yellowknife; the Inuit Federal Inmates were interviewed and evaluated and the interim report is submitted to the Edmonton Assessment Unit for their reference. Above and beyond that the Assessment Unit also conducted number of interviews, tests and gave orientations. At the end of the assessment program (usually 2 to 4 months) makes comprehensive evaluation and issues a Program Plan recommendations including placement to the institution best suited to the inmate needs. In our case is Bowden Institution (now about 60 Inuit)

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CORRECTIONAL PLAN:

When inmate arrives here, the Bowden Institution have all the necessary information and recommendations needed for immediate implementation of his Correctional Plan. Under the "Early Case Preparation" (2to4 yr.sentence), the Case Managers are suppose to begin immediately in developing Case Management Plan (CMP). And the Case Management Team (CMT) are suppose to help us prepare for our eventual release, in otherwords, recommend to us as to what type of program(s) is best suited to us. Yet, this does not happen. Instead, Corrections Management Officers (CMOs) try their best to intimidate inmates with unilateral power and self imposed right to deny or delay our correctional plan and programs required. The general comment seem to indicate mocking of Inuit inmates which more than smacks of racism.

We admit that we have committed a crime and must pay for the consquencies but, it is our right to a chance of rehabilitation programs as an inmate. People do change with the right kind of guidance and direction. If something soon is not done about these inappropriate assessments for our case management directives, many of us will be released more bitter toward authority hence; with likelihood to recommit.

COMMISSIONERS DIRECTIVES:

Under the Native Offenders policy objective states that;

1. To ensure that the needs and constructive interest of native offenders are indentified and that programs (including native spiritual practises) and services are developed and maintained to satisfy them.
- 4b. non-traditional programs of services should be developed and delivered to address unique native needs; or
- 4c. the dentified native targeted programs or services should be developed and delivered by members of the Services or by volunteers, through contracts with native community agencies or with academic institutions.

GUIDELINES

6. The resources may include:

- b external human resources, such as trainers, facilitators, Elders, agency representatives, family members, volunteers, etc;

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NATIVE LIAISON WORKERS Duties and Responsibilities:

- vii) Attend National Parole Board Hearings as required.
- viii) Assist the Aboriginal inmates to access specialized services such as half-way houses, employment services, educational and skills training opportunities, substance abuse treatment centres, etc.
- ix) Maintain contacts with community agencies and programs that can provide community reintergration services to Aboriginal clients.
- x) Maintain contacts with families of incarcerated Aboriginal individuals as required.

2. Program Development and Implementation

- i) Work with incarcerated Aboriginal individuals and groups and with CSC staff to plan, develop and implement social, cultural, spritual and recreational programs and activities to meet the needs of Aboriginal inmates.

3. Commuinity Outreach

- i) Develop and maintain contact with Community resource people and agencies who can provide services for Aboriginal specific programming within the institution.
- ii) Assist in the development of a volunteer bank of people willing to visit or provide assistance to Aboriginal inmates within the institution.

LEVEL OF SERVICE

- 10. A ratio of one Native Liaison Officer for 50 offenders should normally be the formula for distributing the workers.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- 4. Report on monthly basis setting out the type and frequency of activities carried out, including:
 - b. a detail number of consultations with case management staff about the needs, plans and progress of individual inmates.
 - c. the number of Brotherhood or Sisterhood meetings attended (in our case would be the Inuit Group).

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COMMISSIONERS DIRECTIVES con't...

OBJECTIVE

1. To provide a substantial mechanism for advancing the cultural and spiritual needs of Aboriginal offenders through the sensitization of case management and the correctional program processes.

CORE SERVICES

2 The major duties of native liaison workers should consist of:

- a. providing advice to Aboriginal offenders and case management staff in order to foster a better understanding of the offender's background and needs;
- b. working with Aboriginal offenders and CSC staff to assist in the development and delivery of programs for Aboriginal offenders that will help to meet their social, cultural spiritual and recreational needs and help them prepare for successful reintergration into the community; and
- c. establishing and maintaining contacts with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies and individuals in order to develop a bank of resource people and community volunteers who will provide program and community reintergration services to offenders.

MODEL SET OF NATIVE LIAISON SPECIFICATIONS

III Details of Functions

1. Case Management and Pre-Release Planning

- i) Provide institutional orientation information to recently admitted Aboriginal inmates.
- ii) Assist Aboriginal inmates to interpret CSC legislation, institutional rules and regulations terms and conditions of Conditional Release, etc.
- iii) Assist incarcerated Aboriginal inmates in developing pre-release program plans and/or transfers to lower security institutions by working with the offender and the case management team.

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Case Management Release Planning cont'd

- iv) Assist the Aboriginal inmates and the case management team in the development of correctional treatment plans.
- v) Provide counselling and sponsorship for viable temporary absences.
- vi) Provide escorted temporary absences where possible.
- 3. iv) Assist and encourage family, friends and community contacts with Aboriginal inmates.
- v) Sensitize community groups, individuals and agencies to the needs of Aboriginal inmates in preparation for their return to the community.
- vi) Provide information to community groups, individuals and agencies about the federal correctional system and its requirements in relation to Aboriginal inmates.

GUIDELINES FOR TRADITIONAL ABORIGINAL SPIRITUAL PRACTISES

OBJECTIVE

- 1. To provide consistency and continuity in the traditional spiritual services provided to Aboriginal offenders.
- 2. To provide support for Aboriginal spiritual leaders engaged by the institution to attend to the spiritual needs of Aboriginal offenders.

ENGAGEMENT OF ELDERS

- 3. a. identifying Aboriginal Elders who are suitable to attend to the spiritual needs of Aboriginal offenders.

SUPERVISION OF LIAISON WORKERS

- 12. Native Liaison Workers are not employees of the Correctional Service of Canada and should not be supervised or treated as such. In consequence, supervision of the workers is the responsibility of their employing agency. Workers engaged by means of personal service contracts should be regarded as self-employed. While continual interaction (for the purpose of program co-ordination) between Service staff and the workers is necessary and encouraged, issues relating to contract compliance should be dealt with between the contractor and the contract manager only.

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DILEMMA

In spite of Federal Justice Department's good intentions through its Correction Act and policy direction through its Commissioners Directives; we are locked up and seem to be forgotten about. If we have not been forgotten.....then we have been simply placed at the bottom of the active list for future consideration. We are seen as extra inmates, minority group, or outsiders who do not fit into the mold of culturally southern correctional programs. The Institutions apparent actions imply that Inuit inmates are too ignorant to realize unfair and unequal treatment of them. Most Inuit inmates are within the category of "Early Case Preparations" according to Corrections Act. However, we have yet to see such practise because that kind of provision seem to exempt Inuit inmates.

ADMISSION

We admit that we have committed a crime and realized that we must pay for it but, we feel that we have a right to a chance at rehabilitation program as other inmate. People do change with the right kind of guidance and direction. If something soon is not done for Inuit inmates, many of us will be released more bitter toward authority hence; with likelihood to recommit.

LANGUAGE BARRIER

Inuit inmates who do not know English or French well enough to take required programs will not be eligible for parole due to his inability to complete or past his programs. Is that person a less Canadian with less rights than those who know English or French? Inuit who have not taken formal educational have no to learn English for his community's daily language is Inuktitut. Thus, the inmates in that category has and will continue to serve his time until Expirary. The inmates who know little bit but not enough to take programs are enrolled in upgrading classes in order to take the required programs. This is unfair for an Inuk inmate has been unduly jeopardized because of his Jurisdictional and cultural language difference.

There seem to be two types of sentences for Inuit: One is from the judge who made the initial sentence and the other is that correctional system whom seem to have accepted the notion that if an Inuk does not speak or write English, he will have to serve his time until expiry. While other inmates from the south with a same judges sentence will take advantage of Canadian Correctional System and take his appropriate parole. If this can be recognized as not being in line with the spirit of the Canadian Constitution as having undue restrictions on the Inuit; it is imperative that Inuktitut Speaking Program facilitator be hired immediately.

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HUNTERS AND CARVERS

Although, Inuit hunters are very much valued in a family and the community as food providers but, the Institution labels them as unemployed, unemployable or only want to live with fun and without responsible position. This kind of report to the parole boards is frustrating for an inmate who has spent all his life learning about weather, ocean and ice conditions and behaviors. Also, have survived many of severe weathers and learn to live with hunger and cold in process. In fact some books have been written about a "hunter with awe and wonder" by the white men authors about his skills, abilities and endurance. The comparison can be made to a farmer who labours endlessly with out, for some, very little financial gain. He learns the trick of the trade from his father. So he an Inuk hunter, but according to the Institution the hunter is only unemployed or unemployable and must not be recommended for parole when his time comes. As a result most of these particular inmates must serve their expiry.

The carver in the other hand is, although considered unemployed, does gets his income but from what? A carver explains himself as being able to get all his necessary income from his carving and some further explain that because of his internationally recognition he is able to receive substantial amount. General comment is that they probably get their supposed income from illegal activities for example; drug dealing for that kind of money can not be had with legitimately. With a same notion as hunter he is labelled as welfare bum, unemployed or unemployable and shouldn't be recommended for parole.

ISOLATION AND FAMILY SEPARATION

Families are separated beyond hope of seeing each other until the sentences have expired due to distance and great cost. Visits from families are almost non-existent. Because in most cases inmates were financial supporters has resulted in the remaining families not being able to afford cost of travel and long distance calls. After long period of time in some cases has resulted in family break-up. These could have been avoided if the Federal Institution was in the Northwest Territories and financial assistance was available to immediate families on quarterly basis. We are not sure how this oversight has occurred because both Federal and Territorial Governments always had Vacation Travel Assistance for their thousands of employees and issuing social assistance quite generously to its citizens; Yet it has not spent even a small amount needed for few inmates to keep their families together through visitation and communications assistance initiative. It is also important to note that; not only the inmate does suffer the consequences but more importantly the families suffers financial hardship and isolation. (see recommendation).

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NUTRITION AND HEALTH

Medical Staff have reported that some Inuit have high blood pressure and the Inuit inmates stated that they have not had that kind of medical report prior to incarceration. It must have developed recently.

Although, the medical staff did not speculate the cause of it; We suspect that it is from the institutional food which contains very high level of cholesterol, rich in starch and high content in saturated fat. Inuit inmates also stated in having regular diet of country food at home and that they have a hard time digesting milk and food containing saturated fat.

The institution tries to accomodate Inuit inmates with country food but not as a regular diet. Other problem is that the Institution does not recognize it as basic need of Inuit diet and consider it as a treat. Media speculation about the Inuit being fed delicacy food while being incarcerated did not help the matter. Because the Freedom of press are allowed to speculate for milk and greens to be delicacy foods of our southern folks until it has been intervened for false statement, makes it difficult for us to prove that the country food is very important dietary need for our health. Unless, medical authorities states it otherwise, which they had but, media did not do its homework.

Most Inuit are lactose intolerant and had avoided drinking milk to prevent stomach cramps due to excessive gas. And since they have not been eating country food regularly have suffered calcium defecency causing muscle spasms and cramps of back and legs. Regular diet of country food could have prevented it. This statement is based on medical reports stating that: "if only the early explores followed Inuit diet when they tried to find the northwest passage, they would not had died from malnutrition and scurvy. With a statement like that it must be pretty important diet for those who can not digest milk or milk products very well like us Inuit.

DEATH IN FAMILY

Inuit inmates are seldom sent home even in a death of an immediate family. The explanation is that the funeral will be held before the inmate arrives home. The important thing for the Institution staff is to attend the funeral but, in the other hand Inuit believe that it is important to grieve properly. In otherwords, it is imperative that relatives get together immediately after the death of the family so that they may support each other and to declare to stay strong together. This also allows them to express their own grievences and make ammend in order to make a new start without one important member of thier family. When an inmate is not allowed to

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DEATH IN FAMILY cont'd

go home shortly after the death of a family member, then high probability develops whereby; an inmate is going to keep the grieving to himself and builds up anger until he can be released. Then the mixed of grieving and anger is likely to resurface at the wrong time and at the wrong circumstances. This would have devastating effect on the family that work so hard in getting over the death of an immediate family.

PAROLE HEARINGS

Suggestions and recommendations from Correctional Management Officers and psychologist do not put into consideration the following:

1. Inuit inmates are far from home.
2. Their communities are small thereby; makes it difficult to carry out illegal activity without being caught again.
3. Their families are facing hardship not only financially but, also are without country food provider the husband.
4. Being away from homeland is unduly severe for most inmates and his family.
5. Lack of visitation and communication if held longer creates greater chances of family break-up.
6. Depriving of their traditional food is unduly prolonged.
7. Being incarcerated along with people from the cities create atmosphere of criminal elements which should be avoided at all cost. To give an Inuit inmates a parole at the earliest opportunity would avoid some of that possibility.
8. Most Inuit inmates don't have high school education thereby; making it very difficult to follow programs and assignments expected by facilitators. It is not from lack of interest or desire rather ESL play major role in failures and are not recognized nor exceptions are made.
9. Home counseling and Elder guidance is best form of rehabilitation for an inmate. Doing time in the institution without parole due to inability to past programs is more detrimental to an inmate.

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

CORRECTIONS MANAGEMENT OFFICER (CMO)

PREAMBLE:

Corrections Management Officer have never lived in the land of the Inuit and are ignorant of the culture, linguistic make-up, nor the community life style. This has caused misunderstandings between him and the inmate in regards to correctional plans and programs requirements. Some examples are; when an inmates applied for a parole hearing the CMO would not recommend him on the ground that he is still too dangerous to the people of his community. This is usually based on experiences of the southern cities where there is not community support. Inmates have no one to turn to when a CMO is being unco-operative or understanding the inmate's predicament situation.

The psychologist at the Assessment Unit and in Bowden have labelled Inuit inmates as antisocial or tendency to be antisocial. We are wondering as to how Inuit can be labelled that with sufficient substantiation because it is their social behavior that kept them alive and thriving as communal groups. Also, it is our need to socialize that got us into trouble at the first place; example drinking and partying.

Recommendation #1.

That the Federal Government immediately delegates to GNWT the responsibility in hiring a CMO for Inuit inmates only. This CMO would have a knowledge and appreciation for the Inuit culture and language. He must also have lived and be aware of community life style and their expectations generally. He must be sensitive to special needs and circumstances of the Inuit inmates and his family.

Recommendation #2.

Inuit inmates are victims of jurisdictional division of responsibilities by virtue of program inavailability in the North. Incidentally, we had to be placed in the south far away from home and family. While our folks from the south still can enjoy taking program in their home land and gets regular visits from friends and family.

It is recommended that Federal and Territorial Governments make joint arrangements by bringing commonly applied programs to the northern institution, so that Inuit inmates can be transfered back to the North.

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Recommendation #3 Federal Institution in Nunavut:

Due to lack of Federal Facilities in the North, Inuit are incarcerated far away from home without any real hope of seeing their families until it is time to be released. Not only this is hard emotionally and psychologically for the inmate, the wife and children especially. In the other hand, our southern friends continue to enjoy regular visits from family and eat relatively similar food they are used to. Only visibly common things for both are the toilets and brown enamel cups.

It is recommended that the Federal Government make long range plans to build or reassign institutional facility in the Nunavut for all Inuit of Canada.

Recommendation #4 Reclassification of Inuit Liaison Officer:

In dealing with Inuit liaison officer even for small matters such as getting country food from home or initiating small fund raising project have created frustrating results. This is mostly due to so many channels one has to go through

It is recommended that Liaison Officer position be reclassified to Inuit inmates Co-ordinator or facilitator to give a person more freedom and flexibility to decide for the Inuit inmates.

Recommendation #5 Inuit Food:

Although it is clearly stated in the Commissioners Directives that Inuit be allowed to receive Inuit food from home but, Inuit inmates continue to experience difficulties with shipments or freezer space. It is also the lack of interest nor to taking dietary needs of Inuit seriously.

It is recommended that the GNWT take on that responsibility through Health and Social Services with the newly reclassified Inuit Co-ordinator (if and when reclassified).

Recommendation #6 Misdirection of Inuit Inmates:

Inmates who have committed alcohol related crime are treated as if it was premeditated by the Institution. This is done when a judge did not specifically stated as being incidental. This is both unfair and prejudicial to Inuit inmates.

It is recommended that both Governments issue a policy directing receiving institutions whether or not the crime was premeditated. It is further recommended that the Institution treat inmates specific to the Government Directives respecting same.

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Recommendation #7 Death In a family:

Inuit inmates are very rarely sent home in a death a family member. This is due to the Institution not recognizing a need to grieve properly in order to avoid serious problems when an inmate is released.

It is recommended that the Institution follow Commissioners Directive for the Liaison Officer to escort inmates so that they may be with their immediate family shortly after the death of a family member.

Recommendation #8 Parole hearings:

There seem to be a warm desire of the Institution to keep Inuit inmates as long as possible by virtue of continually recommending against parole; Inuit work hard and never complain about cold when shoveling snow in a winter; They are model prisoners etc etc. Inuit inmates sees it differently. They see it as prejudicial for they have no one to turn to when they are turned down.

It is recommended that page nine under Parole Hearing heading be one of the major reason for parole on the earliest possible date.

Recommendation #10 Elders' Recognition:

We recommend that the Community Elders be recognized by the Government and be given responsibility in handling paroled inmates. This would give the Elders an opportunity to give guidance and direction in good behavior, parenting, emotional and psychological therapy, history, custom laws, and environmental and geographical education.


GENERAL COMMENT

There are many more concerns that can be included in the recommendations however, due to lack of resource material and restriction; they can not be substantiated on paper. Furthermore, it is not the responsibility or duty of the Inuit Inmate Group to make comprehensive report about the condition of the Inuit in the Institution. We are hopeful that this little report of concerns be taken seriously and should lead into complete investigation by the respective Government.

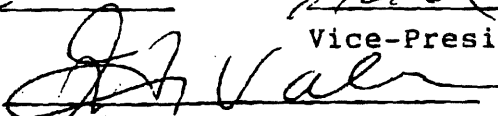
The Inuit Goup appreciate Commissioners Directives and the Federal Government policy respecting Inuit Cultural, Linguistic, Geographical and special circumstances. Thus, it is most important that the sight of it not be lost.



President



Vice-President



Secretary