

Title of Proposal : **Aboriginal Healing Outside of the Gates**

Applicants' names:

Lora (Koala) Kwandibens, Co-Principal Applicant
Amber Christie, Co-Principal Applicant
Mo Korchinski, Co-applicant
Jennifer McMillan, Co-applicant
Cindy Worsfold, Co-applicant
Ruth Elwood Martin, Co-applicant
Alison Granger-Brown, Co-applicant
Lara-Lisa Condello, Co-applicant
Leah-May Walker, Co-applicant
Colleen Reid, Co-applicant
Sarah Desmarais, Co-applicant
Vivian Ramsden, Co-applicant
Ann Macaulay, Co-applicant and NAMHR Mentor

Mailing address for application correspondence:

Megan Smith, Research Assistant
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Community Partners:

Mission Friendship Centre
Women's Resource Society of the Fraser Valley, Mission
Alouette Addictions Services
Union Gospel Mission, Mission
Triangle Resources
Fraser House Society
Women in2 Healing

Supporting Organizations:

Mission Mental Health, Fraser Health Authority
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology
Women's Health Research Institute
Women's Health Research Network
Collaborating Centre for Prison Health and Education
Fraser Valley Institute

ABSTRACT

The purpose is to explore Aboriginal women's concepts of mental health and well being, and their barriers and facilitators for accessing health resources in Mission, BC, following their release from prison. Aboriginal prison leavers will be invited to share oral stories within a semi-structured interview study that is designed and conducted by Aboriginal women, who are themselves prison leavers now engaged in community-based participatory research. Study participants, interdisciplinary research team members, and members and Elders of community partners will be invited to collaborate on participatory research data analysis, interpretation and presentation of the findings, and the development of action plans based on the findings.

(Word count 104)

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: “*Walking with them while they are telling their stories*”

Purpose: The purpose is to explore Aboriginal women’s concepts of mental health and well being towards understanding their barriers and facilitators for accessing health resources in Mission, BC, following release from prison. **Theoretical Rationale:** Aboriginal women represent over 30% of the provincial Canadian provincial women’s prison population, which is a grave over representation compared with the general population (3-5%) (1). In addition, a significant proportion of incarcerated women have had a previous diagnosis of mental illness and/or substance use (2). The high rate of mental health problems experienced by Aboriginal women, including depression and substance abuse, has been implicated in this overrepresentation (3). The idea for this study grew out of the Co-PIs’ (LK and AC) experience as they witnessed fellow Aboriginal prison leavers failing to access resources in their community, their failure to (re)integrate into their community and their subsequent re-incarceration. The earlier work of *Women in2 Healing* has demonstrated that women inside/outside prison can be actively engaged in community-based participatory research (CBPR) processes to improve their mental, emotional, spiritual and physical health (4-6). The NAMHR funding program provides an opportunity for women of *Women in2 Healing* to pilot CBPR processes (i.e.capacity building, action and research) to explore Aboriginal women’s stories of mental health and well being in relationship to their incarceration, in collaboration with their local community partners. In addition, this study will complement the CIHR-funded ‘Doing Time’ project, which focuses on analysis of quantitative data obtained from interviews of women during the first 12 months following their release from prison, but will not provide in depth understanding of mental health and well being of Aboriginal prison leavers. This research project will follow the CIHR Guidelines for Health Research Involving Aboriginal People.

Research Methodology: The co-PIs, (Aboriginal women who have been incarcerated) and the co-applicants drafted a semi-structured in-depth interview guide (Appendix A) based on Aboriginal traditions, their lived incarceration experiences, and our previous research findings (4-6). The interview guide incorporates storytelling and oral history as integral to Aboriginal mental health and wellness. It focuses

on women prison leavers' perceptions of mental health and well being and how that was shaped by their incarceration, and their experiences of strengths and stressors to their mental health following their prison release. The interview guide will be further revised in consultation with community partners and Elders. Women will be invited to participate in an interview by way of posters and word of mouth. They will be offered a \$20 gift card as compensation for their time; child-care and transportation expenses will be reimbursed. Women will be eligible to participate if they self-declare as Aboriginal, have previously been incarcerated and now live in Mission. Participants will be invited to give written/ oral consent. Interviews will be conducted and audio-recorded by co-applicants who live in Mission, and transcribed by members of *Women in2 Healing* who have signed confidentiality agreements. Interviews will continue until saturation of themes has occurred (estimated 50 interviews). Following their interview, study participants will be invited (not required) to engage in future Mission research support meetings (see procedures).

Analytical Procedures to be employed: Audio recordings will be transcribed verbatim. All personal identifiers will be removed for the purposes of thematic and narrative analysis; (however, we will retain the identities of all narratives, because participants may later choose to 'own' their stories¹).

Quantitative data will be entered into an Excel spreadsheet, for descriptive analyses using t-test and Chi-square comparisons. Co-applicants, study participants, Elders and members of community partners and supporting organizations will be invited to research meetings to collaborate in participatory data analysis, interpretation of findings and, development of presentations and future interventions. The findings of this pilot project will then be used as a platform for a national grant application that will facilitate the engagement of Aboriginal women prison leavers in Canada in participatory research processes to improve mental health and well being.

¹ Women prison leavers who engage in participatory research have previously told their own stories as portrayed in transcript data (in which they themselves were the 'study participant'), during their presentations of their participatory research work at conferences, during media interviews and/or when they are writing for publication.

REFERENCES:

1. Statistics Canada. *2006 census of population*. Statistics Canada; 2006. Report No. 97-558-XCB2006022
2. Somers J, Cartar L, Currie L. *Interactions between health services and corrections among Aboriginal offenders in British Columbia*. Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addictions (CARMHA), Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University. 2008 Sept 9.
3. The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC). *Aboriginal women and the legal justice system in Canada*. 2007 June.
4. Martin RE, Chan R, Torikka L, Granger-Brown A, Ramsden VR. *Healing fostered by research*. Can Fam Physician. 2008 Feb; 54 (2): 244-245
5. Martin RE, Murphy K, Chan R, Ramsden VR, Granger-Brown A, Macaulay AC, Kahlon R, Ogilvie G, Hislop TG. *Primary Health Care: Applying the principles within a community-based participation health research project that began in a Canadian women's prison*. Global Health Promotion. 2009 Dec "in press"
6. Martin RE, Murphy K, Hanson D, Hemingway C, Ramsden VR, Buxton J, Granger-Brown A, Condello LL, Buchanan M, Espinoza-Magana N, Edworthy G, Hislop TG. *The development of participatory health research among incarcerated women in a Canadian prison*. Int J of Prisoner Health. 2009 May "in press"

STATUS OF RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

Mo Korchinski, Amber Christie and Ruth Elwood Martin have commenced the on-line application process for this project with UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB).

Mo Korchinski recently successfully submitted a UBC BREB application for a nutrition and exercise program with *Women in2 Healing* for prison leavers in the community of Maple Ridge. In addition, *Women in2 Healing* has a current 'umbrella' BREB certificate. All participatory research projects associated with *Women in2 Healing*, including 'Aboriginal healing outside of the gates', fall under the umbrella of the original *Women in2 Healing* BREB certificate.

We are aware that this study may identify participants with significant mental health problems; in collaboration with our community partners, we will develop resources to refer participants for assistance with their mental and other health concerns. The majority of members of our project team have successfully completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement ethics certificate and have read the CIHR guidelines of health research involving aboriginal people. .

CURRICULUM VITAE

We include 2-paged CVs for the co-principal applicants 2) and co-applicants(11) with headings according to the CIHR community CV. (See Appendix)

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The Women's Health Research Institute will provide financial administration for this project as per the approved budget protocol. The WHRI financial administrator manager's contact information is:

Barbara Humphries
Administrative Manager
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BUDGET

An itemized budget and justification for \$5000 is attached. (see Appendix)

FIVE KEYWORDS

1. Prison
2. Mental health and well being
3. Aboriginal, First Nations
4. participatory research
5. women's health

APPENDICES

1. Curriculum vitae for the following 13 co-applicants

- Lora (Koala) Kwandibens, Co-Principal Applicant
- Amber Christie, Co-Principal Applicant
- Mo Korchinski, Co-applicant
- Jennifer McMillan, Co-applicant
- Cindy Worsfold, Co-applicant
- Ruth Elwood Martin, Co-applicant
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- Sarah Desmarais, Co-applicant
- Vivian Ramsden, Co-applicant
- Ann Macaulay, Co-applicant and NAMHR Mentor

2. Budget

3. Letters of Support

- Community Partners:
 - i. Mission Friendship Centre (letter pending)
 - ii. Women's Resource Society of the Fraser Valley, Mission
 - iii. Alouette Addictions Services
 - iv. Union Gospel Mission, Mission
 - v. Triangle Resources
 - vi. Fraser House Society
 - vii. Women in2 Healing
- Supporting Organizations:
 - i. Mission Mental Health, Fraser Health Authority
 - ii. Nicola Valley Institute of Technology
 - iii. Women's Health Research Network
 - iv. Women's Health Research Institute
 - v. Collaborating Centre for Prison Health and Education
 - vi. Fraser Valley Institute (letter pending)