

## **Aboriginal Healing Outside of the Gates**

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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  
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## **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** Canadian prisons incarcerate a disproportionate number of Aboriginal women compared to the general population. This project builds on our past work that invited women inside and outside prison to engage in participatory research processes for the improvement of mental, spiritual, emotional and physical health. The purpose of this project 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.

**Methods:** 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.

**Results:** This project is a work in progress. We are organizing a community organization fair on July 30<sup>th</sup> at the Mission Friendship Centre to launch the start of the project. We anticipate receiving UBC certificate of ethics approval in the near future. ***On August 14<sup>th</sup>, Amber will share the narrative of the project processes to date: an overview of the past prison projects and community-academic-prison partnerships that form the foundation for this project; the scope of the support that this project has received from the community organisations in Amber's home town of Mission; Amber's personal narrative of being involved in all aspects of this project.***

**Conclusions:** We have found no other published reports in the world wide literature that use participatory research processes to engage formerly incarcerated Aboriginal women in all aspects of the research process. This project will give voice to the narratives pertaining to mental health and resilience of Aboriginal women as they leave prison. The implications of this project and its community-academic-prison engagement will be far reaching.