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"Healing on Both Sides": Strengthening the Effectiveness of Prison–Indigenous Community Partnerships Through Reciprocity and Investment

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Résumé de l'article

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"Healing on Both Sides": Strengthening the Effectiveness of Prison–Indigenous Community Partnerships Through Reciprocity and Investment

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Abstract

This mixed methods study examined the impact of a prison–community partnership, entitled Work 2 Give. The partnership supports a program in which federally incarcerated men in Canada make items to donate to Indigenous communities. Qualitative interviews were conducted with participating men ($n = 32$), recipient community members ($n = 29$), and other prison and community stakeholders ($n = 14$). Selected outcomes (transfers to higher security, successful transfers to lower security, and serious institutional charges) were examined for 60 incarcerated men for whom data were available. Findings suggest that the program positively affected the men's identities and provided opportunities for communities to help incarcerated men to heal; both sets of stakeholders see potential to strengthen the program. Whereas the emphasis has been on unidirectional donation, and the impetus for the program has been with correctional staff, findings suggest a bidirectional model with stronger feedback loops between the prison and community to support reciprocity, investment, and visibility would enhance impact. This model has broad implications for strengthening community–prison partnerships.

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Indigenous Peoples globally experience acute criminal justice inequities (Lockwood et al., 2018; Nielsen & Robyn, 2003; Office of the Correctional Investigator, 2012). Efforts to redress these inequities include supporting relationships between the criminal justice system (CJS) and Indigenous communities. Although community–prison partnerships have potential to promote successful community reintegration (Duncan et al., 2009; Hall et al., 2018; Public Safety Canada, 2018b), partnerships are uncommon and, to our knowledge, there is limited evidence for implementation to optimize their potential. In this article, we analyze an innovative partnership, explore its impacts, examine what works, and identify policy directions needed to realize such partnerships. A research collaboration among the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) Pacific Region, researchers at the University of British Columbia (UBC), an Indigenous First Nation, [1] and a non-profit organization that provides restorative justice services to First Nations was formed to study the impact of a prison–community partnership in which federally incarcerated men make and gift items to First Nations in the central interior of British Columbia (BC). Our findings have implications for policy development within correctional settings, other government–Indigenous community partnerships, programs that partner Indigenous communities with non-profit organizations, and initiatives that use donations to support health and wellbeing for Indigenous and other socio-economically marginalized peoples.

Background

The Canadian CJS has evolved substantially with changing federal politics (Dawe & Goodman, 2017; Deshman & Hannah-Moffat, 2015; Sangster, 2006). These processes have included "multiple and conflicting goals of punishment, including retribution, deterrence, rehabilitation and increasingly, achievement of restorative justice," reflecting "complex and contradictory attitudes toward crime" (Roach, 2000, p. 251). Recent federal governments have been divergent. The Harper era Conservative government (2006-2015) was characterized by a "tough on crime" stance (Doob & Webster, 2015). During that time, the federal government introduced over 80 criminal justice, sentencing, and corrections reform bills (Deshman & Hannah-Moffat, 2015). This approach was criticized by some as increasingly punitive, although Dawe and Goodman (2017) caution that shifts were largely symbolic— politically advantageous yet divorced from evidence about effectiveness (Dawe & Goodman, 2017; Deshman & Hannah-Moffat, 2015). The current Liberal government (2015-present) has taken steps to reverse many Harper-era decisions, with specific attention to criminal justice inequities experienced by Indigenous Peoples. While the extent and impact of these shifts are emergent and not yet fully understood (Dawe & Goodman, 2017; Government of Canada, 2018), State–Indigenous relationships continue to be strained and many Indigenous Peoples note ongoing policy-induced marginalization. However, recent shifts in the CJS may offer a window of opportunity for developing more effective partnerships to redress policy impacts, particularly given ongoing calls to reduce CJS inequities (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015a, 2015b).

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[1] The Canadian State has variously named Indigenous Peoples as "Indian," "Aboriginal," and more recently "Indigenous," and further categorized people as First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. These categories encompass more than 50 language groups (Norris, 2008) and diverse peoples, each of whom have their own names for themselves.

The Canadian CJS is embedded within wider policy contexts, including ongoing colonialism. The disproportion representation of Indigenous Peoples in the CJS is due to marginalization produced through numerous policy dynamics, many stemming from the Indian Act[2] (1985); these policies have resulted in poverty, un- and under-employment, crowded and unsuitable housing, food insecurity, and substandard educational opportunities (Assembly of First Nations, 2013; Forsyth, 2010; Forsyth & Giles, 2013; Kamal et al., 2015; Larcombe et al., 2011; Mosby & Galloway, 2017). Continuous with colonialism, systemic racism has been documented throughout health, social service, education, and child welfare (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2018; Boyd et al., 2016; Davy et al., 2016; McKenzie et al., 2016; Preston et al., 2012; Sinclair, 2016). These policy factors have compounded known correlates of crime (Forrester et al., 2012; Sapers, 2014, 2016), including barriers to education, skills development, and employment. These barriers are linked to widespread State interference, including the Indian Residential School System, ongoing child apprehension, and related parenting surveillance oversight (McKenzie et al., 2016), resulting in the disruption of families and the transmission of intergenerational knowledge. In this context, Indigenous Peoples face inequities at each stage of the CJS (Office of the Correctional Investigator, 2012; Zinger, 2018).

The over-incarceration of Indigenous Peoples began after World War II due to diverse political and economic dynamics (Jacobs, 2012; Milloy, 1999; Sangster, 2006), echoing trends in other former colonies (Day, 2003; Dehaven, 2016; Nakhid & Shorter, 2014; Ward et al., 2006; Wildeman & Wang, 2017). These increasing rates of incarceration were born from historic linkages and contemporary continuations of linkages between colonization and criminalization (Cunneen, 2014; Pavlich & Unger, 2016). Overrepresentation led to increasing numbers of Indigenous-focused CJS projects during the late 1980s and 1990s (Roach, 2000). Despite these attempts, in 1996 the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples found that "the justice system has failed Aboriginal people" (CSC, 2006, p. 5), a problem that continues today and is inextricably linked with ongoing colonialism (Hyatt, 2013; Zinger, 2018). Under the current federal government, multiple efforts are being undertaken, which include a CSC corporate priority to provide "effective, culturally appropriate interventions and reintegration support" for Indigenous Peoples (CSC, 2016, para. 4). The Auditor General has also called for culturally safe programming within prison and community corrections to address the historical context of Indigenous Peoples (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2016), which can be supported by prison–Indigenous community partnerships (Public Safety Canada, 2018a; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015a).

Generally, community–prison partnerships can support rehabilitation within a social development crime prevention model, which aligns with evidence regarding crime reduction (Hawkins & Weis, 2017), and offers alternatives to dominant punitive approaches (Canadian Council on Social Development, 2010; Vogler, 2017). The social development approach works to address the causes—or social determinants—of crime: housing, education, family stability, employment, recreation, and violence and trauma, all of which are linked to wider socio-economic, historic, and structural forces (Canadian Council on Social Development, 2010; Jamieson & Hart, 2003; John Howard Society of Alberta, 1995). Crime prevention through this lens emphasizes "investing in individuals, families and communities," largely through engagement across social, health, and educational contexts (Fournier-Ruggles, 2011, p. 25), community support, and social bonding post-release (Pettus-Davis et al., 2017; Rocque et al., 2013;

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[2] The Indian Act was first enacted in 1876 to govern the Indigenous people of what is now Canada, and the Act remains in force with amendments.

Wright & Cesar, 2013). This approach also aligns with many pre-colonial Indigenous concepts of justice (Dickson-Gilmore & LaPrairie, 2005; Napoleon & Friedland, 2015). For example, studies have highlighted that positive relationships and community engagement can increase parole adherence and reduce substance use (Pettus-Davis et al., 2017; Skeem et al., 2009); relationships with friends, families, and community can improve mental, behavioural and physical health outcomes post-release (Binswanger et al., 2012; Skeem et al., 2009); and sustained positive social support both within and outside prison walls can reduce recidivism (Pettus-Davis et al., 2017; Rocque et al., 2013; Wright & Cesar, 2013). The CSC currently addresses social bonds and community engagement through contracts with community organizations, such as the Elizabeth Fry and John Howard Societies, both of which support justice-involved persons and their families, including Indigenous-focused supports (Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver, 2019; John Howard Society of British Columbia, n.d.).

There is strong evidence of the impacts of programming and policies in facilitating relationship building in prisons (Brown & Day, 2008). For example, studies have shown the potential of peer groups to reduce feelings of loneliness and hopelessness (Brown & Day, 2008), and prison visitation has been shown to improve mental health and reduce recidivism (Albertie et al., 2017; De Claire & Dixon, 2015; Duwe & Johnson, 2016). For Indigenous Peoples, ongoing relationships with Elders has immense benefits (Hadjipavlou et al., 2018; Tu et al., 2019; Waldram, 1997), including those who are incarcerated (Willis & Moore, 2008). Indigenous youth with previous engagement with the colonial justice system have been found to benefit from youth-specific programming in which they engaged with Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, value systems, and culture, which were found to enhance feelings of pride in cultures and identities (Hansen, 2015). More generally, connections with the outside community have been associated with healing both within and outside of Indigenous contexts (Granger-Brown et al., 2012; Halperin et al., 2012; Moller, 2011). Given this support from the literature, prison–Indigenous community partnerships have potential to create and sustain innovative reciprocities, reflecting emerging evidence about the importance of relationships and social cohesion (Hall & Chong, 2018; Lockwood et al., 2018), and aligning with longstanding Indigenous concepts of collective health and wellbeing (Greenwood et al., 2018; Howell et al., 2016; Kimmerer, 2013; Napoleon & Friedland, 2015). Partnerships offer the "possibility of using the substance of conflict as a means of exploring options and establishing responses that . . . develop and strengthen relationships" (Law Commission of Canada, 1999, p. 40; see also Department of Justice, 2015), aligning with ongoing calls for Indigenous healing and resurgence (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2017; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015a) through engagement with Indigenous knowledges and traditions (Borrows, 2005; Friedland & Napoleon, 2016; Napoleon & Friedland, 2015).

The CSC (2008) claims "the role and responsibility of the community in helping to safely reintegrate offenders is one of the most significant challenges in the field of corrections. Community programming reduces the risk of recidivism and is a fundamental component of the overall correctional strategy" (para. 2). However, crime prevention is outside the CSC funding and policy scope (Doob & Webster, 2015), and the majority of crime prevention initiatives are run by non-governmental organizations and funded by grants susceptible to market forces and political whims (Doob & Webster, 2015; Webster & Doob, 2015). Subsequently, crime prevention receives significantly less federal support compared with penal solutions (Canadian Criminal Justice Association, 2017). Additionally, Indigenous-specific CJS programming has long been underfunded and operated on a "pilot project mentality" (Public Safety Canada, 2018a; Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, 1996); this is despite the "effective, culturally

appropriate interventions and reintegration support for First Nations, Métis and Inuit" peoples being a corporate priority for federal corrections (CSC, 2016).

While crime prevention is beyond CSC policy scope, community programming post-release is a priority focus. While CSC "does not control admissions [they have] a role to play in studying the underlying factors leading to crime while offering programs that meet the needs of Indigenous people . . . [including] adequately preparing [individuals] for community reintegration" (Public Safety Canada, 2018a, p. 8). While there is support for partnerships at the policy level, the programs offered in correctional facilities are often the result of unidirectional engagement from the community, wherein community members enter the prison and offer support and programs. While CSC (2008) "relies on service providers in the community and actively encourages and seeks innovative approaches to community corrections" (p. 1), these in-reach programs, including contracted Indigenous Elders, are funded year-to-year, leading to fiscal instability (Brosnahan, 2012; CBC News, 2018; John Howard Society of Canada, 2018). Specific examples of prison–community partnerships in the Indigenous context in Canada include Sections 81 and 84—amendments to the Canadian Correctional and Conditional Release Act (2017)—which outlines ways for Indigenous people to be released into Indigenous communities at different points in their sentencing and release (see also Office of the Correctional Investigator, 2012).

Despite great potential, these initiatives remain underfunded (Office of the Correctional Investigator, 2013b; Public Safety Canada, 2018a), and communities facing colonial barriers to health and wellness may not have resources necessary for community supervision (Martel et al., 2011; Office of the Correctional Investigator, 2013a; Public Safety Canada, 2018a; Ryan et al., 2006). That being said, these programs highlight that, when done well, increased attention to and support for Indigenous community–prison partnerships, with awareness of colonial context, offers the potential to improve health and wellbeing for Indigenous Peoples and create safe and nurturing communities both within and outside of prison contexts (Office of the Correctional Investigator, 2012; Public Safety Canada, 2018a). Yet, little is known about *how* to optimize prison–Indigenous community partnerships, particularly those outside of Section 81 and 84 agreements. The Indigenous community–prison partnership in BC provides an opportunity to examine partnership impacts and potential, thus identifying the policy implications for prison–Indigenous community partnerships that can optimize effectiveness in crime prevention and public safety for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

Program Background

The Indigenous community–prison partnership Work 2 Give, hereinafter called the initiative, was originally conceptualized to provide meaningful employment for incarcerated men and benefit underserved First Nations (Lang, 2012). Men incarcerated in seven federal prisons in BC participated in the initiative, which was open to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous men across security levels. Engagement differs across institutions. For instance, some men engage as part of their formal correctional employment, others volunteer once a week, and others participate as part of Indigenous-specific programming. The men make wooden items including toys and furniture, cultural items such as drums, knitted items such as scarves and sock monkeys, and grow organic vegetables. What the men work on is dictated by the security level of the institution, availability of raw materials, and their imaginations and skills. Fundraising for the project, the purchasing of raw materials, and the distribution

of goods produced are contracted to a community partner in order to maintain an arm's length distance for liability insurance purposes. A trucking company donated their services to transport the goods over 500 kilometers north of the prisons to the rural and remote central interior of BC, and Band[3] staff and community members facilitate distribution. Decision-making related to distribution is led by the non-profit partner, meaning that there was no formal engagement between the men making the goods and the community recipients. In 2015, a research partnership was created among CSC and UBC to study the impacts on participating men and recipients. Additional information about initiative operations has been published elsewhere (Brown et al., 2017). This article reports on findings from both the CSC and First Nations community contexts to highlight relevant policy implications for this initiative and beyond.

Methods

A mixed methods study was undertaken to (a) examine the impact on the incarcerated men who participated and the First Nation receiving and distributing the items, and (b) identify a model to sustain and strengthen the initiative, including the policy potential of the CSC–community partnership. Selected outcome indicators that had potential for assessing impact (transfers to higher security, successful transfers to lower security, and serious institutional charges) were examined for men for whom data were available ($N = 60$). Of those men for whom data was available, 60% were Indigenous. For the selected indicators, data from 2013 to 2015 was gathered. Rates over the two-year period were calculated for two of the indicators, transfers to higher security and serious institutional charges while incarcerated, using the number of occurrences and the number of participating men over the same time period. These rates were compared to three-year rates for the general prison population in the institutions in which the initiative was implemented. For the third indicator, successful transfers to lower security, comparable data for the general prison population were not available to support meaningful comparisons. Therefore, available data on transfers to lower security for participating men were summarized using descriptive statistics.

Qualitative interviews were conducted with men engaged in the initiative ($n = 32$) in four of the participating prisons (selected as being the most active in the program at time of data collection), community members who either received or helped distribute items ($n = 29$), and other prison stakeholders ($n = 14$). Field notes recorded observations of meetings with staff (e.g., program officers, wardens) and men working on items, and during visits to conduct interviews. These interviews were conducted by the authors, recorded, transcribed, and anonymized. We conducted a thematic analysis of the qualitative data, beginning with reading each transcript in its entirety with related field notes, identifying themes and sub-themes within and across transcripts, and developing a conceptual map of thematic relationships. This article focuses on findings with policy-specific implications.

The quantitative data set was limited by several factors. First, the initiative is regional; as a result, the men's participation is not tracked in the same way as in other federal programs. Thus, we were only able to obtain complete data on the selected outcomes for 60 of the approximately 100 men who had participated in the initiative at the time of data collection (2015-2017). Second, while the CSC collects data across an array of rehabilitation indicators, our in-depth consultation with CSC data analysts and staff yielded only three variables deemed adequately sensitive to the impact of participation in light of

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[3] Bands are governing units of First Nations peoples in Canada, as defined by the Indian Act.

other influences from the men's correctional plan. The qualitative findings were limited by the fact that all observations and several interviews with the men were conducted with CSC staff present, which may have influenced what the men said and did.

Findings

The initiative was developed to benefit incarcerated men and a First Nation comprised of six communities. Anticipated benefits for men included changing from an institutional environment "in which [incarcerated people] are largely idle to one which emphasizes work and productivity, and from a culture which is drug based, to one which is transformative (Lang, 2012, p. 3). For the First Nation, the anticipated benefits included "addressing some of the root causes of crime . . . by assisting children to remain in school" (Lang, 2012, p. 4). However, our findings show that, the benefits to the men and communities are broader than initially imagined, contributing to what one participant, a First Nations woman with a background in community health, described as "healing on both sides."

Men Experience Positive Impacts

Our preliminary results from initial interviews with men suggested positive impacts (Brown et al., 2017), and the quantitative data also suggest benefits. As shown in Figure 1, participating men had fewer transfers to higher security and fewer serious charges compared to the general prison population. Furthermore, it was notable that, of the 37 men who participated in the initiative over the three-year period who were not already in minimum security at the start of the three-year period, 23 of these men were able to successfully transfer to lower security during that period. Although the sample size is small, data suggest that the initiative is at least as positive for Indigenous as well as non-Indigenous men in terms of correctional measures. Importantly, these impacts have been achieved despite the fact that the initiative is relatively new. Founded in 2012, it remains operationally outside the scope of core programming and has had limited operational or economic evaluation. This unique positioning impacts CSC staff, the men, and the First Nations communities in various ways that stem from the policy environment.

CSC Staff Sustain Work 2 Give "Off the Sides of Their Desks"

Because the initiative began within the CSC, prison champions—ranging from senior executives to those who directly supervise the men—have primarily sustained momentum. For example, we learned that, since 2012, wardens have pooled small amounts from their institutional budgets to sustain the initiative. As one program officer described:

> We had almost no supplies, we had limited tools, we literally had [staff] going at lunchtime to get glue to finish off products. That was when CSC was funding it, and of course there was only a little amount of money . . . Eventually we got the funding from [the non-profit] [and] were able to get more wood supplies, tools, and basically make to order things . . . So basically my motto was, if we can draw it, we can build it. And we've done some really amazing things. (CSC, program officer)
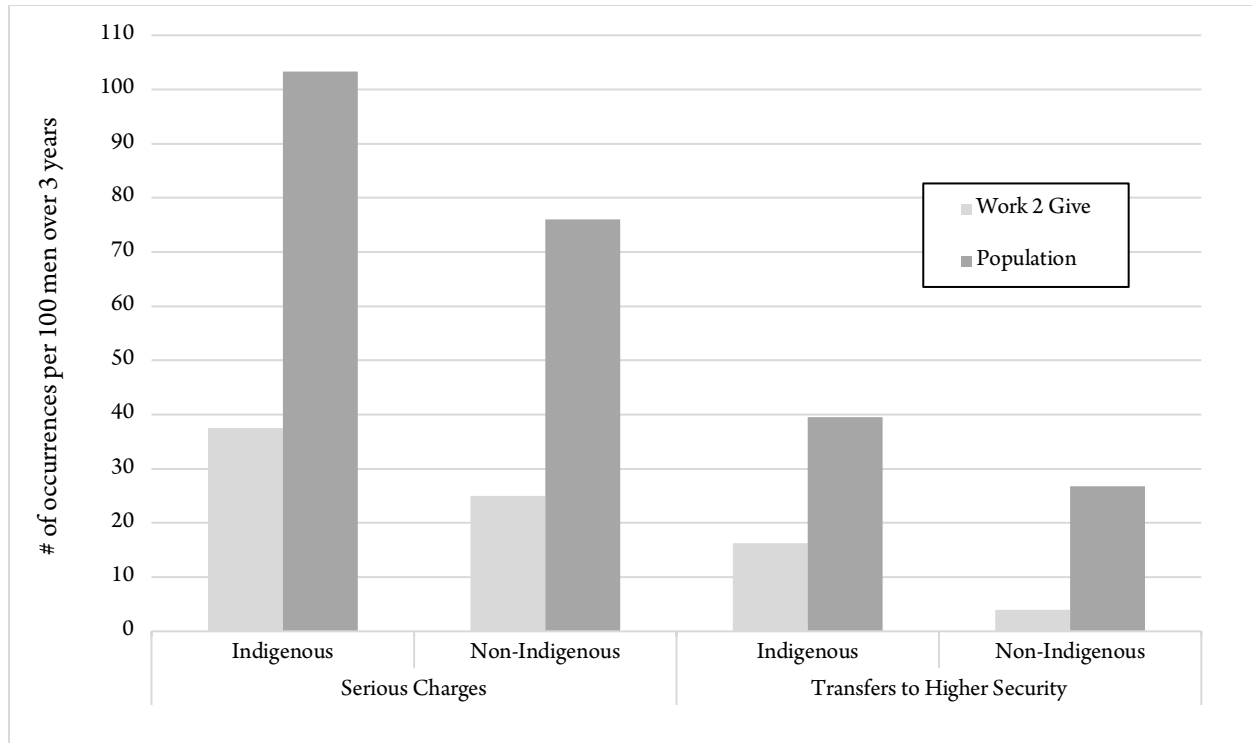
Figure 1. Serious charges and transfers to higher security among Indigenous and non-Indigenous men participating in Work 2 Give vs. the prison population. Work 2 Give N = 60, 61% Indigenous. Serious charges population N = 822. Transfers to higher security population N = 1127, 31% Indigenous.

Staff commitment was connected to what they saw as the initiative's value and impact.

> Most of these individuals, they took and they took and they didn't give anything back for a long time, until they worked their way into a federal prison sentence. You can't underestimate that mental and psychological lift, of actually doing something positive. (CSC, program officer)

As staff observed the men's initial commitment evolve, staff commitment grew.

> It may start off as [just something to do], but quickly evolved to "Oh I'm actually contributing to a community." From a restorative justice perspective, the [First Nation] is almost a surrogate victim community for some of these guys. And vice versa . . . when I talk to folks up there, they see [the men] as surrogate members of their community, or even surrogate offenders, if they were harmed. So [communities] are contributing to help. (CSC, warden)

However, because the initiative is not part of core programming, sustainability has depended on individual staff committed to contributing to the program "off the sides of their desks." Accordingly, staff try to accommodate the initiative within their workload and CSC resources, policies, and institutional cultural norms.

> The warden may think, "Well this person is doing a great job with this side of their desk project plus doing their own work and they're motivated to make this succeed," but the peers are thinking you're a suck up. (CSC, staff)

> We're at our max, I think, because people are doing it all off the side of their desks, and I think we've done a lot off the side of our desks. But for us to deepen it and widen it, it needs to be a bit more formal, but again not necessarily owned by the government, an equal partnership. (CSC, warden)

Overall, the initiative's momentum has ebbed and flowed depending on staff commitment and the staff members' capacity to sustain their involvement in light of priorities mandated by their job descriptions, federal policies, and work culture, as well as ongoing personnel changes and related disruptions within the institutions.

The Appearance of "Not CSC" Enhanced Benefit

While workload and logistical challenges were created and sustained because the initiative was outside of core programming, this enhanced the reputation of the initiative among the men:

> People get to learn [from] each other, as humans, not as inmates. 'Cuz they're doing something else that's not CSC demanded, required, imposed. (Métis man, medium security institution, participating for three months).

The men saw participation as a choice in an otherwise severely constrained environment. This view was often contrasted with the other programming, which the men saw as required.

> I have been a CSC robot for so long . . . I've been told what to do, how to do it, when to do it . . . Prison is a different environment than the street, obviously. And for me to exist in the one I had to just shut everything off, that way nothing hurts, right? So having this has sort of, you know, given me a little bit of something that I haven't felt in a long time. (Euro-Canadian man, mixed-level institution, participating for six months)

Despite this, the men were reluctant to make CSC "look good."

> I do it because I want to do it. The guys that I've worked with do it because they want to do it. The part that scares them off is sometimes upper management taking the credit for everything, as CSC, and not so much the guys . . . All they do is they keep getting referred to as "an inmate, a convict, a prisoner, garbage, scum of the earth," where management gets the credit . . . Most of them don't want the credit, but they also don't want to see that an upper management person is the person that's getting all the acknowledgement, when they really didn't do anything. (Euro-Canadian man, minimum security institution, participating for four years)

Further, within a wider culture of distrust, many of the men were apprehensive about whether the initiative was truly benefiting communities.

Distrust and the Importance of Feedback

The men's deep distrust towards CSC was evident in the data. Specifically, they questioned whether items actually reached the intended participants, and who was actually benefiting. The men repeatedly pointed to a lack of feedback about where the goods were going and how the communities responded.

> We don't get much feedback . . . I'm kind of interested to see if the stuff I'm making is really helpful. It's good to put it in perspective, because it's good to make all the stuff and send it out, but we don't know where it goes, and I'm not sure if we'll ever be told because of confidentiality. (Euro-Canadian man, mixed level institution, participating for three years)

The men's ability to engage with the project and learn about where items were going was inconsistent across institutions, depending on staff interest in the program and frequency of visits from non-profit staff sharing images of community distribution events. The level of information sharing influenced the impacts on the men. When engagement was consistent, the partnership with the First Nation offered potential to build trust and relationships, including the men's relationships to and trust in the program. This added meaning to the work, which was contrasted with other available correctional employment wherein men rarely see the end results of their labour.

> What I like about it mostly is to see the younger kids that don't get very much toys, and to see the expressions on their faces, the pictures. That makes me feel good to see them. And it makes me happy to do it and, because I know it's going to be enjoyed. (Tlingit First Nation man, medium security institution, participating for 1.5 years)

Thus, the extent to which the men received feedback about the First Nation shaped their experience of the work and its impact.

> It's as important to hear what effects you have on the community as it is for the community to have effects on you. For me . . . had I been told more in my life that I was worth more or I was doing good . . . it motivates you to go above and beyond. I'm old enough where I know the road I took was wrong, I know the things I need to do to change where I was, and I'm implementing those changes now. But it's still nice to hear as a human being, "Hey, you did good. You're worth more than what you're letting yourself believe. These people appreciate those things." (Mik'maq First Nation man, mixed-level institution, participating for 1.5 years)

The level of feedback varied across time, as well as institutions. Community feedback was facilitated almost exclusively by the non-profit executive director, who visited the prisons a few times a year with a presentation of images showing where the items the men made went, sometimes with recipient thank-you cards. While critical to enhancing impacts, frequent movement of men across and between institutions meant that individuals could participate for months or even years without seeing the presentation; this, in turn, could increase a sense of distrust regarding the transparency of distribution and undermine perceived benefits to the recipients for the men.

> CSC is notorious for taking something, a situation or something being said, contort it, twist it . . . That this is outside of that, I think is attractive to people, right? And again, I mean, again with the

photos and the fact that somebody came and did an introduction to let us know that this thing is real . . . so my two cents would be to make sure that there is some steady regularity to the contact. I think that would help inspire and, you know, motivate dudes. (Euro-Canadian man, mixed-level institution, participating for six months)

Repeatedly, the men expressed wanting to know more about the communities and the impact of items. Indigenous participants with lived experience of colonialism had specific questions about how to move beyond the material impacts of donating items.

For two years we've got to see a nice little video of the youth group. The [non-profit] thing, the camp, and beds being delivered, right? We have no idea what type of families they're going . . . I mean, tell me why! I mean are they more needy than average people? Are they worse off? It's like we're getting half of a story . . . I understand that the bed gets them off the floor, and the sock monkey gives you something to cuddle, right? But are we really making life better? (Stó:lō First Nation man, minimum security institution, participating for two years)

It's just nice to know a kid doesn't have to sleep on the floor, but it would be nice to know more . . . Maybe we could do more positive things that would actually benefit. Like I said, you know, I had a bed [growing up] too, but I didn't even want to be there. (Métis man, minimum security institution, participating for two years)

Impacts on Men Were Directly Enhanced by the Partnership

The potential for benefit was evident in instances where relationships were well supported. In several institutions where feedback was effectively sustained by the executive director of the non-profit and CSC staff, the men experienced the initiative in meaningful ways. When staff and leadership under-delivered on feedback, meaningfulness was undermined. This had the potential to cause harm, as the men felt distrust towards correctional staff and leaders, and many had previous experiences of feeling exploited. In cases where the men had access to information about the initiative, individual impacts were shaped by how the men understood the recipient children and families in relation to their own lives; thus, the men's personal contexts shaped how they spoke about the profound impacts on their identities (Brown et al., 2017). Many of the men recounted their adverse childhood experiences: For Indigenous men, the impact of these experiences was intensified by racialization and racism, making the partnership with the First Nation even more meaningful.

I mean I've been in [prison] since I was 22, so I had to grow up real quick, real fast. And, I want to do something good when I get out, you know, with what I learned in here. I want to help people. I mean I am helping people, but I want to do more. I want to break that cycle. I want to help people that are suffering from trauma, drug addiction, depression. I know what it's like out there, you know, it's almost a war, especially with the drugs and the violence. So working towards that, [and] being on the Red Road,[4] it's gonna help and enable me to help others, and

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[4] The Red Road is a system of Indigenous values and beliefs that outline living in a good way, and which can include emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental health and wellness (Gone, 2011). While the term is used by Indigenous Peoples across diverse Nations, specific First Nations have similar concepts founded in their own language, worldview, and culture.

also help myself. (Cree Ojibway First Nation man, mixed-level institution, participating for three years)

The opportunity to "do good" was profoundly important to the men's evolving identities. The extent to which Indigenous teachings were embedded in the initiative varied across institutions; however, for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous men, the initiative provided opportunities to engage with teachings that supported healing.

> Putting aside the obvious reasons that it's going to children that need the hand up in life, it hits home for me because of the way I was raised up . . . I wasn't brought up traditionally, however a lot of my barriers and obstacles in life are mimicked in the Aboriginal culture and the Aboriginal communities . . . Until I came [here] and started getting into my, some of the issues that have caused me to commit the crimes that I've committed . . . It's given me all the more reason to try to make some connections into the community. Even if it is behind the door, so to speak, right now, it's helping me; it's helping myself heal myself but, in the meantime I'm not focusing in on myself. I'm using the program and the project to give back. (Mik'maq man, mixed-level institution, participating for 1.5 years)

Reciprocity to Support Healing "On Both Sides"

Despite the fact that the incarcerated men participating in the initiative had access to variable levels of information on the impact of their work, our research found the impacts on the First Nation went far beyond the gratitude anticipated in the initial charitable model (Brown et al., 2020). Community members repeatedly described the impact of the initiative as "helping *our* men inside."

> It's a really good program, and it helps the families and it helps the people, you know, the people that are incarcerated so, it benefits everybody on both sides. It helps with, gives them closure I'm thinking, on both sides and, so a form of healing. (First Nations Band Council member)

Indeed, community members saw the act of receiving items as a way of supporting the men's healing. They appreciated the donated items. However, some did not know items were made by men in prison. Echoing communication barriers in the institutions, information sharing about the initiative was not consistent across the communities, with more remote communities often receiving fewer items and knowing less about where items came from. Those who knew where items originated saw their role as supporting the men's wellbeing.

> There was some questions about like, "Why are they building it, like how come we can't do it," and stuff like that, eh? And I'm going, "It's just their way of giving back to the people, maybe they want to apologize to the people for what they have done." So I just kept explaining, "They're there to help you guys, that they just want to say that we're sorry, and stuff like that, eh?" So I just kept telling them the positives of what [the men] are feeling. (First Nation Band Office staff member and initiative distributor)

Consistent knowledge sharing and engagement by initiative staff and leadership resulted in deepened impact for communities, and problems arising from communication barriers highlighted the potential to enhance impact through increased reciprocity and relationship.

Impacts on the Communities Were Peripherally Influenced by the Initiative

The First Nation is comprised of six communities, which are at least 500 km from the nearest participating prison. Apart from occasional visits by CSC program champions, all communication was conducted through the non-profit distribution partner. The initiative was a small component of the executive director's work, communities were remote and far from one another and the urban centre where the non-profit is based. Due to this separation, delivery and updates were not equitable across all six communities. Without any direct contact with the men, and with limited contact with CSC staff, the communities learned about the men only through infrequent non-profit events within the urban distribution centre. Therefore, many members relied on imagined impacts to frame their understanding.

> There is a goodness in the individuals' hearts, that they're making these furniture, picnic tables, benches whatever, you know? Maybe that's one way of telling the community, "This is my apology, this is the way I'm gonna pay the community back, to regain my trust or regain my honesty" . . . And then vice versa for our community members, "Okay, there is some good there," you know? Not always see the bad. (First Nations Band Council member)

Like the men, the communities were hungry for opportunities to engage more directly. For example, during one visit by the research team, several community members were interested in visiting the men immediately.

> To be honest with you, I'd like to actually be there in, like face to face, and tell them, "You guys are doing amazing, the products are just absolutely amazing," just to see their energy . . . Maybe they'll say, "Wow, the community really does thank us for doing this." (First Nations community initiative distributor)

Community members saw the impacts of the program extending beyond receiving items. It also affected the wider community and Nation through crime prevention beyond incarceration. They imagined ways to connect with the men post-release.

> To come back into the community . . . If they can continue to do that in some way, if it's part of their carving, or if it's build-making. If there's a facility, either here in the community or at the Nation level, somewhere where they can continue that . . . maybe they can mentor or train our youth, or just other people that are wanting to be taught. (First Nations Chief)

Discussion and Policy Implications

The impacts of the initiative both achieved and exceeded the goals and expectations for mutual benefit for the men and communities. The initiative provided meaningful employment that occupied the men's time, while also impacting their identities and positive sense of self. The communities experienced far

more than simple gratitude for the donated items (Brown et al., 2020). However, both CSC and the First Nation are working within a policy context that distances correctional services from crime prevention initiatives (Doob & Webster, 2015), and Indigenous communities from prisons. In this context, "the interests of victim and offender are assumed to be diametrically opposed: the rights of one competing with those of the other in the form of a zero-sum game" (Garland, 2001, p. 180). Despite CSC (2008) claims that community programming is "fundamental" to rehabilitation, a focus on downstream punitive measures, unsustainable funding, policy siloes, and systemic underfunding of Indigenous-specific programming continues to undermine partnership potentials (Doob & Webster, 2015; Public Safety Canada, 2018a; Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, 1996; Canadian Criminal Justice Association, 2017; Webster & Doob, 2015). This allows for the old ideal of "open prison[s] that lower the barrier between custody and the community" (Garland, 2001, p. 178) to give way to exclusionary policies that create distance between incarcerated peoples and communities. Even in the context of an initiative specifically aimed at connecting incarcerated men and Indigenous communities through the giving and receiving of items, a lack of correctional funding limited direct engagement. This meant it was necessary to rely on a non-profit, which lacked clear oversight, to fulfill the distribution outcomes and knowledge sharing, which impacted community benefit. For example, some community members perceived there to be unfairness and inequitable benefit because decisions around distribution were not transparent and information about the initiative was inconsistent. Additionally, the initiative continues to exist outside of formal programming and staff job descriptions, resulting in inconsistent staff buy-in and variable benefits for the men. The "economic rationality" underlying funding decisions undermines sustainable institutional support, leading to what Garland (2001) calls the "limitations of the sovereign state" to control populations, either through social welfare or penal measures (p. 206).

In the initiative, the need for meaningful engagement between men and communities is highlighted by the socio-economic, political, and historic forces of marginalization, oppression, and colonialism, which can be obscured by the distance between them and worsened by widespread stigmatization and popular notions of the "beyond hope" criminal (Garland, 2001; Maruna, 2001; Melossio & Pavarini, 1981): Community members, unaware of where items came from or the full story of the men and their acts of giving, had less opportunity to address their biases towards incarcerated persons, and the men, unaware of community impacts, were left without opportunities to develop new identities outside of "offender" or "criminal." These dynamics are deepened by the fact that prisons and communities are embedded within wider historical and ongoing colonial policy contexts, which sustain the disproportionate exposure of Indigenous Peoples to the determinants of crime (Forrester et al., 2012; Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003). Neoliberal criminological processes increasingly conceptualize crime at the level of the individual, providing spaces for victim input and impact statements that further individualize the crime, while "the offender is rendered more and more abstract, more and more stereotypical, more and more a projected image" (Garland, 2001, p. 179). In Canada, social determinants of crime result in criminal justice inequities built upon a foundation of ongoing and historical colonial forces that combine with neoliberal individualism to erase context, reduce crime to the interpersonal, and frame reintegration and community engagement within the language of risk and managerialism (Garland, 2001). The initiative not only reduces the distance between victim and victimizer, but also provides what one Indigenous community recipient called a "surrogate victim" with diverse relationships to crime, criminal justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation. While the participating men are incarcerated in a system that supports "punishment-at-a-distance" (Garland, 2001, p. 179), criminal policy is developed far from the realities of being incarcerated. The initiative has potential to support a healing-close-together approach, where the

men become less abstract and can be seen as individual people impacted by histories and contexts outside of their control.

In the context of this study, operational barriers to relationships and communication between the men and the community members had the potential to reduce impact and cause harm; this highlights the importance of strengths-based depictions of incarcerated people and Indigenous communities to counteract stereotypes and support community cohesion for individuals leaving prison. In a criminal justice context wherein "the offender's worth tends towards zero [and] victims' interests expand to fill the gap," the initiative offers opportunities for the men to support the interest of the surrogate victim community, while also increasing their feelings of self-worth and opportunities for strengths-based knowledge sharing (Garland, 2001, p. 181). In Canada, the CSC continues to seek community partnerships that address gaps in current programming, and the initiative is currently operating as a model with significant potential. While prison–Indigenous community partnerships cannot rectify broad social injustices, with the right policy support, the initiative illustrates that they have great potential for contributing to better outcomes for incarcerated men, and potential for crime prevention in Indigenous communities. In addition to the dedicated efforts of many correctional staff and leaders, a shift in government in Canada in 2015 brought stronger concerns about crime prevention, the social correlates of crime, and a specific emphasis on incarcerated Indigenous Peoples created new opportunities for strengthening community–prison partnerships, despite ongoing distrust of State actors by incarcerated Indigenous Peoples. As "the formal boundaries of the crime control field are no longer marked out by the institutions of the criminal justice state," expanding to include civil society and a variety of social and economic actors and agencies, governance and control have become increasingly distanced from the lived realities of peoples in prison (Garland, 2001, p. 170). This managerial utilitarianism instead relies on social and economic controls outside of the State, offering potential for partnerships while also narrowly focusing on measurable outputs. Policy changes are needed to ensure that such partnerships, particularly in the context of Indigenous communities dealing with ongoing colonization, are driven by community priorities, and founded in the values of equity, transparency, and cultural safety.

Policy Implications: Fostering Greater Reciprocity and Investment

In addition to the espoused potential for community–prison partnerships to reduce recidivism (Duncan et al., 2009; Hall et al., 2018; Public Safety Canada, 2018b), this particular initiative may improve outcomes for men while incarcerated. The findings of this study suggest that these potentials may be optimized for this and other Indigenous community–prison partnerships primarily through policies that embed greater reciprocity and investment "on both sides," while maintaining an awareness of the ongoing influences of colonialism.

First, Prison–Community Partnerships Should Be Founded in Reciprocity

While restorative justice processes focus on greater engagement between people in prison and communities, in both victim–offender and wider societal contexts, there is a clear need for programming and research that specifically can facilitate reciprocal engagement and altruism between inmates and communities (London, 2011), particularly in Indigenous contexts where relationships are foundational to culturally safe healing and wellness (Dickson-Gilmore & LaPrairie, 2005; Hewitt, 2016). In our study, we found that both men and community members were interested in direct connection, and increased

reciprocity would enhance the benefits of indirect knowledge sharing. However, caution is required so that such partnerships are neither token nor developed based on assumptions about Indigenous Peoples as inherently homogenous across Nations and communities, while also accounting for how structural forces, ongoing racism, and colonialism continue to influence State–community relationships (Clarysse & Moore, 2019; Cunneen, 2014). Participants highlighted this potential for harm when the non-profit staff inconsistently supported connections. Thus, meaningful engagement and local relationships should be fostered with an awareness of these risks.

Our research found that the Work 2 Give initiative occupies a unique position in that it is CSC-initiated but was seen by the men as on the margins of CSC and, in turn, increases positive impacts as the men see their work as outside of the formal and punitive correctional system. Based on our findings, it is important to resource partnerships in ways that foster reciprocity without losing unique positioning as a non-mandated nor solely community-focused program. Key steps to this balance include (a) recognizing the impacts and contributions of all parties, with a particular focus on Indigenous community strengths, and (b) establishing regular communication mechanisms that foster multidirectional communication, including mechanisms for input from Indigenous leaders and community members, prison leaders, staff, and incarcerated people. In this case, our study highlighted that current efforts to strengthen opportunities for communication between the men and communities about community needs and priorities, and regarding distribution processes, can increase each party's investment. Listening to the communities' perspectives regarding their contribution to the men's healing has led to an exploration of ways to further integrate First Nations knowledges, values, and strengths into the operational structure.

Second, Prison–Indigenous Community Partnerships Require Investment from All Parties

We found that the current initiative has relied primarily on individual prison staff commitment, dedication within the institutions, and the engagement of the non-profit within the communities. As with any program, success in the prison context will depend on sustained funding, alignment with corporate priorities, and engaged, supportive management-level leadership. Similarly, we found that communication with and distribution to communities via the non-profit was uneven and resulted in some community members not knowing where items came from and others feeling that the initiative was unfair. These barriers to success are particularly meaningful in the context of ongoing colonialism and distrust by Indigenous Peoples towards the Canadian State. Finally, investment by the participants—in this case incarcerated men and First Nations community members—is key, and can be supported through visibility of the initiative, balanced with safety considerations. All aspects of policy and programming must be founded on the concepts of social justice, equity, and cultural safety as a means to counteract the ongoing influences of colonialism. The importance of these concepts was highlighted throughout our study, both by men and community members who experienced the initiative as such—and therefore derived benefit—and by men and community members who experienced the initiative as inequitable, non-transparent, or extractive.

Third, Reciprocity and Investment Require Visibility

An unanticipated benefit of this research was the increased visibility of the partnership and program throughout both CSC and the communities, bolstered by regular meetings among all parties, photos,

and a documentary film about the project (Macguire et al., 2017). This visibility has been key in supporting increased reciprocity and investment, and underscores the critical importance of regular, effective communication, pre-planned feedback loops, and high-quality and accessible information, including the use of visual methods and narrative formats that align with Indigenous ways of knowing and sharing information. However, the circumstances of this initiative are unique because the partnership involves a number of research grants—including one for a documentary. Plans for such visibility need to be integrated in all partnerships that extend beyond time-limited research projects. As our analysis shows, the communities wanted to know more about the men, and the men wanted more information about community impacts. At the outset, lines of communication and mechanisms can be planned beyond meetings between partnership leads. In this case, goods could be tagged with the initiative logo and could include a description of the artist or maker, while maintaining anonymity for safety reasons. For instance, the man's Indigenous Nation and his intentions for making the items could be included. A description of the initiative could accompany each set of goods. Media releases could be planned strategically, in service of countering the harmful stereotypes about, in this case, incarcerated men and Indigenous Peoples, and prisons and their staff. This is particularly important given ongoing colonialism and histories of misinformation, misleading State–community communication, and the undervaluing of Indigenous community strengths and priorities in tackling widespread inequities.

Visibility is also supported by high quality data and information. At the outset, such partnerships should have resources for tracking participation and outputs. In this case, how many men participate, how many products are produced, and how many individuals receive goods should be tracked. Visibility of the partnership within the prison context can be greatly enhanced by directly linking to corporate priorities at the outset and tracking impact using relevant indicators. In this case, our initial research efforts have identified possibilities and limitations for integrating prison–Indigenous community partnership-sensitive indicators within routine correction system data collection and monitoring processes; this is particularly important given a recent Supreme Court Case ruling that CSC measures are unfairly biased towards Indigenous Peoples (*Ewert v. Canada*, 2018). In this context, policy support in terms of recognition at the most senior levels, financing, and dedicated staff is needed for sustainability and visibility. Strong senior level support within correctional organizations will ideally position Indigenous community partnerships as policy-mandated and as part of regular and ongoing programming. For example, the Sections 81 and 84, amendments to the Canadian Correctional and Conditional Release Act (2017), outline ways for Indigenous people to be released into Indigenous communities, which might be directly enhanced by applying these policy recommendations. Further, release agreements could be combined with initiatives such as the one described here to potentially deepen the impacts of both. Given ongoing priorities to address disproportionate rates of incarceration for Indigenous Peoples, partnerships with Indigenous communities are especially timely.

Finally, this study has pointed to the importance of research partnerships. Funding bodies interested in promoting crime prevention and recidivism reduction should aim to support research regarding prison–community partnerships generally, and partnerships with Indigenous communities specifically. This is timely given calls for Indigenous community-based research across several national bodies in Canada (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2014), as well as the growth of participatory methods and Indigenous-led research (Allan & Smylie, 2015; Smylie et al., 2004). Further, such research should promote access to institutions and ways for Indigenous communities to drive research regarding

corrections, crime, and rehabilitation in their community contexts (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015a).

Conclusion

In this mixed methods study, we examined the impact of a prison–community partnership based in BC, Canada. We found that the initiative had great potential to support healing and rehabilitation for incarcerated men participating across federal prisons in BC, as well as potential to support healing, wellbeing, and community priorities in the partnering rural and remote Indigenous communities. Our study highlighted barriers to positive impact and sustainability and underlined policy requirements needed to sustain and scale impact. We propose that a bidirectional model of engagement, founded on the concepts of equity, social justice, and cultural safety and the Indigenous values of relationship and reciprocity, could strengthen impact by supporting more formal engagement between the men and the community members. The importance of reciprocal benefit as a policy goal within this initiative highlights the critical need to confront ongoing colonial dynamics and racism in the Canadian context, including pervasive negative stereotypes about Indigenous Peoples operating both within and beyond prisons. Future research will investigate operational changes to support these policy recommendations within the initiative, while also providing insights into challenges and opportunities facing governments, non-profit organizations, and researchers exploring ways to enhance wellbeing for Indigenous Peoples across colonial and state contexts. Extending beyond "economic rationality" towards reciprocity offers the potential to create meaningful shifts in "the problematic institutional terrain upon which new [criminological] strategies and objectives are continually built," first and foremost by recognizing the Canadian terrain as colonial, incarcerated men as human, and Indigenous communities as strong partners towards healing (Garland, 2001, p. 174).

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