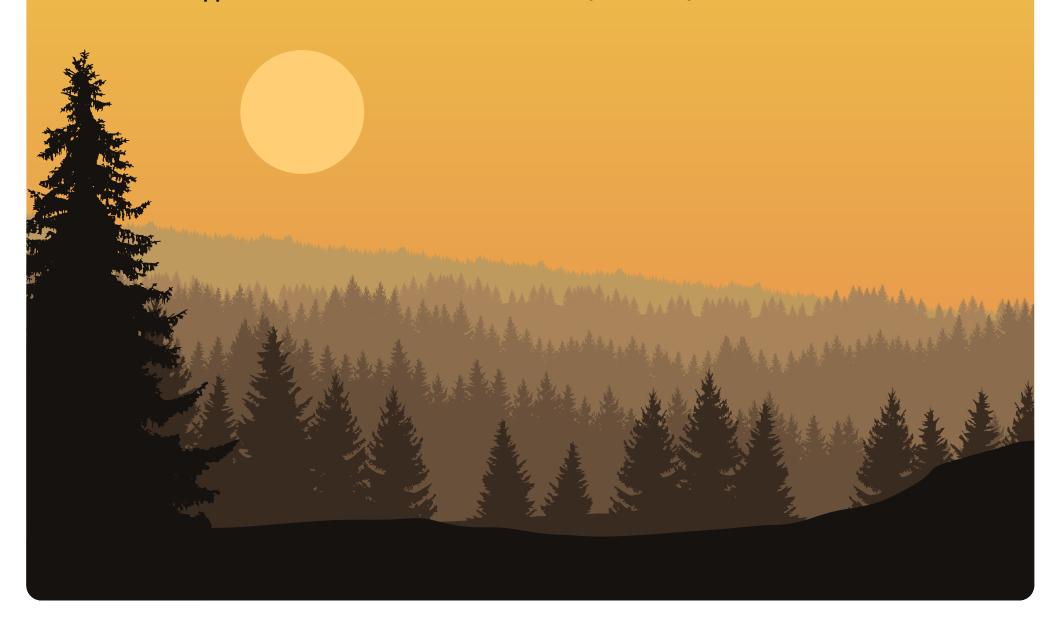# Crime Prevention in Indigenous Communities

An Examination of Culturally-Relevant Programs and Culturally-Competent Evaluation Approaches – Literature Review Overview (2023-P009)

Research Purpose

The report **reviewed** and **synthesized** literature in response to **two guiding questions**:

- How have **Indigenous cultural practices**, **traditions**, and **activities** been included in crime prevention programming and what are their **connections** with crime prevention?

- How have **culturally-relevant crime prevention programs** been **evaluated** and what is their **contribution** to crime prevention outcomes?

Research Methodology

- The literature search resulted in a total of **291 articles/reports**, from 1983 to 2021 with the majority being from **non-peer reviewed literature sources** – suggesting that the field has not yet been extensively researched.

- Articles reviewed represented **22 countries**, including Canada, Australia, the United States, New Zealand, the Philippines, and South Africa.

- Key themes included **over-representation** of Indigenous Peoples in all stages of the criminal justice system; **factors increasing or decreasing involvement** in the criminal justice system; the nature of **existing programming**; and approaches for **culturally-competent evaluation**.

Findings

The Need for Culturally-relevant Programs

The **overrepresentation** of both **Indigenous** males and females, youth and adults, in the criminal justice system highlights the **need for different approaches to crime prevention**.

- According to 2020-21 statistics, **Indigenous Peoples** represented **33% of admissions** to federal custody and 31% of admissions to provincial and territorial custody, despite accounting for **5%** of the Canadian adult population.

- **Crime prevention approaches** should incorporate **Indigenous worldviews** and **cultural humility** (i.e., sensitivity), and promote **cultural safety**.

Indigenous-specific Factors that Influence Involvement in the Criminal Justice System

Factors that increase involvement	Factors that decrease involvement
Colonialism	Engagement in traditional/cultural practices
Residential schools/Sixties scoop	Positive cultural identity
Systematic discrimination	Strong extended-family
Socio-economic marginalization	Community involvement

Culturally-relevant Programs

The **review** of culturally-relevant programs brought to light **key elements** of existing approaches and **best practices** that can provide direction for future crime prevention programs:

- **Community Empowerment**: Involve Indigenous **communities** in the design and implementation.

- **Program Type**: Ensure programs are **adapted** to **different** Indigenous populations.

- **Holistic Approach to Healing**: Incorporate **Indigenous worldviews** to address the root causes of behaviours and aid in healing.

- **Importance of Cultural Elements**: Include **cultural elements** (e.g., ceremonies, healing circles, land-based activities, etc.); **involve Indigenous facilitators, leaders, and experts**; and recognize and address the context of **colonialism and its consequences**.

- **Resources**: Secure **long-term funding** and involve **culturally-appropriate facilitators** and support workers.

- **Impact of Programs**: Conduct further **research into the role and effectiveness** of cultural program components, particularly those co-developed with Indigenous communities.

Culturally-competent Evaluation

A review of the evaluation of culturally-relevant programs uncovered **current barriers, limitations, and risks** associated with culturally-competent evaluation, as well as **best practices** and **additional opportunities** for future program evaluations.

Current Challenges	Best Practices	Future Opportunities
Relatively new area, limited to a **small number** of countries	Designs that respond to **key tenets** of Indigenous evaluations	**Stronger links** between federal governments and communities during development and implementation
Reliance on mainstream/Western evaluation methods	**Co-construction of measures** with Indigenous communities and leaders, ensuring community empowerment	Positioning **evaluators as advocates** for the communities they work with
Relationship barriers, particularly with **building trust** with communities	Designs and implementation grounded in the **cultural context** of each **individual** community	Use of dialogue and **equal participation** to co-develop evaluation approaches that mobilize **community strengths**
Resource and **capacity constraints**, as well as data-related challenges (e.g., lack of data or inconsistent data)	Presence of **culturally-relevant evaluation** components	Various methods of **knowledge sharing** to suit the **diversity** of users and participants
Barriers to accessing remote or under-resourced communities	Consideration of factors such as **trust, safe spaces, two-way knowledge sharing** and **cultural dissonance**	More **research** focused on the **use and impact** of Indigenous evaluation approaches