

BCCORRECTIONS

directions

REDUCE
REOFFENDING

PROTECT
COMMUNITIES

AN EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH

This philosophy speaks to the heart of the work done every day by BC Corrections. The mandate of this branch of the provincial criminal justice system is to protect communities and reduce reoffending. This magazine explores the entire spectrum of that mandate from the offender's perspective. We offer a glimpse of what it's like to move through the system, from the courts to programs focusing on changing behaviours, including evidence-based research and the latest technological innovations that enhance safety and further justice reform. Collectively, these stories answer the question of how we do that. Of course, answering the question of "how" is never complete without talking about the "who." In our case, that's the dedicated 500+ staff working in 55 community corrections offices who supervise over 22,000 offenders in the community year round, and the 1,500+ front line staff operating nine provincial correctional centres that house approximately 2,500 offenders each day.

“It's not where
you've been...
it's where
you're going
that matters.”

We examine the journey taken by offenders from all walks of life; from the paths that lead to life in a correctional facility to the paths that offer reintegration and a real future free of crime.

These are their stories.

The names, characters and criminal histories contained in these stories are fictional.

Discover more about BC Corrections at www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/corrections/about-us

Evidence-based practice leads to **BETTER OUTCOMES**



BC Corrections' evidence-based practice is the foundation for how they deliver their programs in correctional facilities and in the community. It allows staff to make smart and well-informed decisions regarding the supervision of offenders by integrating the best available research with professional knowledge and expertise.

This is the basis of the Performance, Research and Evaluation (PREv) unit that supports the development and evaluation of effective strategies used in BC Corrections, from conducting internal and cross-ministry analyses to supporting external academic research and evaluation projects. PREv supports and oversees about 12 to 15 new research projects a year, many of them ongoing, and has developed long-standing relationships with researchers at Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia.

Through their rigorous evaluation methods, PREv ensures the validity of operations data, as well as upholding high ethical standards in research practice. They investigate the effectiveness of correctional interventions and programs, developing and implementing frameworks for new projects and programs.

■ EVALUATIONS AND PROGRAMS

The PREv unit has played an integral part in bringing BC Corrections' signature programs and initiatives to life. Its work has helped inform evaluations of the Guthrie Therapeutic Community and programs such as the Relationship Violence Prevention Program and the Integrated Offender Management Program*. The following is just a sample of programs bolstered by the findings from PREv to give offenders the power to make better choices. For more information on PREv:

www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/corrections/research

■ THE VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM (VPP)

Using cognitive behavioural techniques, this program helps offenders become aware of their cycle of violence so they can develop self-management skills to deal with their anger. After 24 months, the VPP group reoffended 20% less than a comparison group.

■ THE DRUG TREATMENT COURT OF VANCOUVER (DTCV)

A specialized court, the DTCV offers coordinated support to offenders struggling with addiction. The DTCV has played a key role in reducing crime and providing treatment to those dealing with addiction in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. Just in the past decade alone, the DTCV has reduced criminal reoffending of all kinds by 35% and drug-related repeat offences by 56%.

■ ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAMS

The staff at BC Corrections use risk assessment tools to inform key decisions about offender management. Therefore, the assessment tools need to be evidence-based. The Corrections Risk Needs Assessment tool (CRNA) does well in reliability and validity evaluations and has been found to predict recidivism levels 70 - 75% of the time. By assessing the risks and needs of an offender, staff determine which programs are best suited to change an offender's behaviour. The following are just some of the programs offered to help offenders change their behaviour. For more information on programs and case management approaches:

www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/corrections/programs

■ RELATIONSHIP SKILLS FOR WOMEN

These thirteen 150-minute sessions delivered by correctional officers teach female offenders about healthy relationships and taking responsibility for their choices.

■ EMOTIONS MANAGEMENT FOR WOMEN

These ten 150-minute sessions delivered by correctional officers foster confidence and enhance self-awareness so that offenders can make safer decisions and take more responsibility for themselves and others.

■ SEX OFFENDER TREATMENT AND MAINTENANCE

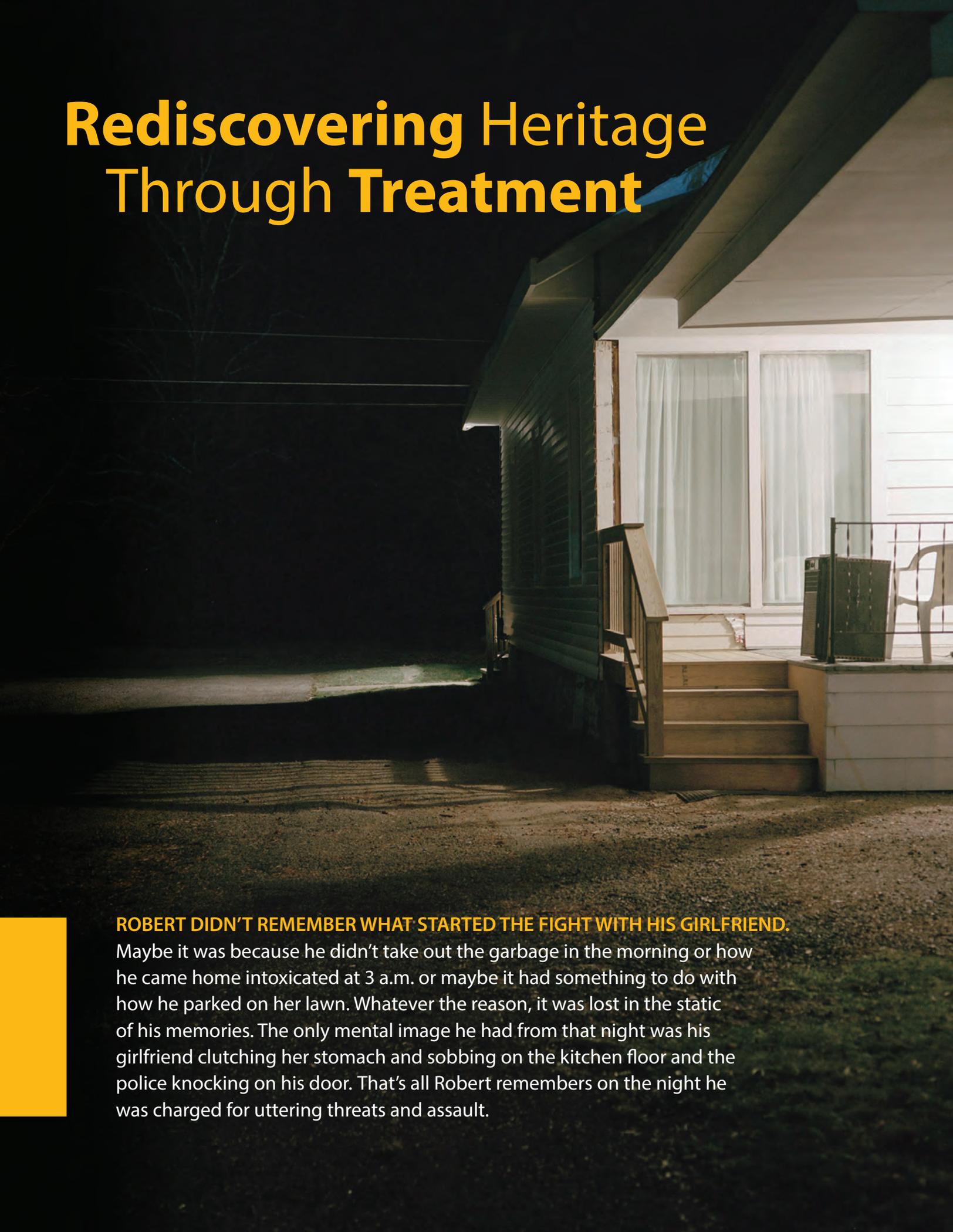
The Corrections Branch partners with the Forensic Psychiatric Services Commission in a collaborative and coordinated approach to provide treatment in both the community and custody. Probation officers lead maintenance sessions designed to reinforce skills learned in treatment.

■ ESSENTIAL SKILLS TO SUCCESS

Delivered by correctional officers, the Essential Skills to Success sessions teach offenders basic life skills, such as how to find housing, manage a budget, prepare a resume and perform effectively in the workplace. Correctional officers and contractors are trained to lead the classes in a way that makes the information easy to understand. The nine skills taught include: reading, document use, numeracy, writing, speaking/listening, working with others, thinking, computer use and continuous learning.

* See pages 4, 5 and 10 for evaluation results on these programs.

Rediscovering Heritage Through Treatment

A photograph of a house at night. The house has a porch with wooden steps and a railing. The porch is lit from within, and there are white curtains on the windows. The house is surrounded by a dark, wooded area. The overall mood is somber and reflective.

ROBERT DIDN'T REMEMBER WHAT STARTED THE FIGHT WITH HIS GIRLFRIEND.

Maybe it was because he didn't take out the garbage in the morning or how he came home intoxicated at 3 a.m. or maybe it had something to do with how he parked on her lawn. Whatever the reason, it was lost in the static of his memories. The only mental image he had from that night was his girlfriend clutching her stomach and sobbing on the kitchen floor and the police knocking on his door. That's all Robert remembers on the night he was charged for uttering threats and assault.

The judge sentenced Robert to probation. His probation officer laid out the terms of his probation: he would need to go through a two-part Relationship Violence Prevention Program (RVPP), have regular check-ins with the probation officer and with the Aboriginal justice worker at the Sto:lo Nation, and have one-on-one counselling with an Elder. The Aboriginal justice worker recommended he contact his uncle James, who he hadn't seen since he was a teenager, but who was an Elder. The Aboriginal justice worker helped set up a meeting.

At first, Robert mostly just nodded his way through the initial meetings with his uncle, spending most of the time mentally counting down the minutes until he could go back to hanging out with his buddies. After awhile, the empty house where he spent most of his days started to erode his pride. In the quiet of 2 a.m., he ran out of things to hate about himself and realized he actually did miss his girlfriend. He needed to become a better man; he just wasn't sure how he'd do that. Through his Elder, he began to understand himself better, and the Sto:lo history and traditions he spent much of his life fighting against.

In Respectful Relationships, each session began with a prayer from his uncle and drumming and singing from the group. This wasn't the usual bad coffee in a bleak room for 90 minutes; they actually respected him and his Aboriginal heritage. With the support of his probation officer and the Aboriginal justice worker who delivered the program together, Robert began to discover why he was angry all the time and, along with the other seven guys in the program, realized he wasn't alone. His probation officer believed he could change and gave him a support network he could rely on.

By the time Robert completed the Relationship Violence Program, the last part of RVPP, it had been a long year. He was going to try to reconcile his relationship, and, thanks to the probation officer, he had a promising new lead on a job. For the first time in a long time, Robert saw a future with real promise, free of violence.

■ DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- **Relationship Violence Prevention Program (RVPP):** A two-part program that helps offenders identify abusive behaviour, understand its harmful impact and learn how to avoid it in their relationships. **Respectful Relationships (RR)** consists of 10 sessions delivered by Corrections staff, while the **Relationship Violence Program (RVP)** consists of 17 sessions delivered by trained therapists.
- **Cultural Edition (RVPP)** is a compilation of the material contained in the RR and RVP programs, but adapted to reflect the unique cultural differences and realities of men from diverse cultural backgrounds.



■ ABORIGINAL JUSTICE STRATEGY

BC Corrections offers programs to Aboriginal offenders that ensure they receive fair, equitable and culturally sensitive treatment. The Aboriginal Justice Strategy operates in 36 communities, providing community-based services that range from court diversion to the re-integration of offenders returning home from custody centres.

Working closely with probation officers, the approximately 100 Aboriginal justice workers across the province play an important role in helping Aboriginal offenders transition into the community. Each of our nine custody centres provide Aboriginal spiritual leadership, counselling and cultural programming.

■ THE STATISTICAL IMBALANCE

Aboriginal people are significantly over-represented in the BC justice system. Looking at the numbers, we see that Aboriginal offenders currently comprise just 4.5% of BC's population, but make up 27% of the custody population and 23% of people supervised by Community Corrections. This is one of the most important issues BC Corrections is working to address. Through open partnerships with Aboriginal justice organizations, we are creating programs and policies that better meet the needs of Aboriginal offenders. In the long term, this will help reduce the number of Aboriginal people in the correctional system.

UP TO A
50% REDUCTION
 OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OFFENSES
 BY OFFENDERS WHO GO THROUGH
 THE RR & RVP PROGRAMS.

(VIA EVALUATION FROM PERFORMANCE, RESEARCH AND EVALUATION UNIT)

For more information on the programs we offer for Aboriginal offenders:
www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/corrections/aboriginal

Recovering FROM ADDICTION

For most of Chris's life, he was told he wasn't very good at anything. In school, he was always picked last for dodgeball, and he had to sound out every syllable when asked to read aloud. At home, it seemed he couldn't do something as simple as wash the dishes without his dad criticizing him. And it was like that until high school, when Chris learned he was very good at stealing cars. It started with a prank, moving a math teacher's car from one end of the parking lot to the other. Then he learned people would pay him a lot of money to steal cars. And so he did, and he did it well; which led to Chris discovering the other thing he was really good at: cocaine.

A middleman was short on a payment and gave Chris some coke to make up the difference. And from that first hit, it became his life. It was the time between the highs that was unbearable and he tried to steal more cars so he would have enough money not to worry about that. Unfortunately, the cocaine made him sloppy and ultimately led to his daytime nap in an SUV he was trying to steal. Now, he was at Nanaimo Correctional Centre for a 23-month sentence that included his enrollment into the Substance Abuse Management program.

He went into the first session thinking it was going to be a waste of time. But then, something happened – the correctional officer running the sessions reached out to him and empathized with his struggle. Chris wasn't used to that. He eventually learned to open up to the other eight guys in the program, sharing his experiences and trying to find that void in their lives they were all trying to fill. He learned about the relationship between his thoughts and behaviour, as well as how to manage his addictions and the relationships that would trap him into using again. Chris also learned basic life skills through the Essential Skills to Success program which was also taught by a correctional officer. With the help of an encouraging teacher, he learned to read without taking an hour to get through a page and then got to work on earning his grade 12 diploma. He started building relationships with the correctional officers who were his teachers, learning by their example.

His case manager noticed Chris's progress and invited him to work in the kitchen as part of the inmate work crew, a responsibility that came with respect and autonomy. It was a level of trust nobody had ever given him. And it was a feeling he wanted more of in his life. He soon enrolled into Guthrie House, a therapeutic community at Nanaimo Correctional Centre, where he could finally move on from his addiction and make up for all that time he had lost. Maybe Chris couldn't be good at snorting cocaine and stealing cars anymore, but he could be good at something that mattered: second chances.



■ A CLOSER LOOK AT GUTHRIE HOUSE

In only five years since it opened its doors, Guthrie House has built a reputation for successfully rehabilitating offenders. The 65-bed facility is a self-contained therapeutic community where offenders get the support and care they need to learn the fundamentals required to live a life free of addiction. Instead of treating surface-level symptoms, Guthrie House helps offenders discover the root cause of their addiction – through an intensive program that combines work, treatment, counselling and round-the-clock behavioural modelling. Offenders need to do more than pass a drug test to get into the program; they need to meet certain behavioural standards and pass an assessment by their peers who demand accountability from each other.

After four months and fulfilling all the requirements of the program, offenders are phased into the community. Even at this stage, the offenders aren't alone as the program helps them find work and housing, and continues to monitor them for up to six months. **Thus far, studies show that offenders that go through the program are 33% less likely to reoffend.**

For more information on programs
and Guthrie Therapeutic Community:
www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/corrections/programs

BIOMETRICS Make Identification and ACCESS EFFORTLESS

The ICON II Project by BC Corrections will change the way offenders access information through the latest biometrics technology and electronic devices. Through an entire suite of eServices and eDisclosure, this state-of-the-art technology provides inmates with access to evidence they need in order to prepare for trial, as well as access to other services, such as the ability to request doctor appointments. For suitable offenders who live in the community, it allows them to self-report to, and receive messages from, their probation officers. The biometrics aspect of the system works through a secure, internal network and confirms an offender's identity during the admission and release process while in custody. It will prevent an offender from using an alias or having someone else assume their identity while under the supervision of the Corrections Branch. Through ICON II, we're not only improving operational efficiencies, but also furthering justice reform, increasing accessibility to critical information for offenders and helping to enhance public safety.

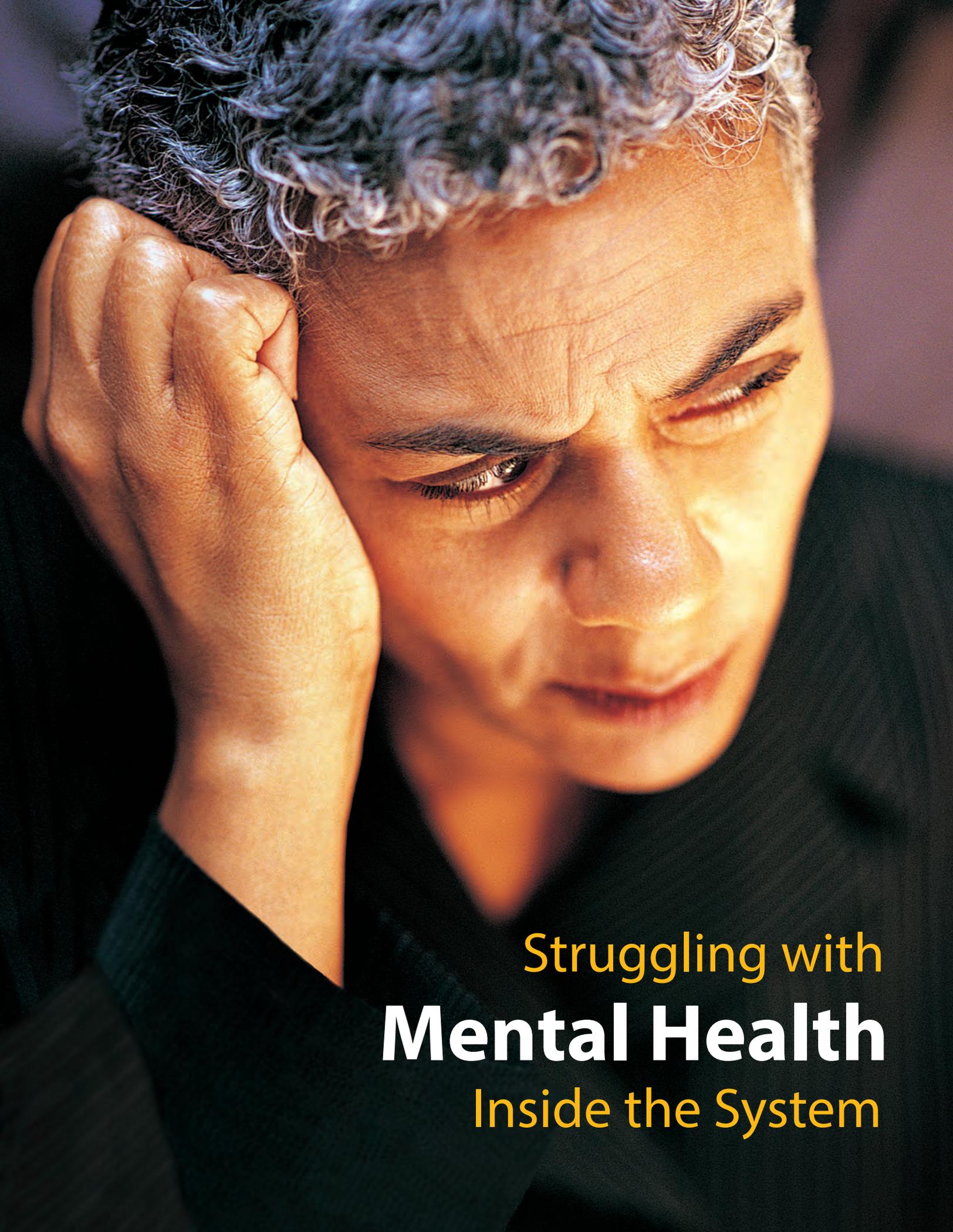
■ DID YOU KNOW?

The idea of using fingerprints for identification was conceived centuries ago. The ancient Babylonians recorded business transactions by pressing the tips of their fingers into clay. Now, with advances in computer processing, automated biometric systems allow us to identify people as effectively as possible. A two-factor authentication, which includes logging into an eDevice using a BC correctional service number and placing your finger on the biometric reader, ensures a false acceptance rate (FAR) of less than or equal to 0.0001%.

Scanners or sensors collect biometric fingerprints that are then converted into an encrypted electronic template. Access is only granted when that template matches the digital "key" provided by the finger. A person cannot use biometric fingerprints to create a mold. Because they're stored in the form of encrypted logarithms rather than the fingerprint's image, it's impossible to reconstruct or steal a fingerprint. Also, the biometric readers are designed to tell the difference between a human body and other materials, such as plastic, on the basis of heat and blood flow.

For more information on our
offender management systems:

www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/corrections/about-us/technology



Struggling with
Mental Health
Inside the System

“When’s the last time you tried to hurt yourself? , ,

asked the woman with the clipboard.

Instinctively, Sonja pulled the sleeves of her shirt over her wrists. It had been weeks since she had last cut herself and back then, the world had threatened to crush her very being. Cutting had been a way to get rid of some of the pain and pressure. That was ancient history, though, compared to the euphoric meth high still buzzing in her brain. Her crime, to her at least, seemed to be living life too much. It had been 1 a.m. and she couldn’t understand why the bartender wouldn’t give her another shot. It was his fault he got hit when she tried to grab the bottle. It was his fault she got escorted away by those police officers, who had sighed as they cuffed her for the third time that month. And it was his fault that she was now in the Alouette Correctional Centre for Women.

At intake, the nurse questioned Sonja about her medical history. Then the mental health screener asked her questions about her social and mental health history, and about her history of violence and self-harm. By the third day, Sonja had met with the mental health coordinator and been referred to the physician and the psychologist. The physician prescribed medication for her bipolar disorder and the psychologist saw her almost every week. That was a place to talk about those past traumas and the pain she had been running from for most of her life. It was also a chance for her to work on coping strategies for dealing with the thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that left her feeling so out of control sometimes. For Sonja, it was a relief not to feel alone with her struggles. Sometimes, she still had too much time to think, but she was grateful for the Emotions Management for Women and Substance Abuse Management programs she got to take, and she tried to keep busy working in the laundry and going to the gym. It seemed to her as though the addictions counsellor, mental health liaison correctional officer, nurses, mental health coordinator, psychologist and her program officers all cared about helping her maintain a level of stability, and the medications she was on seemed to be helping. Her case coordinator and the addictions counsellor had been helping her with her release plan. It was a level of structure and support she had never had in her life, and it brought her a sense of calm.

As Sonja’s release day neared, her case coordinator called Sonja in to go over her release plan. She was set up with income assistance and some clothes to wear for her first day out of jail. Her addictions counsellor had helped her set up an intake appointment at an addiction treatment centre, and the mental health coordinator had made an appointment for her with a community mental health team in her city. Anxious but excited, she felt great about being back out. It was a bit overwhelming to be around so many people and to have to deal with everything on her own, but she was determined.

She had just brought a few dishes home from a secondhand store when some friends came by to celebrate her release with a couple bottles of wine. One or two drinks wouldn’t hurt when she had been sober for so long and doing so well, she thought. It’d be fine as long as she stayed away from the drugs. That nightmare she had last night had left her feeling really shaken, and a bit of fun with her friends would take her mind off those memories that had been coming up again lately.

When her head started to clear, she realized she was sitting in the back of the sheriff’s van, headed to Alouette Correctional Centre for Women. Her face felt bruised and swollen, but she’d have to wait for a mirror to see how badly she was hurt. The mirror would have to wait as she was escorted into a familiar intake room.

“Have you tried to hurt yourself since the last time you were here?” asked the woman with the clipboard.

■ THE BC DIRECTOR OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

BC Corrections recognizes the importance of addressing mental health and addictions among offenders. In fact, BC is the only province in Canada with a dedicated director of mental health services as part of its correctional system to provide consultation and expert advice regarding mental health and addiction services.

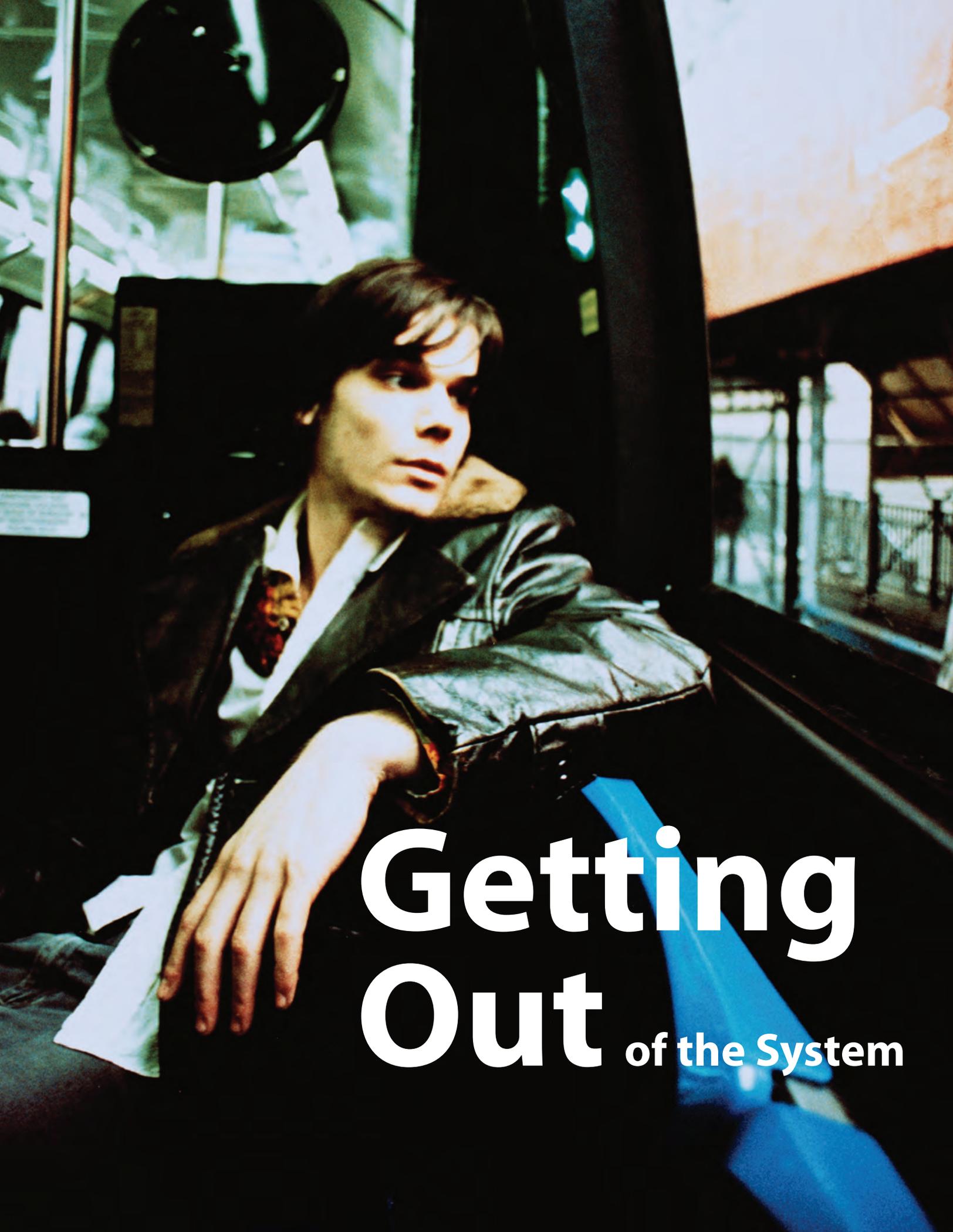
■ DID YOU KNOW?

- 56% of offenders are believed to have a substance abuse and/or mental illness disorder. (PREv 2004)
- 1 in 5 Canadians will experience a mental illness. (Health Canada, 2002)
- 2 out of every 3 adults who need treatment for mental illness don’t get it because of the stigma around mental illness. (MHCC, 2009)

■ THE MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY FOR CORRECTIONS IN CANADA

All offenders deserve to be treated with empathy, especially those who live with mental health issues. Recognizing this, BC Corrections co-championed a one-of-a-kind strategy based on the principles of prevention, early detection, integration and awareness called the Mental Health Strategy for Corrections in Canada. It seeks to ensure that offenders with mental health needs receive a continuum of care and services both in and out of custody. A holistic approach to mental health services, the strategy works to help correctional facilities promote mental health awareness, have trained staff educated in proper screening and assessment tools, offer appropriate treatment and services for suicide and self-injury prevention, and provide transitional services and support that includes community support. Consistent with this, BC Corrections has partnered with the BC Ministry of Health and various Health Authorities (called Partners in Change) in a project to increase access to mental health services at key transition points for clients both in custody and in the community.

For more information on services:
www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/corrections/mental-health



Getting Out of the System

When Jeff was eight years old, he made the mistake of telling a teacher about his dream of becoming an astronaut. The teacher laughed. Maybe her laughter wasn't meant to be malicious, but Jeff didn't wait to find out and hit his teacher. And for most of Jeff's life, that was his default reaction to everything. After getting shoved during a friendly game of street hockey, Jeff broke the arm of the guy who pushed him. That led to his first of many visits to the youth custody centre, and yet with every fight that led him back there, each visit never phased Jeff too much. It was just time away from hanging out with his friends outside the liquor store or a park, smoking and drinking whatever beer they could steal. He spent so much of his time outside that liquor store or in youth custody that school faded away from his life.

He wasn't sure when he quit going to school completely or when his parents kicked him out of the house, but he was drinking and fighting a lot by then and ended up living on the streets. At that point, his life had one priority: find enough booze to block out the world. Eventually, it's why he hit that bouncer with a bottle for not letting him into the bar and got sent to Fraser Regional Correctional Centre for the eighth time. Now he had nothing to do for six months, except plan his revenge on the world... or so he thought.

He was called into an office to speak with a probation officer about something called the Integrated Offender Management Program (IOM). At first, the woman just wanted to talk to him about his probation order, how he could apply for income assistance and where he would live once he got out of jail. And then she asked him about his future. It wasn't something Jeff could really answer, all he knew was that he didn't want to end up back in jail. So she offered him a different choice. He could join this program that wouldn't lead to him losing every job for yelling at a customer – a chance to live a life not controlled by his rage – and get out of the correctional system once and for all.

Once he was in the IOM Program, instead of staring at the walls of his cell for hours, his schedule was full. It began with the Violence Prevention Program, where he worked on his anger problem, and then he spent time in the Substance Abuse Management Program. For the first time, he began learning how to budget and acquire other life skills in the Essential Skills to Success classes, and then he was able to work on getting his grade 12 diploma. But more importantly, he got to spend time in the metal shop, learning how to appreciate the nuances of the tools and the pleasure of reassembling a gearbox. It surprised Jeff to learn how naturally it all came to him. It was then that he felt like he was in control for the first time in his life.

Before he knew it, the day came. Just as he and his probation officer had outlined in his release plan, he had a place lined up through the homeless outreach worker. An income assistance worker had helped with his paperwork so he'd have some money for groceries. His probation officer had set up appointments with a counsellor so he could keep his anger in check. And he was now enrolled in a millwright program at a local trade school so he could keep that passion he discovered in the metal shop alive. Now all he had to do was step outside and he could start his life.

A probation officer was waiting outside to give him a ride to the local probation office. He was nervous during the drive. Jeff kept checking his pocket for the phone numbers of the IOM staff, people he could call whenever the world became too overwhelming and he needed help. The probation officer told him he would be working with Jeff throughout his time on probation, and particularly over the next few weeks, to make sure his transition back to the community went smoothly. Things were going to be okay, Jeff thought. He just had to remember his priorities.

■ A CLOSER LOOK AT THE IOM PROGRAM

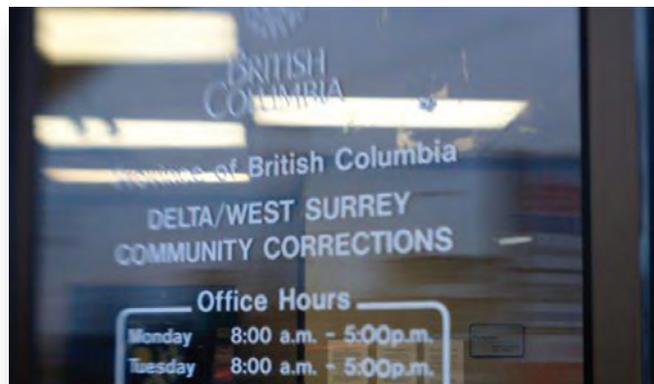
Offenders are most vulnerable during the first few weeks after release. The Integrated Offender Management Program takes a holistic look at the needs of clients to help them gain a sense of accountability and change behaviours that could lead to reoffending. The program focuses on chronic repeat offenders that have been assessed as higher risk and higher needs due to addiction, negative attitudes, peer associations and other dynamic risk factors. The program is finding success, as an impact analysis in 2010 demonstrated, pointing to a reduction of recidivism by up to 48% for those enrolled in the program. For more information on IOM and other partners we work with:

www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/corrections/partnerships

■ CHANGING THE WAY WE WORK THROUGH STICS

The Strategic Training Initiative in Community Supervision (STICS) Program applies the evidence-based principles of risk, need and responsiveness to one-on-one offender supervision to help facilitate positive behavioural change. STICS-trained probation officers identify problematic thinking patterns and show their clients how their pro-criminal attitudes lead to criminal behaviour. They use their motivational interviewing skills to engage their clients in identifying appropriate social behaviours and solutions. Research findings have confirmed that there is a 38% reduction in recidivism for those under the supervision of STICS-trained probation officers versus offenders under the supervision of probation officers without STICS training. For more information on STICS:

<http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/corrections/programs/stics>



■ ADDRESSING CRIMINOGENIC NEEDS THROUGH CRNA (CORRECTIONS RISK-NEEDS ASSESSMENT)

Dealing with offenders can be difficult, so it's important for probation officers to have the tools they need to do their jobs. The Corrections Risk Needs Assessment (CRNA) is an empirically-based dynamic assessment scale that helps officers determine offenders' risk-levels to better address their criminogenic needs. In doing so, the proper supports and interventions can be offered that match an offender's behaviours and readiness for change. Through the CRNA, probation officers are given a better understanding of the risks and needs of an offender, which supports case management.



COURAGE TEAMWORK PASSION INTEGRITY SERVICE CURIOSITY ACCOUNTABILITY



PROUD TO SERVE BRITISH COLUMBIANS

WE WORK WITH PASSION AND INTEGRITY. WE WALK WITH COURAGE AND AS A TEAM. WE ARE THE MEN AND WOMEN WORKING IN PROBATION OFFICES AND CORRECTIONAL CENTRES PROUDLY SERVING THE PEOPLE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA AND ENSURING THAT WE PROTECT THE SAFETY OF ALL THOSE WE SERVE.

JOIN US IN A CAREER THAT MATCHES YOUR STRENGTH.

pssg.gov.bc.ca/corrections/about-us/careers



Where ideas work



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