



MR. NORMAN YAKELEYA
MLA, SAHTU

SEP 2 2015

OQ 840-17(5): On-the-Land Rehabilitation Programs

On May 29, 2015, you asked questions in the Legislative Assembly about the status of on-the-land programs to be delivered by the Department of Justice. At that time I committed to seeing an on-the-land rehabilitation program, or wilderness program, established in the Northwest Territories (NWT) and to provide you with further information on the progress made by the Department of Justice in respect of this initiative.

The Department recognizes the importance and potential benefits of land-based programming and is committed to seeing the best possible outcome for those involved in delivering the programs as well as those participating. To this end, Justice has made significant progress by working with community partners, Elders and staff to build wilderness programming that is broader in scope and includes the flexibility required to be successful.

The fundamental pillars of our land programming remain: safety and capacity building, effectiveness and efficiency in program delivery; as well as stability and sustainability overall. We have developed three different approaches to land based programming that we believe will provide flexibility, support the rehabilitation of offenders, and benefit our community partners and the public:

1. Facility Based Land Program

This approach adopts the long standing recommendation from Elders and community based organizations that corrections services staff should be more involved in the delivery of programs and specifically be responsible for the safety and security of the inmates during the program. Corrections staff would be responsible for identifying inmates for the program and developing and delivering the program. This particular approach addresses the long standing challenges of identifying a sufficient number of low risk inmates to participate in programming and the scheduling of programs.

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A key factor of this approach is that Elders and other support people from the community can have a key role in the delivery of the program, with the full support of Corrections Services. This model will increase access to the program for Elders and inmates, allow staff to increase their knowledge and experience, and create positive links between the facility and community. It will also address the challenges that Elders and other community representatives have raised about meeting the insurance requirements of a contract.

2. Reintegration/Transition Land Program

This approach builds on the Corrections Services reintegration team, which has proven successful in assisting inmates to return home with the support of family and community members. The reintegration team is supported by the leadership of many communities. Like the reintegration team, this approach will assist in serving inmates to transition from the facility to home by participating in a land based program, hosted by the community. Corrections Services will provide administrative and financial support to community agencies to deliver the program, as well as required training.

3. Community Based Land Program

This approach is based on the community justice program, which is active in every community in the NWT and recognized as a leading model for relationship and capacity building. Community based agencies will have the ability to access financial support and other resources to deliver land based programs in order to address issues in a healing environment. This is a wish put forward by virtually every community in our Territory. The Community Based Program gives the Department of Justice the flexibility to work with a community to design a program that addresses their specific needs and supports their unique vision of what a land based program should be.

Planning for both the Facility Based and Reintegration/Transition programs is well underway. Inmates and Corrections staff are participating in land based programming and contact with the leadership in various communities has taken place towards the creation of the reintegration/transition program. Work is also underway to establish the community based program, which is expected to progress quickly given the level of experience and commitment of community based agencies.

Finally, the Department took steps to ensure that the land programs will meet recognized program standards by building in criteria, data collection, reporting and evaluation processes, and ensuring that all aspects of the programs are sufficiently resourced.

I am pleased to be able to report significant progress on the development of land programs by the Department of Justice. I look forward to continuing to work with you and our colleagues in the Legislative Assembly to deliver the best land-based programming possible. Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D Ramsay', written in a cursive style.

David Ramsay

c Mr. Tim Mercer
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Ms. Sylvia Haener
Deputy Minister, Justice

Mr. David Hastings
Legislative Coordinator