

APPEARANCE BEFORE THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (FEWO)

**First Nations Child and Family Services
February 15, 2011**

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NOTICE OF MEETING

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE
STATUS OF WOMEN**

Meeting No. 56
Tuesday, February 15, 2011
11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Room 7-52, 131 Queen Street
(613-943-9748)

AVIS DE CONVOCATION

**COMITE PERMANENT DE LA
CONDITION FEMININE**

Séance n° 56
Le mardi 15 février 2011
11 heures à 13 heures
Pièce 7-52, 131, rue Queen
(613-943-9748)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Violence Against Aboriginal Women

WITNESSES

**Department of Indian Affairs and
Northern Development**

Odette Johnston, Director
Social Programs Reform Directorate

Sheilagh Murphy, Director General
Social Policy and Programs Branch

**First Nations Child and Family Caring
Society of Canada**

Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director

**VIDEOCONFERENCE - SASKATOON,
SASKATCHEWAN**

**Federation of Saskatchewan Indian
Nations**

Chief Marie-Anne DayWalker-Pelletier
Chair, Saskatchewan First Nations'
Women's Commission, Okanese First
Nation

ORDRE DU JOUR

Violence faite aux femmes autochtones

TÉMOINS

**ministère des Affaires indiennes et du
Nord canadien**

Odette Johnston, directrice
Direction de la réforme des programmes
sociaux

Sheilagh Murphy, directrice générale
Direction de la politique sociale et des
programmes

**Société de soutien à l'enfance et à la
famille des Premières Nations du
Canada**

Cindy Blackstock, directrice générale

**VIDÉOCONFÉRENCE - SASKATOON,
SASKATCHEWAN**

**Federation of Saskatchewan Indian
Nations**

Chef Marie-Anne DayWalker-Pelletier
présidente, Saskatchewan First Nations'
Women's Commission, Première nation
d'Okanese

Background Information on the Committee on the Status of Women (FEWO)
Study on Violence Against Aboriginal Women.

On March 8, 2010, the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women (FEWO) agreed to undertake a study on Violence against Aboriginal women. Its purpose was to study the root causes of violence that Aboriginal women and their families experience, the nature of that violence, and what happens to Aboriginal women and their families as a result of violence.

The Committee began to hold meetings in the spring of 2010 that included an appearance by Mary Quinn on April 26th. Ms. Quinn's opening remarks covered a broad range of program areas and initiatives that INAC is involved in and that play a role in addressing some of the risk factors associated with violence against Aboriginal women. These included child and family services among a host of other areas of activity such as community development, education, Income Assistance, the National Child Benefit Reinvestment, the Family Violence Prevention Program, the Urban Aboriginal Strategy and numerous legislative reform initiatives.

Between April 2010 and February 10, 2011, the Committee held a total of 17 meetings regarding the study on Violence against Aboriginal women. In June 2010, the Committee visited Iqaluit (NT), Labrador City (NL), Fredericton (NB), and Montreal, Québec City and Kitigan Zibi (QC). In the past two months alone, 10 additional meetings have taken place throughout various jurisdictions (ON, MB, SK, AB, BC, NWT). It is during these "second round" meetings that the theme of child welfare / apprehension has become more prevalent. In this context, NWAC's Sisters in Spirit initiative is frequently raised, as well as its common themes:

- Intergenerational abuse
- Colonization
- Assimilationist policies (Residential schools, 60s scoop)

Discussions on violence against Aboriginal women have recently extended to the child welfare system. NWAC is arguing that the best preventative approach is to allow Aboriginal children to stay in their families and in their communities in order to end the cycle of cultural dislocation from communities.

Notes for an address by

Sheilagh Murphy
Director General
Social Policy and Programs Branch
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

to the

House of Commons Standing Committee on
the Status of Women

regarding

First Nations Child and Family Services

Ottawa, Ontario

February 15, 2011

Check against delivery

Thank you for inviting me to appear before your Committee, Madam Chair. It is a privilege for my colleague and I to appear before all of you as you continue your important work with respect to violence against Aboriginal women. Our Department continues to be deeply concerned about this issue, and I appreciate this opportunity to assist the Committee, however there are many other federal and provincial programs that assist in addressing violence against Aboriginal women with First Nations Child and Family Services being one small piece of a broader overall response.

The recent provincial Report of the Saskatchewan Child Welfare Review states that "Commentators and researchers are increasingly clear on the fact that the conditions which contribute most to a child's risk are conditions that the child welfare system itself often does not have the mandate or capacity to directly address... (and) ... we use a child welfare solution when the primary drivers are outside the child welfare mandate." We agree with this assessment and I think it's an important lesson to keep in mind while we work on this issue that there are limitations to what each piece of the overall solution can achieve on its own.

I am joined today by my colleague, Corinne Baggley, Senior Policy Manager with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). Together, Odette and I will do our best to answer any questions the Committee may have, but first I would like to begin with a few remarks.

My predecessor, Mary Quinn, appeared before this Committee in April 2010 and provided you then with an overview of some of the program areas within Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) that support healthier and safer Aboriginal families, including INAC initiatives that specifically target violence against women. Mary also explained how INAC works in partnership with other federal departments, provinces, and Aboriginal peoples in order to contribute to the overall response to this serious issue, particularly on reserve, but also in Aboriginal communities and urban centres.

Although I won't get into the specifics about all of these programs today, I would first like to acknowledge the multiple underlying causes that may increase the risk of violence against Aboriginal women such as lack of education, unemployment, and poverty - many of which disproportionately impact Aboriginal communities and women. INAC

works closely with Aboriginal, federal and provincial partners, to address these underlying causes and build healthier and safer Aboriginal families.

The reform of INAC's First Nations Child and Family Services funding program on reserve, as an example, involves a shift towards enhanced prevention services and will help to support parents and keep families together, which ultimately will enhance a sense of security among women who reside on reserve, and can decrease the risk of violence.

Child welfare is one of the most complex areas of public policy, given that decisions around the care and protection of children have lasting effects on children, their families and communities.

It is important to clarify that decisions made by child welfare authorities, including delegated First Nations Child and Family Services Agencies, with respect to the protection of children are made in accordance with provincial legislation and standards.

All children are protected by provincial child welfare legislation as child and family services are matters of provincial jurisdiction. Provincial governments delegate to service providers both on and off reserve and are responsible for ensuring that they comply with provincial legislation and standards.

In the past 20 years, the number of First Nations Child and Family services agencies has grown considerably. Today, 106 of these agencies deliver programs under agreements with provincial child-welfare authorities. The amount of funding provided by INAC through its First Nations Child and Family Services Program has also increased dramatically: from \$193 million 15 years ago to \$550 million last year (fiscal year 2009-2010).

As Provinces began to shift their own approaches to focus more on the prevention end of the spectrum of services provided under child welfare, INAC followed their lead through tripartite partnerships with willing First Nations and provinces. In 2007, the federal government took action to help First Nations Child and Family Services providers to improve outcomes. This included working with provinces to ensure

best practices in prevention-based services were brought to reserves, and broadening the tool kit of culturally appropriate services such as kinship care. Over time, INAC's new approach to funding First Nations Child and Family Services, which we call the Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach, will enable First Nations Child and Family Services agencies to help keep families together. Under this new approach, the agencies will have the flexibility in funding they require to ensure enhanced prevention services are available to at-risk children and families before a situation escalates into one that requires protection.

Over three years ago, INAC developed a tripartite framework with the Province and the First Nations of Alberta to implement an Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach known as the Alberta Response Model. It focuses on proactive intervention, namely providing appropriate services before the problems escalate and become a child protection matter.

The preliminary results of this approach have been positive and encouraging. In the past three years, for instance, the number of Alberta First Nations children in care on reserve has dropped;

permanent placements are on the rise; and placements in institutional facilities are decreasing. These significant results are attributed to a delivery system that is also facilitating greater use of more appropriate types of placements for children, including kinship care and post-adoption subsidies. Kinship care is an option that is used when children are removed from their home and placed in the care of a family member.

Since establishing this first tripartite framework in Alberta, partners in Manitoba, Quebec, PEI, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia have also collaborated to conclude tripartite frameworks on First Nations Child and Family Services. This means that the new prevention funding model is now being implemented in First Nation communities in six provinces and is reaching 69 percent of First Nations' children who live on reserve.

Each framework now provides for specific prevention-based funding for First Nations agencies to deliver or purchase prevention-based services on reserve. In the last four federal budgets, the Government of Canada has committed additional funding to implement these

Enhanced Prevention Focused Approaches. When fully implemented, this funding will provide over \$100 million annually in additional funding for the new approach under the six framework agreements.

I also want to say that INAC is strongly committed and continues to work with all remaining jurisdictions toward securing tripartite frameworks by 2013.

This Government recognizes that effective and culturally appropriate child and family services play an important role in creating strong and healthy First Nations families. Moreover, we will continue to collaborate with willing partners to fund these services in First Nations communities across Canada. This is why we remain committed to implementing a Prevention Focused Approach by means of tripartite partnerships with First Nations and the provinces.

Issues that impact the quality of life of First Nations are not the responsibility of only one group. This is a shared responsibility.

It's clear that there are no simple solutions to the unfortunate ongoing situation of violence against Aboriginal women because it is a complex and multi-faceted issue. It is however my hope that moving forward with responsive and positive changes with such programs as child and family services on reserve will go some way in helping First Nations families to access the services they need before a situation escalates and will help keep First Nations families together.

Thank you. My colleagues and I will do our best now to answer your questions.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**(Possible Questions by FEWO as Related to Issues as Raised
During Its Study of Violence Against Aboriginal Women)**

- Q. Our Committee has heard from various people about the fact that Aboriginal women are often reluctant to report abusive situations in the home for fear that their children will be removed by child welfare authorities. How is this problem being addressed?**
- A. It is important to clarify that decisions made by child welfare authorities, including delegated First Nations Child and Family Services Agencies, with respect to the protection of children are made in accordance with provincial legislation and standards. All children in Canada are protected by provincial child welfare legislation as child and family services are matters of provincial jurisdiction. Having said that, the new Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach for First Nations Child and Family Services that INAC is currently rolling out on a province by province basis, in partnership with First Nations and provincial officials, will help children and families have greater access to the services they need before a situation escalates into one requiring protection.**
- Q. Funding for child welfare on reserve through INAC's FNCFS funding Program has almost tripled over the past 15 years, yet the number of First Nations children in care remains consistent. Why are we not seeing any improvements?**
- A. It is true that despite a dramatic increase in funding, the number of First Nations children in care has remained relatively stable over this period of time. The reason for this growth in funding is that maintenance costs for child have more than doubled since 1998-1999. The increase in these costs has been driven by increases in the maintenance rates charged by the provinces, an increase in the number of special needs children in care and the costs associated with their care, and a greater reliance by agencies on institutional care.**

- Q. In NWAC's April 2010 report, "What Their Stories Tell Us", it says that 88% of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls left behind children and grandchildren and that there are no culturally appropriate supports to deal with this problem. Does INAC know how many of these children are subsequently apprehended into an Aboriginal family? Do you have any figures to share? What is INAC doing to prevent "cultural dislocation"?**
- A. INAC is not in possession of information about specific child welfare cases, therefore we are not aware of the reason for apprehension in individual cases. Because we don't collect this kind of information, we have no way of knowing how many children who lose their mothers or grandmothers or other relatives come into contact with the child welfare system as a result.**
- Q. In earlier meetings of this Committee, many witnesses have talked about the ongoing apprehension of children in the child welfare system as an ongoing impact of intergenerational abuse and colonization. What is INAC doing to allow Aboriginal children to stay in their families and in their communities and prevent family dislocation?**
- A. It is important to clarify that decisions made by child welfare authorities, including delegated First Nations Child and Family Services Agencies, with respect to the protection of children are made in accordance with provincial legislation and standards. All children in Canada are protected by provincial child welfare legislation as child and family services are matters of provincial jurisdiction. Having said that, the new Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach for First Nations Child and Family Services that INAC is currently rolling out on a province by province basis, in partnership with First Nations and provincial officials, will help children and families have greater access to the services they need before a situation escalates into one requiring protection. Also, funding under the new approach can now be used to support kinship care (or placement in the care of a family member) as a placement option for children who are removed from their home.**

Q. When we talk about root causes of violence against Aboriginal women, we hear about drug addictions, but we don't hear anything about the generational impact on Aboriginal people, the cycles of poverty, the high numbers of children being apprehended. What is INAC doing to address these issues?

A. *(Could potentially summarize Mary's opening remarks from last April which provided an overview of a variety of INAC program areas/activities, from the UAS to education and community infrastructure, to NCBR and IA, and Family Violence.)*

Q. What is the on-reserve matrimonial real property issue?

A. Generally speaking, provincial and territorial laws protect the matrimonial real property interests and rights of both spouses during a relationship, or in the event of separation, divorce or death. On-reserve matrimonial interests or rights include a couple's family home, where both spouses or common-law partners live during a marriage or common-law relationship, and other matrimonial interests or rights. The Supreme Court of Canada confirmed that courts cannot apply provincial or territorial family laws on reserves governed by the *Indian Act* if doing so would alter individual interests in matrimonial real property on reserves. Further, the *Indian Act* is silent on this issue. As a result, many of the legal protections relating to matrimonial interests or rights that are applicable off reserves are not available to individuals on reserves.

There is a broad recognition that resolution of this urgent issue is long overdue, and litigation has been filed on this matter. Several parliamentary committees and other domestic and international bodies have studied the issue and consistently recommended legislative action.

Questions and Answers

Standing Committee on the Status of Women (FEWO)

First Nations Child and Family Services (February 15, 2011)

First Nations Child and Family Services General

Q1. What is the First Nations Child and Family Services Program and what are its objectives?

- A. The objective of the First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) Program is to ensure the safety and well-being of First Nations children ordinarily resident on reserve by supporting culturally appropriate prevention and protection services for First Nations children and families, in accordance with the legislation and standards of the province or territory of residence.

INAC's FNCFS Program funds child and family services agencies designed, managed and controlled by First Nations and delegated by provincial authority. In areas where FNCFS agencies do not exist, INAC funds services provided by provincial or territorial organizations or departments.

INAC is in the process of implementing an Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach on a province-by-province basis with ready and willing partners. This new approach will provide First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) agencies with improved capacity to provide services to on-reserve First Nation children on a proactive basis. INAC has made progress in this area through tripartite frameworks in Alberta, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, Quebec, Prince Edward Island and Manitoba.

Q.2 How much funding does INAC provide for the FNCFS Program?

- A. The Program funds 106 agencies (and provinces and the Yukon Territory where there are no agencies) to deliver culturally appropriate child and family services on reserve in accordance with provincial/Yukon Territory legislation and standards. INAC does not fund Child and Family Services in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut; these territorial governments receive their Child and Family Services budget through a separate territorial transfer payment.

Funding has more than doubled over the past 14 years, from \$193 million in 1996-1997 to approximately \$550 million in 2009-2010. Funding is projected at \$580 million in 2010-2011. In Budget 2005, incremental funding was provided for the FNCFS program in the amount of \$125 million over 5 years. Funding for the new Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach was provided through Budget 2006, with incremental funding provided for Alberta in the amount of \$98.1 million over 5 years; Budget 2008 provided incremental funding for Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan in the amount of \$115 million over 5 years; Budget 2009 provided \$20 million over 2 years allowing for additional incremental investments for the reform of the FNCFS program in Quebec and PEI and Budget 2010 provided \$177 million over 5 years for implementation of the Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach in Manitoba.

Our current commitment increases to a total of \$100M annually (that is, \$100M annually in addition to \$550M) when fully implemented for enhanced prevention in the 6 jurisdictions, and the Department is not finished yet. It is estimated that all remaining jurisdictions will be transitioned by 2013.

Q.3 How many First Nation on reserve children are in care?

A. The FNCFS Program serves an on-reserve population of roughly 163,637 children in 573 First Nations communities and as of March 31, 2010, there were 8,682 (5.3%) children in care out of the parental home (in foster homes, group homes, or institutional placements) versus 0.92% of children in care out of the parental home off reserve.

Q.4 Why are First Nations children (6 times) more likely than non-aboriginal children to be placed in care?

A. As the Auditor General's report noted, numerous studies have linked the difficulties faced by many Aboriginal families to historical experiences and poor socio-economic conditions. The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in 1996 linked the residential school system to the disruption of Aboriginal families. Data from the 2003 *Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect* link poverty and inadequate housing on many reserves to the higher substantiated incidence of child abuse and neglect occurring on-reserves compared to off reserve.

FNCFS Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach

Q.5 The Department is making progress in supporting the transition to the enhanced prevention model. But isn't it taking a long time to fix the problem?

A. Two decades ago, there were far fewer federally funded First Nations Child and Family Service agencies and very limited child welfare services provided on-reserve.

While the existing regime has its challenges, it is important to recognize that far more services are being provided today to help address the needs of First Nations children on-reserve and the amount of funding has grown over the last 14 years from \$193M to \$550M.

The challenge is that child welfare is a complex system that does not lend itself to simple solutions. The bottom line is that the Department is working diligently to ensure that children are safe; have access to the services they need; and achieve the best possible outcomes regarding their well-being. And we cannot do this alone -INAC is working with provinces and First Nations communities to identify and address their needs within the confines of our program authorities.

INAC is committed to transitioning the FNCFS Program to an Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach, province-by-province, that is systematic, consistent, and ensures that community-level needs are met with culturally appropriate services based on provincial comparability.

Q.6 Why is INAC approaching the transition of Child and Family Services Program incrementally? Why don't you just introduce a one-size fits all model?

A. The FNCFS Program operates within provincial jurisdiction and therefore requires close partnership with the provinces, and the First Nations, both in the developmental and implementation stages of the transition to enhanced-prevention services. INAC is therefore moving forward incrementally with ready and willing partners.

Q.7 How many Frameworks does INAC expect to complete in the next few years?

A. Six Frameworks are now completed (AB, SK, NS, QC, PEI and MB). All remaining jurisdictions dependent on degree of readiness and willingness are expected to be completed by 2013. We are currently working with our partners towards that goal.

Q.8 What are the challenges INAC faces in managing its Child and Family Services Program?

- A. The First Nations Child and Family Services Program operates under the legislation and standards of the provinces and the Yukon Territorial government. The legislation and standards vary by jurisdiction and are subject to change at differing times. The challenge is to maintain provincial comparability within the First Nations Child and Family Services program authorities, given the variance in provincial and territorial legislation and standards.

Q.9 Why is INAC implementing this Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach?

- A. INAC recognized that the costs and numbers of children in care were rising dramatically and leading to less optimal outcomes for First Nations children and families on reserve. Provinces were faced with similar problems and began to refocus their child welfare programs to more prevention-based approaches. As well, preliminary but promising studies were showing that prevention activities could lead to more positive outcomes for children and provide some economic benefits.

Q.10 Has INAC seen any positive results since the implementation of the Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach?

- A. The Department has recently obtained preliminary data from Alberta which became the first province to enter into a partnership with INAC and Alberta First Nations to implement the Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach.

(In April 2007, INAC announced the first investment of \$98.1 million over five years, to implement a Tripartite Accountability Framework on a new Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach to Child and Family Services with Alberta and First Nations in that province)

Over the past three years, the number of Alberta First Nations children in care on reserve has dropped, permanent placements are on the rise and placements in institutional facilities are decreasing. These positive results are attributed to increased use of prevention measures and more appropriate types of placements for children, such as kinship care and post-adoption subsidies. The early results from Alberta are therefore quite promising which bodes well for the implementation of enhanced prevention in other jurisdictions.

OAG and PAC related

Q. 11 How has INAC ensured that its approach to funding First Nations agencies takes into account the concerns raised by the OAG and PAC?

A. INAC is confident that the Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach model provides sufficient funding to provide the range of child welfare services needed to meet the provincial standards and legislation. Various evaluation mechanisms will be used to measure the efficacy of this approach.

Q.12 What progress has been made to date in addressing the findings of the OAG audit and meeting the commitments made by INAC in its response to the Auditor General's recommendations?

A. The Department developed a Management Response Action Plan that outlines the progress (last updated March 31, 2010). The activities to date include:

- Completed the update of the program authorities in 2007 which included a broader and more culturally appropriate range of placement options with the addition of Kinship Care and Post Adoption Subsidies and Supports where authorized under provincial legislation and standards;
- Worked closely with provinces to ensure that Agencies meet provincial legislation;
- Updated the First Nations National Reporting Guide, to require business plans for those Agencies entering into the new prevention model;
- Articulated a guiding principle concerning culturally appropriate services;
- Revised program reporting requirements and drafted performance indicators for discussion with partners; and held a preliminary meeting with First Nations partners to discuss program's performance indicators;
- INAC regions conducted 27 compliance reviews in fiscal year 2008/09. Additional resources have been approved to undertake extensive compliance reviews of the FNCFS programs in 2009-2010 in five regions, with the goal of ensuring that the current funding is being spent within the Department's authorities and therefore in such a manner as to achieve the most positive outcomes.
- Is in the Project Definition Phase of developing a national data management system that would increase our capacity to monitor program costs and outcomes; and

- Continue to work collaboratively with Health Canada to implement Jordan's Principle. Furthermore, we have worked with Health Canada to resolve the payment of Non Insured Health Benefits for First Nations children in care on reserve.

Q.13 Why has INAC shifted its position and decided to define the meaning of "culturally appropriate services"?

- A. INAC has not developed a specific definition on "culturally appropriate services", because it would be inappropriate for the Department to do so as a definition would depend on the interpretation of various First Nations based upon their specific and unique community circumstances, traditions and needs. Under the Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach, specific culturally appropriate services are included in each Tripartite Accountability Framework document and each business plan that forms the basis of the new approach in the transitioned region.

However, given ongoing concerns from both the AG and the Public Accounts Committee, a general principle on culturally appropriate services has been articulated to alleviate further criticism while not infringing upon First Nations interpretation. It is as follows:

While respecting the provincial governments' constitutional mandate to provide child and family services, the Government of Canada provides funding, as a matter of social policy, to support the delivery of culturally appropriate child welfare services among First Nation communities that acknowledge and respect the values, beliefs and unique cultural circumstances of the communities being served. As such, culturally appropriate services encourage activities such as kinship care options where a child is placed with an extended family member so that cultural identity and traditions may be maintained.

Q.14 Has INAC estimated the full cost of delivering the First Nations Child and Family Services Program? If so, what is it?

- A. INAC has consistently assessed full costs of policy requirements as it has transitioned the First Nations Child and Family Services Program to the Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach. The Department continues to work with ready and willing partners to complete the transition to the new approach. The cost requirements are determined as INAC moves forward on a province-by province basis.

Since Budget 2006, the Government of Canada has consistently been investing additional funding into the FNCFS Program. We have reached tripartite frameworks in:

Manitoba (in 2010: \$177.1 million over 5 years and ongoing);
Quebec (in 2009: \$59.8 million over 5 years and ongoing);
PEI (in 2009: \$1.7 million over 2 years and ongoing);
Saskatchewan (in 2008: \$104.8 million over five years and ongoing)
Nova Scotia (in 2008: \$10.2 million over five years and ongoing, and);
Alberta (in 2007: \$98.1 million over five years and ongoing)

Collectively, this means that the new prevention funding model is now being implemented in First Nations communities in six provinces and is reaching 68% of First Nations children who live on reserves in Canada. INAC is working toward having all jurisdictions on board for the Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach by 2013.

Q.15 Will additional funding be required for First Nations child and welfare services in other provinces?

A. As discussions continue with willing partners in the outstanding jurisdictions, INAC will have a clearer idea of what resources will be necessary to complete the transition.

Q.16 What is INAC doing about ensuring that they have proper agreements in place for funding FNCFS services provided directly by the respective province in a region where there is no FNCFS agency or program?

A. INAC officials are working with the respective provinces to ensure that the proper agreements are in place.

Q.17 What is INAC doing to ensure First Nations Child and Family Services agencies on reserve comply with provincial legislation and standards and financial accountability?

A. INAC has initiated discussions with its partners – provinces/territories and First Nations Agencies – to clarify accountabilities for monitoring, measuring and reporting on the outputs, outcomes and costs of Child and Family Services activities; as well as support First Nations Agencies' adherence to provincial/territorial standards.

INAC's Child and Family Services funding agreements all contain conditions pertaining to the recipient's ability to meet provincial legislative standards, and the Department's financial accountability requirements.

Q.18 What actions does INAC take when it is informed that the requirements of provincial legislation are not being met?

A. The provinces have legislative authority for child welfare which includes the delegation to FNCFS Agencies. The province is responsible for ensuring First Nations recipients meet provincial legislation and standards. As per INAC's authorities, funding to agencies is only provided once confirmation of provincial delegation is received. Should an agency lose their delegation, INAC would terminate funding and make appropriate arrangements to ensure services continue to be provided.

Q.19 To what extent do the new frameworks take into account the varying circumstances in First Nations communities?

A. The new framework model involves a Business Plan that is developed and reviewed through by the tripartite process and reflects the specific needs of the respective First Nations communities. As well, inherent in this model is the ability to move funding between the three streams (Operations, Prevention, and Protection) to better address community needs in a timely and effective manner.

Q.20 In your Action Plan in response to the Office of the Auditor General's report, there is a recommendation on coordination, as follows:

"In order to develop a coordinated approach to the provision of federally funded child welfare services, INAC should ensure that its program rules facilitate coordination; and, in cooperation with First Nations, work with the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat and other federal departments that fund programs for First Nations children to facilitate access to their programs."

How is INAC addressing this recommendation?

A. Under the Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach, INAC ensures that FNCFS recipients have resources to develop and implement a more coordinated approach to the provision of federally funded child welfare services. Agencies are required to indicate in their five year Business Plan how they will work with other services providers (e.g. Home and Community Care, Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program, Special Education) to provide better outcomes for children and families.

As well, we have worked collaboratively with Health Canada to implement Jordan's Principle. The Government of Canada has agreed with four provinces on a way forward, discussions are underway with Ontario, and engagements with the remainder provinces will occur over the next few months. As part of the federal approach, Health Canada has agreed to revise their directive on Non-Insured Health Benefits to cover the costs of eligible benefits for First Nations ordinarily resident on reserve who are in care out of the parental home.

FNCFS Reasonable Provincial Comparability

Q.21 Is it possible to compare FNCFS Program to provincial child welfare systems?

A. First Nation Child and Family Services is a complex matter with many variables at play, including different administrative regimes with varying services and systems of service delivery, as well as differences in definitions, financial reporting and data quality. Some of the challenges associated with comparing funding for child and family services across multiple jurisdictions include variation in the type, quantity and sometimes quality of information available from provinces and from INAC. Another difficulty is properly accounting for services that are included in CFS in certain jurisdictions, but that from a federal perspective, are funded through other INAC funding sources or through other federal government departments.

Q.22 Does INAC believe that First Nations Child and Family Services agencies are currently funded at a similar level to provincial agencies?

A. Yes. As jurisdictions transition to the new Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach, a costing model is developed in each jurisdiction based upon discussion between First Nations, the provinces and INAC. This costing model is particular to each jurisdiction and takes into account the respective provincial program salaries and caseload ratios to determine provincial comparability within FNCFS Program authorities. The costing model is a key element in the transition to the new approach and to ensuring provincial comparable funding.

Q.23 Why is it difficult to compare FNCFS Program and its funding models with provincial child welfare services and funding?

- A. There are multiple complexities, challenges and resulting difficulties which arise in attempting to compare federal and provincial funding levels. The many challenges associated with performing a robust comparison of funding levels with varying child and family services regimes across Canada are results of differing provincial child welfare legislation.

While INAC knows how much it spends per province, there is limited breakdown by category of expenditures, making it difficult to do a comparison of federal/provincial expenditures.

Q.24 I understand that INAC has commissioned a report by KPMG on the issue of provincial comparability in the context of a Human Rights Complaint filed against the federal government by the AFN and the First Nation Child and Family Caring Society. What information does this report contain?

- A. The report in question was produced in the context of an ongoing case before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. Any requests for disclosure of the report will be considered and followed-up on appropriately and according to all relevant legislation.

Funding For FNCFS

Q.25 Why is the funding model based on 6% of the child population and not on the actual number of children in care (needs based)?

- A. FNCFS agencies require a base and stable amount that does not fluctuate from year-to-year to be able to operate. The 6% funding formula was mutually agreed upon by First Nations, the provinces and INAC, and is based on the percentage of children on reserve in care in out-of-home placements which equates to approximately 5.3%. This formula ensures that FNCFS agencies with a very low number of children in care still obtain sufficient funding to operate.

It's important to note that the 6% average number of children in care calculation is one of many factors (e.g. caseload ratios, supervisor and support staff ratios, and provincial salaries) used only to model operations funding which includes the number of protection workers. This is then translated into a portion of the operations funding that agency receives. This base amount ensures that FNCFS agencies with a very low number of children in care still obtain sufficient funding to operate. Also, having a set base amount ensures stability for agencies and provides a disincentive to increase the number of children taken out of the parental home for the

purposes of obtaining more funding. Prevention activities are being funded under the Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach, which in turn are intended to reduce the number of children in care by providing services that improve family cohesion.

Under this model, FNCFS agencies have the flexibility to shift funds from one stream to another to meet community needs. The funding provides all FNCFS providers under the new approach with the necessary resources to offer all types of child and family services, including the communities that have more than 6% of children in care.

Q.26 Is INAC underfunding FNCFS by 22% compared to provincial systems, as indicated in the 2000 report of the FNCFS Joint Policy Review?

- A. The report states that the average expenditures per capita per child in care of INAC's funded systems are 22% lower than the average of provincial systems. However the 1999 calculations used in the report are skewed due to the following considerations:
- The analysis was limited to INAC's direct program expenditures for FNCFS and did not include other departmental financial expenditures in support of FNCFS such as Band Employee Benefits or other federal investments under the Children's Special Allowance Act for children in care out of the parental home.
 - Only seven provinces were included in the calculations resulting in an incomplete national average. Also, Ontario was included in the analysis even though Ontario was not in the overall review as it is funded through the 1965 Agreement and not the FNCFS national funding formula (Directive 20-1 Chapter 5) which was the focus of the review.
 - It is unclear to what extent the reported provincial expenditures are directly comparable to INAC direct program expenditures. Provincial expenditures may include departmental overhead or other children's programming such as day care, young offenders, or mental health which are not included in the INAC expenditures or mandate.
 - In a paragraph below the 22% reference on page 94 of the National Policy Review, the authors acknowledge that "in summary, it is virtually impossible to make any accurate comparison of the level of funding due to the: very different systems of service delivery; very different scales of economy; vastly different social and economic conditions; differing historical and cultural value bases; and the absence of reliable data."

Therefore, it was agreed that INAC would address the review's recommendations, but without taking into account this 22% reference as it was not considered to be accurate. INAC is conducting a funding comparison on a province-by-province basis as it moves the program to the new Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach.

Q.27 How do the incremental amounts for Child and Family Services for Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Prince Edward Island and Manitoba compare to the needs as identified in the Wen:de report?

A. The Wen:de report presented a model that was to be used by all First Nations agencies across the country and did not take into consideration many of the important characteristics of a provincially comparable model. For example, the new models currently being developed incorporate cost drivers such as provincial salary rates; case-load ratios or service standards that are necessary to meeting provincial legislative requirements. The variances in provincial legislation must be taken into account when developing funding models. This is why a one-size-fits-all approach was not deemed satisfactory to meet the individual First Nations needs across jurisdictions.

The Wen:de report did however, provide useful information on a number of related considerations, including information technology, adjustments for remoteness, and revising aspects of the operations formula to minimize the impact of minor population changes on funding levels for small agencies.

The new Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach involves tripartite partnerships that result in the development of tripartite accountability frameworks that support agency business planning, as well as costing models that include cost drivers specifically identified by the practitioners providing the services.

Q.28 Why is INAC not modifying Directive 20-1 immediately to provide prevention funding to all jurisdictions?

A. INAC acknowledges the need for prevention services for all jurisdictions. However, moving to the Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach is a matter of keeping step with provinces as they shift their own regimes to emphasize prevention. So far, six provinces are transitioning to or implementing EPFA, and INAC continues to work with remaining ready and willing jurisdictions to transition to this new approach. The objective is that all remaining jurisdictions will be ready for transition by 2013.

Q.29 How does INAC determine whether the funding provided for child welfare services on reserve achieves positive outcomes for children?

A. INAC is in the process of completing a robust Performance Measurement Strategy that will support appropriate data collection that emphasizes results and outcomes. All jurisdictions transitioned or transitioning to the Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach are using business plans and annual reports to plan for, and report on outcomes. Non-transitioned jurisdictions are using work plans for the same purpose.

Additional resources have been approved to undertake extensive compliance reviews of the FNCFS programs in 2009-2010 in five regions, with the goal of ensuring that the current funding is being spent within the Department's authorities and therefore in such a manner as to achieve the most positive outcomes.

In addition to the steps already taken, Canada's Economic Action Plan identified funding for an integrated Information Management System for the FNCFS Program. The information that will be generated by this system will ensure that INAC can efficiently collect relevant and accurate data pertaining to performance outcomes.

FNCFS Information Management System

Q.30 What type of Information Management System is being developed for the FNCFS Program?

A. The FNCFS Information Management System (IMS) is a new approach to data management that focuses on capturing and reporting on program results, while maintaining essential program management information. The FNCFS IMS will be designed to: simplify reporting; improve work processes; and reduce the administrative work-burden. The FNCFS IMS will provide timely reports on the results of the investments of the FNCFS Program and give First Nations and FNCFS agencies information to identify where change is needed in the delivery of FNCFS programs.

Q.31 How will the IMS support the reform of the FNCFS Program?

A. The reform requires an information management system that will support INAC in moving from a passive financial review role to one of more active involvement in oversight and accountability for results. The FNCFS IMS will also address OAG and Public Accounts Committee criticisms of program management and the need for better information management

Q.32 What investments have been made into the FNCFS IMS and when will the system be implemented?

- A. Canada's Economic Action Plan provided \$8 million over five years and \$1 million ongoing for an automated system for the FNCFS Program. The system will be implemented in three phases, with the first release planned for March 2013, the second release planned for March 2014 and the final implementation planned for August 2014.

Province/Territory Specific

Q.33 What is INAC doing to implement the recommendations of the New Brunswick report, *Hand-in-Hand: A Review of First Nations Child Welfare in New Brunswick*

- A. In April 2009, the Province of New Brunswick appointed Mr. Bernard Richard, the Child and Youth Advocate and Ombudsman for the Province of New Brunswick, to report and make recommendations on the state of provincial First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS). The Report, *Hand-in-Hand: A Review of First Nations Child Welfare in New Brunswick* was tabled on February 24, 2010.

The final report contains 93 recommendations, targeted at various departments, and ranging in breadth from child and family services, culture and language, recreation, housing and education. Mr. Richard recommends sweeping changes to the child welfare system on First Nations, reducing the number of agencies to three from the current 11. Mr. Richard also calls for the establishment of a single First Nations Child and Family Services Office that would provide financial and administrative functions to the three agencies.

INAC is committed to working in partnership with the Province of New Brunswick and First Nations stakeholders to achieve better outcomes for First Nations children and families.

Q.34 What does INAC think of the recently released report from British Columbia, *Growing Up in B.C.*?

- A. On October 18, 2010, the Province of British Columbia's Representative for Children and Youth and the Provincial Health Officer released the Report *Growing Up in B.C* which examined six important aspects of child well-being – health, learning, safety, behaviour, family economic wellbeing and family, peer and community connections. The Report highlights the over-representation of Aboriginal children and youth in the British

Columbia child in care population but does not, however, specifically distinguish between Aboriginal people living on and off reserve. According to the Report, Aboriginal children and youth are six times more likely to be admitted into care than non-Aboriginal children and youth in the Province of British Columbia.

During recent meetings on October 20 and 21, 2010, with officials from the British Columbia Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD), provincial willingness to consider First Nations jurisdiction over Child and Family Services as an alternative to delegated authority was reaffirmed. At a later meeting on November 10, 2010, provincial officials also outlined their intent to engage with First Nations in British Columbia to discuss legislation around First Nations and Métis developing their own culturally appropriate child welfare system for both their on- and off-reserve members.

These initiatives are just at the beginning stages and the province indicated their support for continuing with the move to enhanced prevention. INAC will therefore continue to work with the province and First Nations on developing an appropriate model and business case for First Nations children on reserve in the Province of British Columbia.

Q.35 What is INAC doing to address the recommendations of the Province of Alberta's report: *Closing the Gap Between Vision and Reality: Strengthening Accountability, Adaptability and Continuous Improvement in Alberta's Child Intervention System.*

- A. On October 15, 2010, the Province of Alberta released the report: *Closing the Gap Between Vision and Reality: Strengthening Accountability, Adaptability and Continuous Improvement in Alberta's Child Intervention System.* Of the 14 recommendations made by the panel of specialists, four dealt specifically with Aboriginal Albertans, three of which were accepted by the province. The Report does not specifically distinguish between Aboriginal people living on and off reserve.

The Government of Canada is working with ready and willing partners to build healthier, stronger First Nations families. A vital component to this is improving the lives of First Nations children. In April 2007, INAC announced \$98.1 million over five years to implement the Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach to child and family services on reserve in Alberta. After the first year, all First Nations Child and Family Services agencies in the province had opted into the enhanced prevention model.

INAC's First Nations Child and Family Services program supports culturally appropriate prevention and protection services to create a more secure and stable family environment for First Nations children living on

reserve. INAC is committed to working in partnership with the Province of Alberta to strengthen relationships, improve collaboration to achieve better outcomes for First Nations children and families.

Q.36 How does the Department support child and family services for the Labrador Innu First Nations?

- A. INAC's overall annual funding of \$15 million, under the time-limited Labrador Innu Comprehensive Healing Strategy, ended March 31, 2010. INAC now funds the Labrador Innu (via the province) using the same funding methodology, monitoring and evaluating of basic programs and services for all First Nations on-reserve. While the programs being funded are not new, permanent funding replaces that provided under the strategy, allowing for better planning and implementation of changes to address new priorities.

Annual funding for the Labrador Innu for child and family services amounts to \$5.6M.

Q.37 How does FNCFS funding work in the Territories?

- A. Yukon and INAC have entered into an agreement over funding of Status and non-Status Indians. INAC funds Status Indians and the Yukon funds non-Status Indians.

For the purposes of delivering social development services, "reserve" is as defined in the Indian Act but excludes lands designated for commercial leasing purposes, includes the Yukon territory, and includes Indian communities on crown land or recognized settlements. For the purpose of providing Child and Family Services, all Indian Residents of the Yukon are considered to be ordinarily resident on reserve.

In the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, there are provisions for child and family services in the territorial formula financing agreements, and are therefore not eligible recipients under this transfer payment authority. Funding for Child and Family Services in the Yukon follows Directive 20-1, a child population based formula with all funding being provided to the Yukon Territorial Government who is the service provider (as there are no agencies).

Canadian Human Rights Complaint

Q.38 The Assembly of First Nations and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada filed a Human Rights complaint against the Department in February 2007 regarding First Nations Child and Family services. What is the complaint about?

- A. In February 2007, a complaint was lodged with the Canadian Human Rights Commission (the Commission) by the Assembly of First Nations and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada (the Complainants). The Complainants allege that Indian and Northern Affairs Canada underfunds on-reserve First Nations Child and Family Services as compared to the provinces, resulting in systemic and ongoing discrimination on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin under the *Canadian Human Rights Act* (CHRA).

Q.39 What is the history of the proceedings?

- A. On October 14, 2008, the Commission gave notice that it had referred the Complaint to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal for a hearing.

The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal:

The Tribunal considered a number of motions on September 14, 2009, including a motion for the Chiefs of Ontario to be added as co-Complainant, and a motion for Amnesty International Canada to be added as an Interested Party.

The Tribunal granted the Chiefs of Ontario Interested Party status, limiting their participation to the 1965 Welfare Agreement and the circumstances of child and family services in Ontario.

Amnesty International Canada was also granted Interested Party status. They were instructed by the Tribunal to focus their submissions on the issue of how the Tribunal should interpret ss. 3 and 5 of the *Canadian Human Rights Act* in light of Canada's international obligations.

On December 21, 2009, Canada filed a motion before the Tribunal to have the Complaint struck out on jurisdictional grounds.

This motion was heard on June 2-3, 2010, and the Tribunal has not yet issued its decision.

Judicial Review:

On November 13, 2008, Canada filed an application for judicial review by the Federal Court of Canada of the Commission's decision to deal with the Complaint.

The Complainants' Motion to Strike Canada's application for judicial review was heard before the Federal Court on September 11, 2009. On November 24, 2009, the Federal Court stayed the judicial review pending the outcome of the Complaint by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. All parties (Canada, the AFN and the FNCFCs) have appealed the Federal Court's decision.

Q.40 What is the status of the Human Rights complaint?

- A. On December 21, 2009, Canada filed a motion before the Tribunal to have the Complaint struck out on jurisdictional grounds.

This motion was heard on June 2-3, 2010, and the Tribunal has not yet issued its decision.

Child welfare services on reserve continue to be a priority for this government and we believe that the best way to address the complex issues surrounding First Nations Child and Family Services is through collaboration.

Our legal position does not prevent us from moving forward with willing partners and taking concrete actions that result in important progress with respect to Child and Family Services. The six tripartite agreements on the Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach are beginning to show positive results and we are working toward having all jurisdictions on board by 2013.

Q.41 How does the recent Supreme Court of Canada decision in the *NIL/TU,O Child and Family Services Society and Native Child and Family Services Society of Toronto* appeals impact the Human Rights complaint?

A. The majority decision clearly confirms the federal position before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal that child and family services is an exclusive provincial jurisdiction. The majority comments favourably on the cooperative federalism involved in the manner in which Canada provides funding and provinces exercise their jurisdiction in providing culturally sensitive services, in this case through First Nations' managed organizations.

Q.42 Why has the KPMG Report not been released?

A. The report in question was produced in the context of an ongoing case before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. Any requests for disclosure of the report will be considered and followed-up on appropriately and according to all relevant legislation.

Jordan's Principle

Q.43 What is the federal response to Jordan's Principle?

A. The Government of Canada is working with provinces, service providers and First Nations to make sure the care of a First Nations child with multiple disabilities will continue even if there is a dispute between federal and provincial governments concerning responsibility and payment of service.

Health Canada and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada have collaboratively developed a federal response to Jordan's Principle which is guided by the following principles:

Cases involving a jurisdictional dispute between a provincial and federal government.

First Nations children, ordinarily resident on reserve, who are assessed as having multiple disabilities, requiring services from multiple service providers.

Care for the child will continue even if there is a dispute about responsibility.

Services are comparable provincial standards – the same level of care is provided to a child with similar needs, living off reserve in similar geographic locations.

Q.44 What is the Government doing to Implement Jordan's Principle?

- A. The Government of Canada has formally engaged all provinces, and has reached agreements in two provinces, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. We reached agreements with the province of Manitoba in September 2008, and the province of Saskatchewan and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations in September 2009.

We developed a joint process with the Province of British Columbia and federal and provincial officials are now engaging First Nations to develop a work plan.

Federal, provincial and First Nations representatives are developing a joint statement on the implementation of Jordan's Principle in the Province of New Brunswick.

Exploratory discussions with the Province of Alberta began at the end of May 2010. The province has mandated an interdepartmental committee to work with the federal government and First Nations to develop a dispute resolution process.

The remaining provinces have indicated they have sufficient processes already in place to respond to, and address, jurisdictional disputes.

With key federal and provincial contacts established across the country, the Government of Canada is prepared to review and, where possible, address cases as they relate to children with multiple disabilities to ensure continuity of care.

Q.45 How are First Nations involved in implementing Jordan's Principle?

- A. Health Canada and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada are working closely with some First Nations communities, using a case by case approach to address disputes. This involves the federal and provincial governments, social and health services experts and First Nations communities. This approach is currently taking place in communities to address service needs of children with multiple disabilities who require multiple service providers and to ensure continuity of care.

A joint Ministerial letter has also been sent to the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations to share the federal government's commitment

of honouring Jordan's Principle and the recommended approach to implement it.

As work unfolds with each province, First Nations will be engaged in discussions related to the implementation of Jordan's Principle in the respective province.

Q.46 Have INAC and Health Canada addressed the issue of providing Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) to children in INAC-funded care?

- A. Effective April 20, 2009, NIHB Program agreed to provide eligible benefits to eligible First Nations children receiving INAC-funded child welfare (protection services). This was communicated to INAC/Health Canada regional offices, as well as to First Nation Child and Family Service Agencies.

This direction demonstrates the federal government is responding to the child-first policy, the central point of Jordan's Principle, and is addressing jurisdictional disputes at the federal government level. In addition, it will ensure that there is consistency in the management, communication and delivery of services to First Nations children.

CIDM: 3327542

List of PAC Recommendations

1. Provide a detailed Action Plan to PAC.
2. Provide to PAC a comparison of its funding for FNCFS and provincial funding for CFS.
3. Indicate clear progress in defining “culturally appropriate services” to PAC.
4. Modify Directive 20-1 to allow for the funding of Enhanced Prevention services.
5. Ensure its funding formula is based on need, rather than fixed percentage of children in care.
6. Determine the full costs of meeting all its policy requirements and develop a funding model to meet those requirements.
7. Develop measures and collect information based on best interests of children for FNCFS outcomes.

List of OAG Recommendations

1. Define what is meant by services that are reasonably comparable.
2. Define expectations for culturally appropriate services and standards.
3. Implement this definition and expectation into the FNCFS program.
4. Ensure up-to-date agreements with provinces and First Nations.
5. Seek assurance that provincial legislation is being met.
6. Ensure a coordinated approach to the provision of services with FNCFS program rules that facilitate coordination and by working closely with other federal departments that fund programs for children.
7. Examine the human resources requirements for the FNCFS program and allocate sufficient resources.
8. Ensure new funding formula and approach to funding agencies are directly linked with provincial legislation and standards, reflect provincial range of child welfare services and takes into account varying populations and needs of FN communities.
9. Determine full cost of meeting policy requirements, program management and accountability of the FNCFS program.
10. Conduct on-site compliance reviews and ensure BC Region complies with TB authority.
11. Develop performance indicators with First Nations and provinces, define the information INAC needs, collect information and ensure outcomes for children.

**House of Commons
Standing Committee for Status of Women
Questions and Answers**

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FVPP SHELTER FUNDING FORMULA

Question

What are the principles behind INAC's new shelter funding formula and how is it calculated?

Answer

- **A new shelter funding formula was developed in 2006 to ensure INAC's national FV program resources are allocated in a fair, consistent and equitable manner across Canada. In order to access new shelter investments announced in budget 2006 (\$8.3 million annually in 2007/2008 and an additional \$2.8 million annually in 2009/2010), a commitment was made to Treasury Board to develop and implement a new formula.**
- **The development of the formula was based on a review of research and interviews with INAC regional offices, provincial/territorial governments, and shelter directors, in addition to interviews with the Assembly of First Nations, Native Women's Association of Canada and the National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence.**
- **The formula is a tool to establish regional allocations and shelter operating budgets that are fair and consistent within and between jurisdictions and includes various cost factors such as size, average provincial salaries and remoteness.**
- **In 2009/2010, the formula was applied to the overall shelter budget for existing and new shelters. The result was additional increases for the majority of shelters in Canada.**

FVPP - ALBERTA SHELTERS

Question

Why did the new funding formula result in a decrease for four of the six shelters in Alberta?

Answer

- The Department's overall shelter budget has not decreased. The implementation of the new national formula in 2009/10 resulted in a realignment of shelter funding across Canada and resulted in the majority of shelters across Canada receiving funding increases.
- In the case of Alberta, the overall allocation for 2009-2010 increased from \$7.2 million to \$7.4 million. This funding supports five existing shelters and one new shelter, prevention projects and the reimbursement of provincial bills in Alberta.
- While decreases are unfortunate, Alberta shelters, prior to implementing the new formula, were receiving a relatively high level of historic funding for family violence prevention and protection services.
- In those cases where the new formula results in a decrease of funding for a shelter's operating costs, the government will work with shelters to find ways to minimize operational impacts that may arise.

FVPP – INAC FUNDING that EMPOWERS WOMEN

Question

- **What type of funding does Indian and Northern Affairs Canada provide that empowers Aboriginal women?**

Answer

- **INAC's enhanced prevention approach to Child and Family services will enable First Nations Child and Family Services agencies to ensure that more First Nations families get the help they need to prevent the types of crises that lead to intervention and family breakdown.**
- **New investments to INAC's Family Violence program announced in 2007 of \$55.65 million over five years includes \$8.3 million annually for 36 existing shelters, \$2.2 million for the construction of five new shelters and \$2.8 million annually, starting in 2009-2010 in operating funding for the new shelters. Three of the new shelters are now open in BC, Alberta and Quebec and new shelters in Manitoba and Ontario are expected to be fully operational by May.**
- **In 2007, the Government of Canada invested \$68.5 over five years in the Urban Aboriginal Strategy to promote self-reliance and enable greater economic participation of Métis and urban Aboriginal people. The Urban Aboriginal Strategy projects focus on areas such as: healing and wellness; leadership and empowerment; and harm reduction and violence prevention in some of Canada's largest urban centres.**
- **Legislative reforms can also empower Aboriginal women. The proposed Bill S-4, Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act, in cases of family violence, will provide protections such as temporary exclusive occupation of the family home and emergency protection orders. Bill S-4 is about fairness, equity and protecting the rights of people living on reserve, especially women and children.**
- **On January 31, 2011, Bill C-3, *The Gender Equity in Indian Registration Act*, which addresses the specific issues raised by the Court of Appeal for British Columbia in the case of *Mclvor v. Canada*, came into force. The Act ensures that eligible grandchildren of women who lost status as a result of marrying**

FVPP – SHELTERS in the NORTH

Question

- Can Indian and Northern Affairs Canada build shelters in the North?

Answer

- We know that women in the territories experience higher rates of spousal violence, sexual assault, and homicide than women in the provinces and that Aboriginal women are particularly affected.
- Generally, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's Shelter Enhancement Program provides capital funding to build First Nation shelters or convert existing facilities into shelters.
- INAC's Family Violence program offers support to shelters and prevention projects for those residing on reserve, whereas operational support for shelters serving the off-reserve population is primarily the responsibility of the provincial or territorial governments. Territorial governments receive funding for shelters through Territorial Formula Financing.
- The Family Violence Prevention Program does provide support for prevention initiatives in each of the three territories. The Department's Northwest Territories Region supports prevention initiatives in the Gwitch'in and Tlicho Tribal Councils, the Yukon Region supports community-based projects in First Nation communities and the Nunavut Region supports the Nuluaq Project (National Inuit Strategy for Abuse Prevention) developed by Pauktuutit - Inuit Women of Canada.

non-Indian men will be entitled to registration. It is projected that approximately 45,000 people across Canada will become newly entitled to Indian status.

URBAN ABORIGINAL STRATEGY PROJECT EXAMPLES

Question

- **What are some project examples of the Urban Aboriginal Strategy and INAC's other divisions that benefit First Nation women and Métis and other Aboriginal women who reside off reserve?**

Answer

- **Out of more than 140 projects, the Urban Aboriginal Strategy projects are varied. For example, the Cultural Ambassadors project in Ottawa promotes respect for the role of women in the arts, and the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society in Calgary holds a clinic that provides holistic health care to women and children. The clinic serves mainly women fleeing from violent situations, therefore one of their objectives is to promote self-esteem and positive goal-planning.**
- **MAPS, Men Are Part of the Solution, is an innovative treatment program in Thompson, Manitoba, where the Urban Aboriginal Strategy has funded a project measuring program design effectiveness.**
- **The National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence provides invaluable support to Aboriginal communities and shelters, by coordinating education, awareness and training events. The Circle hosted their Annual National Training Forum on February 8-10, 2010 to provide front-line workers with culturally appropriate training to prevent and reduce family violence in their communities.**
- **Through INAC's Community Infrastructure branch, Onion Lake First Nation in Saskatchewan received funds for its First Nation Women in Trades project, a partnership with Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trades Certification Commission to offer a professional carpentry training program.**

MISSING AND MURDERED ABORIGINAL WOMEN

Question

- **How is the Government of Canada responding to the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women?**

Answer

- **The Government of Canada is deeply concerned about all forms of violence against Aboriginal women and takes the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls very seriously.**
- **This issue warrants coordinated attention from all levels of government. The federal government is working in partnership with provincial and territorial governments, Aboriginal people and other stakeholders to develop more effective and appropriate solutions to prevent such violence and to strengthen cross-sectoral responses.**
- **As announced in Budget 2010, the Government of Canada will take additional action to address the disturbing number of unsolved cases of murdered and missing Aboriginal women. It will invest \$10 million over two years to support concrete actions to ensure that law enforcement and the justice system meet the needs of Aboriginal women and their families. The Minister of Justice will announce details in the coming months.**

ABORIGINAL HEALING FOUNDATION

Question

- **Why did funding for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation cease and how will the Government respond to continued need for emotional and mental health supports?**

Answer

- **The Aboriginal Healing Foundation is a non-profit corporation established in 1998 to address the healing needs of Aboriginal people affected by the legacy of Indian Residential Schools including intergenerational affects. Since 1998, Canada has provided the Foundation with \$515 million for community-based healing initiatives for Aboriginal people.**
- **The 2010 Budget did not provide additional funding. The 134 projects have therefore wound down at the end of March 2010. However twelve Healing Centres will continue to provide services until March 2012 at a cost of approximately \$5 million a year.**
- **Budget 2010 announced an additional \$199 million over the next two fiscal years. The additional funding provided in the Budget will enable INAC, Service Canada and Health Canada to meet higher than expected demands on their existing services, including the Resolution Health Support Program. These demands are the result of a higher number of participants in Settlement Agreement processes and greater complexity of claims than was anticipated.**

BILL C-3 GENDER EQUITY in INDIAN REGISTRATION ACT (McIVOR)

Question

- How do the new legislative changes to the Indian Act affect Aboriginal women?

Answer

- If you will recall, in 1985 Parliament passed Bill C-31, an Act that made it possible for women who married non-Indian men to keep their status.
- In April 2009 the Court of Appeal for British Columbia ruled in the case of *McIvor v. Canada* that the Indian Act discriminates between men and women with respect to registration as an Indian and violates the equality provision in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In its ruling, the Court gave Parliament one year to amend the provisions of the Indian Act that were found to be unconstitutional.
- The Government of Canada proposes amendments to the Indian Act that if enacted by Parliament, will ensure that eligible grandchildren of women who lost status as a result of marrying non-Indian men will become entitled to registration in accordance with the Indian Act.
- The proposed amendments to the Indian Act will only extend registration to eligible grandchildren of women who lost status as a result of their marriage to a non-Indian man before April 17, 1985.
- Overall, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development believes that the total number of persons newly entitled to registration under the Indian Act would number in the range of 45,000.

MATRIMONIAL REAL PROPERTY

Question

- What will be the impact of Bill S-4, Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act on women?

Answer

- Due to the current legislative gap respecting on-reserve matrimonial real property, many of the legal rights and protections that are applicable off reserves are not available to individuals living on reserves. For instance, unlike their counterparts living off reserves, spouses living on reserves cannot ask a court to: (i) grant an order for temporary or permanent possession of the family home, even in a situation of domestic violence or when the spouse has custody of the children; nor (ii) prevent a spouse from selling or mortgaging the family home without the consent of the other spouse. Bill S-4 will provide these rights.
- According to anecdotal evidence, the issue of on-reserve MRP disproportionately affects Aboriginal women and children, especially those experiencing family violence. On the breakdown of a marriage or a common-law relationship, many women living on a reserve do not hold the Certificate of Possession to the land on which the family home sits. They are forced to leave their family home, and in cases where there is no alternative on-reserve housing, their community. Even in cases where the Certificate of Possession is issued to the couple as joint tenants, a court has no authority to grant exclusive interim possession to one of the joint tenants. Neither the Minister nor the council of the First Nation has the power to cancel a Certificate of Possession (unless it was issued in error) or to provide temporary occupancy of the family home.

- Under Bill S-4, application may be made by an individual to have exclusive occupation of the family home. There is a list of factors a judge must consider when determining the application. Among the factors are the best interests of children, who is the caregiver, and how long the person has habitually lived in the community.
- Enabling courts to provide exclusion by way of emergency protection orders under the proposed Act is expected to produce a positive gender-based impact for women. This remedy will allow, for example, spouses or common-law partners in abusive relationships to take exclusive occupation of the family home for a specified period of time, providing them and their dependents with a safe place to stay, albeit on a temporary basis.

Further, Bill S-4 requires that a spouse or common-law partner seeking to sell or mortgage the family home, even if the Certificate of Possession is not in the other spouse or partner's name, must receive written permission from that individual before proceeding, thereby protecting their matrimonial real property interests.

FAMILY VIOLENCE INITIATIVE

Question

- **What is the Family Violence Initiative and what other ways does INAC work with other federal, provincial and Aboriginal organizations to address violence against Aboriginal women?**

Answer

- **Since 1996/1997 the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has led and coordinated fifteen federal departments in the Family Violence Initiative.**
- **FVI objectives are to promote public awareness of the risk factors of family violence and the need for public involvement in responding to it; (ii) strengthen the capacity of health, housing, criminal justice and social systems to respond; and (iii) support data collection, research and evaluation efforts to identify promising practices and effective interventions.**
- **The specific role of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, INAC, (Family Violence Prevention Program) is to support culturally appropriate prevention and protection services for First Nations children and families resident on reserve.**
- **INAC continues to work with stakeholders such as the National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence, NWAC, and provinces and territories, on the coordination of family violence prevention programming.**

PREVENTION

Question

- **NWAC Report released April 21, 2010 calls for preventative and reactive streams. What is INAC doing in the area of prevention?**

Answer

- **INAC recognizes the contribution of the Native Women's Association of Canada through its Sisters in Spirit initiative in raising awareness of the magnitude and complexity of the underlying factors leading to violence against Aboriginal women.**
- **INAC's FV program funds approximately 350 prevention projects on reserve, aimed at raising awareness and preventing violence against First Nations women. These activities can range anywhere from healing circles to workshops on the cycle of violence.**
- **What we are hearing from First Nations and other Aboriginal organizations is that rather than annually-funded project activities, a more effective approach would be community-driven, multi stakeholder collaborative strategies.**
- **Using INAC's FV prevention funding, Alberta and Manitoba have developed Regional First Nation Boards, so they can strategize an approach for all the First Nations in their respective provinces.**
- **Family violence is a long term problem and its root causes are complex and historic in nature. Therefore, an effective response to its challenges, demands a long term, collaborative, preventative and holistic approach.**
- **The Status of Women's new investment in NWAC's project "Evidence to Action" will help to address the priority issue of ending violence against Aboriginal women and provide important tools to communities across the country.**

UN DECLARATION on the RIGHTS of INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Question

- In the Throne Speech, the Government said it will take steps to endorse the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. How will this benefit Aboriginal women?

Answer

A growing number of states have given qualified recognition to.

- We are a country with a proud Aboriginal heritage. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples will be endorsed in a manner fully consistent with Canada's Constitution and laws.
- The Government is consulting with First Nations and Aboriginal Leaders across Canada to make sure that when the Government follows through on its promise to support the Declaration, it will be done in a manner with which Aboriginal people are comfortable and all Canadians are proud.
- Canada wants to help draft a Declaration that more clearly sets out the rights of indigenous peoples and commitments of States in relation to such rights.
- Canada also wishes to build a broader consensus so the Declaration can eventually be adopted and supported by as many States as possible.
- Ultimately, adoption of a Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples will protect the human rights of Aboriginal women.

FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM

How is the government addressing violence against Aboriginal women?

Key Messages

- The Government is committed to fostering healthy First Nations families and is investing \$29.6 million annually in family violence prevention programs and services on-reserve.
- In June 2007, this Government provided new investments of \$55.65 million over 5 years to support the existing network of shelters and to support the construction and operation of five new shelters.
- The First Nations Family Violence Prevention Program now provides operational funding for a network of 41 shelters and supports approximately 350 community-based prevention projects on-reserve.

If pressed about funding to the Three Eagle Wellness Society in Alberta:

- The Three Eagle Wellness Society is a First Nation organization that administers and coordinates family violence prevention project funding on behalf of Alberta First Nations and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.
- The role of the Society is considered a best practice where a First Nation organization coordinates funding and pursues partnerships in support of the objective of preventing family violence.

Background/Key Facts

- INAC's policy covers shelter services for First Nations considered ordinarily resident on reserve, which includes First Nations South of 60° and the Yukon. Provincial and territorial governments typically provide shelter services to Aboriginal women residing off reserve.
- New shelters in Quebec, Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia are now open. The remaining shelter in Ontario is scheduled to be fully operational in February 2011.
- INAC implemented a new national formula which resulted in most First Nation shelters across Canada receiving funding increases, except those in Alberta. The new formula has not yet been implemented in Alberta and operating budgets will not change in 2011/2012 to allow for the development of a transition plan.

- To respond to a Treasury Board requirement, INAC is working with First Nations to implement, by April 1, 2012, new regional approaches to funding community-based prevention projects. The aim is to move away from distributing funds on a per-capita basis to supporting projects based on demonstrated need, while maximizing impact of the funds.
- Budget 2010 announced \$10 million over two years for the Department of Justice and Public Safety Canada to improve community safety and ensure that the justice system and law enforcement will better respond to cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls.
- At the December 1, 2010, meeting of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Member of Parliament Marc Lemay inquired about the high level funding provided to the Three Eagle Wellness Society in Alberta through the Family Violence Prevention Program. A formal response has been submitted to the Committee. The Society is not a shelter. INAC transfers the regional budget for prevention projects (\$851,000 in 2010/2011) to the Society who in turn administers and coordinates this funding on behalf of the department and Alberta First Nations. The Society reviews project proposals, receives reports and supports regional gatherings and training for family violence coordinators.

Sector Policy Contact: Corinne Baggley *ESDPP, SPPD, 613 996-6925*

**INDIAN AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS CANADA
FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM
PROACTIVE LINES FOR RESPONSE TO MEDIA
(not for external distribution - for use by spokespersons)**

ISSUE:

Violence against Aboriginal women and missing and murdered Aboriginal women are receiving increasing media and political attention

POSITIONING STATEMENT:

- The Government of Canada is deeply concerned about all forms of violence – particularly the high number of Aboriginal women and children who are affected.

KEY MESSAGES

- The Government of Canada takes the issue of violence against Aboriginal women very seriously and will continue to work in partnership with provincial and territorial governments, Aboriginal people, and other stakeholders to develop effective and appropriate solutions.
- Indian and Northern Affairs Canada is committed to fostering healthy First Nation families and invests approximately \$30 million nationally to operate 41 shelters, including 5 new shelters, serving First Nation women and children on reserve and to support community-based prevention services.
- The five new First Nation shelters are located in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec.

If pressed on INAC's position on the Standing Committee on Status of Women's Study of Violence Against Aboriginal Women:

- We are encouraged to see that the Committee is travelling across the country to meet with those directly involved in efforts to reduce and prevent violence against Aboriginal women. We look forward to the results of the Committee's study.

BACKGROUND:

The Sisters in Spirit Initiative drew particular attention to missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada. On October 29, 2010, the Government of Canada announced concrete steps to address the disturbingly high number of Aboriginal women that have vanished under these circumstances. Accordingly, the Department of Justice and Public Safety Canada are investing \$10 million over two years to improve community safety and to ensure that the justice system and law enforcement agencies can better respond to cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

In March 2010, the Standing Committee on the Status of women passed a motion to undertake a study on violence against Aboriginal women. The study began with meetings in Ottawa with national Aboriginal organizations, government departments and other stakeholders. Fact finding site visits with organizations involved in efforts to reduce and prevent violence against Aboriginal women have taken place in Nunavut, Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, and Québec. The Committee recently concluded visits in January 2011 to Northwest Territories, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario.

The Liberal and NDP MPs have called for a public inquiry into the issue of murdered and missing Aboriginal women and have called on the government to fund Native Women Association of Canada's Sisters in Spirit initiative.

The objective of the FVPP is enhanced safety and security of on-reserve residents, particularly for women and children, by providing family violence prevention and protection services.

In 2007, a five-year investment of \$55.65 million was announced to support existing and new shelters under the Family Violence Prevention program. This included \$2.2 million to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's Shelter Enhancement Program to support the construction of five new shelters on reserve in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec. These new investments provided increased operations funding to existing shelters and operating funds to the new shelters.

CMHC's Shelter Enhancement Program (SEP) assists in repairing, rehabilitating and improving existing shelters for women and their children, youth and men who are victims of family violence; and in acquiring or building new shelters and second-stage housing where needed. Through SEP, CMHC provides capital funding for on-reserve construction and repair of shelters.

DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSONS

Media Relations (or Regional Office)	Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
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Updated: February 8, 2011

Annex A – Qs and As

ANNEX A

**FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

Q. 1 How many First Nations communities are served by the 41 shelters?

A. 1 With new shelters in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec, approximately 300, or 49% of First Nation communities are served by the 41 INAC-funded shelters.

Each year, approximately 1,900 women and 2,300 children access family violence prevention and shelter services.

Q. 2 What work is underway or planned to enhance the Family Violence Prevention Program?

A. 2 As part of the regular program management cycle, INAC completed a program review to assess current design and delivery of the Family Violence Prevention Program in March 2010 and a preliminary audit of the program in November 2010. An impact evaluation to assess impacts of the FVPP is scheduled to place in early 2011/2012. Results and recommendations from these reports will be used to inform the renewal of FVPP policy and program authorities for March 31, 2012.

INAC continues to support the National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence to provide a coordinated approach to Aboriginal family violence issues through research, data collection, awareness and training forum for shelter workers conducts

Q. 3 Do INAC's FVPP fund shelter services in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut?

A. 3 INAC's policy covers funding to First Nation communities to provide shelter and prevention services to First Nations considered ordinarily resident on reserve, which includes First Nations South of 60 and in the Yukon. Generally, provincial and territorial governments provide shelter services to Aboriginal women and children residing off reserve.

To help support family violence prevention initiatives, INAC provides support to Aboriginal organizations in Nunavut and Northwest Territories. \$37,500 annually is provided to the Pauktuuktit Inuit Women's Association of Canada for prevention initiatives in Nunavut and \$37,500 annually to the Gwitch'n and Tlicho Tribal Councils for prevention initiatives in NWT. INAC's Yukon region receives \$114,100 annually to support First Nation community-based prevention activities.

People in the North also benefit from the Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation's (CMHC) Shelter Enhancement Program, which provides for the construction, acquisition, repair and rehabilitation and improvement of family violence shelters.

Q. 4 What is the purpose of the \$10 million announced in Budget 2010 for missing and murdered Aboriginal women?

A. 4 On October 29, 2010, the Government of Canada announced an investment of \$10 million over two years to address the disturbingly high number of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and to make Aboriginal communities safer.

These funds will be used by the Department of Justice and Public Safety Canada to improve community safety and to ensure that the justice system and law enforcement agencies can better respond to cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

The measures to improve law enforcement and the justice system are expected to also enhance:

- Federal funding for culturally appropriate victims services through provinces and territories; as well as funding for Aboriginal groups to help the families of missing and murdered Aboriginal women;
- New awareness materials, pilot projects and new school- and community-based pilot projects targeted to young Aboriginal women; and
- New community safety plans to be developed to enhance the safety of women living in Aboriginal communities.

Progress on Jordan's Principle Implementation in Saskatchewan

Q. 1 What is the progress of Jordan's Principle implementation in Saskatchewan?

- A. 1** In September 2009, Canada, the Government of Saskatchewan and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) reached an interim agreement on Jordan's Principle.
- A. 2** Key contacts from the FSIN and the province, and from Health Canada and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada comprise the tripartite Jordan's Principle Joint Working Committee. They have been meeting regularly since September 2009 and drafted a Terms of Reference and a workplan for the way forward.
- A. 3** The Joint Working Committee also drafted a Case Conference protocol for the Parties to address cases as they arise, to ensure continuity of services for children with disabilities. While the three Parties may differ in their definition of what constitutes a Jordan's Principle case, the Government of Canada has agreed to review all cases as they arise, through the Case Conferencing process.
- A. 4** Next steps are for the Joint Working Committee to develop a formal dispute resolution mechanism, in the event that a federal / provincial dispute arises.
- A. 5** The Joint Working Committee will continue to monitor cases to prevent jurisdictional disputes. To date, any cases brought forward have been addressed through existing mechanisms and local processes, and none have progressed into a federal/provincial jurisdictional dispute.

RÉPONSE PROPOSÉE

- **Le gouvernement du Canada met en application le principe de Jordan de concert avec les provinces et les Premières nations afin que l'on continue d'offrir**

des soins aux enfants polyhandicapés des Premières nations même si les gouvernements fédéral et provinciaux ne s'entendent pas sur la responsabilité et le paiement des services.

- **Des fonctionnaires des provinces, de Santé Canada et d'Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada s'occupent des affaires portées à leur attention de manière à assurer la continuité des soins aux enfants handicapés des Premières nations.**
- **Des ententes ont été atteints avec la province du Manitoba en septembre 2008, ainsi qu'avec la province de la Saskatchewan et la Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations en septembre 2009. Le gouvernement fédéral participe avec la province du Nouveau-Brunswick et les chefs des Premières nations du Nouveau-Brunswick à l'élaboration d'un processus visant à mettre en œuvre le principe de Jordan.**

BACKGROUND ADVICE

"Jordan's Principle" is a child-first approach which aims to ensure the continuity of care for a First Nations child with multiple disabilities in case of a jurisdictional dispute. Jordan River Anderson was a First Nations child with a rare neuromuscular disorder who required care from multiple service providers. However, the Province of Manitoba and the federal government could not agree on who was financially responsible for Jordan's care. On December 12, 2007, a Private Member's Motion (M-296) to support Jordan's Principle received unanimous support in the House of Commons.

Health Canada and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada have developed a federal response to Jordan's Principle and are reviewing cases as they arise to implement Jordan's Principle. The federal response includes guiding principles that outline a framework for the implementation of Jordan's Principle focussing on:

- Cases involving a jurisdictional dispute between a provincial and federal government.
- First Nations children living on reserve (or ordinarily resident on reserve) who have been assessed by health and social service professionals and have been found to have multiple disabilities requiring services from multiple providers.
- Continuity of care: care for the child will continue even if there is a dispute about responsibility. The current service provider that is caring for the child will continue to pay for necessary services until there is a resolution.
- Services to the child that are comparable to the standard of care set by the province – a child living on reserve (or ordinarily resident on reserve) should receive the same level of care as a child with similar needs living off reserve in similar geographic locations.

The Ministers of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and of Health invited provinces to collaborate in implementing Jordan's Principle in their May 2008 letter. To date, the following provinces have responded and/or are engaged in discussion:

- Manitoba and Canada agreed on terms of reference in September 2008 and are still working on a common understanding of the essential elements for successful implementation of Jordan's Principle.
- In September 2009, Canada, the Government of Saskatchewan and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) reached an interim agreement on Jordan's Principle and are now drafting terms of reference and a workplan for the way forward.
- The Province of British Columbia and Canada developed a joint process document which commits the two parties to developing a dispute resolution mechanism. The parties discussed the joint process document with First Nations representatives on September 16, 2010. Next steps are to seek provincial and federal approval of the document and present to First Nations leadership.
- The Province of New Brunswick, First Nations Chiefs of New Brunswick, Health Canada and INAC are developing a joint statement on the implementation of Jordan's Principle in New Brunswick, which outlines an agreed upon case conferencing / dispute resolution approach.
- Alberta Treaty Chiefs wrote to INAC on January 26, 2010, and attached a resolution on Jordan's Principle, requesting an interim process be in place by March 31, 2010, and that discussions include First Nation representatives. Exploratory discussions with the Province of Alberta began at the end of May 2010. The province has mandated an interdepartmental committee, chaired by the Ministry of Children and Youth, to work with the federal government and First Nations to adopt a child-first principle and develop a dispute resolution process.
- In September 2009, Health Canada and INAC met with the Province of Ontario which advised it does not see the need for a formal dispute resolution process. The Regional Directors General of Health Canada and INAC will meet with the Chiefs of Ontario and the province to discuss Jordan's Principle, pending Ontario's identification of a lead provincial department, which has not yet occurred.
- Quebec indicated its existing tripartite case conferencing process already supports Jordan's Principle. As a result, the province does not see a need to engage in further discussions.
- At a meeting in June 2009, Newfoundland indicated further formal discussions may not be necessary. INAC and Health Canada are waiting for a letter from the province to confirm its approach.
- INAC and Health Canada met with Nova Scotia provincial officials on February 18, 2010. The Office of Aboriginal Affairs advises that a discussion at an upcoming, but not yet scheduled, Mi'kmaq Health Policy Forum may inform the process around Jordan's Principle.
- INAC and Health Canada met with Prince Edward Island officials on February 19, 2010. PEI's Health and Wellness department will coordinate an overall provincial response and provide a letter to Canada, which has not yet been received, identifying provincial focal points to support Jordan's Principle implementation.

- Canada maintains a watching brief on activities in the Yukon.

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House of Commons
Standing Committee for the Status of Women
Hearing on Violence Against Aboriginal Women
February 15, 2011

INAC Witness

- Sheilagh Murphy, Corinne Baggley

FRIENDLY QUESTIONS

Q 1. Apart from the Child and Family Services program, what is Indian and Northern Affairs Canada doing to support Aboriginal women?

- The Government of Canada is committed to supporting better outcomes for Aboriginal women, girls and families through the provision of programs and services addressing such issues as family violence prevention, child and family services, on-reserve housing, economic security and prosperity, education and urban living.

Family Violence Prevention Program

- Indian and Northern Affairs Canada is committed to fostering healthy First Nation families and under the Family Violence Prevention Program, invests approximately \$30 million nationally to operate 41 shelters, including 5 new shelters, serving First Nation women and children on reserve and to support community-based prevention services.
- In 2007, a five-year investment of \$55.65 million was announced to support existing and new shelters under the Family Violence Prevention program. This included \$2.2 million to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's Shelter Enhancement Program to support the construction of five new shelters on reserve.

URBAN ABORIGINAL STRATEGY

- In 2007, the Government of Canada invested \$68.5 over five years in the Urban Aboriginal Strategy to promote self-reliance and enable greater economic participation of Métis and urban Aboriginal people. The Urban Aboriginal Strategy projects focus on areas such as: healing and wellness; leadership and empowerment; and harm reduction and violence prevention in some of Canada's largest urban centres.

MATRIMONIAL REAL PROPERTY

- The Government of Canada is also supporting the proposed legislation, Family Homes on Reserve and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act. On July 6, 2010, the Senate passed as amended Bill S-4. The Bill received first reading in the House of Commons on September 22, 2010. The Bill provides for First Nations laws concerning matrimonial real property on relationship breakdown or death, and provides provisional rules and procedures. The Bill also contains provisions for emergency protection orders in situations of family violence on reserve allowing for temporary exclusive occupation of the family home, among other matters. The Bill is now awaiting debate at second reading.
- On January 31, 2011, Bill C-3, *The Gender Equity in Indian Registration Act*, which addresses the specific issues raised by the Court of Appeal for British Columbia in the case of *Mclvor v. Canada*, came into force. The Act ensures that eligible grandchildren of women who lost status as a result of marrying non-Indian men will be entitled to registration. It is projected that approximately 45,000 people across Canada will become newly entitled to Indian status.

ABORIGINAL SKILLS AND TRAINING

- Canada's New Economic Action Plan committed an additional \$200 million over three years to support Aboriginal skills and training. The Government of Canada is investing \$75 million in a two-year Aboriginal Skills and Training Strategic Investment Fund.

FED. FRAMEWORK FOR ABORIGINAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- With Aboriginal women representing 51% of the Aboriginal population, measures to address gender barriers in the field of economic development are essential. The new Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development is the first step in a fundamental change in how the Government of Canada supports Aboriginal economic development, and ensures that First Nations, Inuit and Métis women in Canada have every opportunity to share in Canada's economic opportunities and prosperity.

- The Government held a Roundtable on Gender and Aboriginal Economic Development on October 12 -13, 2010, with key national Aboriginal organizations to help identify strategies to ensure that Aboriginal women, as well as men, benefit from the implementation of the Framework. At this Roundtable, the Government announced an investment of \$1 million over two years to develop and implement new and innovative pilot projects in support of entrepreneurship among Aboriginal women.
- In 2007, the Government of Canada made a long-term commitment on urban Aboriginal issues by investing \$68.5 million over five years to promote self-reliance and enable greater economic participation of urban Aboriginal people. Since 2007, partnerships with key federal departments, provinces, municipalities and local Aboriginal organizations have lead to more than 125 projects investing in supporting Aboriginal women, children and families.

Q 2. The Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study, released April 6, 2010, found the majority of women surveyed move to the city in order to be closer to family, pursue education and to escape a bad family situation, and/or find a better place to raise their children. What is INAC doing to support Aboriginal women who reside off reserve?

- Out of more than 140 projects, the Urban Aboriginal Strategy projects are varied. For example, the Cultural Ambassadors project in Ottawa promotes respect for the role of women in the arts, and the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society in Calgary holds a clinic that provides holistic health care to women and children. The clinic serves mainly women fleeing from violent situations, therefore one of their objectives is to promote self-esteem and positive goal-planning.
- MAPS, Men Are Part of the Solution, is an innovative treatment program in Thompson, Manitoba, where the Urban Aboriginal Strategy has funded a project measuring program design effectiveness.
- The National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence provides invaluable support to Aboriginal communities and shelters, by coordinating education, awareness and training events. The Circle hosted their Annual National Training Forum on January 26 – 28, 2011 to provide front-line workers with culturally appropriate training to prevent and reduce family violence in their communities.

Q 3. What is INAC doing about the estimated 27,000 Aboriginal children in care?

- While it has been reported that there are 27,000 Aboriginal children in care out of the parental home. INAC funding supports the 8,682 First Nation status children ordinarily resident on reserve that are in care. The remaining children in care are supported by funding from provincial and territorial governments.
- Our Government has increased funding for First Nations Child and Family Services dramatically over the past 14 years, from \$193 million in 1996-1997 to \$523 million in funding in 2008-2009 to implement the new approach.
- My department is working with willing First Nations and provincial partners so they can transition the First Nation Child and Family Services program to an Enhanced Prevention-Focused Approach.

Q 4. Why is INAC implementing an Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach?

- Early Results in Alberta are showing a reduction in the number of children in care out of the parental home and a change in case loads from higher cost placement options to lower cost options, an increase in families accessing prevention programming and a rise in permanent placements.
- Provinces were noting similar benefits off reserve and were changing their child welfare programs to more prevention-based approaches.
- Thus, we believe the Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach will result in better outcomes for children and families.

Q 5. Has INAC seen any positive results since the implementation of the Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach?

- Over the past three years, the number of Alberta First Nations children in care on reserve has dropped, permanent placements are on the rise and placements in institutional facilities are decreasing.
- These positive results are attributed to increased use of prevention measures and more appropriate types of placements for children, such as kinship care and post-adoption subsidies.

- The early results from Alberta are therefore quite promising which bodes well for the implementation of enhanced prevention in other jurisdictions.

Q 6. What progress is the Department making in supporting the transition to the enhanced prevention model?

- In 2007, in order to improve outcomes for First Nations children and their families and to keep in step with a number of provinces shifting their own approaches to child and family services towards a greater emphasis on prevention, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) started to roll out its new Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach on a province-by-province basis.
- The first tripartite framework was with Alberta and Alberta First Nations in 2007. INAC has now reached tripartite frameworks in 6 provinces (including Alberta, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, Quebec, PEI and Manitoba). Collectively, this means that the Enhanced Prevention model covers roughly 68% of First Nations children who live on reserve.
- Under the six Tripartite Frameworks, more than \$100 million per year in additional funding will be dedicated to implementing the new approach.



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

FEWO • NUMBER 045 • 3rd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Wednesday, January 12, 2011

—
Chair

The Honourable Hedy Fry

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Wednesday, January 12, 2011

• (1240)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)): I'd like to call the meeting to order.

I want to welcome the witnesses, who have come out on a freezing day. It is cold out there, so thank you for coming.

I want to just tell you that pursuant to what is known as a standing order, in this case Standing Order 108(2), this committee on the status of women is studying violence against aboriginal women: the root causes of that violence, the nature of the violence, and the different types and extent of the violence, whether it is domestic, societal, psychological, sexual, etc. We're looking at the whole breadth and depth of violence against aboriginal women in all of its forms, and of course the root causes.

Definitely we hope that aboriginal communities will be able to furnish us with some solutions, because it seems to the committee that we have done this, that we have been addressing this thing, for years and years, and we don't seem to be getting a lot of positive outcomes. We're very well aware of the work done by Sisters in Spirit. We feel that it has furnished us with a fair amount of background, but we wanted to talk to women and visit the country.

Now, does anyone know where Marlene Bear is, and if she is coming? No? Then we'll begin with the five groups here, and if Marlene comes in, we will add her.

To let you know what we usually do here, you give us a presentation of anywhere between five and seven minutes. I will give you a two-minute signal and then a one-minute signal so that you know when you should wrap up. At the end of that, we will open it up to questions from members of the committee.

A standing committee, as you know, is made up of all parties in the House. We do have members here from the Conservatives, the NDP, the Bloc Québécois, and the Liberals. Therefore, we will be asking you questions in a particular rotation.

I'd like to begin with the representative from the Prince Albert Métis Women's Association, Lisa Cook, urban aboriginal coordinator.

Lisa, could you begin?

Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook (Urban Aboriginal Coordinator, Prince Albert Métis Women's Association Inc.): Thank you very much, Mrs. Chairperson.

First of all, I'd like to say thank you for inviting us here today. We don't get the opportunity very often to have a standing committee arrive in Prince Albert. I know it's the first stop here in western Canada, and I really appreciate that you've come here today despite how the weather is treating us outside. Maybe some of you are not used to this, but once it gets started here in Saskatchewan, it really gets started.

I'd like to briefly introduce myself. My name is Lisa Goulet-Cook. I currently reside here in Prince Albert. I live here with my family, which includes my husband of 19 years and my three teenaged children. I currently work for the Prince Albert urban aboriginal steering committee. We are being housed over at the Prince Albert Métis Women's Association office building. Actually, they're the capacity-holder. At this point in time, I've been employed by them for about six months. They do quite a bit of work with not only aboriginal women and children but also the entire family.

But the organization I work for, as I said, is the urban aboriginal steering committee. We receive an allotment of funding from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. With that funding we are supposed to carry out, as a steering committee, basically the action orders from the steering committee itself. We make selections and then we put out a call for proposals to the city of Prince Albert.

Whichever agency wants to submit a proposal to enhance their current programming can do so. They state their proposal, and then we as a committee rate those proposals. Basically, we don't want a duplication of services. We want an enhancement, such as capacity-building for their employees or changing the programming they currently have, when it comes to our mandate.

Currently our mandate is basically to help aboriginal women and children, first and foremost, and the way we do that is by improving their life skills. We try to liaise with different agencies around Prince Albert to try to assist these women in finding further help for the situations they find themselves in.

We support a lot of off-reserve Indians. Our mandate is to try to help off-reserve Indians who are currently living in Prince Albert.

If you know Prince Albert's population, we are currently sitting at 54% in terms of aboriginal population. That comes from a census done by the community development department of First Nations University. It's not an official census population statistic, but it comes from a census that First Nations University students completed.

So when you look at the ratio across Canada, Prince Albert has the highest ratio per capita when it comes to aboriginal people. When I say "aboriginal" people, I mean first nations, Métis, and Dene people, and non-status as well. There are a few people who declare themselves as non-status.

That ratio of 54% is not surpassed by any other city in Canada. The population may be higher in other cities, but the population ratio is not that high. Other cities are averaging around 35% to 40%. Here in Prince Albert we're sitting at 54%, which means that over half of the population is aboriginal. A majority of those are children.

That's the highest population ratio of aboriginal persons throughout Canada. We have a diverse population as well here in Prince Albert, but as I said, our mandated focus deals with aboriginal women.

• (1245)

You said in the e-mail you sent me from the procedural clerk that you guys are looking at the root causes and at ideas for solutions. On the root causes that we see for a lot of our individuals and clients—not only those who I'm currently working with but those who other agencies are currently working with—we're running into a lot of individuals who have faced many abuses, such as sexual abuse and physical abuse in their past, and they think that's okay to carry on into future generations.

That, I find, is the most detrimental factor in the root causes. Individuals who go through those types of abuses don't have the self-esteem to say that it's not okay to live in that type of situation, so that whole scenario is perpetuated generation after generation. It didn't help that we went through residential schools; that didn't help either.

But what is most needed at this point in time is really accurately getting statistics in order to start giving more funding to aboriginal agencies that are operated by aboriginals. There is nothing more discouraging to a woman than going to an agency and not getting the help she needs. Ultimately, the children suffer in the end.

What we basically would like to see is more funding coming to aboriginally run agencies so we can help our own people. That's the only way we could see this cycle of violence—in any form, whether it's systematic, personal, domestic, what have you—this system of violence, being basically dragged through the dirt over and over again...it has to stop by having our own people looking after our own people.

Thank you very much.

• (1250)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Lisa.

Marlene has not come, so we will move on to the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle. I have two people here.

Wanda and Eva, are you going to share your time or is one of you going to speak for the seven minutes?

Ms. Wanda Daigneault (Treasurer, Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation): I will speak for those seven minutes.

The Chair: All right. I'll do the two minutes and the one again, just to give you a heads-up. Please begin.

Ms. Wanda Daigneault: I would like to say thank you to Hedy Fry for inviting us here and to all the women who are here—and for those who are not here.

I bring greetings from our president, Judy Hughes, and me, Wanda Daigneault. I'm a new member of SAWCC, and I'm also SAWCC treasurer. With me is my mother, Eva McCallum, our SAWCC north elder. I would just like to say that I'm new at this, so I may make a few mistakes. Just bear with me.

The Chair: There are no mistakes when you're presenting; you're just presenting, just telling us what you think, so not to worry. Don't be nervous.

Ms. Wanda Daigneault: The Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation is a provincial membership-based organization dedicated to promoting and enhancing the status of aboriginal women in all areas of our lives. SAWCC works to unite and involve women by addressing issues of concern through education, advocacy, research, and resource sharing. We strive to advance the issues and concerns of aboriginal women by assisting and promoting common goals towards self-determination and self-sufficiency for aboriginal peoples in our roles as mothers, grandmothers, sisters, aunts, and leaders. Working in partnership with agencies, organizations, and governments in Saskatchewan, across Canada, and internationally, the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation seeks to increase communication, collaboration, and access to necessary resources toward our common goal of equality for all.

SAWCC is one of the 14 affiliates of the Native Women's Association of Canada. Our membership is open to first nations, Métis, Inuit, and non-status women in Saskatchewan. Our programs and services are open to all women and families and have the following three priorities: to decrease vulnerability by addressing violence against aboriginal women, the elderly, youth, and children; to do networking and outreach to support individual and community participation; and to strengthen capacity and leadership creation and enhance youth capacity.

I'm here to share with you the reality of violence experienced by aboriginal women and girls and to discuss how we can take action to address this critical issue. Aboriginal women and families are suffering from a wide range of indicators that place them in a situation of vulnerability to violence and exploitation. To address this issue, we'll look at the root causes, circumstances, and experiences as well as at the responses to violence. The disproportionate level of violence experienced by aboriginal women has been traced to a number of factors rooted in the intergenerational impacts of colonization that have undermined the role of aboriginal women and families in communities—through legislation, such as the Indian Act, and various government initiatives, including residential schools, the sixties scoop and the widespread apprehension of aboriginal children into the child welfare system. Today's disturbingly high rates of violence against aboriginal women and girls, including violence that leads to disappearance and death, have both historical as well as other contemporary root causes and factors.

Through national initiatives such as Sisters in Spirit, the Native Women's Association of Canada has spent the last five years collecting new information about the experience of violence against aboriginal women. In the recently released report, "What Their Stories Tell Us", NWAC reported 582 cases of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls. In examining the cases of violence that have led to disappearance and death, we have to come to understand the much broader spectrum of violence and victimization impacting aboriginal women, girls, and communities.

My presentation will begin with the background and context of violence against aboriginal women and girls in Saskatchewan and in Canada. We will adopt a coordinated approach involving federal, provincial, territorial, and aboriginal leaders. As well, we will share recommendations and the next steps for moving towards action. My presentation expands on the three identified themes from the SWC hearings from last spring: one, murdered and missing aboriginal women; two, culturally appropriate services and filling the service gap; and three, the need to heal victims, families, and communities.

The background and context of violence against aboriginal women and girls in Canada is not easily summarized. However, the reality is that aboriginals are over-policed and under-protected. Statistics on violent crime, victimization, and missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls indicate that the rates of victimization for aboriginal women and girls are 3.5 times higher than they are for non-aboriginal women.

● (1255)

The rate of homicide for aboriginal women is seven times higher than for non-aboriginal women. According to Statistics Canada, aboriginal identity is one of the strongest indicators of violence, even when taking into consideration....

There are over 582 missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls in Canada. Seventy-eight per cent of the cases are from Ontario and west of Ontario. B.C. has the highest number of known cases at 160. These women and girls are young. More than half were under the age of 30 at the time of their disappearance and death.

With the information we have, we know that the vast majority of the women were mothers. This indicates significant issues related to the intergenerational impact of missing and murdered women, as children have lost mothers, aunts, grandmothers, and sisters. There are many questions about how children cope, where they live, and where their support system is.

One of the most important findings is that aboriginal women and girls are as likely to be killed by a stranger or an acquaintance as they are by an intimate partner. Another critical finding, which is consistent with the Sisters in Spirit report, is that only 53% of cases of murder have been cleared by charges of homicide.

SAWCC sits on the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons, which is chaired by the Saskatchewan justice department.

The Chair: Now what will happen is that as we go through the questions you will get an opportunity to expand on things if there was something you didn't get to say.

Ms. Wanda Daigneault: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now I'll move to the Women's Commission of the Prince Albert Grand Council, with Shirley Henderson.

Ms. Shirley Henderson (Chair, Women's Commission of the Prince Albert Grand Council): Good morning. My name is Shirley Henderson. I'm the chairperson of the Prince Albert Grand Council Women's Commission.

We've been in existence for 20 years as the women's commission of the grand council. Our population within the grand council is well over 35,000. We have 14 members on our commission and also 12 first nations communities within the grand council. Three of those communities are fly-in communities: Hatchet Lake, Black Lake, and Fond du Lac. For many years we've been trying to get funding for a women's and children's shelter within the grand council area, but many struggles have occurred, and we have not been able to access any funding.

As for the shelter in Prince Albert, there are a lot of barriers for our women from the far north. The food is different, as is the language. A lot of our ladies only speak their first nations language when they come into the city. The culture is totally different. We do have a lot of barriers for our women from the far north. We're hoping that eventually some programs can be taken to the communities because of the vast distance the women have to travel. For those few who do come to our shelters, a lot of times they have no choice but to go back to the same situation.

The languages within the grand council are Cree, Dene, and Dakota. We were hoping that if we did establish our own shelter we could bring in all three languages, because this is such a barrier to our women.

The communities from the far north are very poor communities. The cost of living is very high. A lot of times, the first nations of a community can't even afford a plane ticket to send an individual out of that community into a shelter—for instance, in Prince Albert. The other shelter they have is in La Ronge. I'm hoping that eventually programs and shelters can be established for some of our communities, because for our ladies it is definitely home-based for them.

● (1300)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now I'm going to go to the ISKWEW (Women Helping Women) Co-operative Health Centre, and Angie Bear.

Ms. Angie Bear (Community Development Worker, ISKWEW Women Helping Women Co-operative Health Centre): Thank you so much. I appreciate the opportunity to come here and speak on the issues today.

I want to reiterate that some of the issues at the core of the violence against women are colonization and having generations of people going through the residential schools. You can imagine the turmoil and the upheaval of families. Traditionally in our communities we didn't have a whole lot of family violence because of the way we lived and because of our belief system. Our women were highly looked upon and honoured in that traditional setting. That is not the mainstream thinking today. Part of it is that the man is the head of the household. That clash of belief systems has been the downfall for first nations women in Canada, I believe.

Just to let you know a little bit about myself, as I said, my name is Angie Bear. I work with the ISKWEW program. It's a women helping women program that deals directly with abuse issues. Our services provide individual counselling. We offer support and referrals for abused women. When we are requested to, we support and advocate for women who are dealing with other agencies and government departments. We strengthen networks and cooperation among community-based organizations and groups. Through public education, we want to increase awareness regarding family violence.

I have just recently come on board with the ISKWEW program. I started November 26. I came from the Prince Albert Grand Council. I worked in the family violence area there for four years.

I've seen first-hand a lot of the core issues and where they come from. I understand the dysfunctions in our families and where they're coming from. I believe that when people wake up in the morning and look out the window, they don't understand a lot of the time where all of those issues come from and how they have gotten here.

I am an aboriginal woman. I grew up in Edmonton, and my family was from Saskatchewan. When I grew up, I had a lot of self-loathing, and I never understood why that was. I remember going home from grade 1 and saying, "I don't want to be an Indian because everybody hates us", and feeling that way. I think it's those core issues that affect you, even when you grow up and you realize those aren't there anymore.

So first of all I'd like to address some of the issues that I think are really important.

Excuse me.

• (1305)

The Chair: If you want to take a minute, some time, we'll stop the clock.

Ms. Angie Bear: I'm fine. I just get a little choked up when I talk about that part, but I'm okay. Thank you. I appreciate that.

I want to address some major concerns that I have in working with women on a daily basis in Prince Albert. When women come into my office and are prepared that day to leave a situation and I can't find any shelter space, this has to be one of my major concerns. When somebody is in a place where they're ready to finally leave that abusive situation, sometimes that window of opportunity is very small. Maybe they go back into the home, where they continue to be dominated, and it's not safe for them to come out until some time later. So when those opportunities come when somebody is ready to leave, and they want to leave now, it's really imperative that we have some place to place them.

What usually happens is I will get a lady who comes into my office and she's fearful for herself and her children. Maybe her partner has her children at that point and he's looking after them, so she can't leave at that moment because she won't leave without her children. When women leave without their children, they become separated, and then there's the whole issue of child apprehension. So they won't leave without their children, and they end up going back. They are put on long waiting lists. We have the YWCA in Prince Albert. If I can't get somebody into the shelter—and the statistics show that the shelter is full 99.9% of the time. So at any time there's never really any space available. You end up being put on a waiting

list, and then you just have to keep calling daily, maybe a couple of times a day, just to see if a space becomes available, because there's so little space available.

As I said, there's the YWCA. They house women and children. And they have Our House, which is attached to the YWCA, and it's for both males and females. That space doesn't help children, though. Unless they can get into the YWCA, they will basically have no place to go. So it's really important that something happen with the shelter space in Saskatchewan.

As Shirley Henderson mentioned, first nations women need that space where they can feel welcome, where their language is spoken, where their food is being served, where they can feel comfortable and safe and secure.

There are other programs that need to happen. There needs to be funding for cultural ceremonies and programs to deal with those barriers when women get into those relationships.

The other major thing I want to talk about is sexual abuse. A lot of women come forward and tell me they've been dealing with sexual abuse for a number of years, and they don't have the resources to continue fighting. Sometimes their children are left in those homes and they are told it's a custody issue. They go to doctors.... They just can't get the support. There needs to be more education and support around sexual abuse.

One of the biggest things I deal with is when children are apprehended and there is no place for the women to really go to get the support they need. They're victimized. I think it has to be looked at, as to what is happening when children are apprehended when there's violence in the home. I don't think it's agreeable to have the woman be further victimized by having her children apprehended because she's with somebody who is abusive. I think we need to deal more with the abuser.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Marlene has not arrived, so I guess we will just carry on without her.

I'm going to move to questions. The first round of questions is a seven-minute round. The seven minutes includes the question and the answer, so if everyone could try to be as succinct as they can, we can get more questions in.

I will begin with Ms. Neville for the Liberals.

• (1310)

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Let me begin by thanking each of you for coming forward. I know it's not always an easy thing to do, and it's certainly appreciated.

I have many questions, but I'm going to start first with Wanda. If you wouldn't mind, I'm going to ask you, in half of my time, perhaps three or four minutes, to give us some of the recommendations that you had in the brief that you prepared that you didn't have time to finish reading.

Ms. Wanda Daigneault: I forgot where I left off. I'll just add on to where I ended.

Hon. Anita Neville: I don't know how much more time I've got, but I'm really interested in the recommendations you were going to make to the committee.

Ms. Wanda Daigneault: I think I started off with the information we have that the vast majority of women were mothers, and this indicates significant issues related to intergenerational impacts of missing and murdered women, as children have lost mothers, sisters.... There are many questions about how children cope where they live—where is their support system?

One of the most important findings is that aboriginal women and girls are as likely to be killed by strangers or acquaintances as they are by an intimate partner.

Another critical finding, which is consistent with Sisters in Spirit, is that only 53% of cases of murder have been cleared by charges of homicide. This compares to 84% for the overall clearance rate of homicide in Canada. We have also calculated the clearance rate by province and have found it ranges from a very low 42% in Alberta to 93% in Nunavut. The clearance rate for Saskatchewan is 78%. This is the highest clearance rate for provinces with a sizeable number of murdered aboriginal women and girls, which suggests that we need to look closer at what Saskatchewan is doing right.

While there are few government initiatives under way to address the issue of violence—such as the federal-provincial territorial working group on aboriginal justice, the FPT family violence initiative, and the FPT status of women forum—the evidence tells us there is a clear need to invest in programs and policies that will change the experiences and outcomes of violence.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you very much.

This morning we met with another agency and we heard many things. I guess I would ask each of you what your relations are with other organizations in the community, or what you find the relations of the women who come into your organization for service support, care, whatever you want, are with other organizations in the community. That is, do they get support from social services? Do they get the kind of support required from police? Do they get it from organizations like Second Harvest Circle and other community organizations?

What's been your experience with working with these women and their relationship with other organizations?

The Chair: Who wants to answer that? Would you like to try that, Lisa?

• (1315)

Ms. Lisa A. Goulet-Cook: Thank you very much for the question, Anita.

Usually when anyone comes to our agency for help, it's already gone past that point where they've been involved with social services or they've been involved with child and family services. Most of the time they are involved with the judicial system, whether they have to go to court for charges, whether they have to go to court to serve as a witness against their abuser, which most likely is their husband or their common-law. So they are involved with the judicial system in many respects. They are involved with other family members who are trying to help them, but the most important fact is that they are there to help themselves and they really don't know where to turn.

I've been put in that situation where I've been faced with family violence. I didn't have a violent upbringing, but I've faced violence with my husband, which we had to heal from, and that wasn't easy. That's probably one of the worst times in my life. So not only do I have that personal experience in dealing with those situations, but we see clients coming into the office where I work involved with all of those systems and really not getting the help they deserve, especially when they have some type of evidence on their face or their body that they've been severely abused.

Hon. Anita Neville: That's what I'm trying to get at, Lisa. I'll have to do it on my next round. What I'm trying to determine is whether they are getting the help that's required from the community organizations, and if they're not, why they are not. Do you have recommendations that we as a committee can put forward to government, recognizing that there are different jurisdictions? Some fall within the province and some fall within the federal jurisdiction. We'll come back to that on my next round, which I hope I'll get.

Madam Chair, thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now hear from Madam Demers from the Bloc Québécois.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much, ladies, for meeting with us. Your being here this afternoon is very important to us.

I will continue along the same lines as my colleague Ms. Anita Neville. The question she asked you is of great importance.

This morning, witnesses told us about the prevalent racism against first nations women living here, in Prince Albert. Unfortunately, this kind of violence is more systemic than simple family violence or other forms of violence seen elsewhere.

We were told about violence perpetuated by social services, police services and food banks, all of which treat aboriginal women harshly. We must discuss this. If this is true, we must find the source of the problem. This is not normal. I am sure that the issue is not due to bad faith, but there must be a reason for it.

I see there is someone from the law enforcement community present here. I would have liked to see this person testify today, so that police services could be represented. I am wondering why this is not the case, given the seriousness of this situation. We are talking about violence against first nations women, and I believe that the law enforcement community is also part of the solution. In other towns, members of police services testified.

I would like you to answer me and to continue answering Ms. Neville's question.

• (1320)

[*English*]

The Chair: Who wants to start?

Wanda, your mike is on. Does that mean you want to start?

Ms. Wanda Daigneault: Yes.

I would like to add to what you just said. I had a niece come here to a women's shelter. She came here because she was being abused, but then she came back home. She was crying. She said, "Auntie, guess what?" I asked, "What, my girl? What happened?" She said, "You know, Auntie, I went to Prince Albert. I went to a women's shelter to stop being abused." She'd brought her little girls with her. She broke down in tears. I asked, "What's wrong, my girl?" She said to me, "Auntie, I went to Prince Albert to stop being abused, and at that women's shelter where we went, I got abused. I got called down. My kids got called down", is what she said. Then I told her, "Well, we'll work it out. We'll talk."

So I could just feel what you said about the two police officers sitting at the back of the room here. I come from a northern community, Ile-a-la-Crosse. There's not much police help. When you call a police officer in the middle of the night, when your spouse is abusing you or whatever, they don't come right away. You know, we had a youth stabbed to death in Ile-a-la-Crosse. He died there. It took police officers one hour to come there.

So I understand where you're coming from in terms of what they're saying.

That's it.

The Chair: Nicole, would you like to have somebody else answer? Lisa looks like she's interested.

Ms. Nicole Demers: *Oui.*

Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook: Yes, I can answer.

She's asked why we don't get those services. I can attest to what Wanda is saying. I'm originally from Cumberland House, and I still see a lot of our people come here into the city and not get those services only because we don't have enough of our own people serving our own people. When you go in for social services, they're not very welcoming. They're not very nice to you. They don't really want to help you.

A lot of our women, when they leave, will leave, yes, with their children, but they will also leave behind financial stability. When our women leave, they leave with their identity and that's about it. They leave everything else behind, including a stable home. Even though it's violent, even though it's dysfunctional at a certain level, it's still their home. It's still their bed. It's still everything they own. It's still their clothing and their personal effects.

A lot of our women leave without anything. I've known women to be kicked out of their homes with literally only their underwear on. They've been beaten up and thrown out into the snow like that. That's the harsh reality for our women. Whether we're in northern Saskatchewan or in the city, that's the harsh reality.

Do we ever realistically get a helping hand from the police services? A lot of the women I've spoken to have been treated very harshly. They haven't been treated with the same respect as our non-aboriginal counterparts. That's just the reality of the situation. You can ask women time and time again. You can ask children time and time again.

When women do leave, they enter into that realm of child and family services. I worked in that realm for quite some time. I don't work there now. I don't believe it's a system that's made to pull

families together. I think it's there, realistically, to pull families apart in order for social workers to have a stable job. That's what I really, truly believe.

• (1325)

The Chair: Thank you, Lisa.

Nicole, I'm sorry; we'll come back to you.

Ms. McLeod, from the Conservatives.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to also thank all the witnesses. It is certainly a cold day but with a very warm welcome, so thank you. I appreciate the frankness that everyone brings to the table.

I come from British Columbia, which has a horrific history with this issue. What our committee is doing is going across Canada and really trying to determine not only root causes, but where we can go. Unfortunately, we can't change history, but where can we go that will be effective in the future?

Let's say there's no budget restriction, there are no jurisdictional issues. If you were looking at your community—and perhaps I'll leave time for each person to tackle this one—what would you do in terms of prevention? Where would you go with that issue if you had no constraints around money and jurisdiction? Also, the second part of that would be where would you go in terms of supporting current victims? I'll leave that open.

The Chair: We'll start with Angie.

Ms. Angie Bear: That is a really good point to bring up. That's one of the things, when I'm working in my programs, I'm looking at for dollars for programs so that I can develop some of the programs.

Some of the things I can see that would really help families, the kinds of programs.... When I was at the grand council I developed a program called "Honouring our Traditions: Shaping Healthy Behaviours". It was an anger management program that was to be developed in Prince Albert. It went through the UAS committee and then was to be delivered out into our communities. Hopefully that initiative will continue, because that is where I believe that capacity needs to be. We need to give the education to the people so that they can deliver it to their own people. We need to provide them with services and education and programs so that they can continue to deliver those programs.

Part of what that anger management program would do in our first nations communities is it wouldn't just deal with anger management. It would deal with.... You are holding onto all this anger, but where is it coming from? Is it coming from...? And we'll go back into colonization. We'll talk about tools for how to deal with anger management. We'll talk about family violence. We'll talk about traditional lifestyles. There is so much that was put into the program. It was nine full days long, and I'm hoping that continues.

If I saw an opportunity where we could deliver programs to people and address those issues, that's where it would come from. It would come from programs coming from our grassroots people and it would be deliverable to our community so that it would be like the trainer type program so that people can take that program and run with it. If they are from a Dene community they can put a Dene cultural component to it, and it still sticks with the program so that they can kind of tailor it to their needs as long as they have the basic tools.

That is where I would really like to see a lot of funding and initiative go toward, to develop something really powerful like that. Part of being in a family violence situation is women have no self-esteem. If we can empower these women and give them some tools so that they can understand where they have come from, what has happened to them, and where they want to go, give them some tools on some child programs so that they can do some parenting, so that they know themselves and can feel empowered that way, that's the way to go. That's what I would like to see.

• (1330)

The Chair: Thank you.

Does anybody want to add to that? We have three minutes left, so if you wanted to be very quick about what you're doing, everybody could get a chance.

Lisa, do you feel you want to add something?

Ms. Lisa A. Goulet-Cook: I want to add something.

I do agree with that statement that we should be adding a traditional component onto teaching our current families, especially the women and children, but I'd also like to see a traditional family one. I mean that help should be brought to the perpetrators as well. They need help as much as the women and the children do. Without helping all facets of the family, all members of the family, how are we going to truly say that we've helped them to heal from their past?

And not only that, but having traditional programming in with very contemporary counselling practices as well and getting to the root causes of those issues is really important in order for a family to really heal, and getting them educated enough to not only improve their life skills but to improve their educational levels as well. That's really important in order for them to start taking further steps toward independence.

The Chair: Thank you.

Wanda, do you have anything to add?

Ms. Wanda Daigneault: Since we're focusing on women and children being educated about violence, why not men? That's what I'd like to ask. Why not men?

The Chair: Shirley.

Ms. Shirley Henderson: I agree with what the lady said. I think the main focus has to be that we have to heal the whole family. Everybody needs counselling—the husband, the wife, and also the children—because in a domestic violence situation everybody suffers. The man suffers. He feels guilt after the incident occurs. After the honeymoon stage has come, he's sorry for what he did. He's sorry to the wife. He's sorry to the child. Everybody's involved. So I

think we need to focus more programming on healing the whole family.

The Chair: Thank you.

We have 30 seconds left. Eva, do you have anything? You haven't spoken. Do you want to add something or are you in agreement?

Ms. Eva McCallum: No.

The Chair: Okay.

Cathy, you have 30 seconds. What do you want to do with it?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: I'll leave it for my next round.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

Now we're going to go to the second round....

Oh, sorry, Irene. We have Irene Mathysen from the NDP.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Clearly I've been far too quiet, and I will remedy that.

I want to say thank you to all of you for being so candid. We're hearing some very difficult things. People have been very forthright in terms of speaking to us, and I appreciate that very much. So thank you for that honesty and clarity.

At the end of the Sisters in Spirit campaign, or when NWAC came to their conclusions, they said that in the course of the work they did across the country, they came across some real ways to resolve a good many of the issues that face first nations women and their children. It seems to me that's what you're talking about here today.

I want to touch on some specifics in terms of what you've said. The first one is the issue of child apprehensions. In my community, which is largely an urban first nations community, we hear over and over again how profoundly destructive that is. For a very brief time the province provided some funding, a small modicum of funding, to the local community to address that so that first nations families could take in kids who needed help and support, so that they had that balance, that cultural support. I'm not sure where that program is. I think the funding has fallen off.

Is that a solution? I'm assuming that here the province is responsible for child welfare and that there needs to be some discussion with the province in terms of a way for first nations to nurture your own children. Do you see that happening, and how could that happen? Is there a possibility of that being something you could take to the provincial government and get action on?

• (1335)

Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook: Thank you for that question, Irene.

I've worked as a social worker both in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. When I was working in Manitoba I saw a system that was much more sensitive to the needs of first nations individuals, Métis individuals, and non-aboriginal counterparts. There were four authorities at that time made to be sensitive to all four, because they had a first nations north and a first nations south.

With the diversity in Manitoba, in the first nations northern authority many communities are fly-in or train-in only; they don't have any roads going up there. Those authorities were more sensitive on how we dealt with first nations children. If you were a Cree person wanting to adopt, let's say, a Dene child, you could not do that. A Dene child had to be adopted by a Dene family, and so on and so forth.

Here in Saskatchewan it's a little bit different. A lot of the first nations have their own childhood family agency, but still there are a lot of non-aboriginal caregivers. Basically, you're tearing a family apart during the apprehension stage, and placing them outside the community in a non-first-nations home or putting them in a group home that is run by non-aboriginal people. Basically, you're separating the family, and we workers didn't really have much of a choice in saying we're going to tear your family apart and put you back in the 1960s again and show you an entirely different educational system away from your family and an entirely different family system away from your family. It is not constructive.

Actually the Saskatchewan government is going through harsh criticism because of it at this point in time. It's in the news. It's in our newspapers. Everybody knows that this system we have here in Saskatchewan is not good right now. It is so harsh to take a child away from their family. I know that because I was adopted. Right now, I don't speak to my biological parents only because there was a system there that tore me away from my family. I was very fortunate to grow up in the same community, but it still tore me away from my family. Children are going through this over and over and over again, which is what's happening here in this city. When we see our moms going through violence or something that's happening in the home where the children have to be apprehended, it's one of the worst things to place a child in a different home setting. They don't know anybody. There are no familiar faces. There's nothing familiar about that home. It is one of the worst things to hear a child cry or hold onto your pants because they don't want to stay there. That is one of the worst, most gut-wrenching, heartbreaking things you'll ever hear.

To say that we need more aboriginal people in the workplace, yes, we do. Yet when we apply for those jobs the door is always slammed in our faces.

• (1340)

The Chair: We've got about 30 seconds left, Irene.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Angie is nodding. I would like to hear from her.

Ms. Angie Bear: Thank you so much.

The one thing I have a really hard time with when I'm working with the women is they come in, they tell their story, and they talk about how they reported domestic violence. When they begin to report domestic violence it goes on a police record and the crisis centre is called. Maybe they leave their partner, go into the shelter, and then they reconcile sometime later, or the partner keeps stalking and stalking and they feel like they can't get away from them. Maybe there's a whole issue with family. The abuser ends up coming back in the home and then the children are apprehended. It further abuses the women.

So that policy needs to change. There needs to be something different with the abuser. If he's continually going back into that

home, it shouldn't be the children who are being removed from the mother and being put into the system and everyone being further victimized. It should be the person who's doing the abuse. Why does he always get off the hook? He then goes into another relationship and then that family is put into turmoil. It keeps perpetuating itself. You have this one abuser and maybe he has three or four families he's been involved in and there's been abuse in those families.

The Chair: Angie, I think we're going to have to move on. Thank you.

Now we'll go to the second round, and it's five minutes. Everyone is going to have to be far more concise if you are going to get enough questions and answers in.

I'm going to go again to Ms. Neville for the Liberals.

Hon. Anita Neville: I don't know whether I can be concise, but I'll try.

I'm listening carefully, and the whole issue of child apprehension and the impact of domestic violence has really been at the forefront today. I think it gives us a lot to think about.

We're here as part of a federal government committee to look at what we can recommend to government to address the issue of domestic violence. You're all undoubtedly aware of the jurisdictional issues: the province has responsibility for some things; the feds have responsibility for others.

I would like your thoughts or recommendations as to what we can recommend to the federal government that would make a difference in the lives of those people who are victims of violence.

I am going on too long.

You've certainly talked about the intergenerational and the colonized aspects of it, but what is happening today that could be changed by the federal government that would perhaps not eliminate but alleviate domestic violence, or violence against women, however it's manifested?

The Chair: Shirley, would you like to try that?

Ms. Shirley Henderson: Okay.

Recommendations to the government.... I think right now for first nations the government has a band-aid effect. They give a little bit of money for a program; you just get a program going and the money runs out. At different times we have had different people employed in different areas, and the money will maybe go on for one year or it may go for five, but the funding is never continuous, and it needs to be.

As I said, if you look at the budget of the Department of Indian Affairs, we do not get hardly any money for counselling. Social services on reserve means handing out a welfare cheque, but there's nothing that comes with that cheque to provide services to the individual. It's a place where they go and get their food allowance, their housing allowance, and that's it. Nothing else comes with that cheque, not even in terms of our social workers being trained for counselling. So where does an individual go? They go to the band office and pick up the cheque. Sometimes health centres have some counselling available, but there too, if you look at budgets within health...as the health director, I am aware of this. I've been health director for a number of years in Montreal Lake, and not much money comes for counselling. We talk about our child and family services agents. There's too much focus on child apprehension without the counselling to the families. It's a cycle that needs to be changed in all areas of our communities, right from social assistance to health, to child family agencies, to the RCMP for the support they should be providing these families.

● (1345)

Hon. Anita Neville: Anybody else?

The Chair: Anita, you have 25 seconds left. Do you have another question?

Hon. Anita Neville: I'm just going to come back on this one. Does anyone have any concrete recommendations that we can put forward?

I certainly heard your comments, Shirley. You spoke earlier about shelter support. I agree that's important, but that's at the other end. That's dealing with the symptoms, not the causes. I'm trying to determine what we can do to eliminate the causes of domestic violence.

The Chair: We're going to have to wait for that answer to come, because Cathy asked for it originally too—prevention. What are the preventative measures that can be taken?

Having said that, it gives me an intro into Cathy's time now.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: I will ultimately go to prevention, but quickly...we had talked about some of the challenges that police services have. Unfortunately, they're not at the table, but I think it was Wanda who was saying that you've had significant success compared to other provinces in terms of solving cases. Is that what you said? Did you say that we could learn from what Saskatchewan was doing right?

Ms. Wanda Daigneault: Yes.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Any idea of what is happening right there...? Would we have to perhaps pursue it through other panels?

Ms. Wanda Daigneault: You would have to pursue it through other panels.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Okay, but there's something significant there that has created a much better resolution rate. I think it's something that we do need to explore in terms of what's happening there.

Having had that quick question, I'll go to prevention. Angie did start to talk about it.

Your program seems like it would support prevention to some degree.

Ms. Angie Bear: Going back, could I talk a little bit about the police service? I believe that's part of the prevention portion.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Absolutely.

Ms. Angie Bear: In my experience with the police service in Prince Albert, I've done a number of things. When I worked for the grand council I used to do the memorial walk; we honoured our brothers and sisters who were missing and murdered. Through that, I got to know the police service very well. We also do a rally in Prince Albert for a violence-free city, in which we honour our police services that we work with in Prince Albert.

I think we're in a really unique situation. For the first time now, I've been asked by one of the police officers to assist them on a domestic violence call. That's never happened, to my knowledge, and I'm really excited to see that they're working with community agencies in developing it.

I've also been in contact with Constable Matthew Gray, who's developing programs and wants to work with community organizations. Yes, you can honestly say that there have been some real problems with working with police services in the past, but I believe those bridges are now being mended and people are really trying hard to work with our first nations communities. I feel very respected when I work with them. I work with victim services and I work with a lot of those community agencies, so I'd like to speak to that.

As well, in some of the programs they're developing, they are trying to work with the missing and murdered women programs. I was invited to sit on a cold case file unit with them. I think the officer, Rhonda Meakin, has moved on since then. But always, the new person, the new officers, because officers get dispersed around the community quite a bit into various communities.... There's always somebody new that we need to work with and they always make that connection, so I really want to say that there's been a really good effort by the police service in Prince Albert to make that connection with community services. I think they're really trying hard to develop good programs.

We're working together at developing them. We're actually going to be setting up a committee that's going to address it and talk about it first-hand, and it's the police officers themselves who are setting that up and inviting people from the community to do this. I hope everyone participates in that when they do, because I think that's a preventative tool.

● (1350)

The Chair: Cathy, you have one minute.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: That's great.

I'm not sure if Wanda might be able to focus in on this. The northern and isolated communities have their own particular challenges. If a woman is a victim of serious abuse within her home—and we've heard that the options in Prince Albert are somewhat limited—are there any solutions you would see that would allow the woman to stay in her own community in safety, solutions that aren't happening right now?

The Chair: I think Shirley was actually the one who brought that up.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Sorry, Shirley.

Ms. Shirley Henderson: Yes, definitely, the service in the community...if it was there, I know the ladies would attend. But because of the distance to travel into the city and to try to accommodate their children—they don't want to leave their children behind. If we could have more services within the community, it would be a lot better for all of the family—for the husband, the wife, and the children. We need those right in our communities. Prince Albert is a long way away from Black Lake.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Is there any travelling support right now at all?

Ms. Shirley Henderson: No.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Perhaps most of those communities have a nurse and maybe a few community health reps?

Ms. Shirley Henderson: Yes, and that's it for support services in the communities.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'll now go to Madam Demers.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Wanda, you said earlier that, to reduce the incidence of violence against women, we absolutely must get men involved in the process. I agree with you. I saw that, as part of one particular program, abusers who agreed to participate in treatment avoided imprisonment and could return home to their spouse. Does this program still exist and, if so, is it effective?

[English]

Ms. Wanda Daigneault: There are none with the program we have in our community. The men who want to get help have to come south to Prince Albert or Saskatoon. Most of those men don't want to leave the community. They like to stay beside their children. Men too have feelings, just like women. They cry just like women. They hurt just like women. I feel that if there was a counsellor, a therapist, whoever, to come in and talk to these men, there would hardly be any violence for women. It would just be all happy.

• (1355)

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Earlier, you talked about a family healing centre. Do you believe that similar centres could be established within communities? Could that help matters?

[English]

Ms. Wanda Daigneault: Yes, it would.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Does everyone agree with this? Yes? Would the operating of such centres be expensive? Do you have an idea of how much it would cost?

[English]

Ms. Wanda Daigneault: No, we don't.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Do centres of this kind already exist?

[English]

Ms. Wanda Daigneault: We have a detox centre in Ile-a-la-Crosse. That's the only centre we have.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Is that a family centre?

[English]

Ms. Wanda Daigneault: No, it's not.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: So, there are currently no centres where the father, the mother and the children can come together to encourage healing.

Angie?

[English]

Ms. Angie Bear: Thank you.

I am also employed by the mental health...and I do work with the program, Choices for Men. I'm a co-facilitator for the Eve program, which is kind of a mirror.... Where the men go into the program, the women get the exact same program. I have also worked with probation services for the past four years, which work with the men who are charged with domestic violence. That one is done by probation services. I've worked in that one for four years.

The problem we have in Prince Albert is we've been trying to develop a domestic violence program. In Saskatoon and Regina they have a domestic violence court. When men are charged with domestic violence, they go into a program. In Prince Albert we do not have the funding for that type of program. We've put a proposal together. We've had the chief of police, prosecutors, and judges sit on that. It's gone forward. A little bit of funding was given to the police services to develop some programs around that, and they're doing their portion of it. But that domestic violence program is really essential, especially since we service so many of our northern communities. That's a really key part of what's missing in Prince Albert.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: I am very pleased with the work done by police services; I congratulate you on that.

Do you feel that similar work could be done in collaboration with other services, such as social services?

[English]

Ms. Angie Bear: Yes, we're actually trying to put together a child apprehension program. Usually when a woman's child is apprehended, it is kind of like going to the doctor and being told you have cancer. When your doctor tells you that you have cancer and then goes on to tell you what your treatment is going to be, you walk out of that office and all you remember him saying is that you have cancer. When a woman's child is apprehended, social services tells her what her rights and responsibilities are, but when she walks out, all she has heard is that her child has been apprehended.

We would like to develop a program, and we're working with social services right now to put that program in place so that when children are apprehended, there will be a program delivered in our community to address that, so that they will have somewhere to go to talk about their challenges, their rights, and their responsibilities, and so families can be worked with on a first basis like that. We are all working toward that at the Co-operative Health Centre.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going to move on now to Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have a couple of questions.

Wanda, you said that very often women are killed by strangers, and you also said that your niece came into a shelter and she was called down. I'm assuming that you mean there were racial slurs. If we look at that and at the fact that first nations women are being killed by strangers rather than by intimate partners, what do you think that tells us? Is racism a serious issue in the communities we're talking about?

Ms. Wanda Daigneault: Yes.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: This has to do with the proposal to have a family centre and cultural programs and counselling. Is there a role for the federal government in terms of providing support funding for capacity building? It would seem to me that capacity building is at the centre of what you are talking about and the needs you are talking about. I wonder if everyone or anyone could respond.

I see you nodding, Angie and Lisa.

• (1400)

Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook: Thank you for asking that question.

At this point in time one of the mandates of the urban aboriginal strategy is to get all the stakeholders together here in Prince Albert to get them to the table to provide almost—I hate to say it—a one-stop shop where we can provide services to the clients who come forward to us once we put them through a needs assessment. That's on the table right now with our committee. I developed that program and we're going to be going through that.

Once we do that we're going to be contacting stakeholders within Prince Albert, such as Angie, various agencies that we are going to invite to a meeting and ask how we can best serve the clients that really need our help the most here in Prince Albert. It can't keep on going the way it is. There are so many different innovative programs here in Prince Albert, but not all the clients know about those programs and how we can help them. We've got to actually do that work, bring that information and educate our clients on what they have offered to them.

The UAS is a pilot project with the Department of Indian Affairs that's being run through different cities within Canada. What we need more and more often is to get core funding for us to develop more preventative programs. What I'd like to see here for Prince Albert is for all the agencies to come together and start developing how we are going to best serve our clients. Yet we don't have that core funding. Our project ends at the end of 2011 fiscal year, which is next March. So we don't have any money to survive past that. That was one of the issues we all have here; once we have a really good

program across the board, across the spectrum for aboriginal agencies, whether it is preventative, whether it's an action plan of some sort, or what have you, once it starts working for our clients the core funding just stops like that. What are we supposed to do with our clients?

With traditional programming that comes right from community-based organizations and that most of the time is based on client needs, once that program is developed a year or two and it really starts making an effect on people, that funding is shut down. That long-term sustainability is not there. How are we supposed to treat clients and send them over here and treat them like a pinball and in the end they start giving up on their wellness plan? They are starting to get independent and then all of a sudden those services are not there for them.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: I assume also you would lose the expertise of your staff. If you can't guarantee a job, you would lose that experienced staff person. It's interesting, because it comes right back to cost. It is certainly much less expensive to fund those support systems than a lot of jails and the mental health costs and the apprehension costs and overall.

I take it I'm out of time, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Yes.

We have actually about 25 minutes left, a little over 25 minutes, so we could go to a third round.

I just wanted to ask the committee and the witnesses to look at the mandate, which not only speaks to the issue of domestic violence, which seems to me what we have been speaking about a lot, but it talks about the nature of the violence. In other words, is it only domestic violence that aboriginal women face, or are there other types of violence? If so, maybe this round might be a way to explore other kinds of violence, other than domestic violence. Is there society violence? Is there community violence? Is there systemic violence? If so, what are the ways in which one can deal with those and try to either prevent them or find therapeutic ways to deal with them or look at rehabilitation, education, or whatever?

I just thought that one might want to explore that, because we have only been talking about domestic violence, and I know we've been to other places where they've told us it's not the only form of violence that aboriginal women face, especially in urban areas; it's not the only type at all.

I'll leave that up to you. I just throw that in there. I know you will ignore me if you don't want to do it. So you can just go ahead and ask whatever questions you want anyway.

Anita, five minutes.

• (1405)

Hon. Anita Neville: How can I let that pass? I would like you to comment on what Ms. Fry said, but I also have one other question for you. I had others, but I have just one quick one.

Are there, in your experience, many instances of violence that go unreported? If so, is that because of fear of child apprehension or other issues? I'm curious about that, but I also would appreciate comments on what Hedy Fry just indicated as well.

You were nodding, Angie. Do you want to go ahead?

Ms. Angie Bear: Yes. I just had a healing circle last night and that was a major thing: there are women who will not come forward. They have the security of that healing circle to be able to say those things confidentially. I asked them if I could mention this if something should come up. That's exactly what's needed: they do need that support there and it's not there for them.

Hon. Anita Neville: It's not there, so they're fearful of coming forward. Is that it?

Ms. Angie Bear: Well, there are a lot of women I'm working with. One lady in particular said she was walking down the street after she left her partner, and her partner saw her walking on the street and attacked her. A neighbour saw what was happening and called her into his place of residence. The police were called. Then her child was apprehended: social services didn't believe that she wasn't with her partner, because it was her partner who attacked her.

She felt that if she hadn't reported the violence to begin with, if she hadn't put it on the radar, maybe she would still have her child. It's in those kinds of incidents where that type of thing happens, where social services doesn't believe what the women are saying when they're saying, "I'm not with my partner anymore."

Hon. Anita Neville: I'm sorry, I did want to follow up on Hedy's point, but this really is distressing. To what do you attribute that? I know it's difficult to generalize. Is it because they don't believe the women? Because they're interested in protecting the best interests of the child? What is it? Because that's a real conundrum for women.

Ms. Angie Bear: It is. I think it's because they do want to protect the best interests of the child. I think that's important, but you can't do so by walking over the woman's rights. That further victimizes that child as well, because then the children don't want to come forward. They don't want to be pulled from their home.

If you can somehow work with the family so that they're not being torn apart and somehow deal with the abuser.... If it's the abuser who needs to be put out of the home, then deal with that. Have him go to court. Have him attend a program. Have him away so that he can't further victimize the family. Something needs to be done in that respect.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

Are there any comments from anybody on Hedy's point?

Lisa, go ahead.

Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook: You asked about how a woman faces repercussions from phoning in. I worked as a health worker at Cumberland House for many years and I did have to work with women when they were going to court. They'd ask me to go in there and help support them.

As for what they were going through, believe it or not, it's in the Criminal Code.... Their partners come in, practically kicking in the door, kicking and screaming and threatening that they're going to kill them, yet when she takes one of their children's toy trucks and hits her husband or boyfriend with it, the woman gets charged with assault. She gets put through the whole judicial system, gets embarrassed and humiliated, and has a criminal record. Then when she applies for a job later on, it comes up on her criminal record check that she assaulted another individual.

•(1410)

Hon. Anita Neville: So what's your recommendation, Lisa? What should we be recommending on that?

Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook: Can you go to the people who are in charge of the Criminal Code of Canada and—

Hon. Anita Neville: We can look at it, certainly—

Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook: —look at that? Because that's not right either. That's not right, especially when the woman has been threatened and the RCMP say it's all her fault when that's not the case.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll go to Cathy McLeod.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I've been hearing a number of things. I can appreciate the concerns around core funding versus temporary funding. Certainly it's not just the federal government. I worked in the provincial system, and I really came to be very leery of.... It's great to have project funding that builds things. It's great to have project funding that pilots something, but it really is tough once you have a program that is achieving success but it's only for five years. Again, that is throughout the system. You almost wonder if you're in for a penny, you're in for a pound if you have programs that have proven their value. I know it happens provincially.

I would be curious about two things. I heard "train the trainer", integrating the traditional with the modern-day, and certainly in health care the chronic disease self-management program that was then adopted had some great success. Is that something that has been envisioned for some of the more northern remote communities where you have lay leaders who have been trained? Have you had any success as it relates to violence and abuse?

The Chair: Shirley, do you have a comment?

Ms. Shirley Henderson: Yes, we have had some really good programs in place. As I mentioned before, the funding seems to cease. Once the program is up and running and going very well for the community, the program ceases. Even with our women's commission, I'd say about 10 or 12 years ago we had a family violence training program where we trained individuals from each of our communities to work in a community on family violence. Well, they provided the training dollars but no funding to the community after to employ them. It was a really good training program. We tried again to get further funding for a future training program for family violence but were unable to.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Sometimes the jurisdictional issues do tend to complicate what are logical community-based solutions. Is there enough flexibility when programs become available to do what makes sense at the community level?

I'll use health as an example, where we have on reserve, off reserve, and it was very costly because we were almost duplicating; there wasn't the ability to connect and partner in a way that made sense. Is that an issue at all?

Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook: At Cumberland House, where I was a health director for many years, at one time when we wanted to partner and build a health centre together, because of jurisdictional issues and other political issues as well, it became impossible.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: What about as it relates to violence and programs? Are there any issues, or is it more of a health issue?

Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook: They've always put it on the health issue front. They always have. They always put it on our plate, and they have always said, well, because this person needs transportation, it should be coming from the health budget. A lot of our health budget, I think 75% at that time, went to transportation to bring the victims out, only to bring them back to the same dysfunctional domestic home, I guess you could say. A lot of our dollars went to transportation.

We tried in so many ways to partner with our provincial counterparts, to say "Here's a program; let's develop a program where we not only educate the mum and the children, but let's get the dad involved as well." What we basically had to do was go to the judge and the government and ask if they could please mandate this man who had been charged with domestic violence or assaulting his wife to come to the counselling with his wife and children. About 99% of the time he did, and a lot of the time it worked, as long as the support services were there, but as soon as you take out those support services, without providing core funding, a lot of it falls by the wayside.

Some people had great success with it. I can guarantee you that. It was about 60%, but it's the 40% that you really need to help. We've transitioned these families to become more independent. That's what you really ultimately want to do.

• (1415)

The Chair: Yes.

Thanks, Lisa. We've gone over on that one.

Nicole.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for allowing me to speak in French.

Based on everything I have heard this afternoon, I believe that one of the key causes of the violence is the extreme poverty first nations women live in. In my opinion, this extreme poverty is also reflected in the lack of social housing, lack of education and lack of power among women.

Should we not use programs provided by Status of Women Canada related to the empowerment of women? First nations women would gain a lot by participating in these programs and by taking charge of their lives, taking charge of who they are and becoming proud of what they are, becoming proud of being aboriginal women and becoming leaders in their community, as you undoubtedly already are. That way, they could become leaders within the Prince Albert community and within other communities, sit on city councils, hold decision-making positions in order to change the power structure and the way things are done. That is the only way to truly change the situation and stop the violence.

I appreciate that you are all working very hard, but you are going against the current because the violence continues to be a problem. To stop the violence, we must put an end to poverty and we must encourage women to believe in themselves and love themselves. That is how we will put an end to the violence.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Does anyone want to tackle that issue—that if poverty ends, violence will end?

Ms. Angie Bear: Poverty is a major issue with everything. Part of it is why are people so impoverished? Whenever we talk about poverty we need to go back and look at when Canada was first colonized. We have no rights to our resources and our minerals.

I live on a first nations community, and when we try to get programs and some economic development there are always those barriers: you have to do this and you have to do that. There are so many things that you're mandated to do before you can even get a small business operated on a first nations community. With those barriers put in there, if that's what's holding people back and that's where the poverty is coming from.... It's twofold: yes, it's poverty, but there are many poor people who don't have violence in their lives and who can live good lives. Part of it comes from understanding where they came from and understanding their traditional values, connecting with those values and being able to be in a place where they can practise those traditional values in a respectful way with people in the community accepting that.

Even a simple thing such as—and I'm not sure if you understand the term—"smudging", where you take the sweetgrass or the sage and you burn it. A lot of our buildings don't allow for that. So when we run groups or put programs together, even a simple thing such as smudging becomes a major issue. We end up not being able to practise some of our traditional beliefs. When we put meetings together we feel that's an important part of practising who we are as first nations people.

• (1420)

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now move on to Ms. Mathyssen.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm going to pick up from Hedy's comments, and from Nicole's comments, because she touched on something I was going to ask, and that is in regard to the social violence and how it's perpetuated through communities.

Specifically, is the lack of affordable housing an issue here in Prince Albert and in other communities, the communities you serve? Could you describe your experience with that?

In terms of poverty, it seems to me.... Someone mentioned the fact that first nations people are often denied a job. They show up looking for a job and it's, "No, not you, we don't want you." So to what degree is unemployment feeding that social violence in terms of what we're all talking about, that need for job training? Someone told us this morning that a lot of first nations people just don't have the skills or the academic background to get the training they need.

Finally, would some kind of child care, some kind of affordable and dependable child care, help women who are perhaps looking for training, trying to find a job, or just trying to sort themselves out in terms of dealing with addictions or the trauma of the abuse they have experienced? Would all of those things be part and parcel of what we've been talking about in terms of a community helping itself?

Ms. Angie Bear: With regard to the housing, that should have been one of the first things that was brought up in this meeting today. Housing is so hard for women. That's probably a big portion of the problem of why it's so hard to get into the women's shelter, because it's not just women who are being abused who are in there; it's people who have no place to go, people who have no housing, so they're taking up space.

I hate to say that, but somebody who is fleeing a violent situation won't have that space available because the housing issue is so bad. Even once they get in there, they are applying all over Prince Albert. Trying to find affordable housing is impossible. Usually women end up taking whatever they can get. The housing isn't always the best. They usually end up having to pay a large amount out of their food allowance to have the house so they have a roof over their head.

Further, there is the child care. I'm raising two of my granddaughters. I have a nine-year-old and a four-year-old. Child care is horrendous. It's so hard to get into day care. There are waiting lists. If you're a working person like me and your income is maybe just a little too high, you have to foot the whole cost of child care even though you're a grandparent. There is no support for grandparents. That's another thing. Some support needs to be put in place for grandparents when they are dealing with their grandchildren, because they're a large portion of the caregivers in the communities.

• (1425)

The Chair: You have one minute.

Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook: When it comes to housing, employment, and shelter, yes, a lot of that perpetuates a lot of the abuse. It all ties in together.

The housing here is unbelievable. People are spending anywhere between \$1,000 and \$1,200 for a three-bedroom, with just a main level. Plus, with the utilities to run and operate a home with three bedrooms, you're looking at upwards of \$2,000 a month. If you're not a working professional and your spouse is not a working professional, I'm sorry, it's just not going to cut it here. In social housing, there is nothing available. We checked around last week, and there is no social housing available, period.

The basic rent at Weidner Investment Services, which is a company that is buying up a lot of the apartments here, starts at around \$850 for a one-bedroom apartment. The three-bedrooms are going for around \$1,100, so how can we say we're providing a lot of services here for people when we can't even get them into affordable housing?

Ms. Irene Mathysen: So there's a concentration of housing in the hands of a small group, and they're controlling the market and charging whatever they feel like?

Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook: Yes. And they're kicking out a lot of single mothers who are trying to make something of themselves by going to school or seeking minimum-wage jobs. A lot of them are

doing that and trying to help themselves. Yet you have this company coming in and literally throwing seniors out onto the street as well, senior citizens.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: So social housing is a desperate need.

Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook: Yes.

The Chair: I want to thank you all for coming and presenting to us.

There are some things I would like to ask, now that everyone has had their turn. I would like to follow up on a couple of things.

You had a question from Madame Demers about if you stop poverty you will stop violence. I used to be a physician in my other life, and I found that very wealthy women were also victims of violence. So I think it has to do with empowerment, and education might be one of the most important sources of empowerment. If a woman can find a job because she's educated she can basically walk away and say "I can take care of myself. I don't need you and I don't need the support systems you have. I can take care of myself and my children."

So as you say, there are many factors, but I wanted to follow up on this issue we had talked about, domestic violence. I know that this morning when we met with other groups they talked about systemic violence. The missing and murdered women were not killed in domestic violence, were they? The question is why there are so many aboriginal women missing and murdered and have not been followed up on in our communities. Obviously there is another form of violence that we haven't talked about, and that is social community violence in urban areas, because this tends to happen to urban aboriginal women.

What I wanted to explore very quickly is on reserve—and that is why we are visiting reserves, we are visiting urban areas, we are visiting isolated areas, because we think that the issues are very different in each of those areas... What we find and have found in all the things we've heard so far is that in urban areas there is always this inter-jurisdictional wrangle: is it a city issue, is it a provincial issue, or a federal issue? So we have jurisdictions that are coming into play in urban aboriginal problems where there is societal violence, etc., as well.

My question is twofold. Why is it that there aren't resources made available on reserve? The federal government has the fiduciary responsibility on reserve. Why is it that INAC is not providing all of the one-stop-shopping services, the shelters, and everything that is necessary on reserve? That's my first question. And if they did, will that at least deal with the on-reserve problems?

My second question is why is it that urban aboriginal people who leave the reserve and come into the city do not have the care and the funding from the reserve following them in? That's the second question.

And thirdly, there was an attempt by Paul Martin when he was Prime Minister to bring in something called the Kelowna accord, which was going to place in the hands of aboriginal people, whether they were urban or on reserve, the ability to take care of the three components: housing, education, and health. Would that, if it had in fact continued on, have been something that would have answered some of your problems?

That's basically what I'd like to hear from you.

• (1430)

Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook: In those areas, if they were tackled and if those fiduciary responsibilities followed us from the reserve to the urban centre, if we had all of those at our disposal for most of the time it would have made a lot of difference for a lot of people living here in the urban setting.

The Chair: Why is that not happening?

Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook: It is not happening because a lot of the funding that reserves have for their people will be given first to people who are living on the reserve, first and foremost. That's the way most chiefs and councils operate. I know because I've lived on a few and worked on a few different reservations. That's who we look after first, the people living on reserve. As soon as you move into the urban setting, you are basically on your own.

A lot of the times we can't access the educational portion of your entitlement as a treaty person. I've been treaty since 1993 only, because I lost my treaty rights when I got adopted by a Métis family. I got my treaty rights back in 1993, and I have not accessed or been able to access one cent of my right to education.

The Chair: Is that educational allowance lost by the reserve when you leave the reserve, or does the reserve still get your educational allowance?

Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook: They still get the educational allowance. They get the housing allowance or the portion for housing, and they get a portion for social development or social assistance as well. So even though you're not living on that reserve, you're still getting your allotment going to that reserve and being administered by that first nation.

The Chair: Do you think that if one looked at legislative and other ways of ensuring that this followed the person, that would make a difference? Could that happen? Is that a solution?

Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook: You know, I don't want to disrespect chiefs and councils that are on reserve....

The Chair: This is not about chiefs and councils; this is about a solution, a concrete thing.

Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook: About a solution? Yes, it would help a lot.

For me, because my family placed a lot of value on education, and because my mom and dad educated all of us and helped us the most they could to get educated...if they couldn't afford it, then we had to pull student loans. Because I got myself educated, I've been independent enough that if I found myself in a violent situation, I was able to pick myself up only because I had my education to help back me up, to help get me back up, to start walking again, and to start living a better life.

You know, if we did have this, that access to housing, education, and health that would follow you wherever you went, yes, that would help a person become very, very independent in many ways, in many respects.

The Chair: Would the Kelowna accord have addressed that?

Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook: Yes, it would have. That's what many first nations people were hoping for. That's what we were counting on and it never happened.

The Chair: It was a signed interjurisdictional agreement between provinces and the federal government and aboriginal communities to be able to have access to that money specifically for those things....

Thank you very much. I want to thank all of you for coming and for being open and honest and answering our questions as well as you could. I know that we really need to have six hours if we're going to do a proper job, but I want to thank you for giving us the answers.

I think I can speak for the committee when I say thank you very much for helping us to understand some of these issues and to try to sit down.... As you know, what will happen with this report is that we will write down what we've heard and out of that we will discuss what we as a committee think are recommendations, based on what we heard. That will then be tabled in the House of Commons, as parliamentary committees do. The government will respond within 90 days. That's what happens with these reports, just so you know.

• (1435)

Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook: Will we be able to get a copy of that report?

The Chair: Once the report is tabled, it goes onto the website of the Status of Women Commons committee.

Thank you.

A voice: Thank you very much.

The Chair: I forgot, because we were so busy having a nice chat here.... Could someone move that the meeting be adjourned?

Hon. Anita Neville: So moved.

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

FEWO • NUMBER 046 • 3rd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, January 13, 2011

—
Chair

The Honourable Hedy Fry

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Thursday, January 13, 2011

• (0810)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)): I will call the meeting to order.

I don't know if Suzanne Chartrand is here. We have Shannon Cormier, Val James, and Leslie Spillett.

Good morning, everyone. I've called the meeting to order. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), this committee, the status of women committee, is an all-party committee. This means that the members of this committee come from the four political parties in the House. It is a non-partisan committee, as parliamentary committees are meant to be, and we are looking at a study of violence against aboriginal women.

You will meet the various members of the committee. When they begin to ask questions, I will introduce them to you. I am Hedy Fry, the member of Parliament for Vancouver Centre, and I chair this committee.

It was a unanimous decision by the committee to undertake this study, following on some of the statistical data that we saw from Sisters in Spirit after they had gone around the country and gathered evidence. What we are looking for specifically, which I hope you will address, is the root causes of what seems to be an extraordinary amount of violence against aboriginal women, and not just the root causes, but the nature of that violence, the extent of that violence, and the types of violence. We hope you will also help us with what you consider to be some of the solutions, either preventative or rehabilitative or dealing with the issue from various points of view. I'm hoping that you can explore that very well.

What we're going to do is what we normally do in committee. We give each of you five minutes to present. There are only three groups who are presenting, so if you will tell me who is presenting from your group, with three people you will then have seven minutes. I will give you a two-minute signal and then a one-minute signal so you can wrap up what you're going to say.

After you present, there will be a question and answer period. There will be questions from the members of Parliament and you can answer. If we do well, we may be able to have two rounds. Sometimes we can get in three rounds of questions.

I'd like to start off, then, and I don't know how to pronounce this, so you can perhaps help me: Ikwe Widdjiitiwin—

Ms. Sharon Morgan (Executive Director, Ikwe Widdjiitiwin, Women's Crisis Shelter): If I may, Madam Chair, my name is

Sharon Morgan, and Ikwe Widdjiitiwin means "women helping one another".

The Chair: Thank you very much, Sharon.

Sharon, will you begin, please?

Ms. Sharon Morgan: It's difficult being the first one to start, because I'm not quite sure what you want to hear.

Ikwe Widdjiitiwin is an aboriginal women's shelter. Most of our clientele are young aboriginal women with children. Our shelter is for women experiencing domestic violence. When they come into our shelter they generally have nothing but the clothes on their backs, with no money and sometimes no ID.

Some of the problems we're facing with some of the women coming in include addiction and mental health issues, which are becoming more visible over time. It becomes very difficult to work with them. There are many other agencies involved, such as child and family, the courts, the justice system, etc.

What we try to do is work with the women—they're there for a minimum of 30 days—and give them programs on domestic violence; advocate for housing; and give them help with legal issues, such as protection orders, and medical, if they have to go to the hospital, for example. For a minimum of 30 days we work with them. That really isn't a lot of time to turn anybody around, but hopefully we pass the seed to them so that in time they will.

Generally we will get quite a lot of repeat clients. They may come in with different partners, perhaps, but they've fallen into a pattern of living in abusive relationships. This becomes, again, more normal for them than it should be. The abnormal becomes normal. They almost look for a relationship that is abusive.

We get quite a few women flying in from reserves, or driving in, or being transferred to our facility. I find that many of them have pretty horrendous stories about what happens on the reserve, such as being under.... Let's say the chief and council are related to the abuser. Well, then, the woman doesn't get any help at all. If anything, she's told to leave the reserve.

So those are some of the stories. When they come into the city, they are really easy pickings for many of the drug dealers and others. We did have our first case of human trafficking, under the new law that passed. Many of our young women are very vulnerable to things like that.

The domestic violence has many effects on the children. They have a lot of difficulty in terms of working out their anger or withdrawing into themselves. You can see a pattern that may be started if it isn't stopped at that time.

We also offer parenting programs for these young women. We offer nutrition programs, etc. Many of them do not know hygiene. We have to teach them how to wash clothes, how to cook nutritious meals for themselves and their children, and how to budget their money, things like that.

We do have many women calling in who are afraid to leave their abusers for fear of retribution. Family members also may force a woman to stay with her abuser, and because those are her only supports, that may be the only thing she can do. But we do encourage them to come in. As I said, we do get a lot of repeat clients who have left several times before. It generally does take them about seven or eight times before they can actually break away.

We have quite a few success stories, thank God. It makes us realize that our job is very important for the ones who we know have broken away from that cycle of violence and are making their own lives with their children. Success stories like those are what keep us going.

We do get some older women into our shelter. Again, it seems that many of them have some sort of addiction to alcohol or prescription pills, which is another big thing. I want to go on to say that many of the doctors our women see just ply them with drugs. I mean, some of the women come in with five or six different types of drugs—anti-psychotics, Valium, all sorts of drugs. They're just overmedicating our women, and these women are becoming addicted. What happens when the doctor stops giving the drugs to them?

• (0815)

These are some of the problems we're facing at this shelter. There are always more things that we wish to do.

Being an aboriginal women's shelter, we also try to organize cultural programs. We request that elders come in and do one-on-one in sharing circles. They're allowed to smudge in our healing room. We also offer counselling 24/7, so there is always somebody there to talk to them.

As I say, 30 days isn't a very long time to work with women, especially when they have all these other things they have to do, like finding housing, get furniture, and just settling down is a time-consuming effort. The staff and the board are all there for one reason, and that is to help these women break away from the cycle of violence and do the best they can.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Morgan.

Now we go to the Ka Ni Kanichihk, Leslie Spillett.

Ms. Leslie Spillett (Executive Director, Ka Ni Kanichihk Inc.): Thank you.

It's Ka Ni Kanichihk. It's a Cree word that means "those who lead" or "those who go forward".

I want to welcome all of our members from out of town to Treaty 1 territory this morning and to our beautiful but cold Winnipeg winter. And of course, to the members of Parliament from Manitoba, welcome home. It's the birthplace of our Métis nation as well, and we really need to recognize that.

Ka Ni Kanichihk is a multi-human-service organization located in one of our neighbourhoods, called Central and West Alexander, which has one of the highest populations demographically of indigenous peoples. I believe we are an expression of our right to self-determination and our own sovereignty in addressing both the root causes plus the manifestation of those root causes in a holistic, culturally appropriate, and extremely creative way. It is primarily women-led, but not exclusively, because we acknowledge that we need everyone in our circle to continue on this journey.

We talked about the fact that the committee wants to hear about the root causes of violence and the predominance of the root causes of violence in terms of indigenous peoples in general, and in particular, indigenous women. I believe firmly, and with every fibre of my being, that those are within the colonial history and relationships that continue to exist in our broader culture. The adage that everyone else knows best about what we need to do to proceed in the right direction has been both dehumanizing in terms of our cultural collective, but also has had a profoundly damaging impact on each individual's agency.

We've learned, by the systems we've been engaged in, to be dependent. My sister talked about being medicated when that's not really working out too well. We find our women are experiencing profound and continuous levels of extreme violence. This is not only partner violence, although that certainly is a part of it. It's also a violence of strangers and it's a violence of systems. We try to do our part in some small way to have a correct analysis and then to proceed forward on that basis.

I am not going to use up all of my time. I'm going to ask one of the women who is involved in one of the programs that's being funded by Status of Women Canada through Ka Ni Kanichihk. Her name is Suzanne Chartrand.

Often one doesn't hear from the voices of those people who have lived these experiences. I think it's really important. Moon Voices is all about giving women back their voices and reverse the trend where everybody has believed that they can and do often speak for our women and our collective.

With that, I'll turn it over to Suzanne.

• (0820)

Ms. Suzanne Chartrand (Representative, Ka Ni Kanichihk Inc.): Good morning. It's an honour to be here.

I want to first of all thank you for having us, and most of all thank Moon Voices, Ka Ni Kanichihk, for taking the time to take this training that is very important to us aboriginal women.

One thing it's enabled me to do, for all the years I've been in this field, is to have my voice when I sit among other cultures, because that's lacking. Going to Moon Voices has allowed me, as an aboriginal woman, to feel safe. It has allowed me to feel secure, and, most of all, not afraid any more that my voice matters. For many years I did live that life. I had a voice, but not to capacity, because I always felt alone. Moon Voices has enabled us to meet a lot of strong women and has encouraged us to speak about the different things that are happening to us in our everyday lives.

We must continue to educate our aboriginal women and encourage them to seek out the sisters we have in this community. As I said, I've been in Winnipeg for 20 years. I feel that I have a place to go if I feel as though nobody's listening, and I'm honoured to do that.

We learn not only how to speak but also how to find out about our tradition, our spiritual part, which is lacking in our society. The aboriginal women in this country are still at the bottom of the barrel. We have a long stride and we've been jumping through hoops. I see that title is important. We've managed to see all the different agencies and different things happen in my lifetime.

Time is running out for those of us who are already hitting 50. We must educate our young people. We must tell them about the issues of how we are decolonizing, and we must get our voices to be heard. I believe that as mothers and women we must be able to continue to focus on trying to help our whole family circle. We have fathers and we have brothers and uncles and grandpas who as yet really have no part in the healing system. Healing is an everyday thing. It's meeting with people like you to take that message further up. We are the ones on the front line.

It's very scary and we feel we're alone when we hear that another aboriginal woman has died. It's sad, because it could be our daughter or it could be our granddaughter. With all these things, I feel peace when I can go to the sisters and just smudge and pray that even with those types of things, we have hope. It's always been that way for generations, and those of us who are first nations, Métis, and Inuit have been able to start finding our places. I'm honoured to be able to share with other young women, and to go to university.

For strong aboriginal women before me and today who are still helping me, I can say thank you. I would say that to them because I think different cultures need to look at how time is changing, and we must be able to have our voices heard. It's no longer about the way society is doing it; it's about asking us. We can tell you there are too many people who try to say they can be our God-given saviour. It's not that way when you find the creator in the meaning of who you are as a Métis, first nations, or Inuit woman. Again, I'm thankful that I can go to medicines, and I can pray, and I can go to ceremonies and find out, and I can direct those to other women who are hurting.

There is no need, in 2011, for women to die at the hands of whoever.

I just want to thank you now and say it's very important that we provide services that are educational. As for funding, if you want to see change, it must start with the people who are affected by the issues that are on the table: poverty, education, murder. The list goes on and on, and I'm sure you ladies have heard it.

I'd like to say *ekosi* and thank you very much for listening.

• (0825)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Chartrand.

Now we go to the Native Women's Transition Centre. There are two people here, Ms. Sutherland and Ms. Marin. Who will be the speaker, or will you share it?

Ms. Margaret Marin (Board Member, Native Women's Transition Centre): I think we're going to share it. Good morning.

The Chair: All right. So you have seven minutes, and I will indicate when it is halftime.

Ms. Margaret Marin: That sounds good.

Good morning. I am a board member with the Native Women's Transition Centre. I welcome you to our community.

For the majority of my life, I guess, I've been around the organizations that are around the table today, because it's a passion and an issue that's been ingrained in me by my grandmother, and it's about being able to speak out on women's issues for future generations as well.

To give you a little bit about the Native Women's Transition Centre, they're one of the agencies that has been around for about 30 years. We really have provided an opportunity for aboriginal women to follow their journey with healing. The recovery from family violence is a lot of the work we're doing.

First and foremost is providing an opportunity for them to have a place to talk about their healing, about where they came from, to understand the relationships, both the personal relationships and the relationships in systems, and the places that they've been through the different organizations and within our own communities.

The centre embraces the aboriginal traditional values in order to heal the generational scars of the colonization and the residential schools. I mean, you know...you've heard it around the table. What we try to do is provide an opportunity for them to speak with elders, to talk about who they are as individuals, because that is lost. When you talk about hitting 50, even I, as an aboriginal Métis woman, am still at that place of understanding who I am and where I came from. It's an opportunity to talk with other families, individuals, women, and children about where they fit. It's really a free choice in understanding the values and personal situations for us, to bringing that forth for us.

We provide programs, but I'm not going to get into a lot of the programs, because I can give this information to you about what we've done. One of the things that I think I'd like to talk about is some of the barriers we're faced with and maybe one of the new things that is coming up with us.

Everybody around here has talked about the issues of funding. Funding is an ongoing concern; it seems to get smaller and smaller and tighter and tighter. With that, we talk about funding issues around what is out there for women and children. There are more standards and there is legislation that comes in; it's harder to get in when policies are developed that sometimes hinder access to services. I think part of that, as Sharon and others have indicated, is around the risk of violence off reserve and on reserve. We talk about the numbers of women who are on reserve and who then come to the city, where there are no resources.

We could talk about housing at 0.5% occupancy; I could be wrong, but we know it's out there. Also, businesses that continue to change housing places into condos make it a lot more difficult for housing for families and children.

We talk about systemic discrimination. There are still youth who have a hard time getting into educational schools or into work because of not having the advantages of support to be able to go to those places. Whether it's discriminatory, whether it's racist, it's out there.

We talk about poverty. On average, nothing has changed in the sense of how living expenses have increased but funding for living has not. We need to talk about that and how that fits in for families who are struggling biweekly or every day to put food on the table.

We're talking about the generational impact of the residential schools. We can talk about this; it's still out there. I don't know how many times in my field I'm asked when we are going to get over this. But the idea is that this is generational. This is historical. I'm sitting in front of you without my language, with having to push myself through mountains and mountains of trying to get where I am today to talk to a standing committee. This is just a small little drop in an ocean, but it still has to be discussed: there are huge impacts for our children because of colonization.

On the lack of safe and affordable housing, again, we're talking about it. You've heard it in the media. We're talking about increasing rents, larger families... Even bedbugs are out there. That has a huge impact on safe and affordable housing. What do we consider to be safe and affordable? For some, we have families who are living not even in a bedroom, but in a bachelor suite, with five family members.

• (0830)

In aboriginal families we use our extended families as well, so sometimes you also can see aunts and uncles within a one-bedroom apartment. That's how we survive and that's how we support each other. At the same time, I think it has to be opened up and viewed as a major issue that's lacking.

When we fit that into it, we're talking about what else there is for you to do except to maybe get caught up in the gangs and to get caught up in the false image that they're there to support you. You get sexually exploited as young children, and it becomes part of the sex trade, or a way to be able to put food on the table.

If that doesn't work—

The Chair: One minute. Sorry.

Does Jojo want to take over, or do you just want to continue and finish it up?

Ms. Margaret Marin: I'll let Jojo continue, because part of that fits into it.

I just want to quickly indicate that Native Women's Transition Centre is recognizing that. If you look at the percentage of women in jail, it has a huge impact. If you look at the history of why those women are in jail, you realize that they went there maybe for one particular thing, and that was to help support their families.

Following up with that, we're looking at developing a third facility through Native Women's Transition Centre that will work with both provincial and federal women to come back to their homes and be able to create a healing opportunity. We just wanted to announce that.

I'll let Jojo talk a bit about her story.

The Chair: You have one minute, Jojo.

Ms. Jojo Marie Sutherland (Staff Member, Native Women's Transition Centre): All right. I can't talk really fast—I'm not an auctioneer—so bear with me.

To begin with, my name is Jojo Sutherland. I'm going to give you my own experience. I had to leave my reservation because of family violence.

On the reservation in the seventies, family violence was an everyday thing. You married the guy and you had to stick with the guy.

The band house gets given to you. The band house doesn't belong to the female, it belongs to the male. If you decide to leave, you have to leave the house.

That's what happened to me. I left my house with two suitcases, one with clothes and the other with pictures of my children. By that time, my daughter was 16 years old.

I became involved with drugs and alcohol because I had no place to go. I prostituted my body so that I could support myself. And deep down...

The guys stay in the home with everything in it and continue with a different family. This is what we suffer as aboriginal women. I went to Calgary and experienced drugs, alcohol, prostitution. I got beaten up a lot there, just as I got beaten up at home.

Remember, when you're just a woman you're without a voice, and if your husband is a family member of the chief and council, they do not hear you. You have no voice. You cannot report it. In the words of the ex-chief, who I knew and who was friends with my ex-husband, it was my fault that I got beaten up.

I moved on and I lost everything. I lost everything.

So that is a little bit of my story.

I am sorry I can't talk any faster. It must be one minute now.

• (0835)

The Chair: Thank you, Jojo.

What will happen now is that we will go to questions, and then you will be able to speak again and have a chance to add to your story and to say other things. The time you have to present is just for a short little synopsis, and then we get into an interactive mode as we move around the table.

I want to thank all of you for your presentations.

I will now begin our question and answer session. Each member gets seven minutes. The seven minutes includes the questions and the answers. If we want to get a lot of questions and answers in, it means that one would have to be fairly succinct in what one says. That goes for the questioner as well as the answerer: I'm warning my colleagues here.

We will begin with Ms. Anita Neville, who is a Liberal member of the committee.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Let me begin by thanking all of you for coming out today. Thank you for your very personal and professional stories.

I have so many questions, but I'm going to keep them brief at the moment and hope that if we don't get the opportunity, I might have an opportunity to meet with you individually at another time. I live here, so we can pick up on it.

Yesterday we were in Prince Albert and we visited an organization. I asked them about their funding, how they stayed alive. The executive director of the organization must have cited 20 different grants that they got to keep afloat. My response to her was "You must spend an awful lot of time writing proposals."

I have a couple of questions I'll put out and then let you answer them.

We represent the federal government. In your mind, what can the federal government do, in concrete terms, to address some of the issues you're facing? I guess I'm focusing on funding in that respect.

My second question is directed to Leslie. Leslie, we've heard a lot about colonization, the impact of the residential schools, and whatever. A number of initiatives have been taken over the past years, and whether it's enough—well, it's not enough. Do you have any concrete suggestions in terms of addressing the issues of colonization?

My third question is also to you, and it's a question that came up yesterday from the chair. We've talked a lot about domestic violence in the hearings across the country. I expect that is going to dominate the discussions because it is so prevalent. You also referenced violence against women of other kinds. I would welcome an expansion of that.

I'll leave it there. If I have more time, I have more questions.

The Chair: Anita directed her questions specifically to Leslie. We'll start with Leslie, but if anybody wants to jump in, just indicate to me, and I will let you answer some of what Ms. Neville asked.

Ms. Leslie Spillett: With respect to the question around funding, it's a crazy, huge issue. I want to ask another one of my partners to address that.

With respect to the historical and contemporary manifestations of colonization, I want to reference a study that was done by Drs. Chalmers and Lalonde, two sociology professors from the University of British Columbia. They were puzzled about the incidence of first nation suicide rates in first nation communities in British Columbia. The puzzling question was that some suicide rates in some first nation communities were 800 times the national average. This is shocking. In some communities suicide was virtually unknown.

They carried out a study to find the factors and elements in determining what caused such a gap in the suicide rates. They found what they termed "cultural continuity". Essentially, the control the communities had over themselves was what made the difference. If they were in decision-making powerful positions, and women-led,—and this is another piece of it that I really need to throw out here—communities that recognized women and actualized the leadership of women were those communities that had those protective factors that made a community safe and functioning.

How do you extrapolate that learning from our contemporary situation in Winnipeg? If you were to look at where your dollars are going, I would suggest they are going primarily into non-indigenous communities to help aboriginal people. That's the kind of scenario that we need to start adjusting a little bit to make sure there is a principle in terms of determining where dollars are going, not to non-aboriginal organizations to help aboriginal women. This is because very often I get calls from those very organizations for me to come and help them because they don't know how to implement their programs because women won't go to those programs. I've actually stopped doing that.

It's not that I don't want to help our women, but that scenario is inherent in how the funding goes. Everybody is able to submit proposals for funding. We really need to redistribute in all kinds of ways.

In terms of the federal government, we need to redistribute the funds to indigenous communities. We know there are very large levels of stereotypes that aboriginal people are all rolling in dollars. We know that's not the case. The dollars that are allocated to indigenous people, very few of them actually get to indigenous communities.

In my mind, the first principle of decolonization would be to look at who's being funded. In my mind, it's kind of easy, but maybe I'm being naive here.

In terms of stranger violence, you know and I know that we can find women prostituting themselves on the streets of Winnipeg. I think it's a part of our culture to not look at ourselves and how the culture works to keep these young people on the streets, but to blame the young people for actually being there. If you keep people in profound levels of economic depression, political marginalization, and social isolation, these are causes that will happen in any community.

• (0840)

Finally, we know that as soon as newcomers come to indigenous territories, they see who the most vulnerable people are. Unfortunately, they exploit our children. We know this is happening. There is a cultural normative or something; I'm not articulating it well. We are.... And it's transferred almost in your pores. You know when you set foot in this country who are the people who are most marginalized, and they've exploited that. We've had children.... We just recently lost to suicide another child who was part of a group of men who used them for sex and drugs. Another one of those young women was found dead at the outskirts of Winnipeg last year. Another one of those young women was found dead in a little community outside of Winnipeg last winter.

We don't have value. We are dehumanized by the culture. That reaps...then that causes the violence against us. If you are so dehumanized as a human being that you are "less than", then that's.... Then the other piece of it is—

• (0845)

The Chair: Leslie, we've gone to nine minutes.

Ms. Leslie Spillet: Okay. Sorry.

The Chair: We've gone quite over time.

I'm sorry, Anita, but we're at nine minutes now.

Hon. Anita Neville: I understand that. Maybe it will come up with other questions on the funding issues. I'd welcome it if you could give us some suggestions on that as well.

I didn't want to interrupt Leslie.

The Chair: I know. I didn't, so I allowed Leslie to go on a bit longer.

Now we're going to go to Madame Demers, who is from the Bloc Québécois.

Go ahead, Nicole.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

First, I would like to thank you for welcoming us and allowing us to meet with you this morning. This is very important for us. I would especially like to thank you for letting me speak my own language. I'm sure you'll understand that I want to keep it and, therefore, it is important for me to continue speaking it.

I am very moved by everything you've said. What we are currently doing in various regions of Canada is very important.

Suzanne, you said earlier that you are 50 years old and that it is absolutely necessary to pass on to the younger generation the courage to carry on, in order to rise above the effects of colonization. I understand, but I wonder how it can be done, since the damage has been ingrained in the human beings that you are for hundreds of years. Money, the courage that you all have and ideas alone cannot fix everything. So, how should we proceed?

Anita touched on this. I met with some people yesterday and realized that there is a lot of ignorance among non-aboriginals about who you are. The people we met with yesterday told us that 54% of

the population in Prince Albert is aboriginal and, therefore, that 20% of the population financially supports everyone else. They did not know that aboriginals who live outside aboriginal communities pay taxes like everyone else.

What do we need to do to get people to understand who you are? How can we build bridges between aboriginals and non-aboriginals, break the taboos and eliminate prejudice and racism? Are you also victims of racism here, in Winnipeg, when you do business with social services and the police? What do we need to do to stop this?

I was moved by a woman named Laurie Odjick, the mother of a young girl who went missing in Gatineau. She touched my heart, and we became friends. Since then, I no longer see things the same way. But who do you need to move so that people understand? How do we do that?

The federal government can indeed give money, but it's not enough. Out of every dollar the government provides, how much really ends up in your pocket? How much? Leslie, could you tell me if it's 25¢, for example? When the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs decides to provide funding, how much money is actually given to programs? Do you know?

• (0850)

[*English*]

The Chair: Who would like to tackle this?

Ms. Cormier.

Ms. Shannon Cormier (Project Facilitator, Ka Ni Kanichihk Inc.): I would say Leslie or one of the other women would be better to speak to that. I'm not sure exactly how much money administratively gets to the actual organizations.

Ms. Margaret Marin: I'll say a little bit about the funding, and maybe you can follow up with Leslie a little bit about it.

Right now, say you were to give us \$50,000. When you talk about \$50,000 and how that spreads, everyone around this table knows that we spread that \$50,000 over a population that is maybe 40 or 50.... So when we talk about dollars and cents, you're talking—and I'm just being as generous as I can—maybe even 25 cents to 50 cents per dollar. You have to think that we're getting more complicated with our organization. We've lost that ability to really look at the community as a strength in the sense of accessing the funding. What ends up happening is that applying for it becomes more extreme and intense. Everybody around this table is applying for the same funding, which could be a very small pot. Not only that, but the requirements change, and then you have to become more creative rather than looking at something that's been solid and that has been working to continue to provide funding because you know it's working.

The other whole thing about funding has to do with what government sees as a success story. What is that? Is it the percentage of people who are actually moving forward? Is it that one woman who has made a change and is no longer in domestic...or is no longer living in poverty? What is that success? Or is it the numbers that say out of the 100 families you're working with, 100 of them are going to walk out the door and be okay?

We have to realize that aboriginal communities look at oral teachings, which are not part of funding requirements. Or when you bring elders or people from the community in and we talk about complex issues of mental health, addictions, violence, the sex trade, what dollar value can you put on those pieces of it? So even though the money is coming in, we also look outside of that. But we find the challenge at times is whether we have the right person coming in, because it is challenging to hire someone who fits the profile, and to find the person we need to work with those families. Funding really has an impact when we're talking about training, and sometimes that's not even an issue. Sometimes we can only get capital when we need operational funding. Sitting down and really strategizing around what is working and why it is working and using that as the strength rather than trying to change policy because something has changed with regard to the direction of the government is something we have to look at.

The Chair: Ms. Chartrand, you can give us a short answer, please?

Ms. Suzanne Chartrand: I'll give you a short answer.

When you asked about some of the solutions, I'm going to tell you to put the funding into education. For those of us who do get educated.... I came here 20 years ago with 16 garbage bags and two children, and because of strong warrior women who helped me through my journey, I'm here to be able to take another sister along with me, chain-linking. When funding is asked for, make sure it's put into education. If you want us to be sustainable and healthy and taxpayers, we must be able to get that education.

Being invited to other places is another open door so that we can continue to say the same thing over and over till the message is delivered by women like you sisters, who can help us. For those of us who are not yet at that level, like I said, with Ka Ni Kanichihk, Moon Voices, we need to bring more women there so that when we are able to sit down and never relax but be in the back, we could encourage others to carry on.

I want my grandchildren to have a healthy lifestyle. My daughter is a third generation and I'm a second generation of residential impact. It affects me, yes it does. Most of all, it's difficult because it is Caucasian people who bring those stereotypes. With my dad being French and my mom being aboriginal, first nations, Métis, it has affected me.

I look more like an aboriginal person, but then my father is a Frenchman from Quebec, Saint-Théophile. Yet I know if he were alive today he would be here to support.

I think we need to be able to understand that for aboriginal people—our children who are going to school, our grandchildren, my grandchildren—the schools will give us back our language and teach. We should not be segregated to one school system. If they allow the French to *parler français*, we should allow the other cultures in this country. I know we have a lot of different cultures, but for those that are first nations and Métis, I would say look at the funding part.

When Ka Ni Kanichihk is doing Moon Voices and you remember us women, remember that behind that we have to have that funding

to become successful, and that there are many of us who don't even have a voice, many women and children.

If the message could be taken back that we look at the Native Women's Transition Centre, where my journey began, and Ikwe, where another part of my life is, those places for women are important, and there are not enough of them.

They built a brand-new humane society for animals, for crying out loud, and yet we are second-class citizens, even to that, because there is not enough. What happens is children come into care, things happen, and then the mothers end up on the streets. We're tired of the people being murdered and killed.

Thank you.

• (0855)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Chartrand.

We're really going over time here. We're not going to be able to do a second round. Because everyone's gone over on this round, I'll let this round go over. But if we have a second round, I'm going to have to be really sharp on timing with you; otherwise, we won't be able to get to the second round.

Now I'll go to Ms. Glover, who is a Conservative.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): I'm new to the committee. I want to thank the committee members for being here. I'm sorry, I thought Ms. Mathysen was going before I was, but I'm glad to speak to the witnesses today.

I want to say *meegwetch*, first of all. I know many of you from a couple of different hats that I wear. It's a proud moment for me to see you here with the courage that you have, speaking about how we can change this horrible system our women have lived through. I have to acknowledge some of the things you've said, because you're absolutely right, money isn't going to be the only thing that solves this. It's collaboration and it's cooperation between different people and different agencies, including the government. The government is here today to find out what is working and what's not working.

Leslie, when you said there were non-aboriginal-led organizations asking for your input, that is not right. Those reports you submit, once the funding is done and your projects are done, are so important. That piece of information ultimately should lead decisions to go another way. Right?

I would ask—and I don't want to put you on the spot here today, Leslie, but I would love to know, perhaps through a written submission to the committee—how that happened, the story of that, and which organization that was. Because when we get applications for funding—and the Government of Canada gives more money to this issue than it has ever before in the history of Canada—that is the reality. When you ask for money, and if there are 20 organizations that ask for a pot of money that might be able to support only 18, those pieces of information you've just provided are really important. So I encourage you to work with us so that we know exactly what worked and what didn't work. That's what I'd like to focus on.

I heard many of you say that aboriginal women's rights have not been observed on reserve or off reserve. I understand that the funding is important. When the Native Women's Transition Centre asks us for \$72,650 they get the \$72,650, and we expect that it all goes to the project that it was supposed to sustain. But what do we do outside of money? Because that is an important piece. You've all said something about rights. At this point, we have bills before the House. That is a big part of what the Government of Canada does and what all the MPs sitting here do. We put bills before the House to help manage and to help protect the people in Canada. One of those bills is the matrimonial real property bill. As Elder Sutherland—and I want to acknowledge the elder here today—and of course Suzanne Chartrand said, they didn't have any rights when they came off reserve. They didn't have any rights to keep the marital home. Yet all other Canadian women across this country, as Sharon Morgan said, have the ability to phone the police and get a protection order or a prevention order and have safety for them and their children while the violence and the situation dissipate and everybody calms down. Yet aboriginal women on reserve don't have that.

There's a bill before the House called the matrimonial real property bill. I'd like to hear from you, Elder Sutherland. How you think that bill might help or hinder? If we have time, I'd like to hear from Suzanne as well, seeing as you've both suffered from having no rights on reserve.

• (0900)

Ms. Jojo Marie Sutherland: What is going to help in the reserve—because I go and visit in the reserve, and I have learned a lot in the western society, and I bring back the good part into my home and to my daughters—is for the women, as I always say, to use their voices. I have to use my voice. I have to fight for who I am. I have to protect this body. I have to live. I have a lot of talks with women in my reservation back in Duck Lake, Saskatchewan. You guys must have gone by it. That's where I come from. It has a population of maybe 8,000.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: I come from Saskatchewan. My family used to play Duck Lake rummy.

Ms. Jojo Marie Sutherland: Yes.

If we could have the voice... I'm fighting for my reservation women to have that voice. Get into the chief and the council. Vote for each other to have that voice. I fight for rights for the women in my reservation because I have granddaughters, and I would want my granddaughters to leave their home and their husbands to live comfortably with what they have earned in that home.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: If I'm hearing you right, you think that kind of bill to give women rights on reserve is a good step forward.

Ms. Jojo Marie Sutherland: Yes, it is. It is.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Suzanne, can I ask you the same question? Is there a bill like that we ought to be undertaking to help them, or is there some other idea you have that we might seize so that we can get aboriginal women their rights?

Ms. Suzanne Chartrand: Coming here 20 years ago, the number one thing that I look at is that there was a place to come and transition into. The Native Women's Transition Centre has always opened the door. What I think needs to happen is we need to emphasize that we support these places, that we see there's a place

for women to come when they're trying to get away from domestic violence.

Sometimes we leave everything and we take what we can. What we need to do, though, is encourage these young women. We need to build up warrior women who will come to speak and bring these changes. When that happens, poverty affects us. Either you're going to go down.... What I chose is not to fall through the cracks of society or to bow down to ignorance.

Like I said, if we can find that, when we hear there are no transition homes and places for women from those communities to live, we have the right, if we don't want to live on a reserve—because I didn't, I lived in a community—to go anywhere in this country we would like to go and reside, and to teach our women to be a voice against domestic violence.

When these bills are being talked about, we will know the right time to be there, and when it's election time we will teach our women to vote, and allow politicians to be accountable for why we voted for them. That's where the change will happen.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Very good. I know that Shannon—

The Chair: Ms. Glover, Ms. Marin would like to answer your question. Through the chair, Ms. Marin would like to answer your question.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Could I just finish, being that it's my question period?

The Chair: No. One witness would like to answer your question, so I will allow her to do so and then you can ask a second question.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: I will allow her when my nine minutes are up.

I just want to finish with this organization, because reclaiming the power is important. The Government of Canada provided some funding for your project called "Reclaiming the power", which gives women their power. I want you to talk about what that did for women and what it does for women so that I know whether you would like to see this continue.

Ms. Shannon Cormier: Absolutely.

The Chair: Ms. Marin, would you please speak?

Ms. Margaret Marin: It's just a follow-up with Jojo. She had asked me to also indicate around the Indian Act and what effect that bill is going to have, because it does fit with all the questions you're asking about empowerment.

That legislation, when you talk around discrimination, is the legacy. So when we look at that, when you're looking at those bills, and hearing the voices of the elders and the stories, it's really important that the voices be heard around how that impacts the act as well as the changes to bills, because it does impact all the way down.

• (0905)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Thank you.

The Chair: Everyone seemed to get nine minutes, so I will give you one more minute if you wish to engage.

Ms. Shannon Cormier: Just to add to what everybody's saying, another option is to also honour the commitments that have been made. At the national aboriginal women's summit, I think it was in Kelowna, the Kelowna accord, the government agreed to do four aboriginal women's summits. There have only been two. One was supposed to be held here in Winnipeg at the end of last summer. That has not happened. So yes, money is important, but so is having an opportunity for aboriginal women to have their voice heard so that these issues can be talked about in more than the few minutes that we do have available, and which we're very grateful for. These aboriginal women's summits are also extremely important.

Part of the aboriginal women reclaiming our power program, with Ka Ni Kanichihk, is to offer women a sacred place, an opportunity to find their voice. How we do that is through cultural programming. It's through education. It's through connections.

Culturally relevant programming is not what we do. We don't "aboriginalize" our programs. It's who we are. That is the biggest reason why we don't have to go ask other organizations to help us find people to come. That's really important, and that makes a very big difference.

The Chair: Now we will go to Ms. Mathysen, from the New Democratic Party.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for this generous welcome to Treaty 1 territory. It's a privilege to be here. I thank you for your courage and your willingness to speak to us.

I have three basic questions. I have no illusions that I'm going to get to all of them.

The first question has to do with funding. I was looking at the projects that have been funded by Status of Women Canada in Winnipeg. There are 13. Of those 13, six have been completed. What concerns me is that many of the projects seem to be very, very short-term. When you're dealing with the kinds of realities that first nation women face, 16 months or 18 months is not going to begin to touch the problem, much less a solution. My concern is the ad hoc nature of that funding, the fact that it is so brief.

We heard in Prince Albert that very often there is a situation, a reality, where community groups have to manage to provide programming that fits funding rather than reality, and that's a problem. A lot of energy is involved in securing that.

Finally, there is some fear on the part of groups that if they say the wrong thing, if they upset the powers that be, that funding will be cut off. I assure you that is a situation we find most egregious.

My second question has to do with this discussion about young women arriving from the reserve. They're vulnerable. We heard in Prince Albert and we've heard elsewhere that there's a judgment placed on these women by authorities, social services, the police, that they're bad, and no understanding of how they got to that place. I'm wondering if the group could describe what happens to a young woman. How does she arrive in such a terrible situation?

The third thing... Suzanne, you alluded to the apprehension of children. We've heard that is profoundly destructive to the community, to women. I was hoping that you could touch on that.

I know that's a huge amount of information I'm asking for, but if you could, please, I'd appreciate it so much.

The Chair: Suzanne, would you like to start?

Ms. Suzanne Chartrand: I read the report where it stated that residential school kids in care outnumbered the children who resided in residential schools, and shouldn't Canada be ashamed of that? We need to be able to understand. Again, I will stress it, because it's the only thing that made me get to where I am. We must encourage that. When we look at programming, I think in total, if you look at the aboriginal directory, there are over a hundred organizations fighting for dollars. If you want to make a difference, make sure that you know where your funding is going.

In the past, I've seen that when something goes good for aboriginal people, and we start to let our crutches go, and we start to heal, those programs get cut. At that level, for us women, we need to make sure the message goes out that you take a look at each and every one, what is happening, how we all link together as sisters fighting for the same cause but may do things just a little bit differently because we women are at different levels.

For me, I'm living in a time when decolonization, if you were to put it into the computer... When I put it in maybe seven years ago, the computer didn't know what that meant. A professor who was an English woman asked, "What is decolonization?", and I was able to reply. It means to turn the things that have been done wrong and turn them back, so we can make sure this will never happen again to the generations of our children.

My vision and goal is that children belong at home with their families. We need to take a look at that, too. When you look at mothers and children, when it comes down to being able to care for them, that doesn't happen. The people who are missing at the table are social services and income. I've never sat at the table with them. The government, the day they put social welfare into the system—I was told by an elder—was the day they crippled our people.

We do want to work. We do. For a Métis woman, I do pay taxes. I am contributing to society. We don't need only small programs. We need to get our degrees. We need to be able to go to school full-time. In the past, I saw these training programs, but they lasted only so many weeks. We need longer education.

• (0910)

The Chair: Thank you.

Leslie.

Ms. Leslie Spillett: Just indirectly specific to the whole funding regime, one thing that's good about the Status of Women Canada funding is that it's multi-year funding, so you can do a project within a particular timeframe. Lots of federal funding does not permit for multi-year funding. So I would recommend that this would be a policy change in some of your other systems.

For example, for the Canadian Heritage funding you have to come up with a project every year. While you get your project done within the deadlines, very often the funding decisions don't come out until six or seven months after the clock starts ticking. You're always kind of stuck in this no person's land or on hold, and then it's a hurry up kind of thing, and then you report. It's a little bit challenging to manage a project like that.

Very often we're told now that food, which is so critical for people who are coming from places of real hunger and real challenge in terms of their food security, can no longer be considered part of the supplies that we're using.

The other thing is administration. None of the project-based funding will permit paying for the executive director, for the management structure. The challenge is that you need a management structure to effectively administer an organization, and the project-based funds don't permit that.

Reporting is a challenge. We have multiple reports, monthly reports, and we're doing it.

One other thing I'd like to add is that we recognize that in Manitoba there is a French school division. French families can go to school in the French language. I'm kind of like Suzanne, in that my children are part Métis, part first nations, and part Irish. My children are educated in French through the immersion system. There is no aboriginal school division here in Manitoba or off reserve in Winnipeg. The highest number of aboriginal people living in Manitoba is up in Winnipeg. There's a French school division but no aboriginal school division. It's a legislated thing within the Manitoba act of whatever year it came to be. On top of that, in the current school system, only about one-quarter of our children are graduating.

So we think there are some issues there. Again, it could be that we need to look at a different model of delivering education. We believe that once children have a strong identity and cultural identity, they'll be okay in whatever system they engage in as adults. My recommendation has been, in Manitoba, to move courageously, and similarly in the francophone community, in upholding our rights.

The other thing I'd like to add—

• (0915)

The Chair: Add it in 20 seconds, please.

Ms. Leslie Spillett: Okay.

We have a framework now that's been passed by all nation-states in the world, and that's the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. That's our standard. That's where we go. That's where we move. That's where we get out of this situation that we're currently in.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We have 15 minutes left. We have another panel waiting to begin on time at 9:30, so it would be really difficult if we ate into their time. I'm going to ask you...or I'm going to try. There are four questioners. If I give three minutes to each group, that time will have to include the answers. Otherwise, I will just have to cut you off or else we don't go to a next round.

So I will go first, just very quickly, to Ms. Neville for three minutes, please. Answers will be cut off, because we cannot encroach on others' time.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm going to direct my question to one person, and that's Ms. Morgan.

You've been quiet, and you haven't had an opportunity in the responses. You went through a very important list of your concerns and issues. You spoke about the fact that you had many come back into your shelters who were repeat "visitors", for lack of a better word. Give us your best advice on how we can help you, and help them, in terms of the recommendations we make from this committee.

Ms. Sharon Morgan: Well, I guess there are different ways to work with these young women. One is that we would like to perhaps make the residential stay a little bit longer and do more work with them one on one.

Secondly—

Hon. Anita Neville: Who imposes the 30 days?

Ms. Sharon Morgan: We get our funding from the family violence prevention program, which is also funded by the Manitoba government. We don't get any federal funding at all.

Part of the problem, of course, is that when the women leave the shelter, sometimes they have absolutely no place to go but back to their abuser, back to their community. What we'd like to see is perhaps more work being done with them, just for the continuity and longevity of working with these young women.

Secondly, you'd asked a question earlier that I wanted to answer. It was about the non-aboriginal women coming to shelters. We do get a lot of immigrant women coming in—from Ethiopia and other places in Africa, from the Philippines, and so on. That takes up, say, 10% of our clientele.

To get back to how we can work with these young women, we do programs on domestic violence—how to see the pattern, how to break the pattern—but there are all the other things that come into play and that have been talked about around this table, including education, housing, and more mental health workers. Oh, my God, it's so hard to find somebody to help these young women who need that help right away. And most of them, if they do see a psychiatrist, are medicated.

So what we'd like to see is more work with these women for longer periods of time, and just generally more work with the family as well. If this woman is in a dysfunctional family, then there's work to be done in the family as well.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. Very good.

Now I'll go to Ms. Glover for three minutes.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Thank you, Madam Chair.

We have three minutes, so I'm going to try to be brief.

There are other funding pots. Leslie did mention Heritage Canada. Of course, there are the ones that Ms. Mathysen mentioned under Status of Women Canada. There's Cultural Connections for Aboriginal Youth. There's the Department of Indian Affairs and Health Canada. Funding comes from a number of places.

There are a number of other programs going on here in the city of Winnipeg, programs that I'm quite proud of, that do fall under different pots of money. One of those programs is from the Native Women's Transition Centre. It has to do with community-based succession planning for aboriginal youth.

I'm hearing all of you talk about education, and I'm wondering if you mean these types of programs. Is that the education you're talking about? Are you talking about K to 12? Specifically, when you talk about education, are you talking about educating our aboriginal women in protecting themselves and moving forward to raise their families, etc., or are you talking about the basic K to 12?

Perhaps I'll ask Ms. Marin, and then maybe Leslie will want to answer that.

• (0920)

Ms. Margaret Marin: First of all, when we're talking about education, I think we're talking from the time of birth right to the time of death.

Right now, the age I'm at. I don't know how much more you could teach me. You could probably teach me a little bit more, but I think right now the grain is the education and identity and self-respect of our children. We've always made that a central, important part of our lives. When we develop programs, the programs are set for families. They're set for the mother and the children at the time they come in, from birth to the time when we see the children who are struggling to stay in school, ages 12 up to grade 12.

When we try to look at the programs, especially for the success of native transition, it's always been that we've asked the community what their needs are. We ask them, and they bring forward to us what they feel their needs are. It's been working, and it's been working for a long period of time.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Thank you. I have only a few minutes, and I just want to make sure that Leslie has a chance.

The Chair: Actually, you don't have a couple of minutes. You have 30 seconds.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Oh, 30 seconds.

Sorry about that.

The Chair: Go ahead, Leslie.

Ms. Leslie Spillett: Similar to what Margaret said, it's all of it. In the education system, we know that for grades kindergarten to 12 it's critically important that our children start experiencing success, at least at the same rate as other Canadians, and go on to post-secondary. That will be part of what supports them and us to have our good life, our *bimaadiziwin*.

But the other piece of education—

The Chair: I'm sorry. Thank you, Leslie. Maybe you can fill it in some other time with another question.

Madame Demers.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Suzanne, to have access to education—something that is very important—a woman must have access to childcare services and affordable social housing. Are quality childcare services and affordable social housing accessible here in Winnipeg?

[English]

Ms. Suzanne Chartrand: From the beginning, no, they have not been. We can see that, given the poverty going way back 20 years to when 60% of aboriginal women were living in it. I don't know today if that has changed. It hasn't, I guess, since the last time.

No, it's not available. That's why our women are on the streets. That's why they're prostituting themselves, because there are not enough funds there. Social services and the federal and provincial governments must bring those people to the table. You cannot find suitable housing, and we must look at the slum-lords and slum issues, because for a single woman to get 200 and something dollars for rent is not realistic. I think we need to be able to allow you to remember that so you can bring that forth too. It's a long, long road, so we have to continue to encourage.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. James.

Ms. Val James (Representative, Ka Ni Kanichihk Inc.): With regard to child care and whether it's accessible, it isn't. Actually the waiting lists are extremely long. When you have a spot in day care, you hold onto your spot for dear life, because as soon as you let it go, there are another 200 people behind you wanting that spot. That's for infants all the way up to school age. If you're trying to work because social assistance workers are saying your kid is over the age of six and you need to work, but you don't have anyone to provide before-school care, lunch-time care, or after-school care, then how are you supposed to work to support yourself and your children? It's impossible.

• (0925)

The Chair: Ms. Morgan, did you have your hand up?

Ms. Sharon Morgan: I did want to add to the child care issue. There are even schools that don't allow kids to have lunch at the school. That to me is just ridiculous. It really does stop a lot of women from going out and seeking jobs because of the child care problem and also because of where it is. These women have to take public transportation, and sometimes to get to their child care or their day care centre could take a very long time and two or three buses. So no, child care does not work well here.

The Chair: Thank you. That was bang on.

Now we go to Ms. Mathysen, please.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to come back to Elder Sutherland and Ms. Marin, because during your presentation you talked about a facility or the kind of facility that was needed that would help young women to manage. You didn't really have a chance to describe it, and I wonder if you could do that now.

Ms. Jojo Marie Sutherland: When an aboriginal girl comes into the Native Women's Transition Centre, we have a lot of programs. We also have our culture. I'm the elder for the Native Women's Transition Centre. I teach them who they are, to find themselves as an aboriginal person, and to be proud of who they are.

I also teach the little kids to respect themselves, to respect their mothers. We had lost that when the residential schools came about because of the impact of the residential schools. We had lost that.

You have to re-teach to love. You have to re-teach to respect. You have to bring back the seven sacred teachings, as they do come in.

Also, I was sitting here listening about child care. When the women come to the Native Women's Transition Centre, they come there to heal themselves, the educational part of themselves, who they are. We give them back who they are. Also, there is no child care during their education. A lot of them give up. They want to go back to do their grade 5. They want to go back to do their grade 3, grade 10, but there's no child care. They apply for work and they apply for school. They are accepted, but they cannot go because there is no child care. We need more money in child care for aboriginal women.

We need more help in funding the cultural part to find who we are as aboriginal people. Once we find ourselves, once we take back what was taken from us, our language, our culture—that was taken, robbed from us—you will see aboriginal women walking with their heads up.

My children do walk with their heads up as aboriginal people, as I do myself. I walk with my head up. I will never let anyone walk in front of me or push me to the side, as was done to me in the convent. I was told, "Shut up, you're just an aboriginal person." But I was a person, and I claimed that person, who I am, and that is what I brought to the Native Women's Transition Centre, my cultural part.

Listening and crying with them, laughing with them, and playing with them is an important key for that healing.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Sutherland.

That's it, I'm sorry. It's now 9:30 and we have another group waiting.

I want to thank the witnesses for coming. I know it seems rushed. We have had so many people wanting to present to this committee that we've had to really tighten the timelines, so we could have as many panels as we'd like.

Thank you for coming.

If we could, we'll have a two-minute suspension, so that we could get everyone to change places and bring in the others.

• _____ (Pause) _____

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• (0930)

The Chair: I'd like to call the meeting to order.

This is the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. It's an all-party committee, which means that all four political parties are represented. It is not a partisan committee. We are here to gather

information. We are here to listen and we're here to see what Parliament has to say and recommend about the issue. We're looking at violence against aboriginal women, the high levels of violence. We're looking at the root causes of that violence and wanting to know what the extent of the violence is, the types of violence, and the nature of the violence.

We're hoping we could have some solutions. When we as a committee agreed to do this we believed that there has been a lot of money and funding and all sorts of programs put forward in the past, and it has had very little effect. So we would like to see an effective solution to these problems.

Each of you will have five minutes to present, and then we have a question and answer period. If we are going to finish so that we can go to the next panel I'm going to have to be really strict with your answers and with my colleagues on their questions.

So now we'd like to begin with Commissioner Bill Robinson of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Commissioner Robinson, five minutes, please.

• (0935)

A/Commr Bill Robinson (Commanding Officer, "D" Division, Winnipeg, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Thank you.

Good morning. I'd like to thank the committee for allowing the RCMP to appear here this morning. It means a great deal to us.

"D" Division RCMP provides policing services to most of Manitoba's rural and remote communities: more than 446,000 people, including 59 first nations and 48 Métis communities.

The RCMP has long been working closely with our aboriginal communities to strengthen mutual communication. "D" Division's aboriginal advisory committee includes elders and aboriginal peoples from different backgrounds and perspectives. We also have well-established public safety protocols with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the MKO, which represents our northern chiefs, and the southern chiefs.

"D" Division's aboriginal policing service facilitates communications processes on high-profile matters of concern to the aboriginal leadership and community. Just last year, in August of 2009, "D" Division RCMP and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs signed a memorandum of understanding that saw a regular member of the RCMP, Ms. Monique Cooper, who is behind me here today, join the AMC at their work.

Responding to the feedback from the commanding officer's aboriginal advisory committee, we established a new position of gang awareness coordinator in April of 2010 to implement the gang prevention, education, and initiative strategy.

We are also actively involved in human trafficking prevention and awareness. "D" Division participates in the provincial human trafficking and response team committee with representatives from the Winnipeg Police Service, the Manitoba Department of Justice, the Canada Border Services Agency, the Salvation Army, the Canadian Council for Refugees, Manitoba Status of Women, Manitoba Justice Victim Services, Ma Mawi, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, and others.

"D" Division RCMP continues its efforts to raise awareness among its members about the emerging human trafficking concern and the issue of murdered and missing women in Manitoba. "D" Division's contract and aboriginal policing services, in partnership with the RCMP northwest immigration and passport section and the national human trafficking coordination centre in Ottawa, provide training and awareness tools to our members. Training has been delivered to the Manitoba north, east, and west districts intelligence officers and groups and to our "D" division traffic services, which patrol our highways every day.

In addition to the awareness training workshops, "D" Division training has also incorporated human trafficking awareness and the video *I'm not for sale* to candidates on a number of courses, including our new member orientation course investigators, drug, basic intelligence, child abuse, investigative interviewing, and traffic services interdiction teams.

I would like to provide you with a brief overview of "D" Division RCMP efforts in addressing and responding to the issue of violence against aboriginal women, including the high-risk missing persons project, Project Disappear, and the Manitoba integrated task force for missing and murdered women.

In 2003 the RCMP and its partners at municipal police services in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta responded to concerns about unsolved homicides and missing persons by establishing the high-risk missing persons project. In Manitoba, "D" Division, the Winnipeg Police Service, and the RCMP participated in this multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional regional effort to identify, collect, collate and evaluate, and analyze all high-risk missing persons and unsolved homicide cases.

"High-risk" in this context is defined as people whose lifestyle, behaviours, or circumstances place them at risk of falling victim to violent crime. The high-risk missing persons project produced a significant number of findings that were well documented and require further investigation and analysis.

Project Disappear was created in 2007 under the purview of the Manitoba Association of Chiefs of Police, representing Manitoba's nine police departments, four of which have missing persons files. Managed by the "D" Division historical case unit, the project and website include persons who have been missing for six months or longer.

More than 170 missing persons and unidentified human remains investigations in Manitoba are detailed on this website. The oldest missing person file is from 1939. Project Disappear's ongoing work includes the review of data and provincial standardization of policies, procedures, tools, and approaches.

The Manitoba integrated task force for missing and murdered women was formed in August of 2009. The task force consists of five RCMP members, two of which are RCMP division criminal analysts, and four Winnipeg Police Service members. The mandate is to review all unsolved homicide investigations involving female victims; to review missing person investigations involving women where foul play is suspected; to analyze investigational information to determine what, if any, linkages exist between occurrences; and to determine the appropriate avenues for investigative follow-up.

• (0940)

Located at "D" Division headquarters in Winnipeg, the integrated unit began its work in October 2009 and is currently at the analytical stage of its mandate. This includes collecting and collating information and conducting investigational reviews and forensic reviews for all mandated cases. In addition to actively reviewing all reported cases of missing women, the integrated task force is developing best practices relating to information sharing, file management, file coordination, and disclosure that can be shared with other investigative units or implemented in similar initiatives across the country.

We are committed to providing answers, comfort, and closure to families and loved ones of the victims while respecting and ensuring integrity of the ongoing investigation. Let me assure you that the RCMP investigates and takes seriously all cases of missing and murdered individuals, regardless of sex, ethnicity, background, or lifestyle.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Commissioner.

Now we'll go to Lisa Michell of the Women's Memorial March of Manitoba.

Ms. Lisa Michell (Chair and Organizer, Women's Memorial March of Manitoba): Good morning. I'd like to say *meegwetch* for asking me to come and present today. I'm the voluntary chair for the Women's Memorial March.

Just so you have a little bit of information about the work we do, this is our fourth year. I myself am a grassroots person. I've been in the grassroots community for the past 20 years, and I've been working diligently at eliminating violence against women, and not just aboriginal women but all women.

For our march, the list of missing and murdered women goes back as far as 1968. The oldest woman we have had was 86 years old. To date we have 216, but as I said earlier, that includes all women, not just aboriginal women.

In my presentation I just want to talk a little bit about the root of violence against women. The way I see it, it's poverty. Poverty comes in many forms. Even when they have access to an income assistance program, there isn't sufficient funding for them. They're set up in lower-income housing in high-risk areas. They're not set up in safer places. So that's a big issue. They're not given sufficient funding.

Some mothers, when they go out and work for minimum wage, could actually get more money from staying at home and being on income assistance, because then things are taken care of. So that's a real gap.

Another thing is that because of a lack of money and because of poverty, many moms do want to support their families and their children, and they end up out on the streets. Being a sex-trade worker is not something you do by choice. Many people beg to differ, but I say they're not there by choice. When they were young, they didn't say, "Oh, someday I want to work on the street". That's not what happened. They are there because of financial stuff. Yes, some of them are there because of addiction, because that's all part of it. It becomes part of it. People will say, "Oh, well, here's something." It's a vicious cycle, so it goes on and on.

As for some of the gaps in the justice system, racism is one of the contributing factors with regard to justice in our communities. Because my ear is close to the ground, many people come to me, and they say, "This is what happened to me", and it is racism. It's not everybody, of course, but it's still there.

It's the same thing with discrimination. We're discriminated against because we're women and because we're aboriginal women.

Here in Winnipeg, we have a task force, but we have noticed a gap. The task at hand is to paint the fence, but how is it going to be painted? Is it just going to be painted in certain spots? My goal is that the fence would be painted in a good way.

There are flaws in there. One of the big issues is communication. Jurisdiction and things like saying, "Oh, well, they're on this side of the road, so we can't deal with it" really need to be dealt with.

We had a case here. In St. Vital there was a man who robbed a 7-Eleven. He left the city of Winnipeg, and Winnipeg Police Service went in to apprehend him in a small community south of Winnipeg. So if they can go out of town to apprehend a criminal in action, why can they not cross that street or cross that road to go find a woman who has either been murdered or is missing? That would be one of my questions.

There are gaps in appropriate victims services. Many of our community members do not know how to access them. They don't know what those are. Yes, the Winnipeg Police Service does have a victims services branch, but they don't know how to access it.

In terms of healing in our families and communities, it starts with me, and it starts with me and my family. I work that way: my family, my community, and now the nation. So that's how healing really happens.

In terms of education, reserve to urban, there need to be supports for people when they move here.

● (0945)

The other thing is that we have programs here in Winnipeg, but they don't fit everybody. For example, if I was being assaulted by somebody and I wanted to go to a shelter, I wouldn't go because my children are over the age of 18, and I'm not going to leave my children at home at risk. So there's a gap right there.

The Chair: We will now hear from Carolyn Loeppky, Assistant Deputy Minister, Child and Family Services, Government of Manitoba.

Ms. Carolyn Loeppky (Assistant Deputy Minister, Child and Family Services, Government of Manitoba): Thank you very much, and thank you for inviting me to speak here today.

I come here today with an interest in Manitoba's children and a career that I've had working in the public sector for nearly 40 years. The areas I have some responsibility for now, and overseeing within the provincial government, are child care, child welfare, family violence prevention, and family conciliation services, which are geared toward families experiencing separation, divorce, and custodial issues with respect to those.

I'd like to talk a little bit about each one of those areas and identify some of the current trends that we're seeing and also some of our challenges, and perhaps offer some information that may be of help in the future deliberations of the panel.

With respect to child care, in Manitoba we have a child care program that, as you have heard, does not meet all of the needs for all of the families that we have. We've had a system that we've been building consistently and steadily over the last number of years. We are right now in the middle of another five-year strategic delivery where we're trying to expand the number of spaces for families as well as improve the quality of our child care.

There is no national program for child care. Each province is working within its own framework in order to look at the needs it has within the province to find ways to ensure that it works toward building a program.

Within child care right now in Manitoba, we have approximately 1,100 centres, and half of those, or about 600, are centres that would be located in schools and other community facilities. The remaining are in family homes where we have licensed people within families where they have smaller numbers of children, but they do provide licensed child care.

In looking at child care, definitely we do see the need to continue the growth for training in order to expand the programs, because with training comes quality programs. We look at the issues of capital facilities and infrastructure. One of the things with child care programs is that they do not enjoy the same kind of infrastructure that many of the other established programs have, like the school systems.

Most recently, we've been having some dialogue with the federal government because of the initiatives that are being undertaken with child care on reserve. There is a directive that the federal government is expecting to have child care on reserve licensed by the year 2015. The opportunity here exists to look at, again, trying to have a program that is equitable and has the same opportunity both on and off reserve.

In child welfare in Manitoba, we've had a long history that started many, many decades ago, but there were some profound events that occurred prior to 1991, and with the release of the report of the aboriginal justice inquiry of Manitoba in 1991. Ten years lapsed before there was activity with respect to that report and its recommendations. Now in the year 2011 we have a system within Manitoba that was jointly designed with the aboriginal community, the Métis community, and the provincial government in order to look at the governance of child welfare within the province of Manitoba.

This is a very challenging area. I think we all know the challenges this presents to families. The biggest drivers for child welfare, of course, are addictions, housing, and poverty. This is what brings children into the child welfare system.

Our social workers, who are the front-line firefighters in terms of trying to keep children safe, have many, many challenges that they themselves cannot do by themselves. Most recently our work with the federal government has resulted in a landmark activity in terms of the development of a joint or harmonized funding model for child welfare. It was finalized in terms of the work that we were doing together last July, when there was an announcement by the federal government with respect to the proportion of funding they were going to contribute to ensure that we would be looking at a model for child welfare that would reduce the number of children in care by providing resources and funding to prevention services, and to enhance family services across the province.

• (0950)

In family violence prevention, we continue to work across the province in terms of the resources we provide for women who have the experience of domestic violence. This is an area that continues to be of concern. We're also looking forward to the work that we're going to be doing collaboratively to improve the services on reserve.

My time is up. I wish I had more.

The Chair: Thank you. Hopefully you can make some more points during the question and answer time.

We now have the Stop Violence Against Aboriginal Women Action Group. Lisa Forbes is going to speak. Shawna Ferris is also from that group.

You have five minutes. I don't know who would like to take the five minutes. If you want to divide it, I'll tell when you're halfway.

Ms. Shawna Ferris (Member, Assistant Professor of Women's and Gender Studies, University of Manitoba, Stopping Violence Against Aboriginal Women Action Group): We were told we had ten minutes, but Lisa will speak on our behalf.

The Chair: That's fine. Go ahead.

Ms. Lisa Forbes (Asset Building Program Coordinator, Supporting Employment & Economic Development (SEED) Winnipeg Inc.; Member, Stop Violence Against Aboriginal Women Action Group): First, let me say thank you to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women for inviting us to present on this panel as witnesses on the issue of violence against aboriginal women.

As well, I'd like to commend committee members for your particular interest in understanding community perspectives regarding the continuing and troubling fact that aboriginal women and girls continue to be overrepresented as victims in acts of violence. It is widely acknowledged that more violent crimes happen to aboriginal women than to other women in Canada and that those crimes are less likely to be solved. It is very disturbing to us that young aboriginal women are at least five times more likely than other women in Canada to die as a result of violence.

We are here representing the Stop Violence Against Aboriginal Women Action Group. This is a grassroots initiative of aboriginal

and non-aboriginal citizens who are creating and implementing tangible actions with the goal of preventing violence against aboriginal women and girls here in Winnipeg and also at the national level. As this panel was looking at current research and service provision with respect to violence against aboriginal women, we will refer to the findings from our community-based research conducted in Winnipeg in May 2010.

In order to understand the gaps, the needs of aboriginal women and girls living in violent situations, and the ways that could prevent further violence, the Stop Violence Against Aboriginal Women Action Group held a community organization gathering and focus group that brought together a diversity of perspectives from aboriginal and non-aboriginal men and women from across Winnipeg. Participants represented 44 social service delivery, research, education, justice, and policing organizations, as well as community groups that work in human rights and aboriginal women's and victims' advocacy.

A survey preceded the focus group, to which 28 organizations provided input. We would like to draw your attention to two of these questions. Organizations were asked to state whether the supply of programs and services was meeting the needs of aboriginal women and girls living in violence. Half of them stated that needs were somewhat being met by the supply. The results show that over a third were not or were only somewhat meeting the demand of aboriginal women and girls in situations of violence.

One of the participants stated that current programs are overused and women are regularly requesting more support, particularly around domestic violence. Another noted that the current location and types of services do not always fit with the needs of the community—for example, faith homes for sexually exploited youth. One reply made reference to the deep and insidious roots of violence, stating that efforts are being made, but the problems experienced by aboriginal women are overwhelming. These include unsafe housing, poverty, addictions, chronic ill health, involvement with child protection, violent neighbourhoods, limited employment opportunities, and the long-term effects of complex post-traumatic stress disorder on mental health, such as the legacy of colonialism and residential schools.

The second question asked the organizations to rate the importance of 19 different services and programs for aboriginal women and girls experiencing violence. The top five priorities included greater access to safe and affordable housing; the development of specialized training for police and social service workers; poverty reduction policies and initiatives; increased addiction treatment services; and greater advocacy for aboriginal women and girls.

There was general consensus among the participating organizations that anti-violence work specifically addressing the plight of aboriginal women and girls must begin, continue, or be strengthened on many other fronts as well, including domestic violence prevention for boys and men; services for male violent offenders; transition services for ex-gang members, those who have reached age 18 and are leaving the ward of CFS, and those coming to cities from reserves and rural communities; support services for families of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls; anti-racism training and awareness for the general public as well as the news media; women's resource information networks; resources for sexually exploited people; and services for those who are involved in the justice system. Organizations agreed that services need to be culturally rooted, around the clock, and receiving multi-year core funding.

• (0955)

We learned from the participants that there are current practices in the community that can be built upon to prevent further violence against aboriginal women and girls. These include aboriginal space, culture, and spirituality that are reclaimed through culturally appropriate services, elders, traditional ceremonies, awareness of colonial history, and an increase in aboriginal teachers and aboriginal history in school; respectful engagement and consultation by government with community groups through increased networks between government institutions and grassroots groups; grassroots community organizing and networking; leaders who lead by example; counselling for children who have experienced or witnessed violence; initiatives that build women's and girls' capacity to be strong, independent, and empowered instead of feeling victimized; positive language use by police; and projects that reach out to youth.

The focus group members were interested in the creation of a network of the organizations that were present that day as well as others for the purpose of informing each other of relevant initiatives, and the creation of strategic alignments toward the prevention of violence against aboriginal women and girls. A network model is currently being developed in consultation with aboriginal women.

The Chair: I would like to ask if you could table the results of that survey with the clerk. You have? Good. Thank you. So it can be distributed to the committee and we can read it.

We've heard the presentations, and now we're going to go into our question and answer period. The first question and answer period is seven minutes long, and as I've explained before, that seven minutes includes questions and answers, so I would really like everyone to be as succinct as they could, please. I know it's difficult, but we have another panel coming up after you, so we have to end on time.

We will begin with Ms. Neville for the Liberal Party.

• (1000)

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's seven minutes?

Thank you all for coming. I very much appreciate hearing from you.

I'm going to try to weave something together, and I hope I'm not creating something.

Yesterday, as you heard, we were in Prince Albert. One of the overriding concerns we heard there, and what I have heard in other communities, not large urban ones but smaller communities, was with regard to the systems in the community, the social welfare systems, the justice system—Lisa Michell spoke about that—and the policing system. We heard today from Mr. Robinson what the police are doing, particularly as it relates to missing and murdered aboriginal women. But what we heard was a real concern that many aboriginal women do not feel they are treated appropriately by the systems, whether welfare, justice, or the police. In one community I was at, they said starkly that they didn't feel safe, that they didn't feel they had protection here.

I would like your comments and your recommendations on what we should be recommending to work with, help, or support organizations, because—and this is my view—we are dealing with racism and discrimination to a large extent.

I'm rambling a little bit, and I'm not sure if I'm gathering the essence of what I want to say, but if I make sense to you, please respond.

The Chair: We'll hear from Commissioner Robinson, please. Then we'll move on to social services, and if we have time we can hear from them.

A/Commr Bill Robinson: Thank you for the question.

We police, as you know, a majority of Manitoba's rural communities and first nations communities. I think there are a couple of very important points we have to get across, certainly relative to policing and partnerships. I think the first is with regard to perceptions training for the police. Every year we participate in and give as many of our officers as possible aboriginal perceptions training. It's important that they understand the communities in which they serve and the issues and how aboriginal first nations people view them and vice versa. I think certainly that's the first step.

But as far as the safety issue in communities goes, a lot of our more isolated northern communities in Manitoba are policed by a detachment that in some cases has to fly in or we have to do visitations into the communities. I've heard it said, certainly, that in some instances some people don't feel safe, of course, because we're not there all the time. But we do the best we can with the service level we have in those communities, and we try our best to provide safety to not only aboriginal women and men but also the children in those communities by getting into the schools and doing those things.

Hon. Anita Neville: Commissioner Robinson, the community that I heard it from most assertively was not a Manitoba community; it was a northern community. The women were quite clear: they do not feel safe; they do not feel they have anywhere to go.

When these issues come to your attention as a leader in the RCMP, that there are issues of discrimination, racism, neglect, or however you want to describe it, what action do you take?

• (1005)

A/Commr Bill Robinson: I travel extensively in the province, and the communication to my members is this, and I know this is relayed across the force: you will treat all persons in Manitoba with the same level of dignity, respect, professionalism, and compassion as you would any other person. What does that mean? Does that mean that when you show up at a house in a northern Manitoba community and there's been domestic violence you have the same resources available to you that you may have in Winnipeg or Brandon or Dauphin? No, it doesn't. It means exactly the opposite. In some cases the ability to remove a husband from the home or the ability to find kids adequate care is very, very, challenging. What we try to do is find family members and locate people and put them in areas of safety.

The one point I do want to get across is that no one agency in the north, or even in the south, can do this alone. It has to be a partnership activity. There has to be the ability for Child and Family Services, for the RCMP, for Awasis, for all of the agencies to come together and work together to find solutions for this.

I've heard many people talk about addictions this morning. I've heard many people talk about communities that are in a state of crisis. And that is true. There is little doubt that those are some of the overriding issues.

As far as systemic racism, what do we do—

The Chair: We only have about 30 seconds left.

Hon. Anita Neville: I'd like to hear from somebody else.

The Chair: Well, we don't have the time, because with 30 seconds left we can't do it in a fulsome way.

Hon. Anita Neville: Can Lisa Michell answer briefly?

The Chair: No.

Seriously, if you can do this in 20 seconds, Ms. Michell, do so.

We will have to go to Ms. Loepky in another round to answer the rest of your question, Anita.

Ms. Michell, you have 20 seconds.

Ms. Lisa Michell: In terms of the RCMP, there is a relationship issue. It stems from the Indian residential schools, when they came and removed our children and took them forcibly. And yes, we realize they're working towards it. They're coming into the schools and building partnerships, but when they're on the street, it's a little bit of a different story.

The Chair: Thank you. Very good.

Madame Demers from the Bloc Québécois.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good morning. Thank you for being here today.

I find the group of witnesses testifying here very interesting. It is a very different, but very interesting, group than the others we have heard from this week.

Carolyn, I'm wondering about something. Problems with children are starting to crop up in the other provinces. The services

responsible for protecting children are starting to remove them from aboriginal communities when there are problems with the family, with young mothers, and so on. These services remove them and take them outside the community for a certain period of time. The same problem existed during the era of residential schools. Even though they aren't being sent to schools or residential schools, they're being sent to foster families and homes where they are cut off from their culture and environment.

A little earlier, you said that you wanted to try to do something different and focus on prevention. That gave me a big smile. We learned yesterday that we're doing the same thing in Saskatchewan as we're doing in Quebec, and that's a mistake. I think that, in 15 or 20 years, we'll see the same problems cropping up as those created by the residential schools.

Could you explain further what you're trying to do here, in Manitoba?

[English]

Ms. Carolyn Loepky: In Manitoba we have 17 child and family services agencies that are specifically managed and run by first nations and/or Métis people. They have the responsibility for oversight and for mandating those agencies, using provincial legislation that gives them the framework with which to protect children and provide services. The agencies are responsive to a governance model that is also managed by first nations and Métis people.

We still have the problem of increased numbers of children in care. We are now working on a model where we're going to try to look at providing additional resources and services for prevention and early intervention services. It's really focused on enhancing the capacity of the family. New resources specifically dedicated to looking at ways to try to reduce the number of children coming into care is something that has started, and will be growing over the next number of years.

We feel, as one of the panel members said early this morning, that the place where children belong is with their families and in their homes. In order to do that, we have to look at different ways of helping family members in order to support them in the parenting and in the nurturance of children.

It's a challenge—

• (1010)

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: I'm sorry to interrupt, but I don't have a lot of time.

Lisa, you have talked at great length about young women who end up on the streets and have no choice but to become sex trade workers. We know that most people who are in prisons in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta are aboriginal. The government is currently investing a lot of money in making existing prisons bigger and in building new prisons.

Do you think this is a good investment, or should the money be spent on prevention programs to help these people to get off the streets, to stop drinking and doing what they are doing to feed their children?

[English]

Ms. Lisa Michell: Absolutely I would say that is 100% true. Housing more people in jail—that's not the solution.

One of the big things is that when a mother or a parent needs her family the most, what happens is that the children get removed. There was an incident where a violent offence happened to a young infant. All of the children were removed from that home, at a time when she really needed her family the most.

One of the big things, too, is that we need to really look at working extensively with the family, with the grandparents, the uncles, the aunts, the cousins—all of that. We need to look at that.

I worked in the child welfare system 10 or 15 years ago. Back then it was like this: you can't have the foster parents and the parents together.

Well, about a year and a half ago, I worked with an agency where that wasn't the point. The program was all about the child.

That's what needs to happen. The programs need to be all about the child, because you know what? The child is now going to be removed and placed into a different setting. I'm a product of the "sixties scoop", so I have a little bit of an understanding of that. When you take the child away from the community, and if there's no access, then how is that child going to learn about their culture? How is that child going to learn about who they are?

At the age of seven, I knew already that there was something missing in my home, but I didn't know what it was. It wasn't until later, when I met my biological dad, that I realized, "Oh, now I know what was missing: my culture." Still to this day, unfortunately, I don't have my language.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Mr. Robinson, one of the problems we've experienced in Quebec is the fact that the RCMP does not work well with the local police. For example, when two young girls disappeared in Gatineau, RCMP officers were in charge of one of the missing girls, and local police forces were in charge of the other. They did not compare notes and, unfortunately, the case remains unresolved. Those two young girls are still missing.

• (1015)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Very quickly, Mr. Robinson.

A/Commr Bill Robinson: We have an integrated task force where our police agencies are working together. We've reviewed approximately 84 files, and we're reviewing more. We're looking for similarities between the investigations. So we're working very closely together. All of the files from all of the police agencies will be touched, they will be reviewed, as will the relationships across the country.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): I'm so sorry, but time is up. Thank you.

Madam Glover, please, for seven minutes.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I too want to welcome you here and thank you for the hard work you do for our communities on a day-to-day basis.

I do want to acknowledge, for the police officers who are present here today, the loss of a police family member: Sergeant Ryan Russell, of course, was lost in the ultimate sacrifice yesterday.

I also want to acknowledge, for the RCMP's benefit, a first that has occurred; I want to acknowledge the appointment of Chief Superintendent Russ Mirastyi, who will officially take over as the commanding officer—the first first nations commanding officer—of "F" Division. I commend these aboriginal success stories. I want to highlight them, and the reason I do that is because during these kinds of sessions we hear the bad, but we rarely hear the good, and I want to give the RCMP an opportunity to address some of the things that have been said here today. I guess I'm a little bit spoiled because I happen to be a police officer on a leave of absence, so I've had relationships with the RCMP and other jurisdictions. It is a family. So it's unfortunate to hear that sometimes they don't get to talk.

But with the RCMP, when Ms. Michell mentioned jurisdictional problems with task forces, can you address how we overcome that? There's \$10 million that has been allocated to the missing and murdered aboriginal women's file, and I believe a part of that money may help to prevent that gap from reoccurring. So if you would, tell me your impression of how that would help and what your experience is here in Manitoba jurisdictionally.

A/Commr Bill Robinson: Just starting in Manitoba, I think we've had many success stories here, going as far back as 2003. The creation of the task force and the missing persons project that we undertook in 2007, to identify all missing women where foul play was suspected and looking at all missing persons, I think was a huge step forward for us.

The relationship here is one where the homicide units within the WPS, the RCMP, the Brandon Police Service, and all the police agencies would need routinely to discuss cases of interest. This is certainly not done in isolation in Manitoba. I think the money that's going to be put into improving systems and altering systems like CPIC, where you have a broader ability to put case pictures and information on CPIC—which of course is the Canadian Police Information Centre and is used by all police agencies across the country—will be a great step forward in the child exploitation area and in the missing children area, where you're going to create a database. It will again provide all police agencies and all agencies across the country the step forward in order to take us from where we are today to a formalized system where we will be able to track this stuff.

In Manitoba, as I've said, we have Winnipeg Police Service members and their files sitting in the same room as RCMP members and their files, and actually doing analytical comparisons. We've identified 84 files to date that are getting very stringent looks. We will be progressing further and looking at more files. You know—

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Can I interrupt?

It sounds like those measures that you talked about that are being implemented, particularly CPIC, would prevent what Ms. Demers is talking about. It's tragic to hear that that happens, and it's good that we're addressing that.

I do want to also take note of what Ms. Loepky said about some of the relationships. I know when she was talking about social workers having challenges—because they can't do this alone; they can't help aboriginal women alone. But I know, just from my experience in the Winnipeg Police Service—we had a domestic violence unit that partnered police officers and social workers. Again, we removed that jurisdictional bias.

I'm aware that there are already measures in place in the Winnipeg Police Service to do that in the vice unit, because they work very closely with many of our vulnerable aboriginal women, many of our abused aboriginal women, working shoulder to shoulder with social workers.

Does the RCMP do something similar?

• (1020)

A/Commr Bill Robinson: Yes, absolutely. We begin working with the youth, of course, in schools, with our youth workers and with our in-classroom officers. We work shoulder to shoulder with Child and Family Services. In fact, recently I worked with a member in Thompson. We worked one full evening beside a Child and Family Services worker, looking at some of the problems, and of course they were right there when we needed them. This goes on every day across Manitoba, not just in RCMP jurisdictions and Winnipeg jurisdictions, but also in our smaller municipalities like Brandon and Rivers and this type of thing.

I think another important piece to all of this, of course, is what the next step of this review capacity is going to be and how we continue to talk to one another as police agencies across Canada. I think the days are certainly behind us where we no longer talk.... Our analysts continually talk. We have ViCLAS, the violent crime analysis system, which is where we enter data on murdered and missing women. Of course, this is a nationwide system, and it provides clarity to similar types of acts and offences against women and men right across this country. The additional moneys will do nothing but increase and broaden these programs we have out there.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Thank you.

I don't have much time left, but I did want to acknowledge all of the yellow T-shirts in the audience. Thank you so much for representing.... You're doing a great job of portraying a message without having to say anything, so thank you for being here.

I read something in the newspaper about an exhibit in another province on missing and murdered aboriginal women, which your group spoke up about and tried to stop. It was a depiction of Robert Pickton's victims. Do you know anything about that, Lisa? Can you tell me why this is something that you would say no to and why we shouldn't bring about awareness this way? To counter that, what would you like to see done to bring awareness to where it needs to be?

The Chair: Lisa, I'm going to have to ask you to take 20 seconds to answer that, please.

You're over time.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: You can submit it in writing to the committee.

The Chair: But I think the committee might like to hear the answer.

Ms. Lisa Forbes: Actually, if I have 20 seconds, what I'd just like to say is that we would like to echo some things we've heard today regarding stable core funding towards organizations and programs that are working on domestic violence and other social programs, including shelters and safe houses.

I'm sorry, but I'm not able to answer that question directly anyway, as I'm not familiar with that initiative.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now I'd like to go to Ms. Mathysen for the NDP.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for being here. I very much appreciate the expertise you bring to us.

I would like to ask everyone a question, but I'm going to start with Lisa Forbes and Shawna because I know the time is limited.

My question is in regard to the survey you outlined. There were some very interesting things there. I would like to hear more about it, particularly in regard to some of these things that have been asked by my colleagues pertaining to what we heard in Saskatchewan about the very negative attitudes young women face when they go to social services, or that are sometimes from the police: that passing of judgment that makes it impossible for them to get the help and support they need. You mentioned some of that.

You also mentioned the news media in terms of anti-racism training. Now, we know there is some training going on, but if you could touch on that survey and some of those specifics, I'd appreciate it.

Ms. Lisa Forbes: Yes. I'd like to say that when we did that survey we did find that the negative attitudes are pervasive. It is an element of systemic racism. It's an element of colonialism and those kinds of things, which we've heard before. Those things continue to exist. I acknowledge that there has been some work, as the RCMP representative has said here.

However, for one of the things that was noted there, we've noted it in Sisters in Spirit reports from NWAC, and we've noted it from Amnesty International. We noted it again in our survey of local organizations. There needs to be training for police and social service workers regarding anti-racism. It continues to be a pervasive problem. Women are constantly running against that in all government systems. It continues to exist.

• (1025)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: And the media...?

Ms. Lisa Forbes: In regard to the media, we have some research. Actually, my colleague here, Shawna, is a researcher on the racist portrayal of victims of violence who are aboriginal—compared to non-aboriginal—and we as a grassroots group are planning to address that issue as well in terms of codes of conduct for journalists and those kinds of things. That's what we're working towards.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

Ms. Shawna Ferris: If I could, I will just say as well that Lisa is one of the members of our group who has been really pushing an initiative to create a charter for journalists to sign, a charter saying that they will not portray aboriginal women in these negative ways and that they'll actually resist these kinds of portrayals as well as things like sensationalizing violence against women.

Did you want to talk a little bit more about that, Lisa?

Ms. Lisa Forbes: No. That's it.

Ms. Shawna Ferris: Okay.

I wanted to emphasize as well that education for RCMP and social services workers is very important. One of the places where that begins is before they become those workers, so it's education across levels of education systems—elementary, high school, and post-secondary education—that focuses on colonization and ongoing decolonization efforts in order to start thinking through the ways that racism and colonialism perpetuate our culture and to inform how everybody responds to one another or reads one another.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: You mentioned funding and the fact that there is never enough. We've heard this over and over again. What would you do with \$875 million? That's the latest tax cut to the banks.

Ms. Lisa Forbes: What a great question. Everybody here wants to answer that.

What I think is that we found we were asking that question too. We were wondering what's happening with the money that's being spent on this issue and why we are not seeing satisfactory results.

So we started asking that question. We asked people: individuals, community organizations, and social services organizations across the board. What we're working on now is this integration that we talked about with police forces and Child and Family Services. There needs to be an integration among social service providers, with a singular goal: to have it as a goal to reduce violence against aboriginal women and girls and to have it being to create strategically...to work with each other to create initiatives towards that goal.

I'm talking about domestic violence prevention programs that educate men and boys, for instance; transition services for people moving from a reserve to an urban area; and having the police and the justice folks and the people who do justice advocacy at John Howard and Elizabeth Fry in the same room and having them working together in all the ways, with all the tools we have at hand, to put our efforts towards that one goal of reducing violence against aboriginal women.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Yes. Thank you for mentioning Elizabeth Fry—

The Chair: You have one minute, Irene.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: —because I know that in northern Ontario their funding was cut off. And that makes it very, very difficult.

I'm sorry, Madam Chair...?

The Chair: You have one minute.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Oh dear.

Very quickly, Carolyn, you talked about the lack of affordable housing and the lack of a national child care project. If the federal government were to step up to the plate, would that help you to do the kind of work that you would like to do in the field?

Ms. Carolyn Loeppky: With respect to looking to the future, I think if we have equitable and stable funding for services on and off reserve in various disciplinary labels in child care, in child welfare, where we have made great progress, and also with respect to family violence, that would be exceptional in terms of the work we could be able to do.

I want to echo, though, what Lisa talked about. I think coalitions and collaborations with purpose go a long way in improving services. In Manitoba, we have the experience where we've been working with high-risk victims, with StreetReach, and with sexual exploitation and human trafficking. More recently, we're working on a children's advocacy centre, where the sectors are coming together to talk about the expertise they bring to the table, and they work jointly and co-jointly. It's difficult work at times, but when you in fact can reach the conclusion, you see much, much better services for children and for families, and strength of communities improves.

• (1030)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you.

We can now go into a second round. The second round will be a three-minute round. If we had a five-minute round it would be very difficult, because we just have a little under 30 minutes. I could make that a five-minute round, but you're going to have to be really disciplined. Okay? Let's do a five-minute round, then.

Let's try Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to pick up on something we heard today and yesterday. It has been prevalent along the way. It is the apprehension of children, which we're hearing a lot about, and the numbers of children. What we also heard is that when domestic violence occurs, many women do not come forward, either to social service agencies or to the police—or to whomever—because of the fear of losing their children.

Can you speak to that in terms of how it can be addressed? I understand that there's always a concern of what's in the best interests of the child, but it creates a whole other layer of issues.

Let me start with Carolyn. What is the province doing and what recommendations would you have to the federal government?

Ms. Carolyn Loeppky: In looking at domestic violence and children, we started some initiatives a while back in terms of looking at children who witness domestic violence. We tried to put some new programming resources into our women's shelters specifically for children's services, so that when women do enter a shelter and they have the children along with them, there is some specific programming for children. It certainly was an initiative that we felt was important. Over the last number of years, we've been able to increase some of those resources, but—

Hon. Anita Neville: Sorry, but what I'm concerned about—and that's important and valuable—is the woman who does not come forward because she's fearful of losing custody of her children. Are you working with that in some way?

Ms. Carolyn Loeppky: The area in which we see some promise and/or hope in terms of helping families who have challenges and/or struggles is a lot of the work that we do with family resource centres, with women's resource centres, and also with parent-child centres that you would have in communities and/or in schools, where you would begin to build some relationships with women and try to get some support and services to them that would be community based and not necessarily mandated services.

In Manitoba, we fund a variety of different community-based organizations like Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata, Andrews Street, and the Wolseley Centre, where we have the opportunity for women—and for men, in some of them—to come forward to get some services and supports and to start to build a bit of a community of support for themselves. So that would be an introduction or a beginning.

But it's certainly a challenge, because when we do look at children, it's the safety of children that does come first. If in fact we're going to be looking at some success factors around our new initiative around prevention and family enhancement, it would certainly be to look at ways in which the family can stay intact, so that if there's an offender in the family, the female doesn't get victimized or punished because of that.

• (1035)

Hon. Anita Neville: Ms. Michell, can you comment on it?

Ms. Lisa Michell: I just have one comment about who defines the best interests of the children. Who defines that? To me, it would be the grandmothers. In our community, it's the grandmothers who define the best interests of the children—not a child welfare system.

Ms. Lisa Forbes: I just wanted to say that I can speak to that as well. Respondents we heard from at our survey said that there need to be more beds in shelters for women who need to leave in the middle of the night, no questions asked, and without referrals from CFS. They need to have a place to go. There are some spaces like that, but there are nowhere near enough. Having more funding put towards shelters and safe houses is needed so that for women it can be “no questions asked, middle of the night, I need to be here to leave a violent situation”. We do not have enough spaces like that.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

Do I have any more time, Madam Chair?

The Chair: You have 30 seconds, whoever wants to go for that.

Hon. Anita Neville: Anybody else?

I'll pass, then. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Anita.

Now we go to Mrs. Glover for the Conservatives.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I do want to acknowledge that shelters are an important component of what the Government of Canada is addressing, with \$55.6 million announced for over a five-year period to invest into shelters. Just recently, \$2.2 million more was dedicated to support

the construction of five new shelters, including one here in Manitoba.

So I agree with what you said, Ms. Forbes, that shelters need to be available, because it's certainly something that will help these women get the resources they need.

Ms. Michell mentioned earlier that young girls don't wake up one morning and decide that they want to be prostitutes. The reason I bring this up is that the Government of Canada agrees that these are victimized women and that there are a number of things that have to come into play to protect them. What the government is responsible for doing is finding ways to do that, including legislation. The matrimonial real property legislation has been put forward. I believe many of the women who are missing or were murdered left reserves because they didn't have any rights, came to urban settings where they don't have transition centres, etc., and became exploited because of their vulnerabilities. They then became our missing or murdered. That is why it's so important that we have police and all these other agencies working together. So we're going to push forward with that bill to try to give rights back to aboriginal women on reserve, and the grandmothers are those women who are going to help us make sure those rights are given back.

Now let's talk about the kids at the other end, the small kids, and about what we're doing to capture them, to protect them. I'm in total agreement that taking them out of their families is a horrible, horrible situation, which is why I'd like Ms. Loeppky to describe the prevention-based approach. This is a new approach, and I believe \$177 million has been invested here in Manitoba so that we can look at a different system. The CFS system before of taking them out of the homes was not working, so a new system has come about.

Perhaps you could describe that for us, Ms. Loeppky, and tell us why you think that might help these young girls from becoming further victims.

Ms. Carolyn Loeppky: Thank you.

The funding model that has been developed and agreed upon by the federal and provincial governments will be providing a shift of the resources. It will be going to prevention and early intervention. This means that if a family comes in and is at what would be determined to be low risk, there would be ways in which the social work system could refer and/or support the family in terms of the services they need.

It would be working with respect to not someone outside of the family telling them, in a prescriptive way, “Here's what you need to do: A, B, C, and D.” This would involve working closely with the family, with the mother, the father, the extended family if there is extended family, to talk about what they believe are the important things they need in order to take the kinds of steps with their children that they want to take.

It might be as simple as the fact that they can't get their laundry done because they don't have a machine in their house and they can't get to the laundromat. It might be something about wanting to get into the world of employment. Is there some educational support that we can either lever, link, or help to support? Is it going to be something around looking at basic needs within the house that are preventing the family from moving forward? Is it parenting issues they want to address with respect to parent-teen conflict and/or parenting of little ones who are going through difficult times in terms of developmental stages?

• (1040)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: And there's the kinship, which is what you're addressing when you talk about the families coming into play. Rather than taking these kids out of the community and out of the family, it's trying to find foster parents within the family, etc. That plays a part too.

But continue: how is this going to help us prevent them from becoming victims?

Ms. Carolyn Loeppky: Well, we know that when families have a first brush with child welfare, it's generally when children are taken out of the home. It's generally not for a long time. We see a lot of children who come into care for very short periods of time. That's what we would like to address, because if you can avoid taking children into care....

We've done some analysis, and it's generally for about 36 days that a child would be taken out of the home while the home stabilizes in order to have the child back and the child be safe. If we can avoid taking that child into care in the first place, and provide the services and supports either in the home or with the extended family, it will avoid that first contact with child welfare. By stabilizing those homes, what you'll find is that children will do better in daycare and in the school system, and they may move forward in terms of being able to actually complete school. In the child welfare sector, educational outcomes are also not in the success range that we would want to see them at.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Ms. Michell, good or bad approach...?

The Chair: Ms. Glover, you've gone over your time now.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Sorry.

The Chair: Thanks.

Now I would like to go to Madame Demers for the Bloc Québécois.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Basically, in all the places we've visited so far, the people we met with insisted on the importance of opening centres for both the victims and the offenders. We were told that if we didn't try to heal the whole family, we would always end up with the same problems. What is your opinion, Lisa and Shawna, and perhaps you too, Ms. Loeppky?

In fact, Lisa, you are right: grandmothers are in the best position to take care of children and decide what is good for them. I've personally been taking care of my grandson for a number of years.

The suggestion to open healing centres for the whole family came up a number of times. What do you think about that?

[*English*]

Ms. Lisa Forbes: I could speak to that.

I've heard from people who definitely think that model is a good idea and that it is whole family healing. I guess what I mentioned before is what I heard people say: that there weren't enough programs to address issues with men, so sometimes.... There were programs for women. Women may learn some aspects of domestic violence communication skills and those kinds of things for prevention, but their partners in the home may not have any training in that matter. So to have an approach that addresses whole family healing would definitely be something that I heard service providers say they would support.

Ms. Shawna Ferris: I can just add something.

When I used to teach in Ontario, I heard from speakers in the Six Nations reserve who actually have an internationally recognized program that does exactly that. I can't remember the name of the program, but I can e-mail or send it to the committee. They've been invited all over the world to talk about the groundbreaking work they're doing with exactly that kind of program.

Ms. Lisa Forbes: I'd just like to add, too, that one of the things I haven't heard made mention of too much here.... I did hear Lisa mention it and I think Carolyn might have said it. Regarding poverty, housing, and those kinds of issues, some kind of a healing centre may be helpful, but if the family is still experiencing these kinds of things.... So to have policies and put money towards poverty reduction, affordable housing and also education and training to improve an economic situation...those things all have to happen together. That's the thing with this. With such a pervasive problem, we do have the opportunity, in that there are so many places to intervene, and they do have to be...we have to intervene on all fronts in a strategic coordinated effort.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Lisa?

• (1045)

Ms. Lisa Michell: Thank you.

I just want to say that in terms of healing in our community, it's not just about smudge; our culture is a way of life. That's how we live. It's not just something that we do on certain days. It's the way we live and how we walk in our communities. That's what culture is all about.

I would also agree, too, that in terms of healing it has to be the whole family unit. It takes a whole community to raise a child. And you know what? I'm still somebody's child, so there are times when I need that.

We also need tremendous support for our men. Jail is not the solution. Incarceration doesn't work. We need to have a holistic approach, a way of life.

Talk to those elders, because the elders have all the answers. When I hear them talk about the child welfare system or any kind of system—the federal government, the provincial government—how much consultation has happened with our elders? I have to ask that question. It's something to think about.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Are there consultations between aboriginal communities and the various levels of government?

[English]

The Chair: Who would like to try that?

Ms. Loepky.

Ms. Carolyn Loepky: Actually, within our legislation in the child welfare area, there is the opportunity for communication, for consultation, for leaders at the political level. It's a required activity. Within the working level, there are also legislated entities we have that provide the opportunity both for collaboration and for communication and consultation in the child welfare area.

In Manitoba, we also have Healthy Child Manitoba, which is a group of seven to nine ministries that come together on a regular basis to talk about the priority programs. We do joint work together around some priorities for services and programs.

The Chair: Thank you.

That finishes that part.

Ms. Mathysen, for five minutes.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to go back to some of the things I heard. We know that it's important to have shelters and that they be functioning. In previous testimony we've heard that there's money for capital, so you can build the shelter, but there's no money for the operations, the important part of the work that goes on there. I wondered if you could comment on that.

Also, in these surveys that Lisa and Shawna talked about, you said that people said there need to be safe homes for sexually exploited youth. I found that extremely disturbing. I wondered if you could expand on that and explain to the committee what is happening to kids on the street or kids who are being exploited.

Ms. Lisa Forbes: For the first aspect—I'm trying to recall different conversations we've had with various service providers—as you said, there's money for capital but not for services. What I can say is that service providers are frustrated that they don't receive multi-year funding in order to be able to initiate programs and see them through.

To have to constantly be writing funding proposals according to the flavour of the month, for whatever they are being asked to address, is a constant problem. It is hard to keep trained people in when you have to say to them, "Well, listen, March 31 is coming up, and I don't know if I can hire you after April 1". That is a constant problem; everyone across the board in social service delivery says that. That's the first aspect.

Regarding safe homes for sexually exploited youth, there has been some really good work done in Manitoba with the Sexually Exploited Youth Coalition, the SEY Coalition. That is several different social service agencies; I believe that policing is involved. It has a whole bunch of different ranges. From what I've heard, it's a good model for being able to think of integration across many different social services and across policing and government

agencies and that kind of thing. That seems to be working well here in Manitoba.

In regard to spaces, I've heard that there are two elements to this issue. One is that there are not enough spaces for those sexually exploited youth to go to for shelter. The other aspect—this may sound a little controversial—is that funding and programs need to be across the board for needs as needed—not just to say that we're addressing sexually exploited youth, we don't want to see those 13-year-old girls on street corners, we want to address that, and that's our flavour of the month.

It also needs to be addressed that...some of the concern is that we put efforts into some programs for youth, for instance, but not for women and maybe not for children. Some people are saying there are fewer services for women. The truth is that it needs to be across the board, and that's not to belittle the fact that we do not have enough services and outreach workers for sexually exploited youth or, specifically, enough beds for the safe houses.

• (1050)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Are these kids ending up in the judicial system and ultimately being institutionalized? Are they ending up in prisons?

Ms. Lisa Forbes: Anecdotally, I would just say yes, but I don't have expertise about that specifically.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Carolyn?

Ms. Carolyn Loepky: I can just add a little to what Lisa talked about in terms of the provincial funding for family violence prevention services. We fund approximately \$12 million annually for 32 different programs. That funding is considered to be core funding, and it provides money for operational funds as well as for core funding, and we have three-year agreements for those. These are not programs that have annual...they're not projects. They don't have a beginning and an end; they are ongoing programs. So this is the provincial approach in terms of funding for family violence prevention programs.

We still see some challenges in these programs. Second-stage housing is certainly a growing area and a growing challenge. Women who may have surmounted the initial attack or violence need to have that transition, and I think you heard that earlier this morning.

In addition to that, when you talk about sexually exploited children, in Manitoba in 2002 and 2008 we took some initiatives to look at sexual exploitation and human trafficking. It came under the umbrella of what we call Tracia's Trust. It has primarily four major components to it. We're looking at issues of legislation and law enforcement, a continuum of service, which talks about early intervention, prevention, and at times the kinds of things Lisa was talking about in terms of building new resources that are specific to some of the needs identified. Examples of that would be some things that are being done with some of our community-based agencies. For example, construction is under way right now for a rural healing lodge.

Breaking the silence is another area we've talked about. This would be with respect to incest in families primarily and people not wanting to talk about issues of sexual exploitation or abuse that occurred, and also looking at child, youth, and family community empowerment, because we believe that is also at the heart of how you begin to address the issues of sexual exploitation.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Loeppky. I think the time has ended for that.

Before I thank the panel for coming, we do have five minutes left. I did not ask a question in the last panel because we ran out of time, but I would like to now. There are some questions that came up from some of the members of the committee for which I felt I might like to get a more fulsome answer.

One of the things we heard, especially when we were in Saskatchewan, was that some women said they fall into a catch-22 situation. They come into town—because we're in Winnipeg, I'm speaking about off reserve. We are told that some of the issues on reserve can be dealt with on reserve. But when people come into the city, they face this whole mess of whose jurisdiction they are in, and it's a sort of lost area.

What we heard was that women would leave and come into the city, where they'd be afraid and they'd go to a shelter, where they may not be accepted, or only for a short period of time, and they would be facing the question of their children being taken away from them. In order to keep their children, they also have to have a place to live. When they are given welfare, it isn't enough, quite often, in the city to rent a place large enough for them and their children, so they therefore don't even qualify. It's a catch-22, and the children are then taken away. So the women are forced out of the home they know. They've come into a strange place in a city. They've not only lost their family ties, but they've lost their children. Their children are also traumatized from losing their family, and now a mother, who doesn't seem to want to take care of them, as far as the kids are concerned, because she doesn't have a place to keep them.

It's a vicious cycle. It doesn't really solve any of the problems—and we know housing is one of the issues. I'd like to hear what you think we can do.

I have a real concern about the issue of urban aboriginal women who face violence, because I think we have to find a way to stop this jurisdictional problem. If the federal government, as far as I'm concerned, has a fiduciary responsibility to aboriginal people, I believe that responsibility should be there no matter where the aboriginal people live and no matter what the issues are. It's about health. It's about their children. It's about safety. It's about security. It's about housing. These issues should be taken care of and not be left in the provincial jurisdiction. The province, really, is left holding the bag for a lot of these services, and these women fall in between the cracks. This violence and this problem continue.

What do you suggest? I'm asking you a question and I'd like you to speak very frankly. It doesn't mean you're going to do it, but I would like you to find a response to this, because it is the problem.

Mr. Robinson.

• (1055)

A/Commr Bill Robinson: I guess from a policing perspective the RCMP and the Winnipeg Police Service face this all the time, of course, when you have women and people travelling back and forth between jurisdictions. We've had instances where we've had people come to Winnipeg and they've simply vanished, and people from our rural communities of course come in and try to organize searches and whatever.

I think the secondments that we've placed at the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and the Manitoba Métis Federation, and our cultural diversity programs that we've placed in our Muslim communities and so forth, take away some of the confusion surrounding where a person might go to get advice from police when they do come in from a community and they have a problem, such as having been victimized on the reserve or in the community, and now they're in Winnipeg and they don't know where to report it.

I think other issues as well, as far as collaboration is concerned for various programs between police now, between Winnipeg and the RCMP, have helped, have assisted. Now, is it perfect? No, it's not perfect. I think there probably needs to be greater communication surrounding it for the people in communities. I know that when I speak with chiefs from across the country or across the province, we constantly talk about this overlap. It is a concern. I think the overlap we have and the representation we have within our first nations communities provide at least a conduit for people when they come in. But again, the communication aspect of it could be broader.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Loeppky, as a provincial person, you might be able to help us to see if we can square this circle.

Ms. Carolyn Loeppky: Well, I believe the issue of jurisdiction and providing services is a very complex one that has its roots in a lot of the legislation, either provincial legislation or federal legislation. The conversation we had when we talked about funding for child welfare I believe was probably one of the most significant conversations we've had about funding and jurisdiction in a long, long time. And we were able to come to an agreement, because it is a partnership between the two levels of government.

It wasn't without its struggles. There were definitions you had to go through. It still isn't complete, because we've just begun. We're going to learn from it. We're going to look at what's working and what isn't working. There has been a commitment on both sides to do that. But I believe it would require a great deal of thought and careful examination to begin to look at how the historical issues around the Indian Act and other legislation come into play with something like that.

What we do outside of that in order to try to make it work better for people is that we do develop those partnerships and we do look at different ways of providing service, so that when people come off reserve, the intimidation factors you talk about can be reduced to some degree. So trying to house services together... In the urban area, and now starting in some of our rural areas, we're looking at trying to do a better job of integrated services. In Winnipeg we have access centres that have health and social services joined together, co-located, and that also do some casework together so that people aren't going to five different places to get one thing here, one thing here, and one thing there.

• (1100)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Loeppky. I have to keep to my own timelines here too.

I just wanted to ask Lisa Michell something. It would seem to me that the Kelowna accord was something that tried to pull that together with signed agreements between the federal government and the provincial governments in terms of aboriginal people and housing, health, and education specifically.

Ms. Michell, did you think that was a worthwhile thing to be pursuing? Or did you think it was in itself doomed to failure?

Ms. Lisa Michell: Well, I think we really need to sit around the table and actually talk about this. I think that's a good starting point, because we need to develop partnerships. The thing is, as I'm sitting here and listening to all this dialogue, you know, in my community we keep things simple. We keep things real.

You know what? Just to add to your earlier question about when a young woman comes to the community, comes to Winnipeg, how would I treat my niece when she comes to Winnipeg? Would I throw her out? No. I would ask her to come and stay with me. That's one of the things we do. We open and we welcome.

I think, too, getting back to the federal, the provincial, and all that government stuff—obviously, I'm not a government stuff person—the thing is to consult with the people. Consult with the elders. Get the youth involved. We need to have everybody being part of this because that's where healing comes from. It comes from within. It comes from ourselves, our families, and our communities. That's how it's going to work.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I want to thank you all for coming. I want to thank you for answering, especially in this round, some fairly complex jurisdictional questions that have constitutional and legal ramifications to them. I hope that we were able to cut through some of the barriers and will be able to find some way through this to some resolutions.

Again, thank you for coming. Thank you for being frank and honest.

We're going to suspend for about ten minutes. Then we will begin with the third panel.

•

_____ (Pause) _____

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• (1120)

The Chair: I'd like to call this session back to order.

This is our third panel, and we have four presenters.

This is a parliamentary committee. As I've explained to everyone, a parliamentary committee is a body of Parliament. It reports to Parliament. It's made up of all the political parties, so it's not a partisan body. It's a body that is here to listen, to deal with the particular issue that we're dealing with, which is the issue of violence against aboriginal women.

We're looking at the root causes of violence against aboriginal women. We're looking at the nature of violence against aboriginal women—in other words, what types of violence, and the form that the violence takes. We're looking at obviously the extent of that violence, and we would also like to talk about solutions. We are travelling across the country to listen to communities and groups who present to us. We have already had hearings in Ottawa with many of the national organizations.

I want to welcome you. To begin, you will each have five minutes to present. We have four groups, which means there will be four presenters. I think you will decide who will be presenting on your behalf.

I'd now like to begin the five-minute presentations. I'll give you a signal at one minute to let you know that it's time for you to wrap up. We are on a tight timeline—we have a site visit to go to later on—so I would really like us to try to stick to the time.

We will begin with Kelly Gorkoff, criminal justice professor at the University of Winnipeg. She is presenting as an individual.

Kelly, would you like to begin?

• (1125)

Ms. Kelly Gorkoff (Professor of Criminal Justice, University of Winnipeg, As an Individual): Yes, absolutely.

First, I'd like to thank the committee for their important work and for inviting me to attend and present today. Most of the information I'll be presenting today is the result of my work as a research associate at the research centre on violence against women, where I studied for eight years, and research after the Montreal massacre.

Part of my work there involved a variety of research topics and evaluations of programs associated with violence against aboriginal women. I can't get into the specifics, but I headed a three-year study on prostitution across the prairie provinces and talked about experiences and some demographic information, as well as program responses. I'm not currently working in the area of domestic violence, but my current work is on criminal justice programs, on the evaluation of new, innovative court programs and related criminal justice policy pertaining to the case at hand.

I've decided that today, instead of focusing on specific projects I've evaluated, I'll give you a summary of the elements of alternative justice approaches that have proved important or promising and, as well, point out some elements that are not so promising. In addition to this, I'll comment on the difficulties of incorporating these elements and programs in a current crime-control climate that is in many ways antithetical to some of these elements.

The first that I want to comment on is to set a context, and I'm sure it's the context of this committee. It is to recognize that the criminal justice system, in all of its responses, operates as a set of colonizing institutions or a set of institutions against aboriginal people.

I'll quote Ovide Mercredi's opening statement at the aboriginal justice inquiry: "In law, with law, and through law, Canada has imposed a colonial system of government and justice upon our people without due regard to our treaty and Aboriginal rights". It's within this context that I'd like to continue to talk.

We must consider the use of the Canadian criminal justice system to address the rights of female aboriginal victims of crime as inherently colonial instrumentally, and symbolically limited. This manifests itself in a variety of programs from inadequate police attention to stigma, policies, and laws that push aboriginal women into unsafe spaces, where they are generally vulnerable to being abused. Thus, the task is to find out how these colonial practices manifest themselves, in what spaces, and through which policies, laws, and practices.

In accordance with this, I'd like to break down my very brief five minutes into the following themes: first, causes and responses to crime; and second, spaces of vulnerability specific to aboriginal women.

In terms of causes of and responses to crime, many current criminologists argue that crime, including violence, is caused by or associated with the link in the breakdown of ties in communities between people and their relationships with one another. If this is indeed the case, societies are generally more fragmented, and as people become more detached from communities, from those things that are meaningful in their lives, and from the bonds that hold them together, crime will increase.

This, then, forces us to think about solutions to violence against women in the context of community building: re-establishing ties between individuals that will undoubtedly be more productive and beneficial than those that focus on the offender alone as responsible for his or her actions. Often, traditional criminal justice approaches such as incarceration continue to erode those bonds that give rise to the behaviour in the first place, with this again becoming a circular, vicious cycle.

These solutions include elements of restorative justice practices, which tend to hold more offenders accountable than, really, the western-based legal system. This would include strengthening community programs, indigenous-based community anti-violence programs, and the use of indigenous cultures to reject violence. These can be plentiful, both at a pre-crime level—or what some call prevention—and a post-crime or responsive level. These are often difficult to establish again in an era and ideology of just deserts and a return to retributive kinds of practices.

The second issue I want to talk about is reducing vulnerability at an institutional level. One of the major findings in the study I did of prostitution across the country was that individuals, in looking for service, tended to avoid those state-sponsored, government-based programs. They tended instead to go to programs that were more insecurely funded but offered much more harm reduction, less fear of coming under the realm of the criminal justice system or the Child

Welfare Act, and really, the avoidance of particular kinds of state services.

• (1130)

I'd also like to throw out, maybe as a discussion, how the law itself, particularly in terms of prostitution, tends to put women in vulnerable spaces, where they're much more likely, in order to do their jobs, to avoid law and the arm of police and take their work into very unsafe positions that leave them vulnerable to violent incidents. These laws then increase stigma, increase violence, and decrease the health and safety of women on the street.

I'll leave it there.

The Chair: Perfect.

Melanie Nimmo, I think you are presenting for the John Howard Society. You have five minutes.

Ms. Melanie Nimmo (Member of the Board, Assistant Professor in Criminal Justice, University of Winnipeg, John Howard Society of Manitoba, Inc.): Good morning.

Thank you for having us here. This is a really important issue, and I'm happy to see so many people out and finally paying attention to this.

My name is Melanie Nimmo. I'm an assistant professor in criminal justice at the University of Winnipeg, with a background in street gangs. I'm on the board of John Howard Society, and I'm here speaking for our executive director, John Hutton. He's not able to be here today. However, Kate Kehler is here, and she'll also be able to attend to any questions the committee has.

I apologize in advance, but unfortunately I will have to leave at noon. I teach today, and this is as much time as I could allot. I'm really sorry that I'll have to dash out.

That said, I also want to thank you for the opportunity to share some of the important work we're doing at John Howard Society. We work predominantly with men in conflict with the law, so a lot of people question what we can offer in terms of aboriginal women, the violence against aboriginal women, and the issue of missing aboriginal women. However, it comes into play because we take a very holistic and multi-faceted approach to crime—namely, restorative justice, which is based on traditional first nations notions of community healing and how to deal with offenders and repair harm in the community.

First I'm going to talk a little bit about John Howard Society in Manitoba, and then I'm going to talk about the notion of restorative justice, and specifically our program "Restorative Resolutions". I then want to conclude by highlighting two programs that we've found to be very successful in attending to violence perpetrated by men, and not just aboriginal men but white men as well, against aboriginal women.

John Howard Society is a national coalition. We have 65 chapters across Canada. We all come together under the banner of advocating for an effective, just, and humane system. In Manitoba, John Howard Society formed here in Winnipeg in 1957. Shortly after that, we also recognized the need in Brandon, and they were incorporated into John Howard Society in 1965. We are currently trying to expand our services to reach out to northern reserves and communities, which are also in dire need of some assistance for alcohol-related and violence issues on the reserves. We're trying to reach out in that regard.

Now I'll talk a little bit about restorative justice. I know that a lot of people are familiar with it. It has a long history. In a nutshell, restorative justice seeks to repair harm. At the same time, it instills accountability on the part of the offender. We note that many victims....

By the way, 41% of the programs that fall under the auspice of restorative justice are for violent offences. Not many people know that. It's not just property crimes. We have found that it's a very rewarding experience for the victim. They're able to describe the harm that was done to them. The victim, the offender, and the community work together to mediate, and to make amends, and to repair harm. So we find it's very significant for empowering everybody involved in the process.

As an example of that, we began running the restorative resolutions program in 1993, with the focus of encouraging men to take responsibility for their behaviour, including violent behaviour against women and children, and to make amends for that.

There are a couple of statistics that I find really interesting: 95% of our proposed plans have been accepted by the courts, and 89% of our clients have successfully completed the conditions without reoffending. This translates into 51,000 hours of community service done in our communities. As well, 450 clients have provided their victims with letters of apology. Again, we're talking about making amends and repairing harm. Finally, in terms of monetary compensation for acts of violence and property damage, over \$1 million has been paid back to victims directly.

We strive to meet the root causes of offending. In that regard, we deal with literacy. We deal with employment skills and helping to reintegrate an offender into the community. We recognize that this is the only way to really resolve some of the issues that bring a person into offending to begin with.

I now want to highlight two specific programs that deal directly with acts of violent behaviour.

• (1135)

The Chair: You have only about 20 seconds to do that.

Ms. Melanie Nimmo: Okay.

One program is our parenting class. It offers men an understanding of their role as fathers, as loving, respectful fathers who give appropriate discipline.

Secondly, significantly, we also offer an anger management course. We offer it three to four times a year. We always have a waiting list for this course. We wish we could offer it on a full-time basis. Unfortunately, we're not able to.

With that, I'd like to thank you very much for the opportunity. We really believe in a multi-faceted, holistic response.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Nimmo.

Now we go to Cathy Denby, a child and youth care program instructor at Red River College.

Ms. Denby, you have five minutes.

Ms. Cathy Denby (Child and Youth Care Program Instructor, Red River College, Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad (Ndinawe)): Thank you.

I'm here representing the Ndinawe and the Red River child and youth care program. I'd like to talk about two programs, so I'm also representing White Wolf Speaking, under the aboriginal community initiatives program, through the Sexuality Education Resource Centre.

Let me talk about the Ndinawe and Red River child and youth care certificate program first.

Previous to this program, it was identified within the community, through a few groups that were doing some healing work with women and transgendered women in the community, mostly aboriginal, who had exited the sex trade, that there weren't a lot of services for women once they did some of the healing work and stuff. Many of the women, knowing what the waters were around sexual exploitation and the sex trade, were wanting to give back within the community. At the same time, they were wanting to get off social assistance, wanting to attain higher education and have a better life outside the sex trade.

So the program was developed in late 2006. Funding was confirmed for the joint pilot training program between Ndinawe and Red River College to recruit and to train former sex trade workers in the field of child and youth care in a community-based and supportive environment. The program was developed as an in-community model, with accredited training consistent with the mainstream child and youth care course at Red River College. They have a diploma program there.

This one-year program that was developed through Ndinawe and Red River is a certificate program that can lead into the diploma program at the college. All of the curriculum is exactly the same as Red River College, so there's no differentiation between what's delivered in terms of curriculum; rather, it's more about the supports and the in-community model.

The program was designed, as I said, to help women who were formerly entrenched, or exploited as children and youth, in the sex trade. About 75% of the participants in the program are aboriginal. To date there have been aboriginal transgendered women graduates and also one aboriginal male graduate.

The program is based out of the north end in Winnipeg. We have a program coordinator, a teaching assistant, a counsellor, and two full-time Red River College instructors. We've been running the program since January 2007.

The program provides cultural and social life skills, along with academic supports, that are designed to promote success and decrease the barriers that a lot of the women face in order that they can successfully graduate from the program and go on to gain meaningful employment. The program's main goal is to support the women to further their education after having exited the trade. All participants are on social assistance at the time of entry into the program.

To our knowledge, there isn't any other program like this in Canada. What's unique about the program is that the participants bring an experiential knowledge base that is so specialized and so important to the field of child and youth care. This is an education that you can't get; you have to have lived it. These participants have lived it. They are the ones who are the experts in this field, knowing what to spot, what to look for, and how to better help children who are at risk of being exploited. In many of the practicums that the students are placed in, they are able to spot the child who is at risk of being exploited. They are able to take some action there and are able to work with them.

For most of the women in the program, they see the program as a way to both educate themselves and work towards eradicating sexual exploitation and human trafficking of women and children. We know that the numbers of aboriginal children in care are high.

To date we have 28 graduates of the program. Most are fully employed and completely off social assistance. We also have a class of 12 today that hopefully will graduate in June.

• (1140)

The program has excellent cultural....

My time is up?

The Chair: Yes. Maybe members will ask you questions about your program and you can expand on it.

Thank you very much.

Ms. Cathy Denby: Thank you.

The Chair: We will now go to the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. We have Chief Betsy Kennedy, and Chief Francine Meeches is here.

Welcome.

Who will speak for the five minutes, Chief Kennedy, or will you share the time?

Chief Francine Meeches (Swan Lake First Nation, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs): If there are two of us, does that mean we get five minutes each?

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: No. Nice try.

Chief Kennedy.

Chief Betsy Kennedy (War Lake First Nation, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs): Good morning, members of Parliament and staff

of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women. We welcome you to Treaty 1 territory here in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Chief Betsy Kennedy: My name is Betsy Kennedy. I'm the Chief of War Lake First Nation. With me is Chief Francine Meeches of Swan Lake First Nation.

We have many notes here, I notice, and a lot of information, but we would like to speak to the family violence prevention programs, the missing and murdered women, and also the sexual exploitation of our girls and women in our communities.

To give you the history of the AMC women's committee, the chiefs sit on this committee. It works toward improving the situation of first nations women and ensuring that Manitoba first nations are involved in decision-making. This is comprised of chiefs and councillors in leadership roles in their communities.

The issue of family violence and intervention is one of our major concerns and takes up many of the lead initiatives. Bill C-3 is supposed to highlight this, but I think some of these things also pertain to what's happening in the communities and how these women are being exploited.

Bill S-4 deals with matrimonial and real properties. When women have to leave the communities because they're just not going to be able to stay on their reserves, they are coming into the city, and this is where many of them are being exploited. I mention this because I believe you wanted to know some of what happens here.

There's also our section 37, which we would like to see. I know this is going to go to the Commons. This has to do with the missing and murdered women of Manitoba and Canada. Following the directions of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the committee continues to advocate on the issues of missing and murdered women, as a disturbingly high number of women have gone missing and have never been found. Most are aboriginal. According to the Native Women's Association of Canada, approximately 580 aboriginal women have gone missing and have not been found across Canada; 84 are from Manitoba. The AMC has called upon the federal government to initiate a public inquiry into this number of missing and murdered women. There has also been an announcement by the federal government that the amount of \$10 million is to be spent within the two years.

Also, in 2009 Grand Chief Evans developed an agreement with the RCMP to have a first nations community liaison worker, Constable Monique Cooper, to be located at the AMC office in Winnipeg. This was established when the parents, the mothers of these missing and murdered women, came to us. We had a working relationship with the RCMP, and now have a woman working exclusively at the AMC office. We would like to recognize that work, which is happening right now. To this day, in both southern and northern Manitoba, there has not been any word on these women to their parents that they've...or how far this was going. The AMC continues to work closely with the families of these missing and murdered women and with the RCMP and Winnipeg Police Service's missing persons unit.

There's also the issue of human trafficking. Since 2009 AMC has been actively addressing human trafficking. The grand chief and the women's committee continue to raise the issue for discussion at the chiefs assemblies.

I want to tell you that when we have our annual assembly, women's issues are being brought out to the forefront, and we do have the support of all our chiefs. We are very proud to say that they really recognize what we've been doing. In turn, these discussions bring awareness into our homes.

• (1145)

The next part will be on family violence. We sit on a committee on family violence and—

The Chair: Perhaps, Chief Kennedy, you can bring that forward in answer to various questions. We've now finished with our presentation time. Thank you.

Now we'll go to the question and answer time. The first round is a seven-minute round, which means that the questions and the answers are included in the seven minutes. Again, brevity would be appreciated.

We start with Ms. Neville from the Liberal Party.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

I'm going to begin with you, Chief Kennedy.

Chief Kennedy, if you would, tell us about the family violence program, what it consists of and how widespread it is, please.

Chief Betsy Kennedy: The family violence program has been going on since 1998. This information is in your package. We started sitting on a committee, the leadership, comprised of the women chiefs in Manitoba. One of the first things we wanted to look into was family violence.

There are some elders and there are some community members who sit on this board. We have made booklets available to the communities, and these have been sent out to every first nation in Manitoba.

The causes of family violence...there are a lot of problems. To me, I think it started from going to residential schools. When you were at school during those times, you were not with your family or with your parents, so there was no relationship there and the bonding was lost. When we came home—and I'll say "we" because I attended. You lose your language and people make fun of you because you do not speak your language. Even your own family, your brothers and sisters, make fun of you because you don't speak the language. I think that's one of the reasons why family violence starts. It starts with ridicule.

It also starts when you're going to school. Many of us didn't even start going to school to take a course until we were 30 years old. I know I started when I was 30, and I finally completed everything I wanted to by age 40. Many of us are not fortunate to have this support. I know that my grandparents were the ones who gave me the biggest support in what I was doing.

In the communities there is isolation and a feeling of despair sometimes. You want to buy something, you want to get something

for your children, and you just can't, so you find other ways of doing things. Much of this is taken out on the wife and the children.

I think there needs to be a holistic, cultural approach.

• (1150)

Hon. Anita Neville: We've been advised, in both this forum and in other forums, of models of family violence intervention that have been successful. Can you cite any in Manitoba that the committee can reference and look at? Can you cite whether they've been successful? We frequently hear about Hollow Water. I've heard anecdotally about others, but I'd be interested in your perspective.

Chief Francine Meeches: Can I speak to that, please?

Hon. Anita Neville: Sure.

Chief Francine Meeches: I want to speak about what we do in our community. I'll just explain that she comes from a northern community and I come from a southern community, so we have one from the south and one from the north.

How we deal with family violence... In our communities it's not something everybody is aware of. It's hidden. Nobody is going to admit to any type of family violence in their home. When you have situations where children are acting out like parents would act out, then you know you have a problem. And we have that.

We work closely with a shelter from a nearby community—I think it's Winkler or Morden, or somewhere around there. We work closely with that shelter. The lady from there works really well with our health centre. When you have that kind of working relationship with the surrounding communities, it benefits your people.

The thing we're finding is that we need a lot of counselling in our communities. It's going to take years to get to the point where we want to be, because counselling is a big thing. Right now we're in a situation where we have so many different areas where people need counselling that we don't even have the money to pay for it. We can't get money from FNIHB in INAC to cover that cost for us. You provide us an amount; we've already expended that amount, but we're trying to help—

Hon. Anita Neville: We're talking about family counselling.

Chief Francine Meeches: Yes, I know, but when you think about counselling, it's part of family violence. Think about it.

Hon. Anita Neville: I agree.

Chief Francine Meeches: When you have violence in your family, you need counselling. Counselling is a really important part of dealing with that family violence.

• (1155)

Hon. Anita Neville: Is there a willingness to access the counselling if you had the resources?

Chief Francine Meeches: Oh, yes, there is, but as I say, it's always the money. It's always the funding that you don't have. We're putting in money from our own source of revenue in order to cover that cost, but you have to do something to help your people. If you're not getting it from where you're supposed to be getting it, how do you deal with it?

If we could have counselling for a lot of our families, a lot of these issues would not.... Your family violence program wouldn't be so expensive. But you need counselling, and it does help.

Hon. Anita Neville: Can I just interrupt for one second?

Melanie, when I mentioned Hollow Water, I saw your head going up and down. Was I right?

Ms. Melanie Nimmo: Absolutely. It's been put on the map—

The Chair: You have about 40 seconds in which to answer.

Ms. Melanie Nimmo: It's been put on the map as one of the most successful models for restorative justice and dealing with the issues of family violence, substance abuse, etc.

Hon. Anita Neville: How can that be successfully replicated? What are the ingredients needed to replicate that elsewhere?

Ms. Melanie Nimmo: I think it has to be driven by the members of the community. I don't think a successful philosophy like that can be imposed on communities. I think communities know best how to solve their own unique issues.

The Chair: Thank you.

We now go to Madame Demers from the Bloc Québécois.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much for being here this morning.

This is a bit difficult. We've actually heard from three groups of witnesses this morning, and they have all said different things. For example, Assistant Commissioner Bill Robinson, who is the commanding officer for the RCMP "D" Division, was here a little earlier, and he described the relationship between aboriginal communities and the RCMP when it comes to missing persons. The picture he painted was very different from yours, Chief Kennedy. You told us that families have not received any information to this day whereas he described in great detail all the steps taken to keep families informed of the investigations into murdered or missing persons. I personally believe you. I don't want to say that I don't believe him, but I believe you.

Ms. Kehler, you talked about alternative justice. You also talked about reducing risks. I'm very interested in those topics too.

Melanie, you talked about programs and sources of funding. Could you tell me more about that?

Cathy, you mentioned a training program for women who got involved in the sex trade to take care of their children. That's a fantastic program and I would like to know more about it. I hope this program can become available elsewhere and I would like us to implement it in other places where it could be very useful.

Those are some of my questions.

[*English*]

The Chair: Who would like to start that answer?

Chief Kennedy.

Chief Betsy Kennedy: Thank you.

On the information, regarding the information going out to the families I believe the RCMP are doing all they can, but it's hard to go to all the missing and murdered women's families. I know that in the north they constantly ask about what's happening. They need updates. Maybe there is need for a further RCMP involvement and closer ties to the communities, especially...because I know there's a lot of work being done here in the city of Winnipeg.

On exploitation, we have brought out information about it, and we also sit in with and tell Monique, who sits on our committee. She gives us information about all that she does. She has an office here at the AMC where the women go if they need to talk about anything that has to do with the exploitation of women. This is one of the ways how we could help.

• (1200)

Ms. Kelly Gorkoff: When we talk about reducing risks.... I'll talk about the study I have completed. It was a fairly small sample of about 60 women involved in prostitution across the prairie provinces. We also surveyed 173 service providers who provided services, both state-mandated and non-governmental organizations who provided services, mostly for young people involved in prostitution. We did 43 site visits. They were trying to develop some best practices kinds of models.

There were three things that women who are involved in the sex trade talked about as reasons for why they became involved. First and foremost, it was money. It was an easy way to make money. That would go to the fact of sustainable incomes for individuals. There is a risk factor—sustainable incomes. We know poverty is related to these particular instances.

The subculture that all of the women talked about was in many cases the lack of a loving relationship growing up and finding that loving relationship on the street. Interestingly, for 70% of the young women we talked to, the reason they came to work on the street was through aunts and friends. So we didn't find the big, bad pimping issue. Now that could have been a result of the sample we spoke with.

The subculture also means a risk. That certainly points us to the community building kinds of aspects in all of the programs that everybody here is talking about.

In terms of program use, all of the women said they would avoid using state-centred services. As young people, they were very hesitant to become involved in, and had bad experiences when they were involved in, child welfare agencies, but tended to gravitate towards programs that were harm reduction based. This is where they could go and get condoms and clean needles and where they could go and just talk to somebody, not necessarily an official program, but the door was always open and they could come and go as they pleased. Those programs were the ones that were the most insecurely funded.

By the time we had actually finished our study, 20 of the 43 programs had lost their funding. Those were the programs that were the most often used, whereas the child welfare.... Interestingly, in this particular timeframe, the Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act in Alberta came into effect and the sexual exploitation program in Ontario was in its last reading. I know Manitoba had a very different approach in developing the healthy child initiative, which was a different approach in terms of certainly the Alberta model.

The Chair: There are 30 seconds left, if anybody wants to drop a 30-second pearl of wisdom.

Ms. Kehler.

Ms. Kate Kehler (Assistant Executive Director, John Howard Society of Manitoba, Inc.): Hello.

I don't know about a pearl of wisdom, but I would like to echo the idea that people do access the John Howard Society, because we are a street-level organization, both here and in Brandon. All of the organizations make themselves available to people at the street level. It's not a big, scary building to walk into; it's a small place right in the downtown area. So we make it as comfortable as possible for people to access us.

We are able to offer our anger management program free of charge. All of our services are free of charge, but unfortunately, the John Howard Society of Brandon actually charges for their domestic violence anger management program. They have a two-tiered program that addresses domestic violence, but they are unable to offer it free of charge, so that is an additional barrier that they recognize as well.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I will go to Ms. Glover for the Conservatives.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Thank you very much.

I want to welcome you all here. I want to acknowledge the chiefs and the fact that we're on Treaty 1 territory.

I want to clarify something with Chief Kennedy, if I could. When I heard you speaking, I thought you were commending the relationship between you and the RCMP and having an RCMP officer in AMC to help have communication with the missing and murdered aboriginal women. Perhaps there was a language barrier. Were you commending them or were you criticizing them?

Chief Betsy Kennedy: I was trying to commend their efforts and what they really want to do, especially with what was established by the first nations.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: And they have had contact and some communication?

• (1205)

Chief Betsy Kennedy: Some contact.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Okay.

I just wanted to get that on the record, because I know it was said, but there was a little bit of miscommunication there.

I did want to address Chief Meeches' comment about counselling. The residential schools apology was long overdue—long overdue. The residential schools situation is a historic tragedy in this country. I'm proud that Prime Minister Harper did make the apology and committed \$5 billion towards a settlement agreement. Much of that money was also supposed to go to counselling.

I'm curious to know, if you're looking for more counselling, are you able to access more funds there? Are you suggesting that that's not available? How can we help you to access that if that is what you're looking for?

Chief Francine Meeches: In our community, we're allowed a counsellor twice a month. That's all our funding from FNIHB will provide.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: But through the settlement agreement, did you look for—

Chief Francine Meeches: No. We don't go through the settlement agreement.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Have you applied?

Chief Francine Meeches: That's not how we.... We're not going into that type of counselling. The counselling we do for our people is for the families in the community, okay, and—

Mrs. Shelly Glover: I get that, but I'm thinking that because you have so many victims of the residential school tragedy, they can access—

Chief Francine Meeches: Yes, but that's separate from this.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: And did you apply?

Chief Francine Meeches: Yes, we have. We will access that—

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Okay.

Chief Francine Meeches: —but what I'm saying is that the counselling we currently have is for situations in our communities, for the young people, the young parents. Suicide is another thing. We were trying to use our suicide dollars, our family violence dollars, whatever dollars we could tap into. We were trying to use what we could. But FNIHB will only allow you to use so much, right?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Right. I'm going to try to help you, because after this is all done, I'd like to have a conversation with you.

Chief Francine Meeches: Sure.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Because there's another \$199 million on top of the \$5 billion that was put towards residential school victims so we could get that help. There are healing centres that are open, so please, we'll meet afterwards—

Chief Francine Meeches: Okay.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: —and I'll try to help you with that.

I wanted to come back to Cathy, because she hadn't quite finished what she was talking about, and I know this program is tremendous. It also speaks to what Melanie was saying. I think it was Melanie who said that when you have experiences and you can share those, sometimes that's the most influential.

I had a car thief phone me from jail when I became an elected official. He's now incarcerated for murder. Actually, he didn't phone me—sorry—but he sent me a card saying "Please continue what you're doing. When you were a police officer, I should have listened to you. I should have listened. Now here I am. I went from car theft to drug dealing, and now I'm in for murder."

I went to see him and asked him this question: "With your experience, would you be willing to talk to others?" Because it seems that some kids and some people who get involved in the system don't listen to moms and dads and what not; they listen to peers and they listen to people who've been there.

So I want to ask you about this. Your program, which is funded by the Government of Canada—and I'm proud of that—does exactly that. How does what your program is doing prevent more women from becoming victims of violence? How does it help? Should we continue this and, like Mrs. Demers said, spread it across the board?

Ms. Cathy Denby: Certainly a dream of ours is to see... The program could be a template model, I think, for other places and could be modified to fit other communities where exploitation is going on.

But let me talk a bit about Sacred Lives, which is a program that was just funded in October as a result of the child and youth care program. Sacred Lives is a program that will employ the alumni of the child and youth care program to go into the schools to deliver preventative workshops on exploitation to kids aged 10 to 17.

The experiential child and youth care workers will be talking to the kids about how to respect themselves and how to spot potential dangers. All of this is also coming from the teachings of the Miikiwaap, so all the workers have taken training. The cultural teachings are also brought into the workshops for the children. We're really happy about developing that program right now and hope to go into the schools next month to start delivering the workshops.

Yes, it's those voices, like I said before, the voices of the people who have been there, who have that life experience. They know best how to approach and talk to kids so they don't get involved.

• (1210)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: I believe that. I believe those women were exploited and forced into the sex trade and they can prevent... Women are very, very influential in our aboriginal communities. I want to acknowledge that with the chiefs.

As well, you mentioned the MRP bill. I believe that is going to help our women regain and reclaim the power not to be forced off of reserve, not to be put in a situation where they're exploited. I'm wondering if you could comment on that bill. Do you see that as a tool to empower them?

The Chair: You have 30 seconds in which to respond.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: You could send it by mail if you don't—

Chief Francine Meeches: This is not anybody else's feeling; this is my own feeling.

There are two sides you have to look at when you think about matrimonial real property, especially in our community, and we deal with that. If we're in a situation where the male is from our community and the female is not a member...those types of things just don't jibe in our community where the wife can keep the home. It doesn't work like that. You have to be a member of our community in order to be entitled to a home in our community. That's just the way it is, and that would probably go in any community.

So when you talk about matrimonial real property and what rights does the female have if the husband should leave the home, you really don't have any rights. You either go back to the community you came from, or, if you're not status, you're basically not allowed to live there. That's just the way it is.

The Chair: Now I'll move on to Ms. Mathysen for the NDP.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for the kind welcome to Treaty 1 territory.

I have a number of questions. I'll try to be succinct.

The first is for Kelly. You talked about harm reduction. One of the realities we're facing with the Himel decision in Ontario is the attempt to decriminalize solicitation, bawdy houses, the johns. The federal government has appealed, but my great fear is that this will become a judgmental kind of response, that instead of seeing these women who have, as you say, been pushed into this role of sex workers, we won't have the intelligent discussion that this opportunity provides. You mentioned clean needles and talks, but it seems to me that when women are ready to make that transition, the resources aren't there. I wonder if you could comment on that.

Ms. Kelly Gorkoff: I guess the only comment is to completely agree with you. I think there has just been, for whatever reason—and I'm not really sure what the reason is, if it's some type of moral stigma, if it's some type of.... I could speculate until the cows come home on why we don't have exit programs. Perhaps it could be a lack of sustainability for programs. I think we've seen a lot of programs come and go and come and go and come and go. We have had programs. POWER in Winnipeg was foundational. Prostitutes and Other Women for Equal Rights was a foundational program, which, again, lost its funding. So it has had six or seven different iterations, and currently at Sage House.

So I'm not really sure that programs have necessarily gone away. I think they've been forced to reinvent themselves. I think, though, that it's a more complex process than simply very specific programs for prostitutes who want to leave because there's some stigma attached to that.

The women we talked to—half of them left and half of them were still involved—had trouble getting housing. So housing is an issue. They had trouble with sustainable employment. They mentioned good living conditions, national child care. These are all issues that are entwined for anybody who's trying to make a go in terms of a life change.

Specific programs are definitely necessary, but because the issues are much broader than that, I think it's the responsibility of a variety of different departments to assist.

• (1215)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

Melanie, you talked about the multifaceted holistic approach in terms of our response to crime. You mentioned that the recidivism among people who had gone through restorative justice was 89%. What's the recidivism rate for others who are incarcerated?

We've heard a lot about spending many millions of dollars on more prisons and more jail time. Is there a better way to spend that money?

Ms. Melanie Nimmo: Yes. I think many of us agree that there is a better way to spend the money. We know that incarceration in fact makes most offenders worse. It further fragments family systems that have already been fragmented enough due to colonization and the residential school system.

To back up and answer your questions about recidivism, our recidivism rate is 17%. Compared to male offenders who do not go through our program...it routinely hits about 50%. I was speaking specifically to that one program and the recidivism rate there.

But I think what we really need to attend to, which John Howard has been attempting to do for a while, is assisting with reintegration for those offenders who we do put into the correctional institutions. We're not saying that people should not be held accountable for their behaviour—that's not what we're saying—but we are recognizing that people do need more resources to facilitate their reintegration into society.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

Ms. Kate Kehler: Can I add to that, please?

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Yes, very quickly.

Ms. Kate Kehler: Thank you.

I just wanted to say, just to be specific about what we do with the restorative resolutions program, that they do go through cognitive errors and they do go through victim empathy. That's the same approach we take in our parenting class and our anger management class as well. We talk about all those issues. We talk about blended families. We talk about different cultures. Our approach is to give them the tools in order to avoid the violent behaviour so they don't have to fall back on violence.

Thank you.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Cathy, in regard to the program you talked about that pertained to trafficking of women in Canada, you said that it was a one-of-a-kind and very significant program. I wonder if you could tell us a little about it. Has there been an adequate response in the rest of Canada to the issue of the trafficking of women?

Ms. Cathy Denby: Well, I don't think our program is known across Canada yet. Just in terms of the research, or not in terms of the research, but.... It's just not known across Canada; we are so busy delivering the program that we haven't even been out there or able to promote it.

What we do need is a very comprehensive evaluation of the program. Of course, we don't have the dollars to do that. Our funding comes in about eight different pockets, from both the federal government and the provincial government, which is just enough to run the program. We do need a very comprehensive evaluation, I think, so that we can develop a very stellar template that can go across the provinces and across the country. In order to do that, we need the funding, core funding. We're grappling all the time. Every year we're writing proposal after proposal, trying to hold on to the five positions that we have to continue to deliver the program. Those are barriers.

We have another couple of barriers in terms of the program. One is the bridging programs into education. Women don't just get off the street, come out of the sex trade, and suddenly have all of the educational skills they need to go into a college program. There needs to be more bridging done. They do healing work first and then that piece needs to come in. And as for post-program, after being in a program for a while that is very sensitive to their needs, and where we understand and look after them quite well so they can academically succeed and gain employment, they still need that support after this as well.

So there are still some glitches in the program, but definitely, as for what we have developed, if you look at 40 graduates and each one of those going out onto the street and stopping one child from being exploited, generationally, that is a cost saving to the government of billions of dollars.

• (1220)

The Chair: Thank you.

That's it, Irene.

Now we're going to go into a second round. We have 20 minutes for the second round, so the second round will be four people at five minutes each. We're cutting it very fine here, so I'm going to really cut you short, guys, if you go over five minutes.

Starting with Ms. Neville for the Liberals, we'll have a five-minute round.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

I have two somewhat unrelated questions. One of them in part was directed at Melanie, but she's leaving.

It's okay.

The Chair: We'll give you a note for being late.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Melanie Nimmo: I'm teaching about aboriginal policing and first nations policing.

Hon. Anita Neville: Well, it's important.

I have two questions. First of all, how do we share best practices? We talked about Hollow Water being a template. How can that information be shared? We talked about Cathy's program at Red River. You talk about developing a template and getting it out there. It's about sharing best programs and best practices and getting that out there.

My other question is totally unrelated. We've talked a lot today about the issue of apprehension of children and violence against women, women going for support. What we also know anecdotally... My question is about whether you have any statistical data as to whether children who are taken into care are more likely to be engaged in prostitution and anti-social behaviour, however one wants to describe it. I've heard stories from various organizations, but do any of you have any collected data, any of you?

Those are my two questions.

The Chair: Well, we've asked that you stay behind to answer that. Would you like to go ahead, Melanie?

Ms. Melanie Nimmo: I would love to.

On your first question about sharing best practices, I think there are a couple of avenues. Of course, government reports...but who reads them?

Hon. Anita Neville: Right—your staff.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Ms. Melanie Nimmo: Yes.

But also, they hold the purse, so to speak. I'm also a huge fan of public service announcements and media kits. We're finding that

really successful in some of the anti-gang initiatives that I'm involved in, in terms of involving the community with real, doable best practices. It's building that awareness, because the community has to know about resources that may be available to them. We find that this is an issue, so I think reaching out and opening that to the community is important.

I don't know specific statistics. Maybe Ms. Kehler can attend to that, or my colleague Kelly Gorkoff can. With respect to children who are in foster care and what we do see, let's face it: if a child is being put into foster care, they're not living in an ideal living situation. Very likely, they're living in a situation where there's substance abuse, where there's neglect, and where there's violence. We see a number of issues in fragmented family systems.

As for what's happening in the foster care system, it's not like this child moves into a loving arrangement where they're cared for. They're being bounced from.... The number of placements that these sexually exploited girls go through is mind-boggling. So to think that they can have some sense of self-worth and self-respect, or that anybody gives a damn for them given the circumstances they're experiencing in their home life and their street life.... It's really disconcerting.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

Anybody else...?

Ms. Kelly Gorkoff: I'll just add to that. There is no monolithic experience of people who are involved in the sex trade. Of the people I spoke with, some come from loving homes. Some of them come from the foster care system. Sixty-eight percent of my sample had some experience in foster care systems when they were younger, but not all individuals of foster care will definitely take that path. Is it a cause? It's probably one of many factors.

The women I did talk to said, again, that the defining characteristic—and it sounds hokey—is the development of a loving relationship with one or two people who they could trust. So foster care systems and their reinvention, perhaps, clearly.... I don't think that's news to anybody in this room. Clearly that's something that can be fostered.

A voice: Cathy, did you want to add anything?

• (1225)

The Chair: You have 30 seconds, Cathy.

Ms. Cathy Denby: It's estimated that there are about 400 youths being sexually exploited each year in Winnipeg and the majority of those are aboriginal youth in care. The average beginning age of involvement ranges from 11 to 16. Thirty-five percent started at the age of 14 years. Seventy percent to eighty percent of the adults started at the age of 18 or more. Forty-four percent of the youth remain involved for two years or more.

The average length of time in the trade was about 12 years. The range is from two years old to 22 years old exploited in the sex trade, and the youths are comprised of approximately 30% non-aboriginal and 75% aboriginal.

Hon. Anita Neville: Where are those statistics from?

Ms. Cathy Denby: They're from the.... I'll think about it. The Manitoba strategy....

Hon. Anita Neville: Okay.

Ms. Cathy Denby: There are a number of pieces that we put together for our presentation.

The Chair: Thank you.

We've gone over the five minutes, but I just want to suggest that you've heard us asking for statistics and data, so if you have either a link or data, could you send it to the clerk, please? She could distribute it to the committee and we could read it and get some further information. Thank you very much.

Next is Ms. Glover for five.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Thank you.

I'd like to go back to our chiefs again. First of all, I'm always impressed with strong women in aboriginal communities, and we don't have enough of them, so you are here as role models, true role models, for our aboriginal women.

I know you touched on this very briefly, but there's a program being run by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs that is called "Prevent Human Trafficking: Stop the Sexual Exploitation of First Nations Women and Children". We've focused a little bit on Cathy's program, but this is another program that's funded by the Government of Canada and is being run quite a bit by members of your communities.

I'd like you to share with us how that's helping to reduce aboriginal women's violence. As well, how can we improve it?

Chief Francine Meeches: I have not seen any numbers to prove that it has decreased, but the awareness campaign that the AMC provides.... When I got involved with that committee over a year ago, I was really unaware of this whole issue. I had heard about it years ago, but I just didn't know.

What we do as chiefs is we try to express the importance of this campaign at the assemblies. Some males will kind of frown upon that type of discussion. In our communities, it's kind of like that. We try to make them aware of how important this is and how they need to go back to their communities and speak to their membership.

In our community, we had the AMC staff come out and do a presentation. A lot of our people said, "You know what? I never knew this before. I never knew this happened." So that's really important. If you continue with a program such as that, where you're continuously providing that campaign out there....

I was involved with the walk we had here in the city. It was unbelievable the amount of people who showed up for that. When you have that type of awareness out there, at least it educates people, especially the young people. Those are the ones you have to really target. They, in turn, kind of educate their parents and grandparents.

To me, with AMC coordinating this it's really great, because it goes out to all the 63 first nations in Manitoba.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Thank you.

Do you, Chief Kennedy, have some knowledge of the program and how it's working?

I just want to say welcome to Ms. Simson, who's arrived from out of town. She's another member of Parliament. I just want to welcome her to Winnipeg.

Go ahead, Chief Kennedy.

Chief Betsy Kennedy: In terms of the importance of this program, as Chief Meeches was saying, there has to be an awareness program out there. Our children in the communities up north come here, or in many of the urban communities or centres, to go to school. We don't give them information on what could happen out there. All we say is "Be careful", just "Be careful".

With this campaign that we've done, this really has made a lot of parents think about what to tell their children, and also to have this done in the schools before they leave. I think that's very important. I know when we do it in our communities, we try to have the parents talk to their children; either that or...because it's very scary out there. Many of the children lost in the north were going to school here, and they're still missing.

• (1230)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Yes.

Thank you.

Do I have a bit more time, Ms. Chair?

The Chair: You have one minute.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Excellent.

Thank you so much for the statistic you provided about exploited children. I visited the ICE unit at Winnipeg Police Service about a week ago and I looked at their computer system. It actually showed that people were accessing child pornography within the last 24 hours. I couldn't believe the hits in Winnipeg alone; you could also look at it bigger and bigger.

There's a lack of being able to proactively look at those. Are the statistics you shared with us the actual ones that have been followed up? Because, I'll tell you, on that one screen, I'm sure I saw over 100 to 200 hits just in Winnipeg during one day. Some of those are children who are being exploited and we haven't even started investigations.

So I want you to clarify that about the statistic. Do you know if it's...?

Ms. Cathy Denby: The stats on this are only for the visible sexual exploitation trade. We're talking straight trade, so we're talking outdoor trade, not indoor. That would be considered indoor trade.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: So this is much bigger—

Ms. Cathy Denby: Yes—

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'd like to move on to Madame Demers.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you for allowing me to speak in my own language.

I would like to continue along the same lines as Ms. Shelly Glover, who talked about role models. In my view, that's a very important issue. I also think that aboriginal women play a very important role in putting an end to the violence they are subjected to. You, who are strong accomplished women, have shown strength and courage. You have succeeded in becoming chiefs in your communities. You are living proof of how much today's aboriginal women can accomplish and of how they can share their experiences with others, as it used to be the case, when aboriginal communities followed a matriarchal model.

I wonder whether it is possible to have a mentorship program by calling on aboriginal women who are successful to pass on this power to women so that they can put it to good use and escape the grinding poverty in which they still live today. No one should have to experience such poverty. It is not normal, especially for aboriginal women.

Chief Meeches and Chief Kennedy, what do you think about that?

[English]

Chief Francine Meeches: I was just thinking of this on the way into Winnipeg this morning. We really need to empower our women. It's really important.

I was talking to Chief Kennedy in the restaurant earlier. We were talking about how strong we have to be as a person, especially the female of the family, because you're the one always worrying about your family. The man doesn't have to worry about the kids, because you're going to take care of them, right? That's just the way it is. We have to be strong regardless of what it is. We have to be the ones to wipe those tears away and we have to be the ones to send that child off to school.

There are males out there who do that; I really have a lot of respect for men who take care of their children, men who are single parents. That's important. The child needs at least one parent, for sure. If you can't have both parents, that one person has to be there.

But to me, there are not enough of these programs and services out there to empower our women. In my community, I try to speak to them, whether it's a cousin or a niece. I try to take them with me when I go somewhere, or to an assembly, for them to see what is actually out there. They need to see that.

Sometimes in our communities, we confine ourselves to that little line that's in our communities. A lot of our people are so comfortable in our communities that they don't see what's outside that. They're so happy to be in their own homes. They're so happy to come home to that house and so happy to wake up in their own home that what's out there is not as important as what's at home. But they also need to see what's out there.

I had the opportunity to leave. I struggled when leaving the reserve. I did. It took me a while. Even as a child, I never saw myself leaving the reserve; I thought I was going to live there forever. That was my dream. But when I did leave, I finally realized that there is more out there.

That's what we need to do in our communities. We need to show that there's more out there and that you can come home afterward

and share whatever experiences and education you have and help your community. That's the way I've always seen it.

Thanks.

• (1235)

The Chair: There are 30 seconds left.

Chief Betsy Kennedy: I just want to add to what Chief Meeches said.

Right now we have so much development going on in the north. I encourage the women in our community—I encourage anybody I speak to on the street, whomever—that they can become a truck driver. They can become an operator. They don't have to do just the regular women's jobs. They can become doctors and lawyers.

We always struggle to... We always want to inform the children of that in our communities. As chiefs, that's what we do. Yes, as women chiefs, we are expected to do a lot more than what our regular role is, and we are happy to do that. As a matter of fact, when I'm home I do as much as I can. This shows the women that you can do things.

The Chair: Thank you, Chief Kennedy.

Ms. Mathysen for five minutes.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I haven't had a chance to ask Chief Meeches and Chief Kennedy any questions, so I'm going to focus some of this questioning their way.

You talked about the Sisters in Spirit campaign. We know that \$10 million was allotted to address the reports that were provided by the Native Women's Association. How would you like to see that money spent, or how would you have liked to see that money spent? We know that \$4 million of it actually went to creating a database, so that's 40% of the money that's not available.

Have you given it any thought? Where should it have gone?

Chief Francine Meeches: I've never really given it any thought, but the thing that really disturbs me at times is that it's okay to announce millions of dollars going to organizations or first nations people, but what happens is that by the time it gets to where it's supposed to go, half of that money is already spent. Those are the things that really have to be looked at.

Who are the in-between people who get the funding? Who benefits from this? By the time it gets to those community members in our community, we don't have a whole lot. The \$12,000 that we get for family violence is not a lot of money. It's \$1,000 a month. What can you do with \$1,000 for your membership when you have 720 people in your community? What can you actually do with that?

Those are the things that really have to be looked at. To me, that's important.

Chief Betsy Kennedy: The program was a certain help, I guess, in providing a lot more than what were doing or what we were receiving. It's been a struggle in our communities to try to do something.

The families that we have, they don't come out and say things. They will do anything they can to keep the family together. That's very sad. Even the children, they have the same thing. They will not say anything. They will not say anything against their parents. But I would like to see the children and their families become a unit where they can have love and have trust again instead of hiding their feelings all the time.

Somebody mentioned child and family services. The children will not say anything because they do not want to enter the child and family services programs. Also, for the women, it's hard for them to go into a program where there's nothing there for them. After they leave, they have to go back home: home to what?

Thanks.

• (1240)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

You're touching on something that I wanted to ask about too. There's been a great deal of discussion here and we haven't heard a great deal about health and mental health. It seems to me that mental health is a centrepiece of this. I'm wondering about services in regard to issues of mental health.

I'm also wondering about the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, which is winding down. The funding has ended. I'm wondering what impact that has on communities and on the work that you do.

Certainly anyone who can answer, or is willing to answer, would help.

Chief Betsy Kennedy: I know there are a lot of programs out there for off-reserve organizations, but in our first nations communities, we don't get that much. We're always having to go to many of our funders to try to get something and we have to do a lot of reports on everything.

Many of those things have to do with mental health, the women, and the children. But when we bring this out, they have restrictions that they have to follow and they have to inform the RCMP. That hinders their things, so they're really stuck.

It's very hard trying to get somebody out there to listen to you. As the chief of my first nation, I will say that we have a lot of that. We try to do anything we can to protect women. We do other things, things other than just having to do some of these programs, but we don't tell anybody about it. The person out there is out there trusting you not to say anything. It's a lot of hard work for us also.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I think that brings to an end this particular session.

I just want to introduce one of our Liberal members of the committee, Michelle Simson, who is going to be going on to Sioux Lookout and Thunder Bay tomorrow.

Welcome, Michelle.

Thank you very much for coming. Those were very interesting and very different presentations. There are a lot of statistics we would like to get and also all the best practices that we would really like this committee to have a look at.

It's very interesting, Ms. Denby, to find out that you have this unique program. I think it's worth our being able to see how the program is set up and maybe to see some of your outcomes.

Thank you for taking your time to be here. We learned a great deal from you, as always. Thank you very much.

Would someone move that this meeting be adjourned?

An hon. member: So moved.

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

FEWO • NUMBER 047 • 3rd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Friday, January 14, 2011

—
Chair

The Honourable Hedy Fry

Equay-wuk (Women's Group): We're both going to do it together. so there are three of us here.

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House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

FEWO • NUMBER 049 • 3rd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, January 18, 2011

—
Chair

The Honourable Hedy Fry

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Tuesday, January 18, 2011

• (1145)

[English]

The Chair (The Honourable Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)): I will call the meeting to order.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), this committee, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, is going to study violence against aboriginal women. It's a unanimous decision by the committee to do this.

What we are looking at are the root causes of violence against aboriginal women. We're looking at the extent of violence. We're looking at the types of violence. And we're looking at ways in which to resolve that violence, because I think the committee believes that for a very, very long time various levels of government have done all kinds of things in a well-meaning way, but they have not achieved results.

We feel that by talking to aboriginal communities, and not only to leaders but to community groups and NGOs, we might be able to find a resolution that will work this time. When the committee finishes with its study, it will present a report, with recommendations, to the House of Commons, to Parliament itself. The government of the day will have 90 days within which to respond as to what it intends to do with regard to the report and the recommendations.

Now I'll begin. We have two groups today. From the Ending Violence Association of British Columbia, we have Tracy Porteous and Marilyn George, and we have Asia Czapska from Justice for Girls.

What we do normally is give each group ten minutes to present.

Tracy and Marilyn, you can decide if you want to split it five and five, or if one of you alone will present, because you will get an opportunity to answer questions later on.

Asia, of course, you have ten minutes.

Now, you don't have to use the whole ten minutes—I'm just telling you—and I will give you two-minute and one-minute indicators so that you can wrap it up and we can move on to the questions.

Now we'll begin. Who's going to speak for your group, Tracy?

Ms. Tracy Porteous (Executive Director, Ending Violence Association of British Columbia): Marilyn is speaking first. I'm going to follow her.

The Chair: All right.

Marilyn, are you going to do five minutes? Or are you just going to speak and then whatever's left over, Tracy will take...?

A voice: That's correct.

The Chair: Just to be clear, you're not doing a five-five split.

Please begin, Marilyn. Welcome.

Ms. Marilyn George (Representative, Outreach Services Coordinator, Smithers, British Columbia, Ending Violence Association of British Columbia): Thank you.

Good afternoon. My name is Marilyn George. I am the outreach service coordinator in Smithers, B.C., which is almost the midway point on the Highway of Tears between Prince Rupert and Prince George, where, thus far, upwards of 19 women have either been killed or gone missing.

I'm also here today as an aboriginal women's representative to EVA BC, a provincial organization in B.C. that works on behalf of 240 programs located throughout the province that respond to violence against women.

Like the work of my provincial organization, EVA BC, my work is solely related to responding to violence against women, which includes domestic and sexual violence, child sexual abuse, and criminal harassment. I have been doing this kind of work for 14 years.

I am from Sik-e-dakh, or Glen Vowell, B.C., in the Hazelton area. I have travelled here from the north to speak with you about the shocking levels of violence being perpetrated against aboriginal women and girls here in B.C.

I don't think I need to speak about the kinds of violence or the extent of the violence experienced by aboriginal women. By now, through the many hearings you have attended already, you will have heard that over 90% of aboriginal women have either been sexually abused as girls, gang-raped as adolescents, or raped and/or beaten as adults. According to Statistics Canada's 2004 general social survey, rates of physical and sexual assault against aboriginal women are more than three times higher than against non-aboriginal women. Aboriginal women report experiencing more severe and potentially life-threatening forms of physical and sexual violence. Aboriginal women are almost seven times more likely to be murdered than non-aboriginal women. It's like walking around with an X on your back.

In B.C., as you know, our province has more missing and murdered women than anywhere else in Canada—160, according to the Sisters in Spirit report. This is a shocking and shameful reality that must be addressed without delay. I wish to thank you for caring enough to hold these hearings.

I wish to focus my talk with you today on what to do and where we should go from here. I wish first, though, to caution you very strongly against concluding these hearings with recommendations for more reports and more studies. Aboriginal people have been studied perhaps more than almost any other group, and the time for study on the subject has passed. The time for action is now.

Throughout the first decade of 2000, EVA BC, working in partnership with the Pacific Association of First Nations Women and BC Women's Hospital, held a number of meetings, bringing together aboriginal women from across the province to discuss the violence perpetrated against us and what needs to be done. During that time, numerous aboriginal women across B.C. came together for many meetings. We studied the issue very carefully. We looked at all the other studies and wrote two reports ourselves, the second of which I will share with you today. It is entitled "Researched to Death", and I think the title alone speaks to what many aboriginal women feel today.

The three organizations that were involved concluded that the findings in previous reports were especially alarming given that the violence experienced by aboriginal women is believed to exceed that of any other group of women in Canada. As said by the late Patricia Monture-Angus, "For Aboriginal women, violence frequently begins in childhood and continues throughout adolescence into adulthood."

That is the same for me and for most other aboriginal women I know. Violence in aboriginal women's lives is pervasive, and is compounded by violence and systemic and institutionalized racism as well as the effects of historical violence, such as residential schools, the Indian Act, and other legacies of colonization. In school, I grew up feeling looked down upon and punished for who I was. I experienced people feeling sorry for me and my sister, and punishing us for being "dirty little Indian girls".

Violence in many aboriginal women's lives is a daily occurrence, for too many women have died either by murder or by their own hand.

• (1150)

Many governments have been willing to fund studies and reports, but very few have been willing to step up and fund the long-term solutions to the problem of violence against our women and girls. How many more women have to die before any concrete, long-term action is taken?

We need programs designed by us and for us. Anything short of that will not do. We need the kind of big action that will support an ongoing network of anti-violence services run by aboriginal women and for aboriginal women. All across B.C. and, in fact, in every province and territory in Canada, there are networks of services to respond to violence against women. Not all jurisdictions have enough of these services, but they exist, and they have been making a difference.

As I mentioned, I work at one of these services in Smithers and Hazelton. These anti-violence services are mostly what I would call "mainstream" services, that is, services set up by mainstream non-aboriginal social service agencies, women's agencies, and governments.

In looking at these services across the north of B.C., I can say that while many of these programs have aboriginal women on staff and are doing excellent work, and while many reach out to women on reserves, there are many women on reserve who either have no way of getting to town and who are not allowed to engage in these services because of the control their abusive partners have over them, or who don't trust the mainstream services, no matter how good they are.

Without getting into the history of colonialization, which I'm sure you are all familiar with, the issue of violence against aboriginal women on and off reserve is very complex. Many women want the security of confidentiality that comes with going to town for help; therefore, the existing mainstream services must have cross-cultural competencies and training and have aboriginal women on staff. This could be a funding stream you put in place that is for existing anti-violence services. You provide funding for an aboriginal counsellor-advocate position, but in addition, and most importantly, there should be anti-violence services run by aboriginal women and for aboriginal women in communities all across the nation.

I believe that this one-to-one support work, the advocacy, and the community education these programs would also do that will make the difference immediately and in the long term. The solutions that will work will come only from our women, and we need to empower them to act and to help others to speak out.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Tracy.

Ms. Tracy Porteous: Well, we may be out of time.

The Chair: No, no. Go ahead.

Ms. Tracy Porteous: I'm the executive director of the Ending Violence Association of B.C. and I'm here as an ally to Marilyn and other aboriginal women from across the province and the nation.

I just want to share with you a little bit about the second report that Marilyn was speaking about, which is called "Researched To Death". A number of times over a period of three years, we brought together aboriginal women from across the province, and we consulted quite extensively about what aboriginal women were saying they wanted and needed in order to increase safety in their lives.

Aboriginal women have said to us over and over that one of the overarching issues is the extent to which racism is alive and in action in communities across our nation. I can attest to that, being a front-line worker for many years, and taking to the hospital women who had just been sexually assaulted, or intervening as an advocate in some way. Whenever I had for myself the privilege of working with an aboriginal woman, I can attest that they are treated differently by the system.... I think it is unconscionable that this still exists.

Therefore, we need to take action in addition to what Marilyn has said, in terms of anti-racism and anti-oppression training for police, for crowns, for all the systems in place, because I think in this day and age, in 2011, that isn't at all acceptable. In addition, we believe that training needs to be provided to aboriginal women before they have...let me just back up. Many anti-violence programs are searching for aboriginal women to hire, but all of the anti-violence programs in B.C. provide post-employment training, and there is no pre-employment training in the area of violence against women.

We've had discussions with Northern Lights College in Terrace. They're interested in providing courses on how to become an advocate or counsellor in anti-violence programs for women; it would be similar to the George Brown College program in Ontario. We believe it would really move things forward if we were able to support colleges and universities to provide courses so that aboriginal women are supported and prepared in order to be able to apply for some of these jobs that exist.

• (1155)

The Chair: Thank you, Tracy.

I would like to go to Asia. Asia, ten minutes.

Ms. Asia Czapska (Advocacy Director, Justice for Girls): Thank you for taking the time to hear us today.

My name is Asia Czapska. I am the advocacy director at Justice for Girls.

Justice for Girls is a B.C.-based non-profit that promotes social justice, freedom from violence, and equality for teen girls who live in poverty. We advocate for both individual girls and systemically, to challenge laws, policies, and practices that breach the rights of teen girls who are homeless and low-income.

Over the course of 11 years of our work, we have observed that aboriginal girls are disproportionately the victims of violent crimes. They are subjected to extreme sexual and physical violence and constitute a shocking number of murder victims in B.C.

Justice for Girls has monitored many cases of violence against aboriginal teen girls in this province. Actually, realizing that we have ten minutes, I might be able to talk to you about some of the specific cases that we've monitored and some of the criminal justice failures that we have witnessed in our work.

According to the Native Women's Association of Canada's *Sisters in Spirit 2010* report, about one-fifth of the cases of missing and murdered aboriginal women across Canada are actually cases of missing and murdered aboriginal girls under the age of 19. *Sisters in Spirit* points out that a huge number of the women were actually young women. So if you count women under I think the age of 31, then it's a very large proportion of the women who were murdered and went missing. And as I said, a fifth were girls, just from the number that *Sisters in Spirit* has documented, which, as you know, is a small proportion of the actual number of missing and murdered women and girls.

Historical and current colonization of aboriginal peoples, lands, and families has created a situation in which aboriginal teenaged girls are one of the most oppressed groups in Canadian society. Aboriginal girls face the deepest poverty, extreme male violence in

the form of sexual abuse, rape, racialized sexual assault and racism, as well as institutionalization in prisons, mental health institutions, and apprehension into alienating racist and abusive non-aboriginal child welfare placements, and homelessness when they escape or when they attempt to escape these abusive situations when they face more violence on the street.

The impact of these institutional and colonial assaults on indigenous girls is egregious. A disproportionate number of homeless girls, for example, are aboriginal. A recent report in B.C. in which over 400 aboriginal youth in nine communities were interviewed found that about 60% of aboriginal girls had experienced sexual violence.

In the last 30 years, according to police, at least 12 teenaged girls and young women, almost all of them aboriginal, have been murdered or went missing along central-northern B.C.'s Highway of Tears, as Marilyn had spoken about, within the RCMP's jurisdiction. According to community members, many more girls and women have gone missing.

The extreme violence that aboriginal girls face is one of the ways in which colonization continues to ravage the lives of indigenous girls in modern-day Canadian society. In every court case Justice for Girls has monitored over many years where multiple girls were being exploited by men, either most or all of the girls targeted were aboriginal. It has been our observation in the cases we have monitored that racism and sexism have motivated crimes against aboriginal girls. Aboriginal girls are targeted by violent non-aboriginal men partly because of the vulnerability created by the non-response of the police and the courts to violence against them.

Justice for Girls has become steadily more frustrated and enraged with utter failures of the criminal justice system to respond to violence against aboriginal teen girls in this province. In the last five years we have met with various provincial politicians, including the Attorney General, and, along with other groups, have called for a broad inquiry into the criminal justice system's failure to respond to violence against aboriginal women and girls in B.C. We continue to demand an inquiry into the criminal justice system's deeply inadequate response to violence against aboriginal girls and women.

More broadly, the Canadian government must specifically uphold the inherent rights of aboriginal girls and women and make every effort to remedy the consequences of colonization. In so doing, the Canadian government must follow and respect the leadership of the Native Women's Association of Canada and provincial or territorial indigenous and grassroots women's groups, such as, for example, in British Columbia, the Aboriginal Women's Action Network.

Given that I think I have a moment, I can talk to you about some of the cases we have been involved with monitoring.

• (1200)

As some of you probably know, in 2004 Prince George ex-judge David Ramsay pleaded guilty to sexual assault causing bodily harm, breach of trust, and three counts of purchasing sex, sexual exploitation of persons under the age of 18. All of Ramsay's victims were under 16, aboriginal, and girls. As you may know, he had presided over their cases in court. Some of them had child welfare cases before him, where he was the presiding judge telling them whether or not they could keep their children.

The RCMP began their investigation into Judge Ramsay's assaults in 1999. He was not removed from his judicial duties for three years. The crimes committed by Ramsay continued, according to the media, until 2001, so for two to three years after the investigation began. His judgments in cases of sexual abuse have never been reviewed, so decisions he made on cases of sexual violence before his court in communities in central-northern B.C. were never reviewed.

We asked the previous Attorney General, Wally Oppal, to review those cases. We asked and nothing was ever done about that. Anyway, that's just one of the cases we brought to his attention.

In the course of the investigation into Ramsay's crimes, it was revealed that Prince George police officers and a youth criminal defence lawyer had also been accused of abusing girls in that community. Despite many groups' calls for action, there has never been an independent investigation of the alleged police abuse of girls in Prince George. I think one of the reasons that young aboriginal women don't trust the police is because the police perpetrate some of the violence against them. That's important to point out.

In 2003, coming back to the lower mainland area, we monitored the case of sexual offender Martin Tremblay, who pleaded guilty to five counts of sexual assault against five aboriginal teen girls. He admitted to videotaping and assaulting the girls while they were unconscious in his home. He was never given a no-contact-with-children condition on his probation. Justice for Girls called for the crown to ask for no contact with children. This did not happen, and upon his release he impregnated a 14-year-old aboriginal girl. Since his release from prison, girls have reported that he has given them drugs, alcohol, and a place to party, and girls have reported waking up after lengthy durations of unconsciousness in states of undress and abandoned in various public locations.

In 2010 two teen girls, Martha Jackson Hernandez and her friend Kayla LaLonde, died on the same night from a lethal combination of drugs and alcohol. Martha's body was found in Tremblay's home, and there have never been charges against Tremblay.

Those are just some of the cases we've monitored. I guess I'll just leave it to you for questions.

• (1205)

The Chair: Thank you.

You had one minute left, but that's good. Thank you, Asia.

Now we're going to another part of the hearings. It's the question and answer part. This will be a seven-minute round. As you know, the members of this committee are from all parties, and they'll have

seven minutes to ask and have the answer, so you have to be tight if you want to get as many questions as you want.

I will begin with Ms. Anita Neville, who is a Liberal.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): First of all, let me thank the three of you for being here. I very much appreciate your presence.

You all touched on something that we've heard. Actually you've probably more than touched on something we've been skirting around and have been hearing about, both through the committee and I've travelled fairly extensively in western Canada on the issue of the missing and murdered aboriginal women. We're trying to gather information on systemic racism with systemic injustice, the lack of response by social welfare agencies, the lack of response or the inappropriate responses of the justice system, the court system, the police system.

In one community—not with the committee, but another community I was in—the women who had gathered there said to me that the women in that community do not feel they have protection, do not feel supported.

I'm raising this because, as you can hear by my colleague's response, we're horrified. Some of what you raised, Asia, I've heard before, most notably the circumstances of the judge's situation.

I guess my question to you is what is your best advice to us on the recommendations, recognizing that we are federal members of Parliament and there are jurisdictional issues? We can speak loudly, and I hope that the report we bring in will be a powerful report and a strong report. But what actions should be taken by the government when this report is put before Parliament? And what should they be doing right now? I'm horrified at the situation you've described. Perhaps the people from B.C. are familiar with it. I'm from Manitoba. Give us your best advice on how we should put forward our recommendations.

I open this to all three of you.

The Chair: Who wants to start?

Tracy.

Ms. Tracy Porteous: I think it's a really important question. I think there are some really concrete things you can do from a federal jurisdiction.

One of the ways systemic racism and sexism is manifesting itself that we're seeing across B.C. is in a really high number of women who have experienced abuse over a number of years being arrested themselves. We've been talking with the RCMP about this for about the last five years, asking them to take some action and to train their officers not to arrest women who are themselves victims. Obviously it can be difficult for police officers to arrive on a scene and there's a lot of emotion and stuff going on, but what we're seeing in the results is a lot of women being arrested and a lot of aboriginal women being arrested.

So we've asked the RCMP if we can look at the training that happens to new recruits in Regina, and that hasn't been made available to us.

Hon. Anita Neville: Can I interrupt you for a moment?

Ms. Tracy Porteous: Please.

Hon. Anita Neville: I asked a question this morning at the site visit we were at. I'm concerned about the number of women in jail. The number of aboriginal women who are in jail, as you are undoubtedly aware, are disproportionate to the population numbers. The question I asked this morning, and I don't know whether you can answer it, is do you have any numbers or figures on numbers of women who are in jail because they responded to violence—personal, systemic, however you want to describe it?

I don't want to divert you from the other answers either.

• (1210)

Ms. Tracy Porteous: If I may say one more thing in terms of what you can do, concrete recommendations from the perspective of justice and federal jurisdiction, restorative justice is a modality that a lot of justice system people are using to try to resolve crime and bring it back to the community's hands. We don't believe that it's a safe resolution for women who experience violence.

Hon. Anita Neville: You do not believe?

Ms. Tracy Porteous: We do not believe.

There are potential uses for restorative justice if it's done correctly, but there are federal programs that are supported by the Department of the Solicitor General federally that.... I think that action needs to be taken immediately to look at whether there are standards and screening guidelines and other protections in place to ensure that women who have been victims of violence aren't revictimized in the process.

We could probably spend a lot more time talking about restorative justice. I won't say more about that today, but if you want to follow up with me at any point....

Hon. Anita Neville: I may well.

Asia, can you respond a little?

Ms. Asia Czapska: Thank you.

On the numbers, as far as women who are in jail for responding to violence against them, I think the Elizabeth Fry Society nationally used to have those numbers. I don't know how updated they are now, but they used to have those, for sure.

If we're talking federally, then we're missing bodies of accountability. We are missing any kind of accountability in a lot of ways for the RCMP, for example. We need independent police oversight. That's one of the basic things. We need a body that is not police that will investigate violence by police, or misconduct or mishandling of cases, of investigations.

We also need an independent body that enforces the UN recommendations to Canada. We know that the CEDAW committee at the UN has made all kinds of recommendations for the status of aboriginal girls and women in Canada, the violence against aboriginal girls and women, and there is no federal body that is responsible for making those recommendations real.

There needs to be some kind of enforcement, basically, at different levels for the recommendations that, as Marilyn and Tracy have said, have already been made for so many years. There needs to be some kind of body that enforces those recommendations. For sure, there

needs to be a department or a section of a department that enforces UN recommendations.

As we have said before, the federal government needs to listen to the Native Women's Association of Canada. And more than listening, they need to take direction from the Native Women's Association of Canada at this point. Also, I know it's provincial, but they need to go to the provincial and territorial aboriginal women's groups.

As far as criminalization, the same is true for aboriginal girls. Aboriginal girls are 40% to 50% of the girls in the prisons in B.C. When we used to do visits to girls in the prison in Burnaby, there would be times when every girl in the room was aboriginal when we were doing outreach. The way we view it, obviously we'd like girls not to be criminalized at all. A lot of the times young women are in jail to protect them from violence. If they're going to the downtown east side, for example, they'll have a condition: "Do not go into the downtown east side, because that's where they use drugs." The police and the social workers think they're protecting them, but instead they're jailing those girls for their own protection, really, supposedly.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We've finished that round.

Now I will go to Madame Demers, from the Bloc Québécois.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good afternoon.

Like my colleague Anita, I am horrified. Why is it that we don't hear about these horror stories down east? Why do we speak out against the situation of women in Afghanistan and Iran and demand that their rights be respected, but we pipe down when it comes to the situation of first nations women? Our voices should be even louder.

What can we do? Why is it that cases like that involving Judge Ramsay are not making headlines? Could you explain to me what needs to be done so that these cases get the appropriate attention in the media? I would like these stories to be on page one. I want to talk about these stories, I want to shout them out. I want women everywhere to deplore this situation out loud.

It is disgraceful to leave things as they are. The fact that the police and the judicial system have not gotten involved is scandalous. How did we get to this? Could you explain that to me? Is it because of ignorance or simply because we do not care, since we don't think that aboriginal women deserve better? Is that the reality we must face? If it is, what is going to happen? We are touring the provinces, and people are sharing things with us. Afterwards, we will return to Ottawa to tell a nice little story and put it on a shelf. But out here, the same things will keep happening to you.

Marilyn, you said that the time for talking has passed and that now is the time for action. I agree with you. As I have been saying from the beginning, the objective of this tour is not to make decisions and establish positions for you once we are back in Ottawa. We would like you to give us the tools we need to enable you to establish your own position. Currently, we are trying very hard to do things properly. Please, help us.

As a woman, I am angry and hurt.

Could one of you three answer?

• (1215)

[English]

Ms. Marilyn George: Forgive me, but it's a very emotional topic.

I don't have an answer as to why this hasn't been heard. But now is the time, which is why I sit here as a first nation woman, to be a voice for all of my sisters that the violence has to stop.

I have heard that this exists back east too. I've read reports. It's always done in secret. It's kind of like, "We can't put this on record. We can't speak about this. It's for your eyes only to see." This was just over a couple of years ago that I read this, and I asked myself, "Why? Why can't it be voiced out there?"

So I sit here in hope that our voice will be heard loud and clear as first nation women. I speak for my daughter, my cousins. I speak for those I've lost in my past due to suicide because of domestic violence and other assaults that have happened to many of our women in our communities.

There are no easy answers right now, but I know that this action has to be taken now. Change has to happen. This stuff should not be happening in our communities in this day and age. Making those connections outside of first nations communities, making those connections with the RCMP detachment to make better relationships—that also has to be done with women. We need women speaking to women. We need aboriginal women speaking to each other. We need education for our women on what domestic violence is, and sexual assault—everything. I grew up with violence around me, thinking that it was just a normal thing. But when I became a woman myself, I realized that it was not normal.

So I want this to stop.

Thank you.

• (1220)

The Chair: We have about a minute left. Does anyone want to add something to that?

Asia.

Ms. Asia Czapska: Maybe this is more of a question or a thought for women in Parliament, but what do you need to be able to act? It feels like there are so many recommendations, but I would ask you, what will make government act? What are the barriers that are in your way or in the way of taking on some of these things?

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: I think that we need to break the silence. We need to put an end to it. You must give us all the information you have gathered, so that it can be published. Social networks that exist

today can help disseminate that information. People need to know the identity of the men involved and what they are doing to young women and girls. Canadians have the right to know these things.

What do you think, Tracy?

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry, we're out of time.

Now we have Ms. Nina Grewal for the Conservatives. Nina, you have seven minutes, as does everyone else.

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses for appearing today in front of our committee and for sharing their insights. My heart goes out to you. These are very heart-rending stories.

Currently we're looking into violence against aboriginal women, and it does seem we also could be looking at violence against immigrant communities. Unfortunately, these are very complicated problems that we are facing these days.

I understand that part of the problem we have in dealing with this is a lack of national data. Do you agree with that in terms of violence against women? Is there any way we could be helping law enforcement agencies with the data or something like that? Do you have any thoughts on that?

Ms. Tracy Porteous: We actually are experiencing a problem with data collection here in B.C. I don't know if that's an issue across the rest of the country.

We have been told that B.C. police have only about a 30% compliance rate in providing statistics to Statistics Canada in terms of crimes committed...in cases as they proceed through the system. B.C. is a little bit different, because the police investigate and the crown lays the charge. Police don't have control over the crown laying the charge, so there's some kind of complication that happens here.

Also, the police have just switched over to a new investigative system that also collects data. It's called PRIME. As far as we can tell, it's very difficult to pull numbers from that, and it should be easy. The Vancouver police have found a way of changing some of the technical foundations of PRIME to allow them to use it for statistical gathering purposes so they can submit that. I mean, we can't really develop proper social policy unless we know if the things we put in place are working or not.

When we have gone forward and asked for information from crowns, from police, and from police services here in the province, we have been told that the information is not available. It's mind-boggling to us that we can have our criminal justice branch say they're sorry, but they can't tell us the difference between how cases of violence against women proceed through the courts now as compared to before they changed their policy, because the data from before they changed their policy is all gone.

Now, I appreciate that it's a provincial issue, but on the federal perspective, I think a lot of oversight and accountability can be brought to the RCMP by asking them to account to a committee or an office. We don't have a national office responsible for violence against women overall or violence against aboriginal women. I agree with what's been said about the need to support the Native Women's Association of Canada and the work they're doing, but I think a lot can be done immediately by asking for accountability from the RCMP.

For example, just recently I asked them for numbers of women being arrested here in the province of B.C., just for the first six months of 2010. I was staggered by the numbers. It would be interesting to ask for those numbers across the country, because I think this is one big difference that can be made. If you arrest a woman who has been a victim of violence for the last 15 years, she'll never call the police again. She'll never reach out, so as she goes forward, her life and her children's lives are at much greater risk if the police make a mistake the first time she reaches out or somebody calls the police. So a huge difference you could make immediately is looking to the RCMP to be more accountable.

• (1225)

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Do you have any thoughts on what the main root cause is of all of this, of what's happening? These are really heart-wrenching stories. Do you have any thoughts on what the main root cause is of all of this?

Ms. Tracy Porteous: It's a good question.

Ms. Asia Czapska: Something we've all talked about is probably the immense impact of colonial repression. I think if you look at the situation of indigenous girls and women in Australia, you'll see very similar situations. You'll see the over-criminalization. You'll see a majority of women and girls in prisons being indigenous. You'll see a staggering amount of violence. You'll see police failure. I think some of the things we've spoken about...

But on your first question, I know that the Native Women's Association of Canada will speak to you about data and data collection, if they haven't already, and what's happening with Sisters in Spirit. Obviously, they need to be supported to continue to collect data on missing and murdered women and girls.

More specifically, as far as statistics go in the RCMP, let's say, it's very hard to get numbers. For example, people think that there are laws against sexual exploitation in Canada and that those laws are enforced, and that's just not true. When it comes to men buying girls and boys for sexual exploitation, those men are not prosecuted very often, and they're not even charged very often.

It's very hard for us to get those numbers on how many men are charged because, for example, sexual exploitation is not separated specifically. That section of the Criminal Code, subsection 212(4), is not separately segregated by the police. It's just put by the police into "sexual assault—other" or "sexual offences—other", so we actually can't even tell you how many men are charged with sexually exploiting children and youth in Canada right now. That number would be very useful for us, to be able to say, well, you know, it's ten men per province, and one or two are found guilty every year...

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Madam Chair, do I have some more time left?

The Chair: I'm sorry, Nina, we just ran out.

Now it's Ms. Davies for the NDP.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Thank you.

First of all, thank you very much for coming today. I know it's hard to have a discussion and answer these huge questions when you have seven minutes or ten minutes, but hopefully we can have some discussion.

Based on what you've said, I wanted to get at the idea that the lack of information is an issue. I know that when Hedy and I were on another committee looking at the issue of the sex trade as it pertained to adults and not children, it was very difficult for us to even get information about what was going on in terms of the sex trade, who was being arrested for what, what violence there was, and how that was being reported. So I do think that's an issue, and I do agree that better information-gathering systems are really important.

I think what's underlying this—and Madam Demers asked this big question—is that we're in this culture of denial. When I think about a culture of denial, it is not so much from a community point of view, because I do think there is a lot of information out there. The cases you've spoken about were very explosive cases that hit the media for days if not weeks, but then they disappeared. So the culture of denial is more among police or different ministries or governments themselves.

I know back in 1999 when I first started raising the missing women issue in Ottawa, I met with the Minister of Justice, who is a very decent guy, and he actually didn't know about the missing women, the biggest case in Canada. So that's in response to your question about why it didn't hit back east or somewhere.

I do think this issue of denial is a huge part of what we're dealing with here. I just wonder, to throw that out there, how we deal with that. How do we get past these individual situations, whether we're talking about the Pickton trial...and then everything just goes back to what it was? To me it's very much about this being a systemic issue and trying to focus attention on that.

I just want to give you some opportunity to respond to the idea of how we draw attention to these systemic issues so we can get out of this culture of denial.

• (1230)

Ms. Tracy Porteous: I very much appreciate the question, and I think we also need to proceed with great caution. What I've heard from my friend Marilyn and other aboriginal women is that you can't just go into a community and start talking about violence and then leave. Expecting women to speak up and disclose what's happened to them can actually create a dangerous situation for them. My friend Marilyn recommended to you that one thing she thought was important would be services run for aboriginal women by aboriginal women in every aboriginal community in the province—or, from your perspective, in the country.

I think we need to think very carefully about putting some of those supports in place before we expect women to talk, because there needs to be some level of safety and some oversight in a community, some safe place, some initiative where there's support and building and communities. One of the federal initiatives that's going on right now, which I very much support, is the building of community safety plans in aboriginal communities. In addition, it's not just about building a plan or a protocol. There has to be some support in an ongoing way. There has to be some advocacy.

I just want to echo what Marilyn has suggested to you, because more than anything else, if you could embed advocates for women by women in communities, I think that would go a huge long way to helping women find their voice.

I think in the mainstream non-aboriginal communities that's probably how non-aboriginal women found their voice: through the proliferation of anti-violence services, of feminist voices in communities throughout the province. Now, obviously that hasn't ended violence, and every community isn't the same in terms of having these services, but one of the things we've been saying to the Province of B.C., because they fund these provincial services, is that they need to fund services in aboriginal communities for aboriginal women. They have funded a few, but not nearly enough. We believe very strongly in the recommendation by Marilyn that doing that would make a huge difference in terms of opening up the denial but at the same time doing so in a way that's safe for women.

• (1235)

Ms. Asia Czapska: If I can take a moment, I'll say that I'm completely and strongly in agreement with that, and ditto—the same—for girls and for aboriginal girls: there need to be specific advocates for young women, for aboriginal young women.

As far as denial goes, I think one thing would help. Sometimes we write reports to the United Nations about this situation of homeless girls in Canada—about how there is homelessness of girls in Canada—and one of the things that happens is that when Canada goes before the UN, it prepares reports, as you know, for different covenant committees, and I think there's a lot of denial in those reports. One of the first things would be...

Some countries, when they're preparing reports to the United Nations, approach preparing those reports by saying, "These are our challenges, this is where we have problems, and we have not done this and this". They say, "Women and girls are not succeeding in these areas and this is what we're going to do about it". When Canada goes to those UN committees and reports, I think it hides as much as it can and denies as much as it can about what is happening. Those reports are not very useful.

I think one of the things would be that those departments that prepare those reports need to start being honest about what's going on in Canada. They need to start looking at those UN consultations or presentations before different committees as moments to actually work on recommendations, rather than just to defend how amazingly forward Canada is on human rights. I think they need to actually say, "Okay, we have problems, and this is where we need to work on those things".

And once again, a body of accountability would be useful.

The Chair: Thank you.

That's it.

I want to thank the committee. We don't have time for a second round. We have had to have very short panels because we've had so many people who want to present that we've had to cut our panels to size. Therefore, we have one round at this panel.

I want to thank Tracy, Marilyn, and Asia for coming.

I know that it has taken a lot of time, Marilyn.

Thank you for being brave enough to share with us your pain.

I think we will suspend now until we get to the next round and the next panel. We'll suspend for two minutes.

• _____ (Pause) _____

•

• (1240)

The Chair: I'd like to call this session to order.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on the Status of Women is studying violence against aboriginal women, and we are travelling across Canada to do so.

There was a motion that was adopted unanimously by the committee to study this issue and to travel across the country and meet with aboriginal communities and other groups that are involved in the issue so that they could tell us about the extent of violence against aboriginal women, the types of violence, the root causes of that violence, and of course the solutions to what is an ongoing problem. Obviously, despite their best efforts, governments in the past, it seems, have not been able to deal with the situation. So we need to be able to get from you a lot of information and concrete solutions so that when we write our report we will be able to at least, as some people have told us, stop studying the issue to death and get on with finding solutions.

Normally, as you know, these are public meetings, so they are being taped. There can be media here. Media are allowed to come in. I just want to point out that representatives of the consulate general of the United States are here as observers. They're very interested in the issue, and they're in the audience today listening. I also want to welcome them here to listen to the issue.

Today we have representatives of Battered Women's Support Services, Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter, Women Against Violence Against Women, and the YWCA of Vancouver.

Normally we give you five minutes each to present. I'll give you two-minute and one-minute indicators so that you know you'll have to start wrapping it up. You don't have to say everything in your presentation, because there will be, hopefully, a couple of rounds of questions in which you'll be able to flesh out some of the other things you want to say and actually be specific about them.

I'm going to begin with Battered Women's Support Services, from which we have Lisa Yellow-Quill, co-manager of the aboriginal women's program.

Lisa, you have five minutes.

• (1245)

Ms. Lisa Yellow-Quill (Co-manager, Aboriginal Women's Program, Battered Women's Support Services): I timed this, and it's actually six minutes. Is that okay?

The Chair: We'll try to get you six minutes. We can play with that. We're not rigid, but we don't want to go to seven or eight or nine.

Ms. Lisa Yellow-Quill: Hello. They call me Blue Thunderbird Woman, Strong Medicine Woman Standing. *Nekaway*, with Cree, Dakota, and Anishinabe blood—

The Chair: Excuse me, Lisa. Can you just make sure that you have the microphone positioned so that we can hear you?

Ms. Lisa Yellow-Quill: Is that good? Everybody can hear me?

As I was saying, my name's Blue Thunderbird Woman, Strong Medicine Woman Standing, from Long Plains, Manitoba. *Pizhew Dodem*. My colonial name is Lisa Yellow-Quill, and I'm the aboriginal women's program co-manager for Battered Women's Support Services.

Battered Women's Support Services is a feminist non-profit organization that employs women from around the world, reflecting our values of balance, inclusivity, and wholeness. We have been in existence for 32 years providing education, advocacy, and support services, including system advocacy and law reform to women experiencing violence. Our priority is to end violence against women.

I'll be speaking to the root causes of violence against women, which have resulted in more than 500 murdered and missing aboriginal women across Turtle Island, together with the need for social and political accountability for the healing of women, their families, and their communities. This oration is a concerted position Battered Women's Support Services has taken to stand with our sisters who speak today and who have spoken before us across the provinces. Our position is strict. We believe inaction maintains the status quo of violence against women, so we want action.

I'm sorry, I'm a little dry now.

The Chair: Relax, Lisa, that's okay. You don't have to rush.

Ms. Lisa Yellow-Quill: I asked Creator and the grandmothers to come to speak through me so that these words I speak would be felt to the core of your being and reverberate to the cores of those once in authority to take seriously the issue of violence against aboriginal women.

We at Battered Women's Support Services acknowledge that we are on unceded territory, Coast Salish territory, and we ask the grandmothers to bless the work we're doing today with the courage, the clarity, and the words that will lead to actions to end violence against aboriginal women.

We know that continued state research on aboriginal women without action is further causing violence in our lives. We further acknowledge that by participating in this research initiative delivered by Status of Women Canada, we could possibly be implicated as co-conspirators or perpetrators in the ongoing objectification and co-optation of aboriginal women and their experiences for financial gain

and political masturbation if this research results in mere band-aid solutions.

We know that continued research initiatives without action are also false promises. There is a wealth of research material from government and academia to grassroots front-line workers that has provided documentation naming the root causes and various forms of violence against aboriginal women. There are imperialism, patriarchy, colonization, and now globalization.

In Vancouver, women demonstrate the enormity of this issue by raising consciousness via the Battered Women's Support Services' initiative, "The Violence Stops Here" campaign, which is training developed to invite men's accountability in ending violence against women, the Walk4Justice, the downtown east side smudge ceremony, and the February 14 Women's Memorial March, which promote individual and community healing, to name a few.

At a national level, in 1996 there was the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, which gave a whole account in volumes of root causes resulting in violence against aboriginal women. The report by Amnesty International called "Stolen Sisters...Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada" is another. In *Black Eyes All of the Time* Anne McGillivray and Brenda Comaskey address root causes and provide recommendations in a clear and concise way on issues of intimate violence, aboriginal women, and the justice system.

As a result, we know the Canadian state is familiar with the issues relating to violence against aboriginal women and, as it is, the patriarchal state that initiates, maintains, and perpetuates...

I need a glass of water. I can't even drink my water.

• (1250)

The Chair: Relax, Lisa. You're among friends. Nobody's judging you.

Ms. Lisa Yellow-Quill: Yes, but we don't usually get to talk.

The Chair: Well, then, take your time.

Ms. Lisa Yellow-Quill: I can't even drink my water.

The Chair: Would you like some coffee?

Ms. Lisa Yellow-Quill: No.

The Chair: Would you like us to come back to you?

Ms. Lisa Yellow-Quill: No. I want to finish.

The Chair: Okay. That's good. All right?

Ms. Lisa Yellow-Quill: Resultantly, we know the Canadian state is familiar with the issues relating to violence against aboriginal women, as it is the patriarchal state that initiates, maintains, and perpetuates the objectification, stratification, normalization, racialization, invisibilization, sexualization, marginalization, criminalization, institutionalization, hospitalization, and colonization that in the end may result in the cremation of our women in this country because they are so badly beaten by society.

To us, it is overtly exemplified in the Eurocentric feeling of land entitlement as demonstrated by the public and private spheres of economic and political entities. I am speaking to the rape of our Mother Earth.

Our main concerns at this point are the issues of paternalistic racism inherent in the socio-political institutions and legislation, the lack of education and resources for urban and rural aboriginal women, and gaps in the justice system, together with jurisdictional barriers.

So for our action items, we want action because women make up 50% of the Canadian population. We want the "Ministry of Women and Equality" reinstated in British Columbia and in place in all provinces across Canada. For the record, there is no longer any ministry that has "women" in its name.

We want action. We want women named on every agenda and their voices included in all the planning and decision-making processes of Canada and its provinces.

We want action. We are asking for socio-political attitudinal change.

We want action. We want the focus of women's experience of violence placed on the perpetrator, not the women. Too often women are blamed and pathologized for the violence they experience.

We want action. We want structural change in governments, law enforcement, and other institutions that maintain the status quo of gender inequality.

We want action. Battered Women's Support Services calls for anti-violence services rooted in historical understandings of colonial violence and informed by aboriginal women.

We want action. We support the Native Women's Association of Canada's call for a reduction of violence: a reduction of poverty; a reduction of homelessness and access to housing; improved access to justice; the 2006 Highway of Tears Symposium's call for victim prevention; community development and support; emergency planning and response; and victim, family, and counselling support.

I'm almost done.

Status of Women Canada and the House of Commons have been relatively silent, notwithstanding this meeting. Violence against women has to be a national priority in ending violence on every level of society, with all institutions mobilizing efforts that are on the ground right now. We have been doing this support without support.

Finally, I will repeat the words of Chief Robert Pasco from Merritt, British Columbia. He says, "Whatever the words of your final report and recommendations may be, they will mean little if they are not met with the political will, the knowledge and the ability to achieve their intent".

Furthermore, in the section on "How to Begin", in the highlights taken from the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, it is said:

Change of this magnitude cannot be achieved by piecemeal reform of existing programs and services—however helpful any one of these reforms might be. It will take an act of national intention—a major, symbolic statement of intent, accompanied by the laws necessary to turn intention into action.

• (1255)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Lisa.

Now I'll go to the Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter.

Hilla, you are speaking?

Ms. Hilla Kerner (Collective Member, Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter): Yes, I am.

The Chair: All right. Good stuff.

Ms. Hilla Kerner: I'm here on behalf of the Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter and on behalf of CASAC, the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres.

I trust that if you don't understand my accent, you will stop me and ask me to repeat.

The Chair: Yes, but I think we understand you, Hilla, very easily.

Ms. Hilla Kerner: I think two months ago I was at a hearing on legal aid, and I was completely misunderstood in the first five minutes.

We appreciate the committee's decision to invite women's groups to speak about violence against aboriginal women and about our struggle to end it and achieve liberty and freedom for all women.

Surely in this room we can agree that although women in Canada formally have equal rights, in reality women in Canada, and aboriginal women in particular, do not have equality in their political, economic, and domestic lives. Aboriginal women do not have representational power in the living political institutions in the democracy of Canada: the federal Parliament, the government, and the Supreme Court. Therefore, independent aboriginal women's groups have a crucial role to play in bringing the voice, the experience, and the wisdom of aboriginal women to the political decision-making arena.

We are calling on the Government of Canada to provide appropriate funding—with no strings attached, with no demands, with no conditions—to the only national aboriginal women's group in Canada, NWAC, the Native Women's Association of Canada; and to consult with NWAC regarding any issue that can affect aboriginal women in Canada.

My second point is about policing male violence against women. We know from 35—

The Chair: Hilla, could you please lean into the microphone? It's because the people in the room may not be able to hear you as well as we can.

Great stuff.

Ms. Hilla Kerner: We know from 35 years of front-line work that men attack women in their own race and down in the racist hierarchy, and that aboriginal women are vulnerable to violence both of aboriginal men in their homes and communities and of all men everywhere they go. The criminal justice system that is consistently failing to protect all women is especially indifferent to male violence against aboriginal women.

Not only that, but cases of criminalizing aboriginal women for acting in self-defence against the attacking men are extremely high.... I want to encourage the members of the committee to find out how many cases of violence are reported to the police by women and compare them to the conviction rates. I assure you that you will be shocked to find out how small is the number of cases that are taken seriously by the police, that are fully investigated, and that are being brought before the courts in Canada.

My third point is about the poverty of women and aboriginal women. It is a well-known fact that aboriginal women are the poorest women in Canada. In the hearing about trafficking and sexual exploitation in front of this committee in 2006, many witnesses pointed out that aboriginal people are disproportionately affected by poverty in Canada. The committee heard that 40% of aboriginal women in Canada live in poverty.

Poverty of women and violence against women are two powerful oppressive forces that feed each other. The Department of Justice Canada recognized poverty as a factor in increasing vulnerability to violence against women. The Public Health Agency of Canada states, "Poverty limits choices and access to the means to protect and free oneself from violence".

Canada has been criticized by the United Nations for its shameful income assistance rates. Women return to or cannot leave abusive relationships because they are unable to adequately provide for themselves and their children on welfare. A crucial measure to prevent the vulnerability of women to men's violence is in providing economic security to aboriginal women and all women. Our ongoing vision is a guaranteed livable income, but definitely a mid-term measurement is to just raise the welfare rates. They're completely unlivable.

My next point is about aboriginal women and prostitution. One extreme expression of violence against women is prostitution. Later today, we'll hear from the Aboriginal Women's Action Network on their opposition to prostitution and the legalization of prostitution.

We are calling on this committee to adopt the recommendation of the report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women from 2007: "Turning Outrage Into Action". The report's recommendations are calling on the federal government to target the poverty of women, and the poverty of aboriginal women in particular, and to decriminalize the victims, the women, who are prostituted—they should not be criminalized for being victims of inequality and violence—but to criminalize the consumers, the men exploiting the women's vulnerability, the consumers of prostitution and the pimps.

My last point is about aboriginal children in care. It's so short that I'm doing it an injustice, and I encourage the committee to invest the appropriate time to have hearings about this issue. Less than 5% of the B.C. population is aboriginal, yet more than half of the children

in care are aboriginal. According to the MCFD, in the last year there were 4,666 aboriginal children in care. The state uproots aboriginal children from their mothers, paying a fortune for foster care instead of investing this money in the mothers and offering them the economic security that enables them to get housing, food, and child care, which in turn enables them to take care of their children.

So basically my points are these: consult and fund NWAC; end poverty of aboriginal women and poverty of all women, because that's what makes them and us so vulnerable to violent men; end prostitution by targeting poverty on the one hand and criminalizing the buyer on the other hand; and force the police to follow the responsibility of the state to protect women by thorough investigation, by pursuing appropriate charges, and by bringing men to court to hold them accountable for violence against women.

•(1300)

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Ms. Hilla Kerner: That is it.

The Chair: All right.

Now we'll go to Women Against Violence Against Women. Darla Laughlin.

Ms. Darla Laughlin (Aboriginal Outreach Coordinator and Youth Counsellor, Women Against Violence Against Women): Good afternoon. Thank you to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women and to the House of Commons for the invitation and request for Women Against Violence Against Women to take part in this important work.

My traditional name is Singing Thunderbird Child, Twice Standing Woman. I am a Cree Ojibway woman from Peepeekisis First Nation in Saskatchewan. My colonial name is Darla Laughlin. I am currently the aboriginal outreach coordinator and counsellor at the Women Against Violence Against Women rape crisis centre here in Vancouver.

I am here, upon your request, to shed some light on the surmountable forms of violence that are perpetrated against aboriginal women and that we at WAVAW have witnessed. Of course, working in the environment we do, we could speak about the horrific acts of physical, emotional, and mental abuse; about women who have been raped, sexually assaulted, and exploited. This would speak to the various types of violence we see working as front-line workers.

As far as the extent goes, I think the papers speak for themselves. Aboriginal women are murdered, and very recently it seemed that no one noticed. So the "extent", I would have to say, is death.

I think the important question to be asked is how did we get to a place in society where aboriginal women are so undervalued? What can we do to make change, and where do we go from here?

Let me say that the most significant forms of violence witnessed thus far have, shamefully, come from the government itself in the form of patriarchy, racism, and sexism. The systemic oppression that aboriginals face is by far the greatest threat to their well-being. It has long been the norm for the Canadian government to impose institutionalized systems of oppression, colonialism, and political repression on aboriginal people, particularly our women.

It is our view that unfortunately little has changed. Currently you are all here to further study the violence that is perpetrated on aboriginal women. I would say that it is known what types of oppression and violence aboriginal women face. We have statistics. We now have government saying that aboriginal women have fallen through the cracks.

My question is why do we need to study what we already know? We know that aboriginal women face marginalization, discrimination, racism, and sexism. We know that women are suffering from the effects of residential school and its legacy. Why, then, are women's organizations not being supported to help these women? We have no money for training. We have no money for core funding. Cuts to women's programs continue to rise.

I would like to say that the work completed recently to look into these systems of oppression did not go unnoticed. However, we have not seen any increase in funding for counselling or programming for aboriginal women who face violence. And yet here we are again, studying the issues of violence against aboriginal women.

It is time for government to understand that without readily available long-term resources for women, the picture is not going to get any better. Women must have the option for counselling, safe and affordable housing, and child care in order to truly heal from the effects of violence. Harm reduction is clearly not enough to assist women forward. It is time for real decolonization practices to be put into place for women to have the tools necessary to be successful in overcoming the effects of violence.

Another key factor in the healing of aboriginal women is to recognize the need for true traditional ways of being. Government has a responsibility to recognize traditional healing in the work they do with women to help disintegrate the barriers of mistrust. Women have an inherent right to seek traditional healers to assist in their process, and we, as change-makers, have the responsibility to assist women to be able to find these ways of healing or to bring these traditional values to our places of work. This is not sufficiently being supported by the government at present.

We also bear witness to the dangers women face who are involved in or trying to exit the so-called sex trade. These women are given minimum support, while johns are supported with programming such as john schools. Women deserve to have available more than harm reduction tools, such as condoms and safe injection sites, to provide help.

• (1305)

Laws must be changed and perpetrators should be held accountable and charged to the fullest extent of the law. Canada needs to understand that this is a despicable action that allows women who are the most vulnerable to be bought and sold while living in fear and under threat of death.

Long-term and sustainable life-skills-building programming and counselling are needed to address the issues of women who are sexually exploited. Government needs to understand that sexual exploitation of aboriginal women is not a trade.

Finally, I would like to say that the Ministry of Children and Family Development has scooped and continues to scoop aboriginal children from their families. This is a direct result of the lack of sustainable support from the ministries for housing and social development. Marginalized women—aboriginal women—are expected to pay rent and bills and feed families on moneys that do not meet expectations and are lower than the poverty line.

These two ministries continue to work separately and continue to support the breakdown of aboriginal women and their children. This directly forces women into places of despair, homelessness, and, sadly, the sex trade. What can be more violent or oppressive?

Currently we know that the world view of Canada is rapidly changing in regard to the way Canada portrays its values and the truth behind the non-support of aboriginal women. It is time for the government to step up and make real change for the safety of and quality of life for aboriginal women.

The following statistics are taken from the 2005 report "Researched to Death: B.C. Aboriginal Women and Violence", by the B.C. government and the B.C. Women's Hospital and Health Centre. Aboriginal women are 3.5 times more likely than non-aboriginal women to be victims of violence. Approximately 75% of survivors of sexual assault in aboriginal communities are young women under 18 years of age. Approximately 50% of these girls are under the age of 14, and approximately 25% are under the age of 7. Canadian aboriginal women between the ages of 25 and 44 are five times more likely than other Canadian women in the same age group to die as a result of violence.

This study was conducted in 2005. Since 2006, the Harper government has cancelled funding for universal day care programs and has cut funding for women's groups and organizations' front-line work and violence work for women's and aboriginal women's issues. With these statistics alone, it is clear: funding is needed for programs and programming for aboriginal women who face violence.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our knowledge. We appreciate your time.

• (1310)

The Chair: Thank you, Darla.

Now we have the YWCA of Vancouver. Nancy Cameron.

Ms. Nancy Cameron (Program Manager, Crabtree Corner Community Program, YWCA of Vancouver): Thank you.

I want to thank the women who have spoken. I don't want to repeat a lot of what they've said.

I just want to say that I have worked in the field of women and violence for almost my entire career, which has been about 30 years, if not longer. I've come to other committees such as this to speak around issues of women and violence. Unfortunately, over the years not much has changed. If anything, it's probably gotten worse.

I think the longstanding facts, statistics, and information that have been spoken about already, and that most of us know at this table still exist...and now in particular the issues of aboriginal women and violence are more of a concern.

I work for the YWCA Crabtree Corner, which is a women and family program located in the downtown east side of Vancouver. Abuse is interwoven into about 99% of the women who come to Crabtree, and of our clients at Crabtree, I'd say about 70% are aboriginal women.

I want to speak particularly about what we see. I think the other women who have spoken have covered very well the issues of why abuse is so prevalent within the aboriginal women's community. I mean, it's prevalent anyway, and what we see at Crabtree are the things that have been spoken about here—issues of oppression. Poverty seems to drive almost all of it. It's very difficult for a woman to leave an abusive relationship when there are issues of housing, when she's living on social assistance—which has been mentioned, that it's not enough money to support someone, let alone children—when there's a lack of resources: I think there's only one treatment facility in the lower mainland where a woman can go with her child to deal with issues of addiction. So there are many reasons why women will remain silent.

It was also addressed that when the police come to a woman's home when there's been a call around violence, an alarming thing is happening. When the police are called around issues of domestic violence, the ministry comes and children are taken. That almost makes the woman victimized again. She's told that if she wants to keep her children, she has to get this man out of the house. We know statistically, and research shows, that that just isn't going to happen, that it takes a woman several times to leave an abusive relationship, and certainly not on the spot. So we have been working with an increased number of aboriginal families headed by women where the children are being removed because there are issues of violence in the home. Of course, this silences the woman; this creates an enormous barrier for her to be reporting abuse, and she's just not likely to do that. It also increases an already existing distrust of the police and the legal system.

I mentioned, and other women have mentioned, the issue of poverty, the stereotyping of aboriginal women that is very prevalent. I see that in my work, in the people who come to do research in the building, and in the community where I work, this sense that aboriginal women, and the judgments that are placed on them... approaching them as almost invisible people within our society. I see that exemplified over and over and over again, and, as has been

mentioned here, within the sex trade, within the judicial system, and within the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

I also see the toll it takes on front-line workers. As I said, I've been doing this for 30 years, and I see how difficult this work gets to be and how hard it is for front-line workers to be doing this work when they're up against a lack of funds.

• (1315)

At Crabtree we've only had our violence prevention worker's position for one year, and it took a long time to get the funding for that, and that came from a private donor. So it's very difficult, even in this day and age, to convince those in positions of authority to be funding this kind of work.

The other thing is the lack of resources. When a woman does come and she is in a situation where there is abuse, the lack of resources, of places to refer her or her children or ways to keep the family together.... I think the inconsistencies between the judicial system and the government about just what constitutes abuse, how to work with abuse, sometimes make our work quite difficult as well.

The Chair: Thank you, Nancy.

Now we're going to go to the question and answer part. This will allow you to expand on some of the things you have said. Each question and answer is seven minutes apiece, so if you want to get as many questions and answers, you're going to have to be as succinct as you possibly can. And I'm saying that not just to the witnesses, but to—

Hon. Anita Neville: Me.

The Chair: No, to the members. Now, Anita.

We're going to begin with Ms. Neville for the Liberals.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you, Madam Chair.

And thank you to the four of you for coming here today.

I have three particular questions that I want to ask you, and you can decide how you want to answer them.

You are all service providers. My first question relates to funding, what advice you would have specifically for the federal government, your own funding challenges, because they're significant, and we've heard about it. We've heard increasingly—and I don't know whether you were in here for the previous panel—about the challenges that aboriginal women have in working with government agencies, with the police, with the justice system. I'd like to know what roles your organizations take on in working with women as they work through some of their challenges with institutions, however you want to describe them.

I think one of you, maybe two, mentioned Sisters in Spirit. You're all undoubtedly aware that Sisters in Spirit have not had their dollars renewed for the larger study into the missing and murdered aboriginal women. I'd like to know your views on the role of Sisters in Spirit. I know my own thoughts, but I'd like to know what you think, in terms of the importance—or not—of Sisters in Spirit being able to continue the work they're doing.

So there are three questions, and I don't know whether they're succinct, but if someone wants to have a go....

• (1320)

Ms. Hilla Kerner: I'll start with the funding challenge. There are two rape crisis centres in Vancouver, WAVAW and Vancouver Rape Relief, and Battered Women's Support Services offer, in spirit, similar services. None of us receive core funding at all for the rape crisis centres. WAVAW and BWSS receive some money for individual workers, but definitely not to the overall operation of women's services, and Rape Relief receives nothing.

So the political leadership of British Columbia does not think that rape crisis centres are worth existing for women victims of male violence and aboriginal victims of male violence. The only funding—and it's a political decision—comes for individual victims service workers, which completely dismantles the understanding of violence against women in relation to equality and the importance of women's services in changing the world and making it a better place for women.

Thank you.

The Chair: Darla.

Ms. Darla Laughlin: I have to agree that the core funding issue is probably the most important. I know that WAVAW has applied eight years consecutively to the Status of Women for funding and have been denied eight years consecutively.

Literally, we're doing work off the side of our desks. The amount of need surpasses what we're able to offer. We need more workers. Hilla is absolutely right, the funding that we do have is not core funding. Our positions are funded individually through various funders. We don't have the sustainability, I guess you could say. We have to apply every single year for our funding, and we don't know whether or not that funding is going to be there year to year.

Ms. Hilla Kerner: Ironically, Status of Women—

The Chair: Hilla, excuse me.

Did either of the other two persons want to respond?

Ms. Nancy Cameron: I'd like to respond.

As I said, we have one position at Crabtree, and it took a long time to get the funding for that, even though all the staff are working on this issue. They may be funded to do something else—maybe work on FASD or something—but because this is so prevalent in the lives of our clients, they're all doing it.

It's not only the moneys for the position; it's also that the staff themselves need support. So it's money to provide that so they can keep doing this work, because they're at real risk of compassion fatigue—if they haven't already experienced it. I think we're losing key people in this field, key women in this field, because of that.

I also think they need to keep it in order to continually be trained. Even to come to an event like this takes us away from our work and from a large number of clients we're not able to provide services for at this particular time. So definitely funding is an issue.

As I said, I've been working with funders for a very long time, talking about women and violence every which way there is to talk about it. I don't know what it takes to convince those who will fund us that we need the funding. I think it's been said every which way it can possibly be said.

The Chair: Lisa.

Ms. Lisa Yellow-Quill: What I know and understand about the funding for the organizations I work for is that we rely mostly on donations, on private funders. We all have to scramble for the funding out there that is available for aboriginal programming around preventing violence, and that creates division in our system.

That's what I'd say about that.

• (1325)

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds. Is there any one of you who would like to speak to the question on Sisters in Spirit that Ms. Neville asked?

Ms. Hilla Kerner: I think there is consensus among women's groups all over Canada about the importance of the project. There was a breach of trust when the Minister for Status of Women allocated the money to the RCMP instead of giving it to NWAC. There is consensus all over the country among feminists and women's groups.

The Chair: Darla, did you want to say something about that?

Ms. Darla Laughlin: I think there was a question put out there on how we can better assist women to approach institutions. I think one of the key responsibilities being missed here is that we need to understand that there isn't a very good track record, first of all. There needs to be some type of liaison work that is absolutely and completely clear about what the role of those institutions is when they see aboriginal women.

We have young aboriginal women who are single parents, who are really unable to speak to their social workers because they fear the worst, especially our teen moms who are constantly being diagnosed—misdiagnosed, I might add—with FAS and ADD and various mental illnesses. They might be suffering from the effects of the legacy of residential schools, and they are misdiagnosed as having mental illness and their children are removed. So I think having some sort of liaison in a traditional aboriginal values-based—

The Chair: So you're suggesting liaison workers of some kind?

Thank you.

Now we go to Madam Demers from the Bloc Québécois.

Merci. Welcome.

Nicole, begin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Ladies, thank you for joining us this afternoon.

First, I would like to tell you that your document was very powerful, Lisa. At times, while you were reading it, I felt embarrassed. At other times, I felt very concerned, as, for instance, when you said that we talk a lot, but we do little. That's true. You are completely right. Darla, you said the same thing, and it's the truth.

Why are we touring the country again? Why are we asking questions about the living situation of aboriginal women when we are very familiar with it already? We know what kind of violence is committed against women. We wanted to go on this Canada-wide tour because we did not want only two or three groups to come to Ottawa to talk to us about the situation, and then to be told that those two or three important groups spoke on behalf of many aboriginal women, but did not represent all of them. We wanted to go on site, so that people like you, who represent smaller groups, could talk to us about the situation. Having done this, we will be able to return to Ottawa and show that all these women testified and said that this is indeed the situation Canadian aboriginal women find themselves in.

We wanted to make sure that it was not only the Native Women's Association of Canada, Femmes Autochtones du Québec and aboriginal leaders that described the situation to us. All aboriginal women have spoken to us about this situation and asked us to do something about it. Your voice is the most important one because it is the voice of all aboriginal women. That is why we are here today.

Ms. Cameron, you say that there have been no changes in the last 30 years. Why do you think that is?

I also wanted to ask you whether you think that Canada's signing of the UN's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and officially asking forgiveness for the events surrounding the Indian residential schools will change anything. We have not seen any changes over the last two years, and I am wondering why.

• (1330)

[*English*]

The Chair: Nancy.

Ms. Nancy Cameron: I think there are many reasons why things have... I wouldn't say entirely that they have not changed, but they have changed very little. I still see an existing attitude towards women that has not changed, an attitude towards aboriginal women that has not changed, systemic beliefs about how to treat women that have not changed, and policies and practices that have not changed. There are many things. What I see is that there have been attempts to make those changes, and then other things happen that pull us back.

Because the numbers of women who are being abused are still enormous and unacceptable, because women continue to live in poverty—if not more poverty and more extensive poverty—because there are still difficulties in the justice system, and because there still are children being removed just because of systemic beliefs or oppression of women as I see... I mean, some things have improved, yes. Back when I started doing this work 30 years ago, there were different views on child care, and there weren't as many transition

houses. We have more shelters now. Maybe we have more treatment centres. Maybe it's more common to have more women who have post-secondary education. Some of those things, though, still exist, and they exist in large numbers within the aboriginal community, and I think that absolutely has to improve, as the women have spoken to here.

Even though those things are improving, there is still abuse of women. There still is.

Ms. Darla Laughlin: I'd just like to speak to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. One of the important things that's going to have to happen in order for that declaration to do aboriginal women any justice and to be helpful is that committees such as yours have to refer to it when you're speaking on our behalf, and you have to use that document. Although it's not a legal document, it should be.

As an aboriginal woman, I think about the so-called apology we received. Yes, we received an apology that many horrific things happened through the colonization process and the residential schools, but the reasons why were negated. No one said in that apology, "We did this because we wanted to steal your land." That was negated. Those are the things that the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is going to bring forward. And until Canada airs its dirty laundry about what's really happening in this country, it's going to be very difficult. We're here to fight that fight and we're not going to go away. We have young people who are coming right behind us who are going to continue this work.

So I implore you to use that document for our women in a good way.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Darla.

We have 30 seconds, if someone wants to make a quick...

Hilla.

Ms. Hilla Kerner: Yes, I want to say that I don't have much hope. I'm joining Darla's call, because the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in November 2008, in an unprecedented step, called on Canada, within a year, to conduct a national public inquiry about the missing and murdered aboriginal women, and to raise the welfare rate. Nothing has happened. It's been almost two and a half years since then.

Unless there is strong pressure from Parliament and members of the public, those UN convention calls are useless.

• (1335)

The Chair: Thank you, Hilla.

That's it.

Now we move on to Ms. Grewal for the Conservatives.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The funding issue came up, so I would just like to let you know that since 2007, through Status of Women Canada, the government has funded about 150 projects, totalling almost \$28.7 million, for work to eliminate violence against women. We are also supporting prevention, providing shelters on reserves, and funding victim services.

We want to ensure that the justice system meets the needs of aboriginal women and their families. Are there any legal reforms, legislative changes, that you can recommend to this committee?

Ms. Hilla Kerner: I'm sorry, I want to correct you. It's true that all the services—

The Chair: Hilla, I'm sorry.

Have you finished with your question, Madam Grewal?

Mrs. Nina Grewal: I have finished with my question.

The Chair: All right. Just put your hand up if you want to speak, because I should really keep things flowing nicely so that one person doesn't answer all the questions.

Hilla, go ahead.

Ms. Hilla Kerner: I'm sorry. I come from a culture where you just speak.

It's true that all these services have been funded by Status of Women Canada, but in the last year Status of Women Canada refused and rejected all applications from women's groups and women's services who are for advocacy. It means there is no federal government funding for women's groups that want to advance the status of women or to advance women victims of male violence. Those services that have been implemented and funded cannot replace the work of women's groups seeking advocacy and equality.

Ms. Nancy Cameron: I'd just like to add that \$28.7 million—if you look at the cost of running our programs—is a very small amount of money to be adequately supporting the staff in doing these programs. With that amount of money, it typically means that the woman herself is not going to be making a very high wage, and there wouldn't be many additional dollars for training or for resources that would go along with that kind of money. So even though it sounds like a large amount of money, when it's divided up, it isn't much money for the various programs.

The Chair: Thank you, Nancy.

Darla.

Ms. Darla Laughlin: I'd just like to say that I'm happy to hear that there is money coming forward for aboriginal women's programming. But I'd also like to add that both Vancouver Rape Relief and WAVAW, the only rape crisis centres in Vancouver, serving a very large population, have not received any funding. This is one of the major cities in Canada, so that speaks for itself, I think.

The Chair: Thank you, Darla.

Lisa.

Ms. Lisa Yellow-Quill: About those moneys, did you say they were for on-reserve or off-reserve groups?

Mrs. Nina Grewal: On-reserve.

Ms. Lisa Yellow-Quill: So on-reserve; okay. There are many.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: I have one more question. We have been hearing about violence against aboriginal women for only a few years now. Previously the problem seemed to exist only in the background.

Why is this the case? Why have we been hearing about this and talking about violence against aboriginal women for only almost half a dozen years now?

The Chair: Lisa, and then Darla.

Ms. Lisa Yellow-Quill: In terms of the \$28 million or so that's been divvied up between over 500 bands across the nation, what I want to say is that those are the band-aid solutions that we don't want, right? We're looking for structural change, attitudinal change, socio-political change. That's what we're hoping the moneys would be invested into, as well as the shelters on reserve and off reserve.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: No, what I mean is that this problem has existed there for quite a long time. Why have we heard about this problem only for the past half a dozen years? This has been there for a long time.

Ms. Lisa Yellow-Quill: What problem?

Mrs. Nina Grewal: The problem of violence against aboriginal women.

• (1340)

The Chair: Go ahead, Darla.

Ms. Darla Laughlin: Well, there's been violence against aboriginal women in this country for 500 years. The reason behind why we are, I guess, only hearing about it...

I've heard about it my whole entire life, being an aboriginal woman, and my ancestors before me heard about it. I think there's been a huge blanket lifted off the eyes of some of our Canadian people. I think what needs to happen is that there needs to be mainstream education and curriculum in the high school education system that portrays a real portrait of colonization, the residential school and its legacy. This legacy is going to go on. People are going to suffer from the legacy of the residential school for a very long time.

Aboriginal women have been victims of violence for decades. This is not a new subject. Unfortunately, the media do not portray what's happening in our country. Most aboriginal issues are swept under the carpet. Most people don't hear about them. It's no secret that women were murdered and went missing in Vancouver, in this city where we sit right now, for decades. The police knew about it. People knew about it. Politicians knew about it. But it wasn't until a non-aboriginal woman went missing that something was done about it.

So once again, the responsibility rests within our government to take action and to let the citizens of this country know what's going on in this country with aboriginal people.

The Chair: Thank you, Darla.

We have 30 seconds left. I'll go to Hilla, and then I'll go back to Lisa.

Ms. Hilla Kerner: I've been here five years. I cannot speak to why it was not an issue on the government agenda before that. It's just ongoing colonizing and indifference towards aboriginal women. It's just a symptom.

Ms. Lisa Yellow-Quill: You know, as far back as I remember... I think I was born when Helen Betty Osborne went missing—the violence against an aboriginal woman in northern Manitoba. Then of course there was an inquiry as a result of it.

So violence against aboriginal women isn't new. It's always been on the agenda. I think it's gotten louder as a result of aboriginals standing up.

Prior to that, in terms of media attention and so forth, aboriginal peoples weren't getting that very much—unless you wanted to prove a stereotype—i.e., "Look how sick these people are. You think you've got it bad? Check out this." There were those kinds of things and attitudes, right?

I just think that maybe the Conservative government is just now open to hearing about it, because violence against aboriginal women has always been on the agenda. It has always been very, very present. This is how—this is *how*—Canada was built. You had to oppress us. You had to kill us.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we will move on to Ms. Davies for the NDP.

Ms. Libby Davies: Thank you very much.

First of all, to all of you, thank you for coming today. You're major organizations in our city, so the work you do is really important.

I'm very tempted to continue the discussion on the funding side because I think we could spend hours on that, on the lack of advocacy funding and the lack of core support, but I also want to switch gears just so we get as many sorts of responses and issues into the record as possible.

But I did want to say that I really hear the sort of level of cynicism that there is, right? You know: another committee, another parliamentary hearing, and another report... This goes on and on. I think that's partly our challenge. How do we deal with that? I mean, we're all people who want to see change, and yet we're dealing with this culture of denial. We're dealing with these huge systemic issues that just go on, and it's about how you tackle that. I just wanted to put that out there.

The question I have—because a number of you raised it—is about the relationship with law enforcement, because that is so important. It's not the only thing, but in every single group that I've ever talked with about violence against women, particularly aboriginal women, the police come up: how they respond, how they don't respond.... For sure, there are good individual officers out there. We've met them. There are individual people within those systems who are doing their very best. But there is a bigger issue about law enforcement, and we do have a couple of fairly senior RCMP officers speaking later, so we will have an opportunity to actually question them.

There's a question I have for you, though. You guys are very active in Vancouver. What kind of official relationship do you have with the police? Is there any sort of ongoing process whereby you

can actually bring forward issues of an overall nature about how law enforcement is done to deal with this whole issue of women who are already victims being re-victimized, in effect, or being charged with whatever because they're poor, because they're sex workers, or whatever their situation?

Is there any relationship you have? Now, you're all in Vancouver, so I presume that mostly it would be with the Vancouver Police Department, and of course outside Vancouver it would be the RCMP, but it's just such an important element in what we're talking about, the relationship with law enforcement overall. I just wonder if (a) you have any experience, and (b) if you have any suggestions about what you want to see changed that we can focus on, pick up, put in the report, and make sure we follow up on.

• (1345)

The Chair: Lisa.

Ms. Lisa Yellow-Quill: I wonder what the implications are of answering that question.

Ms. Libby Davies: None, I hope.

Ms. Lisa Yellow-Quill: Well, I don't know...I'm just a bit of a conspiracy theorist.

Ms. Libby Davies: Say what you feel comfortable saying. I just want to give you an opportunity to say what you think needs to be done.

Ms. Lisa Yellow-Quill: Battered Women's Support Services is a member of the Valentine's memorial march committee. Members of the committee, other community members, and organizations have meetings with the VPD around those issues, questioning their structure, the police structure, the jurisdictional issues, and the continued and ongoing violence against women in the downtown east side and existing Vancouver areas. It's a slow process and it's new. They're trying to build trust with us, and I don't know... accountability.

The Chair: Lisa, can you keep speaking into the microphone? When you turn aside, we don't hear you at all.

Ms. Lisa Yellow-Quill: Okay.

Do you have anything to say...?

The Chair: Hilla?

Ms. Hilla Kerner: Libby, I want to encourage you to ask those officers who will be coming today, because on Friday the VPD had a big community meeting, and they tried to brag that only in the downtown east side there were 666 reported cases, and they showed what happens before they get before the courts. I believe only 50 cases were actually brought before a judge. So I don't know how they think it's going to be a positive spin on their work.

The rate of dropout, before those complaints go before judges, is enormous. First and foremost, how many women are complaining, and how many actually get justice in the criminal justice system?

The second point is there is no civilian oversight of police, and it's crucial in a democracy. It's crucial for civilians to have an ability to oversee police work. The two police complaints commissioners have nothing in their reports about violence against women, although we know that women's groups and victims of male violence, including the Battered Women's Support Services and Rape Relief, are constantly filing complaints. They have no echo in the police complaints commissions.

We have great expectations from the Oppal commission. We're hoping it will bring many women's groups standing. I think the decision will be made next month. You have the framework agreement on women's equality, male violence against women, and state responsibilities, through the police, to protect women.

• (1350)

Ms. Libby Davies: Do any of your organizations have—

The Chair: I think Darla wanted to say something.

Ms. Hilla Kerner: We don't have a formal relationship. We're not interested in that.

Ms. Darla Laughlin: I'd just like to add that I think it really comes down to the responsibility of the policing forces to find out exactly what it is we do and how we do it. I think there needs to be more than just sensitivity training on a cultural value. There are some real losses in understanding throughout the judicial system as well, which are totally and completely cultural.

We have traditional youth who are bearing their banners and wearing their headbands in society, in Vancouver, who are being harassed as gang members. These are kids who were born into ceremony, who are using their headbands for ceremonial purposes. So the police are not even aware of those types of understandings, that knowledge. It's really important that there be a critical understanding of aboriginal people as distinct.

I'm Cree and Ojibway, and I have no idea about the ways of Coast Salish people, as far as my own inherent rights go. So understanding that every aboriginal woman who is in the downtown east side, or anywhere in Canada, for that matter, is not going to have the same belief systems, or understandings, or ways of being is crucial.

This is unceded aboriginal territory. The people who belong here have a right to be understood. That's not happening, and it is creating further violence.

We have many instances. I run two youth groups, and out of those youth groups, 90% of our aboriginal youth females have been dog-bitten, by dogs from the RCMP and from the VPD. I think there needs to be much more work done than just sensitivity training. I think it's the responsibility of the RCMP and the VPD to look for that training.

The Chair: Thank you. That's the end of that round.

We're going into a second round, and it's going to be a five-minute round. I would like to ask everyone to please work within the time. We've gone a minute over time on every one. The point is that we have other people waiting to come in to other panels. As we bump the panels later and later, it's not fair to the people who have been waiting. So can I ask you, please—and I know the sensitivity of the issue, and I'm fully aware and understand the emotions behind it—to

try to be as concise as you possibly can with your questions and answers. Thank you.

Now we'll go to the second round. The second round is a five-minute round, as opposed to the last one, which was a seven-minute round. I will begin with Ms. Neville for the Liberals.

Hon. Anita Neville: I just quickly want to ask something.

Darla, you made a comment at the end that 90% have been dog-bitten. What does that mean?

Ms. Darla Laughlin: I mean by police dogs.

Hon. Anita Neville: Oh, okay. Thank you.

I have a comment and then a question.

My colleague across the way asked why we haven't heard a lot about it. I would beg to differ. I think the issue has been very much on the table for a long period of time, and I would say that it's amazing that this is getting as much play at the moment, given the lack of funding for advocacy groups right now, and the fear, on the part of many organizations who are funded by the federal government, to speak out for fear of further retribution. So I think those of you who are here for being here, and I think this issue has been there at various levels for a long period of time.

I want to ask you something that we haven't quite addressed here. In the late nineties there was an inquiry done by the Minister of Justice at the time. People were involved and met with aboriginal women and dealt with the issue of violence against aboriginal women. I was told by one wise woman who was very intimately involved in these discussions that the reality for many aboriginal women is that incest and violence in their homes is viewed as a norm of life. You may choose to differ with that.

My question to you is this. Is that still the experience that you have—or perhaps not at all—that aboriginal women have come, over the years, to accept violence and incest as how a family operates? If so, what do we do? And if not, good.

• (1355)

The Chair: Darla.

Ms. Darla Laughlin: First of all, I'd like to just state that I don't think that incest and childhood sexual abuse is normal in any family, aboriginal or otherwise.

Hon. Anita Neville: If I can interrupt you, Darla, it's not that I'm saying it's normal, but it is viewed by many to be the norm in their...

Ms. Darla Laughlin: Does this happen? Absolutely, it happens, and we know this is one of the prevalent pieces that was handed down to the aboriginal people of this country through the legacy of residential schools. I think those are the things in that legacy that need to be addressed.

Is there sexual assault that happens within aboriginal families? Absolutely, there is. Is it the norm? I don't know the stats for that, and I don't know how we would even begin to collect stats for that, with it being such a sensitive subject. However, I think these are the issues.

As far as counselling, I can say that 95% of my clients have suffered from childhood sexual abuse due to the legacy of residential schools, and this is why we're here asking for assistance. This legacy is so detrimental to an entire nation of people that I can't even describe how I feel about the need.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

The Chair: Lisa.

Ms. Lisa Yellow-Quill: In response to the normalization of sexual abuse and other forms of violence that happen in our intimate family homes, I don't think it's.... Of course, that extends into our community and so forth. I think the problem is that we talk around it being a normalization, but I think the mechanisms of denial within society, within that abusive relationship, within the families and so on—the denial and the oppression of the issue of that sexualized violence and sexual abuse—are the normalization. I don't think we walk around thinking it's normal. I think how we deny it becomes normal and how we talk about it becomes normal. When we talk about it being a normalized state, then it becomes normal, but it's not.

The Chair: Thank you, Lisa. We are now past five minutes, so I'm going to go to Ms. Cadman.

Ms. Cadman for the Conservatives.

Ms. Dona Cadman (Surrey North, CPC): Thank you very much.

I would like to know who is the main abuser of aboriginal women. Is it aboriginal men? Is it white men? Is it aboriginal women? Who?

The Chair: Dona, have you finished?

Ms. Dona Cadman: I think you also have to get over it a bit, in a way. Yes, you were wronged, very wronged. People have apologized. What more do you want?

Ms. Lisa Yellow-Quill: A change in legislation, justice—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Lisa. I'll come to you in a minute. We have to let Dona finish.

Ms. Dona Cadman: That's fine. Go ahead.

• (1400)

The Chair: Please put up your hand, because the person with the fastest voice gets in and we have to try to let everyone have an answer. I know we haven't heard from Leslie and Nancy for a long time.

Lisa, go ahead, and then Darla.

Ms. Lisa Yellow-Quill: I apologize for my fast voice.

We're not victims. We just know the truth. These systems are still in place. Canada still has legislation from way back still in place. We still live under the Indian Act, which dictates a lot of our lives. It dictates who is going to dictate in future generations.

We live and function within those parameters. We're not victims. We're not victims of it. We exist, and we exist and we live within it. We live in poverty. We live in marginalization. We live to be able to sit here and talk about the issue. The issue is that Canada marginalizes aboriginal women. Colonization is violence upon our mother, the earth, violence on all our nations, and violence on us.

As I just said a little while ago, we had to.... The settlers at that time had to remove us from our positions in our communities in order for them to be able to step in. It was done in many ways.

We're not victims. I just want you to know that when we talk about the Canadian government being the main perpetrator, it's not that we are standing here talking like we can't get over it.

Ms. Dona Cadman: Okay, yes, but every time a government changes, it's that government's fault; it's the next government's fault. So where are you starting from? Are you starting from the beginning, or are you blaming us now?

The Chair: Darla.

Ms. Darla Laughlin: First of all, what I'd like to say is that I haven't gotten over it yet because it's continuing on from government to government. What I'd like to see is some attitudinal change from people who tell me to just get over it. It's not over. There has not been change. People are not getting what they need in order to heal, and that's why we're here today. We're here to talk about what it is that we as aboriginal women need.

We need a government.... There have been many governments before you and before your government. We need a government that is willing to stand up and say enough is enough. We need a government to stand up and say it's not all right to sell aboriginal women and to see them missing and murdered. It's not all right for us to take their children away from them. It's not all right for us to continue running our government on the backs of their resources and not help. This is what we're here to do today.

We're not saying that we're blaming your government. We are blaming the governments in general of this country for not standing up before 2011 to take notice of a 500-year-old problem, for women who have been murdered and missing for over two decades, for families who are in the middle of a breakdown, for ministries who do not support women to live in a position where they're not forced into poverty, for the children of these women in rural communities. We have reserves in this country that don't have schools for children, that don't have clean drinking water for their children to drink, for nursing mothers to drink.

These are the issues we're talking about. This is what's important for this committee to understand. It is not okay to say get over it, because we're not over it.

The Chair: Hilla.



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Standing Committee on the Status of Women

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EVIDENCE

Thursday, January 20, 2011

—
Chair

The Honourable Hedy Fry

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Thursday, January 20, 2011

• (0810)

[English]

The Acting Chair (Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.)): Good morning. We'll start the meeting.

My name is Anita Neville. I'm a member of Parliament from... from where?

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Acting Chair (Hon. Anita Neville): From Winnipeg South Centre. I don't know where we are; we've been on the move a fair bit.

Welcome. Thanks to all of you for being here on an early, cold morning. We very much appreciate it.

This is the 50th meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. As you are all undoubtedly aware, we have been travelling literally right across the country speaking to the issue of violence against aboriginal women.

As for Yellowknife, I've been up here a number of times, but we knew that Yellowknife would be an important stop along our way. We're anxious to hear what you have to say.

We have four presentations. We're on a fairly tight timeline, but I'm going to suggest that you take seven minutes to make your presentations; I don't know what you've prepared. Following that, there will be questions by members of the committee. If you don't get in everything that you had hoped to say, you can use the question period to add to it.

Let's begin with Lorraine.

Lorraine, we're delighted to see you again. It's nice to have you here.

Ms. Lorraine Phaneuf (Executive Director, Status of Women Council of the Northwest Territories): Thank you for giving us the opportunity to present.

I am with the Status of Women Council of the NWT, and although we don't do front-line service, we do a lot of advocacy with women who come to us after they've probably exhausted all other resources.

Aboriginal women who come in for advocacy have indicated to us they are being terrorized in their homes, in the streets, and in the workplace. When they are thinking about and planning on leaving an abusive partner, they face many barriers and challenges in terms of housing, finances, and general well-being. It is important for women to have a safe place to go when they are fleeing from abuse.

Once out, they need lots of supports, both physical and emotional, to regain their power and start over. In Yellowknife we have both shelter and transitional housing, but not all communities have shelters. RCMP, or resources that are easily attainable. This year 314 women and 253 children used the shelter services across the territories.

INAC provides operational funding to a network of 35 shelters used by first nations women who ordinarily live on reserve. In the Northwest Territories most communities have a large demographic of aboriginal women. We have one small reserve that could potentially apply for this fund of almost \$56 million, from which first nations communities are effectively excluded because a majority of first nations women of the northern territories simply do not live on established reserves.

In the NWT, five shelters service an area of over 1.17 million square kilometres containing 33 communities. Current shelter programming is limited in meeting the needs of women and children who are struggling with family violence in their homes. This limitation is compounded by a broad range of functioning among the shelters, which means women in some shelters receive more support than do women in others. For instance, some shelters operate with only three staff members and are able to offer only a safe place to stay, whereas other shelters are functioning at a level that allows for the implementation of limited supportive programming for residents of the shelter.

Currently there are very few services that are dedicated to the issue of family violence intervention, prevention, and risk management in the NWT. Rates of violence are high, yet there are few other options for families struggling with family violence.

The rate of reported sexual assault in the NWT in 2008 was more than six times the national rate. Most communities do have one of the following resources based in their community: a nurse, social worker, community wellness worker, and/or an RCMP officer.

With limited support and many responsibilities, the turnover rate is very high. Residents of these small communities also have limited means to travel to another community, meaning that at times they are often not able to access any additional supports or services that might theoretically be available to them.

Eleven communities in the north do not have RCMP and rely on members to come from other communities. Further, aboriginal women suffer from the most severe, life-threatening forms of violence, including being sexually assaulted, beaten, choked, or attacked. In some communities the rate of violence against aboriginal women is as high as 90%.

Council would recommend that funding be increased and that there be policy changes regarding the on-reserve funding so that shelter services and communities in the territories can do their important work of reducing violence against aboriginal women living off reserve. We respectfully request that the committee review INAC policies within the family violence prevention program to address this issue. We need to work on culturally appropriate strategies that include fair and equitable services to all aboriginal women living in jurisdictions that lack services. We need to consider a national strategy to increase awareness and prevention of violence against women and to maximize services for family violence prevention. We need coordination among all levels of government, non-governmental agencies, service agencies, police forces, aboriginal governments, as well as national and other aboriginal organizations.

The Status of Women Council of the NWT co-chairs the Coalition Against Family Violence with the Native Women's Association of NWT. Since 2000 the Government of the NWT has been working in formal partnerships with various service agencies, non-governmental organizations, and interested professionals to develop and implement specific strategies and action plans to improve service delivery to victims of family violence. Currently the family violence action plan phase two is in place.

The Coalition against Family Violence was a partner in the development of the family violence action plan phase two. It also helps monitor the plan, and has begun the work to present further recommendations that will be presented to the Government of the Northwest Territories.

• (0815)

Lyda Fuller, executive director of the YWCA in Yellowknife, is a founding member of the Coalition Against Family Violence. She has been an integral stakeholder in family violence plans one and two, and she will now continue.

Ms. Lyda Fuller (Executive Director, YWCA Yellowknife; Representative, Northwest Territories Coalition Against Family Violence): Thank you.

As Lorraine said, since around 1999 the non-government organizations have been working on social issues relating to family violence and engaging the Government of the Northwest Territories, especially the social envelope departments, to improve social conditions relating to this pervasive issue.

Originally, the coalition began by doing research. We wanted to describe the nature, extent, and impacts of violence against women in the territory. We released a report in December of 2002 called *Family Violence in the NWT: A Survey of Costs, Services, Data Collection and Issues for Action*. Some of the key findings of that report helped us to develop the ongoing work. Those findings included: a lack of understanding in the territory about the dynamics of family violence, and the presence of attitudes and beliefs that perpetuated it; an underfunding of the shelters for abused women, which led to staff turnover and to shelters doing bingos in order to keep their doors open; a need for improved and consistent collaboration so that there wouldn't be gaps in collaboration; a need for more resources devoted to children, youth, families, and communities; and a concern for the response of the justice system.

The research led to the development of recommendations. We tabled in the legislative assembly an NWT action plan on family violence for 2003 to 2006. Actions were around changes to policy and legislation; expanding the reach of the coalition outside of Yellowknife; capacity-building for communities; culturally appropriate training; prevention through support for healthy family relationships; education and awareness for the public; and service system enhancements for women, men, and children.

This led the government to provide an official response, called "A Framework for Action", in 2004, which described and coordinated the efforts of various social envelope departments on 71 actions that they agreed to take. An implementation steering committee was formed by the social envelope departments, but it also included two members from the non-government associations to meet and talk about progress that was being made.

Unfortunately, a number of the 71 issues were things that were already in progress and sort of tangential to the issue of family violence. However, real gains were made. New legislation included the Prevention Against Family Violence Act, which allowed women to get emergency protection orders and have the partner leave the home so that the women and children could stay in the home.

We started developing inter-agency protocols so that we could work together to better address family violence in Yellowknife, with templates for the communities. Research was summarized around programs for men who were abusive. So we felt that we'd made progress. We entered into phase two with another set of recommendations through 2012. That was funded. We all worked together to try to condense 17 critical actions into the funding available. That happened. We are now embarking on phase three.

I guess when we look at engaging with the government, one of the barriers we have to overcome is the turnover here on both sides of the table. We need to keep people connected and engaged; it's easy to lose momentum when you have the levels of turnover that we have.

• (0820)

The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)): Perhaps we can follow up on some of the other things you have to say during the question and answer period, because we have gone over the allotted time.

Ms. Lyda Fuller: Okay.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now, for the Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association. Sandra Tucker.

Ms. Sandra Tucker (Manager, Abuse Prevention Policy and Programs, Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association): Good morning, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Ms. Tucker, I'll give you a two-minute warning when you have two minutes left, and then one. There's leeway, but it helps you keep your head in the space.

Ms. Sandra Tucker: Absolutely.

Thank you to the honourable committee members for allowing me to present today. I am the manager of the abuse prevention policy programs at Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada. On behalf of our president, Elisapee Sheutiapik, I wish to extend our thanks to the committee for the opportunity to present on the development and implementation of our national strategy to prevent abuse in Inuit communities.

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada is a national organization that represents all Inuit women across Canada. Established in 1984, our mandate is to foster greater awareness of the needs of Inuit women and to advocate for their equitable participation in community, regional, and national concerns.

Pauktuutit is active in a wide range of areas. Files include health policy and programs, gender equality, violence and abuse prevention, protection of cultural and traditional knowledge, economic development, climate change, and leading in policy development and community social change.

Since its inception in 1984, abuse and violence prevention has been a high priority, yet a lack of recognition and resources has caused change to be painfully slow. Those who work in abuse prevention and community services—shelter workers, crisis counsellors, Inuit healers, and police—are discouraged, and nowhere is this discouragement more acute than in the north.

In the north, for example, the circuit court system can be a significant barrier to accessing justice for Inuit women. Furthermore, dynamics of family violence and abuse can be different in smaller communities that are facing the unique challenges and circumstances of overcrowded housing, poverty, and high costs of living, combined with lack of basic community programming. In addition, over 70% of northern and remote communities do not have a safe or emergency shelter for women to access when fleeing abuse.

New and emerging issues for Inuit women are related to resource extraction activities, transient workers, and the associated increases in sexual and domestic violence, exploitation, and substance abuse and alcohol addictions. A considerable sustained effort with adequate resources continues to be urgently needed.

The strategy was created through consultation and collaboration with those most affected by abuse and those whose mandates include prevention and treatment—safe shelters, justice, and corrections. Pauktuutit brought together a multidisciplinary team of health and social service workers, RCMP, court services, safe shelter operators, and Inuit associations from across Inuit Nunangat. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation, NAHO, and observers from the Inuit relations secretariat and programs branch at INAC, Justice Canada, and Qullit Nunavut Status of Women were also involved. We all share a common interest in preventing abuse in Inuit communities and collaborating on the development and the implementation of this unique community-based strategy.

The strategy is based on the six Inuit principles of healing and working together: working together for the common good, environmental wellness, service to others and leadership, empowerment, resourcefulness and adaptability, and cooperation and consensus.

The strategy began with a vision of an Inuit society of healthy individuals who respect the past and embrace the future as Inuit, and who live in supportive families and caring communities where violence and abuse are rare occurrences and are dealt with swiftly and justly, according to the Inuit ways. Abusers are held accountable for their actions, and both victims and abusers are supported in their healing process.

The goal of the strategy is a steady reduction of violence and abuse in Inuit communities and the eventual predominance of caring, healthy, and respectful relationships. We envision the attainment of these goals by meeting objectives outlined in the strategy: to develop sustainable relationships among partner organizations that are committed to the reduction of violence; and to coordinate efforts so that resources can be best used to the best advantage, and implement effective and culturally appropriate services and programs to prevent abuse and promote healing.

In addition, the national strategy sets out strategic priorities for the implementation. Our first priority is to make abuse in Inuit communities a priority issue, which we have done. Priorities also include: to raise awareness and reduce the tolerance of abuse; to invest in training and capacity development; to sustain front-line workers and community services; to deliver services that heal Inuit; and to expand programs that build on Inuit strengths that prevent abuse.

•(0825)

The accompanying guide, "Sharing Knowledge, Sharing Wisdom", provides inspiration, ideas, and examples of successful initiatives that can help individuals, groups, and communities implement the national strategy. The guide includes tools to use designed for Inuit communities. They include information on community mobilization; advice on the national advisory committee on advocating for change; facts and statistics that can be used to convince others; some thoughts on the root causes of abuse in Inuit communities; Inuit principles of healing and working together; steps in planning activities and actions; and sources of information and help.

Since 2006 Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada has used the national strategy as a guiding tool in the development and implementation of projects aimed at abuse and violence.

In 2006-07, through the support of Status of Women Canada, Pauktuutit implemented the violence against women and children project. The objective of this project was to identify promising practices in violence and abuse prevention. In total, we consulted 11 communities, and each community formed its own coordinating committee in order to address the needs of the community they live in.

During the same period, we undertook a broad dissemination of the national strategy, including presentations at various events and workshops. Because of the national strategy, we began the process that led to the development of the national Inuit residential schools healing strategy. It has been implemented predominantly through support of projects by INAC.

Concurrent to this work, we began our work on the women's shelter component, including the creation of the National Inuit Women's Shelter Association and the development of our "Making our Shelters Strong" training module for front-line workers. We continue to work on these two components. The shelter training has now been delivered in each of the four regions of Inuit Nunangat, and there continues to be an ongoing demand for the training, not only by shelters but also by various community and governmental agencies and departments.

In response to participant feedback, we are currently developing a web-based training module, as well as peer-to-peer user forums for shelter workers and a single point of contact for the shelter association. This site will also contain a blog, which will serve as a means for us to disseminate emerging resources and practices to the shelters across the north.

We have also undertaken what we term as on-the-land projects. In the last fiscal year we were able to take two groups of women, one group aged 20 to 55 and the other group aged 55 to 82, for a week-long on-the-land project. Our younger women's project had women taking the leadership role in family violence, where we integrated traditional activities of kamik-making and being on the land. We combined that with education, resource building, and information sharing, so that the women could take the leadership role.

Our most successful project to date has been with regard to elder abuse awareness, where we took eight elders on the land—and our youngest was 82—for a week-long expedition out into the country just outside of Kuujuaq, Quebec, where our elder women not only returned to their traditional practices but we were able to provide them with information, resources, and a safe place to talk about the elder abuse occurring.

I'm going to stop here. If you have any questions, by all means.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Tucker.

We go now to the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority, Barbara Lacey and Sheila Nelson.

Who's going to speak for the group, Ms. Nelson?

Mrs. Sheila Nelson (Manager, Community and Family Services, Child Protection Program, Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority): I guess I'm nominated to do that. I'll start off.

The Chair: All right. I think everyone seems to have gone ten minutes. I'm not going to give you ten minutes, but we're going to play with it.

• (0830)

Mrs. Sheila Nelson: I won't take ten minutes.

Good morning, everyone. On behalf of the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the committee for the invitation to appear before you today.

I'd like to begin by saying that as a service provider mandated to carry out the roles and responsibilities of protecting children, we see the devastating impact that family violence has on aboriginal women and their children daily. Violence against women has a ripple effect. Violence creates fear, and this fear impacts all women, including the service providers whose role it is to support and protect them. Our child protection staff is currently all women. Acts of violence tend to trigger emotions for people, and on numerous occasions I have witnessed staff being intimidated by the high-risk situations that some of the aboriginal women they work with are faced with every day.

We see and hear many reasons why aboriginal women find it difficult to end an abusive relationship. There is fear of retaliation, not only from the perpetrator of the violent crime but also from community members as well as members of their own family. Often the women lack resources to support themselves and their children with the basic necessities of life. We see some aboriginal women who have tried to leave abusive relationships only to return because they didn't feel they received the support from their family, friends, and the agencies tasked to help them build lives free from violence.

A number of the aboriginal women we see have poor self-esteem due to a history of witnessing and experiencing violent acts since they were young children. To ease the pain, they sometimes turn to substances such as alcohol, street drugs, prescription medications, or solvents. Unfortunately, doing this can in turn have a spiralling effect, and quite often it's the reason their children are apprehended.

In 2010 Yellowknife Health and Social Services received 74 reports of violence occurring in homes where children were present. This number does not reflect the reality within which we work. The majority of these calls came from law enforcement when they were called to homes where there was family violence. A large number of the reports we receive are referred because of neglect or alcohol-related issues. Once a report is investigated, we learn that family violence is also prevalent, and it is often the underlying cause of the neglect.

In December 2010, just one month ago, our agency had 51 active family service files. Out of this number, 34 of the families had been identified as having ongoing family violence issues, which is a contributing risk factor to the safety of the mothers and their children. These families have a total of 71 children who have been exposed to or affected by domestic violence in one form or another.

Children who live with domestic violence face numerous risks, such as the risk of exposure to the traumatic events, the risk of neglect—which is often the reason given when we receive a report from someone who is concerned about a situation—along with the risk of being directly abused.

In order to develop solutions that will empower aboriginal women to sustain themselves, they need to be provided with tools that are readily available and easy to access. I can't stress that enough. It is important that aboriginal people be respected and listened to when they share with others what is in the best interests of aboriginal people.

It is equally important that perpetrators of violent acts be held accountable. Programming needs to be accessible in small communities for all parties, for without some form of change in this regard, aboriginal women and children will continue to be at risk of harm. It's imperative that the Standing Committee on the Status of Women continue its efforts to support the human rights of aboriginal women to be protected from acts of violence.

To the aboriginal women who have suffered acts of violence, lost family members, and overcome challenges they have faced along life's journey, we salute you. As an agency, we will continue to do our part to advocate on behalf of aboriginal people in order to get the services they deserve to deal with the conflict issues we see every day.

I thank you for your time.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That was great. You were under five minutes.

♦(0835)

Mrs. Barbara Lacey (Manager, Clinical Supervisor, Community Mental Health and Addictions, Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority): Can I take the other five?

The Chair: You'll get your chance. As we go into the question session...

Oh, you wanted to do another few minutes. Fine. I thought it was just Ms. Nelson alone. You have time. Go ahead.

Mrs. Barbara Lacey: Thank you.

I'm the manager for Community Mental Health and Addictions for Yellowknife Health and Social Services. Community Mental Health and Addictions is made up of family counselling. Family counselling provides individual work to men and women as well as couples therapy. We do the mental health work for children for Yellowknife Health and Social Services, so 30% of our referrals are from child and family services for work with children. And the children they're referring to us are the children who, for the most part, have been victims of family violence.

The other issues that might show up could be grief, sexual abuse, at-risk behaviours, or not attending school. Those might be the primary factors that are identified, but family violence is most often behind them.

Reasons adults are referred include depression, stress, individual partners in relationships seeking support, grief, separation and divorce, and addictions. If we look behind those, most often there is the issue of family violence.

In the last three months alone, according to our intake person, who does same-day appointments—we've provided two same-day appointments daily, so someone can call in the morning if they're in crisis and get an appointment—she's seen 19 aboriginal women

living with family violence, and another ten aboriginal women have made it on to our wait list. That's just in the last three months.

I've been here only a year, so Yellowknife is very new to me, and I can speak only about Yellowknife. We have two communities, Lutsel K'e and Fort Res, which I've become familiar with. But when I have looked at our caseload for the year I've been here, at any point I could have pulled five or six men out of that caseload. If we had a group to support these men who have had issues of violence, that would be great. I know we're working with the justice people. I know there's a partnership to get this kind of a group going, but to me it's one of the significant missing links. So we really need to be supporting the men who have the issues of violence if we're going to make a difference to the family.

The second piece I have noticed missing—I've worked on task forces concerned with family violence since 1989—is the education groups. I know they were spoken about, but we don't have one in Yellowknife. If we don't have one in Yellowknife, we probably don't have one in the rest of the Northwest Territories. They're called survivor groups, and they're usually run by transition houses. So the women would maybe do some individual work with a counsellor, and then we'd refer them to this group program through transition services. They'd go through this education program, and then maybe they'd come back and do individual work. We don't have that kind of a group, and our shelters don't have the funding support or the staff support to run that kind of a program. We do individual work with these women, but I'd love to see a group program started. That doesn't mean that family counselling can't do it—we're looking at it—but it's tough to do everything.

We have a family violence protocol group, and we're working on a common tool, the ODARA tool, Ontario domestic assault risk assessment tool, which is wonderful. We are training across the Northwest Territories on how to use the tool. Having a common screening tool is very important, and I think we're doing great work on that.

Family counselling uses a screening tool for couples, so we have many. For one thing, we're still funded to do couple work, and there isn't that kind of funding anywhere else in the country. So that is a real blessing. We certainly need it here because of the family issues that we address. So we are still funded to do couple work, and we have a screening tool. With that screening tool, most of the couples are initially screened out for violence. It would be really nice to be able to do the education with the male partner around the violence issues, but so far we haven't been able to put that group together. And we need the training to put that group together. For me, those are big pieces that are missing.

Primary care is another project that Community Mental Health and Addictions is involved in. We've moved into this primary care clinic downtown, and we've moved family counselling in. That means that our physicians can refer clients coming in to see them to family counselling quite easily. We build the connections.

• (0840)

We did this exercise yesterday as a team where we were clients, and we all had of these case situations. We had to go around to housing, in one part of the YPCC, and income support somewhere else, and mental health somewhere else. I had 22 steps I had to take as a client to try to get what I needed, and in the end my children were taken away from me.

You know, we're trying to do primary care, and we're really trying to help, but if we look at the client... It's so cold out there, and there's no transportation. Housing in Yellowknife is very expensive. Employment is really tough to come by. I felt dizzy, absolutely dizzy, with those 22 steps, trying to get to all of the places I had to get to. In the end, I'd done everything I should have done—I'd gone for addiction help, I'd gone to mental health and income support, I'd talked to child and family, the whole deal—and still my kids were taken away.

So we've got lots to do.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Lacey. That was very interesting.

We're now going to go to the question and answer section. This is a seven-minute round. I'm going to be... Please look at me, because we can't keep going over. If we go over too much, then the next panel gets a shorter period of time. We need to remember that.

We will begin with Ms. Neville for the Liberals.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you, Hedy.

Thank you very much for your presentations. I'm sitting here trying to formulate a question. As you're undoubtedly aware, we've been on the road and we've heard about a number of situations, much of what you've identified here today—lack of resources, lack of staff, the need for more help.

One of the things I'm struck by, listening to you, and maybe I'm missing something, is that there seems to be a community willingness to coordinate, to plan, to work together that we haven't found in quite the same way in many other communities. In fact, in some it's been quite the opposite and quite disastrous.

The other thing, as I'm listening to you, is that you all represent service delivery organizations, and you talk about... One of you, and I think it was Lyda, made the comment that it's important that our clients be respected and listened to.

It was you, Sheila? I'm sorry.

One of the things we've heard on our travels is that aboriginal women particularly do not feel respected, do not feel listened to, do not feel valued by the communities, and are frequently marginalized and treated in a very disrespectful way.

We're just getting a half-an-hour view from five of you sitting here, but I guess I'd like to know a little more about the dynamics. If

I'm right in saying that you are working together, recognizing that your problems are not insignificant but that you're making a coordinated effort to address them, what's making that possible—if I'm right?

Ms. Lyda Fuller: I'd like to answer that.

I think the Coalition Against Family Violence has been very effective in having all of us work together. It's not easy. It takes a lot of work—it takes skill—among the members to compromise and to come to agreement. But the issue in the Northwest Territories is so pervasive and so impactful on the lives of women, and the front-line workers hear and experience so many chilling stories and examples, that it really motivates us to work together as a group.

We want to make progress in a planned way. Barb Lacey was talking about services for men who use abuse; well, the coalition has been working on that issue over a long period of time. We're finally now at the point where there's going to be a pilot project, but a huge amount of time has been spent in the development of a good program for that, a program that will be effective and that takes into account all the learnings across the country.

We had a real arm-wrestling experience when we were trying to fit those 17 action items into the amount of money. We knew that we had to support the existing shelters that were underfunded and we knew that the women keep asking us for services for their partners, so with limited funding, how do you do that?

Our government partners were at the tables with us. We finally came to an agreement that we would fund the shelters and seek outside funding to augment the territorial government funding for the development of the program for men who use abuse. We have heated debates and heated exchanges, but we are all really driven by what we see every day and by the pain for women, children, and whole communities—and for the men, too.

We're a small territory. We form relationships with each other, and trust develops over time. We work hard to try to preserve that and to move forward in ways that will really, at the end of the day, have a positive outcome for those women.

• (0845)

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

Does anybody else want to comment? Sandra?

Ms. Sandra Tucker: Yes, I'd like to comment as well. One of the things that Pauktuutit takes exceptional pride in is that any project, any program we deliver within the communities, starts with the communities.

All of our projects are driven by advisory committees made up of community members, local subject-matter experts, and input from our partners, which are often the land claims organizations, the GNWT, the GN, and the Nunavik Regional Government. We start off by going in and saying: "Here's an idea. Let's work together. You tell us what's going to work for you". We do that rather than going in and saying, "We think you need to do this".

This model has been exceptionally successful in that it creates community mobilization. From the inception of the project to the delivery, the end of the project, the community has a stake in what's going to happen. All of our projects are tailored to the needs of the specific communities. We'll go in with the model and that model gets adapted to what the community needs are.

Not unlike what Lyda was saying, we see it nationally that women are fearful of going into safe shelters—if they're even available in the northern communities—out of the fear that their children are going to be taken away. Even if they go to the shelter, the protocols and procedures of various organizations that need to come together in order to support a women's transition to safety are incongruent and often opposing. So you need to be on the housing list, but in order to get on the housing list you need a letter from income supports to say that you're going to get income support. But if your husband has damaged the residence you're at, you're still responsible for the arrears. It is a vicious cycle that keeps women down.

One of the major concerns that we've had, Anita—and we've spoken of it—is that lack of sustained funding for shelters. We have 53 northern remote fly-in communities. As of today, we have 14 operational shelters.

Hon. Anita Neville: Wow.

The Chair: Ms. Tucker, Ms. Neville, we've gone over time. Thank you.

We now have Madame Demers for the Bloc Québécois.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Good morning, ladies. Thank you for being here.

I am very surprised this morning to hear that so many people agree on the solutions needed to counter violence against aboriginal women, all the more so since certain organizations are local, recognized agencies. Indeed, we have not seen that anywhere else. It must be said that we have not heard from many agency representatives, be they local, provincial or from some other level of government; people did not come.

I am happy to welcome you here this morning, Ms. Nelson and Ms. Lacey. We are very pleased to know that you are working together. It is surprising, but it makes me very happy.

In other places, people want to get rid of others rather than help them. The other day, we learned that some physicians wanted to get all of the drug addicts out of Williams Lake. They want to eject them from the city rather than treat them. They are not going to be offered any treatment. If people arrive at the hospital after having taken any drug whatsoever, because they are injured or because they have broken an arm or a leg, they will not be treated; so there is no point even trying.

The situation is quite serious in several places. Women are being mistreated. Your coalition functions very well, but does it work as well within the community? Do you have the respect and support of the community? Does that support extend to the people your coalition seeks to help? You are looking for housing for the women you want to help. Are you finding affordable housing for these

women, places where they will be able to raise their children without fear?

You seem to be telling me that it is difficult. Is there racism in the community? We were told last night that Yellowknife has the highest average household income in Canada. If that is the case, how is it that aboriginal women and men are poor? Homes cost at least \$350,000. Who can afford a house at that price?

I would like you to answer those questions.

• (0850)

[English]

The Chair: Who would like to try that first?

Sheila, would you like to go?

Mrs. Sheila Nelson: Oh dear, that's a tough one. That's a tough question. Certainly the points that you've made are very well taken.

In my experience, working at the front line and managing a very good team of social workers, I find that when we go for services, the services are not as readily available as we would like them to be for the clientele we are tasked with servicing. Housing is definitely an issue. Yes, properties are expensive in Yellowknife. A lot of our families cannot afford to rent apartments. Unfortunately, we have one landlord in town who owns a lot of the buildings, so if you're evicted by that property owner, it's often difficult to find housing in another unit.

Personally, and I'm speaking from my own experience, I would like to see the departments work more closely together. I find that housing, income support, and social services through our Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority need to work out a system where the services for the families we're here to assist are more readily available.

Right now, as a last resort, families are referred to child and family services because the family doesn't have any housing. We try very, very hard not to bring children into foster care because of the fact there isn't housing available. Very often, social services is the one that ends up paying rental arrears, so people will have a place to live. It doesn't make sense to me.

We need more people at the table to build and develop a solution that is going to maintain the families who require services. It puts a lot of stress on people. Unfortunately, the stress that parents are experiencing impacts children. As much as we don't want to apprehend children, there are occasions when we do.

We have a lot of positive things going for us, don't get me wrong, but there are still areas where we could improve. I think if we worked more cooperatively as departments, we would provide better service overall.

• (0855)

The Chair: You have one and a half minutes left.

Ms. Lyda Fuller: I'd just like to acknowledge that housing is a huge issue here. If I could make one plea to the federal government, it would be for a national housing strategy.

Voices: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lyda Fuller: It's a huge issue for us, and it's going to get worse, because the federal funding for social housing is backing out. It will become strictly a territorial responsibility. So, please, we would love a national housing strategy.

I'd just like to comment about community engagement. It's difficult in the north to spread your impact out, especially to the small isolated communities. The four women's organizations have recently undertaken a three-year project with funding from Status of Women Canada, and supplemental funding from Justice Canada and INAC, to work with women in the 11 small communities without RCMP. We just started that work at the beginning of the summer. I am fascinated by how that's going. But the women are feeling supported. They said to us that we couldn't go in just once; we would have to be there for them. That's what we're doing. So we'll have lots to report down the road on that.

The Chair: I will now go to Mrs. Grewal, for the Conservatives.

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank all the witnesses for appearing today and sharing their insights with our committee on this very, very important issue.

I think we all agree that violence against aboriginal women is a very, very serious problem. Unfortunately, it's a very complicated problem with no easy solutions at all. I'm wondering if you could highlight any success stories taking place here in B.C., Yellowknife, and Alberta. They could be successful lessons, which we could then use throughout Canada.

Ms. Sandra Tucker: I firmly believe that the models our organization has developed can be applicable in any community across this country, particularly within aboriginal communities, be that first nations, Métis, or Inuit, because they are models designed for the community to put their input into and to tailor them the way they are. We also look at really integrating the cultural traditions and the cultural way of life back into our programming.

We're actually successful on both sides. One of the biggest successes we've had has actually been with the on-the-land projects, to the point where other government and territorial regional health boards have said that this is so successful—their communities are saying that they want more—that they're actually funding this to occur. We've gone in and we've presented it when we've piloted it in the communities. Now the communities are saying, "You know what? We see this."

Our communities are strong. The 53 northern and remote Inuit communities are strong. They are survivors. Although we have very, very few resources, they do amazing work. I think one of the things we need to take into perspective is that in the north, at a lot of our shelters, the woman can only stay for a maximum of six days. How do you arrange housing, income support, mental health, addictions, all of that, in six days? You don't. And that's given that a woman has access to these shelters. We have some communities that are....

All of our communities and fly-on and fly-out. I have yet to come across any abused woman who has \$5,000 or \$6,000 at her disposal to grab a plane ticket to get to the nearest shelter or to go to the south

to get away from abuse, where often she is abused again because of the vulnerability.

I think one other point that really does need to be recognized is that because of the lack of support...and it comes down to money and the lack of money. Often Inuit women are told by health and social services—and this is not finger pointing here—that they don't have the resources to fly them out. We have documented 16 cases so far of where a woman has been murdered by her spouse within 48 hours of returning home after trying to get away from the community. This is unacceptable, absolutely unacceptable. We should not be subjugating any survivor of abuse, be it a woman or a child, to that.

• (0900)

The Chair: Nina, is that your question, or would you like to ask another one?

Mrs. Nina Grewal: No, anyone can answer.

The Chair: Ms. Lacey.

Mrs. Barbara Lacey: You asked about a "good news" story. This isn't necessarily about a victim of family violence that I'm actually aware of; it's about a young woman who's a single parent with a couple of children. She's in her early twenties and she has her mother in the picture, so her mother's able to look after the children. This young woman was able to go to Aurora College, do her diploma in social work, and do a practicum with us in family counselling. Because of the internship program at YHSSA and Stanton health authority, she now has a social work position prior to her finishing her degree with Stanton.

If I think back to the beginning of the feminist program back in the early eighties, that's when women started standing up and speaking. I think our aboriginal women have to be visible, have to be present, have to be in the positions. So to me this is a good news story in that we have a young woman, an aboriginal single parent, who is getting some education and who, because of both the education policies here and the internship program, has a position. We'll start to see some of that representation, I hope.

To me, that's a good news story. But we need our aboriginal women to be seen.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Madam Chair, do I have some more time left?

The Chair: You have two minutes.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Okay.

It's suggested that one solution to reducing violence against aboriginal women is education campaigns. If women have a better understanding of their rights, and resources are made available to them, they will take better steps to protect themselves.

Do you believe that education campaigns would be an effective weapon in tackling violence against aboriginal women?

Ms. Sandra Tucker: I think education is always a good thing, but again, speaking on behalf of the 53 isolated and remote communities in the north, you can do all the education you want and you can do all the safety planning you want, but if there are no resources on site, nothing's going to change, right?

We can talk about younger women or we can talk about elders; if there's no safe shelter, if there's no mental health counselling, if there's limited police interaction..... I mean, NWT is fortunate in that they have the emergency protection orders that force the abuser to leave. In Nunavut that's not the case; the woman again is taken out.

So I think we really need to look, at a federal-provincial-territorial level, at ensuring that each and every community has resources. The best education campaigns are worthless without the resources to follow through on those plans.

The Chair: We have thirty seconds, if anyone would like it.

Mrs. Barbara Lacey: I just want to refer to the anti-poverty conference that many of us were at this fall. Out of that anti-poverty conference, the issues that were identified by the aboriginal community were housing—if it's there you still can't get into it because you don't meet the criteria—the cost of food, wanting a subsidy for food, and the relationship with income support. I think those were the main issues that were identified. And for family violence issues, those connections all have to be worked on if our women are going to be able to get out of situations and into new situations.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we go to Mr. Bevington for the New Democratic Party.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Thanks, Madam Chair.

I want to thank you all for participating in this today. I've had the chance to participate today because our critic in this area, Irene Mathysen, was unable to attend, but I'm very pleased to be here as well, because of course as a lifelong resident of the Northwest Territories I have experienced these issues every day throughout that time. I'm seeing the effects of it.

I want to touch a bit on preventative work that has been done. I remember when I was mayor in Fort Smith in the late eighties and we had the first "Take Back the Night" march. I remember that the reaction of some men to that was really quite extraordinary, they felt so threatened by it. But as the course of those "Take Back the Night" marches went on, that disappeared.

What can we do throughout the north to continue the work to raise the awareness of men about their roles, their responsibilities, about their interaction with women in society? Is it something we should take up more in the schools? Is it something that should be a national campaign of awareness for men across the country, continuing to do that work?

What are your answers there about the preventative work that we need to do?

• (0905)

Ms. Lorraine Phaneuf: I can only speak to small steps that we've made through the coalition. Government and non-government work together to come up with strategies and work together. Sometimes folks are there and they talk about different issues, not necessarily ones the coalition is working on, but we do promote awareness. This year for "Take Back the Night" we had a huge representation of men who attended the walk. I often call it the most phenomenal day I've had here in Yellowknife. It was awesome. We had good press

coverage. We had community agencies coming together to discuss the issues. The media was there. We had pictures of all kinds of cases on a big flip chart, all the cases in one year of abuse and violence on the streets in Yellowknife. People were engaged. I've been here for five years, and sometimes there were a few women's groups walking and that would be about it. But this year I don't know what we did or what we didn't do. I suspect it had something to do with the white ribbon campaign. Some young men from Yellowknife have been quite involved in that. I don't know if they brought it or what happened, but it was actually a very good event.

I think the work of the coalition is important. Although we may not have every task force that they have down south, we certainly have very passionate people at the table who are interested in the same goals and visions, and oftentimes projects such as the one the Y is doing have engaged the women's groups to help. So we get to also hear what's happening; we're not working in a silo. We hear what's happening in the small communities, and I think it's just a good way to move forward.

The Chair: Ms. Nelson.

Mrs. Sheila Nelson: Thank you for bringing that question forward, Dennis.

From what I see on the front lines—and I often don't get an opportunity to be involved in the larger picture in the community because of the workload I have, but what I do see and what I did when I worked in the eastern Arctic.... When I worked there I worked in the area of sexual abuse. As a new person to the north, I went into all the remote communities and Baffin Island, and I thought, oh dear, there are a lot of issues here, but how am I going to address them? So I thought to myself, okay, I can't do this alone. I need to form relationships within the community, and I need to find some strong males who are here who will speak out against abuse against children.

I think we need to do that in the Northwest Territories. I think we need to do that at the grassroots level.

I don't think people want to address violence. They know it's wrong, but they're afraid to speak out. I think we really need to have men on board to speak out about violence in communities.

I'm all for having education in the schools as well. I think our young children need to know what's acceptable and what's not. Although the Government of the Northwest Territories has a no tolerance policy, there are times when my staff take a lot of verbal abuse from people who come into the office. I'm very adamant, if that is the case, and they're told it's not acceptable. You need to speak to people in a proper way.

I would certainly do all that I could to bring more men on board to speak out against the violence in the communities. Without that, without role models, I can't see a lot of changes occurring.

• (0910)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Fuller.

Ms. Lyda Fuller: I just wanted to say that in December I was in Whitehorse, and they have been conducting a campaign. I brought posters back to bring to the coalition. They engaged men and they have developed posters with men saying, this is not okay, and I honour my wife and I protect my kids. They have had lots of success with that. They gave me a group of posters, and we'll talk about it at the coalition. I think it's critical.

The Chair: Ms. Tucker, quickly.

Ms. Sandra Tucker: Very quickly, I just want to talk about engaging men. In Nunavut, actually in Repulse, there is a men's counselling project going on. When an individual is charged under the domestic violence act, he and his spouse are referred to this program. He undergoes anger management; he gets a lot of psychological education around violence and abuse prevention. They're given couples counselling, and she's also given counselling.

Out of the 64 individuals who have been court ordered to attend this, there have only been two individuals who have been subsequently charged with a domestic violence offence. The rest have made changes in their relationships.

Maybe this is something we need to look at as a part of this: if you're going to be charged, this is what you have to do. If there's successful completion, the charges are dropped. So we're educating that way as well.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Tucker.

Now we're going to go to a second round. The second round is five minutes; that means five minutes for questions and answers.

I'll begin again with Ms. Neville for the Liberals.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

An issue that has not come up here today, which I would be interested in knowing a little bit about, is what is your relationship, as agencies, as organizations, with the police? What is the role of the police in addressing domestic violence? How does the person who is abused deal with the police? Do they go? What's the role of the police in this community? We've been hearing different things across the country.

The Chair: Ms. Tucker.

Ms. Sandra Tucker: Very quickly, from a national organizational standpoint, our relationship with the policing services, be they regional or RCMP, is actually phenomenal. They're actually calling us and saying, "Here's the situation we're facing. What information do you have? How can you help us?" To have that exchange with policing services is phenomenal. We know from a national perspective that they're engaged in the work that we're doing and we're engaged with them.

The Chair: Ms. Nelson.

Mrs. Sheila Nelson: I would have to say that the working relationship our staff have with the RCMP is very positive. There are times when we have our differences, but we're able to work those through.

Many of the calls that we get are call-outs after hours, in the evening, from the RCMP asking for assistance. I have seen them on many occasions to be very accommodating of the victim and supportive. Again, it depends. Some people are more comfortable with that role than others, but overall I think we're quite fortunate. In the smaller communities of Fort Resolution and Lutselk'e I haven't had any concerns being voiced by staff. They're always there when we need them and they do their best as well. So we're fortunate.

The Chair: Ms. Phaneuf.

Ms. Lorraine Phaneuf: For us, our role with police would be mostly to sit on committees. They're usually very interested in doing that.

A lot of times we get a frantic phone call from women in small communities where there may be no RCMP present, or there is RCMP but they're scared. So oftentimes I will just call our person from the coalition. He works with us to call those police officers, those Mounties that are in those communities. Sometimes what happens is the women feel the men are going to be in remand, but then they're sent back.

There's no shelter there, and unless something else happens there's not much the police can do, so they're usually frightened in their own homes. Oftentimes we'll call and just ask them to keep an eye on them. They always say yes, they will. I don't know if they actually do. I have no evidence of that, but am hoping they actually do that. So for us it's been quite positive.

• (0915)

The Chair: One and a half minutes, Ms. Fuller.

Ms. Lyda Fuller: Because we're designates for the emergency protection orders, we've been working closely with the RCMP in most of the communities across the territory. I would say they try very hard. It's variable what you hear back at the community level.

We meet with them regularly, and whenever we raise an issue—and we will do it, let me tell you—they have followed up and responded. So we have seen some good outcomes over time around that, but there's always work to be done. I think it's very difficult in the small communities without RCMP.

In my presentation later I will talk about how sometimes they can't find some of the partners. When they serve emergency protection orders, it was a bumpy start-up, but we've been five years into that process and things have gotten better. We do have an ongoing regular relationship with them.

Hon. Anita Neville: If I could just make a quick comment, Madam Chair...

The Chair: Yes, you have 30 seconds.

Hon. Anita Neville: There seems to be something different about this community that we've not experienced nor heard about in many others we've participated in. That is not to minimize the problems and the challenges you have, but there seems to be a distinguishing characteristic here. We need to find it, articulate it, bottle it, and recommend it.

Thank you.

The Chair: Very well said, Anita.

I go to Ms. Cadman, for the Conservatives.

Ms. Dona Cadman (Surrey North, CPC): I'm going to ask a question, and I don't mean it to be rude or anything, but I want to know: are any of you Inuit or aboriginal? Yes, I thought you would be.

We have been told that aboriginals want services for aboriginals, about aboriginals, and run by them. Now, you're not. How does this work here? Are they upset that you're not an aboriginal? Are they upset that you're a white person working for them? How does that work?

Mrs. Sheila Nelson: My experience has been that it depends on how you relate to that individual. I think there are some aboriginal people who do struggle with the fact that I might be Caucasian, but on the whole, I would have to say that I'm very well accepted by the people I work with. I would like to see more aboriginal people involved. We certainly do strive to have aboriginal staff in our office.

I think, though, overall, I guess I can't say enough. It really depends on who you are and how you relate to the individual before you. I think it's so important that we respect each person who comes to us for assistance or that we seek out. You work at developing your relationship to the betterment of them.

Ms. Dona Cadman: Are you taking some of these younger women who may have gone through a program and mentoring them to help you, to hire them if you can, or to use them as role models?

Mrs. Sheila Nelson: No.

We do have—and I think Barb touched on this—the Government of the Northwest Territories if you are an aboriginal person.... If you're a social worker and you get your degree or complete the diploma program, then you are put in a position in one of the social service offices. We have had a number of staff come to us that way. We work along with them and they're out there doing the same thing—

• (0920)

Ms. Dona Cadman: What about these women who don't have the education but have had the experience? Sometimes the experience is much more important than the education. You learn more that way, I think, having gone through it...experience is everything.

Mrs. Sheila Nelson: Experience certainly does help you. For the social workers that I'm responsible for, you must have a college diploma as a minimum. Experience is certainly.... We look at equivalencies, but it's becoming more and more difficult to do this job; there is so much court involvement. So the requirement is that you must have a diploma or a degree.

Ms. Dona Cadman: All right. If you have this woman who has gone through it and is willing to go through an education program,

would you help her? Is it your mandate to help her? Or is there another organization that would help her go through the steps and maybe help her with the money and help her with her children, if she has children?

Mrs. Sheila Nelson: Well, she possibly could be eligible for a student loan—

Ms. Dona Cadman: Okay.

Mrs. Sheila Nelson: —if that's what you're speaking about, but our organization does not.... We would be there to support her, but financially we would not be supporting that person through that process. There are other opportunities.

Ms. Dona Cadman: Do all the organizations up here work together, or are you individual...? Is it that you're here, Sandra is there, and Lyda and Lorraine are over there? Do you work together? Do you join together? Do you communicate?

Because working alone is harder than working together. You share your experiences and your education—just everything—and it's a stronger group, instead of working alone.... How does that work? Do you work alone?

The Chair: We only have 30 seconds, and Ms. Lacey had her hand up.

Would you go ahead, Ms. Lacey?

Mrs. Barbara Lacey: I know I'm the newcomer, but having adult services, mental health, and family counselling, I have to work with Lyda. I don't have a choice.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Barbara Lacey: I have to work with Sheila. I don't have a choice.

If you're asking about what it is that we have to bottle, well, we need to have good relationships and work together, because we're it.

Ms. Dona Cadman: Okay.

Mrs. Barbara Lacey: There aren't other options, so we have to get over ourselves, work with each other, and negotiate.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'll now go to Madame Demers again.

{Translation}

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The question my colleague Dona asked is very important. The day before yesterday, we met with a few young women and one man. He told us that aboriginal women were victims of the "buckskin ceiling", rather than the glass ceiling. These women cannot get beyond that ceiling because most of the time they are condemned to work at lower levels even if they have degrees that would allow them to go further. It is very important to point that out and to try to determine why that is.

In my opinion, Lorraine, your organization can make great strides in solving that issue. You talked about shelters and first, second and third stage transition houses, where aboriginal women are taught various ways of taking themselves in hand in order to get out of this vicious cycle, homes where they can learn a trade or a profession.

Currently, there are shelters, or transition houses, but I presume that this is a first stage transition house. How long does that first stage last?

[English]

Ms. Lorraine Phaneuf: What we're really trying to do at this point is to stabilize the shelters, because if we don't have shelters, we have nothing. We don't have enough shelters.

I'll regress a bit, in order to offer training for aboriginal women and women of the territories we have just launched and finished a three-year project, which I actually presented to this committee maybe a year and a half ago, about how we work with marginalized women—that is, women who were in the shelter, women who were in a homeless shelter, women who were couch-surfing. They were brought into a three-year program to learn how to do non-traditional trades.

What has happened is we've had a funding lapse and this project has come somewhat to a standstill. When the government has given us the three years to work with marginalized women, those women are now in the system with us. We advocate for them. We have no staffing dollars, but we still have the women in the program and we lead them through. When they come with us they are surrounded with services. So if they need a place to stay or day care, or if there's any kind of barrier that would have prevented them from becoming successful, the project had dollars through HRSDC and INAC to follow through.

We have had some great successes. We have had women who were in the shelters. We have women who were couch-surfing who got jobs at DeBeers who are now in apprentice programs. The numbers may not have been huge, but in fact out of 30 women, five women are now in apprentice programs and are now working. Perhaps they're not working in trades, but one of them is a librarian in her community.

It's very important that if we are going to help people, we have to surround them with the necessities for them to be successful. If it's just little bits and pieces, when you go to the next place there's a big wall there preventing them.

• (0925)

The Chair: Ms. Tucker.

Ms. Sandra Tucker: Pauktuutit is very pleased that we've also developed an Inuit women and business program. Through the gracious funding of INAC it looks like this year we're going to be able to continue that training, as well as the establishment of an Inuit women's business network. From our perspective, we are assisting Inuit women in gaining the skills they need to become entrepreneurs to start their own businesses to gain those skills.

The one thing I want to say is when you look at Inuit women as a whole you see a group of exceptional, strong, well-informed women. Our current government has a very good example of that in Leona. We have Nellie Courmoyer. We have Mary Simon. We have Elisapee

Sheutiapik. We have exceptional leaders and very, very, wise and brilliant women. It's a bragging right for us that they are the examples of how you can become a leader in your community and facilitate change.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'll now go to Mr. Bevington again for five minutes.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Thanks, Chair.

Someone mentioned here that Yellowknife has one of the highest per capita incomes for families. But Yellowknife also has one of the highest per capita expenditures for families. Throughout the north the cost of living is a problem that simply exacerbates everything else. When you get to the smaller communities, where unemployment rates are very high and yet the cost of living is considerably higher than here in Yellowknife, the impact of that on family relations has to be very severe.

Of the base causes of family violence, in many cases we would see that in the south a lot of them would be economics. Does economics play the same role here in the north in terms of causes of family violence? Do you see that as one of the prime movers?

The Chair: Lyda.

Ms. Lyda Fuller: I'm struggling with how to answer that.

For me, the prime mover around the violence here is the colonization that happened and the oppression and trauma that have impacted whole communities.

On top of that, other stressors that are in place certainly keep the pot stirred around things. And poverty has a huge impact on families. It's hard work to be poor. It's hard work to try to meet your ongoing needs. So it definitely has an impact.

Once again, for me, it's housing, housing, housing, as the key driver. We see so many situations with overcrowding. That leads to stress and things fall out of that—arguments. We have lots of requests, as a shelter, for women to come from Nunavut and from small communities here in the territory because they want to relocate to Yellowknife where there are more services and more housing, although certainly not enough housing. You see that migration. You see the pressure. You see agencies and women themselves saying, "We feel like we have no options."

For me, the big driver is that huge cultural disruption that happened over a long period of time, and that still has an impact, and the housing situation.

• (0930)

The Chair: Ms. Lacey.

Mrs. Barbara Lacey: And addictions. Absolutely, what Lyda is saying.... Part of coping with the trauma is addiction. There are both males and females in that population, of course, but if you look at who's on the street, you will see a lot of male aboriginals with addictions issues. We're looking at the integration of mental health and addictions services, which is being looked at across the country, but we're not there yet in Yellowknife, as far as being able to address the addictions issues in the way we need to.

Addictions and family violence certainly are connected.

The Chair: You have three-quarters of a minute.

Ms. Sandra Tucker: Really quickly, we also see the clash of the traditional ways of living and the modern ways of living, especially with the younger population. The older people are still looking at the community as a whole: everybody shares the wealth, everybody shares the resources. We have a younger population that, like every young person, is very materialistic, which leads in a lot of cases to elder abuse, draining grandma and grandpa's cheques right at the beginning and using the threat, "I will commit suicide if you don't." With the rates of suicide, nobody wants that hanging over their head. So there is a clash of traditional versus modern.

The Chair: Thank you.

We have the time to go into a three-minute round, a very tight round. If someone has already said something that you wanted to say, you can add something new and that will be fine. But I want to hold this tightly so that we can get it done.

I will go to Ms. Neville again.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you, Madam Chair.

We're here as part of the federal committee on the status of women, and my question to each of you, recognizing jurisdiction—and jurisdictional issues often get in the way—what would be your primary message or recommendation to us? Identify one thing that we, as federal politicians, can bring forward in this report or do for you.

The Chair: Madam Tucker.

Ms. Sandra Tucker: More money for programming and projects on the ground, and getting federal moneys to the provinces and territories to make sure that resources are in each and every community the way they should be.

The Chair: Ms. Fuller.

Ms. Lyda Fuller: In addition to housing, I would say money for community development...how important it is, how critical it is. The distances even to travel to communities are so great, and women want support and assistance with that.

• (0935)

The Chair: Does anyone else want to respond to that question?

Ms Lacey.

Mrs. Barbara Lacey: I would say increased support for programming for both men's and women's shelters around the education, so the psycho-education piece for both men and women.

The Chair: Ms. Phaneuf.

Ms. Lorraine Phaneuf: I think it's important for the committee to consider that services need to be equitable and accessible to all the women, so even if you are in a remote location, you should still be safe and have services available to you.

Hon. Anita Neville: Do I have any more time?

The Chair: Yes, we have about one and a half minutes.

Hon. Anita Neville: Sandra, at the end just now, you raised a larger issue, the issue of elder abuse and the disagreement, I guess, between generations. How prevalent is that, and how is elder abuse manifested?

Ms. Sandra Tucker: Actually, we're just currently undertaking some work to find out the rate of prevalence of elder abuse. An

educated guess would be that it's exceptionally high in the communities. It's manifested in elders not having enough food to eat. Their basic needs are not being met. I just came, actually, from Inuvik, and there was an elder, a 69-year-old woman, who was taken to the emergency shelter there because her son was physically abusing her because she wasn't able to give him more money. And this is something we hear consistently across the country. Again, it's not something that's often spoken about in the communities, but it's rampant. It's going to be the next epidemic.

Hon. Anita Neville: Is it usually a woman that's abused?

Ms. Sandra Tucker: No.

Hon. Anita Neville: No, but it could be?

Ms. Sandra Tucker: It can be the woman or the man, whoever it is that has the income coming in. Typically, it's the older person whose name is on the lease and who has the most stable income coming in, so we're seeing it with both male and female elders. The numbers are rising, and more and more are going to shelters.

The Chair: All right, thank you.

Thanks, Anita.

We go now to Dona Cadman.

Ms. Dona Cadman: Lorraine, I know what this term means, but maybe some of my elder colleagues don't. Could you tell us what "couch surfing" is?

Ms. Lorraine Phaneuf: Oh, sorry. Because of the cold weather or just the nature of Yellowknifers, women and children who have no place to live are often taken in by relatives or friends, and they just stay there. They don't have beds. They don't really have a spot in the family, but they're allowed to stay there because they have nowhere else to go. Oftentimes, because of the overcrowding or however many social issues, they're moving from house to house with really no place to go, sometimes getting food where they can through the shelter systems, but really not having a home for themselves or their children.

Ms. Dona Cadman: Thank you.

How large a problem is child apprehension? Is it a big problem up here? It seems to be a big problem every place we've talked. Is it big up here too?

Any of you, please go ahead.

Mrs. Sheila Nelson: Since I work in that area, I'll speak from my experience.

It's definitely higher than we'd like it to be. Taking any child into care is totally against my belief. However, there are situations in which a parent is unable to provide for them at a given time, and we have to provide alternate arrangements for them. It is very difficult to find foster homes, to find families that will take in children, so it's always a struggle for us. And as much as people think we take children without reason, we have to really prove a case to the courts. So it's not that we do that flippantly.

There are a lot of children still living with families even though people might question us about why we're leaving those children there, but my experience—and I've been in this field for a very long time—is that you try to maintain that connection with family. One of the things I've found living in the north as opposed to what I found when I lived in Ontario is that the children always know their family members. They're here, and they eventually go back to them when they reach the age of 16. So if we can do anything to maintain that relationship, that's definitely what we do. But, yes, there are situations in which addictions are involved and violence is involved, and we do have to remove children for their protection.

• (0940)

The Chair: Ms. Tucker.

Ms. Sandra Tucker: Just speaking further on what Sheila was saying, one thing that we're noticing is that a lot of women are now not choosing the option of going to shelters because of fear of their children being apprehended.

I want to bring to this committee's attention a situation I just became aware of. There is one shelter here in the Northwest Territories that provides double duty. They are an emergency foster placement/women's emergency shelter. Can you imagine the trauma on a child who's been apprehended from his or her own home—usually, violence is somehow related to that—to live in the same facility where a woman may be coming in beaten, bruised, and bleeding? This particular shelter, and God bless those shelter directors, is a 50-year-old building. We shouldn't be in a situation where the resources are so limited that we have to put them together.

A voice: It's wrong.

The Chair: I'm going to go to Madame Demers again, so we'll give you some time to get your headpieces on for translation.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I would like to ask you one last question. There are people from the media present here this morning. I would like to know what type of relationship you have with the media. When the time comes to expose discrimination, social problems and problems in the community, do you get media attention? Are your problems interesting enough to the media? Are they there for you or are they only present when the Standing Committee on the Status of Women visits you?

What do you have to say, Lorraine?

[English]

Ms. Lorraine Phaneuf: I think we're very media-rich in the north, as you know.

[Translation]

The media are everywhere, all the time.

[English]

They are everywhere. Even if we're having small events, the media really covers issues for women and family violence. That's been our experience. When we had our northern women in mining, oil and gas project, having come sometimes from different jurisdictions, funders

were amazed at the amount of media coverage we got from our project. For us, the media has been quite rich.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: And what do you say, Sandra?

[English]

Ms. Sandra Tucker: We also have a very good relationship with the media. In the past, they've been great supporters of us. We would always like to see more media coverage. We drive our media contacts crazy with press releases and news releases, but we're doing it because we want to get things out into the forefront.

One of the big challenges we've had is with the national newspapers. The local and regional newspapers have been phenomenal. CBC North and the radio have been phenomenal. It's the big newspapers—*The Globe and Mail*, *The Toronto Star*, and the *National Post*—because we can send them information over and over, and it doesn't seem to catch at that national level.

I don't know how we can change that, but it's something we really need to see some growth in, getting these issues into the national forefront, so they don't just stay as regional issues. We keep spinning our wheels. People need to know what's going on. I'm open to any suggestions from the committee on how we could encourage them to listen.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: In your opinion, how do you think you could share what you are doing here? Because you are doing extraordinary things, you are achieving extraordinary successes, as opposed to some other places, like Williams Lake or Prince Albert, for instance, where the situation is more desperate. These communities are experiencing tragic situations.

According to you, how could you convey to others what you are doing here; how can you let them know how you are managing to achieve your objectives? How could we share your way of doing things with them, so that these people are given hope that they will some day get out of their situation?

[English]

The Chair: A very short answer. Who would like to tackle that?

Ms. Nelson.

Mrs. Sheila Nelson: I just have a comment. You're really building up our self-esteem this morning. I am starting to feel wonderful. Wow, look out, we're out to advocate now.

Honestly, I don't know. I oftentimes feel very isolated in the program I work within just because child protection is sometimes frowned upon. I still try to get out there and do the best I can for the families that come to our attention. I find that in Yellowknife, and I also find this in Lutsel'e and Fort Resolution, if we want something, we ask for it, and we usually get people who want to work together on a project, if there's something. For instance, if I need some housing from our transitional housing here. I have built a relationship with Kate, and she will say, "I'll see what I can do for you". It's really working one-on-one. You just have to build those relationships.

• (0945)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bevington.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: I concur with everyone's vision of the Northwest Territories. I do think that, although our problems are very large, and I don't disagree with that, there are some things that we do here very well, because we are a balanced society.

We have great empowerment of aboriginal people throughout the Northwest Territories. We have built over many years good relationships that are really the driving point of our lives. They are the things that we all hold very dear. Those are things that are real strengths for the people of the Northwest Territories. We have the challenge of creating a society that is unique in Canada, in that we will have strong aboriginal governments as well as strong public governments. That is something that I think drives all of our equations.

Getting back to the economics of this, we have seen great economics in the Northwest Territories with the development of mining. We have chosen a pattern of taking people out of their communities for two weeks and then putting them back as being the pattern we're going to follow. Do you see that as having a positive or negative effect on family violence?

The Chair: Ms. Tucker.

Ms. Sandra Tucker: It can have both.

The development of the resources in the north brings in additional income. But what we are tending to see, especially in this area and also in Nunavut, is that when the husband or the breadwinner in the family has gone out to work in the mines or on the oil pipeline, he makes wonderful money, and coming home, he makes some pit stops along the way and that money kind of all disappears. He comes home and he's broke. The rent is not getting paid and there is no money for food.

That of course again exacerbates any situation related to domestic violence, because housing is now at risk, there is no food, and there are no basic services. I don't know how we are going to change that. We're dealing with people a lot of times who have had very limited income and now have access to a whole lot of money. When you get a whole lot of money in your hand, the urge is that you sometimes really want to spend it.

We're also dealing with addictions issues, particularly alcoholism, and that money is being spent quickly. We are hearing from our contacts in the north that most of the money that's being made is being spent before it ever gets back to the family unit.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

That ends this round, but before we end, we have a couple of minutes left.

Without belabouring it, I want to remark on what my colleagues have said, which is that you are indeed a unique community, although I must say, in Nunavut we also found that same sense of uniqueness. I don't know if it's because you are territories, because you are smaller.... You're talking about colleagues you work with, Ms. Nelson, by their first names. In British Columbia you have a

hierarchy in every bureaucracy, with a deputy minister and five ADMs and six directors general, and by the time you get down to the field worker, that hierarchical system is a difficult one to deal with. I think that may be the secret of your success. Let's do away with hierarchical systems right away.

That's important, and there are many best practices that we can learn from you and from Nunavut. When we were there, we heard that same thing.

I want to talk about a couple of things. Dona talked about couch surfing, and actually it's not a phenomenon up here. It's not because of the cold weather. Couch-surfing is a way for women to stay under the radar. It happens in Vancouver more than you would ever realize and in the cities; it keeps them under the radar. Children and family services don't know that they don't have a place to live. They stay under the radar and their children are not taken away from them.

I wanted to talk a little bit about that. Ms. Lacey said something very important that touched me deeply. She said, "I really tried. I tried. I was running around confused, and they still took my children." At the heart of all this is the fragmentation of families, and children who are already traumatized by watching violence in the family, children who are already traumatized by one parent leaving the home, invariably the mother, and then to be wrested away from that mother is extraordinarily traumatic. You can see how, generation after generation...we know that 45% of children who live in abusive homes turn out to either become abusers or to have partnerships with abusers later on in life. So there is that intergenerational thing.

I need to ask this question, and it's a difficult question, Sheila. I'm not trying to say, you guys are nice because you don't have any options. I know that you seem to really get it and you seem to care. Ms. Lacey really moved me with her statement, "They still took my children." In many places we went, one of the biggest fears of women reporting violence at all was that they have nowhere to go; there were no shelters for them, and in isolated communities they are just stuck. As you said, they don't have money for a plane ticket to get down to wherever there are shelters, and the shelters are limited—30 days in some areas, but six days is really terrible. So really people just stay where they are and they continue to live with the violence.

We've heard something really important, and I want to ask about this. Housing, of course, is extremely linked, but we've heard that another reason women will not leave the violent situation is that once they get out of the shelter they have such little money from social assistance with which to pay rent.... Nicole brought this up earlier. We heard in certain areas that the foster parent can get \$2,500 a month to look after three kids and the mother of those three kids gets about \$600 to do the same work. I'm not asking anybody to say what's wrong with that system; it's obvious what's wrong with that. But I would like to find out what we can do to change it. Everyone is aware of it, and surely there is a built-in bias. I understand that women who have been victims of violence quite often aren't good parents because they themselves have been so beaten down, but surely there's a way we can intervene to find a way to give these women.... If we can't find housing for them, at least we can pay for market housing for them, appropriately, if we can do it for a foster parent.

I'm specifically directing this to Sheila and Barbara first, and then I'd like to hear your opinion on it.

Sheila, what can we do to stop that real unfairness and total tragedy from occurring?

• (0950)

Mrs. Sheila Nelson: I wish I had the answer for you. As hard as it may be for people to believe, apprehending a child from a woman who has left an abusive relationship is the last option we want. We put out a significant amount of money to assist families that are on a very limited income, and sometimes income support just doesn't pay enough. It's not uncommon for us to give out gift cards on a regular basis.

The Chair: So you supplement...?

Mrs. Sheila Nelson: Oh, supplement. As a matter of fact, I can tell you that on average we probably give out between \$5,000 and \$6,000 a month to supplement.

The Chair: From your department.

Mrs. Sheila Nelson: It comes from our department.

The Chair: This is unique again. It doesn't happen anywhere else but with your department here in Yellowknife. It doesn't happen elsewhere.

Mrs. Sheila Nelson: The reason we do it is that I don't believe the child should be removed from a parent if they're able to look after the child. If they're short on money to pay.... Often we pay utility bills. Often we pay housing arrears so that a person can get back into the housing system and have rent geared to their income.

Like I said earlier, there is work we need to do between our departments, and I think that change has to come from above me. I certainly speak out about it, but the change has to come from higher up than my level.

The Chair: But the supplement is an important piece.

Did anyone want to tackle that a little bit? Ms. Lacey?

Then we'll close on our questions.

• (0955)

Mrs. Barbara Lacey: I wanted to answer the question from more of an assistance perspective. I really do believe that the case management model is the model we have to put in place.

It doesn't matter if you're a woman in family violence coming out of a family violence situation and trying to get yourself reorganized, or a mental health client, or a homeless client, I believe that having an advocate, having that support, that case manager, to help with the negotiation and navigating the system.... I came from methadone maintenance treatment in P.E.I., and we had to work with income support all the time because our clients were the injection drug users, and nobody likes them. To have a good relationship with income support was often the key, because that kept them in their housing. If I could keep them in their housing, maybe child and family services would then look at getting the children back in.

My clients did not have the skills to negotiate any of that. Often, our women getting out of these situations don't have the skills to negotiate everything, as we found when we did this experience yesterday. So I really believe in the case management model. That

means more money. That means more funding and more positions. Lyda has some of this in her outreach team and the independent supported living program. We know how much good this does. Our individuals trying to negotiate a system need somebody with them. That would be my answer.

The Chair: Thank you. That was very helpful.

I want to thank all of you for coming and for sharing with us. We've learned a lot. It seems as if pennies are dropping. As we go everywhere, we're getting more pennies just clicking down.

This has been a very good session for us to listen to and to compare and contrast with other areas. Some of what we've heard has been heartbreaking, but you seem to have had a certain amount of success, as has Nunavut. I think maybe it's because you're territories and you're not as fragmented as all of the provinces.

I think this is good. Thank you very much.

I'm going to now suspend until the next session.

• (0955)

(Pause)

• (0955)

The Chair: I will now call the meeting to order.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), this Standing Committee on the Status of Women is studying violence against aboriginal women.

You know that standing committees are made up of all four parties. It is by and large a non-partisan effort, because we are parliamentarians here and we all want to come together. Whatever we find and report will be presented to Parliament first, and then of course the government of the day will have to respond to the report and the recommendations within 90 days.

Given what we heard from the Sisters in Spirit reports, that there are over 580 missing and murdered aboriginal women around the country, there have been calls for a national inquiry. We know that this is an issue, with best intentions or not, that people have been trying to remedy for a long time with very little success. While most people tell us that this has been studied to death, we're not trying to study anything. We know the data. We know the statistics. What we really want to do is talk with people on the ground and see if they can cut through all of this to tell us what the root causes are and tell us what is the nature and extent of the violence against aboriginal women. By nature, I mean different types of violence. As you well know, violence can be sexual, it can be physical, it can be emotional, it can be systemic. Racism is a form of violence.

So we wanted to look at the nature and the extent of violence. We also wanted to look at the root causes, and I think we've been hearing now a repetitive measure of what the root causes are. But we'd like to also, more than anything, listen to solutions you can offer us—solutions that are not the same old, same old, because the same old, same old has not been working. So we'd like to hear about creative solutions, innovative solutions, systemic resolutions, but we also want you to be as frank and honest with us as you possibly can.

That having been said, I'm going to start the presentations. We have four groups represented here today. We will give you between five and seven minutes; seven is the upper limit. If you can just check me out occasionally, I will give you a little signal as to whether or not you have a minute left or you should wind up; it doesn't mean stop immediately, but it means winding up within about 20 seconds.

We will begin with the Native Women's Association of the Northwest Territories. The presenter is Therese Villeneuve, but she also has Ms. Thomas with her for support. Thank you.

Ms. Villeneuve.

• (1000)

Ms. Therese Villeneuve (President, Native Women's Association of the Northwest Territories): *Mahsi cho* for having me here.

[Witness speaks in Dene]

I would like to thank you for taking the time to visit Yellowknife and to find out first-hand what is occurring in the area of violence against aboriginal women in the Northwest Territories. As you probably already know, the incidence of violence is much higher in the Northwest Territories. Statistics indicate the incidence is seven times higher, and we know the actual incidence is probably much higher than that reported.

These statistics have not changed over the past few years, and the nature of assaults seems to be getting more serious in many cases, and by more serious we're talking about deaths of spouses. Women are sometimes being beaten up in their own homes.

Sentencing has not reflected the serious nature of these assaults. As you can well imagine, the future does not look good in terms of reducing the incidents, considering the number of children who are witnessing these acts of violence.

I will ask you to excuse me, because sometimes this becomes very emotional, especially for aboriginal women.

The Native Women's Association of the NWT was established and incorporated under the societies ordinance in 1978 as a non-profit organization. Headquarters are located in Yellowknife. We offer a victim services program, aboriginal human resources development program, and a full-time aboriginal adult training centre. We also have a contribution agreement with HRSDC to pilot a literacy and numeracy program specifically designed to reflect the needs of students throughout the Northwest Territories.

We get core funding from the Government of the Northwest Territories, and this provides us with an executive director, financial manager, and administrative assistant. NWA of the NWT also sponsor workshops and special events, such as Sisters in Spirit luncheons, judo programs for youth, etc. One of our main services in Yellowknife is directly linked to the topic we are discussing today.

The mission of Yellowknife victims services is to offer compassionate support and system information referral to victims. The majority of our clients are aboriginal women; however, we also see men and non-aboriginal women. We have one coordinator and one victims services worker. As well, we hire a trainer to train volunteers, as the after-hours work is done by volunteers. We

provide 24-hour services that include court accompaniment and preparation, support through RCMP statements, victim impact statements, information about the criminal justice system, emotional support, crisis intervention, and referrals. Although we mainly see victims from Yellowknife, there is an increasing demand in communities that do not have victims service workers.

About 25% of the people victims services provides services to are aboriginal adult women who are victims of serious violent crimes. The demand for our programs at the training centre continues to grow. New funding from the GNWT as well as the federal government has allowed us to diversify our programming as well as focus on curriculum development.

At this time there are approximately 15 students enrolled in our adult education and pre-employment. Our classes continue to focus on math, English, computers, employment skills, and life skills, including traditional activities. This is a unique program. We service mostly women who have very low literacy and numeracy skills who would not be able to upgrade, as no other similar holistic programs are available for this population.

Obtaining funding on a yearly basis is always problematic, and is getting even more so, as the funding for this population is getting harder to obtain. Federal money from INAC or other departments is just not available for a long-term commitment that is needed for this population. We believe that if the federal government is serious in reducing violence against aboriginal women it will invest in education and housing for at-risk women.

Our students are dedicated to making a difference in their lives, but they face many uphill battles, including addictions, homelessness, poverty, violence in their lives, and lack of child care services, as many of these women are single parents themselves. The best way to reduce violence against aboriginal women is to provide them with education. Other resources that are lacking include outreach workers and counsellors. The Government of the Northwest Territories does not see a need for funding these resources.

In terms of violence against aboriginal women, one of the things the federal government could do would be to change the on-reserve and off-reserve funding process. Another recommendation would be national awareness, with an education program to raise awareness, at local and national levels, of family abuse, sexual exploitation, and alcohol and drug abuse.

You talked about the root causes. Well, one of—

The Chair: You have thirty seconds, please.

Ms. Therese Villeneuve: Okay. I just want to focus on the root causes.

As you know, many of us have suffered from the impact of residential schools in our lives. Aboriginal people were not violent people in the past. The men did not abuse their wives, their families. We were brought up on the land. The women were very, very honoured.

I think if we're going to go back to that, one of the programs that could be really supported is the on-the-land program. We can go back and renew all this honour that we were once born into, and used to, and lived, because our aboriginal culture, it's what we lived. This is not our aboriginal culture, the situation we are in right now.

• (1010)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Villeneuve.

Now I will go to Lyda?

Ms. Lyda Fuller: Yes. I'm here now—

The Chair: For the YWCA.

Ms. Lyda Fuller: —for the YWCA, yes, but on behalf of our shelter for women fleeing violence, women and their children.

I won't go through the statistics. They're listed here. It's very high in the north.

I just want to say that most women in NWT communities face formidable barriers to accessing services and support to escape from violence. There are only five shelters in the NWT that serve 33 communities spread over a vast area. Women often in the communities without shelters have to go a local social service worker to get their trip to a shelter paid for. And often this person can be related to the partner that the woman is trying to escape.

Violence starts early in their relationships and continues through child-bearing years. We see very young women with a number of children already who repeatedly come to our shelter. By the time they can really think about how they want to change that violence in their lives, they're tied down with child rearing and see no way out. They are busy caring for their children, the housing options are limited, and there are really significant community sanctions for disclosure of abuse. That's often a barrier to seeking meaningful help.

Women use the shelters as respite for periods of time, to regroup and go back. Elders use the shelter in this way too. We have seen women in their sixties and seventies, with multiple healed fractures, who get dumped out into snowbanks and come into the shelter.

Women often don't think change is possible because the abuse is endemic. It's often what they have known and grown up with. And women have sympathy for their partners, because their partners have been abused as well. When you look at the root causes around cultural disruption, and residential schools, everybody in the community is suffering. A lot of times women don't see the larger system as offering helpful support. They want to heal as a community.

The women who come to us say that it's primarily physical and emotional abuse, but we see a wide range of all the types of abuse. We see women beaten severely who then miscarry while they're at the shelter. We see women who can hardly walk due to beatings. We see women who end up leaving the shelter and are beaten to death.

We see women who are held against their will and then physically abused over periods of time, who give notes to their children to take to school asking for help. We see women who jump out of vehicles in the liquor store parking lot and hop into taxicabs to come to the shelter.

We see a lot of young women from Nunavut communities who access shelter services here in Yellowknife. As isolated as you can be in this territory, you can be even more so in Nunavut. Transportation is very costly, so often we are the cheapest alternative.

Resources in Nunavut are scarce. I'd like to make a real plea, on behalf of Nunavut, for better support to those shelters there, because they really do need that. Women often go back to bleak circumstances. We have women in from the small communities in Nunavut who might have a child with a disability. They're struggling. They've come to the shelter, and the partner has moved another woman into their home. So what do they go back to? These women have no economic independence and sometimes few alternatives because of that.

Recently a woman come to us from a Nunavut community. She and her five kids were put into cells in the Nunavut community because that was the safest place there until they could arrange for a flight to get her and the five kids to come out. Partners, however, it seems to us, have no trouble following the women to the communities with shelter and will often drive by the shelter to make sure that we see them, and that the women see them. That becomes a threat in itself. It's interesting, because when you talk to the communities and the referral agents, they say "She's coming for counselling. This is her problem and she's coming for help."

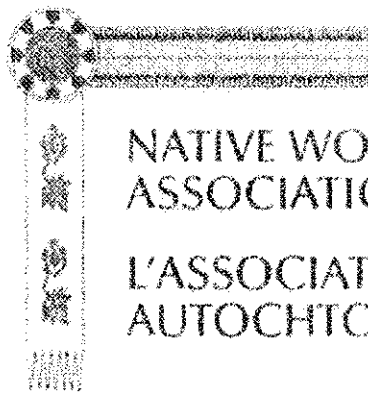
We have been facilitating emergency protection orders. That's been really helpful except in the small communities without RCMP, because there is no way for that to be followed up. We have received phone calls from women who have obtained emergency protection orders and then they're left without food, baby food, and diapers. We take supplies out to them because they're economically tied to that partner and he's now gone from the home.

Women who are at high risk often have few supports long-term. We try to keep them safe in our transitional housing, but if that partner is known to the other tenants and they're scared of him— watch out. We had emergency protection orders granted and that has been helpful.

The last thing I want to end on is the work we're doing with the other women's groups in the eleven small communities without RCMP, which I think is a key to what we want to do. Communities need community healing and community development.

• (1015)

The Chair: I'm going to give you an extra minute to quickly expand on what you just said.



NATIVE WOMEN'S
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

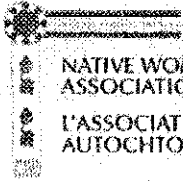
L'ASSOCIATION DES FEMMES
AUTOCHTONES DU CANADA



The national voice of Aboriginal women in Canada since 1974

What Their Stories Tell Us

Research findings from the Sisters In Spirit initiative



NATIVE WOMEN'S
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA
L'ASSOCIATION DES FEMMES
AUTOCHTONES DU CANADA

Sisters In Spirit 2010 Research Findings



Aboriginal women and girls are strong and beautiful.
They are our mothers, our daughters, our sisters, aunties, and
grandmothers

Acknowledgments

This research would not have been possible without the stories shared by families and communities of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is indebted to the many families, communities, and friends who have lost a loved one. We are continually amazed by your strength, generosity and courage.

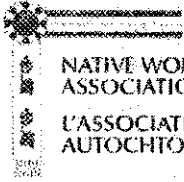
We thank our Elders and acknowledge First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities for their strength and resilience.

We acknowledge the dedication and commitment of community and grassroots researchers, advocates, and activists who have been instrumental in raising awareness about this issue. We also acknowledge the hard work of service providers and all those working towards ending violence against Aboriginal women in Canada.

We appreciate the many community, provincial, national and Aboriginal organizations, and federal departments that supported this work, particularly Status of Women Canada.

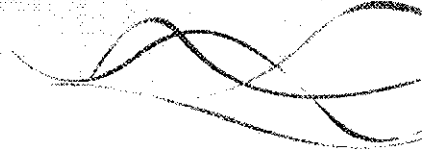
Finally, NWAC would like thank all those who worked on the Sisters In Spirit initiative over the past five years. These contributions have been invaluable and have helped shape the nature and findings of this report.

This research report is dedicated to all Aboriginal women and girls who are missing or have been lost to violence.



NATIVE WOMEN'S
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA
L'ASSOCIATION DES FEMMES
AUTOCHTONES DU CANADA

Sisters In Spirit 2010 Research Findings



Native Women's Association of Canada

Incorporated in 1974, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is founded on the collective goal to enhance, promote, and foster the social, economic, cultural and political well-being of Aboriginal women within Aboriginal communities and Canadian society. As one of the five National Aboriginal Organizations, we are a network of Native women's organizations from coast, to coast, to coast. In 2010, we are proud to speak as a collective voice for Aboriginal women for over 35 years.

Mission Statement

NWAC's mission is to help empower women by being involved in developing and changing legislation which affects them, and involving them in the development and delivery of programs promoting equal opportunity for Aboriginal women.

Vision

We have a vision of Aboriginal communities where all individuals have an opportunity to develop their talents in order to achieve their full potential. We see communities where all people can lead healthy lifestyles by maintaining balance in their spiritual, emotional, mental and physical health.

We see Aboriginal communities where our children grow up with pride and a strong identification of who they are. They constantly seek to broaden their knowledge of the things that affect them and their relationship with the environment and the land. We see communities where all our people have an opportunity to learn our history and traditional ways, while attaining a high level of academic education with broader society.

In order to accomplish this, we see strong Aboriginal families where the responsibility of education begins in the home and families nurture their children to be proud of who they are. We see a community where all Aboriginal people accept and exercise their responsibilities to contribute to a strong community.

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Sisters In Spirit 2010 Research Findings

Executive Summary

As of March 31, 2010, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) has gathered information about the disappearance or death of more than 580 Aboriginal women and girls across Canada. This finding is the result of quantitative and qualitative research carried out over a period of five years. In 2005, NWAC secured funding for the Sisters In Spirit initiative – a five-year research, education and policy initiative supported by Status of Women Canada – to address the root causes, circumstances and trends of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. NWAC has collected the evidence to document, in systematic way, issues of violence that women, families, and communities had been pointing to for the last generation.

What Their Stories Tell Us: Research findings from the Sisters In Spirit initiative brings together five years of research related to missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. The purpose of this report is to answer three fundamental questions: What are the circumstances, root causes and trends leading to violence against Aboriginal women in Canada? How many Aboriginal women and girls have gone missing or have been found murdered in Canada? And, why this violence has led to such disturbingly high numbers of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada without connection by police or justice authorities?

What Their Stories Tell Us presents demographic and statistical evidence from NWAC's Sisters In Spirit database, while situating the issue within the larger context of root causes and ways forward. It also draws on information gathered through the existing literature and highlights some of the stories and experiences shared by families of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. NWAC reminds readers that each number presented here represents a woman or girl who is loved and missed by her family.

As of March 31, 2010, 582 cases of missing or murdered Aboriginal women and girls have been entered into NWAC's Sisters In Spirit database. NWAC's research has found that the intergenerational impact and resulting vulnerabilities of colonization and state policies—such as residential schools, the 60s Scoop, and the child welfare system—are underlying factors in the outcomes of violence experienced by Aboriginal women and girls. In summarizing the research and identifying trends related to root causes and circumstances, there are a number of key findings that should inform policy decisions, victim services, and action. These key findings are supported by the common themes that emerge from the life stories previously shared in the first and second editions of *Voices of Our Sisters In Spirit: A report to families and communities*.

Key Findings

There are a **disproportionately high number** of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. Between 2000 and 2008, 153 cases of murder have been identified in NWAC's Sisters In Spirit database. These women represent approximately ten per cent of the total number of female homicides in Canada despite the fact that Aboriginal women make up only three per cent of the total female population in Canada. The majority of women and girls in NWAC's database were murdered, while **115 women and girls are still missing**.

The majority of disappearances and deaths of Aboriginal women and girls **occurred in the western provinces** of Canada. Over two thirds of the cases were in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan.

A great majority of the women were young. More than half of the women and girls were **under the age of 31**. Measures designed to increase safety must take into account the needs of young Aboriginal women and girls.

Many of the women were mothers. Of the cases where this information is known, 88 per cent of missing and murdered women and girls **left behind children and grandchildren**. These children must have access to culturally appropriate supports to deal with this trauma.

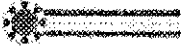
Aboriginal women and girls are as likely to be killed by an acquaintance or stranger as they are by an intimate partner. Almost 17 per cent of those charged were strangers. Aboriginal women and girls are more likely to be killed by a stranger than non-Aboriginal women.

Nearly half of murder cases remain unsolved. Nationally, 53 per cent of murder cases have been cleared by charges of homicide, while no charges have been laid in forty per cent of cases. However, **there are differences in clearance rates by province**. The clearance rate for murdered women and girls ranges from a low 42 per cent in Alberta to 93 per cent in Nunavut.

The majority of cases occurred in urban areas. 70 per cent of women and girls disappeared from an urban area, and 60 per cent were murdered in an urban area. But **resources are also needed** to respond to the needs of families in rural and on-reserve communities.

In addition to the above key findings NWAC research has found links between missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls, to FASD (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder), hitchhiking, gangs, mobility, and jurisdictional issues. All of these emerging issues require further attention and inquiry. NWAC aims to conduct further research in these areas during the second phase of the Sisters In Spirit initiative as we move from knowledge to action.

While NWAC has made great strides in bringing to light issues of violence leading to the disappearance and death of Aboriginal women and girls, Aboriginal women continue to be the most at risk group in Canada for issues related to violence, and continue to experience complex issues linked to intergenerational impacts of colonization, particularly those resulting from residential schools and the child welfare system. Ending violence against Aboriginal women and girls lies with both men and women, with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. It ends with recognition, responsibility and cooperation. Violence against women ends with restoring the sacred position of Aboriginal women as teachers, healers and givers of life.



Sisters In Spirit 2010 Research Findings

*"What is it about numbers? What do they tell us? Do they help us understand?
One woman goes missing, then another, then another. For a long time only
those who know and love them pay attention. Until the numbers start to add
up..." ~ Finding Dawn*

Introduction

The Native Women's Association of Canada launched the Sisters In Spirit campaign in 2004 to address violence against Aboriginal women and girls. The campaign was founded on the belief that "over the past 20 years, approximately 500 Aboriginal women have gone missing in communities across Canada. Yet government, the media, and Canadian society continue to remain silent" (NWAC 2004). In 2005, NWAC secured funding for the Sisters In Spirit initiative – a five-year research, education and policy initiative supported by Status of Women Canada to address the root causes and trends of missing and murdered women and girls. In 2005, NWAC began to collect the evidence, to provide substantiated proof of what women, families, and communities had been talking about for the last generation. In 2010, the Native Women's Association of Canada holds the only research identifying the disappearance and death of 582 Aboriginal women and girls across Canada.

This report is a reflection on the last five years of research related to missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. The purpose of this report is to answer three fundamental questions: What are the circumstances, root causes and trends leading to violence against Aboriginal women in Canada? How many Aboriginal women and girls have gone missing or have been found murdered in Canada? And, how has this violence led to such disturbingly high numbers of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada without connection by authorities?

To address the issue of violence, one must understand the history and impact of colonization on Aboriginal peoples in Canada. It is the ongoing narration of violence, systemic racism and discrimination, purposeful denial of culture, language and traditions, and legislation designed to destroy identity that has led to the realities facing Aboriginal peoples. This research will begin with an explanation of how colonization is not simply a strategy of the past, but a reality that reinforces the silence surrounding the violence experienced by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis women today. It is this foundation of knowledge that answers the questions of „why?“ and „how?“ so many Aboriginal women and girls have gone missing or been found murdered without recognition of government or society. It is also this understanding of the contemporary realities of colonization that informs the recommendations for change.

*The overrepresentation of
Aboriginal women in Canada as
victims of violence must be
understood in the context of a
colonial strategy that sought to
dehumanize Aboriginal women.*

What Their Stories Tell Us

This report shares the numbers, the known cases and the facts related to root causes, trends and circumstances of violence that has led to disappearance and death. Each number represents the story of a woman or girl who is loved and missed by her family. Throughout this report stories are shared of some of the missing and murdered sisters, mothers, daughters, and grandmothers, as told to NWAC by their families. Their stories reflect some of the experiences and impacts faced by these women, girls and their families. But most of all, they are a reminder that Aboriginal women and girls are strong, beautiful, proud and loved.

Through the Sisters In Spirit initiative, NWAC has been honoured to share the life stories of Amber Redman, Beatrice Sinclair, Claudette Osborne, Daleen Kay Bosse (Muskego), Danita BigEagle, Debbie Sloss, Delores Whiteman, Georgina Papin, Gladys Tolley, Lisa Marie Young, Nina Courtepatte, Shelley Joseph, and Terrie Ann Martin (Dauphinais). These are the stories of mothers, daughters, grandmothers, and sisters. Stories of beautiful women and girls with hopes, dreams, and gifts.

Tragically, too many stories illustrate the social and economic marginalization of Aboriginal women in Canada. While some of their stories reveal experiences of poverty, abuse or addictions—issues often associated with increased vulnerability or so-called ‘high-risk’ lifestyles—many of these women and girls were ‘vulnerable’ only insofar as they were Aboriginal women. As argued by Jacobs and Williams (2008, 134), they “were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time in a society that poses a risk to their safety. They were targeted because they were Aboriginal, and it was assumed that either they would not fight back or they would not be missed.”

Aboriginal women are the most at risk group in Canada for issues related to violence. The overrepresentation of Aboriginal women in Canada as victims of violence must be understood in the context of a colonial strategy that sought to dehumanize Aboriginal women. While the motivations and intersections may differ, NWAC has found that colonization remains the constant thread connecting the different forms of violence against Aboriginal women in Canada. The value of Aboriginal women is diminished by the persistence of patriarchal values that, consciously or not, continue to influence and regulate social norms and gender relations. As noted by NWAC:

Amber's story

Amber's mother strongly believes the greatest gift from the Creator is the gift of a child. As an infant, Amber was breastfed and this mother-daughter bond continued as she grew into a chubby baby. Amber was also "daddy's girl" and when she was three years old her father designed and beaded her first fancy dance outfit in her favourite colours, purple and pink, and her parents travelled with her on the powwow trail.

Amber's purpose here on Earth was to bring this issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women to the forefront because society did not see this as a priority. Our communities need to take responsibility for the safety of our women and girls.

Addressing the issue of violence against women in Canada is made more difficult due to the underlying acceptance of a level of interpersonal violence between men and women throughout Canadian history. This makes it difficult to work towards the elimination of violence in society as an ideal. In addition, the general cultural acceptance of violence and violence against women as demonstrated in various media, including video games, television shows, movies and music establishes a climate in which it is difficult to eliminate violence. (2008, 5)

This is compounded by a colonial process that involved a deliberate strategy to undermine the influence and respect held by Aboriginal women and replaces the existing social, economic and political systems of Aboriginal peoples with ones rooted in patriarchy and European understandings of femininity and masculinity. The outcomes and ongoing impacts of this history are pervasive and include poor health and mental health outcomes, intergenerational trauma, overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in the child welfare system, lack of access to justice, and economic insecurity leading to restricted options and inadequate choices. The impacts of colonization, however, are perhaps most evident in the rates of violence against Aboriginal women.

Violence against Aboriginal Women and Girls

Prior to the Sisters In Spirit initiative, academic literature on violence and violence experienced by Aboriginal women focused on domestic or family violence rather than violence rooted in the systemic, gendered racism facing Aboriginal women. While academic literature on violence still largely focuses on family violence, NWAC has tried to expand the scope of literature on violence. The initial research question of the initiative boldly challenged the context in which violence impacts Aboriginal women in that it asked specifically: —What are the circumstances, root causes and trends leading to *racialized, sexualized* violence against Aboriginal women in Canada?" This question challenged the assumptions of violence against Aboriginal women and girls. While NWAC has shifted away from this language, the initial question broadened the context of violence to ask if Aboriginal women and girls are victimized because of their race and gender, and if the experiences of violence go unnoticed by police, the justice system, government, and society because of their race and gender.

According to the 2004 General Social Survey (GSS), Aboriginal women 15 and older are three and a half times more likely to experience violence (defined as physical and sexual assault and robbery) than non-Aboriginal women (Statistics Canada 2006b, 5). Statistics concerning family violence (which represent most of the available data) are particularly alarming.¹ Statistics Canada reports that rates of spousal assault (physical or sexual assault and threats of violence) against Aboriginal women are more than three times higher than non-Aboriginal women (Statistics Canada 2006a, 64). And, nearly one quarter of Aboriginal women experienced some form of spousal violence in the five years preceding the 2004 GSS (Statistics Canada 2006b, 6).

Aboriginal women also report experiencing more severe and potentially life-threatening forms of family violence, such as being beaten or choked, having had a gun or knife used against them, or being sexually assaulted (54% of Aboriginal women versus 37% of non-Aboriginal women) (Statistics Canada 2006a, 65). 44% reported “fearing for their lives,” compared with 33% of non-Aboriginal women and 27% of Aboriginal women reported experiencing 10 or more assaults by the same offender (as opposed to 18% of non-Aboriginal women) (ibid., 66). As a result of this severe violence, it is reported that Aboriginal women are significantly more likely than non-Aboriginal women to suffer physical injury, receive medical attention or take time off daily activities as a consequence of these assaults (ibid, 65). And while non-Aboriginal women reported a decline in most severe forms of violence (from 43% in 1999 to 37% in 2004) the number of similar attacks against Aboriginal women remained unchanged since 1999, at 54% (ibid.).

The GSS indicates that Aboriginal peoples have higher rates of non-spousal violence and are threatened with violence in and around their homes to a greater extent than non-Aboriginal

Beatrice's story

Beatrice is remembered as a beloved grandmother and a strong Cree woman. Beatrice taught her grandchildren to respect the people who come through your door; they are there to visit you, so you must give them that time. Beatrice was not given the same respect in death as she offered those around her in life.

Beatrice was the primary caregiver to her granddaughter Sharon. Alcoholism was present in the family, a fact that could be related to many family members' attendance at residential school. With Beatrice no longer alive to shelter her from this trauma, Sharon's life started to spiral downwards. Nevertheless, the values Beatrice had instilled in Sharon gave her the ability to take care of her siblings.

¹ In this report NWAC has chosen to use the language of “family violence” rather than partner or domestic violence. As Kelly (2002) explains, the language of family violence provides a greater contextual understanding of the intergenerational impacts of violence and its effects on families. As such, the language of “family violence” helps situate violence against Aboriginal women within the context of colonization, which is key to explaining the prevalence of this issue.

people (ibid, 68). Beyond this general observation, however, little information is available concerning other forms of violence against Aboriginal women. Statistics Canada reports, for example, that GSS sample counts are too low to produce statistically reliable estimates of sexual assault against Aboriginal women (ibid.). Certainly, family violence remains an urgent issue impacting Aboriginal communities, but the lack of data concerning other forms of violence indicates the need for further attention and research in this area, particularly as it relates to Aboriginal women and girls.

Statistics Canada also reports that Aboriginal peoples are severely overrepresented as victims of homicide. While Aboriginal peoples made up about 3% of the population between 1997 and 2004, they represented 17% of homicide victims where the Aboriginal identity of the victim was known (Statistics Canada 2006b, 7). Between 1997 and 2000, homicide rates of Aboriginal females were almost seven times higher than non-Aboriginal females.²

According to a 1996 report by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), Aboriginal women between the ages of 25 and 44 with Indian status are five times more likely than other women of the same age to die as the result of violence (Amnesty International Canada 2004, 23). Often overlooked or ignored is the extreme vulnerability of women in the sex trade. According to police reports submitted to Statistics Canada, 171 female prostitutes³ were killed in Canada between 1991 and 2004; 45% of these homicides remain unsolved (Statistics Canada 2006a, 37).

As reviewed by Brownridge (2003, 66), community based studies have found rates of violence against Aboriginal women to be much higher than indicated by government surveys: from 48% of women in a reserve-based sample in rural southern Ontario, to 80% of 104 women in northwestern Ontario, to 70 to 100% of Mi'kmaq women living on-reserve in Nova Scotia. While published rates of violence against Aboriginal women vary depending on the methodology of the study, common to all these reports are the shocking levels of violence experienced by Aboriginal women. The results presented later in this report add further evidence, dimension and urgency to an issue already demanding immediate action.

Claudette's story

When Claudette laughed, she laughed from the belly. She had a big smile and contagious laughter. She could get anyone laughing. She had a good sense of humour and lit up a room when she came in. She was also a very strong girl and she stood up for herself.

When Claudette's disappearance was reported, sometimes they didn't even say her name in the headlines. Instead, her family read words like "sex trade," "drug addicted" and "Aboriginal." That was tough for the family to deal with. It made it difficult to get society to see Claudette for who she really is. She's a mother. She's a daughter. She's a sister.

² Age range not specified.

³ Age range not specified.

Research has also identified certain socio-demographic characteristics that are associated with higher rates of violence against women. Such characteristics cannot be considered causes of violence, but rather, “factors that help identify the context in which violence occurs” (Statistics Canada 2006a, 36). Factors consistently identified in the literature are:

- Age (rates of violence are highest among young women);
- Emotional and psychological abuse is determined to be one of the most important predictors of physical and sexual violence in spousal relationships—Statistics Canada (ibid., 40) reports that spousal assault rates are up to 20 times higher for women whose male partners demonstrate these behaviours;
- Socio-economic factors (such as low income, being unemployed or having low educational attainment); and,
- Alcohol abuse and relationship type (rates of spousal violence are higher in common-law unions than marriages).

Additional factors mentioned in the literature include being a member of a lone parent family, living in crowded conditions, large family size (number of children), having a previous marriage or common-law union (an indicator of family stability), high residential mobility, experiences of sexual abuse, especially as a child, homelessness, institutionalization, and drug addiction (Brownridge 2003; NWAC 2008; Statistics Canada 2006a; Statistics Canada 2006b). However, in 2006, Statistics Canada reported that Aboriginal peoples are three times more likely to experience violence than non-Aboriginal peoples even when the effects of all other factors are controlled (Statistics Canada 2006b, 5).

Daleen's Story

Daleen's family wanted answers; they wanted to know what happened to the beautiful, compassionate and outgoing woman who wanted to be a teacher, who loved to make people laugh, who had a passion for drama and fine arts. They wanted to know what happened to their beloved daughter, sister, mother, wife, and friend.

Daleen's family says the initial police response was like being “shrugged off and brushed to the side”. But they also want people to know that the Saskatoon Police Service and RCMP eventually launched an intensive investigation into Daleen's disappearance. “If it wasn't for their hard work, my daughter would never have been found,” says Daleen's mother.

Impacts of Government Policies and Colonization

The experiences of violence and victimization of Aboriginal women do not occur in a vacuum. Violence is perpetuated through apathy and indifference towards Aboriginal women, and stems from the ongoing impacts of colonialism in Canada. While this process is rooted in history, the impacts of colonization continue to affect Aboriginal peoples, and perhaps more profoundly Aboriginal women, today. One example with regard to First Nations women is the administration of the *Indian Act* which has created ongoing barriers to citizenship for Aboriginal women and their children and the intergenerational impacts and trauma resulting from the residential school and child welfare systems. These are well known and documented patterns of historic, as well as contemporary colonization. Systemic racism and patriarchy has marginalized Aboriginal women and led to intersecting issues at the root of the multiple forms of violence. The result of the system of colonization is a climate where Aboriginal women are particularly vulnerable to violence, victimization, and indifference by the state and society to their experiences of violence.

Government attacks on the social and cultural systems of Aboriginal nations through government legislation continued with the establishment of church-run residential and day schools. Operating from the 1800s to 1996, the residential school system saw Aboriginal children (not just First Nations, but also Métis and Inuit) forcibly removed from their homes for the purposes of assimilation. Children frequently suffered physical, mental, sexual and spiritual abuse and many are known to have died from disease or malnutrition (National Council of Welfare 2007, 83). These schools had a profound impact on the traditional family, community and education systems of Aboriginal nations. As it has been said, "the removal of children from their families altered relationships between everyone and everything. Family bonds normally created as result of nurturing and loving relationships were not part of the residential school experience" (Jacobs and Williams 2008, 126). As a result of the residential and day school systems, children suffered loss of language (and with it the ability to communicate with parents or grandparents), were denied cultural and spiritual learning and traditional teachings around

Danita's story

Danita had her first child, a daughter named Cassidy, at 18. Once born, Cassidy became Danita's passion. Although she was still battling addictions to medications prescribed to her, Danita was determined to go back to school and find a place where she could build a home for herself and Cassidy. Danita would tell her little girl, "It won't always be like this." In an attempt to keep her promise, Danita went to treatment centres, trying to get better.

After two weeks went by with no sign of her daughter, Dianne, fed up with police inaction, marched down to the station and demanded that something be done to locate Danita. Dianne had to convince police officers that Danita really was missing, that she wasn't "out partying" as they insisted. The police responded, "Give us some time or give us a place to look." Dianne replied, "I think I'm doing your job."

roles and responsibilities, as well as the experiential education traditionally provided by parents and Elders. Not surprisingly, the residential school system has been characterized as cultural genocide (ibid) and has had a direct impact on the next generations of Aboriginal children, resulting in what is often referred to as the intergenerational effects or intergenerational trauma of residential schools.

In 1951 the *Indian Act* was revised and provincial child-welfare agencies were granted legal authority on-reserve. In the years following this amendment, First Nations children were taken into care at an unbelievable rate. This period is commonly referred to as the 'Sixties Scoop,' a term used to describe the time between 1960 and the mid-1980s when the greatest number of Aboriginal children were adopted (National Council of Welfare 2007, 84). More than 11, 000 status First Nation children, along with many other Aboriginal children, were adopted at this time. In some instances, children were "literally scooped from their homes without knowledge or consent from families or communities" (ibid, 84). These children were adopted mainly by white families, resulting in cultural dislocation and "confused identities" (ibid.). Many are believed to have suffered sexual and other abuse and continue to deal with the trauma associated with this violence.

Reflecting on the current state of child welfare policy and practice in Canada, Blackstock argues that while practitioners often reflect on residential schools and the Sixties Scoop, when you ask them what they really learned or how this history impacts their current practice, very few people have real answers (National Council of Welfare 2007, 88). This is significant, as there are now more Aboriginal children in child welfare care than at any point in history (ibid., 85). The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society (FNCFCS) estimated that 30-40% of children in care are Aboriginal (Blackstock et al. 2004, 156). Further research by the FNCFCS in three sample provinces in 2005 found that while non-Aboriginal children had a 0.67% chance of being taken into care, the likelihood rose to 3.31% for Métis children and 10.23% for status First Nations children. Recent research by the National Council of Welfare (2007, 86) indicates that in some provinces, Aboriginal children comprise 70 or 85% of children in care, and that the percentage of Aboriginal children in care continues to increase. Nationally, the number of status First Nations

Debbie's story

Debbie was just Debbie. She was stubborn and wouldn't walk in the line that they tell you to walk in. At the same time, Debbie loved helping with the community events such as potluck dinners, bingo, dances at the community hall, and bonfires at the beach.

Noting that the police report describes Debbie as a "Native Indian" and "known alcoholic and drug addict", the family believes that police officers made judgments about Debbie based on preconceived notions and stereotypes and that these assumptions hindered the investigation into her death. Her daughter, Laura, believes they just passed her off as another dead Indian. But Debbie was a woman, a mother, a sister who was loved.

children entering the child welfare system rose a staggering 71.5% between 1995 and 2001 (ibid., 85).

These devastating figures indicate just how much attention needs to be paid to child welfare policy and practice. In particular, there is a need for greater recognition and attention around the reasons why Aboriginal children are taken into care. By and large, Aboriginal children come into care for reasons different than non-Aboriginal children. Compared to other children in Canada, Aboriginal children are less likely to come to the attention of child welfare authorities for physical or sexual abuse, but are twice as likely to experience neglect (Loxley et al. 2005, 7). Data from the Canadian Incidence Study on Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (CIS) indicates that —substance misuse, poverty and inadequate housing appear as undercurrents to the over representation of Aboriginal children in care” (Blackstock and Trocmé 2005, 23).

In order to address the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in care it is necessary to address the socio-economic status of Aboriginal peoples. It is critical that Canada acknowledges that the current system works in ways that perpetuate racism towards and inequality for Aboriginal families and communities. As Blackstock points out, —even if a non-Aboriginal family has these same factors [poverty, poor housing, care giver substance abuse], the Aboriginal child is still more likely to go into child welfare care. So, race has continued to play a role in child removal” (National Council of Welfare 2007, 87). Current practice also fails to recognize that, for Aboriginal peoples, the ‘best interest of the child’ (the overarching principle that guides child welfare work) is inextricably tied to community and culture. Indeed, it has been argued that, —inevitably, many Aboriginal to non-Aboriginal adoptions break down during adolescence when identity formation is crucial” (ibid., 85). Yet despite interest from Aboriginal families, many children continue to be placed in non-Aboriginal adoptive homes (ibid.).

A focus on apprehension as the main form of intervention is incredibly short-sighted, in that it fails to recognize the potential long-term impacts of being taken into child welfare care. Research indicates that children in child welfare care are more likely to experience health

Delores' story

Family and friends recall that Delores was always smiling, had a great sense of humour and was the life of the party. As a youth, Delores attended Lebret Indian Residential School. It was not a place where Delores found the nurturing and guidance she needed to fulfill her dreams of becoming a nurse or working with children.

Delores' daughter, Laura, was placed in foster care during the "60s Scoop," when it was not uncommon for "Indian" children to be removed in order to be placed with white families. In 1987, Laura returned to Standing Buffalo Dakota First Nation after discovering this was her home community. After speaking to relatives and community members, Laura began to realize that her mother had not been seen or heard from in a very long time.

problems later in life and are less likely to have success in education programs, a fact that has implications in terms of economic security (ibid, 88). It is known that low educational attainment and unemployment have been identified as risk factors associated with violence. Also of particular concern in the context of missing and murdered women is Australian research (Cripps et al. 2009) that found that Indigenous women with children who had been removed from their natural family during childhood were at higher odds of experiencing violence as adults than those who did not.

A review of the literature also indicates a link between child welfare involvement, sexual exploitation and the sex trade. Sikka's interviews with key informants in Winnipeg and Edmonton support previous research that point to child welfare involvement as "perhaps the most common feature among girls who entered into prostitution" (2009, 14). Surveys in Winnipeg have found that around two thirds of women involved in street prostitution had been taken into care as children (ibid., 11). Participants in Sikka's study also drew attention to the link between child welfare involvement and sexual exploitation, noting that girls who run away from their foster homes or care facilities are "particularly vulnerable to being preyed upon by older males seeking to exploit them" (ibid.).

Research also indicates a link between child welfare involvement and conflict with law. As explained by Sikka:

Many girls' first point of entry into the criminal justice system is a charge for an offence committed within a care facility. Girls may be charged with assault on a staff member or other 'violent' offences and are then remanded to detention centres, where they come into contact with sexually exploited youth and recruiters. (ibid., 9)

Considering that Aboriginal women now represent a startling 33% of women in federal penitentiaries (Mann 2009, 6), the link between child welfare involvement and conflict with the law requires further attention. Real action, however, requires a holistic approach encompassing the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health of Aboriginal women, families and communities. As explained by Hill, the history of colonization has burdened Aboriginal nations

Georgina's story

Georgina carried the trauma of being removed from her home as an infant, or growing up in foster care, group homes and the streets, of missing her family and community. She carried the pain of addiction, prostitution, and violence. But it was losing her children to the child welfare system that hurt Georgina the most. When she lost her children, she lost a piece of herself.

A proud Cree woman, Georgina was the mother of seven children, as well as a cherished sister and friend. Her favourite colour was red and she loved to make bannock. She was a ball of fire with a heart of gold. She made people feel safe. These are the things people remember most about Georgina.

with a continual — passing down of various loads or degrees of post traumatic stress. Generation after generation so that we wind up with this entire burden on our people as they exist today” (National Council of Welfare 2007, 84). This burden is evidenced by the current socio-economic condition experienced by Aboriginal peoples in Canada, particularly, Aboriginal women.

The social and economic marginalization that impacts so many Aboriginal women and their families is troubling. Research shows that Aboriginal women are affected by higher levels of poverty, lower educational attainment, higher unemployment, poorer physical and mental health and lack of housing (CCPA 2010, 37). Indeed, recent statistics reveal that over 40% of Aboriginal women live in poverty (NWAC 2009a, 1). In 2006, 13.5% of Aboriginal women were unemployed compared to 6.4% of non-Aboriginal women; data from 2001 indicates that the highest rates of unemployment (22%) are experienced by Aboriginal women living on-reserve; and, 60% of Aboriginal women with jobs work part-time and/or part-year and most are concentrated in low paying occupations, such as sales, service, business finance, or administration jobs (ibid.).

While Aboriginal peoples are making significant gains in terms of educational attainment, they are still far less likely to complete high school or obtain a university degree than non-Aboriginal people. In 2006, only 12% of non-Aboriginal women had not completed high school, compared to 27% of Aboriginal women (Wilson and MacDonald 2010, 14). Less than 15% of Aboriginal women have a university degree or higher versus to 28% of non-Aboriginal women; it should be noted however, that more Aboriginal women had attained trade certificates or college diplomas than non-Aboriginal woman (ibid, 13, 14). Sadly, the situation is less optimistic for Aboriginal men. 8% of Aboriginal men have a university degree or higher, compared to 25% of non-Aboriginal men (ibid. 13).

Impacts of economic insecurity are seen in the poor housing conditions experienced by many Aboriginal peoples.⁴ Aboriginal peoples are almost four times as likely as non-Aboriginal people

Gladys' story

Gladys lived in Kitigan Zibi all her life and enjoyed the simple pleasures of her homeland, especially going to the bush. That was her time. She really liked going hunting and fishing. Gladys loved everybody and took care of her kids and her family. She welcomed everybody and anybody into her home, no matter who they were.

Gladys' family is now on a journey to find answers to the questions they have about the death of their beautiful mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. They want her story to be told and hope that shedding light on injustices will help to build a better future for her great-grandchildren and generations to come.

⁴ It is important to acknowledge that housing conditions vary greatly amongst Aboriginal communities. The experience of Inuit people living in the North is very different, for example, from First Nations people living on and off-reserve and for Métis people living in urban areas versus rural areas.

to live in a crowded dwelling and are three times as likely to live in a home in need of major repairs (Statistics Canada 2008a, 16). While the number of Aboriginal people living in crowded homes has declined in the last decade (from 17% in 1996 to 11% in 2006) the number of Aboriginal peoples living in homes requiring major repairs remains unchanged (ibid.). The housing situation is particularly precarious for Aboriginal single mothers. In 2001, more than half of all Aboriginal single parent households headed by women were in core housing need (NWAC 2009a, 1). Aboriginal women are far more likely to be single parents than Aboriginal men. In 2006, 29% of Aboriginal children 14 and under lived with a single mother, compared to just 6% living with a single father (Statistics Canada 2008a, 15). Research from 2001 found that over 70% of Aboriginal single parents lived off-reserve and over 80% of those households were headed by single mothers. (NWAC 2009a, 1).

The above statistics are noteworthy in that they identify the current context impacting many Aboriginal women and their families and indicate what needs to be done to improve this situation. Many factors of health and wellbeing are inextricably linked to low income and measures of socio-economic stress and that the mental and emotional impacts of poverty, the lack of perceived options, can be overwhelming. As recounted by Jacobs and Williams:

[w]ords such as low-self esteem, depression, anger, self-doubt, intimidation, frustration, shame and hopelessness were used to describe some of the crushing feelings of Aboriginal children and parents living in poverty. Families are feeling despair as they cannot see any way to 'rise above' their situations. (OFIFC 2000, 7)

Poor housing options mean limited choices for Aboriginal women in terms of leaving violent relationships or escaping unsafe situations. In such a context, women living on-reserve may be forced to choose between remaining in a violent home or leaving their community. Aboriginal women residing in towns or urban centers often live in marginalized areas of these communities where housing fails to meet the criteria of being safe, secure, affordable or appropriate (NWAC 2008, 10). Aboriginal women and girls are also at increased risk for homelessness (ibid.). The housing experiences of Aboriginal women and girls in urban areas are troubling, as research

Lisa's story

Lisa Marie Young is remembered as a beautiful and vibrant woman. Her parents always felt like she was going in the right direction. "My daughter wanted to shine," says Lisa's mother. "No matter what she wanted to do, she would have been awesome." More than anything, the family wants to keep Lisa in people's minds. They do not want people to forget about Lisa Marie.

Lisa always felt strong about her independence. She felt safe in her community, as though she knew everyone. She never thought anyone would harm her. Still, Lisa was practical and if she went out at night she was always with a friend. But the night she went missing, Lisa was with friends.

indicates that a high number of Aboriginal peoples are now living in urban areas. The 2006 Census found that 54% of Aboriginal peoples lived in an urban centre (Statistics Canada 2008a, 12).

In the context of restricted options and inadequate choices, too many Aboriginal women and girls are forced into situations or coping strategies that increase their vulnerability to violence, such as hitch-hiking, addictions, homelessness, prostitution and other sex work, gang involvement or abusive relationships. While there are no nationally collected statistics regarding Aboriginal women in the sex trade, research reviewed by Sikka (2009) indicates that the number of Aboriginal women involved in prostitution is disproportionately high, especially in the Prairie provinces. According to Sikka:

[S]tudies have indicated that between 70% of sexually exploited youth and 50% of adult sex workers in Winnipeg are of Aboriginal descent. These estimates are staggering, given that Aboriginal peoples only make up approximately 10 percent of the Winnipeg population. (ibid., 10)

The link between prostitution and experiences of violence requires greater attention. Women who work as prostitutes or in other areas of the sex industry frequently report to researchers that they experience violence perpetrated by strangers, clients, acquaintances, partners and the police (NWAC 2008, 5).

Despite the many layers of trauma experienced by Aboriginal peoples throughout history and into today, Aboriginal women, men, their families and communities, continue to live and love, work, teach, protect, provide, hope, create and dream. It is a legacy of strength and resilience, one more powerful than colonialism.

Limitations of Research

Most of the national data concerning victimization in Canada stems from surveys developed, administered and analyzed by Statistics Canada. These surveys include the General Social Survey (GSS) and five justice surveys that collect data related to the Aboriginal peoples as

Nina's story

Nina's mother says that Victims' Services workers do not know how to deal with families that have lost someone to murder. She is frustrated by the feeling that there are more resources available to offenders than to families. Family members also need access to supports like healing circles and counseling -- but these services can be expensive and not everyone can afford to pay.

Nina was a beautiful girl with a passion for movies, music, and dancing. She had a gift for drawing, writing and loved drama. Nina wanted to be famous and dreamed about becoming a model and actress. She loved TV shows like American Idol, Canadian Idol, and America's Next Top Model.

victims and (accused) offenders: three corrections-level surveys and two police-level surveys. In terms of violence against Aboriginal women, however, these data sources are characterized by certain methodological challenges and published findings are sometimes limited by a lack of gender-specific data. In addition, most of this research deals with violence against Aboriginal women generally, offering little to no discussion around the unique experiences of or between First Nations, Métis or Inuit women. Given this limitation it is difficult to formulate a response that speaks to the circumstances and needs of these distinct groups.⁵

The GSS is cited frequently as an important source of data regarding the experiences of Aboriginal peoples as victims of crime, their fear of crime, and perceptions of the criminal justice system (Statistics Canada 2006b, 4). A general population survey conducted every five years, the GSS has been characterized as the only study of violence that records Aboriginal identity and is representative of the Canadian population (Brownridge 2003, 66). It is important to emphasize, however, that the GSS is characterized by certain limitations, especially with respect to ‘measuring’ violence against Aboriginal women. As explained by Statistics Canada:

Statistical methods developed by Statistics Canada for measuring violence against women were not designed specifically to take account of cultural differences among [various] groups, including Aboriginal women. For example, the General Social Survey (GSS) was conducted by telephone and only in English and French; Aboriginal women who live in remote communities without telephones or who do not speak English or French fluently will not be able to participate. Aboriginal women may also face additional barriers to disclosing violence to an interviewer that relate to cultural differences. The GSS is therefore likely to underestimate the true incidence of violence against Aboriginal women (Statistics Canada 2006a, 64).

Shelley's story

Shelley was the daughter of Aileen and Jim Joseph. She was the mother of Ivan, Sheena, Amanda, and Shane. Shelley was a Mohawk woman, Wolf Clan from Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. She was a woman with beautiful long brown hair and many gifts. This is her story.

A year and a half after she was murdered, Shelley's oldest son committed suicide. Ivan was an Iron worker and very handsome. He had a long ponytail and loved his red Oakley sunglasses. Family members say he never recovered from the loss of his mother.

⁵ The term “Aboriginal” is used to conflate First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples into a single category. While NWAC recognizes the importance of discussion, policy and programming that speaks to the distinct experiences of these communities, the secondary sources that inform quantitative research often fail to acknowledge the particular nation of the woman or girl involved. Given this limitation, this report speaks to the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women generally, and not First Nations, Métis or Inuit women specifically. This said, NWAC recognizes that “Aboriginal women” does not represent a uniform category. In addition to the cultural distinctions between and within First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, the category of “Aboriginal women” is further differentiated by class, geographic location, disability issues, etc.

Of the five justice-related surveys, corrections level data is generally considered most reliable with high levels of response and coverage and most national level indicators on Aboriginal peoples in the justice system have been based on this information (Statistics Canada 2006b, 4). Indeed, police surveys are complicated by a number of challenges and limitations. For example, data is based only on reported incidents. Considering that about six out of 10 incidents of violent crime against Aboriginal people go unreported (a figure comparable to the non-Aboriginal population) (ibid, 6), it is clear that 'official' police counts must under-represent the current situation.

Though Statistics Canada has tried to improve the limited data they receive by asking police to note cases where the question of Aboriginal identity is not asked, some police services still systematically classify the Aboriginal background of victims and accused persons as 'unknown' (Statistics Canada 2006b, 4). Considering that the RCMP covers 75% of Canada's geography and serves more than 630 Aboriginal communities (Royal Canadian Mounted Police), the lack of available data contributes to a major gap in data concerning the victimization of Aboriginal peoples. Statistics Canada reports that "[b]etween 1997 and 2000, an average of 18% of victims had an unknown Aboriginal status. Between 2001 and 2004, the proportion of victims with an unknown Aboriginal status increased to an average of 44%, resulting in substantial undercoverage of the Aboriginal status variable" (Statistics Canada 2006b, 21). Clearly, such gaps raise serious questions about the representiveness of current homicide data as it relates to Aboriginal peoples.

Even when police do report this information, there are no established guidelines for identifying how data on Aboriginal identity should be collected. Without guidance or clear protocols, Statistics Canada notes that data pertaining to Aboriginal identity is often collected through "police observation." This approach is problematic. As explored by Lawrence (2004), there remains in Canada a prevailing attitude that 'being Aboriginal' is about how you look, and that that 'look' is dark skin, black hair and brown eyes. However, Aboriginal identity is about much more than appearance. The experience of Aboriginal peoples in Canada is accompanied by the unique historical context of colonization, the impacts (and resulting vulnerabilities) of which cannot be measured by a quick assessment of skin, hair, and eye colour.

Recognizing the need for more reliable, comprehensive data around the number of homicides involving Aboriginal peoples, Statistic Canada's yearly Homicide Survey asks police to record

Terrie's story

As a youth, Terrie excelled in school. She was active in drama and choir and won first place in a school science fair. She was an artist and a writer and could speak French. Her teachers used to say, "I wish all my students were like her."

Almost eight years have passed and Terrie's murder remains unsolved. Her parents try to stay positive but the process is frustrating. They are sure that someone knows what happened to their daughter and are pleading for anyone with information to come forward. The silence needs to be broken.

the number of victims and persons charged that were Aboriginal. Some police agencies, however, have refused to collect or report the data, arguing that collection of such information contravenes internal policy, that the information is not needed for the agency's own purposes, or that police officers find it impractical, uncomfortable or insensitive to ask individuals about their cultural background.

Statistics Canada also frequently receives requests for data regarding missing persons in Canada; however, there are no national data sources concerning the number of missing persons reports filed each year, the number of cases resolved or the percentage that remain outstanding. It is argued by some law enforcement personnel and researchers that since it is not a criminal violation to be missing it is inappropriate to track missing persons reports as part of national data collection on the incidence of crime. That said, in 2006 the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACCP) sought to improve data collection on the number of Aboriginal peoples reported missing by modifying the CPIC database to allow officers to note First Nations, Métis or Inuit ancestry. Unfortunately, to date the trends observed through this "improved" data collection have not been made available to the public.

In Canada, there is one known jurisdiction that has worked to improve reporting of Aboriginal identity. The Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police (SACP) is the only policing body to present detailed statistics on missing persons in their jurisdiction. The SACP website offers an analysis of missing persons from 1940 to 2009 by race, gender, and geographic location. The website reveals that almost 59% of missing women and girls in Saskatchewan are of Aboriginal ancestry (17 of 29 cases). The number of outstanding cases of Aboriginal men and boys is also significant, but represents a smaller percentage of cases (44% of 69 cases). Considering that Aboriginal people represent only 15% of the population in Saskatchewan (Statistics Canada 2008a, 11), these figures are significant, and speak to the urgency surrounding this issue of missing Aboriginal peoples and need for more publicly available data.

Despite the clear need and desire for data on missing persons in Canada, and missing Aboriginal peoples in particular, there has been little tangible movement in this direction. Recently, initial consultations were held in Saskatchewan to discuss a pilot project that would have instructed police officers to record the Aboriginal identity of victims and offenders. According to Statistics Canada, the RCMP "categorically refused," citing privacy concerns and other practical issues. As the pilot required the full support of all police forces and Aboriginal leadership in Saskatchewan, the so-called "Saskatchewan pilot" is not expected to proceed.

Sisters In Spirit Research Methodology

Through the Sisters In Spirit initiative NWAC has systematically documented all known cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. Such research allows NWAC to speak with confidence about the root causes, circumstances and trends associated with these cases. However, given the nature of this subject matter, the methodological, ethical and practical considerations around this research are numerous and complex.

Above all, this research is designed to honour the woman and girls lost to violence, their families and communities. To this end, NWAC has developed a community-based research plan to guide the research in a culturally appropriate and respectful way. The approach to community based research is rooted in the principles of relationship, reciprocity, collaboration, and equal partnership between researchers and participating family members. This methodology privileges the experiences of Aboriginal women, girls, and their families as well as incorporates key principles of participatory action research. In doing this work, NWAC is guided by the ethics of sharing, caring, trust, and strength and the analysis of the data reflects a grounded theory perspective. As an inductive approach, grounded theory holds that "conclusions must be grounded in the data collected, that researchers should build theories that reflect the evidence rather than attempting to make the data 'fit' into preconceived hypotheses" (King, forthcoming).

The quantitative research began with creating a database to record information about missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. In doing so, the objective was to create a 'census' of these cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls (that is, to document every case). Over the course of the initiative NWAC reviewed more than 740 cases of missing and murdered women, 582 of which were found to meet the criteria for inclusion in the database:

- The woman or girl involved is Aboriginal (status or non-status First Nations, Métis, or Inuit);
- The case involves a female or living as a woman (includes transgender or transsexual Aboriginal women);
- The woman or girl is missing, or died a result of homicide, negligence, or in circumstances family or community members consider suspicious; and,
- The woman or girl was born or connected to a community in Canada.

While the database is designed as a census of such cases, NWAC does not claim to have documented every case of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. In fact, it is believed the scope of this violence is far greater than what has been documented. As will be discussed below, the findings reflect only those cases that have identified and reviewed to date. As such, when reporting on the findings, NWAC refers to the 'known cases' of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls.

The database consists of more than 250 variables organized according to four themes: demographic information, life experiences (of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls), incident information and trial information, including some information about the accused. The database is populated mainly through secondary research, and in some cases supplemented by information shared through storytelling by family members, reports from community members and other key informants (such as police officers). Main data sources are media articles, police websites, and reported court decisions. The design of the database was informed by the work of other research bodies, particularly Statistics Canada. This approach allows for comparability between the quantitative findings by NWAC and general population trends related to violence against women and homicide in Canada.

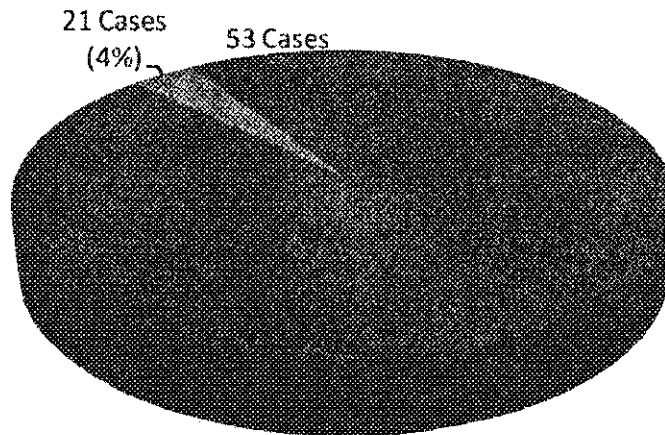
The research carried out through the Sisters In Spirit initiative is valuable in that it represents new information—primary data collected by NWAC that exists nowhere else. However, it should be emphasized that Aboriginal communities have been pointing to this issue for some time. As an organization representing the interests of Aboriginal women in Canada, NWAC has sought to gather this information and analyze it in a thoughtful and respectful way.

Sisters In Spirit Research Findings

In 2009, NWAC reported 520 known cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. As of March 31, 2010, NWAC has recorded information for 582 cases. Of the 582 cases, 115 (20%) involve missing women and girls, 393 (67%) involve women or girls who died as the result of homicide or negligence, and 21 cases (4%) fall under the category of suspicious death (incidents that police have declared natural or accidental but that family or community members regard as suspicious). There are 53 cases (9%) where the nature of the case remains unknown, meaning it is unclear whether the woman was murdered, is missing or died in suspicious circumstances. Most of these unknown cases come from lists of missing and murdered Aboriginal women compiled by community members and posted on the Internet or published in newspapers. NWAC values and respects community knowledge and feel it is important to include these cases in this research. While lists acknowledge women and girls who have been lost, the information related to circumstances of the case is often limited. To date NWAC has not been able to locate further details about the unknown cases through secondary sources. Figure 1 presents a summary of the 582 cases.

Figure 1: Summary of Cases in SIS Database, 2010

■ Missing ■ Murdered ■ Suspicious death ■ Unknown



Source: Calculations by NWAC using data from the Sisters In Spirit (SIS) database, 2010.

Over the past five years, information has been collected on an ongoing basis with regular updates to the database. When a change in a case occurs (for example, if a missing girl is found safe), the database is updated to reflect the new information. Comparing the 2010 findings to those from the 2009, *Voices of Our Sisters In Spirit (Second Edition)*, there are a few changes to take notice of. First, there is a sizeable increase in the number of known cases. In 2009, NWAC reported 520 cases and as of March 31, 2010, there are now 582 cases of disappearance and death. While there are an additional 62 cases in the database, these reflect both *new* cases from the past 12 months, as well as historic cases identified through archival research. The number of new cases recorded in 2009-2010 is 20⁶, which includes missing, murdered, suspicious death, and unknown status cases.

Upon review of the cases, a second finding of interest is related to the overall number or proportion of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. While murder cases continue to represent 67% of cases in the database (similar to our 2009 findings), the number of missing cases has decreased both in terms of the actual number of cases, as well as the percentage of overall cases. In 2009, there were 126 missing cases in the database (24%). This has since dropped to 115 cases (20% of total cases). Based on the dynamic nature of this research, this change reflects that some women and girls have been found alive. Sadly, others have since been found murdered or died as the result of suspicious circumstances.

⁶ Since January 2009, there have been 27 cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women entered into the SIS database. However, since the last release of data in the 2nd edition of *Voices of Our Sisters In Spirit*, there have been 20 new cases of disappearance or death.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Women and Girls All Impacted

The information identified in these findings has grouped cases under a broad category of 'Aboriginal women and girls.' In recognition of the differences between and within First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, NWAC also acknowledges the specific community of each woman or girl where possible. However, this information is not well reported in secondary sources, making it difficult to gather enough data to formulate a discussion that speaks to the unique experiences of (and within) each group. For this reason, the overall analysis of frequency and trends related to missing and murdered women and girls is presented as an aggregate of the three identity groups. This said, it is important for NWAC to report on the cases where the identity is known.

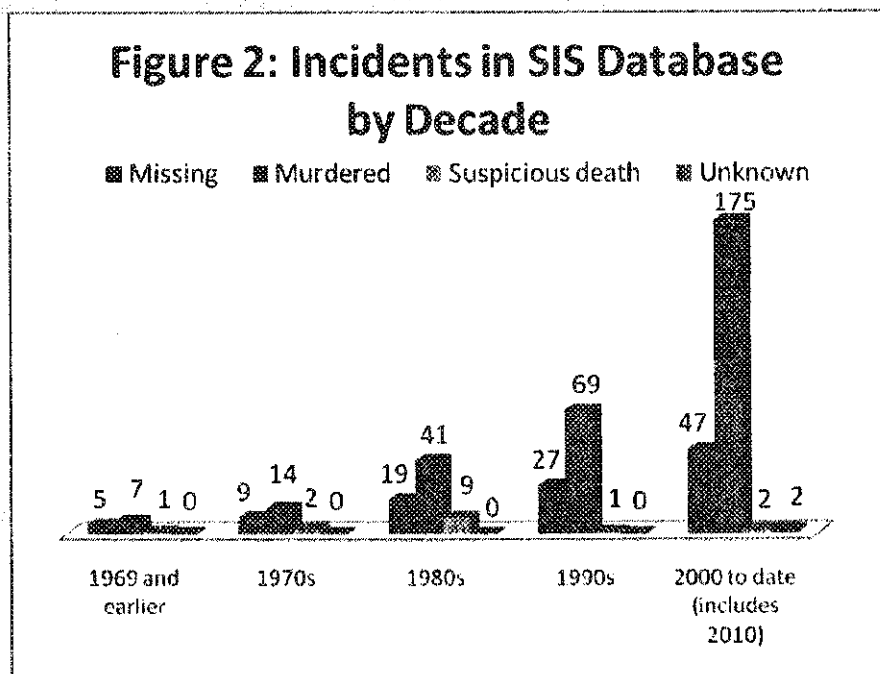
Of the 582 cases in this report, 153 of the women and girls are First Nations, 14 are Métis and 27 are Inuit. In 332 cases, the woman or girl is known to be Aboriginal, but there is no additional information to indicate whether she identified as First Nations, Inuit or Métis. There are also 56 cases where the identity of the woman or girl involved is unknown. These cases are included in the database because there is a strong reason to believe that the woman or girl is Aboriginal; however NWAC has not been able to confirm this through secondary sources. To collect further information regarding these cases, NWAC requested assistance from the RCMP to confirm the identity of the women and girls involved. RCMP records indicate that 23 of the 56 cases involve non-Aboriginal women; however, due to the Privacy Act the RCMP could not report back to NWAC which of the 56 women were non-Aboriginal. Without further details, the decision was made to keep all unknown cases in the database for analysis. The concern was that randomly removing 23 of the 56 cases might inadvertently exclude cases where the woman or girl is in fact Aboriginal. To support this decision a statistical significance test was conducted first with the inclusion of all cases, and then with 23 cases randomly selected for exclusion. The results found no significant difference in the outcomes, suggesting that there are no outliers in these 23 cases that would change the overall analysis or outcomes of the research.

The decision to include the 23 cases also reflects the concern around how police collect and record information on Aboriginal identity. As discussed earlier in this report, NWAC has learned there is no requirement or consistent protocol regarding how police gather information on Aboriginal identity. In carrying out this research, NWAC honours community reporting as the most reliable means of knowing whether a particular woman or girl is Aboriginal. Police recording, meanwhile, is often based on the 'visual assessment' of the woman by the officer involved. Knowing the problems and inaccuracies of police collected data on Aboriginal identity NWAC was reluctant to randomly remove 23 cases from the database without further information.

Most Known Cases from the Last 10 Years

NWAC records information about when the known cases occurred. Of the cases identified to date 226 (or 39%) occurred in the past 10 years, and 97 (17%) occurred in the 1990s. This distribution is quite different from the findings released in 2009, which found that over one half

(55%) of cases occurred since 2000, and over one quarter (26%) of cases occurred in the 1990s, again reflecting the dynamic nature of the research. Compared to the 2009 findings, the 2010 data also indicate a different proportion of missing versus murder or suspicious death cases. The 2009 data found the majority of older cases involved missing women; however, as Figure 2 identifies, the findings now indicate more cases of homicide or suspicious death in all decades. This change in the data reflects what was previously suspected—that ongoing research will uncover additional older cases of both missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls which were previously undocumented.



Source: Calculations by NWAC using data from the Sisters In Spirit (SIS) database, 2010.

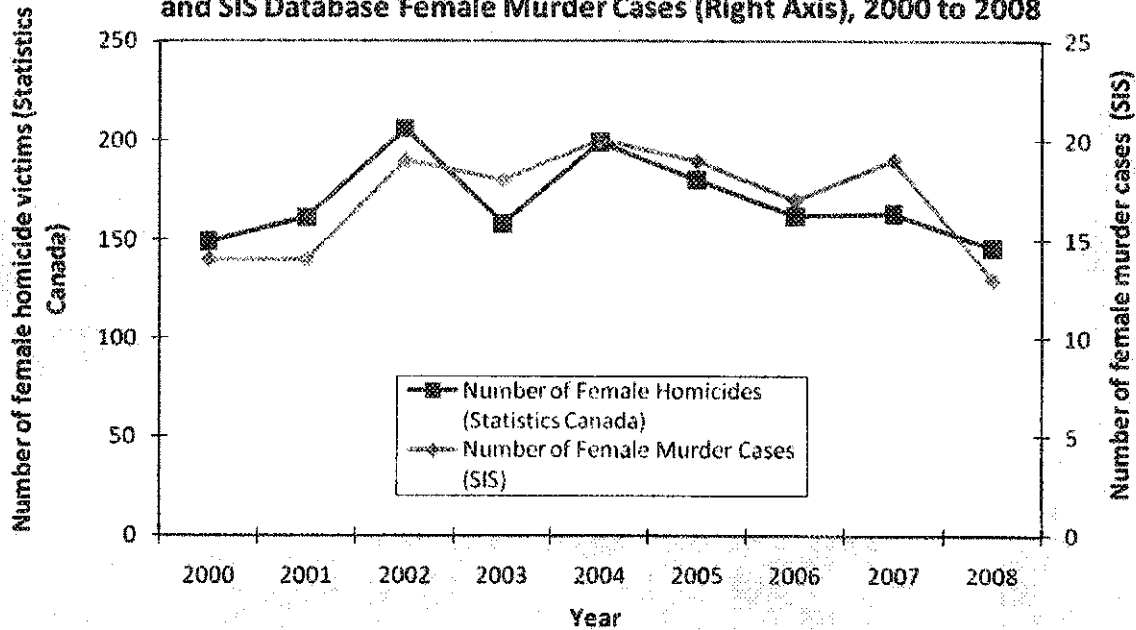
There Are Likely More Older Cases

The number of female homicide victims in Canada has fluctuated in recent years. The most recent statistics show that from 2000 to 2008 the number of female homicide victims was as high as 206 in 2002 and as low as 146 in 2008 (Statistics Canada 2009a). As a trend, the number of female homicide victims increased from 2000 to 2002, declined slightly in 2003, increased again 2004, before starting a general downward trend until 2008 (Figure 3).

In Canada, there is no known homicide rate for Aboriginal women, but comparing the overall homicide rate for women in Canada, with the findings from the Sisters In Spirit database, there is an interesting pattern to consider. While the numbers differ considerably, a comparison of the trends suggests that the Canadian female homicide rates coincides quite closely with murder

cases collected in the Sisters In Spirit database over the same time period (Figure 3).⁷ While the two trends are not identical, it does suggest that over this period there was a relatively close relationship between trends of female homicide victims in Canada and cases of murdered Aboriginal women. The patterns observed in Figure 3 might be simply coincidental; however, the similarity makes sense given that cases of Aboriginal women and girls in the database are likely represented in the Statistics Canada figures.

Figure 3: Numbers of Canadian Female Homicide Victims (Left Axis) and SIS Database Female Murder Cases (Right Axis), 2000 to 2008



Source: Beattie, Sara "Homicide in Canada, 2008" Juristat, October 2009, Vol. 29, No. 4, Statistics Canada, and SIS Database, 2010, and SIS Database - Female Murder Victims

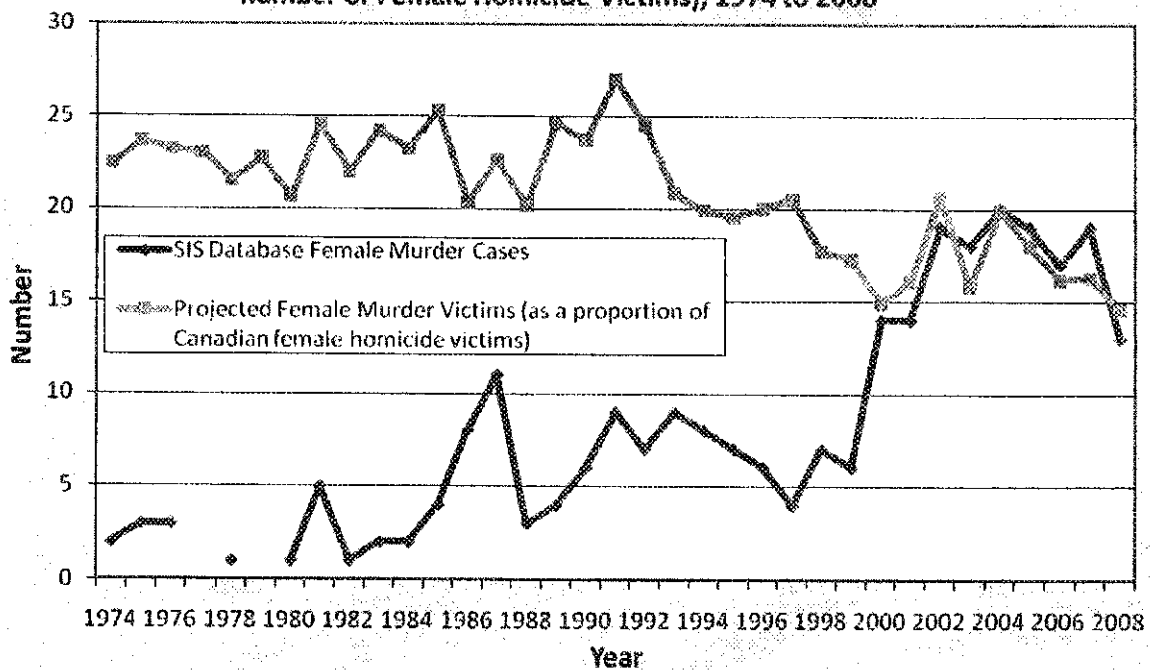
The close relationship between these two trends in recent years suggests there may have been a similar relationship in the past. However, a comparison of murder cases in the Sisters In Spirit database with the historical Statistics Canada figures shows that this is not the case. The current NWAC findings suggest there was a sudden increase in the number of murder cases at the turn of the century from 1999 to 2000, yet the overall number of female homicide victims in Canada at that point was declining. As there is little evidence or research to suggest that the number of homicides involving Aboriginal women suddenly jumped at this point in time, it seems far more likely that, despite ongoing research, the NWAC database continues to undercount the older cases, or true number of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada.

The question, therefore, is by how much might this research undercount the number of Aboriginal women and girls that have been murdered in Canada? The recent close relationship

⁷ The two data series are being compared for similarity of trends, but differ quite considerably in terms of actual numbers.

between female homicide rates in Canada and the Sisters In Spirit database indicates that, between 2000 and 2008, cases identified by NWAC represent about 10% of the total number of female homicides in Canada. Applying this percentage to the number of female homicide victims back to 1974 allows us to estimate or project the number of Aboriginal women and girls that were murdered over this period. It must be emphasized that the projected line in Figure 4 is speculative and its shape is related to the overall Canadian trend. The actual trend in the number of murdered Aboriginal women might have been much higher or possibly lower than the projected line. Nevertheless, the projected line in Figure 4 suggests that the Sisters In Spirit database accounts for only a fraction of the older cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. For example, the projected line suggests that the number of cases

Figure 4: Number of SIS Database Female Murder Cases and Projected Number of Female Murder Victims (as a proportion of the Canadian number of Female Homicide Victims), 1974 to 2008

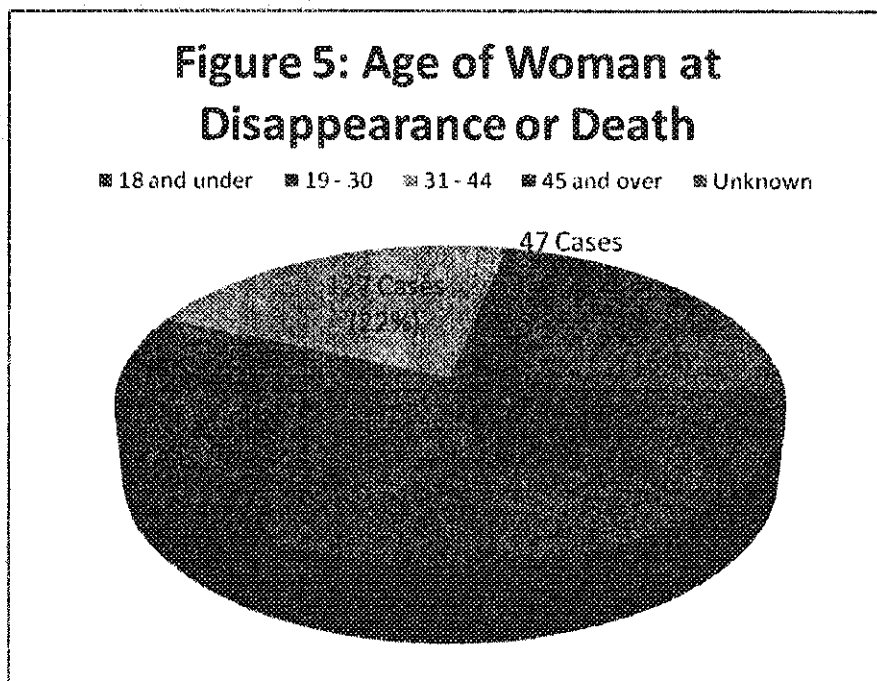


involving Aboriginal women and girls could have been as high as 20 to 25 in the mid-1970s. In contrast, the number of cases recorded in the Sisters In Spirit database is less than five for each year during the same period.

Majority of Cases involve Young Women and Girls

In conducting this research NWAC has gathered as much information as possible in order to understand the lives of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. In 2010, NWAC has collected information about the age of the women or girl in 85% of known cases. Just over half of the cases (55%) involved women and girls under the age of 31, with 17% of women girls 18 years of age and under (Figure 5). This finding is up slightly from 2009, when

approximately 52% of cases involved women under the age of 31, with 14% of women and girls 18 years of age and under (NWAC, 2009). While Statistics Canada data indicates that just over 24% of female homicide victims between 2004 and 2008 in Canada are 50 and older (Statistics Canada 2009b), only 8% of murder cases in NWAC's database involve women over 45.

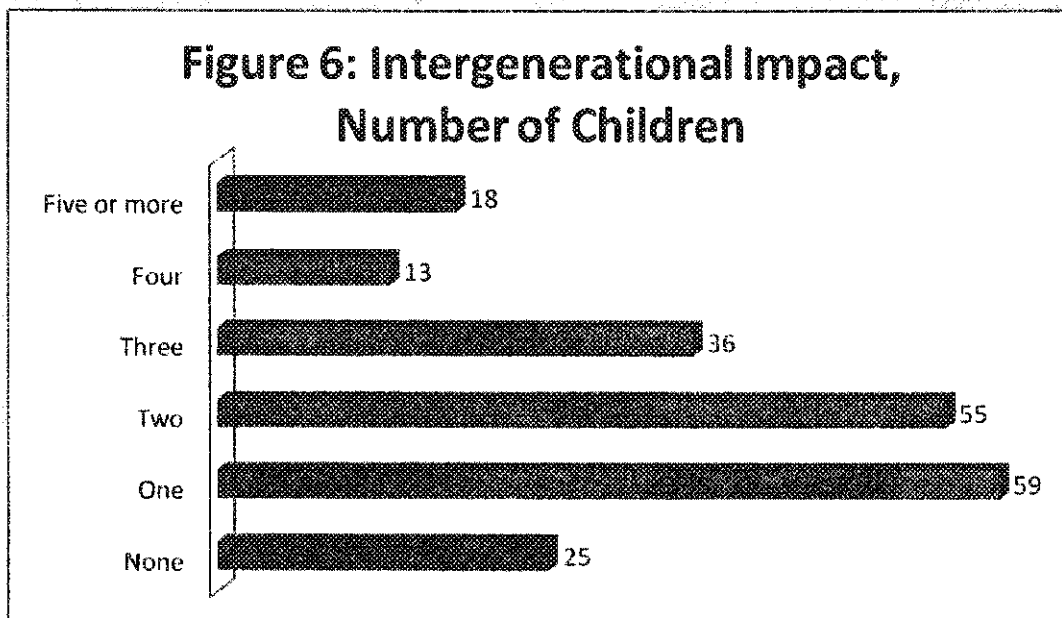


Source: Calculations by NWAC using data from the Sisters In Spirit (SIS) database, 2010.

Intergenerational Impact of Missing and Murdered Women: Many are Mothers

In 2009, NWAC reported that many of the missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada were mothers. Knowing the number of women who were mothers speaks to the intergenerational impact of women who have gone missing or been found murdered, and the need to provide supports and services to the children left behind. Unfortunately, this information is not always reported in secondary sources. Of the 582 missing and murdered Aboriginal women, information regarding the family size, or number of children, is known in just over one third (206) of the cases. In these cases, the overwhelming majority of women were mothers (88% of cases). Moreover, there are more than 440 children who have been impacted by the loss of their mother. See Figure 6.

**Figure 6: Intergenerational Impact,
Number of Children**



Note: n = 206 cases in SIS database for which this information is known. Moreover, there are more than 440 children who have been impacted by the loss of their mother.

Source: Calculations by NWAC using data from the Sisters In Spirit (SIS) database, 2010.

Majority of Known Cases Occur in the Western Provinces

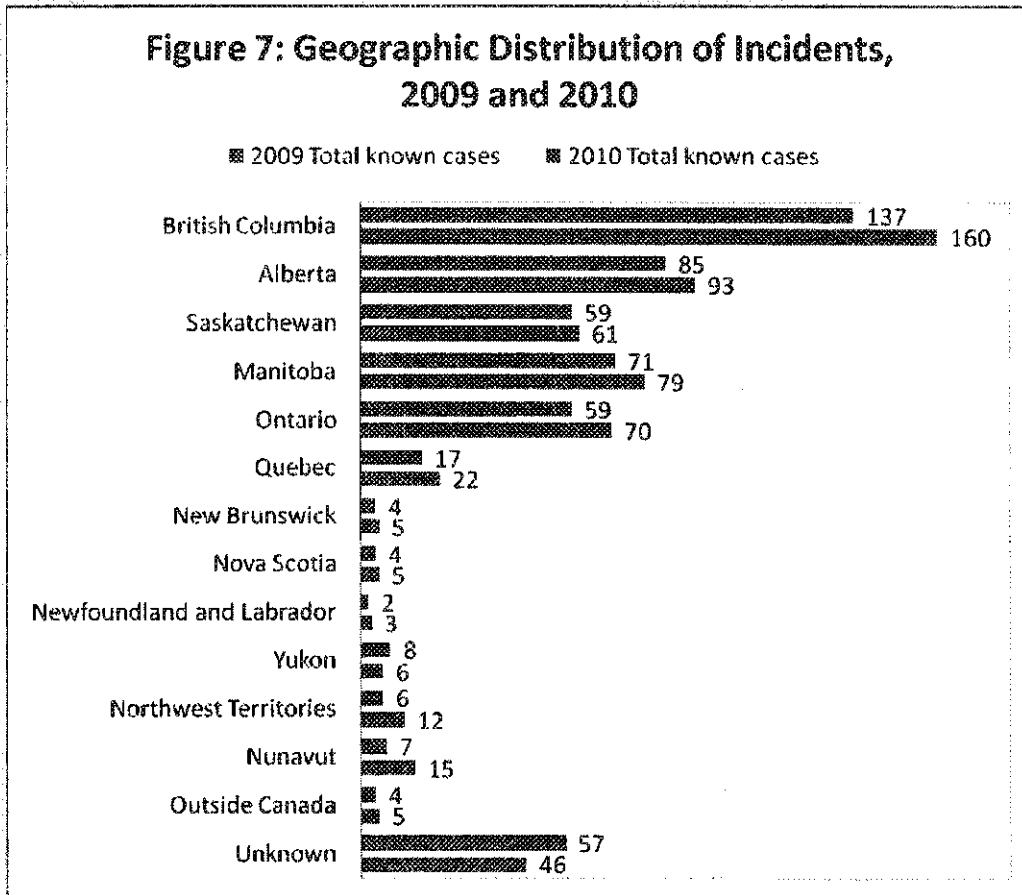
The majority of known cases identified in this research occurred in the western provinces, with more than a quarter (28%) of all cases taking place in British Columbia. The high number of cases in British Columbia may reflect the availability of information on cases in high profile areas, such as the Downtown East Side of Vancouver, and those occurring along Highway 16 (also known as the “Highway of Tears”) in northern British Columbia. In contrast, there are a limited number of known cases in the Atlantic provinces and northern territories. For the Atlantic region, this may reflect the smaller population or lower proportion of Aboriginal peoples in these provinces, or be the result of underreporting/limited access to secondary source information concerning cases in these areas. In the northern territories, it may reflect the small population, as well as the fact that it is rare for a person to be missing in the north.

The distribution of cases across the country suggests no region is immune to violence leading to the disappearance or death of Aboriginal women and girls. To date there is only one province in the database without any cases—Prince Edward Island. However, community members have shared information about Aboriginal women and girls who disappeared or were murdered in Prince Edward Island but at the time of this report NWAC was still working to gather further information about these cases.

Since the release of the 2009 *Voices* report, NWAC has been able to gather information about 11 cases where the province of incident was previously unknown, reducing the number of these cases from 57 to 46. The research has also identified additional cases in all provinces and two of

the three territories, which can be seen in the overall increase in cases (from 520 to 582) since the last report. Only the Yukon territory saw a decrease in missing and murdered Aboriginal women or girls (from eight to six cases). This change reflects the ongoing nature of the research, indicating new information in these cases or that a missing woman has been found safe.

Figure 7: Geographic Distribution of Incidents, 2009 and 2010



Source: Calculations by NWAC using data from the Sisters In Spirit (SIS) database, 2010.

Most Cases Occur in Urban Areas

The evidence collected indicates that the majority of cases occur in urban areas.⁸ Of the cases where this information is known, almost 60% of women and girls were murdered in an urban area; 28% of cases occurred in rural areas; and, 13% of women and girls were murdered on-reserve. This distribution is even more striking in terms of missing cases. Taking a broad look at the different locations where women and girls have disappeared,⁹ it was found that over 70% of women and girls went missing from an urban area, 22% were last seen in a rural area and 7%

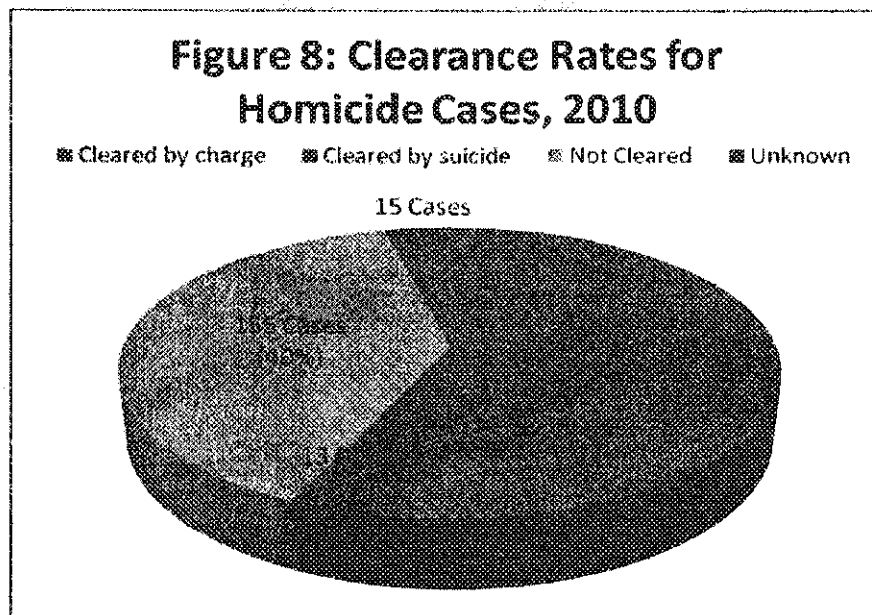
⁸ In this report, "urban" is defined under the Statistics Canada's definition or category of a Census Metropolitan Area, whereas "rural" refers to a non-Census Metropolitan Area.

⁹ This includes cases where women and girls are still missing, as well as cases where women were missing and have since been found murdered.

disappeared from a reserve. While it is clear that the issue of missing women and girls is overwhelmingly an urban issue, the high rates of mobility of Aboriginal peoples, and particularly Aboriginal women and families, creates a different dynamic for cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls than would be experienced in the non-Aboriginal urban population. What this means is that even when cases may be linked to an urban area, there are often other circumstances impacting women and families, such as temporary or semi-permanent residence in a city and having close ties to a home community that is also impacted by the disappearance or death of a woman or girl. For cases on reserve and in rural areas, however, must also receive equal attention to identify appropriate recommendations for justice intervention. This issue is reiterated by family members who have expressed frustration over the fact that rural cases do not seem to get as much attention as those in urban areas, a situation one family member described as —acism-plus.”

Nearly Half of Murder Cases Remain Unsolved

NWAC also tracks information to measure outcomes in homicides involving Aboriginal women and girls. Referred to as the ‘clearance rate’, the data reveals a strikingly low percentage of cases where someone has been charged criminally in cases involving Aboriginal women and girls. In 2010, the evidence indicates charges have been laid in only 209 of 393 cases (approximately 53%). This clearance rate for murder cases is dramatically different from the average clearance rate for homicides in Canada, which was reported by Statistics Canada at 84% in 2005 (Statistics Canada 2005, 10). While a small number of cases have been cleared by suicide of the offender, there remain 155 cases (40%) where no charge has been laid, and an additional 15, or 4%, where the status of the case is unknown by NWAC.



Note: n = 393 cases in SIS database for which this information is known.

Source: Calculations by NWAC using data from the Sisters In Spirit (SIS) database, 2010.

There are Differences in Clearance Rate by Province

In looking at the outcomes in cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls, NWAC also wanted to identify if there was a difference in clearance rates by province or territory. Table 1 identifies the clearance rate by provinces in cases of homicide.

Province or Territory	Cleared by charge	Cleared by suicide	Cleared otherwise*	Not cleared	Unknown
British Columbia	47.0%			49.0%	4.0%
Alberta	42.3%	9.0%		42.3%	6.4%
Saskatchewan	78.4%			21.6%	
Manitoba	51.6%	1.6%		45.3%	1.6%
Ontario	51.8%	3.6%		41.1%	3.6%
Quebec	56.3%	6.3%	6.3%	31.3%	
New Brunswick	50.0%			50.0%	
Nova Scotia	40.0%			60.0%	
Newfoundland and Labrador	66.7%	33.3%			
Yukon	75.0%			25.0%	
Northwest Territories	62.5%	12.5%		25.0%	
Nunavut	93.3%			6.7%	
Outside Canada	66.7%				33.3%
Total	53.2%	3.3%	0.3%	39.4%	3.8%

Source: Calculations by NWAC using data from the Sisters In Spirit (SIS) database, 2010.
*refers to cases where a charge was laid, but not for homicide (e.g. a charge of assault)

While the overall clearance rate is low, there are some provinces or territories that stand out as having higher clearance rates than the national average. Notably, all known cases in Newfoundland and Labrador have been cleared, either by charge or suicide of the offender. The Territories have a higher than average clearance rate, with 93% of cases in Nunavut and 75% of cases in the Yukon cleared by charge. In the Northwest Territories, 62% of cases are cleared by a charge and an additional 13% are cleared by suicide, resulting in an overall clearance rate of 75%. Based on reports of higher levels of family violence in the northern territories, it seems likely that the higher clearance rates in these regions may reflect that it is generally easier to lay charges when the offender is someone close to the victim (e.g. a partner or family member) versus an acquaintance or stranger. What is of interest, however, is the clearance rate in Saskatchewan which boasts a high (by comparison) rate of 78% of cases cleared by a charge.

More than Half of Women and Girls Died in a Residential Dwelling

The data collected has also been analyzed to track the specific location where women were found murdered/in suspicious circumstances in order to examine the idea of 'safe space' (for example, in one's home versus a busy city street). Of the cases where this information is known (234 of the 393 cases of murder or suspicious death), it was found that 59% of Aboriginal women and girls died in a residential dwelling. In 15% of cases, the violence happened in an open area, such as a field, and in 14% of cases the incident took place on a street, road, or highway. The large number of cases occurring in residential dwellings may reflect the rates of family violence experienced by Aboriginal women.

Table 2: Locations of Murders and Suspicious Deaths in SIS Database, 2010

Where victims were found	Murders		Suspicious Deaths		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Residence	130	33.1	9	42.9	139	59.4
Public place	14	3.6	2	9.5	16	6.8
Vehicle, including public transportation	1	0.3			1	0.4
Street, road, or highway	31	7.9	1	4.8	32	13.7
Open area	34	8.7			34	14.5
Other	12	3.1			12	5.1
Total known locations	222	56.5	12	57.1	234	59.5

Source: Calculations by NWAC using data from the Sisters In Spirit (SIS) database, 2010.

Aboriginal Women and Girls More likely to be Killed by a Stranger than Non-Aboriginal Women

Of the known cases where charges were laid (261), it was found that 23% of the women were killed by current or ex-partners; 17% of accused offenders were acquaintances of the woman or girl, meaning a friend, neighbour, or someone known to her and a further 16.5% of suspects were strangers with no prior connection to the woman or girl. While anti-violence advocates in Canada have worked toward debunking the myth of 'stranger violence'—only 6% of non-Aboriginal women are killed by strangers (Statistics Canada 2006, 68)—NWAC's research indicates that Aboriginal women are almost three times more likely to be killed by a stranger than non-Aboriginal women.

Table 3: Relationship of Suspects to Homicide Victims in SIS Database, 2010

Relationship	No.	%
Partner	45	17.2%
Ex-partner	14	5.4%
Family, including all types of family relationships	15	5.7%
John or criminal relationship	4	1.5%
Acquaintance	45	17.2%
Stranger	43	16.5%
Unknown relationship	95	36.4%
Total	261	100.0%

Note: Total represents the number of cases in the database in which charges were laid.
Source: Calculations by NWAC using data from the SIS database, 2010.

Aboriginal Women Experience Violence by Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Offenders

Examining the demographics of the accused offenders, NWAC found the vast majority (80%) are men. Where the age of the accused offender is known (51% of cases), over one quarter were youth under the age of 30 (73 of the 261 accused, or 28%), a further 14% of accused offenders were between the ages of 30 and 39, and 7% were between 40 and 49 years of age. It is also clear that Aboriginal women experience violence by both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal offenders. In 36% of cases, the person charged is Aboriginal, while 23% of accused offenders are non-Aboriginal. In the case of non-Aboriginal offenders, there are some known cases of multiple offenders (e.g. Robert Pickton and John Michael Crawford), which results in offenders being counted more than once based on the number of homicide charges that have been laid. The background of the remaining 41% of accused offenders is unknown.

Upon examination of the offenders or perpetrators of these crimes, it is perhaps important to explore the connection between offending and prior personal experiences of violence, neglect or abuse—particularly for offenders who may disproportionately experience intergenerational violence and abuse. While information about personal history is only known in 24 of 261 cases, the research uncovered a history of abuse or suspected abuse in 21 cases. In only three cases there was no prior personal experience of violence or abuse. While the tragic outcome of violence by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders is the same, the social contexts from which they emerge and the measures that must be taken to address them are distinct, as will be considered in the following section.

Involvement in Prostitution is not a 'Cause' of Disappearance or Murder

Recognizing the extreme vulnerability and high levels of violence against women in prostitution, NWAC has worked to better understand how this experience relates to cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women. Of the 582 known cases, information is known about this experience in 149, or slightly over one-quarter (26%) of the cases. In about half of those cases¹⁰ (74 of 149) the women were not involved in the sex trade; in 51 cases,¹¹ the women were known to be involved in prostitution at the time of disappearance or death. NWAC also found an additional 24 cases where the women *may* have been involved in prostitution.¹² It is important to remember that these figures represent only a subset of cases and findings around the proportion of women involved (or suspected to be involved) in prostitution may change with more information. Moreover, it must be emphasized that involvement in the sex trade is not a *'cause'* of disappearances or murders; rather, many women arrive at that point in the context of limited options and after experiencing multiple forms of trauma or victimization.

Sisters In Spirit: A Research for Change Initiative

One of the most powerful components of NWAC's research into the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls is the subsequent ability to act and implement positive solutions in light of what is known. NWAC has identified a fundamental need to create preventative measures and effective solutions, as well as tailor action to the needs of Aboriginal women, particularly young women and mothers. Aboriginal organizations, federal, provincial, municipal and Band governments, Aboriginal communities, police, service providers, courts, educators, media, Canadians and the international community all have a stake in this issue. In order to address violence, policy, programs, and services must incorporate and reflect the evidence.

Need for a Two-Stream Approach

A two-stream approach is needed to address violence against Aboriginal women: the preventative (proactive) stream and the reactive stream. On one hand, changes are needed to increase safety and lessen vulnerability of Aboriginal women and girls. At the same time, the system must also address the needs of families and communities after a woman disappears or is found murdered. Success in preventing violence will, of course, decrease need for reactive measures, but preventative measures can only be obtained over a longer period of time so both must be addressed simultaneously. Immediate improvements to responses to families of missing

¹⁰ Five cases involved missing women, 67 were murdered, and two involved suspicious deaths.

¹¹ Eight cases involved missing women and 43 were murdered.

¹² Three cases involved missing women and 21 were murdered.

and murdered Aboriginal women and girls are crucial; however, such improvements do not necessarily address root causes of violence.

Prevention

Prevailing violence prevention strategies have been criticized for placing the onus on the victim to ensure her safety and effectively alleviating responsibility from perpetrators of violence and the society that allows violence to exist. Too often, prevention strategies assume that if programs and services are available, women will be able to improve their situation. This is problematic on two levels. First, violence prevention needs to be about more than individual choice. Second, many of the programs intended to help fail to reflect the real needs of Aboriginal women and are therefore inaccessible and ineffective.

Equality is essential for the health and well-being of Aboriginal communities. At the same time, it is hard to focus on culture and healing when families and communities lack clean water, access to childcare or the economic security to have safe, affordable housing. In this way, physical, spiritual, mental and emotional needs must be seen as interconnected and mutually re-enforcing. To truly address violence against Aboriginal women, it is necessary to support the revitalization of our ways of being. It is necessary to reclaim the balance inherent in traditional gender roles and to take responsibility for the transmission of pride, cultural awareness and traditional knowledge to future generations. Since so many missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls are young, there is also a need for integrated educational strategies that engage youth in frank discussions about healthy relationships, self-esteem and personal safety, while raising awareness about the supports and services available in communities (something that obviously becomes more difficult in the context of rural and some First Nations communities, where supports may be limited by resource and capacity issues). The roles and guidance of Elders and culturally-relevant teachings around traditional roles and responsibilities must be understood as integral to this process.

There is a need for integrated educational strategies that engage youth in frank discussion about healthy relationships, self-esteem and personal safety, while raising awareness about the supports and services available in communities.

Response

It is an unfortunate reality that this issue will not abate until major changes are made to improve the overall socioeconomic outcomes of Aboriginal peoples. These circumstances, however, cannot be addressed in isolation. Efforts to ensure effective responses from the police, the courts, victim services, the media and other service providers when Aboriginal women and girls go missing or are found murdered are required.

NWAC's research with families found that they encountered barriers when working with police and victim services after their loved one disappeared or was murdered. For example, in research related to police responsiveness it was found that police often stereotype missing Aboriginal girls

and act based on those stereotypes as opposed to acting in the girl's best interest. This is a clear indication that measures must be taken to increase police and, arguably, Canadians' sensitivity and understanding of things like the history of colonization in Canada (Whiteduck, forthcoming). Families also indicated that they need victim services to help them navigate the police system, yet many families either were unaware that they could access victim services or there was a gap in the availability of services, particularly for families of missing women (Rexe, forthcoming). The obstacles that preclude families from a complete and equal response must be immediately removed. As articulated by Jacobs and Williams –it is obviously difficult to deal with the loss of a loved one, but the grief is even more difficult to cope with when the institutions designed to serve you let you down” (2008, 133)

While history is not an excuse for violent behaviour, violence perpetrated by Aboriginal men in the context of colonization, devaluation, and feelings of powerlessness, should be considered.

Experiences of Aboriginal Offenders

In understanding the vulnerability of Aboriginal women to violence, it is also important to recognize the trauma and violence experienced by Aboriginal men. Many Aboriginal men are struggling with the trauma of colonization and the intergenerational impacts that accompanies this history. For example, when Canada forcibly removed or apprehended children during the residential school era, they impressed upon children that their mothers were 'bad' mothers, that their families and communities were inferior and that their very identity was something to be ashamed of. Among the many negative impacts, boys were denied traditional teachings, rites of passage and understandings of their responsibilities toward women and how their role contributes to a sacred balance. As a result, many boys were never taught how to parent or interact with women in positive ways that are reflective of their cultures and traditions. As a result, some Aboriginal men internalized patriarchal understandings of masculinity that are not reflective of traditional teachings; values like the importance of power, domination, and control.

While history is not an excuse for violent behaviour, the context of colonization, devaluation, and feelings of powerlessness should be considered. Violence perpetrated by Aboriginal men is explained by Brownridge:

It is possible that those partners of Aboriginal women who themselves are Aboriginal have not only internalized [the] devaluation of women but that this operates in a context where they themselves feel devalued by society. To feel some value in the society in which they find themselves, they may have adopted White devaluation of women and seek to attain a sense of self-worth through having power over their partner. (2003, 78)

The experience of violence in childhood is a known risk factor or indicator for perpetrators of violence later in life (Cripps et al. 2009, 484) and since the residential schools era, as many as four generations of Aboriginal children have been raised in an environment of violence and abuse (Bopp, Bopp, and Lane 2003, 49). In this research, at least 21 Aboriginal offenders have been identified as experiencing violence, neglect, or abuse. NWAC's finding is supported by research concerning family violence and sexual assault in the territories, which found that

approximately three quarters (77%) of those accused of family violence and just over two thirds of those accused of sexual assault had suffered at least one form of abuse (Paletta 2008, vi).

Thus, the context of colonization and its intergenerational effects must be taken into consideration when working with Aboriginal offenders, particularly as the intersections between incarceration, recidivism, healing, and Aboriginal justice and legal traditions are emerging as important issues in the corrections system. However, when searching for solutions to rehabilitate Aboriginal offenders and overcome their own trauma related to the effects of colonization, it is vital to remember the needs of the victims' families. Returning to traditional forms of justice is an important step toward decolonization; however, Aboriginal women and their families have rights and society must be protected from violent offenders. Adjin-Tetty warns of the potential consequences of victim's rights being neglected during sentencing:

Focusing on decolonization or reversing the legacies of colonization could thus render women's victimization (both from colonization itself and the resulting social disintegration) invisible. Although it is important during sentencing to recognize the disadvantaged background of Aboriginal offenders that may have contributed to their commission of the offence in question, the harmful effects of the victimization of Aboriginal women (who are also obviously disadvantaged as victims of colonization) must not be trivialized. (2007, 200)

The needs of Aboriginal offenders may be similar to those identified for Aboriginal peoples in terms of reconciliation from colonization and its effects; for example, a part of the healing process for Aboriginal peoples may involve reclaiming traditional gender roles and responsibilities to regain or maintain traditional ways of being. There is a need to establish culturally-appropriate healing resources for men who have committed violence, such as men's support groups, counselling and sitting with Elders.

Mothers, Families, and Children

NWAC has found that many women impacted by violence, as well as disappearance or death are mothers and caregivers of their children. The research findings presented in this report identify at least 183 missing and murdered Aboriginal women are or were mothers; this means more than 440 children have been left without their mothers. When examining the circumstances of violence, we must not overlook those who may be affected by multiple layers of violence or trauma: the children. For this reason, measures created to improve the situation of Aboriginal women will have a similar and positive impact on their children and families. There are very real implications for the children left behind after their mothers disappear or are lost to murder. It goes without saying that children will experience trauma after such incidents regardless of their age. However, what supports are available to children of missing and murdered women? If these wounds are not healed and children carry this pain with them into adulthood, a cycle of intergenerational trauma may well result. Other family members and the community require support to cope with this trauma as well.

The overrepresentation of Aboriginal children involved in the child welfare system also has serious implications. After five years of research on this issue, NWAC has found that Aboriginal women losing their children to the child welfare system often leads to depression, increased use of alcohol or drugs to cope and, ultimately, increased vulnerability to violence. For example, through this research families have shared that a woman losing her children may 'push her over the edge.' This link to trauma caused by involvement with the child welfare system must be acknowledged as a root cause; apprehending children, breaking that special bond between mother and child, must be the last possible resort. Alternatively, we should focus our efforts on working with Aboriginal mothers and families, particularly those who suffer from family violence, addictions, poverty or other factors associated with increased vulnerability, to foster healthy families. As articulated in a report by the National Council on Welfare, "we still need to shift our paradigm of working from one where we tell other people what to do to one where we bring families together and listen to them and ask them, 'What kind of support do you need?' 'How can we help you to take care of your children and keep them safe?'" (2007, 90)

The number of Aboriginal children left behind after their mothers go missing or are murdered is high. Thus, there is a dire need to support family members who take custody of these children. In order to avoid perpetuating the cycle of cultural disconnection, Aboriginal families and their communities must have the necessary supports in order to keep their children home. There must also be support for those who express interest in caring for Aboriginal children in the child welfare system, and consideration that they may also be living in poverty. There should be support for these families and communities to care for these children and prevent an ongoing cycle of apprehension into the child welfare system.

Emerging Issues

A number of issues have emerged over the course of NWAC's research relating to missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls that require further inquiry, but fall outside the scope of the current framework: deaths that occur as a result of drugs, alcohol, exposure or suicide; deaths in-custody of police or corrections; and deaths in residential school or child welfare care. NWAC has also considered links between missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls and foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD), hitchhiking, gangs, mobility, jurisdictional issues and human trafficking, which are not necessarily reflected in the data, but are important to the overall discussion of missing and murdered women and girls.

Deaths as a Result of Drugs, Alcohol, Exposure or Suicide

While homicide is a very specific form of violence, numerous cases have identified Aboriginal women and girls who died not as the result of violence, but in tragic circumstances that might be considered "violent" (through drugs or alcohol, exposure or suicide). Although the immediate circumstances surrounding these deaths may not have been caused by a particular person, the root causes are often similar to cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls, such as increased vulnerability due poor housing, poverty and other socio-economic inequalities.

These cases are not included in the Sisters In Spirit database, but are relevant to research that broadens its scope to include deaths that result from the intersections of racism, sexism and indifference. The close links to the underlying causes and circumstances identified in the Sisters In Spirit research framework, as well as the tacit knowledge gathered by NWAC suggests that such deaths are far too common for Aboriginal women and girls.

Deaths In-Custody of Police, Corrections, Residential School or Child Welfare 'Care'

Also not included in the database are women who died in-custody of police or corrections and children who died in state 'care.' Decisions have been made not to include these cases because of the belief that these cases must be reviewed under a different lens of responsibility. Based on a growing understanding of the experiences of children in the Residential School system, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is beginning to investigate the history of children who died or went missing in residential schools (CBC News 2010). It is the assertion of NWAC that these deaths warrant close examination since the systems in which they occurred could, or perhaps should, be held responsible. When in police custody, prison, residential school or foster care, the responsibility of care for Aboriginal women and girls, as well as men and boys, falls to the state. As such, all levels of government in Canada have a responsibility to keep these women and children safe. Deaths and murders in these systems must be examined individually, even though root causes and the issues may intersect.

Deaths and murders in the corrections and child welfare systems must be examined independently, even though root causes and the issues may intersect.

Research by Sikka points to a disturbing gap in terms of both police and child welfare response to teenagers in care or with 'high needs.' She writes,

[p]articipants raised concerns that police missing persons units and social welfare agencies pay less attention to the whereabouts of runaway girls once they reach the age of fourteen. Many noted that 'chronic' runaways over this age are not deemed 'missing' or 'high risk,' particularly where they stay with 'fiends' or are thought to be just 'hanging out.' (2009, 14)

Sikka's work directly relates to the research presented in this NWAC report, which found almost one quarter of Aboriginal girls who go missing are under the age of 18 years old. What can be gleaned from Sikka's findings is that these so called 'chronic-runaways' are actually the highest risk of being exploited, as 'fiends' are often the ones luring these young girls into situations of sexual exploitation or prostitution. Women and girls in prostitution are extremely vulnerable to violence, which may lead to disappearance or death. For this reason, the non-responsiveness of the police and child welfare systems in working with cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls should not be overlooked.

Heightened Vulnerabilities: FASD¹³, Hitchhiking, Gangs, Mobility

Recent research for NWAC has also indicated that links exist between the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls, and FASD, hitchhiking, gangs, and mobility. While it has been difficult to draw out the extent and influence of these particular issues through secondary research, experiential knowledge of researchers and NWAC staff based on relationships with families and communities and the examination of large numbers of cases has revealed linkages. A small number of cases in the database have indicated that the woman or offender was affected by FASD. The literature on FASD and the corrections system in Canada indicates a connection between the disorder and offending: —[t]he cognitive, social, and behavioural problems faced by individuals with FAS/FAE are believed to lead these individuals into trouble with the law, and then create further problems for them during incarceration” (Boland et al. 1998, 54). Participants in Sikka’s research also stressed the inability of care facilities to effectively support youth with FASD, the result being that many young people run away from these centres, increasing their vulnerability to exploitation and violence.

When the important role Aboriginal mothers fulfil is lost to violence, the trauma of such an experience can breed more violence in the next generations. Research shows that 22% of gang members in Canada are Aboriginal (Totten 2009, 2) and information collected by Totten suggests a number of Aboriginal women and girls who have been murdered were involved in gangs at the time of their death. Also, Aboriginal mothers being lost to violence affects the children they leave behind, as Totten writes, —[m]any of these young men bitterly report that their mothers were absent throughout their childhood – some having been murdered or missing for extended periods of time” (ibid., 12).

It has been found that mobility amongst Aboriginal women, particularly as they move from small communities to large urban centres, makes them vulnerable to violence. Many young people from rural communities relocate to urban centres to attend school. Family and community members, as well as other key informants have shared stories that women and girls raised in rural or isolated communities are often unprepared for the transition to an urban environment. It is also of concern that many community members have long pointed to a high number of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls who were hitchhiking at the time of the incident. The issue of hitchhiking is of concern to NWAC as it directly relates to poverty, lack of access to transportation, and barriers to Aboriginal women securing safe transportation. However, it also speaks to issues impacting youth. Considering the research findings which indicate 17% of all missing and murdered Aboriginal women are youth 19 years and under, and more than 55% are youth under the age of 30, educating young Aboriginal peoples about safe transportation, safety in the urban context, and knowing risks posed by strangers and acquaintances, are all extremely important issues that are often overlooked.

¹³ Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) describes a continuum of permanent birth defects caused by maternal consumption of alcohol during pregnancy, which includes, but is not limited to fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS).

Sikka's study also makes the link between mobility, increased vulnerability and sexual exploitation. It was noted that Aboriginal women and girls living in rural areas sometimes have to travel to urban centres to access health or employment services, and that young girls often come to larger centres for powwows, dances, or other gatherings. Participants in Sikka's research relayed stories in which "people preyed on the mobility and transience of Aboriginal women in order to facilitate their entry into the sex trade" (2009, 15). While the link between mobility and sexual exploitation/disappearance/murder is sometimes obscured through secondary sources, qualitative research, including interviews with families of missing and murdered women and girls and knowledge shared by community members and other key informants, indicates strong connections in this area. Considering that Statistics Canada has found that Aboriginal peoples are moving away from rural and non-reserve areas to large urban centres and back to reserves (Statistics Canada 2006b, 4), there is a clear need for greater supports for Aboriginal women and girls in cities as they transition to and from their home communities.

Overlapping and Unclear Jurisdiction Areas

Finally, NWAC has found that overlapping and unclear jurisdictional areas of RCMP, First Nations, municipal and provincial police forces has impeded effective resolution of some cases. Family members have shared stories about jurisdictional conflicts when attempting to file a missing persons report outside their community of residence. For example, while one police service says the report needs to be filed in the city where their loved one went missing, the other maintains the report should be filed with police in her home community. Jurisdictional issues such as this act as a tremendous barrier to families and loved ones who try to make a missing persons report, but also to the investigation into a case. Jurisdictional conflicts also impact families' access to victim services. Over the course of the Sisters In Spirit initiative, NWAC has learned that different police forces provide different types of services, so families in the same city might receive different supports depending on whether their loved one's case falls under RCMP, provincial, or municipal jurisdiction. Jurisdictional issues must be resolved quickly and effectively so that officers and service providers can work in the best interests of victims and their families.

The high number of missing Aboriginal women in Canada is a serious issue that needs further research to identify links to human trafficking and what supports are needed to support women and girls who have been trafficked.

Jurisdictional issues must be resolved quickly and effectively so that officers can work in the best interests of victims and their families.

Missing Aboriginal Women and Girls and 'Human Trafficking'

NWAC has been asked about potential links between missing Aboriginal women and girls and human trafficking. Based on what is known from cases of women who were missing and later found murdered, human trafficking has not emerged as a significant factor in the disappearance of Aboriginal women. This is not to say that Aboriginal girls or women are not being trafficked or that trafficking might play a role in the disappearance of the 115 women still missing.

However, NWAC's research to date does not indicate strong links to the stereotypical or most recognizable forms of human trafficking, where cross-border activity and the sale of women's bodies are common elements.

Yet, the legal definition of human trafficking is much broader than what is commonly understood. As Sikka writes, "a person in Canada can traffic someone simply by exerting control over the movements of a person" (ibid., 5). Sikka's research shows that Aboriginal women and girls' experiences fall under this definition and "the types of trafficking to which Aboriginal women and girls are subject because they are Aboriginal are the types associated with discrimination, racism, poverty and breakdown of community" (ibid., 22). By this definition, certainly intersections could exist, but limitations of our quantitative research circumvent ascertaining this level of information. However, Sikka warns of problems with conflating the two issues and points out that the high number of missing Aboriginal women in Canada is a serious issue that should not need the label of 'trafficking' to be taken as such. By trying to 'fit' cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women into the trafficking box, we serve only to diminish or hide what we know to be true about their experiences.

Although the limitations of secondary research made it difficult to explore the depth of these issues, the purpose of drawing attention to them here is to share what we have learned and point out areas that require further attention so that meaningful solutions can be implemented. While NWAC has uncovered unique and vital information pertaining to missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada for the first time, one of our major findings is that there is still much work that needs to be done. As evidenced through these areas we have identified for further research, the issue of violence against Aboriginal women is broad in scope and as we move forward we must take into account the many interconnected issues that make up the roots of the problem.

Conclusion

As of March 31, 2010, NWAC has found 582 cases of Aboriginal women and girls who have gone missing or been murdered. Tragically, too many of their stories illustrate the social and economic inequalities experienced by Aboriginal women and girls, which are directly linked to the impact of colonial policies that dislocated Aboriginal women, families and communities, and result in trauma, violence, as well as circumstances of vulnerability. However, the stories shared by families, communities, and friends also tell us that many missing and murdered women and girls were 'vulnerable' only insofar as they were Aboriginal and they were women.

While NWAC has made great strides in bringing to light issues of violence that have led to disappearance and death of Aboriginal women and girls, Aboriginal women continue to be the most at risk group in Canada for issues related to violence, and continue to experience complex issues linked to intergenerational impacts of colonization and residential schools. Ending violence against Aboriginal women and girls lies with both men and women, with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, as well as all levels of government. It ends with

recognition, responsibility and cooperation. Violence against women ends with restoring the sacred position of Aboriginal women as teachers, healers and givers of life.

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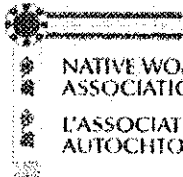
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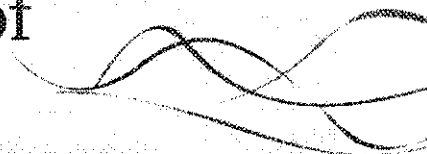
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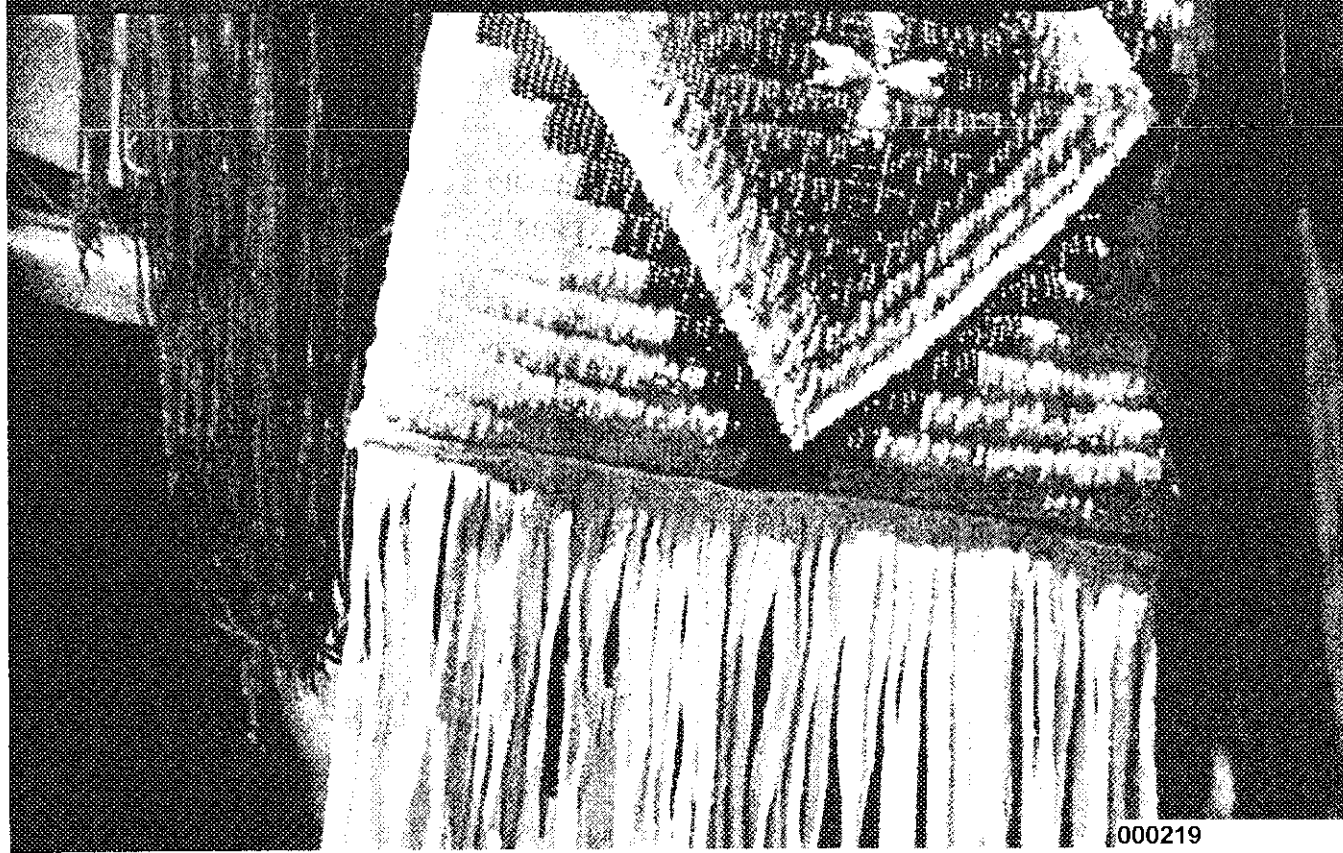
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For further information about Sisters In Spirit, please
contact the NWAC satellite office.



*Aboriginal women and girls are strong
and beautiful.*

*They are our mothers, our daughters,
our sisters, aunts, and grandmothers.*



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the Status of Women

regarding

Overview of INAC Activities and Initiatives that Support Healthier
Aboriginal Families

Ottawa, Ontario
April 26, 2010

Check against delivery

Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for inviting the department to appear before the committee. It is indeed a privilege for my colleague and me to appear before you as you commence an important study on violence against aboriginal women in Canada.

In my opening remarks, I would like to outline some of the program areas in which Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) supports healthier and safer Aboriginal families. I would also like to share with you the INAC initiatives that specifically target violence against women, and explain how INAC works in partnership with other federal departments, provinces, and Aboriginal peoples in order to contribute to the overall response to this serious issue, particularly on reserve, but also in Aboriginal communities and urban centres.

The department is responsible for two mandates, Indian and Inuit affairs and northern development, which together support Canada's aboriginal and northern peoples in the pursuit of healthy and sustainable communities and broader economic and social development objectives. Indian and Northern Affairs, or

INAC, also works with the urban aboriginal people, Métis, and non-status Indians through the Office of the Federal Interlocutor.

As you know, there are a number of ongoing social and economic challenges that make aboriginal women more vulnerable to violence against them. These include factors such as the unemployment rate, family situation, and education levels.

Through INAC's support for child and family services, community development, and education programs on reserve, we work closely with aboriginal, federal, and provincial partners to help address these underlying risks and build healthier and safer aboriginal families.

Provincial governments typically provide or fund services to aboriginal women residing off reserve, and in the north, the Government of Canada provides territorial formula financing to the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut governments.

This funding is to support public services such as hospitals, schools, infrastructure, and social services.

The ongoing reform and development of INAC's social programs on reserve is critical to tackling root causes that may contribute to violence against women on and off reserve. For example, a preventative approach in INAC's Child and Family Services program on reserve aims to support parents and keep families together, which ultimately will enhance a sense of security among women who reside on reserve, and can decrease the risk of violence.

The department is moving its income assistance program on reserve to go from solely meeting basic needs towards implementing an active measures approach that will help individuals participate in job readiness and training so they can find employment. As we make progress, this will enable individuals on reserve to become more self-sufficient, and it will ultimately reduce the impact of poverty.

A related program is the department's national child benefit reinvestment project, which is focused primarily on reducing child poverty and strengthening families on reserve in the areas of providing child care, home-to-work transition activities, parental and nutritional support, and culturally relevant programming. The department also targets programs directly to address violence against women. The family violence prevention program aims to ensure that first nations women and children on reserve have a safe place to turn during situations of family violence and supports first nations communities to address the root causes of family violence through a range of prevention activities. In 2007 the department announced an investment of approximately \$55 million over five years to support the existing network of shelters, including \$2.2 million to support the construction of five new shelters. The department currently supports a network of 41 shelters on reserve and approximately 350 community-based prevention projects for first nations people residing on reserve.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's shelter enhancement program covers the capital costs for construction and maintenance of shelters.

In terms of urban programs, the Office of the Federal Interlocutor (OFI) works to improve the socio-economic conditions of Métis, non-status Indians and urban Aboriginal people who reside off-reserve.

The Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study, released April 6, 2010, found the majority of women surveyed move to the city in order to be closer to family, pursue education and to escape a bad family situation and/or find a better place to raise their children. Ten percent of these women moved to escape a bad family situation.

Through the urban aboriginal strategy, the Office of the Federal Interlocutor partners with the aboriginal community, local organizations, municipal and provincial governments, and the private sector to support projects in three areas of priority:

improving life skills, promoting job training skills and entrepreneurship, and supporting aboriginal women and children and families. Since 2007, approximately \$7.5 million has been provided for more than 140 projects under this third priority, focusing on areas such as healing and wellness, leadership and empowerment, and harm reduction and violence prevention in some of Canada's largest urban centres. In the area of legislative reform, in such measures as the proposed Bill S-4, Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act, as well as in the changes made to the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Government of Canada is taking steps to provide first nations women protection and rights similar to those enjoyed by other Canadians.

Once enforced, Bill S-4 will provide basic rights and protection with respect to the occupation and fair division of the value of the family home to on-reserve individuals facing the breakdown of a relationship or death of a spouse. The legislation will also provide protection for individuals in the event of family violence.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada participates with the Public Health Agency of Canada as it leads a broader family violence prevention initiative. Launched in 1988, this is an approach to family violence across 15 federal departments and agencies. The Native Women's Association of Canada, through its Sisters In Spirit initiative, has contributed to an understanding of the extent and nature of violence against aboriginal women. The department also works with such stakeholders as the National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence, provinces and territories, and other government departments such as Health Canada, the Department of Justice, Status of Women Canada, and others, on the coordination of family violence prevention programming.

Together, we are working to make a difference and put an end to violence against Aboriginal women and make a difference in combating the factors that place them at risk.

My colleague and I will do our best to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

Fact Sheet – Child and Family Services

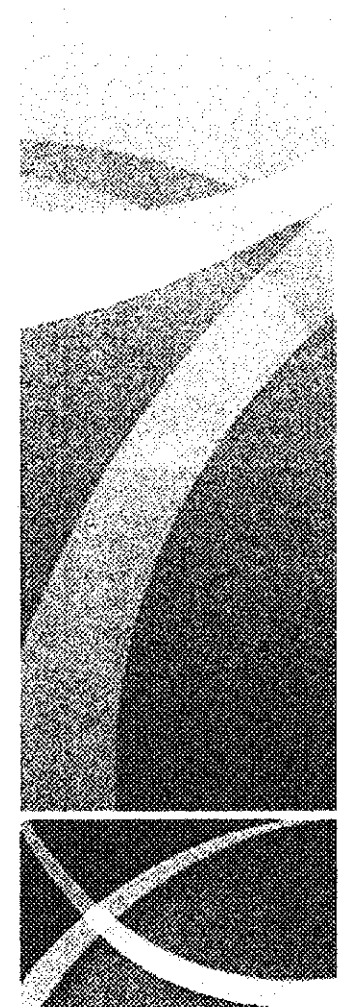
- INAC provides funding support to 106 First Nations agencies in the 10 provinces. Where there are no First Nations agencies, the First Nations receive services from the province or the Yukon Territory.
- 163,637 children are supported through the Child and Family Services Program.
- In 2009-2010, INAC provided funding to support 8,682 children in care, out of the parental home.
- In 2009-2010, there were 5.3% of on-reserve First Nations children in care versus 0.9% off-reserve.
- Two decades ago, there were very few federally funded First Nations Child and Family Services agencies and very limited child welfare services were provided on reserve. So, while the existing regime has its challenges, it is important to recognize that far more services are being provided today to help address the needs of First Nations children.
- INAC has increased funding dramatically over the past 13 years from \$193 million in 1996-1997 to \$550 million in 2009-2010 and a forecasted \$580 million in 2010-2011, which will equate to a funding increase of 200%.
- On April 27, 2007, INAC embarked on an Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach starting in the Province of Alberta.
- INAC has provided \$98.1 million over five years to implement this new approach in Alberta beginning in 2007-2008. In July 2008, tripartite frameworks were reached between the Government of Canada and the provinces of Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan and First Nations in those provinces to implement the Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach. INAC invested an additional \$10.2 million over five years in Nova Scotia and \$104.8 million over five years in Saskatchewan for First Nations agencies serving children on reserve. Canada's Economic Action Plan (2009) announced a further \$20 million over two years to implement the Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach in Quebec (\$59.9 million over five years) and Prince Edward Island (\$1.7 million over five years). Canada's Economic Action Plan also provided funding for the development of a national data base system.
- In July 2010, a tripartite framework was reached between INAC and the Province of Manitoba and Manitoba First Nations that will see \$177 million over five years to implement the new Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach to Child and Family Services in Manitoba. The addition of Manitoba means that the enhanced prevention model now reaches about 68 % of First Nations



Indian and Northern
Affairs Canada

Affaires indiennes
et du Nord Canada

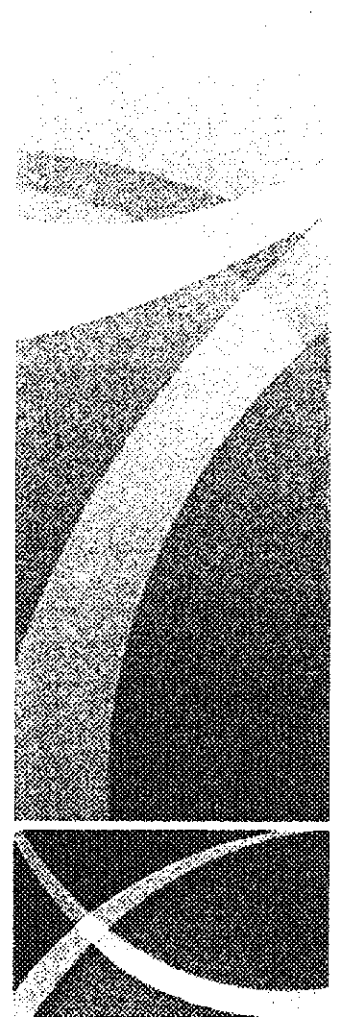
**Better Outcomes for First Nations
Children: INAC's Role as a Funder in
First Nations Child and Family Services
Updated: July 2010**





Roles

- INAC's role is to fund or reimburse First Nations service providers and provinces for administrative and protection services (operating costs) and for the direct costs of placing children in temporary or permanent care of foster parents (maintenance costs).
- INAC does not deliver child and family services.
- All children are protected by provincial child welfare legislation. Child and family services are matters of provincial jurisdiction.
- Over the past twenty years, provincial child welfare authorities have delegated program delivery on reserve to a growing number of First Nations Child and Family Services agencies – currently there are 106.





Over The Last Decade Federal Funding has Doubled

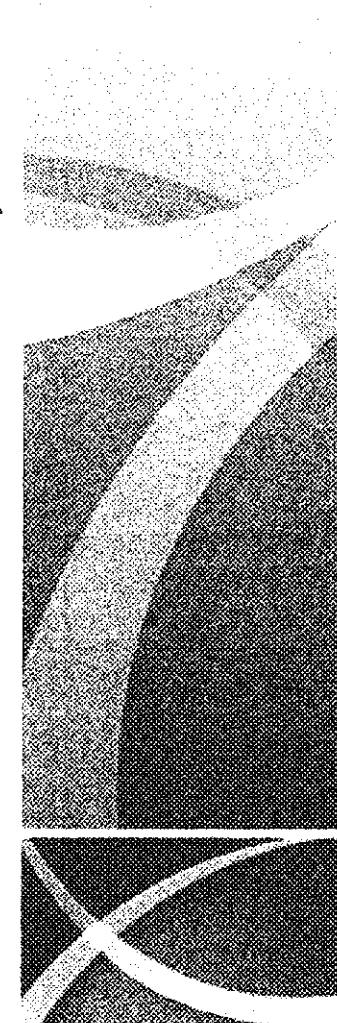
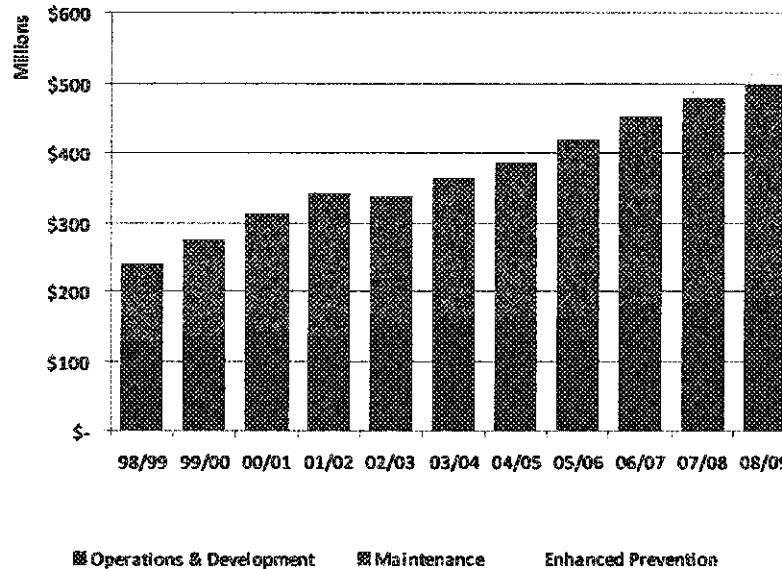
Twenty years ago, INAC funded 34 child welfare service providers on reserve.

However in the past twelve years alone, INAC has steadily increased funding to the provinces, Yukon and to more than 100 First Nations Child and Family Service agencies who are responsible under provincial or territorial law for the design and delivery of child protection services within their jurisdiction.

INAC funding to these service providers has more than doubled over the past decade, from \$238 million in 1998-99 to approximately \$523 million in 2008-09.

Funding in Nunavut and in the Northwest Territories is provided by the Department of Finance through transfer agreements with the territorial governments.

INAC funding for First Nation Child and Family Services over time
(Millions of dollars)





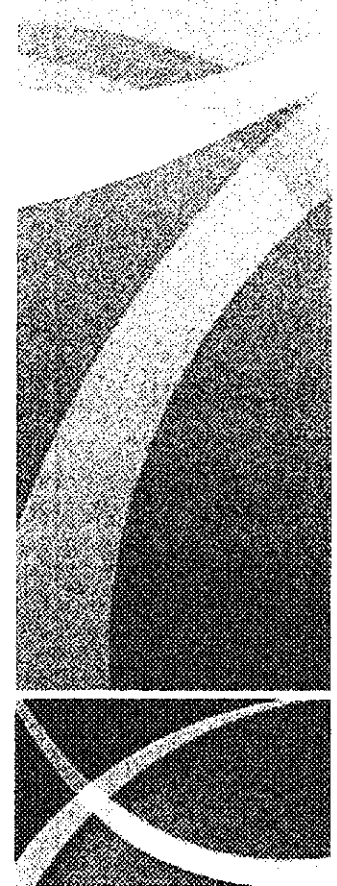
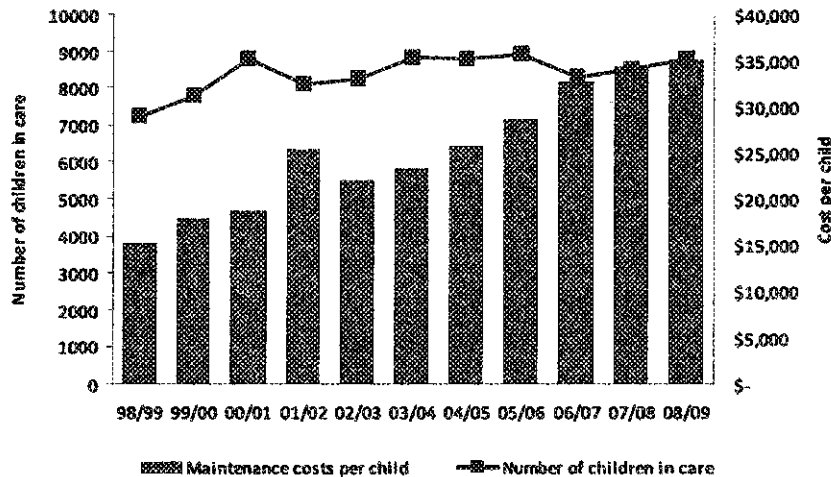
Increased Funding was Not Leading to Better Outcomes

Despite a near doubling of the funding, the number of First Nations children in care had remained relatively stable over the last decade.

The reason for the growth in funding was that maintenance costs per child had more than doubled since 1998-99.

The increase in costs has been driven by: increases in the rates charged by the provinces; an increase in costs for, and the number of, special needs children in care; and greater reliance by agencies on institutional care.

Comparison of number of First Nations children in care and maintenance costs per child over time





The New Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach

Provinces began to shift to a greater emphasis on enhanced prevention in their own approaches to child and family services.

In 2007, the federal government took action to help First Nations Child and Family Services Agencies improve outcomes. This included working with provinces to ensure best practices in prevention based services were brought to reserves, and broadening the tool kit of culturally appropriate services such as kinship care.

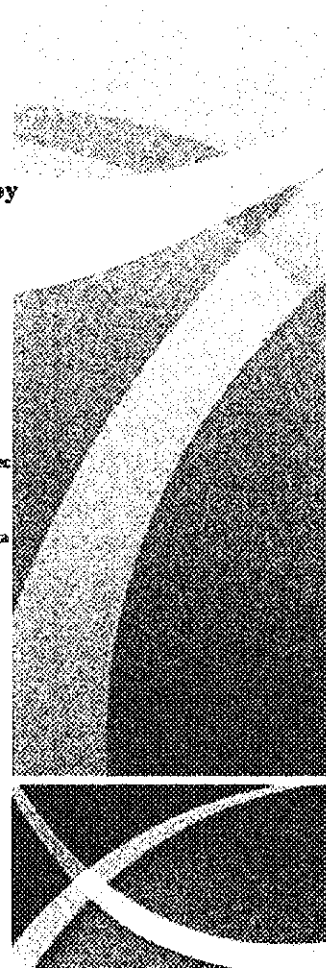
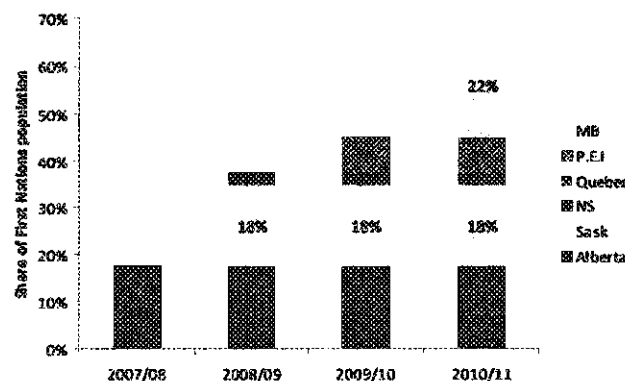
INAC's funding can now be used for kinship care, post-adoption subsidies and supports to better ensure permanent placements for children.

In 2007, INAC also started to roll out its new Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach on a province-by-province basis.

The first framework was with Alberta and Alberta First Nations. By September 2009, this program was underway in five provinces, providing funds to child protection authorities in PEI, Quebec, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

New investments announced in July 2010 will further extend this new approach in the province of Manitoba, extending the enhanced prevention model to reach more than two-thirds of First Nations' children who live on reserve.

Percentage of First Nations on-reserve population covered by New Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach





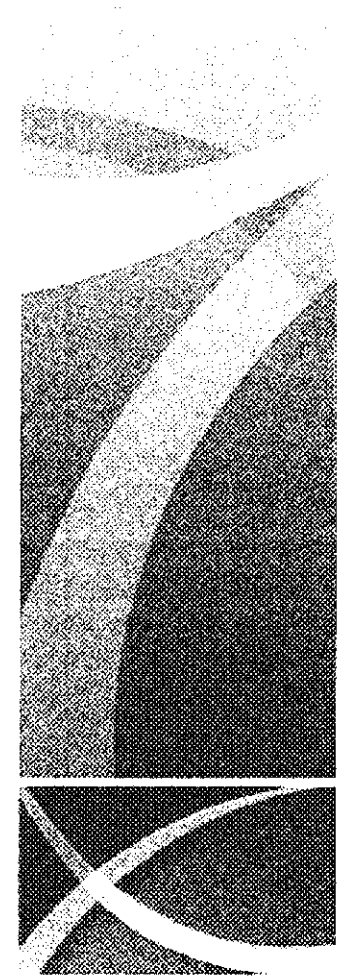
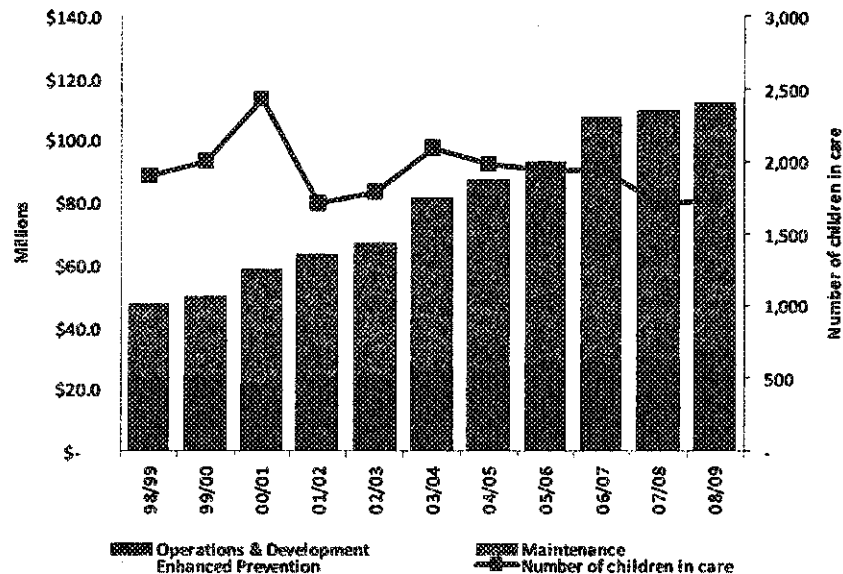
The Alberta Experience

On April 27, 2007, INAC announced the first tripartite accountability framework that allowed Canada to provide Alberta with an investment of \$98.1 million over a five year period.

The "take up" was immediate. After the first year, all First Nations Child and Family Services agencies in Alberta had opted in.

Early indications from the province are there is a decrease in caseloads; an increase in families accessing family enhancement programming; and a rise in permanent placements of children.

INAC funding for First Nation Child and Family Services in Alberta
(Millions of dollars)





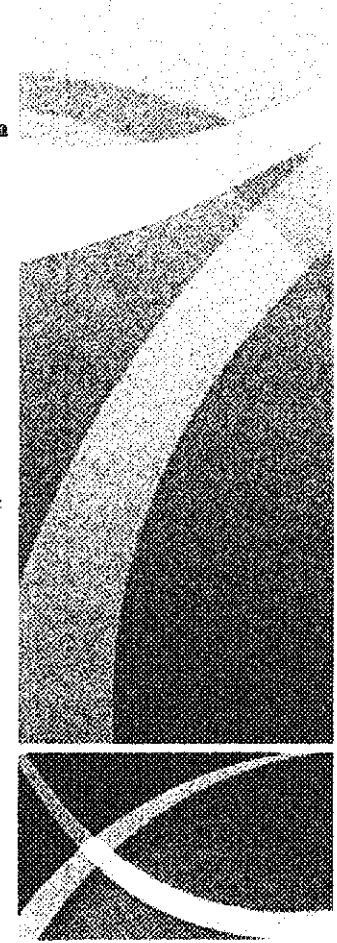
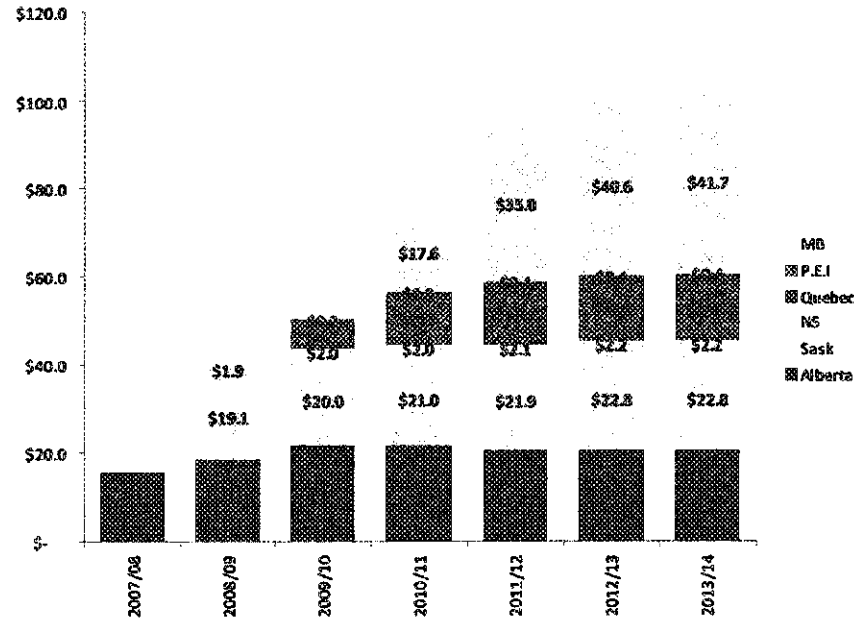
National Roll-out: Expanding the Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach

INAC continues to discuss implementation of the new approach with willing provincial and First Nations partners.

Under the six current frameworks (including Manitoba), more than \$100 million per year will be dedicated to the new approach by 2012/13.

The goal is to have all provinces on board for the Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach by 2013.

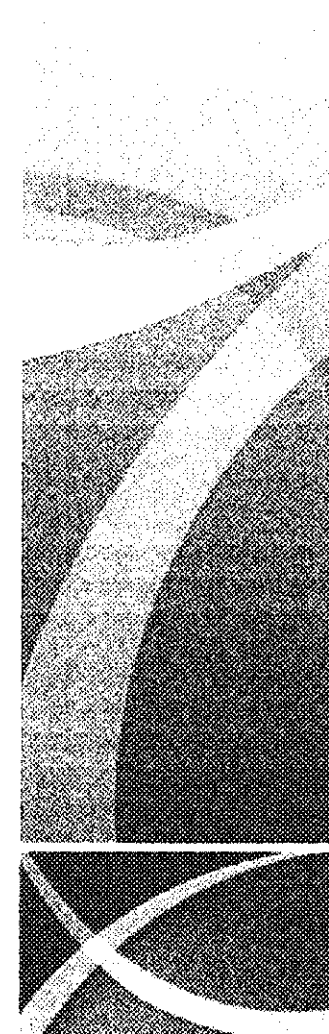
Current and planned INAC funding under New Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach





Summary

- First Nations Child and Family Service Agencies operate under provincial jurisdiction. INAC is not a service provider - it is a funder.
- Experiences of the previous decade had demonstrated that increased expenditures did not equate to improved outcomes for First Nations children and their families. In Child and Family Services, more spending may just reflect more children in care and a passive approach to delivery services.
- In 2007, INAC began to implement a new approach to funding Child and Family Services. This new enhanced approach provides a wider set of tools for Child and Family Services agencies, strong governance and better accountability at Child and Family Services Agencies.
- The Government of Canada has made investments in three successive Budgets to help First Nations Child and Family Service Agencies and provinces achieve this shift.





Chronology

March 2007

Budget 2007 included funding for investments in a new approach to First Nations Child and Family Services. Budget 2007 also provided all families with over \$17 billion in direct support through federal programs such as: the Universal Child Care Benefit, the Child Tax Credit, the Canada Child Tax Benefit, the Child Disability Benefit, maternity and parental benefits, and the Child Care Expense Deduction.

April 2007

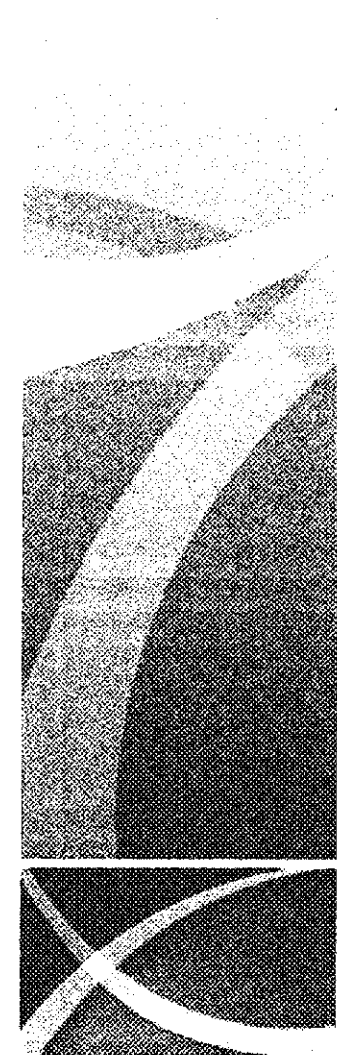
INAC announced the first investment of \$98.1 million over five years, to implement a Tripartite Accountability Framework on a new Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach to Child and Family Services with Alberta and First Nations in that province.

February 2008

Budget 2008 provided an additional \$10 million over five years for Nova Scotia and \$105 million over five years for Saskatchewan to move to the new Enhanced Prevention Focused approach.

July 2008

Funding and related Tripartite Accountability Frameworks are announced for Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan and respective First Nations in those provinces.





Chronology (continued)

January 2009

Canada's Economic Action Plan included additional investments of \$60 million over five years in Quebec and \$1.7 million over five years in PEI to continue to move forward with implementing the new approach.

August 2009

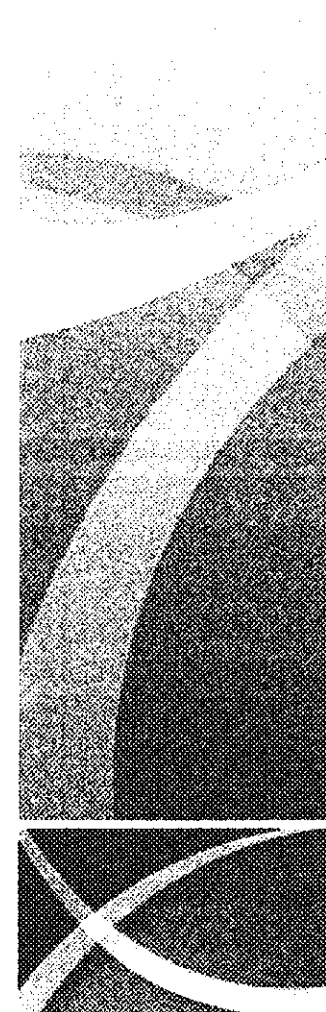
Funding and related Tripartite Accountability Frameworks with Quebec and PEI were announced, expanding the new Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach to Child and Family Services to a total of five provinces, covering almost half (46%) of all First Nations children in Canada.

March 2010

Budget 2010 included a commitment of \$53 million over two years to continue to make further progress on implementing a Prevention Focused Approach to Child and Family Services.

July 2010

A Tripartite Child and Family Services Framework is announced that will see \$177 million over five years to implement the new Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach to Child and Family Services in Manitoba. The addition of Manitoba means that the enhanced prevention model now reaches about 68 per cent of First Nations' children who live on reserve.



The announced funding to implement the new Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach is as follows:

Province under EPFA	Announcement	Total over Five Years	Ongoing Annual Funding
Alberta	April 27, 2007	\$98,1 million	\$20,7 million
Saskatchewan	July 22, 2008	\$104,8 million	\$22,8 million
Nova Scotia	July 22, 2008	\$10,2 million	\$2,2 million
Quebec	August 25, 2009	\$59,8 million	\$14,5 million
Prince Edward Island	August 26, 2009	\$1,7 million	\$0,4 million
Manitoba	July 19, 2010	\$177,1 million	\$42,2 million
Total		\$451,7 million	\$102,8 million