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Chair

Ms. Julie Dabrusin

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• (1100)

[Translation]

The Chair (Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.)): I call to order the 130th meeting of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

Today, we will continue our study on Bill C-369, an act to amend the Bills of Exchange Act, the Interpretation Act and the Canada Labour Code (National Indigenous Peoples Day).

[English]

We have with us for our first panel today, Ry Moran of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation; and Terri Brown, from the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation Survivors' Circle.

We'll begin with you, Mr. Moran.

Mr. Ry Moran (Director, University of Manitoba, National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation): Yes. Wonderful.

I'm just going to make a few very quick opening remarks.

[Translation]

Thank you for inviting us today.

[English]

Importantly I want to introduce Terri Brown, who is the chair of our survivors' committee at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. It's very important that we start this dialogue with survivors and that we always remember that this conversation that we're having today is about survivors, about what they endured, and the legacy that has been left for their families and communities.

I go over to Terri.

Ms. Theresa Brown (Chair, National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, Survivors Circle): Good morning, everybody, it's a pleasure to be here today to do a short presentation. I want to share with you some brief comments about what it's like to be a survivor.

When I was 10 years old I was taken from the love of my family, community and nation. I was given a number and locked up. My story is not unique. We suffered mental, physical, spiritual, emotional and sexual abuse, and all kinds of human rights violations. My story is a tragic one, but I'm grateful to be here. Many of my fellow students went missing, died, were never seen again by their families.

Our stories are a gift to you, Canada, so we can set things right. This shame is not ours to bear alone. We must reconcile together. A national memorial will give the message that this history is important, and that we matter and are believed.

A special, separate day when our grandchildren could go out and lay a wreath, lay tobacco, pray and remember is important to me and other survivors. It is also a time for this country to remember and say "never again". We want to know that when we are gone, our spirit of truth and reconciliation will live on in our future generations.

We ask you, Canada, to consider setting aside this special, separate day that is not in combination with any other day, a day when we will say "never again" together.

Thank you. *Mahsi cho.*

• (1105)

Mr. Ry Moran: Thank you, Terri, and thank you, all of you, for having us here. These conversations we're having are obviously of the utmost gravity for the country.

Some time back, I received a call from some folks in Alberta asking why I had referred to the necessary learning that was ahead of students in that province as exploring the concept of "cultural genocide" in this country. I replied very plainly that if you open the front page of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's summary report, you see that after a comprehensive and detailed study of the history of this country, the TRC was forced to conclude that there are no words for it other than "cultural genocide".

This is a very difficult pill for this country to swallow. It is an extraordinarily difficult concept for us to wrap our heads around as a nation because for so long we have been seen as a nation of humanitarians, as peacekeepers and as upholders of human rights. But as we examine the evidence, we find time and time again that those human rights have not been extended fully and comprehensively to indigenous peoples in this country and that we continue today still to suffer or realize a comprehensive human rights crisis in this country in certain areas, especially in regard to child and family services.

This means that Canada is going through a painful process of awakening, discovery, reflection, truth-telling, healing and, certainly, reconciliation.

When we take a step back and look at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, the concept of memory and cementing this painful history into our national consciousness is reiterated throughout multiple calls to action. Certainly, this national memorial day is a very important day in that regard, so that we as a country have the opportunity to come together with humility, deep respect and sorrow to reflect on the actions that this state has undertaken.

In understanding that day, we have to understand that it's not just a day to remember but also a day to educate and that we need to keep telling these stories over and over again in this country for a very long period of time, because reconciliation will not happen overnight. We have to dig in for the long term on this.

We also have to understand this call to action in context, because there are other calls to action. One calls for a national memorial. One calls for memorial statues to be erected in every provincial capital. One calls for communities themselves to be empowered to develop community narratives. One calls on the national Historic Sites and Monuments Board to properly honour and acknowledge the actual sites of mass human rights violations, which were recognized through the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement.

Taken together, when we look at the future of the country in five or six years, say, I see a country where we have marked the sites of residential schools, where as a state we have officially recognized these, and where we have memorials erected where leaders, students, survivors, indigenous and non-indigenous people will gather together and reflect on this history. I see a future wherein communities are further empowered to keep telling their stories about how they have been forced to endure this very difficult evolution of Canada.

I see all of this being very powerful for the coming young people in this country. This is who we are doing our work for now. My young children, aged nine and six, are now in schools where residential schools are being talked about. That's a very positive thing, but there are many more generations to come, and they need to be given the opportunity to also reflect on the great injustices that have been inflicted.

Before we move into the questions, I want to turn very quickly to a concept that is very important. At the international level, Canada, as a nation among nation states, is obviously influenced by the various human rights codes and declarations and commitments that we've made. One of those, obviously, is the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which says that indigenous peoples, broadly paraphrasing, have a right to see their history accurately reflected by the state. That's very important.

• (1110)

But there are other human rights principles. The one I want to draw your attention to is the updated set of principles for the protection and promotion of human rights to combat impunity. These are broadly referred to as the Joinet-Orentlicher principles.

Typically speaking, these principles often refer to documentary heritage or protecting the evidence of mass human rights violations, but one of the really important sections in this set of principles reads:

A people's knowledge of the history of its oppression is part of its heritage and, as such, must be ensured by appropriate measures in fulfilment of the State's duty to preserve archives and other evidence concerning violations of human rights and humanitarian law and to facilitate knowledge of those violations. Such measures shall be aimed at preserving the collective memory from extinction and, in particular, at guarding against the development of revisionist and negationist arguments.

That says we have to stand on guard, not only to protect the truth of what has happened, but to protect ourselves from ourselves in the future. The reason we have a place like the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation is to preserve the memory and to continue this process of truth-telling. There is a call for a national day so we continue to recognize just how severe the violations were. This has to become as Canadian as any of the great values we uphold in Canadian society, this humility, this reflection, this respect and this duty to remember.

I'm going to leave it there, but we have the opportunity and have been called upon to do better as a country. Doing better has to entail cementing this memory and these opportunities for reflection within our national fabric now, tomorrow and for generations to come.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

We have people today who are new to our committee for the day. Mr. Ouellette, Mr. McKay, Ms. Lambropoulos, Ms. Wagantall and Mr. Zimmer. Welcome to this committee.

We are now going to begin our question and answer period with a seven-minute round.

Ms. Dhillon, please.

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I will be sharing my time with MP Ouellette.

What do you think should be the right day to reflect on and remember the horrors of the residential school system?

Mr. Ry Moran: Terri and I and others have been talking a lot about this tricky question of the right day. Rather than tell you what the right day is, we were thinking it would be good to provide you with some principles to make the tricky decision.

We can turn to many days to remember what has already happened in regard to this conversation of truth, reconciliation and healing.

For example, there was the day the agreement in principle was signed, the day the Indian residential school settlement agreement was launched, the opening and closing ceremonies of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

More recently, a number of very important days have been developed by communities to respond to this history. Orange Shirt Day in September is a very important day that is now gaining a lot of momentum across the country. National Indigenous Peoples Day has also been discussed.

I think we have to remember this day has to be about reflection, memorialization and commemoration. National Indigenous Peoples Day is very much a celebration of indigenous culture, the vibrancy and the fact we are still here, and that the policies of cultural genocide did not work.

I think Orange Shirt Day is a very important day, but Orange Shirt Day is working so very importantly right now for educators. Such powerful educational opportunities are being created by that day that I would be hesitant to interrupt that good work that's happening in schools.

I think in picking the day we also have to think about what time of year we want this to happen, how the seasons operate and change, and if we are going to be having large public gatherings, which I think is envisioned by the memorials that would be erected in the nation's capital and provincial capitals, that we reflect on what good turnout means at those events so people can attend and properly honour what's going to be happening.

●(1115)

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Perfect.

I will give my turn over to Mr. Ouellette.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much. I really appreciate you coming here today, Mr. Moran and Ms. Brown.

My father went to residential school. I have uncles who were in residential school.

We're actually really getting down to the wire here with this bill. There will have to be a date for the next witnesses coming to testify. We need a date and we need it soon. I don't think we can spend a lot of time with generalities about what we should be doing. I don't think the people on the committee are going to be able to come up with that date. We're going to rely on the survivors and the organizations that are best positioned to tell us what it is we should be doing.

I have also proposed a bill about June 2, Bill C-318, put forward by survivors from Manitoba, which was the release of the TRC report. One of the issues that we face is, if we continue as indigenous peoples to only be celebrated or remembered for all the bad that happens to us, what does that create among our young people?

If we always send a message to our young people that we are simply always survivors.... I like a national aboriginal peoples day, because it's actually a day of celebration. But so few Canadians actually take the time to celebrate. Wouldn't it be lovely if we actually did take that day to highlight everything that's good about our cultures? It would be taking the time to remember, but also have a day of celebration about who we are so we can give hope to our young people. That is often a message I don't hear from organizations and people. I think it's a poor message to send to our young people, because if young people don't have hope, what type of future are we going to create for ourselves, not only among indigenous peoples but for the nation?

Mr. Ry Moran: I think in regard to hope, hope is seen as being an essential component of all of this, because unless we firmly believe that we have the opportunity to build a better country together, then

there is no hope. We have to be able to see ourselves in the future of the country, and that includes indigenous peoples seeing themselves fully and richly in the future of this country, realizing a country wherein indigenous identities and Canadian identities aren't necessarily at conflict.

Vis-à-vis celebration and this day of memorial, though, the complicated thing is that we do have this very damaging and difficult past that we do have to remember and reflect upon. Creating opportunities for the country to understand how far we've fallen is also a liberating experience to help us realize how much more we can achieve.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: I'm going to challenge you: the Northwest Territories also does both at the same time on June 21.

Mr. Ry Moran: Yes. I think that's right. I think that's where we really have to think about what the day actually looks like. There is a solemnity to this day that has been envisioned by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. It is very specifically targeted at survivors and remembering this particular history, and it's very particularly focused on, unfortunately, the truth part, leading to reconciliation.

I'm not saying there are not ways to combine these. I think it's quite obvious, as we look at all indigenous gatherings or all indigenous days, that those two—what has happened and what lies in front of us—is always at tension.

●(1120)

The Chair: That brings you to the end of your time, but I'm hoping you'll get a chance to ask questions again.

[*Translation*]

We now go to Mr. Blaney.

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would also like to thank the witnesses for coming today.

I will start off by saying that we obviously support the principle of a set day to recognize the suffering of first nations and other indigenous peoples in residential schools. Given that it was our government that got the ball rolling, we will support the principle of the bill.

I found our discussions most interesting. I have to say that when I was Minister of Veterans Affairs, I thought along the same lines. A colleague came to tell me that he wanted to make November 11 a statutory holiday.

My time spent at the Department of Veterans Affairs left an indelible mark. I see that you are wearing your poppies. I congratulate and thank you.

I thought that my colleague had a very good idea. I then consulted the Royal Canadian Legion, stating that the day was surely one of the moments that brought the nation together. I asked representatives of the Royal Canadian Legion what they thought of my colleague's idea of presenting a bill setting out November 11 as a statutory holiday. To my great surprise, they told me that they were not in favour. I replied that it was an important day. They explained that for them, it was more important to hold commemorative services during that day.

Friday afternoon, for example, as is my wont, I will go to a school where a beautiful ceremony will be held. Jean Cauchy, a veteran, will be there, as well as members of our armed forces who were deployed in Afghanistan. The bagpipes will be played. I have to say that I am very proud that such a ceremony will take place in a Quebec school to recognize our veterans' sacrifices. I make a point of going.

When all is said and done, my colleague did not present his bill.

Mr. Moran, I heard you talk about a call to action, and I agree with you. When I was Minister of Veterans Affairs, there was also a ceremony for indigenous peoples on June 21. There is a memorial for indigenous veterans not far from here. I would see first nation members in uniform put on traditional garments. It was a beautiful ceremony, but I have to admit that there was not that same call to action. And yet we should celebrate native peoples' contribution to all aspects of our society as well as remember those tragic moments.

In short, the 11th of November is not a statutory holiday, and yet I laid some wreaths here in Ottawa, as well as in Lévis and in Quebec City. We manage to bring people together.

Ms. Brown, you said that you were proud that your child could learn this tragic history. In which way could the bill help teachers talk about this page in our history book and give it some meaning?

Yesterday, Prime Minister Trudeau reminded us of another sad page in our history book: we did not allow a boat filled with Jews asking for asylum to dock. Those Jews wound up in concentration camps.

How can we do our work as legislators properly? We clearly all want to make known the incredible experience of Ms. Brown, but how can we do it efficiently?

I wanted to share my experience with you. Ms. Brown, I would like to know what you think about this. If we don't have enough time, we could come back to it at the next round of questions. In what way can we make this tragic period known to future generations? How can we use it in a constructive manner, so that indigenous peoples can contribute to building Canada?

[English]

Ms. Theresa Brown: It's already been happening in schools for several years, where they have curriculum on the Indian residential schools and the true history of what happened to us in those schools. Of course, you have the people, the educators developing the curriculum, which is.... I believe the Northwest Territories was the first school district to embrace that, and they have been continuing on.

The indigenous experience is important. You mentioned the aboriginal veterans memorial. That was a huge celebration, because up until a few years ago, we didn't know that history. It's important for our children to know the true history. We've given our stories, now you need to tell us your story. That's the missing piece of it. There's more to the story than what happened in the schools. It's very broad. It embraces this whole country and every person living here.

Now, how do we mobilize it? It will take time, for sure. On Remembrance Day, not everybody goes out to lay a wreath or to watch the ceremony.

I have a fifth grandchild coming on May 3. When I'm gone, I want that child to be able to go somewhere and know the true history and lay something down in memory of me. I suffered a huge atrocity, one that no human being should ever have suffered. It's not simply about survivors. The dialogue in this country, the conversation, needs to change. I don't take it lightly when I'm referred to as simply "survivor". I'm not that. I'm more than that but it's about that. Why we suffer is about that, and it's about everything else that transpired from that day forward, from the day we were locked up. I don't take it lightly when I'm referred to frivolously. It's a very serious matter.

I want to say that the traumatic experience is not celebrated but it must be remembered—so it doesn't happen again. It cannot happen again to anybody in this country, whether they are first nations or not.

In the spirit of reconciliation, I am hoping that we will move quickly ahead but not to say, "Make the decision today." We cannot do that for you. We have many conversations going on, and as they come together, we'll be able to give you that day. We need some time. We're not asking for five years—maybe a month or two at the most—and then we will be able to say, "This is a day that will work for us." We need to consider educators, school districts and all of this because they have a big role to play in educating the young children. We've done our part as survivors but we cannot go out and educate every single individual and child. As you can see, we're getting up in age. Where we can, we contribute, but we cannot do all of that.

Thank you very much for the work you have done so far.

●(1125)

[Translation]

The Chair: We now go to Mr. Nantel for seven minutes.

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much to all the witnesses for being here today.

When our committee hears new witnesses, we are often surprised by the emotional impact of the testimony, whether it be our study on bringing back artifacts and human remains or in the context of this national holiday. The impact has been constant, at least in my case. I have been an MP for seven years now. In the beginning, I had set ideas about what I wanted to accomplish in Ottawa. Since becoming the MP for the residents of Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, I have been learning about the extent of the tragedy suffered by indigenous peoples. I was lucky to work closely with Romeo Saganash and to be able to count on such a friend. Generally speaking, I have seen to what extent people in Canada salve their consciences by recognizing the hardships endured. However, in doing so we create an illusion that we understand, but this is false, as the rot goes much deeper.

When we were talking about issues related to charges of simple possession of marijuana and how to deal with them, someone came out with the following statistic: in Regina, in nine cases out of ten, the persons charged with simple possession of cannabis are members of a first nation. To my mind, this means there's a certain vulnerability, that's why I'm always touched when I hear about your experiences.

I think that reconciliation attempts with Caucasians go to the heart of the bill and that reconciliation will help us attain this objective. That said, certain aspects of organizing such a day have yet to be defined, such as its theme and essential components or commemorative activities. I don't think the bill sets it all out.

The debate on the date is important. We have Orange Shirt Day in September or October, I believe. I am from Quebec, and our national holiday, Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day, marks the beginning of summer, the arrival of good weather. I think that June 21 is very much in keeping with reconciliation: it's the end of the school year, the beginning of summer, the summer solstice. I have already told my colleagues here how I was overwhelmed by a summer solstice ceremony that I witnessed with an elder on Victoria Island two years ago. We must never forget that we parliamentarians see things from a pan-Canadian vantage point. We have our own point of view. In terms of reconciliation, it would be an ideal moment to celebrate and increase awareness of indigenous peoples.

I also am reminded of a Cliff Cardinal show which ran recently in Montreal. He came to present a very modern play at the La Licorne theatre. This had nothing to do with traditional garb; the play was set in modern times.

Don't you agree that June 21 could be a fantastic opportunity to increase awareness of indigenous peoples and share your history? If there's one thing that everyone has in common in Canada, it's the happiness we feel at summer's arrival, and it would be wonderful to associate that feeling with your peoples, who have such a strong bond with nature.

• (1130)

[*English*]

Mr. Ry Moran: Thank you for all your very good comments, for all the good discussion.

From my perspective on this, this is all a bit tricky, to tell you the truth. I think that we should not underestimate the complexity of this

conversation that we're having. We also should not limit ourselves by an either-or type scenario.

I know that decision-making is very difficult. I have a lot of sympathy for this committee that is faced with quite a challenging decision. This is not an easy thing to decide upon. However, I do want to challenge us a little bit to think not about the immediate right now, but about five, 10, 15, 20 years in this country. I don't know if it's possible or not, but is it possible to have two statutory holidays? Is it possible to have June 21 recognized as the celebration of indigenous culture, and then have another day that reflects and recognizes the severity of the treatment of indigenous peoples?

I'm not saying that this is the answer, but when we look at the future of this country, what we have to recognize is that we're going through the painful process of realizing that we have to stop doing some things in order to start doing other things. We have to take that long-term view on it, and we have to remember what these various mechanisms that we're talking about are really trying to achieve by their definition. This day that we're talking about is a day to reflect on what has happened, on the pain that has happened. That is painful stuff. It absolutely has to be tied to education, and it absolutely has to be tied to opportunities for a whole bunch of different people to have a lot of different conversations on this very painful element of Canadian history and Canadian society.

However, I'd caution us to not get stuck in the trap of "this or that". I want us to think about what we can aspire to and what this country truly looks like when we have begun to fully realize the histories, the contributions and the rights of indigenous peoples in this country. It looks like a very different country, frankly, than we have right now. This country has a lot of change that it needs to do. Not all of this change is going to happen in our lifetime, that is for sure, but we really have to think about Canada in 2100. What are we trying to achieve collectively, and what are the pieces of information that we need to protect now? What are the memorial activities that we need to protect now? What are the celebratory activities that we need to protect now in order to realize this future?

It's not easy stuff. I don't envy your trying to make this decision. That's where we try to keep it in terms of principles and what we're trying to achieve. It's tough stuff.

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Nantel, your time has come to an end.

[*English*]

Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to both of you for appearing here today.

I have the advantage and the disadvantage of not being a regular member of this committee, so I come at it with no real forethought in that respect. On one level, this is a very simple bill: pick a day and decide if it's paid or unpaid. It's that simple. On the other side, it's incredibly complex.

My thinking, as I listened to my colleagues question you, went to your views on the state of consultation and reconciliation in this country because 5% of the population is indigenous and the other 95% is not. If we are going to have consultation and reconciliation, somehow or another those two solitudes, for want of a better term—I don't say that they are, exclusively—need to be reconciled.

I want to get your thought on some of the historical issues that are going on these days. For instance, we celebrate the Famous Five over on Parliament Hill, and rightly so. They advanced women's rights quite dramatically. However, if you examine their attitudes of that time, they're certainly not up to 21st century sensibilities. We also see things like Sir John A.'s statue being defaced in Regina and the Cornwallis statue being taken down in Halifax—possibly perfectly correct. We have all of these things that are bubbling under the surface that sometimes erupt.

From your perspective, what is the status of reconciliation? If we are to truly make this a Canadian holiday or a recognition day, how do you see it? How do you see getting the other 95% into an attitude that embraces reconciliation, rather than fights over historical injustices?

Mr. Ry Moran: There are a lot of big questions there.

To start, that piece that I read you from the United Nations refers directly to the state's responsibility. The country itself has a duty to recognize human rights violations that have happened.

Hon. John McKay: Is this the revisionist and negativist statement?

Mr. Ry Moran: That's correct.

That's broadly rearticulated in a number of principles that apply, wherein countries themselves have the responsibility as responsible nation-states to be held accountable and to hold themselves to account for past wrongdoings. That is important, because there is a recognition sitting right beneath the surface in that. We have failed greatly as humanity on multiple occasions. Healthy, vibrant, national and international communities have to be built upon certain core principles of universal human rights—indigenous rights now.

Central to this is this concept of the guarantee of non-recurrence. This is the fancy international language that's used when Terri says, "I want to make sure that this never happens again to anybody anywhere."

What we're not talking about here is changing history so that history is whitewashed. We're talking about ending the conflict. We're talking about real, true, lasting peacemaking in this country. We have been at conflict with indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, and frankly with the environment, since the dawn of time here.

This is very big-picture stuff.

When we think about the painful process of how we understand our past leaders and the construction of this country, it's not just about re-understanding what it is that they've done, but also ensuring that there's appropriate balance. That's why National Indigenous Peoples' Day is so critically important. We have to recognize that the resistance of indigenous peoples to the creation of Canada is now being seen as in the core national interest.

The Prime Minister of Canada said that there is no place in Canadian society for the ideas that gave rise to the residential schools. That says something very fundamental about those ideas that we hold very deeply that are buried down inside us. Those have to be combatted with a degree of fierceness, frankly, and rooted out. They are very deeply buried inside us, at the individual, collective, societal and national level.

• (1140)

Hon. John McKay: How do you reconcile the notion that some indigenous peoples and groups, in effect, refused to celebrate Canada's 150th birthday? They felt that the construct of Canada is an imposition and a rejection of everything indigenous. It was a total anathema to them.

If that's true, how do you, in effect, get past that point, where there's an adjustment on the part of the 95% and an adjustment on the part of the 5%...or is that just a bridge too far?

The Chair: That's a complicated question. I'm going to warn you that you have about 45 seconds.

Hon. John McKay: I'm sorry about that.

Mr. Ry Moran: I'm going to quote Willie Littlechild, because I think he said it very beautifully. The treaties and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples are not problems; they are solutions. They have to stop being seen as problems. We have to start seeing them as fundamental mechanisms that are already in place, have been broadly recognized; as being a path for us to follow to ensure that we don't repeat the same mistakes of the past.

That's why we have human rights. That's why the United Nations declaration is part of an overall, broad human rights framework. We have to protect us from us. Humans are extraordinarily valuable. We need these aspirational and tangible steps to help protect us against that.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you for that thoughtfulness.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now go to Ms. Wagantall, please, for five minutes.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Thank you so much for being here today. I appreciate this opportunity to sit on this committee and hear this conversation.

I'd like to carry on a little in the same vein as the member from Winnipeg in regard to the youth and the next generation. I totally appreciate what's trying to be achieved here and the whole issue around educating the 95% in a balanced way, remembering, but also the importance of celebrating. When I think about reconciliation, something like that requires truth to come forward, an apology—a very intentional apology—to be made and accepted. It requires the opportunity to move forward in ways that forgiveness and healing enable you to do.

I had a wonderful opportunity with a young chief. He was not from my riding, but we sat and he talked to me for hours about his experience. His father, who had also been a chief, and his mom had both been in the residential school system and suffered significantly. When former prime minister Harper gave his apology, this young man called his dad and said, “Dad,” and his dad replied, “I’m listening. I’m listening.” He couldn’t talk. He was so overwhelmed with emotion and just sobbing that this was taking place.

This young chief said, “You know, I grew up in a home where both of my parents were survivors.” At that point that’s what they were—survivors of the residential schools. They grew up in an atmosphere where they were told to duck if they saw a policeman coming along. He said, “I grew up thinking that I too was a residential school survivor,” until his dad had this experience and began the healing process. He said, “I came to the realization that I am not a residential school survivor,” and he talked about how he chose to go on with his life and is now leading his community and making huge impacts.

There is a lot to celebrate as we go through this whole process. I understand the angst of putting the two together, and yet if we don’t I feel like we’re failing to accomplish what we truly want to accomplish with my children and your children. I have 10 grandkids. I’m boasting a bit, I know. It’s very important to me that they.... Quite honestly, my children grew up in schools where I called them the token whites. It’s a different world out there now in so many ways.

When it comes to wrongs done, I come from a Ukrainian heritage. My grandfather came over just before Holodomor, and on Saturday night I’m going to remember millions of Ukrainians who were basically starved to death. They moved to Canada, and they remember, but in the midst of all that they also say to me, “Cathay, we kept our culture. We have our language. We are proud.” In some ways, they feel more Ukrainian here than they did in Ukraine—that is what they literally have said to me.

There are all those dynamics of, yes, remembering and making sure our children know and that we don’t repeat, but also to make sure we’re celebrating how far we’ve come and continue to go.

I have one more really brief thing. I’m on the veterans affairs committee as deputy shadow critic. We’ve travelled this whole last session, visiting with first nations, indigenous, Métis and Inuit veterans, and with Canadian Rangers. They’re so amazing. They were not treated fairly, but not one of them regrets having served. This is where I see we have so much hope.

I also have a grandson whose birthday falls on Remembrance Day. As a young boy he said to me, “You know what, grandma? In the morning we are sad. In the afternoon we have a party.” It’s important to teach our children that we need to remember, but we can also celebrate.

I just hope you feel there is room for both of those in that expression for this reconciliation day that you’re looking for.

● (1145)

The Chair: You have 20 seconds left.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Okay. It’s too bad we can’t have more time.

Mr. Ry Moran: We have to come back, again, to what we are trying to achieve. The process we are working our way through is truth and reconciliation. It implies a relationship between those two. Reconciliation is the goal, but it has to be built on the truth.

There is no question about that dualism being fundamental. How we achieve that is what we’re grappling with right now. It’s a bit of everything.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will be going to Mr. Boissonnault, for five minutes, please.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to both of the witnesses for being here today.

I will start by saying that Remembrance Day is a federal holiday. Federal employees get Remembrance Day off. One of the limitations of the federal government is that we can’t regulate what provinces and territories do, even though we may want to. This PMB would extend the same holiday to federal employees and the agencies that the federal government regulates.

To both of the witnesses today—maybe I’ll start with Ms. Brown—my great-grandmother, a full-blooded Cree woman, Lucy Brown Eyes, told me when I was five and she was 88, “We come from the land, Randy, and some day we’ll go back to the land, and the land will be all shared in the future.”

Do you believe that truth-telling is the first step to healing?

Ms. Brown.

Ms. Theresa Brown: Yes, I do believe that truth-telling is very important, although truth-telling on the topic of Indian residential schools is not very old. We have just begun that. In fact, it was first brought out with the royal commission—

● (1150)

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: RCAP

Ms. Theresa Brown: —RCAP, in 1993 or something.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: In 1993 or 1994.

Ms. Theresa Brown: That was the first time the country came to realize this horrible atrocity had happened, and it was still happening at that point.

While this conversation isn’t very old, there’s much education to be done. We’re saying that memorializing a day, a special day separate from all other days, is important. We have only begun to tell our story. We want this remembered, and not put in side by side with people making dream catchers, necklaces and stuff like that. It will get buried.

People, for one thing, don’t want to talk about this. It was very difficult for people to hear our stories. Believe me, I don’t like telling my story either. If I didn’t see some benefit to it—a huge benefit to it—I would not have gone there. In fact, even telling you today what I did is difficult. It’s difficult every time I talk about it.

That's why we need to have a day when we can talk about it together and have that difficult conversation, and not try to forget it by making dream catchers or by offering our foods to you and that kind of thing.

I want this day put aside so that we can tell the absolute truth into eternity. We suffered at those schools. We don't want to cover it up anymore. It's not something that is pleasant; it's difficult. But it will get us to the next level as a country—to a better country, a better place for everyone.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Absolutely.

It's like when I speak with veterans and some of the older vets say that the only day they talk about their experiences is Remembrance Day. They stay silent on it for the rest of the year. Remembrance Day is their safe-space day. It's a similar concept.

I think there's a way to respect the TRC and have a day where we pause to remember, and also have another commemorative day when we do other activities. I think there's certainly the possibility of that.

You mentioned a monument for truth and reconciliation.

How would you see that incorporated into the day, either of you, Ry or Ms. Brown?

Mr. Ry Moran: Briefly on that one, there's a call to action for a national monument here in Ottawa and one in every provincial capital, and then for the national Historic Sites and Monuments Board to deal with the actual sites of the residential schools.

I can see something happening in all of those places, plus additional ones. I can certainly see there being something very powerful happening here at the national monument, wherein national leaders would gather together to reflect on this terrible national crime.

We have to remember, going back in time, that there was a very scathing report issued in 1921, which referred to this as being “a national crime”. That's the name of John Milloy's book. He was the main researcher, who Terri talked about, on the RCAP file.

I can see there being a very solemn day wherein, as Terri was saying earlier, tobacco is put down, wreaths are put down; there is that moment of silence, that honouring and commemoration. We know how to honour people who have fallen in terrible circumstances. We just have to recognize in some ways, when we take a step back and think about this in terms of human rights, that the children who fell in these residential schools were largely non-combatants. They didn't deserve to have their lives shortened in such a terrible way.

The Chair: That brings you to the end of the time, and the end of the time for this panel.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: I have some suggestions for the chair here. I hope you'll take it in a friendly way.

I think there are a number of questions that need to be asked of the witnesses as they come forward, and that should be previously given to them by this committee.

The question we're really trying to get answered is whether we should have a memorial day versus a statutory holiday. I'm

concerned that we're having a number of witnesses come, and we won't be able to answer these important questions that are going to impact this private member's bill and whether it will be going forward.

We also need to answer the question of the balance between lifting people up and the idea of a memorial day. Can we do both? We need to ensure that we hear from survivors, youth, chiefs, women and men; from not only indigenous communities but also from non-indigenous communities.

Specifically, we're very concerned about a date. I think it's going to be very hard for the committee to come to a consensus if we don't hear dates, especially in testimony here.

We need the groups that come to demonstrate not simply an overall vision of why this is important. We also need specifics, because that's what we're actually dealing with in this. We need to hear the direction that they want, recognizing that we as parliamentarians also suffer under some terrible constraints. We have a time constraint coming up. There is an election in a very short time, bills have to be done in a certain period of time—45 days, I believe—and we have to vote on it in the House of Commons.

If we haven't answered those questions, it's going to be very hard for parties on both sides of the aisle to come to a consensus. It could lead to more division, cabinet voting one way, caucus voting another, opposition voting one way and splits. This is not what this bill should be about.

Also, I think there's a large constraint: we need to hear from businesses, because there are concerns about businesses involved in this and what a statutory holiday or a memorial day...the balance between culture and what we do.

Those are some of the questions I would pose not only to you but to the witnesses. I think it's very important that when people do come here, they've done a lot of work with the people in their organizations to give us those answers. It's nice to spend time discussing the importance, but a lot of us already recognize the importance. Today I've heard everyone discuss how we want to, but we're asking questions about how and what measures we should use.

• (1155)

The Chair: I appreciate that feedback. Thank you very much, Mr. Ouellette.

That's the end of our time with this panel. I would really like to thank both of you for the time you gave. You did hear a number of questions. You might not have been able to answer all of the questions that came, or there might be other ideas that you've had since you heard all of these questions. Please do feel free to put in written submissions as well. I would just ask that you try to do so as soon as possible.

I am not suspending, as I see some of the members moving. I am saying to this panel, thank you very much, but there is a motion that we must deal with from Mr. Blaney.

Thank you for your help.

Mr. Blaney.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

After hearing Mr. Ouellette speak, I would simply like to add that we would be open to the idea of letting future witnesses know in advance what subjects may be brought up during testimony.

As you know, the Minister of Finance, Mr. Bill Morneau, has presented a budget implementation bill. It is actually the biggest budget implementation bill ever presented. Certain parts of this omnibus bill concern the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, as you know. Moreover, I was at the House of Commons yesterday and a few government members bragged about parts of the bill that pertained to copyright. As certain clauses in the bill directly concern our committee and it is our responsibility, as parliamentarians, to hold an informed vote on the bill presented by Mr. Morneau, I would like to propose to the committee that we invite minister Pablo Rodriguez to come and present his arguments.

The Chair: I just want to clarify something.

I have a notice of motion before me.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Actually, I have two of them. Is it the motion that is only one paragraph long?

[English]

Is it the one you have?

[Translation]

The Chair: I simply want everyone to understand the motion that we're going to vote on.

Hon. Steven Blaney: That's this one.

The Chair: Here is what we have before us:

That, pursuant to the Order of Reference of Wednesday, October 24, 2018, the Committee consider the supplementary estimates (A) before the reporting deadline set out in Standing Order 81(5); and that the Committee invite the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism to appear in view of this study.

Hon. Steven Blaney: That's the one.

The Chair: Right.

Does anybody wish to say something?

Hon. Steven Blaney: I have not yet finished, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Of course. I simply wanted to be clear about which motion we were talking about.

Hon. Steven Blaney: The motion seeks to invite Minister Rodriguez to come and speak about the clauses in the budgetary bill that directly concern our committee, for example issues surrounding copyright.

We heard many witnesses, including people who work in publishing, academics and regional media representatives, who had expectations as regards budget implementation. They expect to find clauses that would enable the education sector to better respect copyright and close the loopholes in the Copyright Act.

I'm sure that Minister Rodriguez will be happy to come speak of the clauses contained in the bill that concern our committee. At the same time, committee members could mention those aspects that are

not contained in the bill but which have been brought up by our witnesses.

● (1200)

[English]

The Chair: All right. I just want to be clear on the wording of the motion that everyone has in front of them, that is being voted upon. It is:

That, pursuant to the Order of Reference of Wednesday, October 24, 2018, the Committee consider the Supplementary Estimates (A) before the reporting deadline set out in Standing Order 81(5); and that the Committee invite the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism to appear in view of this study.

Is there any debate on this motion? I see none.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Madam Chair...

[English]

The Chair: You can't debate your own motion, can you?

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: I would like a recorded vote.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: I have a question.

What is the amendment proposed by Mr. Blaney to the budgetary report? We would be happy to have the minister come and speak about the supplementary estimates (A), but there is no reason for the minister to come to speak about the budget implementation act. What is this about, exactly?

[English]

The Chair: Sorry, I just want to clarify, because the motion that I have before me right now, which I have read twice, is to consider the supplementary estimates (A). That's the motion that was served before us.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: There are the supplementary estimates of the minister; it is our custom to hear the minister on this topic. What's more, yesterday, he was promoting certain budgetary measures, and his colleagues within the government spoke in the House in favour of these measures.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: The motion we have before us is about the supplementary estimates (A). We would therefore hear him speak about that, and not the Budget Implementation Act, 2018, No. 2

Hon. Steven Blaney: That's what the motion says.

[English]

The Chair: I'm going to read this motion just one more time so everyone is absolutely clear that they know what they're voting on. I'm going to read it in English, just because I'm a whole lot faster and I don't get caught on that "multiculturalism" word. It is:

That, pursuant to the Order of Reference of Wednesday, October 24, 2018, the Committee consider the Supplementary Estimates (A) before the reporting deadline set out in Standing Order 81(5); and that the Committee invite the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism to appear in view of this study.

Having heard that wording, and it's clear, is there any further discussion?

(Motion agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you.

We will suspend briefly.

•(1200)

(Pause)

•(1205)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: We are back. Welcome, all. We are still waiting on a few witnesses.

Mr. Blaney, the floor is yours.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Madam Chair, you know that Canadians were horrified to discover that for 10 years now, a former governor general, who already receives a generous pension, has been claiming expenses in excess of \$200,000 per year. Obviously, it is thanks to the hard work of journalists that we learned of this.

Clearly, the fact that expenses are being hidden from the Canadian public tarnishes the reputation of our institutions. In this case, it is the institution of the Queen's representatives here in Canada.

This is why I am presenting a motion requesting that our committee conduct as soon as possible a study consisting of at least two meetings on expenses and accountability mechanisms for the Governor General of Canada and former governor generals who continue to receive taxpayers' money. This motion requests that this committee study the expenses and the accountability mechanisms of monarchs and their representatives, including former representatives in constitutional monarchies comparable to Canada.

It is obvious that this proposal is in keeping with the openness and the transparency that the current government seeks to promote. The motion also serves to follow up answers that we received during question time, when the government showed openness and stated that it sincerely wishes that Canadians know how their money is being spent.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you for that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Chair, you will note that the motion is inadmissible. My esteemed colleague, a former minister himself, knows the committee procedures very well. Such a motion goes against the Standing Order. We request that you declare the motion inadmissible so that we may follow the standards and procedures of the committee.

Hon. Steven Blaney: On a point of order, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Let me speak to the clerk.

[*English*]

I was going to start, and it may cut through some of the further discussion. It is a substantive motion that requires two sleeps. That would mean we could consider it when we get back.

What I will need is to be able to continue with our witnesses, if somebody feels like discussing it more. That is the ruling, and I've confirmed it with the clerk.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney: I respect your decision, Madam Chair. It will therefore be possible for myself to present the motion at the next committee meeting so that we may discuss it. I request the help of all my colleagues within the committee in order to get the motion passed, so that Canadians may know how their money is being spent.

The Chair: Mr. Nantel, do you have something to add?

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Yes, indeed.

Not only do I think it is a fine idea to ask questions about budgets being used by the governor general, but I am even thinking that it is a good idea to question our links with the monarchy. I therefore wholeheartedly agree with my colleague.

•(1210)

The Chair: Excellent.

[*English*]

We can revisit that motion once we've had the appropriate notice, but we do have witnesses in front of us today, and I would like to be able to get through them.

[*Translation*]

We have with us today Robert Bertrand, who is the National Chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. He has testified before our committee many a time.

Thank you so much for coming here today.

[*English*]

We have with us Regional Chief Kluane Adamek of Yukon region from the Assembly of First Nations.

Thank you for being here.

We have with us by video conference Naveen Mehta of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union Canada.

I'd like to begin with the video conference because we do have technical issues sometimes, so it's best to start with you.

Please begin with your presentation, Mr. Mehta.

Mr. Naveen Mehta (General Counsel, Director of Human Rights, Equity and Diversity, United Food and Commercial Workers Union Canada): Thank you so much.

Good morning. I thank you for the opportunity to present to this committee. I'm general counsel and director of human rights for UFCW Canada, which is one of Canada's largest private sector unions, representing about a quarter of a million people and their families from coast to coast to coast. Our members are diverse, engaged and active, and there are thousands of them in each one of your ridings.

On Tuesday, we had an annual event here in Ottawa, open to all of you, as members of this committee, and to all MPs. If you attended that event, you know that we have members who work in industries from the cradle to the grave. We have members who work in hospitals where babies are delivered, day care centres, food retailing, and all the way to funeral homes.

We as a national union are very proud of our history of being committed to workers' rights, not just with regard to our members but for working people everywhere. Over the past decade, that commitment has allowed us to understand that there's an area where we need to work significantly harder. That is in regard to our relationship with indigenous peoples and, very importantly, our job of breathing life into the TRC recommendations.

You have before you people far more knowledgeable than myself on the history of indigenous peoples, and I suggest you rely on their lived experiences. In preparing for this important submission, I received a wealth of knowledge from the indigenous members of the UFCW indigenous committee. That committee was formed in 2016. It provides an essential amount of wisdom in putting together these submissions before you and the formulation of work around a national strategy on reconciliation and building meaningful relationships with these communities.

With regard to our work thus far with indigenous communities, as I mentioned earlier, our job is to try to breathe life into the work of the TRC recommendations. In a short time, we've been able to do things such as putting together a UFCW Canada reconciliation toolkit. It's a concise guide to support non-indigenous members, staff and leadership, and the Canadian public, to break through some of the mythologies, inaccuracies and straight-out lies that we were taught growing up with regard to indigenous communities.

Moreover, it provides us a step towards reconciliation. In addition to that—and I could go on for quite some time of course, which I don't have—we've worked very closely with Cindy Blackstock and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, on the human rights case against the federal government. We've worked very closely on a variety of indigenous matters relating to child welfare on reserve, but I don't have the time to go through all of it.

I want to talk to you about celebrating National Indigenous Peoples Day. As a national union, the UFCW Canada began doing that in 2017 and 2018, first in Calgary and then in Winnipeg. Our two-day events have informed our understanding and appreciation of both indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, and the essential nature and importance of this day.

Our first event had 25 people. It was our first kick at the can. Our second had over 50. It was an opportunity for all of us—indigenous and settler—to reflect on Canada's past and present, and formulate meaningful steps towards the future.

One of our upcoming initiatives that resulted out of that day was connecting with indigenous communities across the country, particularly with regard to youth, and helping to build a better understanding of workplace rights in indigenous communities and for indigenous youth who leave the reserve.

Next month, we will be travelling to Waterhen Lake First Nation in northern Saskatchewan to do just that, with over 300 youth from the community in attendance.

It's important to note that National Indigenous Peoples Day and the celebration of it is not something new. It is increasingly something that is done in Canadian workplaces. Some workplaces in Canada have already begun allowing employees to take the day off with pay to celebrate the day. What we're discussing here is not an

obscure concept; it's an emerging, forceful wave for the future. In developing our workplace bargaining guide for indigenous peoples and reconciliation, we've begun to look at the language concerning National Indigenous Peoples Days in existence.

Just from our preliminary research, we know that employers and unions are already moving in that direction, and negotiating collective agreements that provide for this as a paid holiday. In terms of instances where National Indigenous Peoples Day was paid, I'll give you a couple of statistics. We measured collective bargaining agreements across the country that have June 21 off with pay, or where an employer has a provision that covers full-time and part-time employees in the workplace.

● (1215)

We discovered that 4% of employers that we had researched granted full or part-time employees the ability to have a paid National Indigenous Peoples Day off.

We also measured employers who granted the day off, without pay or in lieu of another day, and that was another 2% of employers.

The question that remains is whether we would like to be part of this wave or are we going to be yet another Canadian generation simply dragged reluctantly towards the inevitable truth that we must breathe life into the TRC recommendations? One essential way to do that is the enactment of this bill.

My wholehearted submission to the members of this committee is that we have no choice, in that we have to view ourselves as progressing forward, so we must ensure that this legislation moves forward. It is important to indigenous peoples, but more or equally important, it is also important to settlers, those of us who haven't been on this land since time immemorial, to celebrate the accomplishments of indigenous peoples, to reflect and remember the past and build a real and genuine nation-to-nation relationship moving forward.

One quick point, which CFIB made in its submission, was that it said that the cost would be about \$3.6 billion to Canadian businesses to have another statutory holiday. Unfortunately, there was no background and no research provided in that submission and it was a very short letter.

The bill attempts to amend just the Canada Labour Code, as we know, and for those employees who are subject to federal jurisdiction. We all know that the vast majority of Canadians are subject to provincial labour laws, which are outside the jurisdiction of this bill.

I would suggest that we don't place any weight on this number of \$3.6 billion, as it doesn't really reflect the reality of what we're dealing with here today. Moreover, there is a cost to celebrate and there is always a cost to reflect. If we are going to build the country that we dream of and that others know us to be, I think it's essential that we have such a day.

I know that no one would suggest that we remove Canada Day or Christmas Day as a national holiday. To do so would be absurd. In the same vein, we know that there is a cost to justice and an even greater cost to injustice and doing nothing. I firmly believe that to do nothing and not enact this legislation would be that injustice.

Work on reconciliation is also fundamental to the identity of this country. It's not just unions or NGOs and a few workplaces that I'm speaking of. In my travels from coast to coast, there is a genuine need and urgency for those who have settled on this land to have a more honest conversation about the tragedies that have happened in the past, those that are current and how we want to make sure that we have no such tragedies in the future.

For example, I have the good fortune to be a member of Legal Leaders for Diversity and Inclusion, which is an organization made up of 100 of Canada's general counsels across organizations, including all of the big banks, multinational corporations, regional companies and smaller workplaces. While I don't speak for that organization, I can tell you that one central theme to the work of Legal Leaders for Diversity and Inclusion is that of reconciliation.

The Chair: Mr. Mehta, you're at the end of your time, so I'm just going to ask you to wrap it up, please. You can have a few seconds, yes.

Mr. Naveen Mehta: Awesome. I'm in my last paragraph.

The NIPD is in line with traditionally indigenous communities' celebration of the summer solstice, even as they are steps away from a significantly European Christian-focused holiday. It puts teeth into inclusion, from a national perspective, which allows Canadians to share space and invites new experiences that would revolve around National Indigenous Peoples Day.

I thank you so much for this opportunity.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

I now give the floor to National Chief, Robert Bertrand.

• (1220)

National Chief Robert Bertrand (Congress of Aboriginal Peoples): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

Good afternoon, Madam Chair, vice-chairs, committee members, representatives and guests.

I am National Chief Robert Bertrand of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, CAP. I am pleased to be with you today, and I wish to acknowledge that we are on the traditional and unceded territory of the Algonquin peoples.

For over 47 years, CAP has committed itself to advocating for the rights and needs of the off-reserve, status and non-status Indians, Métis people and southern Inuit, the majority of whom live in urban, rural and remote areas. CAP also serves as the national voice for its 10 provincial and territorial affiliates, which are instrumental in providing us with a direct connection to the priorities and needs of our constituents.

This is an important discussion. Bill C-369 proposes to amend certain acts to make National Indigenous Peoples Day a statutory holiday. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today, because consultation on issues that impact all indigenous people is something that CAP strives for in our work as a national indigenous organization.

A day celebrating the indigenous peoples of Canada has been around for over 20 years. As citizens of this country, we have come to recognize that to move forward together we need to have true reconciliation between all indigenous peoples, non-indigenous Canadians and all levels of government. Each year on this day, we celebrate the immense contributions the indigenous people have made for this country.

This past year, I was at the ceremony of remembrance at the aboriginal veterans monument in Ottawa. I was honoured to be there in support of the courage of all indigenous people who have served and continue to do so in our armed services for Canada. CAP is supportive of National Indigenous Peoples Day becoming a statutory holiday so that all people can gather to honour indigenous communities and cultures in a day of celebration.

We believe that, in addition to the holiday, the federal government should support the education efforts and activities of indigenous organizations in cities and communities across Canada. We must ensure all Canadians take the time and have the tools to learn about our histories. A national holiday would be an opportunity for Canadians to recognize and learn about the many different indigenous cultures throughout this vast land.

It is important that this day be inclusive and that, as the bill reflects, it is for all indigenous peoples of Canada. We will not be excluded based on residence, status or politics. A statutory holiday will be an important opportunity to reflect upon the diverse heritage and culture of our people, which remain so vitally important to the social fabric of this country. In doing so, each and every one of us will be working towards the reality of true reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.

Merci beaucoup. Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

The Chair: We will now go to Regional Chief Kluane Adamek, Yukon Region, Assembly of First Nations.

Regional Chief Kluane Adamek (Yukon Region, Assembly of First Nations): Thank you.

I'm really pleased to be here. I want to acknowledge the national chief of CAP, and of course that we are on the unceded Algonquin territory and also paying particular tribute today to our aboriginal veterans. Today is the day we honour and acknowledge them, and I'm wearing my new piece of regalia.

I have a beaded poppy that I'm not wearing at this moment but it's on my jacket. It's a really important day. I'm very humbled to be here to share perspectives with respect to a day where we can celebrate who we are, certainly from an indigenous perspective, but not just for indigenous people; this is for Canada.

My name is Kluane Adamek and I'm from the Dakl'aweidi (Killerwhale) Clan. I'm a Yukon regional chief, and I've been serving in this capacity since last January. It is so important that members of this committee not only represent interests of your constituencies, but also bring voice and leadership to the commitment that has been made not solely by this Prime Minister. Of course, we know that the relationship with indigenous people as he describes it is the most important but this is 40, 50, 60, 100, 200 years in the making.

There's no question that supporting and ensuring that Canadians across this country have the opportunity to have a day of celebration with us to celebrate who we are on June 21 is incredibly important. We know that TRC calls to action identified this, the UN declaration identifies this and we know that through Bill C-262 this has also been identified.

Last year, in 2017, we had June 21 as a holiday in the Yukon Territory; 18 years ago, the Northwest Territories created June 21 as a holiday.

This comes to where we are now. The question isn't why anymore. It's how. How do we get to a place of advancing reconciliation and ensuring that our people are fully acknowledged in this country? This is an opportunity for all Canadians to spend a day to learn. In the Yukon, celebrations are held across the territory, but in particular, at the Adäka Cultural Festival, we welcome visitors. We share who we are. We drum and we sing because that's important. It's an opportunity to learn.

In addition to that, most recently, the national executive, the other regional chiefs, the national chief and I had a conversation about this day. Something for you to consider as a committee would be this. We have to have a day that we celebrate. As is our custom, there are celebrations for us in the Yukon. Our potlatching is alive and well. We know that was taken away from us and it's back and it will never leave.

We must also consider a day to commemorate. The day of commemoration is going to be a different day. This day acknowledges the survivors of residential schools. As we saw floods of orange T-shirts across the country, indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians understand that history. Those of us sitting at this table and my generation, your generation, our grandparents' generation, that shared history wasn't shared. That was taken from all of us. It is about that commemoration and ensuring that those residential school survivors are commemorated on their day, a special day for them.

It doesn't have to be on that same day on which we celebrate. In Israel, for example, they have a day where they acknowledge the history and a day after when they celebrate. This has been done around the world. New Zealand has a day, Waitangi Day on February 6. Canada can be leaders in this.

I feel that opportunity is now more than ever, and I look to our first speaker. I look to our national chief of CAP. I think about the business community, the public sector and the roles they have. I think of all those Canadians and all those kids. It's our responsibility to ensure they really understand the original relationship of this country.

We chose that recognition, understanding who we are, sharing our stories. We know these things, but it's time for action. We know why. It becomes about how.

For the committee, of course June 21 is celebrated right across this country. Solstice in the north is already a holiday. This would be the federal government setting a tone for the rest of the provinces and territories across this country to say this is incredibly important so provinces and territories should stand with us. Stand with the north, which has already take a huge step in this process.

●(1225)

This is also for your consideration: September 30 must also be a day of commemoration. We have to really understand that history, because we know, as our elders have talked about—I think about my grandmother and my father who both went to residential schools—that important history and that specific area of understanding has to be made. It has to be understood. We have to stand in support of those residential school survivors.

Those would be the reflections that I would share with you, committee, and as would, of course, the Assembly of First Nations. There have been many years and many discussions about this by our chiefs, our communities and our people. Whether it's in our communities or whether we are living in urban centres, we have a responsibility. Every single one of us has a part in this journey towards reconciliation.

I would like to be part of that celebration with you when this bill passes and becomes legislation. What we're hearing across the country is there's no cost to reconciliation. You can't put a number on it. Of course, there are going to be financial considerations that have to be made. But wait a minute here, how many other holidays have we had? How many other holidays have we celebrated and not once have we truly celebrated not only the commitment that we have to that relationship with indigenous peoples but the way in which our indigenous peoples, first nations peoples, myself as a Kluane citizen, have contributed to this country, to our economies, to the way in which we do our business? That is very important.

I wanted to thank the committee for the opportunity to join you and to put that challenge of ReconciliACTION out there. It's not a question of why, it's how and when. It's also a question of how we are going to ensure that our residential school survivors are commemorated. We think of Phyllis wearing her orange shirt, showing up so strong that day and having that taken away. This becomes about ensuring that that never happens again.

I would like to thank all of you for the opportunity to join you today. I want to particularly acknowledge my colleague at the Assembly of First Nations, Natasha. This has been a file that she's been working closely on. I know many of the people on your teams who are here today. Certainly for this committee, this is an incredible responsibility that you have. I wish you the best in your deliberations.

Gunalchéesh.

●(1230)

The Chair: Thank you.

We are now going to begin our question period.

We will go to Mr. Boissonnault, for seven minutes please.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Thank you to all the presenters here today.

Regional Chief Adamek, I have a question to you to start off.

I'm non-status adopted Cree from Alberta, my great-grandmother Lucy Brown Eyes, was a full-blooded Cree woman. Everybody thinks my mum is Mexican because she goes out and tans for a half hour to two hours and it's like she's been outside all summer. She's one-quarter Cree.

We didn't talk about residential schools, yet there was one not very far away. We didn't talk about being indigenous because in the seventies in Alberta that was like a thing of shame. I think we have to get to a point in Canada where we actually pause and talk about the dark parts of our past, where we talk about how we marginalized people, and where we talk about how residential schools were copied by the apartheid government of South Africa to figure out how to separate people. We did such a good job separating indigenous people from non-indigenous that other governments actually came and studied us and then used it to oppress their own peoples. I think that's worth a day.

I think for the people who were in residential schools up until the point where I was still in university, in the nineties, at the University of Alberta and people were still going to Blue Quills, that deserves a day. I think that deserves \$11 million of federal money to give all the people who are on the federal payroll a day off to go and listen and think about that with their families. Hopefully the provinces and territories will follow suit.

Regional Chief, do you believe non-indigenous Canadians, either southerners or Canadians in the north, know enough about indigenous history and residential schools yet?

Regional Chief Kluane Adamek: I wanted to thank you for sharing your reflections and being so open to sharing them, because we know our shared histories. I wanted to also share with you, member of the committee, that it sounds like you and I have some similarities there in those hidden parts of our histories. It does become about where we are in the learning. I'd say there's a long way to go.

In the confines of Parliament, of course, senators, members of Parliament and people making decisions for this country have a lot to learn. Our people, our Yukoners, have a lot to learn. Northerners have a lot to learn. Canadians have a lot to learn. Yes, we do need these days. You mention those dark chapters; while we've turned the page we can't just leave the book on the shelf. It becomes about revisiting that, understanding and, as you describe, it being a part of our history that isn't hidden anymore.

It's incredibly uncomfortable. It takes vulnerability and courage to have those conversations from a perspective of those who have been through it and lived that experience. It also takes vulnerability for those settler Canadians—non-indigenous people—to say, “Okay, we need to have these conversations.”

It is so very hard, but that is the only way we're going to move forward. We hear this from our elders, our leadership, our members of committee and our members of Parliament. This is incredibly important. I would have to say I agree with you. There is still so much to learn.

Coming from a region that has 11 modern treaties...people still think those were signed and trucks are gotten for free. That's not real.

That's not what happened. That's a tripartite agreement among the Yukon government, Canada and first nations.

I'm agreeing with you absolutely. There's so much to learn. These days would provide a part of that opportunity. There are many systemic changes that still need to be made, but let us have those days and ensure that federal public servants have that opportunity. Also, let's challenge the provinces and other territories to get to that place where that becomes a day as well.

• (1235)

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: I have a question for you that I'm going to embed in a bit of a reflection. We still have a long way to go. I agree with you. I grew up in Morinville, near Alexander First Nation. My grandmother worked at the Youville Home in St. Albert. I now represent Edmonton Centre, just south of there. About a month ago, a woman went home to her apartment building in St. Albert. Tacked to the door was a warning that said, "You and your little kids had better leave because you're not welcome here, and if you don't leave there's going to be violence."

She's indigenous, and she had five kids living in an apartment complex. The people in that complex, the white people and indigenous people in that complex said that she and her kids did not belong in St. Albert, off the rez.

We need this day. We need a day to commemorate. We need a day to celebrate or we're not going to get where we need to be as a people.

Now here is my question to you. When you're an elder many decades from now—I'm going to say many, that's my prerogative—what would you hope we will have achieved with this commemoration day? What will the children be able to tell their children and grandchildren when we get this right?

Regional Chief Kluane Adamek: I would describe the moment I've had here today, being able to share this story and that in 2018 or 2019, legislation was passed. From that moment on, you saw a shift across the country of people beginning to come together to celebrate, listen and learn...those moments, as you describe, of deep thought, deep reflection...having a day in September.

Those were days when kids were taken away. That is also the beginning of the school year.

How do we also use education as that tool that assimilated our people for decades? How can we then turn the page to say, “Can we use that system to be the system that creates that change?” It would be change not just for indigenous students—there's no question—but for all of our kids. It has to be with the young people.

I don't have children now. The secret's out. This is why I can travel across the country all the time. I'm deeply humbled by the Prime Minister of New Zealand, who brings her baby everywhere. That might be me in a few years, you never know.

The point is that I would love to share this story with my grandchildren and describe the experience of, as mentioned, our parents and grandparents who have lived it, so it's never forgotten, as our elders describe often. This cannot be an experience that's forgotten. We need to be able to move forward in our healing journey together. It must always be shared.

Thank you for that question. I appreciate that and look forward to other questions about the importance of both of these days, as you described.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Blaney now has the floor for seven minutes.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for your inspiring words, Chief Adamek.

My thanks to you also, Chief Bertrand.

Thanks also to our witness appearing by teleconference.

I live in Lévis, across from Quebec City, where we have a very dynamic maple industry. Bellechasse is considered the home of the world's maple industry. We have membrane filtration technology, pumping systems, telemetry apparatus, but basically it is all built on indigenous knowledge. We have actually inherited maple sap from the communities that once occupied the territory of Bellechasse. They were probably Malecites.

In your presentation, you spoke of commemorating that. It is important for the people of Bellechasse to remember the origins of a sector that creates a lot of jobs and exports a lot of products to the United States. You talked about celebrating and commemorating that heritage.

Before you, we heard from witnesses who told us about residential schools. Education came out of those discussions a lot.

There is also the principle of recognition, which we of course support. When I was Minister of Veterans Affairs, Mr. Bernard, I had the opportunity to take part in the June 21 ceremonies with indigenous peoples. For me, it was a wonderful gateway through which to recognize the indigenous contribution to modern Canada, and their sacrifices.

• (1240)

[*English*]

What is the marketing mix?

[*Translation*]

How will we be able to reconcile it all? We do not just want a day off. People love days off, as do I. However, we want a day that has significance. How can we make sure that future generations will be fully aware of indigenous issues?

As Mr. Boissonnault mentioned, we must not simply have commemoration and celebration activities, we must also have education. How can we ensure that education? What tools can help us to achieve the objective of this bill? How can we focus it, so that people do not just have a day off without knowing why?

National Chief Robert Bertrand: Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Blaney.

One of the ways we could look at it would be to work with school boards across the country, specifically in order to give students information and explain to them the significance of the day.

Here is something I saw with my children. They are grown up now, but when they were little, they came home with all kinds of

information about recycling. I can tell you that, now that those children are adults, the idea of recycling is firmly anchored in their actions.

I would really be in favour of work being done at federal and provincial levels with the schools to raise the students' awareness of the day. In my opinion, it would be a good first step towards reconciliation.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Ms. Adamek, would you like to comment?

Regional Chief Kluane Adamek: I would. Thank you for the question.

The report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada contains more than 80 recommendations. That would be a good place to start.

I speak French, but my mother tongue is English. So this is a good test for me today.

That is one recommendation, but there are others. I am thinking of Canada's ministers of education and of the ministers of health.

[*English*]

It has to become about the commitments, as you're describing. How do we ensure that people really understand what these days are about?

I'd like to share a model with you that we use in my community. We start with the individual. That becomes about you and me thinking about the territory we live on: How do we share that with our families? How do we share the history that we know? Then there's your family, and then that goes, in a larger ring, to your community. Then you think about nations, and then you think about the country.

So everyone has a role in what this education is going to be. There is no one source, if you will. It becomes about us, as individuals, creating our own understanding. That is now a responsibility. No longer is it for indigenous Canadians to share. It's about every single Canadian taking the time to learn. I would suggest that be one approach.

I would also suggest that tools be made, within government, for public servants. These would be in addition to all the changes and recommendations of the TRC, for example, public servants having a stronger understanding of the relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians. Taking it a step further, there are a number of tools that can be used, that we would love to be able to support, having engagements on....

I also would suggest looking to those nations, and being able to provide...from my perspective, speaking to first nations, specifically, in this country, both on and off reserve, both status and non-status. As we know, in the Yukon, you aren't required to be status to be a citizen of our nations. Our agreements provide us with that ability to define our own citizenship. We've moved beyond the Indian Act. So then it becomes about how we support our nations to share their stories, to have that very special day, as Kluane people, to share who we are, where we come from and what our history has been. How did the Alaska Highway impact our people? Why is it that the gold rush is seen as the beginning of the Yukon? Wait a minute. That's not accurate. Why did it take 40 years for Kate Carmack to be acknowledged as one of the discoverers of gold? These are the moments that will no longer be only our responsibility as Kluane First Nation, but as Yukoners. However, we need support to be able to host those important events and to create those materials.

I would like to thank you for that question because there will be tools and resources that will need to be developed. There will be teachings, and learn-ins, and understanding that's built at home, at the dinner table. I know very well, coming from an indigenous and non-indigenous background, that there are conversations that don't always take place. "Hey, Grandpa, we have a farm. I think this farm is built on the people from Curve Lake's traditional territory." Those conversations were only had at our dinner table because I have an indigenous background and a non-indigenous background. So it changes the conversation.

It is our responsibility to change that conversation, in that circle I described, which is ours, and then to take it further—to community, to family, to our places of work, our nations and our countries.

•(1245)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you very much, Chief Adamek.

Your French is excellent, by the way.

Regional Chief Kluane Adamek: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Nantel has the floor now.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you all for being here.

Mr. Mehta and Mr. Bertrand, thank you, but my first question goes to Ms. Adamek. You are such a positive leader.

I have been here in Ottawa for seven years. If I have learned one thing, it is that a diamond in the rough is still a diamond. I feel that the thinking that my colleague Ms. Jolibois brought to her bill broke through a wall, and has led to a wonderful conversation like this one and to testimony like yours this morning.

If I am not mistaken, you would like the committee's report, as well as recommending a statutory holiday, possibly on June 21, that we legislate a national Orange Shirt Day, more or less like Remembrance Day, that may or may not come with a day off.

Regional Chief Kluane Adamek: Thank you for the question.

[*English*]

We know that June 21 is the day when a deep celebration is held. That has been the day. That will continue. Solstice could be the day. Of course, we encourage that.

We have to also keep in mind that celebration and commemoration are two different things. I think about the potlatch. When someone passes, we have a potlatch. We have a feast. We commemorate the person. A year later, we have a celebration. We have a feast, and we give gifts away. In our culture, the more you give, the wealthier you are. We have a day to commemorate, and we have a day to celebrate. In a lot of our cultures across the country, it is the same way.

It has to be about celebrating. Maybe that's one step, but it feels like now is the time for us to take a really big step. That would mean two days. Of course, there is going to be a dollar amount attached to that. Of course there will be concerns. There always will be, but this provides us the opportunity to be leaders now. If we don't do this now, my questions would be when and why not. It has to be about two days. What are the first steps to get there? Maybe we need to talk about that a little bit more. There has to be at least one. There's no question. It's almost 2019. My consideration for you is that there really should be two. These are two very different things we are talking about.

I hope I provided the clarification that maybe you were looking for. I hope this isn't the only conversation. This is a formal conversation, and I entirely understand that, but we would be happy to have other conversations with you, members of the committee, to fully describe the differences between the two and why this is so very important.

This becomes about my generation also sharing that. It can't be about just one group or leadership. It has to be about all our communities. It really needs to be about our kids—your children, your grandchildren, my future children, my future grandchildren—really understanding what this is all about.

•(1250)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Absolutely.

I will now turn to you, Mr. Bertrand and Mr. Mehta.

[*English*]

I was very pleased to hear about the work environment angle today and the general agreement with the idea, which you seem to have witnessed.

My question is to everyone. Mr. Blaney referred to Memorial Day in an astonishing, tough conversation we had about having a statutory holiday or not. Passionate people came to talk. They were all super involved in Memorial Day, but they considered that it would not be a good idea that it be a statutory holiday.

Another parallel is also valid when we talk about Memorial Day.

[Translation]

I feel that we cannot deny the fact that symbols have a lot of value. At least, I think so. For example, a lot of us are wearing a poppy. We do not wear it on Remembrance Day only. We start to wear it in November, or even in the previous month. So, as they appear, young people ask why people are wearing a little red flower. It encourages conversation. Basically, it is remembrance month, with some days having a theme.

Mr. Bertrand, Mr. Mehta or Ms. Adamek, do you feel that having a symbol would stimulate more conversations and, above all, would increase the visibility of indigenous people? A holiday is still a holiday for everyone. But because of the poppy, even if people do not have the day off, they know that it is Remembrance Day.

National Chief Robert Bertrand: For your information, when Ms. Jolibois held her news conference on Parliament Hill, I was at her side.

I have to tell you that, about a month and a half ago, we held our annual general meeting here in Ottawa. We had people from all over Canada. I think that, in total, there were about 125 of us. Someone proposed that we set aside a day for truth and reconciliation. During the discussion, a number of people spoke. I remember one lady in particular who talked about her experiences at residential school. I have to tell you that, when she finished, almost everyone there had tears in their eyes. Afterwards, people told us that it is very difficult for them to talk about the things that went on in the residential schools and to relive the memory of it all.

However, then people talked about a day of recognition and no one had a problem with that. I have the resolution here. I will read it if I may.

The Chair: You can read it, but we are already past seven and a half minutes.

•(1255)

National Chief Robert Bertrand: I am sorry. In any event...

Mr. Pierre Nantel: No, go ahead.

The Chair: You can read it. I just wanted to say that we then have to move to the next speaker.

National Chief Robert Bertrand: Okay, no problem.

[English]

“Whereas the Department of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism is working on the implementation of a new statutory holiday to mark the legacy of residential schools, and whereas Canada observes National Indigenous Day on June 21 and Orange Shirt Day on September 30, therefore be it resolved that the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples endorse a national indigenous statutory holiday moved by David Turner, Aboriginal Congress of Alberta Association, seconded by Liam Thompson, Aboriginal Congress of Alberta Association.”

[Translation]

That resolution was passed.

People want to leave the past behind them and think more about the future.

The Chair: Okay, thank you very much.

We now move to Mr. Breton, for five minutes.

Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

My thanks to the witnesses for joining us today.

Chief Bertrand, you were reading the declaration, the resolution, were you not?

National Chief Robert Bertrand: Yes, I was.

Mr. Pierre Breton: You read it quickly, so some things escaped me. You mentioned two dates. Does the proposal call for two dates?

National Chief Robert Bertrand: No, there would be only one date.

Mr. Pierre Breton: Okay. It would be in June or September. That is the proposal you asked people's opinion on, correct?

National Chief Robert Bertrand: No. The first resolution that was proposed called for a day to be designated for truth and reconciliation. That scared some people. That is why another name was suggested, the national indigenous statutory holiday. People were in favour of that term, but not of the first name suggested.

Mr. Pierre Breton: Okay, I understand. This was a large group of about 125 people.

I just wondered about one thing. I am sorry, but I missed the first hour of the meeting, because I was in another one. Our colleague has presented us with a really interesting bill. I would like to know what consultation work was done over the last year. If I recall correctly, this bill was introduced in October 2017. How were communities, groups or the various organizations consulted? Were you consulted personally? Do you know whether all the indigenous organizations in the country are in agreement?

Let me start with you, Chief Adamek. After that, Chief Bertrand and Mr. Mehta can answer.

Regional Chief Kluane Adamek: Thank you for the question.

[English]

Certainly, from the Assembly of First Nations' perspective, there have been a number of resolutions that have been carried calling for a day to celebrate, a day of recognition, and then also the day for commemoration, as we're describing.

We'd be happy to table those with the committee and also share what was most recently passed at our national executive. We the 10 regional chiefs and the national chief carried a resolution that would look to the 30th as being the date of commemoration that we would advocate for.

From our perspective, communities have been having these conversations. Residential school survivors have been having these conversations. That's where the direction and the reflections that we've heard have said that commemoration and celebration are two different things. I want to make sure that I'm being as clear as I can. Yes, June 21 has been and should continue to be a day of celebration. This has been discussed across the country. I know our chiefs in Yukon are supportive of that.

There should also be a day of commemoration to really learn and understand those dark chapters, the legacy of residential schools. An earlier question by the vice-chair was about the poppy and how people recognize the poppy as being a day. People now recognize Orange Shirt Day as being a day. That's where this is very important that there is a differentiation between the two.

I'm fully supportive of both of those dates, but would highly recommend that we look at both of these dates as being days. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as the national chief of CAP described, had recommended a day and recommended that we could look to September 30. There's a day that we celebrate, that we potlatch, that we feast, that we celebrate who we are in Canada, and a day that we acknowledge and honour those residential school survivors and those very dark chapters of our history.

• (1300)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Breton: Do you want to add anything, Chief Bertrand?

National Chief Robert Bertrand: Yes. This is a very important issue for the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples.

[*English*]

Unfortunately, CAP was not consulted on this day.

We have noticed in the past that the federal government and INAC deals mostly.... As you know, there are five NIOs in Canada, and the federal government has decided, for I don't know what reason, to deal with only three NIOs in most cases. I don't want to speak for NWAC, but we get left out a lot. I think for a discussion as important as this one, CAP should have been invited. We represent those living off reserve. And right now, I'm not giving you information that you do not already have. There are over 70% of indigenous people living off reserve. We are the oldest, and we're being left out. I have to tell you that sometimes I'm pretty upset about it.

Anyway, I'm very glad to be here, to be able to express my feelings. But to answer your question, no, CAP was not consulted.

The Chair: Unfortunately, we are out of time. I've let it go over time as it is. I do apologize.

If you'd be able to put anything further in writing, or if you have something to say in 10 seconds....

Okay.

Regional Chief Kluane Adamek: Again, on behalf of the Assembly of First Nations, we continue to be actively engaged on this file; and we really want to be clear that, respectfully to all the NIOs, the work of the Assembly of First Nations continues to support all of our people.

We have non-status people in the Yukon who are members of our agreements. We have people who live off reserve. We will continue to support all of our people as best we can.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to join you.

The Chair: Thank you.

I just want to also clarify that this is a private member's bill, as there was a question about it.

I want to thank everyone for coming.

[*Translation*]

Thank you all for your testimony.

[*English*]

Both of the witnesses here referred to resolutions that had been passed. If you would be able to provide us with copies of those resolutions, send them into the clerk, that would be helpful. You don't have to do it today.

The meeting is adjourned.

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