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Chair

Mrs. Karen Vecchio

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• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)): We're going to commence this morning's meeting. Thank you very much.

Today we're going to continue with our study pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Tuesday, June, 20, 2017. The committee resumes its study of indigenous women in the federal justice and correctional systems.

Today, for our first panel, I would like to welcome, from Bishop's University, Dr. Vicki Chartrand. She is an associate professor in the department of sociology. We also have, from Quebec Native Women Inc. and by video conference from Kahnawake, Quebec, Véronique Picard. She's the justice coordinator.

Today we're going to begin with our seven-minute rounds, and with Vicki, for seven minutes.

Go ahead.

Prof. Vicki Chartrand (Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Bishop's University, As an Individual): Before I begin, I would actually like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land on this unceded territory of the Anishinabe people. It's an honour and privilege for me.

I also want to thank the members of this standing committee for their time and energy in embarking on such important work.

As noted, I am Vicki Chartrand. I am currently associate professor at Bishop's University in Sherbrooke, Quebec. Previous to this, I was the executive director of a women's transition house in the northern interior of British Columbia. I also worked at the national office of the Elizabeth Fry Societies. Prior to that, I worked at Correctional Service Canada in the voluntary sector in the parole office.

You may know that in 2016 *Maclean's* magazine published an article entitled "Canada's prisons are the 'new residential schools'". The statement builds on a substantial body of research that explores how Canada's criminal justice system works against indigenous people at every level: police checks and arrests, bail denial and detention, sentencing miscarriages and disparities, and of course, the high rates of imprisonment. These trends are also well documented throughout other settler colonial regions, such as the United States, Australia, and New Zealand.

It's clear that the problem is systemic to settler regions like Canada. While the prison is not a residential school per se, we have to keep in mind that it was born of the same modern logics of segregation and reformation of the individual. I don't think it's a coincidence that in the 1950s and 1960s, as we started to see Indian assimilation policies begin to recede, we also started to see the prison and the child welfare systems silently take their place in the lives of indigenous people. In fact, prior to the 1960s, there was only 1% to 2% of indigenous prisoners. Since the 1960s, that number has increased consistently every year after.

As you have likely heard, indigenous women represent 2% of the general population and somewhere between 36% and 39% of the federal prison population. This reality is woven into a backdrop of colonialism, where indigenous women are more often criminalized and then imprisoned for what are referred to as "crimes of survival" that are linked to poverty, lack of educational and employment opportunities, lifestyles of substance abuse, mental health concerns, and histories of sexual abuse, violence, and trauma. In your study, it's important for the committee to consider how the prison system often parallels and reinforces the same realities of repression, abuse, and violence experienced by indigenous women from the onset of colonialism.

I've visited prisons all across Canada, in Australia, and I've even been in a prison in Cambodia. Prisons are characterized by authoritarianism, marked power imbalance, violence, enforced restriction of movement and activities, isolation, lack of freedom of association, and enforcement of arbitrary and trivial demands. This is also very characteristic of colonialism itself.

Indigenous women end up on the deepest end of the system, and continue to be subject to some of the most restrictive levels of penal practices, such as maximum-security classifications, segregation, involuntary transfers, physical restraints, strip searches, lockdowns, use of force, dry cells, institutional charges, lack of medical attention, and also with higher rates of self-harm and suicide. When you end up on the deep end of the system—and I don't mean to be macabre—you often don't come out alive.

Adaptive or coping strategies commonly exhibited by women in prison, such as angry outbursts, substance use, or self-injury, are often cultivated in response to the prison environment and compounded by their histories of abuse, violence, and trauma. Women's resistance to the institutional order, or their inability to adjust or cope, is often interpreted as non-compliance, perceived as a security threat, and met with intensive control, which also results in more time in prison.

For example, there are two cases in the media that I'm sure you're familiar with.

Kinew James, who died of a heart attack after her sentence after her emergency button call in her cell was routinely ignored, was initially serving a six-year sentence for manslaughter but accumulated dozens of charges while in prison, which resulted in a 15-year sentence.

Renee Acoby has also been in the media. She accumulated an additional 21 years of charges in prison, spent more than half her time in segregation, and was eventually given a dangerous offender designation, which, effectively, keeps her in prison for life. This is particularly germane for indigenous women whose resistance to control or violence is a part of their survival in their communities or on reserve, whatever the case may be.

Since 1848, from the Brown commission, we've been looking at the systemic repression and brutality in the prisons.

• (1105)

Since the 1960s we've been looking at remedies to address the rates of incarceration of indigenous people in Canada that have included more penal interventions, and clearly to no avail. It is a mistake for us to continue to make the prisons part of a remedy to the rates of indigenous incarceration when that reality is arguably endemic to its character.

I have solutions that I want to build on that echo the significant work others have been doing in this area already.

First, front-end strategies that are indigenous-led are more long-term. There's a bill on the table, Bill C-262, that outlines the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. I want to commend the current government for supporting this bill. It's in line with the TRC recommendations.

We need to make sure that basic rights of indigenous people are being met. There are basic national standards of clean water, electricity, employment and educational opportunities, social service support, health care, and the like.

Second, we have to minimize and mitigate the harmful impacts of the prisons, such as, for example, by abolishing segregation, at the very least, for women. My understanding is that the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies has a pilot project in place that looks at dynamic security measures, rather than more restrictive ones, such as force measures. We can also accomplish this through external, independent oversight and accountability. That can happen by way of judicial review, as outlined in the *Arbour* report, or through parliamentary oversight in the intermediary, as outlined by Senator Kim Pate.

Finally, we need decarceration strategies and community options. There are existing remedies in the legislation that include, in the CCRA, section 29 agreements in the community for people with mental health concerns, and sections 81 and 84, whereby indigenous and non-indigenous prisoners can serve their sentence and parole in a supported way in the community.

In implementing these remedies, we obviously need the necessary resources. We have to build on the internal strengths and capacities of indigenous communities—I could talk more about that—as well as be creative in our options.

I just want to remind you that prisons don't disappear problems; they only disappear people.

Thank you so much for listening.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you so much.

We're now going to hear for seven minutes from Véronique Picard, from Quebec Native Women Incorporated.

You have seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Véronique Picard (Justice Coordinator, Quebec Native Women Inc.): My thanks to the committee for inviting my organization, and to Ms. Chartrand for her eloquent speech about the situation.

As some of you may know, Quebec Native Women Inc. is a not-for-profit organization whose goal is to defend the interests of aboriginal women and to improve their standard of living throughout Quebec, whether in urban areas or in their own communities. We do so in different ways, specifically through promoting non-violence, through good health considered from a holistic perspective, and through accessible and equitable justice.

Because of that, we are called on to work not only with women from the various nations living in the territory of Quebec, but also with front-line organizations and with larger ones, with federal and provincial public institutions, and with government representatives. Our mission is to speak on behalf of those women to institutions that affect their lives, so that we can give a voice to those women experiencing injustice.

The astounding increase in the numbers of female indigenous inmates is a major issue for us because it affects many indigenous and Inuit women in Quebec, as well as their families and their communities. Their problems are not those of one person only.

First of all, it is important to understand the context in which the prosecution and incarceration of indigenous women has evolved over time. The overrepresentation of indigenous women in the justice system and the correctional system corresponds to an intergenerational cycle of appropriation and institutionalization of indigenous people. For the most part, this runs through a common history marked by trauma and difficulty, which finds its origin in colonial policies and practices.

As an organization, our first recommendation that results from that background is to provide training and awareness activities on indigenous history and issues. This must be provided systematically and automatically, and it must be compulsory for all those in the justice system: first responders, police, lawyers, correctional officers, judges, program coordinators in institutions, probation officers and all those involved in transition houses. It not only includes yesterday's issues, it includes today's issues too.

We believe that this awareness of, and information about, the history and the issues of indigenous people will allow those working in the legal system in which this indigenous population finds itself to improve their practices. They will also play a part in changing the internal policies that affect the lives and experiences of the indigenous women in the prison facilities.

By way of information, a comment on this recommendation was made by the Office of the Correctional Investigator in its 2016-2017 annual report. It stated that the Correctional Service of Canada, CSC, does not provide its staff with guidance or training on how aboriginal social history should be considered in case management decisions.

The goal of the second recommendation is to reduce the marginalization of indigenous women in prisons and especially penitentiaries. Indigenous women are marginalized in part because of their particular social, historical and economic background. This marginalization too often brings with it an increase in risk factors, which are established according to risk assessment principles. They take the form of higher security classifications, such as medium or maximum.

The marginalization of aboriginal women and their realities are considered risks because risk factors are assessed objectively, independent of a person's sociohistorical and socioeconomic background. The realities that affect indigenous women to a greater extent automatically bring with them a higher risk level. Examples are intergenerational trauma, alcoholism, violence, abuse, lower education levels, insecurity or poverty. So indigenous women are more likely to be given a higher security classification, as the statistics available clearly show.

● (1110)

We believe absolutely that those labels are obstacles to healing, to rehabilitation and to the reintegration of these women. A blatant example is that healing lodges for indigenous women inmates, as provided for in section 81, accept only those with a minimum security classification, which is only a very small number.

Indigenous women with higher security classifications and who clearly have more complex or greater needs have no access to programming of that kind. It is counterproductive to isolate those

women and not provide them with the support they need. Either access to programming of that kind must be made easier for women with higher security classifications or the risk that those women pose must be assessed in the light of the particular backgrounds and realities of first nations or Inuit women. The resources are available. Their quality may be open for debate, but they must be used to their full potential.

The final recommendation is to provide services and resources that are culturally sensitive and appropriate outside prison facilities. The services and resources must be permanent and regularly available, which is not the case, at least in Quebec.

For those granted conditional releases, transition houses are very poorly equipped to meet the needs of first nations or Inuit women. Those houses actually get very few financial and human resources. It is all very well to hire indigenous workers, for example, but, indigenous or not, those workers also have to be fully trained in indigenous issues.

Moreover, it is important to consider the fact that a number of indigenous women do not—

● (1115)

[*English*]

The Chair: We are almost at seven and a half minutes. I want to allow you to continue, but at the same time, hopefully, those remarks will become part of our questions. If there are continuous remarks or if you want to send the remainder of those remarks to us, we would be able to put that on the record for you as well.

What we're going to do now is start our round of questioning. In our first round, each member has seven minutes.

We're going to start with Emmanuella Lambropoulos for her seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Good morning.

Ms. Picard, thank you for joining us today.

I would like to get a little more information about the prison system. In your opinion, what are the existing barriers, particularly with regard to indigenous women?

Once indigenous women enter the penal system, how are they treated differently?

Ms. Véronique Picard: First, I feel that indigenous women and victims are treated differently because the conditions of their lives, their life experiences, are not taken into account. Their history makes them victims of discrimination. They do not generally receive adequate and available services. Prison and the justice system are a bit like a Band-Aid that is put on without really treating the problems that need to be seen very holistically. They form a whole that comes from years and years of colonization and discrimination. Those factors, those conditions, are not considered as one whole.

For example, when a crime is committed, it is seen as a crime and not really as a part of a larger picture. When these women enter the prison system, they do not automatically have access to the services they need. They do not have access to them when they leave prison either. That is the point I am making. There are very few resources available for them, either in their communities or in urban settings. That is the situation in Quebec, at any rate. They are often just drifting. We may ask where the women that need services should be referred. We talk about a cure. You talk about rehabilitation and reintegration into society. We are talking about a cure, because the issue is all about a long-term process, which is necessary for reintegration into society.

For me, the biggest obstacle is the absence, the lack, of appropriate and available resources, both in their communities or in the cities. There are very few workers and they are overloaded. There are very few resources, services, and, of course, dollars for the communities and for the cities.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Okay.

Can you tell us if there are healing lodges in Quebec?

Ms. Véronique Picard: There is one, but it is for men.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: There are none for women.

Ms. Véronique Picard: No.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Can you tell me the percentage of indigenous women in Quebec prisons?

Ms. Véronique Picard: I do not have those statistics.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: So, without the statistics, could you tell me whether the number is relatively high?

Ms. Véronique Picard: Because we are working with members from all the nations in Quebec, we know that this is an issue that affects our women. They deal with the issues directly. By working with those who work more at community level, we see that the women are not provided with the services they need.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Okay, thank you.

[English]

My next question is for Madam Chartrand.

You had mentioned that a lot of the issues stem from the lack of resources in areas where a lot of indigenous people live, for example, reserves. You were saying that we can build on strengths in indigenous communities, in order to help improve on the problem.

I was wondering if you could give us examples of what we can do in order to lessen the number of women who end up in prison.

• (1120)

Prof. Vicki Chartrand: Sure.

One of them is that we have to be creative in our solutions. If we just follow the correctional mandate of risk assessments and managing people's risks, we won't come up with an ability to release people into the community. I'll give you an example.

When I worked at the women's transition house, it was a transition house for women who were abused. Oftentimes, they're indigenous women coming from poverty. In fact, a lot of the women were actually coming from prison.

When you're coming from poverty, you can't afford to live in a good place. Often the women would have to stay in an area called the crack shacks and you can imagine what the crack shacks might have entailed. Of course, having worked for parole, you go in to do these community assessments, to see if they're going to be released into an environment that's suitable for their rehabilitation. They can't afford to do that. They can't afford to stay anywhere, other than an environment that's more than likely not going to be suitable for their parole.

A creative idea, for instance, is a transition house. This was on our own backs, in the sense that, we didn't have the resources for it. If we could fund these kinds of resources.... They would stay in these environments, but we would offer them a safety plan, so that if anything ever happened, they would be welcome to stay in our house for the time being—in the interim—so that we could set up something else.

We need to get creative in our solutions. That comes from the communities. It comes from the grassroots work. I'll give you another example.

Right now, I'm doing a project on the missing and murdered indigenous women. You may or may not be familiar with Gladys Radek, but she walked across Canada five times to raise awareness and to bring this issue to light. The communities have been doing this work for years. We're just picking it up.

As there has been so much criminal justice neglect in this area, they have taken on looking for the missing and murdered women themselves. Two summers ago, we went across Canada to talk about all the amazing work that they've been doing. We interviewed people like Bernadette Smith, who started the "Drag the Red" campaign. Are you familiar with this?

Drag the Red, what they did.... The police refused to search the Red River after Tina Fontaine's body was found. The police said it was ineffective and inefficient, so they started dragging the Red. They didn't find very much. I think they found only teeth, but do you know what else they did? Outside of the monofunction of policing, what they also did was they built community. They gave people hope. They brought people together. This is what we call community capacity building. These are exactly the kinds of things that we want to be seeing in indigenous communities. This is led by indigenous people.

I have lots more examples of that and of course, I'm going to be doing research on this and providing those kinds of community capacity examples.

The Chair: Excellent.

Thank you very much.

We're now going to move on, for our next seven minutes with Martin Shields.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I appreciate the witnesses being here and being able to inform us with the wealth of knowledge they have.

Going to Ms. Chartrand, you mentioned the historical, in the sense of the change from the 1960s to the current. I know that's a huge volume, but could you succinctly say what has changed, from the 1960s until now, that has increased that percentage?

Prof. Vicki Chartrand: It's interesting. In the other part of my research I've been reading prison reports from 1837 onwards. Every year they would release annual reports. When you read the reports from 1837 up until the 1960s, you see that they actually didn't want indigenous people in their prisons, not in the federal ones, anyway. The provincial local jails were actually built on reserve—that was a control mechanism—but federal prisons were reserved for white settlers.

In the 1960s they stopped reporting on race. There are significant, fundamental changes in the way we started to administer social control. We started to build in more risk aversion, risk factors, the kinds of things that we started to see in the 1960s. We were less concerned with nationality. It seems to have been that we were more concerned with effective systems.

Of course, the human rights era was ushered in around this time. This is when we also started to see, as I said, the erosion and the receding of the Indian policies and assimilation policies. Then child welfare cases started to see more indigenous children involved. It seemed as though the prison started to take over as a new mechanism of social control over the indigenous population.

• (1125)

Mr. Martin Shields: One of the things mentioned by the other witness was indigenous staffing. Is this an area you have looked at?

Prof. Vicki Chartrand: In what way do you mean?

Mr. Martin Shields: I mean staffing anywhere in the system that we're dealing with indigenous women.

Prof. Vicki Chartrand: I think that's important, and I think bringing culture into prison is important. I think those are the kinds of things that at least alleviate some of these impacts.

The reality, from my sense of it, is that there's a culture in prisons. If anyone has ever been in a prison they understand that culture. You have to toe the line to be seen as supporting solidarity among staff members. That's really important.

You can put some of the best people in that kind of institution, but they're there to watch people. You're the keeper. This might be a bit extreme, but I rather liken it to.... Let's take the institution of slavery, for instance. You could have the nicest slave owners, who are really nice to their slaves, but the institution itself is problematic. You can put the nicest people in, but the institution's going to breed quite a lot of hostilities.

Mr. Martin Shields: I take it from this that you would suggest that staffing of indigenous women in institutions is not an answer, because of the control mechanism you have just outlined.

Prof. Vicki Chartrand: If it's the only option, I would say yes, but I would definitely look more towards community options.

Mr. Martin Shields: Then, with indigenous people involved themselves, could you explain how you would see that model?

Prof. Vicki Chartrand: With indigenous people...?

Mr. Martin Shields: You're talking about solutions outside of a prison structure. How would you involve indigenous women, in the sense of resolving that problem with those who have challenges?

Prof. Vicki Chartrand: This would be where all the great work that Madame Picard does comes in. They would come in and would actually host section 81 or section 84 agreements, through which they have some of the resources in place to facilitate, to see, to host indigenous women.

Mr. Martin Shields: From your point of view, it's not your expertise. You have done a lot of studies—you have studied the institutions—but I was looking for examples you might have of keeping that from happening.

Prof. Vicki Chartrand: Do you mean women going into prisons?

Mr. Martin Shields: Yes.

Prof. Vicki Chartrand: It would be the front-end strategies of basic resources. When we went into communities, there wasn't running water or there wasn't food. How can you expect people to thrive, if they don't even have some of those basic needs?

Mr. Martin Shields: You're going back to developing the social determinants of health, in a sense, as a basis beforehand to keep from their being involved with the institutions.

Prof. Vicki Chartrand: Yes. It's all three areas. First is social determinants. Second is to mitigate it. Third is community options such as those Madame Picard is involved in.

Mr. Martin Shields: Right. Okay.

Let's go to Quebec.

You have mentioned involving indigenous staffing. It's a term you used. Where would you see this? You have talked about the use of it.

[Translation]

Ms. Véronique Picard: I was not talking about indigenous staff. As for external resources, I really liked what Ms. Chartrand said, that the community could take charge. However, the necessary resources are required. The community has to be able to take that kind of responsibility, of providing resources and support, but it also has to have the resources it needs in order to do so. That means human and financial resources. As well, they need housing, which some communities lack completely.

Other priorities cannot get in the way, essential needs like housing, for example. In a number of ways, the community can be involved. I am thinking of healing lodges. The same formula can be adopted, but in the communities, with appropriate, culturally sensitive services. We might think of sharing circles, for example.

• (1130)

[English]

Mr. Martin Shields: But that goes back to my question, in the sense of “who”.

Maybe it was the interpretation, because I wrote down that “indigenous staffing” was something that was said. It was maybe the translation and it was not what you meant.

I'm going to the “who”. Who were the critical pieces to...?

You've outlined great big ideas, and I'm out of time.

The Chair: Yes, we're out of time, so maybe we can get back to that question.

We are now going to move over to Sheila Malcolmson for her seven minutes.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to both of the witnesses.

I'm hoping that you can paint a picture for us that starts even earlier, of the factors that are bringing indigenous women into the justice system and into incarceration in the first place. Then, what is the collateral damage for their extended families? How can that perpetuate more interactions with the justice system and the penal system?

I'm elected in British Columbia. We have terrible stories, again and again, of trauma, including sexual abuse, which can set women apart who are living in poverty in B.C. Many of them are indigenous and are vulnerable because of the economic injustice that puts them into situations that are less safe. Because of trauma, this maybe gets them into addiction, which can exacerbate interactions with the criminal justice system.

Can you talk more about that history and the cycle of violence we're seeing, which can affect the next generation as well?

That's to both witnesses, Vicki Chartrand from Bishop's University, and Véronique Picard from Quebec Native Women.

[Translation]

Ms. Véronique Picard: That was a long question and I am not sure I fully understood it.

In terms of putting an end to the cycle of violence, I think it always comes back to resources and support. More and more, we are talking to women in our communities and we are encouraging them to break the silence surrounding the cycle of violence, which was born of a violent past. The first step is to talk about it, and we are doing that more and more. But the lack of resources, either in the communities, outside them, or in urban settings, remains a problem. Many of our women live in Montreal and have access to very few resources. I believe that the basic problem is the lack of available resources and funding. There are a lot of other difficulties, meaning

that we put the major problem to one side. It includes a number of things and has to be seen holistically. That is first and foremost what needs to be tackled, in my opinion.

Earlier, we were talking about the communities and the people we could turn to. I think it is important to communicate with the communities. Some of them are quite capable of providing resources and guidance of this kind. Others would be capable, but, for some services, they are lacking human and financial resources. In the cities, the situation is exactly the same. Moreover, as the women there are very isolated, they are in more danger of suffering some forms of violence. Even when those women are victims, the police can treat them with a lot of discrimination. So a certain mistrust develops.

My position is that everything revolves around the services and the resources to which indigenous women have access, whether they are in their communities or in the cities.

[English]

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you.

Maybe I can refine my question just a bit more. This is early in our study. If you could paint a picture of that cycle of violence, we will move to try to identify ways we can interrupt it. Just give us a picture. How are women going into this system, and are they any better when they come out of it?

• (1135)

Prof. Vicki Chartrand: I was talking to a friend of mine back in B.C. She is a Carrier Sekani woman. Her sister is in prison for murder right now. I'll walk you through that story.

Their history is that the father was abusive. They lived with a fairly abusive family. The mother drank quite a bit. The mother has cancer now, so they're at risk of losing their mother. Her sister drinks, and her partner was abusive as well. At some point, she had two of her children taken away, which escalated a lot of the drinking. One night, they were out drinking and possibly using drugs, and they got into a fight. What ended up happening.... She had a penknife on her and she—no, her friend was there with her, and the boyfriend got stabbed. She was arrested. She didn't want to talk to a lawyer, because she didn't want to have to think about and relive that night, so there's no chance of her looking at self-defence, provocation, or anything like that. She is going to spend the rest of her life in jail. She will be given a life sentence. It's a very quick trajectory, but this is very common.

Then you can talk about the over-policing that goes on within the indigenous communities, the lack of sensitivity. It's endless. It would almost be worthwhile for you to just spend a day “in the life of”, go into communities or even go into prisons and just talk to people and hear their experiences. That would be so valuable.

I've been refused from prisons, but prisons can't refuse judges and parliamentarians, so I would really encourage you to go to a prison. Go into a maximum-security prison. Go see what it feels like. It's intense.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Can either of you talk about the federal responsibility? Sometimes these are provincial jails, but given that it's indigenous women, do we have a special role on the federal side?

The Chair: A very short answer....

Prof. Vicki Chartrand: In the CCRA, they do. I forget the section; I think it's section 33. They have to actually provide cultural sensitivity to indigenous people at the federal level.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We are now going to move on to Eva Nassif for her seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much for your presentations.

Have you worked with indigenous women, or can you refer us to some testimony from people who have worked with them after they leave prison?

Ms. Véronique Picard: Actually, when we are talking about life experiences or stories of everyday life, either about incarceration or problems with the justice system, with a number of indigenous women, it does not go up to the time they are incarcerated. That said, yes, we do talk to them.

Women who have been part of the system contact us, whether they are convicted, accused, or victims. So yes, we have experience with those women. We also have a lot of contacts with more front-line organizations, those dealing directly with homeless women, for example, or with women stuck in the justice system.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Could you tell us briefly about the types of services that exist for those women, whether general or cultural, in order to ease their integration after they leave prison?

Ms. Véronique Picard: I would say that there are no services on an ongoing basis. Some services exist, in Montreal in particular, but they are not regular or permanent. They may be set up, but then, for lack of funding or resources, they disappear quite quickly. Regular or permanent programs and services are what we most lack. Some organizations work with indigenous populations in conflict with the law, especially in Montreal, but they have very few human and financial resources with which to do their work. As a result, the services are provided sporadically. The women may receive a service, but it may be interrupted two months later. The fact that they are not permanent and regular is absolutely an obstacle, and a major one.

• (1140)

Mrs. Eva Nassif: You have mentioned the lack of services a number of times, but could you also give us an overview of what the prison system means for the women who have told you their stories?

Ms. Véronique Picard: You want to know what the prison system represents for those women?

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Yes.

Ms. Véronique Picard: It is a negative experience in a lot of ways. They feel very disadvantaged, especially when they get out of prison. They always feel shame. Some decide not to go back to their communities. As we know, of course, their communities are small

and everyone knows and talks about everyone else. So they end up in the city in a precarious situation. As they are quite vulnerable, they are in danger of falling back into the legal machinery quite quickly.

However, we are told that, in some respects, some women feel more comfortable when they are incarcerated because of the lack of resources they experienced when they were on the outside.

So there are two realities, and both are very negative. They are both related to the lack of services outside the prison system.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: You talk about a lack of services, funding and resources. We know that the government could do something in that regard.

In your opinion, what role could the federal government play to make access to legal services easier for those indigenous women?

Ms. Véronique Picard: First, you have to listen to those women and become aware of their needs. Ms. Chartrand put it well when she said that, above all, you need to sit down directly with the indigenous women who have dealt with the justice system, women who have been in prison, women who are there now, and women who have been released. What I mean by that is that they have broken out of the vicious circle.

It is all very well to listen to what experts say, or organizations like ours that work with the women directly. But that will never be as poignant as what the women themselves say. They can tell you about what their communities need, and what they need.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Ms. Chartrand, you talked about a research project that focused on “the historical links between the penal and colonial logics to understand the incarceration of indigenous peoples in Canada”.

Could you tell us what you mean by “penal and colonial logics”?

[*English*]

Prof. Vicki Chartrand: Yes, it's a good question.

“Penal” means “punitive”, and “colonialism” would be the history of European exploitation in other people's countries, like in Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. It's a settler colonial region where individuals came, settled, and had to eliminate the existing systems, governance, and cultures in order to settle. That would be a colonial-penal logic. They parallel each other through assimilation, reformation, and rehabilitation.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We now go on to our second round, for five minutes, with Rachael Harder.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Thank you.

Thank you very much for taking the time to be with us today. We certainly appreciate it.

I think my questions are for the most part for both of you. I'll direct my first question to Véronique, if I may.

You talked a lot about community resources and the need to make them available to aboriginal women as they come out of the prison system, in order for them to rehabilitate and reintegrate into society and be successful in that reintegration.

Have you seen any examples in which a community bond has been put to use and has worked well? By that I mean a situation in which the government has given money to an organization to implement a program to help serve these women as they come out of the prison system, whereby the programs that are being established—the not-for-profits, often, that are putting these programs together—would be held accountable based on results. In other words, how many of the women they're working with return to being incarcerated, versus how many don't? Maybe there are some other factors that could be measured along the way as well.

Basically, this would be the idea of using a community bond to help these women re-establish their lives in Canadian society. I'm wondering if you've seen this work, if you have examples, or if you could comment on whether you think it is a model that could be pursued.

• (1145)

[Translation]

Ms. Véronique Picard: I know several stories of reintegration. I must say that I prefer the word “healing”, even if the word “reintegration” fits better in this system. We are always talking about healing. Since this is a process, it is difficult to measure.

Beneficial activities, such as a sharing circle, are offered by the Montreal Native Friendship Centre, for example. I believe that the gaps lie in the lack of permanence of these services. These services should also be directed specifically to the population that has been incarcerated, for example to women in prison. Some existing services are very good for women in general and could incorporate more culturally appropriate services.

The example of the Elizabeth Fry Society transition house may be relevant, except that there is a gap in the lack of culturally appropriate services for indigenous women who were incarcerated. Services exist, but they are not always relevant to indigenous women. Will they feel that they are part of something? Will they feel that we don't judge them?

We always think in a spirit of healing and not in a spirit of reintegration. Reintegration can mean many things to different people. Although it is difficult to measure, if the person initiates a healing process or if they say they have completed their healing process, it is a success.

[English]

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you.

Out of respect, I want Vicki to have a chance to answer that same question as well.

In your estimation, or based on your research, would you say that this is something that should or could be pursued?

Prof. Vicki Chartrand: To echo what Madame Picard was saying, right now, as far as I know, there's one section 81 for women—a healing lodge for women—and that's in Alberta. Then there's one healing lodge run by CSC, which is in Saskatchewan.

Just to go back to the idea of results, it really is different for each individual, and we have to meet the individual where they're at. Some of our requirements in the transition house... We want to see people, if they want, take education or have employment, abstain or undertake risk management with harm with drug use and whatnot. We always, however, met them every day and said, “Hi, how are you today?”

If they had to come back 100 times because they had relapsed, or whatever the case may be, I'd say hello to them 100 times. I'd just let them keep coming back to access the services, and I'd meet them where they were at that moment. The idea that they have to reintegrate, and then, if they relapse, we breach them and they're back in prison, just sets them up to fail. You're setting people up to fail.

• (1150)

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you so much.

We're now going to continue with Marc Serré for five minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank our two witnesses for their work and their passion. Obviously, there is still a lot of work to do.

My first question is for Ms. Picard.

On its website, the organization you represent indicates that it is denouncing the Indian Act because it is unfair. Do you have any specific recommendations for improving the Indian Act, especially with regard to the particular component of justice?

I would like to say that I fully agree with your position.

Ms. Véronique Picard: With respect to the Indian Act, we have always been very adamant about its usefulness as an assimilation tool. In addition, women suffer more discrimination.

We have made a number of recommendations for amendments, if there are any, and amendments that should be made to clause 6, for example. This specific clause affects us in a particular way.

In our opinion, the debate surrounding the Indian Act is very broad. However, we have always said that gender discrimination is also discrimination. We don't really realize that women would have lost their status and would no longer have had access to those kinds of services. In our view, a woman who says she is an indigenous person is an indigenous person, but she isn't in the eyes of such legislation.

However, she doesn't necessarily have access to the services and resources of her community if she has needs in terms of justice, health, disclosures or consultations, for example.

I don't know in what way you're asking what changes should be made to the Indian Act, but—

Mr. Marc Serré: That's great. You've touched on the things we need to look at.

My next question is for Ms. Chartrand.

[*English*]

Among the publications you made reference to, you had the 2007 United Kingdom Corston report, when they looked at the prison system and at a women-centred approach, in some of the recommendations and rethinking.

Do you think we should be applying any of those recommendations that were done in the U.K. and some of those strategies here, for indigenous women in the correctional system in Canada?

Prof. Vicki Chartrand: Yes, I do: the ones that pertain to decarceration strategies. It would be around those. I definitely wouldn't say I'm an expert around the Corston report—it's more on what's being done in Canada—but it would be anything around decarceration.

Mr. Marc Serré: Would you be able to provide us at a future date some of the recommendations along those lines from the Corston report?

Prof. Vicki Chartrand: Yes, for sure.

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you.

Here is a question for both witnesses.

In budget 2017 we had—I just want to hear your comments on this to see whether it has been beneficial—\$65 million for Public Safety for aboriginal communities in the justice system. We also had \$50 million under Correctional Service for mental health. Have you seen some benefits? Do you have any comments about some of these investments that were made just recently in budget 2017?

Prof. Vicki Chartrand: I'm sorry, could you just quickly repeat those numbers?

Mr. Marc Serré: There was \$65 million in Public Safety for aboriginal communities in the justice system, and \$50 million for Correctional Service for mental health. That applies overall.

Prof. Vicki Chartrand: Okay.

My understanding is that the Correctional Service has introduced new programming around mental health. They've also deferred some funds.

I was listening to the Office of the Correctional Investigator. They said they had 700 beds for prisoner psychiatric patients and that they closed two-thirds of those beds to offer intermediate care. My understanding is that they needed those 700 beds and actually needed more than 700 beds. It sounds to me as though they're not effectively addressing the mental health concerns of individuals, not to mention that the prison system itself substantiates many mental health problems.

I know that Public Safety has been strongly involved in a lot of front-end strategies, working with communities. I understand they've been doing what's called safety planning with communities, just to

make sure that there are some things in place that individuals can go to in order to stay safe.

Part of the problem with that is that—

I'm sorry, I have to pack it up. Okay.

• (1155)

The Chair: Any additional comments you have can always be submitted as a brief as well. You've had excellent questions, so I thank you very much.

We're now going to move on to Rachael Harder for the final five-minute round.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you so much.

I'll direct my question to you first, Ms. Chartrand. Maybe you can comment a little bit with regard to aboriginal women. Of course we know that most of them were victimized before they themselves became perpetrators.

I'm just wondering if you can comment on what could be done to better pursue the healing process in order to make sure that these women are well cared for and go through that healing process even before they land in a penitentiary or a prison.

Prof. Vicki Chartrand: Can I defer that question to Madame Picard?

Ms. Rachael Harder: Sure.

Prof. Vicki Chartrand: Patricia Monture, who has now passed on, made the comment, "Give me my people back." I think it is really important that we understand that indigenous people heal in indigenous communities.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Sure.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Véronique Picard: This is an important question.

Committing crimes can be part of the healing process. Everything revolves around history. Earlier, we talked about the cycle of violence. It starts with residential schools and intergenerational trauma. We reproduce what we have suffered. In my opinion, it will take several years to leave it behind.

The first thing to do is to talk about it and break the silence. In addition, institutions must provide the resources and services needed in communities to respond to this break in silence, to respond to those who want to begin this healing process. I would not say it's a cultural change, because it's not part of the culture; however, a change of mentality must take place within the communities themselves.

It's difficult to say what should be done to prevent crime. I think we have to stick to the basics. For example, some communities have housing problems. Because of that, several people are crammed into the same dwelling, because there are very few of them. This kind of situation can certainly lead to more crime. There are more people and these are precarious situations. In some communities, the basic elements of the minimum living conditions necessary for the development of a population are not present. I think it starts there. In terms of resources, there are still gaps.

[English]

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you.

I'm going to let my colleague ask a question.

Mr. Martin Shields: I think you have led to where I was before. To me, the most critical point, moving forward, is the “who” because looking at somebody else to say “we need resources” or looking at somebody else to say “solve this problem” is where we get into difficulty. We need somebody to decide who the “who” is, and that's where you need to go in defining the “who”.

I asked you and we ran out of time, but who is the who? This could be a long term, but who is most important in resolving this?

[Translation]

Ms. Véronique Picard: I think that, essentially, it's always about communities.

This is the responsibility of the communities, but there is a relationship between reconciliation and things like that. I think we have to separate things. It comes from communities, but I think that some community problems require resources, financial or otherwise. In some ways, many communities are working hard to improve the services and living conditions of their populations, but there are very few stakeholders. They are overburdened because communities don't have the resources to engage many. In terms of services, there aren't many. I think the responsibility is difficult to evaluate. I would say that the community should—

• (1200)

[English]

The Chair: We're going to have to wrap this up. Thank you very much.

I'd really like to thank the two panellists, Dr. Vicki Chartrand and Véronique Picard, for joining us today.

We're going to take about two minutes now to switch over our panel. We'll suspend for two minutes.

Thank you.

• (1200)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1200)

The Chair: We're now going to reconvene our study. Let me ask everybody to please take their seats.

We have three different panellists. From the Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto we have Jonathan Rudin. From Women of the Métis Nation, we have Melanie Omeniho, and from Concordia University, Felice Yuen.

We're going to start, each with seven minutes to provide opening statements. We'll begin with Jonathan for his seven minutes.

Mr. Jonathan Rudin (Program Director, Aboriginal Legal Services): Thank you. I want to thank the committee for the invitation to be here.

I do work for Aboriginal Legal Services, but I want to mention our Ojibway name. We asked Elder Jackie Lavalley for our name. We gave her tobacco and asked for our name. The name we received was *Gaa Kina Gwai Wabaama Debwewin*, which will be impossible for

the translators to translate. What it translates to is “all those who seek the truth”.

The significance of the name is not that we have the truth, obviously, but that in all forms of our work we try to assist people to try to find the truth. Sometimes it's the individuals we work with, sometimes it's the courts and tribunals we appear before, and I hope that our submissions today and our discussions will help you in your quest.

I have three points that I want to raise. The first point I want to talk about is the role of Parliament in addressing the over-incarceration of indigenous women.

Before we look at what the Parole Board does, before we look at CSC, we have to look at the fact that there are still mandatory minimum sentences that take away from judges the ability to sentence indigenous women the way they would like to be sentenced. There are still provisions that restrict judges from using conditional sentences, which can keep women out of prison.

We are in the midst of a charter challenge in the case of an indigenous woman charged with importing drugs into Canada. She is looking at a minimum sentence of two years. Unfortunately, although the current government has promised changes to the Criminal Code, they have not been implemented. Without our involvement and her counsel's involvement, she would be serving a federal sentence right now. Parliament can act on this now. It's our recommendation that it is past time for that.

It's not just the mandatory minimums. It's also the restrictions on conditional sentences. There is a study done by Ryan Newell, an article called “Making Matters Worse”. It's in the *Osgoode Hall Law Journal*. I can send information on the specific site.

He refers to research by a scholar who was looking at the way in which courts use the Gladue and Ipeelee decisions to sentence indigenous women. She found 31 cases of indigenous women who received conditional sentences. After the passage of the Safe Streets and Communities Act in 2012, 29 of those women would not have been able to receive a conditional sentence, which means they probably all would have been going to jail.

The first thing we urge the committee to recommend and to try at least to do is to have the current government bring in the legislation they have promised to bring in to restore to judges their discretion to sentence people without the burden of mandatory minimum sentences and the restrictions on conditional sentences.

Our second point relates to programming for indigenous women. I know that you heard from Correctional Service of Canada and that they talked about their Pathways program and the fact that there are elders available to indigenous women who want to access that service.

Those are good initiatives, but the difficulty with CSC's initiatives is that they're only available for indigenous women who want to participate in traditional programming. There are indigenous women who are in prison who are not interested in traditional programming. There are indigenous women who are traditional and don't want to access the programs in their institution because the elders in their institutions don't follow their practices. For those women, it's at though they're not indigenous because there are no services for them.

Programming has to be developed to meet the needs of all indigenous women, not indigenous women who simply fit into CSC's stereotype of who an indigenous woman should be.

We are supporting an initiative in Toronto called "Thunder Woman Healing Lodge". It's an attempt to get section 81 and section 84 parole beds in a healing lodge for indigenous women in Toronto, because there are no such options available in Ontario. That program will be open to all indigenous women and will be able to address all of their needs. We can't simply say to indigenous women, you get a service because you meet our ideas of what an indigenous woman should be, and others don't.

• (1205)

The third point I want to raise relates to the national Parole Board. I know you've heard from the national Parole Board and they spoke about their elder-assisted parole hearings. It's nice to have an elder-assisted parole hearing in the sense that it's maybe a more culturally appropriate way to conduct a parole hearing, but that doesn't do anything to address the information the parole board has on the indigenous women who are before that parole board. The difficulty that we have now is that for indigenous women who are seeking parole, the information the parole board relies on is only that information that essentially has been collected by CSC and CSC staff about those women, and that's what goes forward.

One of the issues that the Parole Board and CSC have not really adequately grappled with, I think, is how to provide Gladue reports. These are reports certainly that our organization has been providing since 2001. How do we provide that sort of information to the Parole Board so that there's another source of information, another way to look at the circumstances of the indigenous women who are coming before them?

Those are my initial remarks. Thank you.

• (1210)

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're now going to move on to Melanie for her seven minutes.

Ms. Melanie Omeniho (President, Women of the Métis Nation): Good afternoon. I also thank the committee for engaging and having us present here today. I'm going to start off by saying that there should be nothing about us without us. Those are my favourite words because the Métis often get forgotten.

There are several presentations that have been made, and one of my favourites is where the Métis are hiding in plain sight, where you've seen pictures and all sorts of icons of Métis presentations for centuries now, but nobody really wants to talk about us and we get left off of the agenda, without a seat at the table, all the time. I do appreciate the fact that you've reached out to engage with us.

I want to know more about things like what this committee and others are doing to engage indigenous women who are incarcerated. A lot of the discussion needs to happen with them at these discussion tables on the issues that affect and impact them, but I'm only going to speak on the issues of Métis.

You have to understand who we are and where we've come from to know that a lot of the programming and work that's been done within corrections or any of these processes has often excluded us. We want to make sure, when we're doing this kind of work and people are developing processes to move forward with policies and engagement, that Métis are not included as an indigenous characterization. We're all distinct and apart from each other, and Métis need to have their place. As your former speaker indicated, not every glove fits every hand. We need to make sure there are opportunities for Métis women when it comes time to deal with the issue of their incarceration.

One thing I want to talk about is the Gladue reports in relation to the people we have within the court systems. We realize how taxed they are. Many of our people are not getting Gladue reports.

The legal aid system is overburdened with the kinds of clients that people are dealing with. The lawyers find that a Gladue report is another tax on people, and they actually even discourage the people who are going through the court system from getting a Gladue report. They'll talk to them about how that's only going to increase their incarceration within the various remand centres for a longer period of time.

The whole point of a Gladue report is so that people can look at the factors as to how these people actually ended up where they are. It isn't a place to make an excuse for them, but it's a place where we can engage the correctional institutions to find a way out of this mess so that they don't become reoffenders, or if they are reoffenders, that we start looking at places where we can start engaging other solutions to help make sure they don't remain within those systems.

Quite often, many of the people we work with who are part of the correctional institutions are there because there are no supports in the community for mental health issues. They're there because there are addiction issues.

Addictions are a health issue. Corrections will never be a solution for us to fix addictions issues or to fix mental health issues. There is no programming or support in a correctional institution to help with those things, so we need to find a different way to start working with some of our indigenous women who are within those systems.

The Gladue reports are really important if they're truly being done the way Gladue reports were intended. As the Supreme Court had indicated, the Gladue reports are going to have ideas for the judges as to what kind of programming is going to be necessary for the person who's being put within these institutions. They can be a restorative justice program as much as they're a corrective justice program. I think it's important for us as indigenous women and Métis women to start making sure that these factors are in place.

• (1215)

I know that we need to fix the correctional institutions and the court systems in relation to how long it takes for any of these things to go on. We now have case after case in which individuals who are charged are pleading guilty prior to conviction because it's an easier solution to get them back home to their children than for them to deal with trying to leverage a defence for themselves.

Sometimes these women, especially young women, who are in these institutions are being introduced into a system that changes the direction of their lives and generates trauma for them. I really encourage and support that this committee start to address and look at some of the issues that relate to our women.

Mostly for the Métis, I want to say, there hasn't been a lot of research done. Most of the research, work, and information that we were able to gain, even when we were looking at coming to present here, is more of a pan-indigenous approach, which doesn't work for us. It doesn't support who we are. It doesn't support the women we are trying to work with to address the issues concerning what happens with them within those institutions.

We want to know how the programming is evaluated. We read some of the information that was linked to us for this presentation. Some of the programming.... I guess that if I were doing programming, I would want to toot my own horn too, but the question is, who is really looking at this programming? Who addresses the effectiveness of the programs?

As I said, we need to engage indigenous women with this stuff to make sure that it's benefiting them.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We'll move on to Dr. Yuen for her seven minutes.

Prof. Felice Yuen (Associate Professor, Concordia University, As an Individual): Good afternoon.

Thank you, members of the committee, for this opportunity and for conducting this very important study.

My recommendations are grounded in two main points: the fragility of indigenous programs and services provided in women's corrections and the need for supports and services for indigenous women outside the prison.

CSC's intention to provide appropriate services for our indigenous women is fragile, because the services are created to fit within an existing framework, a framework that reflects western approaches to rehabilitation. While CSC has made many changes to support indigenous women, they already are or are at risk of becoming, as the women have said, whitewashed.

For example, when I was conducting my research in Grand Valley Institution, I witnessed deep relationships and connections between the women and the spiritual adviser. She was referred to as "Grandmother" by the women in the prison. Just before my research was about to end, this spiritual adviser expressed concern because she was asked by CSC to write assessments of the women. At that point in time it was merely a request, not a mandate, but in 2016 this process was further legitimized as an essential aspect of providing effective culturally appropriate interventions for aboriginal peoples.

A grandmother doesn't take notes; a grandmother doesn't report what you say and do to authorities. As women told me, "Grandmother loves and cares for us", and that is what made a difference for them. I've had a few occasions to meet, since my time there, with some of the women I met at GVI, and they say it's not the same as before. Yes, there are more spiritual advisers now, and yes, there are more programs, but the quality of the relationships is not what it once was. As such, I recommend that CSC consider how they can change or make exceptions to their policies to fit the cultures or ways of life of indigenous people.

For example, I recommend implementing something similar to Gladue principles when assessing a woman for her level of security. Right now many indigenous women are not accessing the supports and services available because they are deemed medium or maximum security. If a woman's history of colonization and trauma are taken into consideration when security labels are applied, more indigenous women would have access to programs and services such as healing lodges.

A second recommendation is to provide equal funding for community-based healing lodges—they currently receive 60¢ to the dollar received by CSC-run healing lodges—and also to create new ones in urban settings. I refer you to the correctional investigator's annual report for the rationale behind this, specifically the segment on section 81.

The third recommendation is to create opportunities for intergenerational healing. The trauma of colonization and the pathway to incarceration for many indigenous women goes back generation upon generation. While there are children allowed in federal prisons—those four years and under can stay there full time, and six and under can stay there part time—I think it makes sense not just for women to heal but the generations before and generations after.

The fourth recommendation is training and education for CSC staff and mainstream, community-based organizations who will play or already play a part in supporting indigenous women. As we already know, the average Canadian doesn't know enough about indigenous cultures and the colonization of indigenous peoples. One starting point could be the blanket exercise offered by Kairos. The RCMP have used it, along with the Montreal police, and they suggest that it's been a good experience thus far.

My final recommendation related to my first point is to partner with indigenous organizations and have them offer programs and services for women. This might get beyond the pan-indigenous approach that has already been highlighted by members of this panel.

This recommendation dovetails with my second point: the need for supports and services for indigenous women outside of prison.

The fact is that while indigenous supports and programs in federal prisons need improvement, they're better than what many indigenous women face in the community. I've heard numerous stories about how women revoke the conditions of their parole or reoffend so that they can go back. "It's good to be back home amongst my family," they say when referring to their sisters, members of the Native Sisterhood, "just in time for Christmas."

The point is that some women experience their culture in a positive light for the first time in prison, and once they are released they don't know where to find support so that they can continue this way of life. The gaps in supports and services for women released from prison is a noted issue. For indigenous women, it's even worse.

● (1220)

My recommendations include the creation of halfway houses, or at least units within existing halfway houses, that have culture-specific programming and services for indigenous women. I reiterate that this is done in collaboration with indigenous organizations that already exist. I suggest that programs for indigenous women in prison include a community bridge or link that provides some sort of continuity for women upon their release.

Here I refer you to a program that is hosted by Community Justice Initiatives called "Stride" at Grand Valley Institution. Notably, there's not a strong representation of indigenous women who participate in this program, but this organization is trying to find ways in which they can collaborate and connect with indigenous organizations, or members of the community who will help them reach indigenous women.

This is an ongoing issue with many mainstream organizations. I know the Elizabeth Fry Societies has been trying hard to try to find ways to help and support indigenous women as well. The fact that this committee is conducting this study is a significant step in the right direction because it provides an opening for the possibility of collaboration, and ultimately, a stronger network to support indigenous women.

The overrepresentation of indigenous women is not just the responsibility of CSC but of all of us.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're going to start our first round of questioning for seven minutes with Sean Fraser.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Thank you very much. I have a pile of questions. I really appreciated the testimony. If we can keep answers short to get through it, I would sincerely appreciate it.

I'll start with our guest from Aboriginal Legal Services.

On the issue of mandatory minimums and conditional sentencing restrictions, I completely accept the evidence that you've given. I don't know how we think we are better positioned in Ottawa, with no facts or evidence, to decide what a sentence should be than a judge who is aware of the facts and evidence in a particular case. The Gladue reports sort of play into this. There is not equitable access to Gladue reports because in different parts of the country, in different communities, they are just not done for whatever reason.

How can we at the federal level encourage the use of this so that courts are aware of the aboriginal social history that the witnesses from our last meeting discussed at length as being very positive in terms of the outcomes?

● (1225)

Mr. Jonathan Rudin: Certainly, you're right that Gladue reports are not universally available. They are not available at all, frankly, in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. One of the issues is that the federal government does not want to be involved in the funding of Gladue reports. While the federal government in their aboriginal justice programming is very involved in many areas, they have not touched the area of Gladue reports.

In Ontario, we have 14 Gladue writers who will probably do 400 or 500 Gladue reports this year, and almost all of our funding comes from Legal Aid Ontario and the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General.

I think that if the federal government were prepared to provide funding on some cost-share basis, that would encourage other provinces to jump into the process. It would also allow for better use of that funding in places like Ontario and Alberta, where the provinces are bearing all the costs.

Mr. Sean Fraser: If there were going to be some kind of a pilot program to test the outcomes of an investment like that, how could we best introduce this? Is this just sort of a colourful proposal for organizations that do this?

Mr. Jonathan Rudin: The federal government already does cost-share agreements with indigenous organizations that provide services in restorative justice areas, and we have funding for that. There are all sorts of areas where the aboriginal justice division in the ministry of justice or the Department of Justice has relationships. It wouldn't be hard to expand that. That wouldn't be an issue.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Still on the issue of Gladue reports, you mentioned how important it would be to give access to the information contained in those reports to the parole process. What kind of a change would be required for that to take place?

Mr. Jonathan Rudin: There are two problems. One is whether that would be funded, because currently our funding is to provide Gladue reports to the courts, not to parole.

The second issue is how you get the information about how someone has worked through the prison system. Where is that information going to come from? How will someone external to the CSC be able to interview the people they need to interview to get that information?

I don't think it is an insurmountable question. Certainly, we would be happy to be involved in discussions about how to make it work, but we haven't had any of those discussions.

Mr. Sean Fraser: In cases where there has been a Gladue report, is there a reason that it cannot just be given to the Parole Board? The work is already done.

Mr. Jonathan Rudin: Certainly, it could be. The difficulty is that the person, if they're in the federal system, will have had at least two, three, four, five, six, or seven years in the institution. What becomes so important at the parole process is what the person has done while they've been inside and also what their plans are when they get released. The development of that will not have been set out in the Gladue report if the assumption was that the person was going to the penitentiary in the first place.

Mr. Sean Fraser: I think Ms. Yuen made the point as well that it sets you on a different course. I'm sure five or seven years in an institution would change you. You'd be a different person on the back end from what you were going in.

I think both Ms. Yuen and you could potentially speak to or did speak to this issue. We heard about the phenomenal results that healing lodges can have for a person, in terms of lowering the rates of recidivism and in rehabilitation.

One comment we heard during our last meeting was that there's not a big enough population of female indigenous offenders, in certain parts, to justify a whole new healing lodge. How can we expand the services offered, if not by way of a Correctional Services lodge, to give universal access to this kind of program, if we know it's working? Is the answer the community-based program funding?

Prof. Felice Yuen: I certainly think that partnerships and collaboration with local community is important. That could get around some of the.... I think that with the big prison, the big numbers, working together doesn't work. It's the smaller, personalized services that would work, and these community-based organizations would have the knowledge to create the supports and services.

•(1230)

Mr. Jonathan Rudin: The other point, though, is that one of the issues—and I think one of the last speakers mentioned this—is the classification of indigenous women. They are over-classified as maximum security. Indigenous women are 42% of the women who are classified as max. The difficulty with healing lodges is that you can't get into them until you're minimum. It's not that there aren't

people. It's that there aren't people who are eligible, because they can't get themselves down to minimum by the time their sentence is close to being up.

Mr. Sean Fraser: I have probably less than a minute to go. To our guests from the Women of the Métis Nation, thank you. So much of your testimony applies not just to Métis people, but to indigenous women generally.

You mentioned the importance of consultation with people, those with lived experience, who are incarcerated. It is a difficult thing for us to bring an incarcerated person here, of course. Is there someone we can be getting information from, a resource, so that we can understand the lived experience and how this study might impact them?

Ms. Melanie Omeniho: I know that there are indigenous community organizations that are working with indigenous women. I'm sure that if you reached out to them, such as Native Counselling Services—I believe Dr. Patti LaBoucane has actually presented to this committee already—they have people they work with daily to ensure that you would be able to.... I understand that we can't take people out of the prisons to bring them here, but people who have already left those institutions certainly would have an ideal insight into this.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Thanks to all three of you.

Those are my questions.

The Chair: We're now going to move on for seven minutes with Martin Shields.

Mr. Martin Shields: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I appreciate the panel and the insights you bring. I just need a bit of clarification.

Sir, you mentioned that the programming does not apply to all, but then you mentioned something about a program for all indigenous in Toronto, so I'm a little confused.

Mr. Jonathan Rudin: Let me try to clarify. The concern I had was that CSC's indigenous programming is only available to indigenous women who are interested in participating in the Pathways program, which is basically the cultural orientation program.

What I mentioned is that there is a program that we are helping with that has not yet been funded by CSC. It's an attempt to put specific parole beds and also a healing lodge in the Toronto area. It's not funded yet, but the organizers for that program, whom I spoke to before I came here, made it clear that it would be open to all indigenous women.

We take indigenous women as they are and work with them in terms of their needs and provide them the resources they need. We wouldn't require them to say that they want necessarily to go the traditional route or another route.

Mr. Martin Shields: You said the programs are there, but they don't fit all. Is that right?

Mr. Jonathan Rudin: Right.

Mr. Martin Shields: You're very clear on that. It's because there are some differences in the large geographic country we have. Do you believe that they can, within one program, provide enough paths for the variety in this program?

Mr. Jonathan Rudin: The focus needs to be on the needs of the individual women, but also recognizing that they are indigenous. Indigenous women, as you heard—it was touched on here, and you heard in your previous panel—share many issues. The reason they come before the justice system and are in the prisons is that they share a number of experiences. Programs can be developed to address those experiences, although the ways in which people will then deal with some of those experiences may differ.

You certainly can, however, provide a program for all indigenous women to talk about the impacts of violence or the impacts of residential school. That shouldn't rely on someone's saying, "I want to go to this Pathways program." It shouldn't be the only place that people get access to those sorts of programs.

Mr. Martin Shields: I appreciate that clarification.

Now, is this something that's just being started, or is it something that's been working for a period of time?

Mr. Jonathan Rudin: The Pathways program is something that CSC has been doing for a while.

Mr. Martin Shields: No, I mean the new one you're talking about.

Mr. Jonathan Rudin: It's not funded yet. CSC's ability to do outreach and actually work with communities to set up programs... They don't have a great track record. Ms. Yuen talked about the funding issue. CSC is trying to do better, but we'll have to see whether they actually do better.

Mr. Martin Shields: At some point, somebody may fund this program, then there may be an evaluation, and then there may be a replication, if it proves positive.

•(1235)

Mr. Jonathan Rudin: Yes.

Mr. Martin Shields: You're hopeful, though, that it will work.

Mr. Jonathan Rudin: I have no doubt that it will work, but the question is whether it will ever be funded.

Mr. Martin Shields: Can it be replicated?

Mr. Jonathan Rudin: Yes. This is not rocket science. This isn't new.

Mr. Martin Shields: Great. Thank you.

Dr. Yuen, you mentioned some specific things about "who", which in a previous panel I probably asked a couple of times about the "who". I think you began to identify the "who" that was important to do things, both within and out.

One of the things I found very interesting was your intergenerational piece. Would you talk about that a little more, about the significance of it?

Prof. Felice Yuen: Yes. I've been doing some research with indigenous women in general, not just indigenous women who've been incarcerated, looking at what healing means to them. It always goes back to intergenerational relationships—my son, my daughter, but also my grandmother, my mother.

When they're experiencing a ceremony, they make comments such as, "My mother and my grandmother were never able to do this. I do it for them. I do it for my son." It's so connected. It's so intertwined that you can't separate and just focus on the woman—the individual—for healing. It needs to encompass, I mean, seven generations before and seven generations after. When we're trying to support, if you want to frame it as such, rehabilitation or healing, if you're looking at it from their perspective, doesn't it make sense, then, that we create programs that encompass multiple generations?

Mr. Martin Shields: When you talk about "generational", from my experience that widens in a sense how it's often viewed. It may be a number of family, in a sense, connections that are not just directly linear. Have you experienced that?

Prof. Felice Yuen: I'm sorry, can you clarify what you mean by many generations as opposed to linear?

Mr. Martin Shields: I mean linear in the sense of grandmother, daughter of, son of, but it expands in the sense of the family as they see it.

Prof. Felice Yuen: Yes, absolutely. To incorporate that line of thinking, it's not just the nuclear family but the larger collective, and I certainly don't know and am not the person to ask about the tangles of what that would include. I think that because the trauma has been intergenerational, to address it the healing needs to be that as well.

Mr. Martin Shields: It's very broad, in a sense, if we can approach it.

Prof. Felice Yuen: Yes.

Mr. Martin Shields: Having listened to the other witness and what he described, is that something that you believe would fit into what you have seen as a solution?

Prof. Felice Yuen: Do you mean the program, for lack of a better word, in Toronto?

Mr. Martin Shields: Right.

Prof. Felice Yuen: Yes, I think it's a good start. The problem is that we're just beginning. We're just at the cusp of—the birth of—trying to understand colonization and where we go from here. We've come to the point of this pan-indigenous approach. How do we pinpoint it? If we need to start with this "being all-inclusive, for everyone", then what?

We have to start somewhere, and I think that this is a good start. It might start involving other specific nations and then mobilize them to move beyond this sort of "one shoe fits all" stage we are at right now.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're now going to move on to Sheila Malcolmson for seven minutes.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to all three of the witnesses.

Again, talking about mandatory minimum sentencing, here is a scenario that I've heard about how taking away from judges the ability to use their discretion in sentencing has been a problem, and how disappointing it is that this government hasn't actually repaired that policy of the previous government. Here is the way it's been described to me.

A woman—in this case an indigenous woman—ends up being accidentally the accessory to a crime. Her boyfriend uses her car as a getaway car, her house is the address. It could be something so remote. She doesn't have great access to the justice system, doesn't have the means, and doesn't get good representation. In any case, in the past the judge might have been able to say, "I see you're in a bind here. I will allow you to serve your sentence on weekends in jail, at which point you can ask a grandmother or somebody to look after the kids." If the hard and fast rule is that you must serve your sentence starting on day one and ending on year three or whatever, then that woman can lose her children, and those kids go into foster care or are split from their family, and then we have the intergenerational trauma that Dr. Yuen described.

Could it be that simple, that small a crime, that then has that collateral damage, when mandatory minimum sentencing is the framework in which women are sentenced?

• (1240)

Mr. Jonathan Rudin: Yes, that's certainly the case. In some mandatory minimums, depending on how they're prosecuted and regardless of the person's actual involvement, if they are factually guilty, they will get the mandatory minimum. If the mandatory minimum is a year or two or three, that's what they're going to get.

The other thing that gets in the way is that any mandatory minimum sentence prevents a conditional sentence from being put in. Generally, if you get a weekend sentence you can't get one longer than 90 days. If the court felt that 90 days wasn't enough and they felt that four, five, or six months...you can do a conditional sentence, which is served in the community, with house arrests and other difficult sanctions, but that's not available if conditional sentences don't permit it.

What happens then is that the person goes to jail, and if they don't have someone to look after their kids, you're exactly right, they will lose their kids.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: That's a forever impact on the next generation.

Mr. Jonathan Rudin: Certainly, yes. Even if the person gets their children back, they will have been removed from their families. I can tell you, having read thousands of the Gladue reports that we produce, that experience of being taken from your family and put into foster care—particularly when a child is older, because they're not going to one home and they'll often be moved from place to place—is incredibly damaging.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Dr. Yuen, has that damage, as described by Mr. Rudin, been something you've focused on in your research?

Prof. Felice Yuen: It's certainly something I've heard the women I have spoken to talk about. They talk about being placed in foster care, or having someone in their family incarcerated and how it's

impacted them, and the self-fulfilling prophecy, "I said when I was younger it wasn't going to happen to me, but here I am."

I'm dreaming here, but wouldn't it be so amazing if the child could go, or the mom stayed at home with their child, or if it must be prison, then the child goes to prison with mom and is there beyond the age of four or seven.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: To Melanie Omeniho, for the Women of the Métis Nation, you talked about Gladue reports either not applying to Métis people or not being accessible. Can you talk a bit more about whether there are waiting lists? In your experience, what is the access to these, if they are an option?

Ms. Melanie Omeniho: For starters, most of the time defence attorneys are not advising Métis women on what the purpose of a Gladue report is and how it will benefit them. They're not encouraged to engage in the process of asking for a Gladue report, and if they don't ask, there won't be one.

Even in some instances where I have gone to court to advocate for somebody and have advised the legal aid defence attorney that they should be getting a Gladue report, they don't. In fact, they tell the judge on recommendations at sentencing that Gladue factors have been considered. That is not the purpose of a Gladue report.

Part of it is that I know the actual structures within the system are so taxed. It is the issue of funding the Gladue reports. Who is funding this, with what resources, and how many Gladue report writers are there considering the number of indigenous people who are being incarcerated or sentenced? It does become a really major issue.

If somebody is not visibly an indigenous person, they will try to get away without doing any Gladue reports or engaging them in that process at all. I've even seen where Elizabeth Fry does assessments on people, and people will say, "That's like a Gladue report, and that's all they need."

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: I have a quick question for any of the three witnesses. We heard last week from Correctional Service of Canada, who said, "Our approach to working with indigenous women is holistic and women-centred, and is built to address their unique needs and contribute to their safe and timely reintegration into the community." Has that been your experience?

• (1245)

Ms. Melanie Omeniho: No, it has not.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: That's a simple answer.

Is there anything from the other witnesses?

Prof. Felice Yuen: No.

Mr. Jonathan Rudin: I'll make that unanimous.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: All three say no.

Thank you very much for your work. We're going to draw on a lot of it in our report writing.

Thanks, Chair.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you very much.

We're now going to continue with Bernadette Jordan.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Thank you, Chair. I'm going to turn my time over to Terry Duguid, and I'll take his five minutes, if it's still available.

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Thank you, Ms. Jordan.

Thank you, Chair.

Welcome to our special guests today. Your excellent testimony is going to be very helpful as we chart a path forward, so thank you so much.

My first few questions will be for Ms. Omeniho. I represent a fairly sizable Métis community, and as you know, Manitoba is home to the largest Métis community in the country. In fact, I represent part of Louis Riel's riding of Provencher. It's not called Provencher anymore—it's Winnipeg South—but it's the historic community of St. Norbert.

I'm aware of the great work that you do, and particularly Infinity Women, in Manitoba.

Do you have a number or a proportion of the prison population that is Métis? Do we have a roundabout figure for the indigenous folks who are in our penal system? What proportion would be Métis?

Ms. Melanie Omeniho: I would have to tell you at this point that any of us would only be guessing what the number is. That's actually one of the issues I meant to raise earlier. When women become incarcerated, and not only under the process of the sentencing, how often does anybody ask the question so that they can self-identify?

I think that is part of the issue even with the pan-aboriginal approach. People need to start asking who these people are when they get to a correctional institution. They need to be asked the question, "Are you an indigenous person, and how do you identify?" That's the only way the system is ever really going to know: by tracking this.

There are no statistics or research specific to Métis.

Mr. Terry Duguid: You've already answered my follow-up question, which was getting to that exact point, so thank you very much.

Are you aware of any culturally appropriate supports, both in the prison system and in the transition out of the prison system for Métis specifically?

Ms. Melanie Omeniho: There have been some programs that I know have been done within some of the institutions. For instance, I've met with some groups, such as Native Counselling Services—I've met with Mr. Benson—to talk about this. A program such as the blanket program, which was mentioned earlier, is not a Métis program. It becomes problematic because it's actually first nations-based.

There aren't, then, many of them. It isn't that the blanket program is not a good program or that we don't like that program, but if there were some amendments even to how the program is implemented, it would be beneficial to Métis as well as to first nations. That work needs to be done, however, with Métis elders and Métis knowledge keepers to help do those things.

As for programs when coming out of the institutions, I don't know of one, to be honest with you.

Mr. Terry Duguid: I'm not aware of one either.

Just for our members, we have a Métis government in Manitoba. Is there a Métis government in Canada as well?

Ms. Melanie Omeniho: We have the Métis National Council, which is the national representative body.

Mr. Terry Duguid: We have a national council, but we actually have a Métis government.

Ms. Melanie Omeniho: Yes.

Mr. Terry Duguid: I do not think there has been any interaction between either the federal or the provincial correctional systems and that government. Would you agree that it would be a good idea for the two governments—or frankly, three governments—to sit down and design something that is quite specific for what is a very large proportion of our community? It's in the 100,000 range. It's 10% of our population in Manitoba, so it's extremely significant.

• (1250)

Ms. Melanie Omeniho: We're the largest indigenous community in North America, to put that in perspective as to the number of Métis.

When you're talking about the institutions and the number, for instance, of indigenous women who are incarcerated who may be Métis, we suspect that it's probably close to 50%. I know that's been the story when we've been dealing in child welfare statistics, that close to 50% of the indigenous children in care are actually Métis. When you put the numbers together as to what a large group the Métis are, it's not that I want 50% of the women incarcerated to be Métis, but there's a good chance that would probably be an indicator.

Mr. Terry Duguid: This question could be put to any of our guests today, and you just mentioned the child welfare system. Again, I'm very familiar with the child welfare crisis in my home province. Our Minister of Indigenous Services is convening a national meeting to see what we can do as a federal government in terms of coordinating and just doing better for this very difficult situation across our country.

One member of Parliament referred to our child welfare system as a superhighway to homelessness and a superhighway to the correctional system. When our kids turn 18, after being in 10, 12, or 30 foster homes, they're often on the streets. There are no supports.

This is in line with Ms. Malcolmson's question on prevention. Is there something we can do on this in your communities? Métis have child and family services. Would you have some recommendations on that front for dealing with the issue at the root-cause level?

Ms. Melanie Omeniho: From my perspective, healing needs to start with our children, but it is intergenerational. Our families are not nuclear families. Our families consist of aunts, uncles, cousins, grandmas, and everybody, but the healing needs to start with our children.

Child welfare is only the next generation of kids who are going to be part of the residential school story. We need to stop doing that by some mechanism. I know there's no quick solution, but we need to start building healing and connectivity back into our communities.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you very much.

We're now going to move back to Martin Shields for five minutes.

Mr. Martin Shields: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Let's go with the Métis in the sense that you've talked about the invisibility. Part of what I read and what I see is that the identification is the challenge in our country. Would you like to comment on how we can deal with that?

Ms. Melanie Omeniho: People need to start asking. I'm going to be frank. I've been an advocate for over 30 years. When it comes to even dealing with the issue of homelessness, people don't want to ask the question, and I've been fighting that issue for many years. They say it's because it's racist. Well, if I ask you if you're Italian, do you feel that I have some racial motivation to ask you that question?

Mr. Martin Shields: I might object if you called me Italian.

Ms. Melanie Omeniho: No, but I mean, I'm just using that—

Mr. Martin Shields: I knew I'd get a rise out of her.

Ms. Melanie Omeniho: But it is true. Why can't you ask the question? Why can't people identify? It would put us on a train towards understanding the differences and distinctness of each of our communities.

Mr. Martin Shields: Isn't there a larger, country-wide issue, in the sense of recognizing as a defined group?

Ms. Melanie Omeniho: You're going to ask me to get really political here, but—

Mr. Martin Shields: We're a bunch of politicians, so....

Ms. Melanie Omeniho: All I know is that I am a Métis of the northwest, and I'm part of the Canadian Constitution as one of the indigenous people of this country. I don't have to defend that anymore, because that's who I am. I've already been to all the courts, and I don't mean "I" as in me, but "I" as in the Métis Nation. We've already done that.

At this point, it's up to us to work towards saying who we are and what we are, as well as working with other governments in a nation-to-nation process to ensure that the rights of Métis people are recognized, appreciated, and respected, and that as a nation we continue to grow in a healthy way. That's my political statement.

● (1255)

Mr. Martin Shields: That's good. Thank you. We appreciate it.

I've been in a men's prison with a healing lodge. The problem they had with it was that it was oversubscribed by white prisoners. They were in it, and it created real problems in the sense that these are very popular.

Mr. Jonathan Rudin: I was recently at the Kwkwèxwelhp centre near Abbotsford. They are popular. Indigenous healing lodges, from CSC's perspective, are not restricted to indigenous people. Anyone can go who wants to participate. The problem there was that they couldn't get enough indigenous inmates. I think they were 10% to 20% non-indigenous, and it was because non-indigenous men were

able to get down to minimum security more quickly than the indigenous men.

Mr. Martin Shields: The question I have is about healing lodges. So that it doesn't get to what you're saying and what I've seen, how do you replicate them on a broader scale across the country? How do we get to this?

Mr. Jonathan Rudin: I think the communities have answers, whether they be urban communities or reserve communities. I think Dr. Yuen's point is very significant. Many people who go to prison have no sense of their indigenous identity other than the vague sense that they're indigenous. Tragically, as someone in the last set of speakers mentioned, some people only start to learn about indigenous identity in prison. Then, when they get out, you hope they will learn more and will pursue the paths they need to learn more about their culture.

We operate in Toronto, and there are hundreds of indigenous restorative justice programs across the country. They know how to work with indigenous people. This is not knowledge that doesn't exist. It is simply taking existing knowledge and allowing it to be applied to people when they get out of prison.

The Chair: Bernadette, we have two minutes left for you.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: Thank you, Chair.

Thank to our witnesses for being here today.

Ms. Omeniho, we heard last week from the Department of Justice that women are less likely to identify and, therefore, have a harder time accessing some of the programs that are available to them. Yet one of the things you're talking about is making sure that we do identify.

Is there a way you see that we can move forward with making sure that indigenous people get the support services they are eligible for?

Ms. Melanie Omeniho: One thing I would say is that, especially in corrections, if people understood their responsibilities and their rights as individuals within the system, they'd feel a lot more comfortable to identify. If identifying as an indigenous person in an institution is going to put me into the gang unit, I don't want to be there either. I'm going to say, "No, I'm not." If the opportunity were given that would help them understand that we could start dealing with some more restorative kinds of programming to assist them to reintegrate into the community and get out of the crises they're in and deal with their issues, I think you would go a long way towards people probably being able to say, "Yes, I'm this person."

I also agree that many people don't even deal with what their cultural identity is until they're introduced to it in a more positive way. Unfortunately, sometimes corrections might be that way.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: To your point when you said you wouldn't identify if it meant you were going to go to a gang unit, is that something that's prevalent? Is there profiling done?

I get that there is, but is there evidence to support that? Where would we find it?

Ms. Melanie Omeniho: I'm not sure where you would find the evidence, but I know there have been studies done, even on profiling by way of carding, for instance, which is going on in our communities right now. I don't think you'd have to look very far to find a lot of that evidence.

● (1300)

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: Thank you.

The Chair: Excellent. What a great panel today.

I'd really like to thank Jonathan Rudin, Melanie Omeniho, and Dr. Felice Yuen for coming out today.

Just as a reminder, on Tuesday for one hour, on our panel we have West Coast Prison Justice Society, Prisoners' Legal Services; and also West Coast Women's Legal Education and Action Fund.

Our second panel consists of Siksika Nation; Lois Frank, instructor in native American studies and criminal justice, University of Lethbridge; as well as the Indigenous Bar Association.

Thank you. Today's meeting is adjourned.

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