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# Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs

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Chair: Mr. Bob Bratina





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• (1110)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order, acknowledging first of all that in Ottawa, where I am today, we are meeting on the traditional, unceded territory of the Algonqui people.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted on April 29, the committee is meeting on its study of the sex trafficking of indigenous peoples.

To ensure an orderly meeting, I would like to outline the best practices. Participants, ensure that you have selected the language of your choice. Go to the globe at the bottom centre of the screen, click on it, and you can select either English or French, whichever language you would like to listen in. If you change back and forth while you are speaking, you don't have to make any further adjustments. When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly. When you're not speaking, your microphone should be on mute. If, in our discussions, you feel you would like to add something, you can use the "raise hand" function. I'll try to keep an eye out for that.

I'm looking forward to the next couple of hours together and am delighted that we're able to meet on this very important subject.

With us today are National Chief Elmer St. Pierre of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples; Grand Chief Garrison Setee, and manager, Hilda Anderson-Pyrz, from Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.; and Bryanna Brown, prevention coordinator with the Alluriarniq program at the Tungasuvviat Inuit.

I invite the witnesses to give their opening statements of up to six minutes each. We'll begin with Elmer St. Pierre.

Elmer, welcome, and go ahead.

**National Chief Elmer St. Pierre (Congress of Aboriginal Peoples):** Mr. Chair, members of the committee and fellow witnesses, thank you for the opportunity to speak on the issue of trafficking of indigenous people.

As you are well aware, my name is Elmer St. Pierre, and I am the national chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples.

I acknowledge my presence on the traditional and unceded territory of the Mohawk people. At this time, I would like to offer a virtual tobacco tie to each and every one of you for the information that we are going to be exchanging. Thank you.

CAP represents the off-reserve status and non-status Indians, Métis and southern Inuit peoples. Today, 80% of those indigenous

people live off reserve. Forty-four per cent are in urban centres across the country.

The biggest human trafficking operation in Canada's history was the residential school system. Off-reserve and non-status people are survivors of this tragic system. Residential schools never ended.

Indigenous people are 5% of the population in Canada. Fifty-two per cent of the children in foster care are indigenous. Indigenous girls face more sexual exploitation in foster care than any other group. Forty-six per cent of our youth in prison are indigenous. In some provinces, over 90% of the youth in prisons are indigenous. Forty per cent of incarcerated women are indigenous, and that number is rising. Fifty per cent of the victims of human trafficking are indigenous women. Of those, nearly one-quarter are under the age of 18.

There are pathways among foster care, prison, sexual exploitation and human trafficking. Youth are ripped from their homes, more because of poverty than any other factor. They are abused in foster care. They wind up vulnerable on the streets, living with trauma and struggling to survive. They are denied education and employment. They cycle between homelessness, prison, abusive situations and trafficking and exploitation. Too often it only ends in a road of death. We need to help the boys and girls from starting on that road. We need to make sure that everyone caught in that cycle can escape it and find the healing and community they need.

The government has taken steps to work with some aboriginal organizations, but has shut out others at the same time.

Off-reserve and non-status communities are sidelined. They are denied housing funds to help give vulnerable women shelter. They are denied access to education funding to give kids a future. They are denied justice programs to open healing lodges and use alternative sentences. They are denied status as rights bearers under the indigenous child welfare legislation.

CAP's provincial-territorial organizations work to provide services in spite of being sidelined. Programs like “looking out for each other” partner with shelters in communities to give help to those at risk of going missing. They offer housing, shelter programs, homeless outreach, parenting support and health care support, but they cannot reach out to the need when they don't have the services. I would just add that these programs are run on the east coast. The “looking out for each other” program is in New Brunswick.

• (1115)

We offer the following calls to action. End the exclusion of off-reserve organizations from programs like housing, child welfare and justice. Support capacity building to address the multifaceted issues of the MMIWG. Support affordable, safe public transportation options to replace lost inner city bus routes. End the overrepresentation of indigenous women in corrections and prioritize treatment and community care in an indigenous-led process. Accelerate funding under the MMIWG action plan. Ensure that our off-reserve organizations can access funding for cultural, language and justice services, community safety and other essential services to keep women and girls safe.

*Meegwetch.* Thank you.

**The Chair:** Chief St. Pierre, thank you so much for your presentation.

We're going to Grand Chief Settee and manager, Ms. Anderson-Pyrz, from Manitoba.

Grand Chief, please go ahead.

**Grand Chief Garrison Settee (Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.):** Thank you for the opportunity to present to the standing committee.

I wish to acknowledge the land of the people of Treaty 1 and Treaty 5 territory.

My name is Garrison Settee. I am the grand chief of the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak.

As the grand chief, I am committed to working towards ending all forms of gender and race-based violence that impacts indigenous women and girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. We must look at the root causes of sex trafficking through the impacts of colonization.

The events that have occurred over the last two weeks have dominated headlines on the impacts of past, present and ongoing colonial violence in Canada against indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

On May 27, the remains of 215 children at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School were announced. On June 3, 2021, the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and the national action plan for ending violence against 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, along with other companion documents, were released.

I want to highlight some of the realities faced in the north, according to [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] 2017, rates of violent crimes against young women and girls are five to six times higher

than those living in southern Manitoba, and in northern Manitoba it's worse. Predators are targeting indigenous girls at bus depots and airports to take advantage of their vulnerability during periods of transition, such as coming out of child and family services care to obtain medical care or educational opportunities not available in their own home community. MKO has observed that this also occurs when entire communities are evacuated to an urban centre due to fires and floods.

There exists an important opportunity to prevent violence and trafficking by intervening at these points of transition. Winnipeg, along with Regina and Saskatoon, are known as a city triangle where victims are shipped between these cities and different provinces. For instance, Thompson is the largest city in northern Manitoba. It has the highest number of missing youth in the province. It has been identified as a critical point of intervention to reduce the likelihood of their moving or being trafficked to Winnipeg.

MKO is concerned that there is insufficient policing and resources to combat human trafficking in northern and remote communities. Policing agencies across all jurisdictions are not mandated to report to the Human Trafficking National Coordination Centre. This results in the denial of the basic human and indigenous rights as related to culture, health, security and justice.

Education and employment gaps are major contributing factors to indigenous women's economic marginalization, which in turn makes them more dependent on others, leaving them more vulnerable to violence and less able to leave violent circumstances.

There is a need for safe housing, including increased housing on reserve and access to shelters; for culturally responsible health care services; and for laws, policies and practices of the Canadian state to adequately recognize, respect and make space for the inherent right of indigenous self-governance and self-determination.

Hilda.

• (1120)

**Ms. Hilda Anderson-Pyrz (Manager, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Liaison Unit, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.):** My name is Hilda Anderson-Pyrz. I'm the manager of the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls liaison unit.

Our unit was established in 2017 as part of MKO. Our mandate is to provide support, services and advocacy to impacted families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, survivors of gender-based violence and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. The unit also focuses on prevention awareness in ending all forms of gender and race-based violence.

I wanted to highlight that in the “Federal Pathway”, released on June 4, 2021, human trafficking is mentioned within the theme of “Safety and Human Security” and under “Supporting safe and healthy communities”, with a focus on prevention, and “interventions to support victims and survivors of human trafficking”, and “[a]ddressing socio-economic barriers to education, training and employment” through “[f]ostering a cultural shift and supporting allies” through raising awareness and public education about human trafficking and providing training to frontline police officers.

Under this same theme of “Addressing human trafficking and exploitation” through increased funding for “initiatives to stop human trafficking, including support for at-risk populations and survivors”, it states: “This will include supporting indigenous-led and grassroots organizations to advance efforts to prevent and combat human trafficking.”

These are clear actions that can be implemented immediately. Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people cannot wait for action. We’re experiencing violence and being murdered and going missing at alarming rates in Canada.

Here are the recommendations going forward.

They are that the 2019 to 2024 national strategy to combat human trafficking be immediately updated to respond to the calls for justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls final report; that a representative from the Manitoba first nations northern, remote and isolated communities sit on the advisory committee comprising victims and survivors of human trafficking; and that coordination and resourcing of immediate actions of the national strategy and the federal pathway be undertaken, including guidance from the calls for justice principles for change and the National Family and Survivors Circle’s four pillars of inclusion, interconnectedness, accountability and impact.

We are all part of the solution and must work collectively to end all forms of gender and race-based violence.

Thank you for the opportunity for MKO to present today.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Anderson-Pyrz and Grand Chief Settee.

Now we have Bryanna Brown, prevention coordinator of the Tungasuvvingat Inuit Alluriarniq program.

Was my pronunciation close?

**Ms. Bryanna R. Brown (Prevention Coordinator, Alluriarniq Program, Tungasuvvingat Inuit):** Yes, and thank you, Mr. Chair.

*Atelihai.* My name is Bryanna Brown. Hello.

I am from Nunatsiaq, Labrador. I would like to acknowledge that I am currently living on unceded unsurrendered Algonquin territory here in Ottawa, Ontario.

I’m here today representing Tungasuvvingat Inuit, where I am the prevention coordinator of the Alluriarniq program. “Alluriarniq” means stepping forward.

The program provides support for Inuit aged 16 and older living in Canada who are currently engaging or have in the past engaged in sex work or are looking to exit the sex trade and are victims/

survivors of human trafficking. We also support victims of sexual violence and abuse.

I would like to read for you this quote from the missing and murdered indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people national action plan: “The full and independent involvement of families, survivors and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people is a defining aspect of a decolonizing approach in creating transformative change.”

As someone who has previous experience with many of the issues being spoken of today, I thank you for having me here with you. I appreciate being in the presence of each and every one of you.

Thank you.

• (1125)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much indeed for being here.

Mr. Clerk, are we still waiting for the other two witnesses?

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Naaman Sugrue):** Yes. That’s correct.

**The Chair:** That’s fine. We will move on with questioning and rearrange things as necessary as we move along.

In our first round of questioning, we will have six minutes with Mr. Viersen, Ms. Zann, Madame Bérubé and Ms. Blaney.

Arnold, you have six minutes. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I was hoping to ask the other witnesses who aren’t here some questions, so I’ll turn this time over to Gary Vidal.

**The Chair:** Gary.

**Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC):** Thank you.

I want to pursue a little bit of what I heard from Grand Chief Settee.

Grand Chief, you talked about the rates in northern and remote areas compared to urban centres. As a member of Parliament who serves a very northern and remote riding, I’m very curious to drill into that a little bit. I’m not going to pretend that I understand much of this, so this is an education for me to understand some of the things going on in my own riding. I’m going to assume that northern Manitoba, maybe, is not that different from northern Saskatchewan where I’m from.

If you would take a few minutes and expand on your comments about the rates in northern and remote communities compared to more urban centres....

Also, you talked about the points of critical intervention, and I was really intrigued by your comments there. I want you to flesh that out. I want to give you some time just to talk about that a little bit more, if that’s fair.

**Grand Chief Garrison Settee:** One of the things that I've always spoken about is the very different demographics that we live with in northern Manitoba. It's very different from southern Manitoba. In Manitoba, we have 15 isolated communities, and 85% of each community is unemployed, so there's poverty and a lack of resources to help women and victims of domestic violence. The services are just not there. Women tend to gravitate to urban centres, and that creates greater problems because they cannot access employment. They cannot access adequate housing or shelter, and they become victims of a cycle that has been perpetuated by a lack of resources and a lack of adequate support for them.

I always say that women's shelters are a must in every first nation. People running from domestic violence turn to urban centres. They turn to other communities, and they are led down a path of victimization everywhere they go. It's a sad state. We're living in a country that's prosperous. This situation should not even be in existence, but it is. It's a reality we live in from day to day.

**Mr. Gary Vidal:** Could I get you to expand on that comment you made about the points of critical intervention? I think you talked about bus stations. You talked about the situations when there are fires or evacuations. You even referenced some cities in my province of Saskatchewan. I think you talked about Saskatoon and Regina. Can I get you to just expand on the points of critical intervention and how we might help there? What are some ideas of ways that we could help at those points of critical intervention?

**Grand Chief Garrison Settee:** I think, with regard to the supports and the resources needed for people who are transitioning or moving into urban areas, there's a vulnerability there. There are risks there. We've seen it happen in Winnipeg. Young girls come to Winnipeg for medical appointments, and they go missing. We hear it on the news that they have died and become victims because there is not enough support to monitor the transition and the movement of young people. Those are areas of transition.

We need to look at how we can improve the system. It's the health system that has a lot to do with that. There are not enough resources and support for people who don't know the city life. They don't know the urban life, and they get lost and become very vulnerable and at risk. We need to concentrate on those transition points and ensure that there's protection and safety for all.

• (1130)

**Mr. Gary Vidal:** One of the things I've had some conversations with people in northern Saskatchewan about, and one of the results or one of the things we've maybe learned through the pandemic, is the ability to provide services. We're sitting here now in a Zoom meeting, and there are some things we maybe have learned to use to technology for better than we might have in the past: providing medical services and supports to some of the remote communities. Potentially, we've learned some things that might allow us to be better at providing them so that some of those young people don't have to travel to the big urban centres for those.

Do you think that's fair: to actually think there's maybe some opportunity to improve those services with what we've learned in the last year?

**Grand Chief Garrison Settee:** I think that probably more than ever, this pandemic has shed light on the insufficient resources that

we have to deal with things. People do not have to move away from the first nation. I think that awareness and prevention would be the key to educating and protecting our young girls and women, before they leave their community, that there are pitfalls they must avoid. They must be informed on how to protect themselves.

Maybe I can pass part of the question on to Hilda, if you don't mind, because she works on the front line with these people.

**Ms. Hilda Anderson-Pyrz:** Thank you.

The pandemic has shown how responsive governments can be. I think that level of response must continue when we want to work towards ending all forms of gender-based and race-based violence against indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

When we look at our communities, especially our first nation communities that are remote and isolated, we see there are many barriers that are faced by indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, even men and boys. They pose many vulnerabilities to them if they're forced to leave the community to access their basic human rights—access to health, food security and even economic opportunities.

We really need to reflect on how we can improve the lives of indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people so they're not forced into vulnerable situations that could potentially put them at risk of being sex trafficked, going missing or being murdered. We really need to reflect and build on programs and services that are indigenous led and rooted in culture.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for the response.

Committee, before we go on, I see that Ms. Blaney has joined us. Welcome, Ms. Blaney.

The technical procedure here is that we need accurate, clear speech to be picked up, normally through a headset microphone, so that the interpreters can properly interpret. The committee can't function without proper interpretation.

Let me go over to Mr. Clerk to see how the sound checks out.

Mr. Clerk.

**The Clerk:** Sure, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Blaney what I'll ask you to do is introduce yourself, where you're calling from and a little bit about your role. I'll ask you to speak slowly and clearly. Because you don't have a headset, hopefully interpretation will let me know that they can continue with interpreting your testimony.

Please go ahead.

**Ms. Fay Blaney (Lead Matriarch, Aboriginal Women's Action Network):** Thank you very much.

My name is Fay Blaney, and I am the lead matriarch for the Aboriginal Women's Action Network. I'm based out of Campbell River today.

**The Clerk:** Thank you, Ms. Blaney.

I'm hoping that one of the interpreters will be able to wave at me. They have, and we can hear you well enough.

I'll ask you to speak just as steadily and clearly as you did, which was good for them, and then we'll be able to continue with your testimony today.

**The Chair:** Thanks very much.

Just so you that know, Ms. Blaney, we have already begun a six-minute round of questions. Ms. Zann will be next, followed by Madame Bérubé and Rachel Blaney, and then we'll get to your witness testimony.

Let's go ahead now to Lenore Zann for six minutes.

**Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.):** Thank you very much. *Wela'in*.

I come to you today from the unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq, in Mi'kma'ki, Nova Scotia.

Part of the call for justice 3.4 from “Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls” of the national inquiry states that trauma and addictions treatment programs must “be paired with other essential services such as mental health services and sexual exploitation and trafficking services as they relate to each individual case of First Nations, Inuit and Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA[+] people”.

My question for you today is, what progress has been made on this call for justice, and given that many of the services referred to are provided [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] with the provinces and territories to implement this call for justice?

Who would like to take that question first?

• (1135)

**Ms. Hilda Anderson-Pyrz:** I can take that.

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** Thank you.

**Ms. Hilda Anderson-Pyrz:** I think when we look at the need to provide trauma and addiction services, which are very lacking right across the country, especially in remote and isolated locations, there needs to be adequate funding and resourcing that's long term to support indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people recovering from colonial violence. There's a great need. There needs to be a lot more action to ensure that there are mechanisms for healing from colonial violence and to treat individuals who are seeking the supports and resources to recover from the addictions that are used as a coping mechanism to recover from the trauma associated with colonial violence.

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** Thank you.

Is there an advantage to having a national hotline for reporting human trafficking? Has this service been used frequently by indigenous peoples? Are the services culturally appropriate?

**Ms. Hilda Anderson-Pyrz:** We've done outreach through our organization for this hotline. From what I've seen, one of the biggest concerns is that you can have a hotline, but you need to ensure that there are adequate resources to support individuals who are seeking resources from calling that hotline. Currently, that doesn't exist across the country.

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** Thank you.

It's interesting, because when youth are having issues with mental health or addictions, they find it difficult to go to a group and talk to adults about it. They feel much better talking to other youth, peer to peer. What do you suggest is best for women and girls who are being trafficked or who are under threat of being trafficked? Who is it best for them to go to? How can we help them best to stay out of this particular terrible quagmire?

**Ms. Hilda Anderson-Pyrz:** I think the supports that are developed have to be indigenous-led, barrier-free and judgment-free. Victims have to feel a sense of belonging. As well, those types of services and resources should be developed in consultation with victims of human and sex trafficking, because they're the experts of their lived experience and their agency. They should have the autonomy to participate in the different types of committees that are establishing different types of resources and services. If that does not occur and the voices that are impacted are not at the table, then, as we've seen across this country in many circumstances, they're often not meeting the needs.

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** Right. Here in Nova Scotia, we're working with the Nova Scotia Native Women's centre. It was nice to be able to help get them about \$380,000 for their human trafficking program to try to prevent human trafficking here in Millbrook First Nation and here in Nova Scotia. Highway 102, which goes from Halifax...goes right across the country, and we call it the highway of tears, because there are so many young women who have been trafficked. They are taken right through our community here and on further west.

How much would you say organized crime has to do with the people who are behind the human trafficking blight?

• (1140)

**Ms. Hilda Anderson-Pyrz:** I think a very large portion of it has to do with organized crime, but one thing I also want to highlight is that when we look at the economic recovery from the pandemic, we also have to be ready to respond. We're going to see an increase in human trafficking and sexual exploitation of indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. As a country, we have to be ready to respond and ensure that there are resources and supports ready to respond and protect those who are victims.

**The Chair:** That brings us to time, Ms. Zann. Thank you.

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** Thank you.

I agree.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Bérubé, the floor is yours for six minutes.

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My thanks to you for being here for this meeting. Your testimony is very important to our understanding of this entire process.

In an article entitled “Trafficking in persons in Canada, 2018” that appeared in Statistics Canada’s *Juristat*, we read that: “the vast majority of victims of police-reported human trafficking were women and girls (97%).”

Although the article provides no statistics on sex trafficking, it says that: “[t]hese trends suggest that, in Canada, human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation is more prevalent—or more likely to be detected or reported—than human trafficking for other purposes”.

The article does not mention indigenous women and human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Can you give us any data on human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Hilda, would you like that one?

**Ms. Hilda Anderson-Pyrz:** Sure, I’ll take it.

Currently, one of the biggest problems we see as indigenous people in this country is how data is collected. The way data is currently collected, it does not tell the true story of our realities. I know there’s a huge push to develop mechanisms where there is the ability to build the framework and work towards indigenous data sovereignty.

Right now it’s very difficult to accurately track how many victims there are of human trafficking and sex trafficking, as well as even to accurately track the correct number of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

There has to be a real push to ensure that the framework and the resourcing is made available for indigenous data sovereignty and collection to occur to really highlight the realities we’re facing as indigenous people in this country.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé:** We know that the process has gaps in terms of comparative data.

Are there ways to fill those gaps?

[*English*]

**Ms. Hilda Anderson-Pyrz:** I’m not sure if anybody else wants to answer that. If you don’t, I can.

**The Chair:** Please go ahead.

**Ms. Hilda Anderson-Pyrz:** I really highlighted that again. There is the need for the infrastructure, the tools and the resourcing to be able to accurately capture the realities and the colonial violence experienced by indigenous women and girls. I think that will really tell the true story of what is occurring in this country. We need to do it sooner than later.

The national inquiry highlighted many truths of the lived experience of indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ in Canada, but we need to have proper infrastructure for data.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé:** Grand Chief Settee, you mentioned earlier that, in northern Manitoba, there is a city triangle where human trafficking takes place. You talked about the need for support for the police, for infrastructure and for secure housing.

Do you have any other recommendations to deal with this trafficking?

• (1145)

[*English*]

**Grand Chief Garrison Settee:** One of the things I would like to see is the ability to have infrastructure in first nations for the protection of women, even in the urban centres. They need to have access to a safe place. If they don’t have access to a safe place, they will go out on the street. They’ll be on the streets and they’ll be very vulnerable out there with nobody looking after them. We need to really emphasize that.

In my tenure as grand chief, we have seen so much happening to women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. The biggest need we have right now is to have those safe places. I advocate that every first nation should have a women’s shelter.

**Ms. Hilda Anderson-Pyrz:** I also wanted to add a little bit to what Grand Chief is saying. We need to heavily focus on prevention through education, as well. We need to have programs in schools that are starting from a very young age on teaching about safety, boundaries, and the human trafficking and sexual exploitation that is occurring out there.

When we look at the remoteness and the isolation of many of the communities within the MKO territory, they don’t have the proper infrastructure to be able to look at resources online. Poor connectivity issues are currently impacting many of the nations within the MKO territory. We need to develop curriculum that will start at a very young age within schools and has a heavy focus on prevention and reclaiming identity and culture to strengthen indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. We need to have spaces that promote cultural activities and the reclaiming of identity.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Rachel Blaney, please go ahead for six minutes.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to everyone who’s here to testify today. I really appreciate what you had to share.

I’ll come first to Ms. Brown and then follow up with Ms. Anderson-Pyrz.



I'm hearing a lot of information here that is really interesting, but I want to get more into the services that are provided. I really appreciate hearing about the needs of rural and remote communities as a result of their lack of access and having to send people away. I think that's really important.

I'm just wondering if you could start, Ms. Brown, about how your organization supports individuals who have experienced or are experiencing sex trafficking. What are the most important factors to consider when providing these services to indigenous individuals who have experienced sex trafficking?

I also just want to say that if you have any information about the male side of this—because I've also done some research, and it sounds to me like there's a growing population of men who are being sex trafficked—I think it would be helpful for the committee.

Thank you.

**Ms. Bryanna R. Brown:** In the Alluriarniq program, it's really important for us to provide cultural supports in the ways that we support survivors, and have an elder present and available for those who are seeking services from us.

Food security is also a large issue that contributes to the issue of human trafficking.

We also provide counselling and we recently created an internship program for survivors of human trafficking. I'm a survivor myself, so I took part in this internship program. The manager of the Alluriarniq program, who had recently finished her position with us, created this internship program. It really helped me to gain more experience in relation to my employment and career path, and has improved my life very much.

Another thing that is extremely important in helping to prevent human trafficking is housing. That's something that I had really large issues with. After I was hit by a car, about four years ago, I was having issues accessing health care due to racism. Each time I went to the doctor, I remember it was assumed that I was drunk or intoxicated, as I was really dizzy from having trouble breathing. The car hit my leg, so I was really unbalanced when walking. To a lot of people, I seemed intoxicated, but I was not. It felt like I was being passed around a lot. That lack of health care caused me to get weaker and weaker. I was not able to work, and then people started to take more advantage of my situation.

Over time, after finally coming to Ottawa, and living in Ottawa, I was able to access the health care services I needed. Working with Tungasuvvingat Inuit, I felt that I was adequately helped, and much less vulnerable due to the services it provided me, especially with regard to housing.

The City of Ottawa has a home with a good subsidy, which I found to be extremely helpful, as I had moved out of a shelter four days prior to the pandemic. Since the pandemic, I find that there have been much more social supports, and my life has greatly improved due to these supports.

For the factors to consider, the intergenerational trauma from residential schools within our community stills plays a really large role, and is largely connected with the issues of human trafficking, and missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and 2-spirit.

I had a lot of trouble going to school after experiencing more and more colonial violence after being hit by a car, and different things like that. Vocational training in order to advance, especially on the job, would be very helpful, and perhaps reduce the feelings of trauma when we're learning or having to go school.

For male survivors, there have been a few people that have confided in me their experiences they have had with sexual assault or human trafficking. I noticed that men were typically very afraid to trust anyone with this information, and definitely more afraid of having that information divulged to family members, the public, or those they work with.

I think that's a really large barrier to providing supports. Having culturally relevant supports is extremely important. Growing up, I had a lot of anger in terms of finding my identity and understanding who I was. Ever since I have understood my culture more, I'm calmer and healthier. I'm able to function better, and navigate the world easier ever since.

Thank you.

● (1150)

**The Chair:** That's quite a testimony. Thank you so much for being so candid about these issues which are important to our committee as we move through this investigation.

I'm going to ask Ms. Blaney to give us her six-minute presentation, and then we'll move on to the next round of questioning.

Ms. Blaney, once again, please go ahead slowly and clearly.

**Ms. Fay Blaney:** Okay, thank you very much.

Briefly, I just want to say that the Aboriginal Women's Action Network has been in existence since 1995. For the past 10-plus years our focus has been on issues of trafficking and prostitution of indigenous women. I think our interest in that was really piqued when there was an effort during the 2010 Olympics to license brothels, so we really began to focus intensively on that.

I want to make my presentation in three parts. The first part will deal with the complexities of indigenous women's experiences and how we become sexually exploited. The second portion I'm borrowing from my friend Cherry Smiley, whom you'll be hearing from on Thursday. She said to me that incest is....

Sorry, I'm feeling really rattled because the technology drove me crazy before I got on, so I'm struggling a little bit right now.

● (1155)

**The Chair:** So am I, Ms. Blaney. Don't feel bad about that.

Go ahead.

**Ms. Fay Blaney:** I couldn't get onto Zoom. It was insane.

Anyway, Cherry said to me that incest is the boot camp for prostitution. My second point that I really want to make is that indigenous girls are sexually exploited, and it leads right into being trafficked or prostituted.

In my final section, I want to offer some recommendations. I'm titling that section "Nothing About Us Without Us". It's kind of ironic, and I'll explain that later.

In the first part about the complexities that indigenous women face, I want to borrow from the literature review that the Native Women's Association of Canada did. They cite a UN global study talks about how trafficking victims are targeted. Traffickers go after women who are young, female, poor, undereducated and who come from dysfunctional homes and are searching for a better life. To that I would add the child welfare system. Indigenous women coming out of the child welfare system are very much targeted for trafficking.

I really want to underscore the fact that there's a huge lobby in this country to legalize prostitution, the sex work lobby. They're one dimensional in their perspective. I want to point out that there are huge complexities with indigenous women that are not factored into their equation. I don't need to say a whole lot about that because there has been so much happening in the media, such as the 215 children, plus the 104 more who have been found.

We know we struggle with racism—deeply rooted racism—and genocide in this country. Out of that we have a great deal of poverty. That's showing up in the levels of homelessness across this country. Indigenous women and their children are very much impacted by that.

Further, I just think that misogyny gets missed so much in our conversations around colonization. Misogyny plays a huge role—patriarchy plays a huge role—in what's happening to indigenous women and girls.

We have a member of the Aboriginal Women's Action Network—I'm hoping she's watching today—who never lets us forget that women with disabilities are often not considered in our conversations about sexual exploitation. Often, indigenous women become disabled as a result of violence.

We're marginalized in all of the institutions across this country. There are the cases that have been brought forward by Cindy Blackstock on child welfare, and right across this country there is the fact that so many of our children are in care.

The justice system, the racism within the justice system, and the police misconduct.... It's right through the whole system; I'm not picking only on the police. There have to be justice reforms. There should have been more in the mandate of the national inquiry to address the behaviour of the justice system.

The health care system, as my friend there has mentioned, the way she was treated.... Within our first nations government even, indigenous women are marginalized in all of those systems.

Within that process, we begin to believe what's being imposed on us, what's being force-fed to us. That message comes to us daily,

routinely, everywhere. Every which way you slice it, indigenous women are marked to be lesser than, so we're very much targeted for trafficking. That's deemed to be the only role that we're capable of in Canadian society.

● (1200)

That's my first point. The complexities that indigenous women face in how we end up being sexually exploited have to be factored in. It's not an isolated instance of, "Oh, I'm so proud to be a sex worker, look at me." There are many more factors at play that result in women being sexually exploited in the indigenous community.

For my second point, with regard to young women and girls, I often point to Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond's report when she was the representative for children and youth here in B.C. She released a report that looked over a three-year period. She examined all cases of sexual abuse within foster homes. The result of her study was that almost 70% of victims were indigenous girls. I think 20-something per cent were indigenous boys. When you look at all those percentages, there's barely anybody else being abused besides indigenous children.

We are definitely groomed for sexual exploitation, and we come to accept that as our fate in our lives. There are numerous other studies. I looked at the study that came out of the Vancouver Rape Relief & Women's Shelter, where they also examined 100 calls over a certain period of time. In their report they said that 12% of the callers were under the age of 14 when they were being sexually exploited, 12% were between the ages of 14 and 15, and 18% were between the ages of 16 and 18. That's pretty high when you think that almost half of indigenous callers were underage when they were being sexually exploited or trafficked.

In the report by Melissa Farley and Jacqueline Lynne, they tell us that of the women who were involved in their study, 96% of the indigenous women said they were being sexually abused as children before they entered into prostitution, or were being trafficked.

**The Chair:** Let me just interrupt for a moment. Normally we have about a six-minute testimony, and we have lots of questions to come before our one o'clock hour. How much longer would you like to take before we go to our rounds of questions?

**Ms. Fay Blaney:** I'll take another minute and just conclude with "Nothing About Us Without Us". I find that comment very ironic because a lot of different social justice groups are saying this. They want to be included in the decisions that affect their lives.

I was saying earlier to my friend that everything is decided for us; everything without us. I made the case that during the national action plan to end violence against indigenous women and girls, the thing that came out of the national inquiry was that there were no women's groups. Why is it that women can't speak for themselves? It's hugely problematic as far as I'm concerned.

My recommendations for addressing the crisis that we're faced with is to have a comprehensive feminist exiting service for indigenous women to exit prostitution, trafficking, sexual exploitation, because there's practically no such service right now. All we have currently are services that promote prostitution. They have centres that keep the holding pattern called "harm reduction".

A guaranteed livable income.... I heard my friend at the top there, and I'm sorry, I don't know her name. Her last name is Brown. Any way—

• (1205)

**The Chair:** It's Bryanna.

**Ms. Fay Blaney:** Yes. She talked about guaranteed livable income under food sovereignty and benefits that came out of the pandemic.

Further, women-only detox and addictions treatment are absolutely critical. Here in B.C. we have treatment facilities that are coded. I've experienced that and I am a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. I tell you, it's not easy to sit in a room where offenders are disclosing their experience of offending and I have to listen to that.

Finally, the funding of autonomous indigenous women's groups and organizations goes back to "nothing about us without us". That's missing practically everywhere I look. Indigenous women are not leading the educational process or making decisions about our own lives. I can go on and on, but will stop there.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thanks so much for really remarkable testimony.

We would like to get to the committee members' questions for all of our witnesses. We're on the next round.

Mr. Viersen, are you ready to take the Conservative...?

Okay, go ahead for five minutes.

**Mr. Arnold Viersen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank our witnesses for being here today. We very much appreciate your testimony.

Ms. Blaney, a few years ago you testified at the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls on the expert and knowledge keeper panel. You gave recommendations.

One of the things you talked about was to go upstream and address why indigenous women and girls are being trafficked in the first place. Do you have any recommendations for preventing indigenous women and girls from being trafficked in the first place? What needs to change?

**Ms. Fay Blaney:** It came out in the recommendations that I gave. I think that women-only detox and addictions treatment facilities are really critical. I, for one, got right into my addictions when I was a teenager because of the sexual abuse and other forms of abuse, like being orphaned and those things I dealt with. I do believe in having women's centres. That's where I sprouted my wings. It was in the women's centres that I had access to and in the women's studies programs. Those are the places where I developed a consciousness and self-awareness. I wasn't able to defend myself against the oppression I was dealing with until I came upon wom-

en's groups, women's centres and women-safe spaces. That is really critical.

In the national inquiry, I talked about the importance of consciousness-raising groups. These are groups of indigenous women sitting together, talking about the issues that impact our lives and identifying what the areas of concern are. That's how we operate within the Aboriginal Women's Action Network. We do not provide services. We aren't service oriented. Primarily, our task is education, consciousness raising and political action. Out of that, incredible things happen. Some of our members were travelling across the country on the national women's march against poverty and violence.

Those are some of the things I think are really important to prevent the sex trafficking of indigenous girls, primarily.

**Mr. Arnold Viersen:** Some of my research shows that the average sex trafficking victim in Canada is worth about \$325,000 a year. There is huge money in it. That's part of the reason it happens as frequently as it does.

Where does that money come from? That money is a huge incentive to drive people into it and to drive traffickers to pursue trafficking of victims. How do we get rid of the money? Where does the money come from and then how do we push the money out of the system?

I'll go with Ms. Blaney and Ms. Brown.

• (1210)

**Ms. Fay Blaney:** I think the money comes from male entitlement.

In Sweden, they did a massive educational process, with the Nordic model that they developed. An important element of that was education around equality issues for women.

The Indian Act is built upon patriarchy, and it's going to be a long time before we're able to undo what has been done to us, including the current government's resistance to implementing Bill S-3, I think it is, on the status question.

**Mr. Arnold Viersen:** Ms. Brown.

**Ms. Bryanna R. Brown:** I'm sorry, but would you be able to repeat the question?

**Mr. Arnold Viersen:** Yes. In the past, money was a big driver in a lot of things, whether it was coming to Canada for fish or lumber or the beaver pelts. Today, we see that a victim of sex trafficking is worth about \$325,000 a year to their trafficker.

The question basically is, where is that money coming from and how do we get that money out of the system?

**Ms. Bryanna R. Brown:** I think there's a large demand for it, of course.

I've noticed that people from all different backgrounds contribute to that demand, and I know that financial abuse is heavily tied in with the issue of human trafficking and indentured servitude.

About a year or two ago, someone was trying to groom me for human trafficking, and I luckily caught on to what they were doing prior to it actually happening. In the beginning stages, they tried to be in a relationship with me. It started off as something that seemed completely normal, just a regular boyfriend or relationship, and then they tried to get me tied to as many contracts as possible. I would have something under my name that I would have to pay back that also had the name of the trafficker on those contracts, say, for a car, or a two-year phone contract with Bell or Rogers—anything like that. Because they're so hard to get out of with those companies afterwards, it kind of ties you to that trafficker even more, and then you're forced into it in those ways.

**Mr. Arnold Viersen:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thanks so much.

We'll go on to Adam van Koeverden for five minutes.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to send out an extraordinary thank you to the witnesses today for providing such personal and vulnerable testimony. This is hard work for the government to do, but it doesn't compare to your lived experience. Your lived experience does contribute to progress, and I want to thank you on behalf of people who will be protected by future policies that this work will create. Thank you.

I'm joining you today from the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

I also want to say that violence against women is almost always men's violence against women. In saying that, I want to cede my time to Lenore Zann, my colleague. This is her space and this is her work, and I think she has more valuable questions to ask than I would ask.

I want to thank everybody once again.

I'll go over to you, Lenore.

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** Thank you so much, Adam. Thank you for being so generous and for thinking of my time as well.

I want to say thank you to the witnesses. I know this is a difficult topic, but it's very, very important.

I want to highlight some of the things that Ms. Blaney mentioned, which are totally what I agree with. It is about misogyny. It is about patriarchy. It is about the inequality for women in society and the complete disdain and contempt that some men have towards women and girls. It needs to stop now. The more femicides we hear about, the more angry, really, I become. I know that these can all be averted if people are educated to believe that we are all equal, that you can have your emotions and be upset about something, but it doesn't mean you can kill somebody or try to control somebody else. This is all about control and domination. These are all colonial attitudes and actions anyway. By and large, I believe most women have been affected by this, our first nations people in particular, and I'm so, so, so sorry.

In the submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, the Native Women's Association of Canada stated that some of the recurring themes that contribute to the recruitment of indigenous women in trafficking include—we've talked about them today—precarious housing and poor living conditions; high rates of unemployment, unstable employment and low working wages; lack of access to social and economic resources and programs; prior exposure to human trafficking and sex trade from a young age, through family or friends; and family violence and the impacts of colonization, such as residential school experience and intergenerational trauma.

So tell us about “nothing about us without us”. What are the first steps we need to take to make sure we can crack down on this terrible practice of human trafficking? Putting a price—a price—on a woman's life is disgusting.

Ms. Blaney and Ms. Anderson, would you like to comment?

• (1215)

**Ms. Fay Blaney:** Hilda, would you like to go first?

**Ms. Hilda Anderson-Pyrz:** No, you can go first.

**Ms. Fay Blaney:** Okay.

I tied “nothing about us without us” to the funding of autonomous indigenous women's organizations so that we can spread our wings, like I did, in women's centres and in university. Studying women's studies there is where I learned about what happened to me.

It becomes so normalized. There is a book called *Black Eyes All of the Time*. I think we need another book that talks about the sexual abuse of indigenous girls and how that becomes so normalized that being trafficked isn't so far removed from our reality. The remedy to that, as far as I'm concerned, is capacity building amongst ourselves as indigenous women.

I never know how to do this respectfully, and I do want to be respectful. I have concerns about the fact that we have a well-resourced Assembly of First Nations but a poorly resourced Native Women's Association of Canada that can't adequately represent our interests across the country, much less at a local level. We really need to do that capacity building ourselves. As a result of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, in 1972, I think, non-native women got women's centres all across this country. They got Status of Women Canada and the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women. All of these things happened for non-indigenous women. We need our turn to do that. We need to decolonize from what was done to us in the Indian Act.

That's a long process. I fear we're not even starting that. We're still under the umbrella of our band councils and under this banner of colonialism, without specific focus on gendered colonialism, gendered racism and gendered poverty. Those things are pretty much absent, and they're eclipsed by the bigger questions of colonialism.

That's what I talk about a lot.

• (1220)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** Interesting. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Lenore, I think we'll be able to come back to you, and you can pick that up with Hilda later.

Right now, Madame Bérubé, it's your turn. Please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Blaney, your statement, your testimony, was very moving. We are learning about everything these women may be going through.

You talked about misogyny, patriarchy, poverty, discrimination, domestic violence, and that was not all. In your opinion, what can be done to remedy the situation? Do you have any recommendations?

You said that it is important that you be part of the recommendations in the fight against the trafficking of indigenous women. Do you have any recommendations for us to consider?

[*English*]

**Ms. Fay Blaney:** I am so sorry. I didn't understand any of that.

**The Chair:** Fay, you don't have the language selected. On the centre bottom of your screen is a globe. Select the globe, and then select "English" as the language. That's where you will hear the interpretation.

**Ms. Fay Blaney:** Okay.

**The Chair:** It's a very good question, and I think Madame Bérubé should restate it so that you can hear it.

Sylvie, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé:** Can you hear me, Ms. Blaney?

[*English*]

**Ms. Fay Blaney:** Yes.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé:** I was saying that I found everything that you said to be very pertinent. It was very moving. I took careful notes.

You said that this is about genocide, poverty, discrimination and misogyny, and that the Indian Act is patriarchal. You said that you wanted to participate as a woman and as a leader in this matter, that it was not up to us to decide, but up to you to see what could be done to remedy the situation.

Do you have any recommendations for us that would help you to solve the problem?

[*English*]

**Ms. Fay Blaney:** Okay. I feel like I am repeating myself. I'm sorry.

I really believe that we need to begin our capacity development amongst ourselves, as indigenous women, in order to be able to respond to the huge variety of issues that impact us. There is child apprehension. There is male violence against women in our families. There is even the language of "family violence"—which I really object to—that obscures who is doing what to whom. Generally, that's male violence.

There are a variety of issues that impact us as indigenous women. We need to do capacity building and have consciousness-raising circles amongst ourselves so that we're able to develop our responses.

I had the gift, in 1982, of being in a circle of women, and that was where my interest in my own situation arose. I sat with the concerned aboriginal women here [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

**The Chair:** Oops. I think we've lost Fay. We'll reconnect with Fay, and in the meantime, we'll move on to Rachel Blaney with her question.

Rachel, go ahead.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

If I could come back to you again, Ms. Anderson-Pyrz, first of all, I do want to touch base on the hotline. I've heard from indigenous folks in my riding, especially with the finding of the 215 children, "Why would I call a hotline? Who is on the other end? They have wrecked everything. Why would I call them to ask for help?" I've heard it so many times that I can see there is a gap there.

I'm just wondering if you could talk about that, but could you also just talk about the services that you provide? What are the challenges, especially due to the fact that you're representing a rural and remote region?

Thank you.

• (1225)

**Ms. Hilda Anderson-Pyrz:** When we look at the hotline, we look at whether indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people are comfortable in accessing services. Relationships are fundamental when we're coming from experiences of human and sex trafficking, or gender-based violence.

It's very difficult to reach for supports over a telephone, because that's not our way as indigenous people. We tend to be more comfortable when we're able to meet in person where we feel safe, and there's a relationship to build. Then we're able to openly express our lived experiences, and that also provides a doorway to ask for help.

When we look at a hotline, it's one step, but if someone's calling a hotline, there needs to be an automatic response saying, "Thank you for calling. This is a service in your area, and this is how you can access it." That's not happening right now, because there's not enough resourcing across this country to support victims of gender and race-based violence.

Within our unit, we take a very decolonizing approach to the services that we provide. We really focus on indigenous-led services and supports that are rooted in our ways of being through culture, ceremony and languages. This is what we've heard from different events, healing gatherings, and different stuff that we have done through evaluations. We really take those evaluations to heart. They are shared with us from participants who seek our resources and supports through the MKO MMIWG liaison unit.

We also find that with colonial structures that are set-up to provide services, it's very challenging to interact with these types of supports and resources due to the barriers that are posed, and the lack of willingness to work with indigenous service providers. We are viewed as less than them and that we don't have the capability or the capacity to deliver meaningful services. However, if you look at our approach, it's very meaningful and effective in dealing with indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people who are victims of race-based and gender-based violence, as well as focusing on wellness, healing and prevention.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that response.

Just to clarify, the next speaker will be Mr. Schmale, followed by Mr. Battiste, for five minutes each.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Thank you to our witnesses for being here, and providing some great testimony.

I'll go to the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples first. Could you describe CAP's affiliate, the New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council, and its program called "Looking Out For Each Other"?

**National Chief Elmer St. Pierre:** Basically, I just found out about this a couple of months ago. When the women go out, they usually go out two at a time, or they make contact. Say, Susan phones up her friend Joy saying, "I'm coming over to visit." They keep an eye out that way.

It's been a very successful program. The women and girls are saying where they're going to go. It's a good program, especially if they're going out at night shopping or whatever the case may be. You've always got a partner, or a good friend, who goes shopping with you.

• (1230)

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** I understand. As you mentioned, you just found out about it recently. The more I read about that program, it does seem very interesting in how they are able to ensure that everyone arrives safely when they're going out. People know that they're to be expected somewhere.

I want to hear if you have anything else to add. You kind of mentioned it in your opening remarks. Taking care of children at an early age, and ensuring a robust support program is in place—we actually heard in testimony today—can be major factors in preventing trafficking of minors.

Could you comment on why CAP was excluded from the government's indigenous child welfare act reforms and what impact has that had on the communities left out of that process?

**National Chief Elmer St. Pierre:** It was a major impact like with Jordan's principle. CAP, the grassroots people and our PTOs

have no say in any of this. As far as being left out goes, we weren't the only ones who were left out. The Native Women's Association was also left out. I don't know whether the MPs know this but there are only three main aboriginal bodies, national indigenous organizations, that sit at any of the tables, and those are MNC, Assembly of First Nations and ITK.

We used to sit at the table. Five years ago, we used to be at all the tables. There are MPs who are stepping up and saying, "no, we're bringing CAP in." We just did one here not too long ago at which the MP kind of got slapped on the wrist for having us there. There are the other three organizations that I just mentioned. Sometimes right at the end of an invitation it will say, "if the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples is there, we will not be there."

Our whole focus is our grassroots people and helping them out one way or another. A prime example of that was with COVID-19. I don't know whether everybody knows, but when we first applied for it, we were offered \$250,000 to do nine communities right across Canada, which would have worked out to about \$25,000 for each province. We tried to figure it out ourselves. We figured that maybe each family would have ended up with a baloney sandwich or something like that.

We took Canada to court, and just as we were about to go into court, they came up with a number. It wasn't the very best figure, but it was enough for us to help out our people. To this day, I don't know why we are excluded from all the tables, because if we're not there, how are we going to know what to do? We get our news second-hand. There are a couple of ministers on here who I guess I could say are faithful to us, because anytime they have a table meeting, we get invited and we know what is going on right at the start.

A prime example is with the UN declaration. Six months prior to CAP being contacted, there was consultation done with the three other organizations. All of a sudden they decided they had better have consultation talks with CAP. We got a total of maybe three hours of consultation whereas three of the other organizations got six months' worth. To me, that's not fair.

We are aboriginal people. We're Métis people. We're non-status people. We're status off reserve, and we're southern Inuit. I just don't get it. You probably all heard about the distinct base, and that is where we get left out. I don't know why, because we're a distinct base. We're Métis people.

• (1235)

**The Chair:** Elmer, you're always welcome here, and I really appreciate—

**National Chief Elmer St. Pierre:** I know that Bob. Actually Bob, you're one of the people who brings us to all of the meetings. I'll mention that the other one is Rachel Blaney. We've had meetings with Rachel. Some of the other ones I'm not quite sure of, but at least the two of you who are here, we've had table meetings with, and I'm glad we have a few on our side who will bring us in no matter what the other three organizations say.

**The Chair:** Thanks, Elmer. Thanks a lot.

I just don't want to get slapped around. I just say "Bring 'em in! Welcome."

We go now to Jaime Battiste for five minutes.

**Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to return to the subject matter at hand. My question is going to be for Ms. Anderson-Pyrz and Ms. Brown and then Ms. Blaney. Our government put \$2.2 billion in the recent budget to address the calls to justice by the murdered and missing indigenous women and girls inquiry. One of the things we've done is to introduce a national action plan on June 2, and we're hoping to use that money to end systemic racism and violence against indigenous women in Canada.

I'd like each of you, in one minute, to tell us what your recommendations would be on how we could best utilize this money to address the challenge of the trafficking of indigenous women across Canada, so that we can come up with recommendations back to the government that say this is what we heard and these are the important things that need to happen first and foremost.

Ms. Anderson, could we start with you?

**Ms. Hilda Anderson-Pyrz:** Yes, absolutely.

I think the first thing the government can do is implement guaranteed livable income because poverty is a major contributing factor to human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Provide opportunities that are barrier-free for healing from colonial violence and the impacts that are rooted in culture. Provide ceremony and land-based healing opportunities as well.

Thank you.

**Mr. Jaime Battiste:** Thank you for that.

Ms. Blaney or Ms. Brown, did you want to chime in with some recommendations on how we can use that \$2.2 billion to address the issue at hand?

**Ms. Bryanna R. Brown:** I think it would be really important to ensure that consultants who are survivors of sexual abuse or human trafficking be consulted and paid for their work and for their traditional knowledge.

It would be very useful to have training programs or presentations to bring more awareness to indigenous peoples of what they are going through with regard to the history of residential schools and intergenerational trauma and how that relates to the sexual abuses and normalization of human trafficking in communities, how that develops within our communities and how we can prevent it.

**Mr. Jaime Battiste:** Thank you.

Ms. Blaney.

**Ms. Fay Blaney:** I think it's a really long journey to come out of being sexually trafficked and being in prostitution. We really need a comprehensive and feminist exiting service for indigenous women.

Other forms of healing.... I mentioned earlier about women-only detox centres and addiction treatment facilities. I think those kinds of services are really critical for the large numbers of indigenous women who are in survival from prostitution or who are being trafficked.

**Mr. Jaime Battiste:** Ms. Blaney, I only have about a minute left. Can you expand on what some of the best practices are around what you called "exiting" the trafficking?

What can we do as the government to set up a way to get people out of that in a safe and secure way and in a way that's respectful of indigenous people in Canada?

● (1240)

**Ms. Fay Blaney:** Definitely Manitoba is ahead of us on that. I'm sure Hilda could speak about the developments that are happening there.

In B.C. we have religious—like, Christian—services for women when they want to exit.

I'll defer to Hilda on that to talk a bit about what they're doing in Manitoba.

**Ms. Hilda Anderson-Pyrz:** I know that in Manitoba there's a huge reach-out to victims who have been trafficked and are survivors of human trafficking and sexual exploitation for their lived experience, expertise and agency to kind of guide that process and what the process looks like. I know they also focus on what safety means for victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation—coming from that lens. We know that some Christian-based supports are not conducive to what safety means to victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation due to beliefs and barriers.

As an example, I can just say that you're forced to stay in a room. Many victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation have been violated in a room with a closed door. You need to have an open space concept where it's a safe haven for victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation, and which is barrier-free, open 24-7 and has readily available resources that are culturally appropriate, such as grandmothers, counselling services and ceremonial practices.

We see that currently happening in Manitoba with the 24-7 safe space that is named after a grandmother who has been very instrumental in supporting many victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. It's Velma's House. It's run by victims who have been trafficked and who have been sexually exploited. They're bringing their lived experience, their expertise and their agency to providing those supports and resources.

Coming from a true place of understanding, removing those judgments and creating that safe space will truly give that individual who is seeking those supports and resources a space to reclaim their spirit and look at other referrals that can help them on their journey of healing. It is keeping them safe away from traffickers, protecting them and giving them dignity throughout the whole process.

It's so critical to ensure that dignity is provided to individuals who are seeking supports and resources, so they're not made to feel that they're a problem and that it is their fault because it is not their fault.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much for the response.

Members of the committee, we'll have time for one more intervention from each of the parties.

The Conservatives are first.

Since things have changed around a bit, will it be Gary Vidal? Who will speak next for the Conservatives? Mr. Melillo?

Would you like to go ahead for five minutes, please?

**Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that.

I appreciate all of our witnesses joining us today.

I'm not sure who to pose this question to, but perhaps to you, Hilda, if you're still on.

In our previous study, we were talking a lot about enforcement on reserves and some of the gaps, challenges and jurisdictional confusion that limit proper enforcement on reserves when it comes to police and even further down throughout the justice system. I'm wondering if you have any comments on how that may impact the prevalence of sex trafficking, if at all, and how working to address those gaps might potentially help address the issue that's at hand today.

**Ms. Hilda Anderson-Pyrz:** Yes, absolutely.

We have to look at interjurisdictional boundaries and remove those boundaries so that there are timely responses when we're looking at the protection and security of victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation, because there are delays created in response times without having any type of interjurisdictional agreements for response, with people saying, "well, that happened in Manitoba so we have to do this", or "that happened in Ontario and we need to do this". Meanwhile, the victim continues to be victimized.

We need to have a collaborative approach that's responsive, acts in a very timely manner and is victim centred in order to ensure that the homicides of indigenous women and girls and the continued gender- and race-based violence does not continue. We really need to look at how Canada responds and ensure that those barriers are removed from responding.

• (1245)

**Mr. Eric Melillo:** Thank you.

Did anybody else want to comment on that before I move on?

I don't see anybody, so now I'll pick up on this. I don't mean to repeat what has already been asked, but it's certainly a very important discussion and worthy of proper examination. We spoke a bit about the factors that are leading people to be in vulnerable situations. I'm wondering—perhaps Hilda or Bryanna or whoever wants to comment—if you could speak in a bit more detail. I know that we've touched on it already, but what are some of the ways that we can better prevent people from getting into the vulnerable situations to begin with?

**Ms. Hilda Anderson-Pyrz:** I'll hand it off to Bryanna because I think it's an important space for her to share, based on her lived experience.

Thank you.

**Ms. Bryanna R. Brown:** I'm sorry. I'm nervous. Can you please repeat the question?

**Mr. Eric Melillo:** No problem. Thank you.

I'm just wondering if you're able to touch a bit on what the government could do better to help ensure that we are more preventative, more proactive, in ensuring that people do not find themselves in the vulnerable situations that have led to human trafficking, to sex trafficking. What can we do in terms of programming and supports? Where can we fix those gaps to intervene [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

**Ms. Bryanna R. Brown:** I think it's really important to have indigenous-led direction when creating healing programs for survivors of human trafficking or having anti-human trafficking programs.

I am also on the Indigenous Climate Action National Steering Committee, and I have noticed climate change, the extraction and exploitation of land and natural resources. I have been thinking of how that relates to the exploitation of indigenous peoples, especially indigenous women, and environmental injustice and environmental racism and how that causes displacement of indigenous peoples from their communities, and how that causes further culture shock when having to be removed from their indigenous communities to a more non-indigenous community, and being in that culture shock and not having access to traditional food, their traditional territory.

I think having access to land is extremely important. I notice that it seems to be more effective when we have more culturally relevant resources available to clients that are provided by indigenous peoples and Black people, and people of colour as well.

I have created programs and workshops and presentations to bring awareness to the issue of human trafficking, and provided consultation to hospitals and anti-human trafficking organizations to provide input on the survivor leadership and healing programs. I have noticed that there's a large demand for these presentations and bringing more awareness to these issues.

Thank you.

• (1250)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Before I go to Ms. Zann, I see that we've been joined by Diane Redsky.



Diane, we have three more interventions. If there's a moment or two at the end, I will have you make some comments.

Mr. Clerk, would we be able to add a few extra moments at the end to allow Ms. Redsky to give her presentation? Would that be okay?

**The Clerk:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay, so we will do that.

Hang on and listen to the conversation.

Now we will go to Ms. Zann for five minutes.

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** Thank you, Chair.

First of all, Ms. Brown, what a great job you have done. It seems like you are really on your way.

Education is key. I believe learning how to have our own self-worth, and to get our self-worth back again after we have been through terrible situations of abuse and neglect and violence, is the key. It takes so much out of women, but we need to be there to support each other.

I hope you are getting all the supports that you need. You're very inspiring, and I want to thank you so much for being here today.

I would like to go back to the issue of the \$2.2 billion the government is going to be giving for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in the next couple of years.

Here in Nova Scotia, we are discussing a resiliency centre. That's what the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association is working on along with me. They feel that this would be a very good way of having a safe space for women who have had intergenerational trauma, residential school trauma, missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, LGBTQIA+. It would be a great safe space for people to heal.

Are any of you also working on these kinds of projects across Canada?

Ms. Blaney, perhaps I will go to you first.

**Ms. Fay Blaney:** Yes.

We don't have a resiliency centre; we're participating in the coalition on the murdered and missing. That coalition arose out of the Oppal inquiry, and it's an important voice for us to have to try to articulate our concerns at the national level.

In terms of the dollars that you mentioned, I would agree with Hilda. A guaranteed livable income is really important, because it would allow for individual autonomy and self-sufficiency for indigenous women. The levels of poverty are quite high, and the urban centres are becoming unlivable. Housing is through the roof.

Here in Campbell River, there's so much development and rents are so expensive, they are inaccessible. I think the guaranteed livable income would be one way of addressing indigenous women's inequality.

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** Thank you very much.

You said earlier that "incest is the boot camp for prostitution". Here in Nova Scotia as well, I've been working with a number of people, including Linda MacDonald and Jeanne Sarsen, who've gone to the UN and spoken about trafficking. They are working with women who are survivors of being trafficked. I've met a number of them. They say that, yes, in fact there are families where the children have been trained into this terrible industry and then shipped all over the place.

What would you like to say here? How can we deal with this terrible issue?

**Ms. Fay Blaney:** The issue of incest is definitely a learned behaviour. We acquired that through our blessed residential schools, which also killed us. I think the behaviour has to be unlearned. We can't say enough how much the residential schools have impacted us. I am a survivor, and there are four generations before me who are all survivors.

Actually, my generation is the first to raise our own children. This whole thing about having a family—deep breath here—is something that we've been denied, denied, denied, denied throughout history. It's very difficult to now suddenly be concerned about protecting our girls, after all we've been through. It's a really complex problem.

I was listening to what the other man was asking about, about what we can do to address this, and I was kind of laughing nervously, because at the beginning I was talking about the poverty, the racism, the misogyny, the child welfare system, the justice system and the health care system. All of those institutions are complicit in oppressing us.

• (1255)

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** It's overwhelming, isn't it? It's almost overwhelming when you....

**Ms. Fay Blaney:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you—

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** I'm sorry to interrupt, Chair. I just have to say that Nora Bernard was a friend of my father's. He started the first nations Mi'kmaq teaching program in Nova Scotia to train Mi'kmaq students to be teachers, and he was very close to Nora. She did some amazing work for survivors of the residential schools.

My heart goes out to you and to every survivor of that terrible system. It was a terrible system. We need to do everything we can to deal with the trauma associated with that for all the families and the intergenerational families. Please stay in touch.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Madam Bérubé, you have two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Blaney, could you give me some information? You talked about taking better care of children.

Can you please explain to me what you mean?

[English]

**Ms. Fay Blaney:** We have a long journey to go in terms of having some autonomy over the child welfare system. The rates of apprehension are right through the roof. We often talk about how there are more children in care now than there ever were in residential schools. It's caused huge damage in the same way the residential school system has.

In my former life, I taught at the post-secondary level. I often had indigenous students coming into my classroom who didn't know who they were. They were learning who they were, in my classroom, and what it means to be indigenous: Where do I come from? That is another arm of the genocidal strategy that's been launched against us.

I hope I answered your question. You were asking about child welfare, I think.

[Translation]

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé:** Thank you.

In 2018, a brief was presented to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. The Native Women's Association wrote that there is a lack of disaggregated and cross-jurisdictional data. As a result, identifying and assisting Indigenous victims and survivors of human trafficking and exploitation has been greatly hindered.

Given the importance of those statistics and those disaggregated data, can you tell me how we can fill that gap?

[English]

**Ms. Fay Blaney:** I think Hilda is a part of—and so is Diane—the national action plan. They have a committee or a table that deals with data, and I'm really looking forward to the results of their work.

The femicide observatory is involved in that process, and I'm really pleased to see that. They're speaking about decolonizing data. Hilda did, to some extent, speak about the jurisdictional problems that we have around policing, and I'm hoping that committee will be taking that into consideration.

I am looking forward to the work that comes out of the data committee.

• (1300)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Is there anyone opposed to extending briefly past one o'clock?

I think I'll have the committee's support to continue on after one o'clock.

Now we'll allow Ms. Rachel Blaney to have her intervention, and then we'll hear from Ms. Redsky.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Chair, I would like to cede my time. I really want to hear from Ms. Redsky. I don't want her to lose a minute.

I also just want to say it's nice to have another Blaney in the room. Fay. It's always good to have your sister-in-law online.

Thank you, and I will cede my time.

**The Chair:** That's very kind of you.

Ms. Redsky, good afternoon and welcome.

Normally, we have about a six-minute presentation by our witnesses. We'd really like to hear your presentation, so can you please go ahead?

**Ms. Diane Redsky (Executive Director, Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre Inc.):** Yes, thank you.

Can you hear me?

**The Chair:** Yes, we hear you.

**Ms. Diane Redsky:** Okay, good. We were having technical difficulties earlier.

[Witness spoke in Ojibwe]

[English]

My spirit name is Love Eagle and I'm from the Caribou Clan. I acknowledge the treaty territory that I have the privilege of living and working on: Treaty 1 in the homeland of the Métis Nation. I also acknowledge the traditional territory of my ancestors, Treaty 3, Shoal Lake 40 First Nation, which also provides the water to the city of Winnipeg.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here. I apologize for the technical difficulties and not being able to participate in the whole session, but I'm really happy to see some of the leaders working on this issue with Hilda and with Fay here. I want to acknowledge our survivor as well, who is bringing a really important voice to this really vital issue.

I'm hoping that you have learned through.... It appears that you've had a few meetings on this particular issue with a number of people who have been informing this group. I'm glad that you're getting a lot of different perspectives that are building on why this is the most extreme form of violence against indigenous women and girls, how indigenous women and girls and two-spirited LGBTQQIA are also uniquely targeted for the purposes of sex trafficking in our country, and why it is critically important to have unique resources that are available and accessible that are indigenous-led and trauma-informed and that honour harm reduction. I hope those are some key messages that you have picked up on.

The work that I have been working on, really, on this issue for over 30 years now has been to address and find solutions—to problem solve—on how to end the sex trafficking of, particularly, indigenous women and girls. My career has been focused a lot on that, including leading the National Task Force on Sex Trafficking of Women and Girls in Canada.

The organization that I work for is called the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre. It is located in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Treat 1 territory. We currently operate a rural healing lodge. It is and continues to be the only rural healing lodge in Canada for child victims of sex trafficking. This is a very unique resource that is under the portfolio of the provincial strategy called Tracia's Trust to end sexual exploitation and sex trafficking in our country. It's a provincially funded rural healing lodge.

I want to just give you some insight into that rural healing lodge and our experiences of operating a rural healing lodge. These are for girls and transgender teens between 13 and 17 years of age. These are some of the things that we have heard from girls. Again, these are minor children who are involved in the child protection system because they are girls in need of protection, and they need the support to be able to begin their healing journey.

Here are some of the key points that they have shared with us over the years of operating Hands of Mother Earth, the rural healing lodge: Their sexual exploitation started young, as young as nine. They are groomed and lured online and in person. Girls from northern first nations are particularly at risk, in that a lot of it is online, and sometimes other girls are manipulated and forced to go into northern first nations communities to also do recruitment and luring and bring girls back into Winnipeg or larger urban centres.

The control by the trafficker can take on many forms. He can pose as a boyfriend or a drug dealer, an older man supplying them with drugs or a place to stay. He can pose as an uncle or a father figure, even “daddy” in some cases, so how traffickers are targeting indigenous women and girls is very relationship-based. They are coerced to perform sex acts as many as six to 10 times a day, continuously, seven days a week, and hand over their money.

● (1305)

They're often on some really harmful drugs as well—for coping, as well as what is given to them—such as meth, heroin, crack and those types of drugs that can really impact their ability to give proper consent to anything. Meth is continuing to be a huge factor in controlling girls. A girl is more profitable to a trafficker than an adult woman, but the trauma-bond component to the trafficker is making it very hard to intervene. The target is primarily girls who are in child and family services care. Depending on where they are across the country, sometimes that place is more dangerous than others, such as Ontario and Saskatchewan, where the CFS age of majority caps out at 16. There's that period between 15 and 18 where there really aren't any adults who are actively responsible for their care and protection, which leaves them very vulnerable to traffickers.

We know that many men are buying girls to sexually abuse them—and that is the correct language to use. It's pretty diverse as well, so if we're looking for who the typical abusers and offenders are, it's men of all ages, from different cultural backgrounds and socio-economic situations.

What is also important about what we've heard from our young residents is that this is a long journey on their healing. Their healing journey will take forever, and that's not meant to be a bad thing, because with proper supports, indigenous-led supports and opportunities to continue to heal, this journey is a really important investment in their long-term healing journey. It does take a lifetime to heal from the most extreme form of violence against women and girls, so having that safe place to start the healing journey is critically important.

I have some recommendations for this committee. Within the federal national action plan to combat human trafficking, I'd really like to see an emphasis on it being indigenous-led, and then having an indigenous stream that is really focused on making those strate-

gic investments across the country. We have to outsmart what is already out there.

I would agree on how critically important data collection is, because there is no common data collection, so we don't have an accurate number of what's happening across the country. Women and girls are presenting themselves in shelters and they're documented as cases of domestic violence instead of sex trafficking, so there's a lot of complexity around data collection, but there still is a really important opportunity for this across the country.

We really need to have and develop a victim service strategy that is directed to their life-long healing, and not contingent on their being involved in the court system. Many of our girls from the Hands of Our Mother Earth Rural Healing Lodge have participated in the court system. It has been just a terrible experience from beginning to end, so we really need a victim centre, a victim service strategy, to ensure that we are really giving a strong level of support to young girls, and anybody, any victim, who is impacted by sex trafficking while they're going through the court system. Just in one case, where there were multiple victims, we had several girls who participated in that court system who made several suicide attempts, some of which succeeded. We really need to ensure that we're creating that strong safety net as they go through the court system.

● (1310)

It is critically important—as it relates to what we have now overall and which could at least help and not make anything worse—not to repeal Bill C-36. This is the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act. It is a really critical piece of legislation not only for the community, but for policing agencies to be able to intervene at times, so that they have a full venue or a number of tools they can use to intervene between a trafficker and those they are abusing and sexually exploiting.

I'm going to say two more things. Advocates like me and many others really want, need and encourage the investment in the voices of survivors. It is critically important because that is where the answers are. That is where we need to support survivor leadership. We need to be investing in those survivor-led voices and in those survivor-led organizations because those are where the strategies and the solutions lie. There's a critical need to make investments into survivor voices and particularly indigenous-led voices.

The last thing I'll say is that any form of buying sex from women and girls is violence against women—bottom line. We need to stop normalizing this form of violence and saying it's okay because there's money involved.

That is what I'd like to bring to this committee. Thank you again for the opportunity to be here.

**The Chair:** Ms. Redsky, thank you so much.

I'm glad that we had the opportunity to hear those points. I want you to understand that this committee has been working—the four parties together—toward a common objective of resolving the problems that we've been hearing. I'm very proud of the way we have been able to work.

Also, we have outstanding analysts. Nothing is going to be missed in the material that's prepared for us from the conversations, questions and answers we've had. This has been a brilliant, although somewhat sobering, couple of hours.

On behalf of all our committee members, thanks to each and every one of you for sharing your life experiences, but offering us a pathway to a better future.

With that, I'll take a motion to adjourn.

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** I move to adjourn.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Zann. All in favour of this motion?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** This meeting is adjourned.

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