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Chair: Mrs. Karen Vecchio



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• (1530)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)): I call the meeting to order.

Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome to the seventh meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. It's wonderful to have you all here. Some of us are on Zoom today and some of us are here in the room.

I'm going to remind everybody that, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted on Tuesday, February 1, the committee will resume its study of intimate partner and domestic violence in Canada.

Given the ongoing pandemic situation and in light of the recommendations from public health authorities, as well as the directive of the Board of Internal Economy on October 19, 2021, to remain healthy and safe, the following is recommended for all of those attending the meeting in person. Anyone with symptoms should participate by Zoom and not attend the meeting in person. Everyone must maintain two metres of physical distancing, whether seated or standing. Everyone must wear a non-medical mask when circulating in the room. It is recommended in the strongest possible terms that members wear their masks at all times, including when seated. Non-medical masks, which provide better clarity over cloth masks, are available in the room. Everyone present must maintain proper hand hygiene by using the hand sanitizer at the room entrance. Committee rooms are cleaned before and after each meeting. To maintain that, everyone is encouraged to clean surfaces, such as their desk, chair and microphone, with the provided disinfectant wipes.

For those participating virtually, I would like to outline a few rules to follow. You may speak in the official language of your choice. Interpretation services are available for this meeting. You have the choice at the bottom of the screen of the floor, English or French. If interpretation is lost, please inform me immediately, and we will ensure that interpretation is properly restored before resuming the proceedings.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. If you are on the video conference, please click on the microphone icon to unmute yourself. For those in the room, your mike will be controlled as normal by the proceedings and verification officer. That's all working today. Perfect. I remind you that all comments should be addressed through the chair. When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly. When you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute.

Before we welcome our witnesses, I would like to provide this trigger warning. We will be discussing experiences related to violence and assault. This may be triggering to viewers with similar experiences. If you feel distressed or if you need help, please advise the clerk.

I'm also going to let everybody know that I've made this beautiful little sign. It's your one-minute sign. To any of our panellists, when you're giving your five minutes, you'll be getting this at the four-minute mark, for your one-minute warning. To any of our questioners and our MPs, that's a reminder for you as well.

Let's begin today's meeting. I would like to welcome to our first panel the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres. We have Gertie Mai Muisse, the chief executive officer, and Sean Longboat, director of programs. From Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada I'd like to welcome Gerri Sharpe, the interim president.

For opening comments, we will all begin with five minutes. I would like to turn the floor over to the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres for your five minutes.

Ms. Gertie Mai Muisse (Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres): Thank you.

My name is Gertie Mai Muisse. I am Mi'kmaq from St. George's, Newfoundland and currently the chief executive officer for the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres.

I am joined today by my respected colleague, Sean Longboat, who is a Cayuga man from Hamilton. He is currently the director of programs at the OFIFC. Sean is a kind man, meaning he is a committed advocate for the protection of indigenous women, children and families. I have asked him to join me today to discuss friendship centre wise practices for ending violence.

We are very honoured to join the committee this afternoon. I thank you for the invitation. Our presentation will provide some highlights from our more substantive brief that has been submitted to the committee.

Our organization supports 29 member friendship centres across Ontario for the past five decades and also additional delivery sites. It has ensured that culture and community are at the core of all of our programs and services.

Ending violence has always been a pillar of our work, which recognizes the disproportionate rate of violence against indigenous women, girls and the two-spirit LGBTQQIA community members. We also never forget the impact of violence and trauma on indigenous men and boys in our communities. Our efforts have contributed to frameworks and initiatives that have influenced the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and in particular, the urban indigenous national action plan.

Going forward from the foundation of evidence provided through the national inquiry and many prior reports and research, I would like to share information on two key areas to inform the committee's study. The first is about three indigenous-led initiatives delivered by Ontario Friendship Centres that have been designed to address intimate partner and domestic violence. I would also like to recommend new approaches that can be adopted by the federal government to effect meaningful change and impact within our current generation.

To begin, I will share information about three key initiatives. The first is the indigenous healing and wellness strategy, which was launched provincially in 1994 to address the increase in intimate partner violence and domestic violence in indigenous communities. The indigenous healing and wellness strategy supports indigenous governed programs and services to reinstate the healing journey in a holistic manner that is aimed at better outcomes at the community level. Since 2019, friendship centres have collectively supported over 12,000 clients, reflecting the sustained need for programs that heal and prevent violence.

The next is the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres' Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin program, which is a leading wise practice that empowers indigenous men and youth to take part in ending violence by reclaiming their traditional roles and responsibilities as protectors of their communities. The program provides wraparound care for self-identifying indigenous men and youth who are ready to embark on their healing path or to become advocates for their community to end all forms of violence.

Finally, the federation has a program called the indigenous community justice program. It is a culturally appropriate alternative to the mainstream justice system that supports the prevention of violence through diversion programming. The program is based on indigenous legal principles by involving community members, victims, survivors of intimate partner violence and elders in the creation of healing plans that seek to resolve and restore balance, and mitigate further harm. The program keeps the individual rooted in community, stabilized and connected to long-term healing, subsequently reducing the risk of recidivism.

The indigenous community justice program was recently designated as the indigenous-specific intimate partner violence program by the Province of Ontario. This is a milestone that demonstrates the program's power in addressing offending behaviour through culture-based approaches to justice that reduces indigenous peoples' involvement in the justice system.

Next, I would like to recommend new approaches that can be adopted by the federal government. The first is a new relationship with indigenous people, communities and organizations that actual-

ly reflects the lived experience in our communities. The lack of federal strategy to directly support urban indigenous communities impedes improving outcomes across social determinants of safety and health.

The second is to establish a national program to ensure victims' service workers are integrated within urban indigenous community service provider networks and employed within organizations like friendship centres.

The third is for Canada to implement a universal guaranteed basic income program nationally to address deeply entrenched socio-economic circumstances that remain barriers to safety, health, well-being and community connection.

• (1535)

Finally, increase the capacity for urban indigenous innovation, program design and evaluation to support creative approaches to finding new wise practices in ending violence and reducing conflict through culture-based preventative strategies that are informed by those who are most impacted.

This concludes our presentation. Thank you for listening.

We would be pleased to answer any questions you might have throughout the session.

Wela'lin.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're now going to pass the floor over to Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada. Thank you so much.

Gerri Sharpe, we're going to pass the floor over to you for five minutes.

• (1540)

Ms. Gerri Sharpe (Interim President, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada): *Ubalaguk* and good afternoon, Madam Chair or Madam *isivauta*, and distinguished members of the committee.

It is an honour and a pleasure to appear before you today.

Since 1984, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada has been the national voice for Inuit women of our country. Through advocacy, policy development and community projects, Pauktuutit brings awareness to the unique needs of Inuit women in a wide range of areas, including violence and abuse prevention, justice and policing, health and wellness, and social and economic development.

Addressing intimate partner and domestic violence is the main priority of Pauktuutit, and yet the problem has continued to worsen in the past 30 years.

I will start by providing you with a glimpse of just how severe the problem is. The rate of violence experienced by Inuit women is 14 times higher than for other groups of women in Canada. At times, Inuit children experience abuse and maltreatment at 10 times the rate of other Canadian children. In Nunavut, one of two Inuit women has experienced severe sexual abuse during childhood. The suicide rate for Inuit is estimated to be between nine and 20 times the national average.

These few facts only reveal the surface of the issue. Reluctance to report domestic violence is further heightened by the Inuit language barrier, a lack of safe places or shelters, and a general mistrust of police.

Underlying historical, social and economic factors contribute to the Inuit experiencing the highest rate of violence in the country. Inuit continue to face the intergenerational trauma of residential schools, institutionalized and systemic racism, overcrowded housing conditions, poverty and food insecurity.

Domestic violence must be addressed as both a physical and mental health issue. We know that psychological traumas, particularly those that go untreated, have devastating impacts.

The financial costs of physical abuse, including emergency services, treatment, rehabilitation and the frequent need for medevacs are significant, yet current investments to reduce gendered violence have been insufficient. Many Inuit women live in small fly-in, fly-out communities. Most Inuit Nunangat communities are experiencing a housing shortage and are without shelters. Too often, there are simply no safe places where women can escape violence and no resources to access.

Inuit women are required to navigate a complex system and travel long distances with no transportation or financial means. They are forced to seek shelter outside of their home communities, leaving behind any children and support systems they have in place.

While Inuit women face the highest rates of domestic violence in the country, funding, resources and a seat at the table for Inuit women's leadership voices as decision-makers are significantly lacking.

An Inuit-specific, gender-based analysis lens must be applied to all policies and initiatives to address domestic and intimate partner violence experienced by Inuit women. The solutions must be led and informed by Inuit women, who are the experts and hold the knowledge to solve this issue that directly impacts Inuit women. Pauktuutit has called for investments in shelters and transitional housing that are coordinated, gendered and distinctions based. These investments must be sustainable and support work to increase access to counselling and treatment programs and supports for unhealthy addictions, which mask the underlying traumas and/or instigate violence.

Health, police and service providers must be better educated about Inuit history, culture, gendered violence and our language. Historically, there has been a breakdown in trust, resulting in fear of those in positions of power, such as police. Inuit women have expressed that they have felt revictimized after seeking help within the justice and policing systems.

• (1545)

Pauktuutit has signed a memorandum of agreement and is working in partnership with the RCMP to shift towards community-led policing that strives to improve the safety and security of Inuit women, for our families and communities.

The need for support and resources was heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many services were reduced or shifted online, while Internet accessibility is a continuous problem for Inuit communities. Mental health and substance misuse issues have risen even higher, as families have remain confined to the home, in overcrowded conditions, due to health directives. Advocacy for shelters and transitional homes for Inuit and their children must be a top priority for Pauktuutit.

I appreciate the opportunity to come before you today and to speak to the important issues of intimate partner violence. This issue continues to victimize and traumatize our women and gendered people, with intergenerational impacts that continue to destroy the lives of children, families, communities and culture. We look forward to working with the federal government to address this modern-day tragedy that impacts so many.

We welcome any questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much for those words today.

We will start our first round of questioning. We'll be granting six minutes to each of our members.

We will begin with Laila Goodridge.

Laila, you have six minutes.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Thank you so much to both witnesses for your powerful testimony.

One thing I've really trying to bring to the forefront as we study this important topic is legislative solutions. One piece that has been brought to the attention of the committee is Clare's Law, which originated in the United Kingdom and is now in place in both Alberta and Saskatchewan.

I'm wondering if either of your organizations has heard of Clare's Law and what your thoughts on that would be.

Ms. Sharpe, perhaps you could go first.

Ms. Gerri Sharpe: Thank you for that question.

I can tell you that I personally have not heard of Clare's Law. I can tell you that I have advocated for the women of the Northwest Territories for many, many years and I'm not familiar with that, but that's not to say that our staff are not.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Go ahead, Gertie.

Ms. Gertie Mai Muise: No, I have not heard of Clare's Law, but I'll pass this over to my colleague Sean Longboat. He may be more familiar with the policy work behind some of our program development.

Mr. Sean Longboat (Director of Programs, Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres): Thank you, Gertie Mai.

I'm aware of Clare's Law. I haven't studied it in detail. I know that some of our staff in our policy shop have information on it. We'd be happy to follow up in written format to provide our position on that piece of legislation.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Wonderful. That would be much appreciated.

I think, effectively, one of the big pieces to get to the bottom of domestic violence and something that I think is critical is making sure that we have the right legislative framework in place. Can you point to any pieces in legislation that currently exist or that could be tweaked that would improve the situation, in your opinion?

Perhaps that can go to Mr. Longboat.

Mr. Sean Longboat: In terms of legislation, we're happy to follow up on specific solutions from a policy stance. We presented a number of solutions that address programming. While there is important legislative work to advance, there are also a number of program initiatives that are under way and ready to launch immediately. Our focus as a friendship centre movement is really getting down to business in terms of being able to scale up programs that are working, because there are not sufficient resources for indigenous organizations, broadly speaking.

As Gertie Mai mentioned in her opening remarks, urban indigenous organizations are often forgotten. Here in Ontario, 85% of indigenous people live off reserve. We're very much interested in talking about the kinds of solutions that can effect positive change in communities immediately.

• (1550)

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Wonderful. Thank you.

As someone who represents the riding of Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, we have a large indigenous population, and much of that is in urban centres. The work that the friendship centre does in my community is truly spectacular. I can imagine that the work you guys do in Ontario is very similar to what I see in my own backyard, so thank you.

I believe Gertie Mai had something to add.

Ms. Gertie Mai Muise: Yes, thank you.

From a legislative standpoint, we have a lot of legislative tools in place. A lot of it has to do with provincial programs and policies, relationships between jurisdictions and jurisdictional discord and wrangling that really has an impact on our ability to properly get up from under.

I also feel there is a need to recognize that legislation is historically and inherently systemically racist against indigenous women, and is only a small part of the solution.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: To Ms. Sharpe, you were talking about some of the unique challenges that exist in our Far North. Could you expand on some of those issues, so that we hear a more full-some piece for our committee?

Ms. Gerri Sharpe: Most definitely. I'm glad that you give me the opportunity to do this with the pure fact that regardless of any

policies and legislation that you have in place, you need to remember where we're located. When we say small fly-in, fly-out communities, that is no joke. That is the reality that we live in.

While I am located in Yellowknife in an urban setting, I am not on Inuit Nunangat. You need to remember that in those small communities, such as Pauktuutit and Sachs Harbour, individuals who are encountering intimate partner violence need to utilize the health care system to get a trip to Inuvik. They're treated like they're there for a health care visit, which is crap.

When you talk about something that comes from the UK, that is not going to be suitable for the north. The north has only been around for the last 60 years. With Inuit, when it comes to intimate partner violence, it needs to be community-based and involve everyone.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're going to move to Ms. Sonia Sidhu, for six minutes.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to begin by acknowledging that today is United Nations Zero Discrimination Day and the first day of Women's History Month. We can all agree that we are all working toward a future when women of all backgrounds are free from discrimination. Thank you very much for that powerful testimony.

My first question is for OFIFC. Ms. Muise, you were talking about barriers to safety and a culture-based strategy. We have heard about the general increase in domestic violence during the pandemic. When we talk about the lack of general trust in policing, how can we improve the language barriers that you mentioned? What are the unique barriers to accessing services?

Ms. Muise, you can begin, and Ms. Sharpe, you can add to that as well.

• (1555)

The Chair: Ms. Muise, are you able to hear us?

Ms. Gertie Mai Muise: Yes, I'm not sure I clearly understand the question that's being asked.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: What are the unique barriers? We heard about the lack of trust in police services and language barriers. There are many barriers. Can you talk about the barriers and how can we improve those barriers?

Ms. Gertie Mai Muise: Okay, I see.

The barriers to support for indigenous women and girls, 2-spirit and LGBTQIA, and men and boys in our community are intersectoral. Every area of work, the determinants of health, all of those things that have an impact on people's vulnerability...each of those systems trying to respond and help has barriers in them. One of the ways we've found that works to help improve the jurisdictional wrangling and the intersectoral lack of coordination—all of those things—is to have community-based teams that navigate those systems to encourage coordination and really encourage linkages to culture-based resources, like traditional knowledge holders, traditional teachers, family and kid networks, and people who've come through systems and survived.

It's really critical to understand barriers, because the way the community understands barriers is very different from what western service systems and service structures see as barriers to helping our communities. That's why it's so critical for any investments to land inside communities with organizations that are indigenous-led, indigenous-governed and indigenous-informed. Now we are seeing a lot of awareness around what the real barriers are, especially during the pandemic. I think we've seen a new understanding among all the stakeholders in the field. There could be some education around it. I think it's always helpful for us to understand what keeps systemic racism at play, and how to interrupt that and create new pathways for safety and wellness.

We have a lot to say on that, and I think our longer brief went into some of those barriers. Actually, when I look at the brief, it has some legislative pieces we are recommending to support Bill C-223, an act to develop a national framework for a guaranteed livable basic income. That was one of the legislative pieces that we had and are currently advancing.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Ms. Sharpe, would you like to add to that? Culturally sensitive services are very important. How can they be more helpful?

Ms. Gerri Sharpe: There are a number of barriers that need to be recognized. In particular, one of the barriers around COVID-19 is having people isolate in the home. Potentially, this places a woman in more danger. She's being removed from her safety group. I definitely agree that anything that works towards the community is going to help the community.

An example I can give you is something that happened last week in regard to policing. The individual stated there was a drug dealer living below her. Whether that's the case, I don't know. The person living below her decided to call the RCMP. The RCMP responded, and because her daughter was crying, a social worker wanted to take that individual's daughter, despite the fact that the woman had a recording of that drug dealer verbally threatening to stab her and kill her in her sleep. They did nothing for that individual except remove the woman from her home and bring her over to her sister's home—otherwise, they would have needed to take her daughter. This was all instigated by the drug dealer.

• (1600)

The Chair: Wow.

Ms. Gerri Sharpe: Nothing happened. She was later returned home to that same place, where he started it over again that night. The RCMP responded to the call from the drug dealer and to his

concerns, not the uttered threats that were made to the individual woman. They don't live in the same home. He lives below her.

There are a number of different things.

The Chair: Thanks very much, Gerri. I'm sorry for interrupting you. We were going a little over our time, but you have such important information for us to hear.

I'm just going to let everybody know that we have the brief that was mentioned. The additional brief that was sent is currently being translated, so it will be sent to you.

I'm now going to pass it over to Andréanne for six minutes.

Andréanne, you have the floor for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for their truly enlightening and intriguing testimony on gender-based violence and domestic violence, which are both extremely significant issues.

Ms. Muise and Ms. Sharpe, thank you.

I took a lot of notes during your opening remarks. First, you talked a great deal about the cultural issue, and this is something I'd like to hear more about. Either of you can answer my question.

I'm a big believer in nation-to-nation dialogue. When you talk about new approaches and new relationships, are you referring to being more culturally sensitive to your own communities so that you can address the issue of domestic violence differently?

[*English*]

The Chair: Was that to somebody specific?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: As I said, either one can answer my question.

[*English*]

The Chair: Gertie, I see your hand is up.

Are you having a problem?

Ms. Gertie Mai Muise: No. I wanted to say that I think we need to give some time to our Inuit colleague.

I want to quickly say that this is not what I was referring to. The vast majority of first nations Inuit and Métis people live in urban, rural and remote areas, off reserve and off traditional territory. Though it's very important to have those discussions and to dialogue with the treaty holders, nation to nation, there are not a lot of political solutions to this complex social problem.

In fact, because of the jurisdictional wrangling and the politicization of indigenous people in this country, taking a nation-to-nation approach to ending intimate partner violence will never get us there.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: You talked about delays in terms of transferring funds and the importance of making investments, particularly in health care. You both talked about how this is really a public health issue, and you also spoke of the housing problem.

We experienced the housing problem in Quebec. Because of these delays, women sometimes end up in shelters for longer periods of time, and after that they need safe and secure housing. In your opinion, it's important to invest more in both health care, to prevent these issues, and housing, to allow women to break the cycle of domestic violence. That's what I gather from what you have said. Is that right?

Again, my question is for both of you, Ms. Muise and Ms. Sharpe. You both talked about the importance of breaking the cycle of violence and rebuilding women's trust in the system.

• (1605)

[English]

The Chair: Ms. Sharpe, do you want to start on that one?

Ms. Gerri Sharpe: Yes, please.

Thank you.

I want to say that housing is definitely a factor for Inuit women when it comes to those who are underhoused. There is a lot of overcrowding in Inuit Nunangat.

I want to refer back to the community setting. When I say “culture-based for Inuit”, it's not just Inuit, but here in the north. Today, for instance, here in Yellowknife, the Snowking has opened his snow castle; if you can hear it, those are Dene drummers. This is a free, community-based event that's taking place here. The reason I wanted to show that to you is that anything that involves the community is going to be healthy for the community. It needs to involve the men, the children, the elders and the community as a whole, and it can be something as simple as a drum dance. It can be something as simple as sewing. It doesn't need to be huge, although we need something huge to solve the problem overall.

Right now, one of the other barriers in place is the fact that we do not have any treatment centres in the north. When a woman needs to report an instance of intimate partner violence, she needs to consider if she's going to leave the home or have the individual removed from her home. If she needs to leave the home, she's going to be leaving her community.

It's not just a case of “Where do I go for the night?” It's more, “Do I want to leave the community, not just to go to Yellowknife or to go next door to my sister's house?” It's a community problem. It's not just a house problem; it's a whole community problem, so it takes a community to solve it.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to move over to Leah Gazan. Leah, you have the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Thank you so much, Chair.

A really deep thank you to both of you on the panel for the critical work you do.

Both of you mentioned the need for a guaranteed livable basic income. I'm actually the one who put forward Bill C-223 in response to call for justice 4.5 to implement a guaranteed livable basic income as a way to help mitigate the crisis of violence against indigenous women and girls. Senator Kim Pate currently has Bill S-233, which is being debated in the Senate. It's exactly the same bill with exactly the same wording in both houses of Parliament. We're working jointly on this initiative.

Madam Sharpe and Madam Muise, can you briefly explain why you support the need for a guaranteed livable basic income?

Ms. Gertie Mai Muise: I can start.

I think the importance of a basic livable income really is about understanding intimate partner violence and domestic violence [Technical difficulty—Editor]. The roots of that violence are well-documented by the truth and reconciliation commission. It has to do with colonialism and the layers of intergenerational experiences amongst our people. The basic livable income allows women and other gendered people with their families to be able to find a safe haven. As we're now finding, that's a critical piece to stopping further harms.

I'd like to pass it to my colleague Sean for a minute so that he can describe the housing, and how basic income and housing are connected.

Sean, would you mind talking a bit about what we're learning with our new initiatives?

Mr. Sean Longboat: Absolutely. It's well-documented that indigenous people experience poverty disproportionately in communities. We support basic income, but we also want to ensure that as part of that legislation, services will not be impacted. We know that economic self-sufficiency and having economic resources and housing options provide a protective factor and creates an alternative to remaining in an abusive home. It also creates an environment where women have the resources that they need to improve their lives, to access education, to access training and to become more economically self-sufficient.

We are doing a lot of work in this area right now in a program called urban indigenous homeward bound. That program shows that when you provide indigenous women with things like housing, income supports and culture and healing supports, they're far more likely to succeed, and they are succeeding.

• (1610)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much.

I only have a limited amount of time.

I agree with you. One of the things that is critical to Bill C-223 is the fact that it's in addition to current and future government programs and support, including accessible affordable housing with rents geared to income.

I'd like Madam Sharpe to respond briefly. I have a couple other critical questions I want to ask both of your organizations.

Ms. Gerri Sharpe: When it comes to women having a guaranteed income, this is something that we definitely would support for the pure fact that it would end reliance on a male companion. It would also help any children who are within the home, because often it is a woman who takes care of the children. She's not necessarily the only one, but in the case where there is intimate partner violence, it would normally be the woman who takes care of the child, and women will always look after their children first.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much.

Moving back to the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, you spoke a little bit about your indigenous diversion program. We know that for men who are violent, it's often rooted in deep trauma, and your diversion program is rooted in community. You've witnessed a very low recidivism rate by keeping people in the community, nurtured by community. I've been very clear about my position that you can't assist people with violent behaviours by incarcerating them because it's an anti-social violent environment. Could you tell us about why you think your indigenous diversion program is working?

The Chair: You have 15 seconds left.

Ms. Gertie Mai Muise: Yes. Sean definitely can tell you, and we can, and we'll send you more detail. I think if you look at our brief, you will find some detail in that also.

The Chair: Leah, we will get back to you, for sure.

We're going to be starting our second round. We'll be starting off with five minutes and passing it over to Michelle.

Michelle Ferreri, you have the floor.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Thank you, and thank you so much to our witnesses and everybody here.

I'm going to start with Gertie Mai.

You talked about new relationships, indigenous-led initiatives, in particular lived experience. I was wondering if you could expand with more specific examples of what you would like to see and what that would look like.

Ms. Gertie Mai Muise: We know that when indigenous communities that have a relationship and a deep knowledge of the needs of that community are provided with resources to do a job, they get the job done.

These new pathways I'm talking about and these new relationships are basically to eliminate some of the jurisdictional discord and wrangling that happens when we are trying to address very serious harm against indigenous women in our communities.

We're talking about direct funding relationships between the federal government and provincial service organizations that have a mandate to do this work, who are already doing this work and have

been doing it for decades. We're talking about getting rid of the white tape and eliminating a lot of the barriers and having a lot of flexibility.

We're talking about low barrier, about high flexibility. We're talking about an inside community of resources directed to those individuals and communities that need the resources, those families, so that they can even find their solutions and we can support them in finding their own solutions.

Those are some of the things. We have lots of ideas about this, because we've been testing a lot of things. The homeward bound program that Sean just talked about is a new initiative. It's underfunded—actually not even funded. That's an innovative thing, with wraparound services. That's a totally brand new approach that's working and that we'd love to talk more about with you.

• (1615)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: That's fantastic.

Homeward bound is in my riding of Peterborough-Kawartha. I'm a big ambassador for it. It is an absolutely outstanding program, which should be getting national attention, so I was really glad to hear you bring it up.

If you can send to the committee the specifics on what's working, I think that would be really valuable. We could get into the nuts and bolts of it.

I'd like to turn it over to Gerri.

Gerri, you brought a lot of passion to this committee, and we're really grateful for it. I think we definitely need to add a hashtag for "white tape". That was fantastic from Gertie Mai.

Ms. Gertie Mai Muise: That's not really mine, though; it's Sylvia Maracle's phrase.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: It's very good.

Gerri, you talk about what I believe in, and it's that the power of one is the power of many, and very much the community basis of... You touched on how challenging it is, because you're not just leaving the partner, but you're leaving the community.

You said you need to build trust, that there's a lot of distrust with the police. What's the best way to do that?

Ms. Gerri Sharpe: There was one thing I was very interested in attempting to do, and I wanted to try this in Yellowknife first. It was to make it mandatory for new officers to participate in some sort of community-driven training.

I am also an artist. I teach people how to make things like seal-skin mitts. One thing I was working on with the RCMP here in Yellowknife was setting up sealskin-making workshops. If there was four officers, then there be four community people where the conversations happen naturally.

This is something that would be community-driven and would benefit only the community. This is where the officers would be in a safe place to ask questions such as, “Why are you are raising your eyebrows for yes and squinting your nose for no.” They may not feel comfortable asking that in the community. This would give them safe place to ask questions like that.

There was a lot of interest from the RCMP in Yellowknife on that. Unfortunately, COVID prevented me from starting that. I think this is something that should go on in every community, because it immerses the officers in the community and it builds that trust.

When I lived in Inuvik and the officers would participate in Muskrat Jamboree, even by just running in one of the events with their full gear on, the whole community clapped and rejoiced in that.

In order to protect the community, the officers need to be part of the community. If they're not part of the community, they can't prevent everything from happening. They really need to be part of it.

The Chair: That's perfect. Thank you so much.

We're now going to move it over for five minutes to Anita Vandenberg.

Anita, you have the floor for five minutes.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank our witnesses for very compelling testimony.

I'd like to start with the friendship centres. I am familiar with the incredibly important work that you do and also what you mentioned about basing it on the lived experiences, and certainly in Ontario, most indigenous people are living in urban areas. In my riding, I have an indigenous youth council and some of the stories are very much along the lines of Inuit or indigenous young people coming to Ottawa, fleeing households in which there is violence, and then not being able to find a safe place to live, a place where they will not then face the same kind of violence. I know that advocacy led to our announcement of \$720 million for the indigenous shelter and transitional housing initiative. One of those will be right here in Ottawa for Inuit women.

How important is that and how important is it that people will be able to live within their cultural community but also have that safe housing? I note that you mentioned that there's a gap in government policy on urban indigenous, in my view, particularly for youth, young women. What more can we do? Should we be expanding that project? How do we resolve this?

• (1620)

Ms. Gertie Mai Muise: That's a complex question.

Having a focus on lived experience is so critical because many, many indigenous women and girls and their families in urban settings are basically invisible. There are a lot of things happening in the urban space. I really think there needs to be an urban-specific approach to anything we're doing in the country.

I'd also like to invite my colleague Sean to make some comments about a link to the shelters and that aspect of your question.

Sean.

Mr. Sean Longboat: Crisis intervention is an important aspect of the work of friendship centres. We do experience high service demands among women who are in crisis, who are fleeing intimate partner violence and other forms of violence. Therefore, shelters and transitional housing are important immediate interventions. We do have a number of partners across the province who are playing an important role in this space, but with that being said, it is important to highlight that the shelter system itself is not an adequate response to violence and that in many cases it can be a hostile environment for indigenous individuals.

A more effective solution, in our view, would be to develop safe and affordable housing options for indigenous individuals and families, including women who have been victims of intimate partner violence, to empower them to recover from their experience of violence. For many years, the OFIFC has been calling on the federal government to invest in a national urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy. We know from our research that safe and affordable housing is a protective factor that counteracts the risk factors for, really, all forms of violence.

We're happy to provide more detailed information on the specifics of our ask. I think we provided some general information in our brief, but we're happy to follow up with details on the nature of that specific approach.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you very much.

I still have a minute, so my next question is to Ms. Sharpe.

We talk about rural and then deep rural and the barriers that you described for some of the women who are in northern communities, the fly-in, fly-out communities. I know that The Ottawa Hospital is actually the primary care centre for most of Nunavut and that many of these women do end up here in Ottawa. I'd like you to talk a little bit about what more can be done so that they don't have to leave their community in order to get the help and the services, so they don't have to use the health system and fly all the way to Ottawa away from their families and supports in order to get help. How can we do that in place?

The Chair: You have 30 seconds to respond.

Ms. Gerri Sharpe: The big, big issue, I think, is going to be midwifery. Reverting back to allowing individuals to give birth in their home communities as well as moving education to online is going to be a major, major relief for individuals.

I also want to touch on the urban centre, because Pauktuutit definitely is so appreciative of the Ottawa-specific shelter that is there. There are 5,000 Inuit living in Ottawa, which is more than in some of the northern communities, so allowing them to be culturally relevant is definitely needed.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We are now going to move it to Andréanne.

Andréanne, you have two and a half minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for their testimony today. It's been truly enlightening.

I would like to come back to one aspect. One of you brought up the issue of intergenerational violence.

Can you elaborate on that aspect, which should be monitored? One of the two witnesses addressed this issue.

• (1625)

[English]

Ms. Gerri Sharpe: I'm going to say that was me. When it comes to instances of intimate intergenerational violence, I am a 53-year-old woman who lives in Yellowknife. I attended a residential school and there are many younger than I who have attended residential school. My mother attended the same residential school I went to.

When I was at Akaitcho Hall, there was a supervisor who had also been there when my mother had been at that same school. So the intergenerational trauma I felt is my mother's anger and not being able to articulate why she was angry [*Technical difficulty—Editor*], which led to her dying from three different cancers because she did not trust white doctors. She did not trust men.

In turn, very vulgar language was directed towards me and my brother. I tried my damndest to make sure that was not directed to my children and I think I have succeeded with that. My grandchildren will not know what I grew up hearing. That's still just four generations and there are three to go before that never happens again, so the intergenerational trauma is real.

The Chair: You have about 25 seconds.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: I had the opportunity to substitute on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

If you look at discrimination in federal institutions like the RCMP, in your opinion, is it crucial that we restore confidence in these institutions and that we stop discrimination to break this cycle of violence, particularly intergenerational violence?

[English]

The Chair: Were you expecting a response from either Gerri or Gertie?

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Madam Chair, actually, I wanted to get the witnesses' views on how important it is to rebuild confidence, and how federal institutions like the RCMP, where there is still far too much discrimination, can fit in.

I would like to hear what they have to say about the connection between discrimination in these federal institutions and intergenerational violence, which repeats itself from generation to generation.

[English]

The Chair: Okay.

We're coming right to this last two and a half minutes. I'm going to have to move it over to Leah.

Leah, you have two and a half minutes. Then we will do our best to get all the answers.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much, Chair, and thank you so much, Madam Sharpe, for sharing your story.

Federal funding is a huge issue. The national inquiry came out. We have no timelines, no directed funding specifically for indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA folks. Marion Buller and the APTN two weeks ago said the federal government has fallen flat on its face in response to the national inquiry.

One of the things—I'm hope I'm correct, Madam Sharpe—is that only 13 of the 51 communities in Inuit Nunangat have emergency shelters for individuals fleeing violence.

Can you please share the impact that the inaccessibility to safe shelters has had to protect women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA?

Ms. Gerri Sharpe: When it comes to violence in the smaller communities where there is not a shelter, I'm going to speak to the Beaufort Delta specifically, which consists of nine communities in the upper part of the Northwest Territories. They include Tuktoyaktuk, Sachs Harbour, Paulatuk, Fort McPherson, Tsiigehtchic, Inuvik and Aklavik. In that area, there are two shelters. One is an emergency shelter in Tuk. The other is the transitional home in Inuvik.

If somebody in Sachs Harbour needs to access the transitional home in Inuvik, they have to get the approval of the nurse in charge so that they can fly from Sachs Harbour to Inuvik to use the shelter. This isn't if they feel they need to utilize the shelter; this is how they get approval to use the shelter. It's considered to be part of health care, which it is not. It should have its own budget line and not be part of health because that is a conflict of interest.

• (1630)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Women fleeing violence can't just walk down the street to their local shelter for safety. What's the result in terms of murdered and missing women, for example? How has that increased as a result of that?

Ms. Gerri Sharpe: This is something I gave as testimony on to the inquiry as well, when they were here in Yellowknife.

In my opinion, when it comes to women needing to flee violent relationships, they go to urban centres. When they go to urban centres, women end up in Edmonton, Vancouver, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Montreal and Nova Scotia. This is where we lose our aunts, our sisters, our babies and our grandmothers because they've been completely removed from their support systems. They fall into this cycle of down-spiralling victimization.

It's a huge issue.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We have come to the end of time for our first panel.

On behalf of the status of women committee, I would really like to thank Gertie Mai, Sean and Gerri. Thank you so much for joining us today and providing this passionate testimony.

We'll take a break for about one minute. We're going to switch over to our second panel. We would ask this first panel of witnesses to leave the meeting. Just press the leave button on the bottom of your screen. That would be fantastic and we'll get started.

Jenna, do you have a question?

Mrs. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Thank you, Karen.

I do have a question. I have a motion I want to discuss briefly. I'm not sure when would be the best time during our meeting today.

The Chair: There's a little bit of committee business closer to the end. Perhaps we could allow the group to come through first. We'll get that done and then we'll ensure that we can have that discussion for you.

Mrs. Jenna Sudds: Amazing. Thank you.

• (1630) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1635)

The Chair: I reconvene this meeting.

I'd really like to welcome our next group of panellists today.

I'm going to make mistakes, so I need everyone to fix what I say.

From the Ka Ni Kanichihk, I would like to welcome Angela Brass, the coordinator of the U_Matter program. From Wabnung Abinoonjiiag, we have Angie Hutchinson, executive director. From the women of the Métis Nation, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak, we have Melanie Omenih, president.

We'll be starting off with five minutes each. I'll give you my timer. At one minute I'll show you my one-minute sign for you to start wrapping it up.

I'm going to pass it over to Angela for five minutes.

Mrs. Angela Brass (Coordinator, U_Matter Program, Ka Ni Kanichihk Inc.): Hi there.

The U_Matter program focuses on teen dating violence prevention, adding the indigenous teachings to it to bring that awareness to them. So far, it has been going very well, having the elder do the teachings for the youth and the young adults. It has been very beneficial.

We've had a lot of the youth disclose to us some of the things they've seen and experienced, which is a big step, but I feel that they've built that comfort with having the elder passing on the indigenous teachings to the youth.

So far, our program has been very beneficial for the Winnipeg inner-city area.

That's really all I had to bring forward today. If there are any questions—

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm now going to move the floor over to Wabnung Abinoonjiiag, and Angie Hutchinson.

Angie, you have the floor for five minutes.

Ms. Angie Hutchinson (Executive Director, Wabnung Abinoonjiiag Inc.): *Tansi*, and good afternoon.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson and honourable members of Parliament, for the opportunity to present to the committee today.

I join you today from Winnipeg, Treaty 1 territory. These lands have been stewarded by the Anishinabe, Cree, Dakota and Oji-Cree nations for millennia, and it is the homeland of the Métis nation.

I also acknowledge Treaty 3 territory and Shoal Lake first nation. Shoal Lake is the primary water source for Winnipeg.

My name is Angie Hutchinson, and I am the executive director at Wabnung Abinoonjiiag.

Wabnung Abinoonjiiag is an indigenous non-profit organization established to empower children and their families to end the cycle of violence. Wabnung Abinoonjiiag provides opportunities for holistic healing and support to children, youth, individuals and families to thrive through the support of programming and services that are rooted within indigenous ways of knowing.

Our programming is directed by the expressed needs of the community, gathered through community councils and community connections. At its heart, it's a relationship-based connection to community.

Wabnung Abinoonjiiag holds the vision of a place and time where children and their families can live free from violence and unrestrained by the impacts of violence. To achieve this vision, Wabnung Abinoonjiiag creates a community that wraps around children and their families to nurture their healing and well-being so that they can take their rightful places within the world and the future.

The truth and reconciliation calls for action speak to the restoration, revitalization and strengthening of indigenous cultures by and for indigenous peoples through the provision of culturally relevant services on issues such as family violence and indigenous-specific victim services programming.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples uphold that indigenous people have the right to self-determination, including social and cultural development. Indigenous people have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their history, languages, oral traditions and philosophies.

The national inquiry calls for justice support the revitalization of indigenous health and wellness care practices through land-based teachings and ceremonies and supporting indigenous-led initiatives for individual, families and communities to access cultural knowledge as a strength-based way to support cultural reclamation and revitalization.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples notes that understanding inequality and power imbalances lie not only in relationships but also within structural violence.

Family violence cannot be addressed as a singular problem but rather requires addressing the root causes of inequity, including racism and patriarchy as contributing factors to family violence in addition to addressing the dynamics and behaviours of violence within relationships.

The insidious impacts of the settler-colonial process across Turtle Island have been devastating for indigenous families, communities and nations. The intentional and systematic destruction of indigenous sovereignty and self-determination was undertaken through the destruction of families and communities through the removal of children through the residential schools, the sixties scoop era and the ongoing devastation of the child welfare system. These historical and ongoing systems of oppression are intended to strip away a sense of belonging and strength, disrupting families and communities, and they continue to have negative and damaging impacts on the well-being of indigenous communities.

Wahbung Abinoonjiiag creates a community of support for individuals, families and communities healing from violence for current and future generations.

Indigenous ways of healing are holistic and inclusive. Wahbung Abinoonjiiag honours that participants are the experts in their own experiences and that understanding one's healing journey is not a time-bound nor a linear process but rather would be reflective, flexible and responsive to experiences. Healing requires humility, patience and wisdom.

An aspect common to many indigenous nations is the connection to relationship building, community and kinship ties. It is with this understanding that healing for children cannot take place without the healing of families and communities. Programming needs to move beyond narrowly defined criteria and have the ability and flexibility to be responsive and rooted within relationship-based approaches. We must see the child as the centre of families and communities, and healing opportunities for children are intimately connected to healing for all of those around them.

Kinanâskomitin. Thank you.

• (1640)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to move over to Melanie with the Women of the Métis Nation.

Melanie, you have the floor for five minutes.

Ms. Melanie Omeniho (President, Women of the Métis Nation - Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak): Good afternoon.

My name is Melanie Omeniho and I am the president of Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak. I'd like to bring greetings on behalf of my board of directors and staff. I am located right now in the land of Treaty 6 and the Métis motherland, and am found in Edmonton at this time.

We implement our vision and mandate through national advocacy for distinctions-based, culturally relevant policies that are intended to improve the lives and well-being of Métis women, children, families and communities. We apply a gendered, intersectional approach to the views and equitable access for an equality of outcomes through a Métis gendered lens, considering our historical and contemporary Métis women's roles and acknowledging that gender and culture are inseparable.

It is also through this approach that we have developed the gender-based analysis that we work with. Preventing violence and abuse against Métis women, children and two-spirited and gender-diverse people has been a priority for Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak since its very inception. In addition to consistently engaging in activities to promote Métis women's leadership, LFMO undertakes many activities to end gender-based violence and intimate partner violence.

From our perspective, gender-based violence is not a women's issue; rather, it is an issue that requires a whole lot of society response to end this grim reality. Over the last few years, much of our work has been dedicated to developing our report, which we call "Weaving Miskotahâ". It is the Métis nation's journey to ending violence and missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

We are currently undertaking the development of the Métis nation action plan to implement our plan. In addition to our ongoing work on missing and murdered women, girls and 2SLGBT people, LFMO has undertaken the development of a gender-based violence tool kit. Our tool kit is strength-based and incorporates principles of lateral kindness. When we use these lenses, we hold in balance the acknowledgement of our challenges while celebrating our resilience and strength, those positive characteristics that have helped us to overcome for generations and keep going and thriving through our adversity. This is relentless work, but our mission will always remain to see a world where Métis women from across the Métis nation motherland are safe, respected, connected and empowered, and have the capacity to work with Canadian Métis governments, agencies and organizations to help create the conditions for healthy, vibrant and productive communities.

The lack of understanding of Métis identity and the misrepresentation of indigenous women have been reflected in their stereotypical media portrayals, which have led to their continued dehumanization and mistreatment in Canadian society. Gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence, against Métis women does not exist in a vacuum. It is a reaction that is a result of colonization, toxic masculinity and imposing patriarchal values and norms. Popular culture, including television shows, movies and video games, has situated Métis women and girls as uncivilized, hypersexualized and disposable.

When accessing services, Métis women, girls and gender-diverse people have continually faced racism that is distinct from the racism experienced by first nations and Inuit women, girls and gender-diverse people. The racism is often due to a lack of information about Métis women's experiences. One way that LFMO promotes ending violence with respect is through our "She is Indigenous" campaign, and we are going to continue to work with our grandmothers and elders to help make sure that there are kinship and community programs and cornerstones to healing.

We are going to develop, with an emphasis on education and awareness.... To help change this, we need to involve men and boys in these conversations, and we will continue to do this in a culturally relevant manner.

I thank you for this opportunity.

• (1645)

The Chair: Thank you very much. I really appreciate that as well.

We'll start off our first six-minute round of questions. We'll pass it over to Dominique, who is online.

Dominique, you have the floor for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Greetings to my colleagues.

Ladies, thank you for your top notch presentation.

Ms. Brass, you left us a little wanting. Obviously, I'm very interested in the program you set up, uMatter. What I find interesting is that you've brought generations together, that is, elders welcome the younger ones to pass on their knowledge and science.

How does it work? How is it organized? Who participates? Is participation voluntary?

I'm giving you the opportunity to tell us more about what is going on at home. It's significant and intriguing. All the initiatives presented in our study must be, or can be, exportable. That's what I want to check with you.

Thank you for making our mouths water, but we would need a little more detail on this experience.

• (1650)

[*English*]

Mrs. Angela Brass: Hi there. Thank you for being so intrigued. I apologize for the lack of information earlier.

My program is Ka Ni Kanichihk Incorporation in central Winnipeg. We run various programs out of our organization that deal with the youth and with young adults. The youngest youth we've presented to has been nine years old, and the oldest youths we've presented to have been up to, I believe, the age of 26. These are after-school programs that Ka Ni Kanichihk provides for the inner-city indigenous people in the core of the city where there are more low-income individuals.

We use the programs that are run out of Ka Ni Kanichihk to present to them—the uMatter program. The program has been around for two years, but unfortunately because of COVID we had to stop presenting the program. Now that we have finally been able to present, it's been almost every evening from Monday to Friday. I have an elder who comes in with me and we tag-team or take turns. She will provide an indigenous teaching to our youth, who are urban youth, because they haven't had the opportunity to learn these traditions here in the city. We get to provide that knowledge that they've been lacking as youth living in the city. They soak it in. They love it.

With what she talks about with her indigenous teachings, I incorporate the statistics and some of the things we see that are very violent—like in our music, in our social media, our movies, our video games and things like that. We're able to relate to the youth so that they have an understanding of how much teen dating violence there is. Unfortunately, there is quite a bit with indigenous people, because we have those traumas that have been passed down from generation to generation. It's educating our youth with these types of programs that have been very beneficial so far.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Are these teachings directly related to your indigenous resources, to your lived experience, to what is intrinsically connected to you?

[*English*]

Mrs. Angela Brass: It's not me directly. However, have I used some of my past traumas as examples with the youth? Yes, of course I have. Has the elder I work with used her past traumas as well? Yes, she has. This is how our inner-city youth, our urban indigenous youth, are able to relate to us. They're able to relate to their own families with some of their horrific passed-down traumas they've had to deal with as well.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Ms. Brass, thank you very much for the clarifications.

Ms. Hutchinson, as I understand it, you do the same type of activity. You talk about programs and services that are rooted in the indigenous way of life. Did I understand correctly? Is that really the basic premise of your activities?

• (1655)

[*English*]

Ms. Angie Hutchinson: All of our programming at Wabung Abinoonjiiag is rooted within indigenous ways of knowing, so that is a big part of how we are uplifting indigenous knowledge. Unfortunately, a lot of the time we face challenges in wanting to deliver indigenous-based programming that's rooted within our world views, our understanding and our connection to relationships and how that fits within funding criteria or reporting measurements, because they're two different world views.

One is often very quantitative and lacks an understanding of intimate relationships; those are relationships with self, with families and with communities. We see individuals who come to Wabung Abinoonjiiag as whole beings who exist not in terms of specific criteria tied to one program. So whether it be their link specifically to a program that supports individuals who have—

The Chair: Excuse me. We are past the six minutes by quite a few seconds here.

We are going to pass it over now to Jenna Sudds.

Jenna you have your six minutes, and perhaps that can be discussed in the next round as well. Thank you.

Mrs. Jenna Sudds: Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all of our witnesses for joining us today. It's certainly an important topic, and we appreciate your contributions today.

I'm going to start with Ms. Hutchinson. I am intrigued by the focus on community, which our witnesses on our previous panel today spoke as well. You also mentioned your approach, which involves the wraparound services for the child and family, to them from that perspective. I'd love to hear a bit more about the focus and the outcomes of that approach of wrapping around the family.

Ms. Angie Hutchinson: Thank you. I will note that I am getting—

Mrs. Jenna Sudds: Yes, there are connectivity problems.

Ms. Angie Hutchinson: If you are able to hear me, that wraparound approach—if I understood the question, because it cut out a little bit—is absolutely essential. Healing is not done on an individual basis; nor is it done on a specific trauma basis, such as family violence or intimate partner violence.

As has been mentioned by a number of folks who have spoken today, there's a larger kind of context of the historical factors that have contributed to the levels of violence we now see being faced within indigenous communities. The individual is seen within a larger family unit structure and a larger community unit structure, and when one individual starts to undertake that healing process, there are ripple effects through the community and through their families. Those go both ways. It's that reciprocal understanding of that intimate connection of community, relationship and kinship

ties that is rooted within who we are as indigenous people and in the way we move through the world.

Just the very fact of having wraparound supports and seeing individuals as part of larger units within families and communities is uplifting indigenous ways of knowing and being. It's the way we move through the world, and that's how we approach all of our aspects of healing as well.

Mrs. Jenna Sudds: Thank you very much for that.

I actually have one more question for you, Angie. From preparing for today and reading a bit about the amazing work you do, it's my understanding that you do offer transitional housing for up to one year. I'd like to ask how that program is going, what the availability is and what the demand is like.

Ms. Angie Hutchinson: Absolutely.

Our transitional housing is available. We say up to one year, but again it's rooted within that individual's experience. So we're responsive in our understanding that we're not setting a specific timeline so that in one year or 365 days folks are out the door. We understand that housing supply is a huge challenge. There may be housing that's available, but it's not a safe place for that individual to go, so we have to work and walk alongside that individual to find safe and stable housing that's affordable. Having affordable housing is a huge barrier to being able to have a permanent place to call your home, and we definitely see a huge challenge for family units. Larger family units require larger apartments or housing units. There's a huge gap in what's available within the housing supply right now.

• (1700)

Mrs. Jenna Sudds: Thank you very much.

I have a question for Melanie.

You stated that gender-based violence is not a women's issue and you also later commented on the importance of involving men and boys. I'd love it if you could expand upon that, particularly how you're engaging men and boys as part of the solution.

Ms. Melanie Omenih: Part of our role, of course, our mandate, is to work with Métis women and gender-diverse people, so we try really hard to work with them, and we also work with the other Métis nation organizations and governments to start bringing in opportunities for a change of attitude. None of us, much like the previous person said, live in isolation from each other, and the only way that we're ever going to change how things work is to change the dynamic of how people see each other.

Gender-based violence was not a normal part of our society in the early stages of our community, so one of the things that we are doing is working on developing programs and encouraging our various Métis nation regional organizations to start looking at things as more than a bystander and helping to understand how to change the attitude of people. We also have a She Is Indigenous program to help lift up women and demonstrate the important role they play in our communities so that men do not see us as a disposable part of society and we're not an objectified part of what our community is. Those are things that we try to develop to try to change how men perceive women, because it isn't just indigenous men who need to have re-education on who women are. It's all men.

Thank you.

Mrs. Jenna Sudds: Absolutely. Thank you.

The Chair: Awesome. Thank you so much.

We're now going to turn it over to Andréanne.

You have six minutes, Andréanne.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you very much to the three witnesses on our second panel.

Ms. Brass, Ms. Hutchinson and Ms. Omeniho, I have a question for each of you.

First, Ms. Hutchinson, in your opening remarks you mentioned the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. I would like to know if you have any more specific recommendations to make.

You mentioned a few suggestions, but in terms of the report, what could be introduced to work on this issue of domestic violence and intimate partner violence?

[English]

Ms. Angie Hutchinson: Thank you.

Programming that is indigenous-led and developed and available through the community at the direction of the community has been mentioned a number of times.

Individuals are the experts of their own lives and when we work with a community to understand the expressed needs of a community, community-based organizations such as Wahbung Abinoonjiag are then able to respond and provide [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]. We often see a mistrust of systems. Family violence services and indigenous victim services rooted within systems like the justice system or policing system are not trusted and folks are not going to reach out to those systems. They are going to come to folks whom they have relationships with, and that's community-based organizations, which build relationships on a day-by-day basis and inherently really work with individuals and walk alongside them. They don't direct individuals about how they should be healing or the steps they need to take to heal.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: If I understand correctly, it's important to work on restoring victims' confidence so that they can report their abuser. That's what I understand.

Ms. Omeniho, you mentioned the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. We know that was very important. I'd also like to hear from you, once again, on the important recommendations of this report that we have seen and heard on several occasions. They include funding for long-term operations and culturally appropriate resources for indigenous women and girls, in urban settings as well as in communities.

Do you feel that the federal government has responded positively to this recommendation when you bring up the National Inquiry into Missing and Murder Indigenous Women and Girls?

What could be done to improve this?

● (1705)

[English]

Ms. Melanie Omeniho: We've been a very active part of the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls process and the building of the national action plan. A very hefty response was given to try to address issues for the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, but I want to tell you that at this time, there has not been enough action to implement the recommendations that were brought forward.

There are many amazing recommendations, from trying to help with healing the families who have been impacted by the legacy of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls to recommendations around the prevention so that we can stop seeing this as a norm.

A lot of work needs to be done within the justice system to try and help our people, both as victims and as people who are a part of that criminal justice system, so they're not put in places of being vulnerable.

All of that work needs to happen now. Our sadness is that there is very little action actually happening at this time. There was a lot of energy put around this, but there has not been any follow-through.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Yes, sometimes it feels like this report has been shelved and we could look at it again and work to act on some of the recommendations that were in it.

Ms. Brass, you mentioned knowledge transfer. You talked about an intergenerational approach where elders tell teens about various experiences of violence that they have had so that the teens can learn from their mistakes and keep it from happening again, to break the cycle of violence. I think that's kind of what you're doing in your organization, but you're also making it a recommendation.

[English]

Mrs. Angela Brass: If we could have this program run all across Canada in every major city and even in the smaller communities, I totally recommend it. It helps, right? Having that shared passed-down knowledge will hopefully help change the way things have been from the historical harms we've had to encounter as first nations people.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: What I take away from your approach is that it's based on exchanges between elders and teens about different experiences in various communities to help teens learn from those who came before them.

I will let you address another point later, because I only have five seconds left.

Thank you very much.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to pass it over to Leah.

You have the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much.

It's good to see Winnipeggers here. It's nice to see you again, Madam Omeniho.

I have a very short five minutes, so I'm going to do a fast round. I want to hear from all of you because I know you're amazing.

I'll start with Madam Brass.

One thing we know about youth, and particularly indigenous youth, is that when they have a sense of identity and know who they are, it becomes a shield in the world. I know Ka Ni Kanichihk provides excellent programs for young people to really understand who they are and where they come from.

How do you think that assists with mitigating the crisis of violence?

Mrs. Angela Brass: I think it will help a lot. We have those historical harms or blood traumas that they referred to from our past generations, which we feel as indigenous people.

Having the youth learn these traditions that we lack living here in the cities makes a huge difference. I've seen it. The confidence they have is amazing. To be a part of that and to share that knowledge with them is the most rewarding thing I have encountered so far.

• (1710)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much.

Madame Hutchinson, you're a super rock star. I know that you've done so much work, especially around the national inquiry.

We haven't touched on this before. You spoke about how Wahbung provides land-based programming. Why is land-based programming critical in terms of assisting families with healing?

Ms. Angie Hutchinson: Absolutely. Land-based programming is an essential part of culturally based programming. Culture is tied to

the land. Language is tied to the land. Who we are as individuals is tied to the land. That opportunity, in particular for urban folks, to be able to access land-based teachings, where they haven't had the opportunity or they lack the economic ability to access land-based teachings, is critical. That is really at the root of who we are as indigenous people.

Again, it's that connection to our understanding of who we are, how we breathe and how we live. When we introduce ourselves as indigenous individuals, we will often tie ourselves to the land we come from. That's what lives in our bones and that's what lives in our blood. That's who we are as individuals. That access back to the land is restoring that sense of belonging and identity and knowing who we are as individuals.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much for that.

Madam Omeniho, you spoke about how you take strength-based approaches. You talked about "lateral kindness". That really hit me, because I know that often when people talk about indigenous people, they speak of us as a deficit, from deficit perspectives, and yet we are so resilient. We are still here. We were supposed to be eradicated, but we are still here. That speaks to our strength.

I want you to speak a little bit about that.

Ms. Melanie Omeniho: It has always struck me that one of the things that have made us as successful as we are has been the amazing and powerful indigenous women who are around us. I had the great fortune of being raised by many of my grandmothers and aunts. They always taught us that we lift people up. We don't try to find ways to tear them down.

We've worked really hard to try to implement that, in the work that we do and in the walk that we walk. That's what's so amazing about our She is Indigenous campaign. We are a resilient lot of people. We continue to tell people that we're not the social detriment of society. We are your doctors. We are your lawyers. We are your teachers. We are your grocery store clerks. We are the people who are walking right beside you and helping to lift up and support our country. We need to be treated with those values and that respect.

That's why we do strength-based work. We do a lot to try to lift up and hold up women all over the place. There are a number of indigenous professors who are working throughout our universities in this country, and they need to be recognized and acknowledged for all the things they bring.

We are not a deficit. We are not to be seen as anything lesser than anybody else.

I really appreciate the question. It's really good to see you again too.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Yes. For sure.

Just quickly, Madam Brass or Madam Hutchinson, you talked about kinship ties. Can you expand on that? What do kinship ties look like?

Ms. Angie Hutchinson: I can speak to that very quickly.

When we talk about the disruption of community, the disruption of a sense of place, that is that sense of kinship. Who we are and where we come from leads us to know where we're going. That kinship tie is really understanding self, it's understanding family, it's understanding community and it's understanding nations.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much.

The Chair: That's awesome. Thank you so much.

We're about to start our second round. We don't have a lot of time, so it will be the Liberals for three minutes, Conservatives for three minutes, and the NDP and Bloc 90 for seconds each.

You have three minutes, Michelle.

• (1715)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you.

Thank you so much to all of the witnesses. It's nice to hear about all of the work that's being done. I loved hearing from Melanie about how you're involving men, which I think is critical, and from Angie about children being a key component.

I'd like to go to Angela Brass to start.

I love your enthusiasm and optimism and passion for what you've been able to accomplish. When we talk about systemic trauma and multi-generations and how long it takes to see real change, you've worked with kids from age nine up to 27. Do you have any success stories that you can speak to of kids who've broken generational trauma?

Mrs. Angela Brass: I think right now what I could just really speak to is something that's very fresh and very current that happened last week with some of the young adults who were 17 and 18. They came back the next week—because it's a 12-week course that we run with them—and actually said they had started talking to their partners, apologizing for the way they'd treated them and were trying to discuss ways, which they learned from the U Matter program, on how to better their relationships. That was the biggest reward I think I could have right now or that we could have as a program.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: That's fantastic. You don't know what you don't know, right? So to change that trajectory is absolutely phenomenal.

I'd like to talk a little bit more, Angela, about what you're doing in social media. I'm very interested in this because I think it's one of the biggest challenges. We heard from Melanie about this, too—if Melanie wants to touch on this—about a lot of the media that is consumed by youth and adults that portray toxic images or thoughts. How are you using social media in a positive way to connect and educate teens and youth about healthy relationships?

Mrs. Angela Brass: I think right now the kids are so tech savvy, they teach us all of the positive ways and they also know the negative ways of social media. From the earliest age of nine up to, like I

said earlier, the later stages in their early twenties [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

What have we done? It's just that we've used these as examples so far of how we see a lot of the negatives that we've become desensitized to, and that we have to start [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] to go forward in a positive.

The Chair: Your time is up. Thanks very much.

Those last few words we did miss, Ms. Brass. Could you just say that last sentence again? I'm sure you don't have it directly in your head. No, you're thinking you're not sure what that last sentence was? We were talking about the negatives on social media. That was the part—

Did you get what you needed?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I think so. I didn't hear exactly, but I think I got it.

The Chair: Okay. We're going to move over to Emmanuella for three minutes.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Thank you very much to all of our witnesses for being here with us today.

My question is for Ms. Brass. I only have three minutes, so I'm probably limited in how many questions I can ask, but basically I'm interested in the U Matter program.

I know that you guys go into schools and do after-school programs. You said that you're in Winnipeg, I believe, so I guess there are many indigenous students attending the same schools and you can offer those types of programs. What about for kids who are in different cities and are more spread out and attending regular schools? What would you recommend for kids like that, who could benefit from these types of programs, and how can the government help support that?

Mrs. Angela Brass: One of the key things about the U Matter program is that when we go to do these presentations, we're not only presenting to the youth, but also to the adults in charge of these different programs or these different classes for them to observe what they're doing so that in the future, they can continue bringing teen dating violence awareness to the youth.

Will we have an opportunity to reach out to rural communities? Yes, I am hoping to do so and now with some of these restrictions being lifted with the COVID, I'm really hoping to get out there and bring more awareness to everybody.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Another question I have is that obviously this program is very necessary in these communities specifically. What are some of the things you can tell us about teen dating in indigenous communities that are some of the biggest problems that we should tackle and that we should be looking at when we're doing this report and making our recommendations?

• (1720)

Mrs. Angela Brass: I think for them just to be able to recognize that it's wrong, and for stuff that we may have seen intergenerationally and that some of us may have been told to just brush under the rug, we have to use our voice and have to put a stop to it, because it is wrong.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you very much.

Would any of the other witnesses like to chime in with regard to teens specifically? I know that you don't necessarily work with youth, but if you've done work with youth and have any additional comments to make, please do.

Ms. Melanie Omeniho: The only thing I would tell you is that this is the generation of communication. We need to really make sure that our young people are educated to be critical thinkers. As we can see, social media has its place and there are many benefits to it, but we always often see the negative aspects. We need to make sure that our youth are protected and safe.

I really do hope that the federal government starts looking at the development of legislation to protect young people from being vulnerable within the processes of the Internet and social media.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're now going to go to Andréanne, for 90 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: As my time is three times 30 seconds, each witness will have 30 seconds to answer the following question.

What should we prioritize to find real solutions to intimate partner violence? Is it more funding, more culturally appropriate resources for indigenous realities, or more legislation to better address the issue of coercive control?

[*English*]

Ms. Angie Hutchinson: I would say prioritize all of them. We need stable, secure funding that's flexible, that allows us to be responsive to culturally based programming that's relevant to whatever distinct region or community that it lies within. There has to be a prioritization for legislative changes that really address those larger systemic factors to violence, as well, so prioritize all of them.

Ms. Melanie Omeniho: I would also agree. All three of them need to be changed. I don't think we can work on just one element and forget all the others. We need more funding and resources. We need more shelters for a second stage transitional [*Inaudible—Editor*]. There needs to be a lot more emphasis on even the laws that relate to partner violence or domestic violence in our communities. Very often, there's very little attention paid to what actually protects the victims of domestic violence.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're going to go to Leah for the last 90 seconds.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Ms. Hutchinson, you have an addiction relapse program that uses a medicine wheel model as a framework for healing.

Can you explain that model? Can you also talk about why those kinds of culturally appropriate support systems are so critical in healing people who are struggling with addictions and are often rooted in trauma?

Ms. Angie Hutchinson: Absolutely. The connection between traumatic experiences and substance use is absolutely a big part. It takes a holistic understanding of an individual. Very often, many of the addiction treatments that are more western or mainstream really

try to be piecemeal and separate the individual by treating the addiction like a specific physiological response. However, they fail to recognize the historical trauma, or they address mental health concerns before addressing the addiction.

The programming that we offer is rooted within indigenous ways of knowing and really understands that the individual exists as a whole person. We are able to address the mental, spiritual, emotional and physical wellness of the individual to assist in the healing journey.

• (1725)

The Chair: Thank you so much.

Today has been just fantastic with the panellists. I'd really like to thank Angela, Angie, and Melanie for being here and being part of this great discussion as we're doing this study. Thank you very much.

To members of the committee, we have a bit of committee and administrative work to go through.

Jenna, I'm going to pass it to you. I know that we've had some discussions today. Did you want to put your motion forward?

Mrs. Jenna Sudds: Yes, I apologize I wasn't able to be in person. I'm not sure if it's necessary. It was really just about the timing of the minister coming. You've discussed that in the room already.

The Chair: We won't put it forward in an official motion then, Jenna. We'll just have an overview of what we're looking at.

In the last 24 hours everybody should have received this document. It's basically a document put together by our wonderful analysts from the Library of Parliament. It indicates who has been put on our list or who we have seen and then in the last table—there are tables here—it indicates what some of the possible gaps are and who we have not heard from. Clare and Dominique have put some information here, too.

In table 2 it will show anybody who's remaining on your list who has not come, and then it also indicates who has been invited and who has said no, that they're not able to come.

We know there are some gaps here. Today we've had some great discussions, but we're probably.... Today I heard questions on teen dating and things like that, which are exactly to do with our motion.

I'm going to read the document that our clerk has put forward to me. Halfway through the study is where we're at right now. These gaps are there. I'm going to ask if every team can look at these lists and refocus on making sure that they're filling in these gaps and that they have a list back to the analysts for March 3 at 4 p.m. for any witnesses they think we would like to see.

I recognize that we're coming closer to the end, so if anyone wants to reach out and have some informal conversations, we can do that as well.

One of the biggest matters—Jenna, I'll talk about that right now—is when are we going to see the minister? I think it's kind of confirmed. We're going to be speaking to the minister on April 1, so that's going to be closing up near the end of our study. The clerk has been working to make sure that we can fill in all of those times.

There are a couple of different things that are coming up. We have the supplementary estimates that are due on March 23, and we also have the main estimates that have just come out as well. The supplementary estimates have been referred to the committee. I would suggest, with the agreement of the committee, and I would hope that we could all be good on this, that we forego the study of the supplementary estimates and just look at the main estimates that are also coming, because they're basically all coming to us at the same time. I suggest we use our time wisely. During that time, that's when we call in the officials from WAGE, and it gives us an opportunity to also speak to the minister on that.

Is there any discussion or concerns about our forfeiting that and then being able to look at the mains? Is everybody okay with that?

Anita, do you have something?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Just for clarification, if we're inviting the minister for the 1st, assuming that she's available, that would be part of this study, I thought, because that was part of the original motion.

The Chair: That is correct; it would be part of this. Usually what we'd have is the minister for one hour and then WAGE would be here for the second hour. But we've already had WAGE here. Instead of having that two hours specifically on the study, what we could do is separate it so that we have the minister for that one hour and have the support from her staff there, and then we can switch into the main estimates for the second half of that, if that's okay. Then we're not calling the same people back within days, and we have the minister here at that time as well.

Is there any discussion? Are we okay on that?

Go for it, Anita.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: The mains aren't until May, I believe.

When are they due?

A voice: They're due on the 31st.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: I think we could have her come for the study, and then we can look at another opportunity to have her before the end of May for the mains. It would be a little bit confusing to have both on the same day.

• (1730)

The Chair: Okay, that's not a problem. That's absolutely fine.

Would we be looking at having another panel, then, for that day? Yes?

Okay, so what we'll do is try to fit in another panel, then, for that day. We'd have the minister for the one hour and put in a panel for three, if that's okay with everybody.

Do we get support from everybody on allowing the supplementary estimates to go through? Is that okay if it's reported back to the House? Are there any questions?

I see everyone is okay with that.

What we'll do is go back to the main estimates. We'll find a time that we can look at them, because I know we'll be starting our second study. We'll be doing drafts. We'll be doing all of these things, so we'll get that done. What we'll be looking at is that day.

Are there any other questions or concerns?

Leah, go ahead.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Very quickly, I know that there has been a lot of interest in rehabilitation for men. I have somebody who is a real champion. Mitch Bourbonniere brought his name up.

Is there room? Are you saying that we can offer up names?

The Chair: We should have those names in by Thursday night, and send me a quick note on that as well. Right now we do need to speak about those things. That's part of our study in terms of what we can look at, so please send those names forward, and we can look at that again.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you.

The Chair: Are there any other questions or concerns?

Go ahead, Michelle.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: To clarify, if we want to put forth more witness names for gaps that we want to fill, do we need to talk about it in committee here, or...?

The Chair: Talk about it among your own caucuses, within your own parties, and submit those. We all are affiliated. We all get so many witnesses for this study. The clerk has worked to see who can fit in there, but I think we can focus on what we haven't heard, right?

I'm going to pass it over to our clerk, because she...Oh, I said to send them to the analysts, but please send them to Alexie. They're supposed to go to Alexie.

Are there any other questions or concerns? Is everybody good?

Everybody, thank you so much for the great meeting. I will see everybody on Friday.

We have lots of great panels. I'm going to read them out: the Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration, the Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment, the Ending Violence Association of Canada, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, Changing Ways, and the Boys and Girls Club of Peel. We'll be seeing you all on Friday, and I'll see you then.

The meeting is adjourned.

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