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Chair: Mrs. Karen Vecchio



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• (1605)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 28 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women. It is so nice to see witnesses joining us in person again.

Lisa, we are happy to have you at FEWO.

Before we begin, I have been informed that we have resources until 6:15 p.m.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted on Tuesday, February 1, the committee will resume its study of resource development and violence against indigenous women and girls.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of June 23. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and members. Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your microphone, and please mute yourself when you're not speaking.

For the interpretation for those on Zoom, you have the choice, at the bottom of your screen, of "floor", "English" or "French". For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel.

I will remind you that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

Members in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. Members on Zoom, please use the "raise hand" function.

The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can, and we appreciate your patience. I'll be putting up this red card as notice of your one-minute warning, meaning that you have 60 seconds remaining.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses: from the Native Women's Association of Canada, Lisa J. Smith, senior director; from Women of the Métis Nation, Melanie Omeniho, president; from Wa Ni Ska Tan: An Alliance of Hydro-Impacted Communities, Professor Jarvis Brownlie and Associate Professor Ramona

Neckoway; and from Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, Kilikvak Kabloona, chief executive officer.

They're online. I know some of the witnesses have a problem with earphones, so if it's the will of the committee, they can send a written submission because the translator cannot do the translation.

You can send the submission to the clerk by tomorrow so that we can do our translation.

We'll go over to Lisa.

Go ahead. You have the floor for five minutes.

Ms. Lisa J. Smith (Senior Director, Governance, International and Parliamentary Relations, Native Women's Association of Canada): Good afternoon, everyone. I am truly honoured to be here amongst you. I'm told that I'm the first in person since COVID, so I truly am honoured to be here on unceded territory.

My name is Lisa Smith, as the honourable chair mentioned. I'm senior director of governance, international and parliamentary relations. That title is a lot taller than I am, but here we are.

As you know, the Native Women's Association of Canada, NWAC, is highly committed to ending the ongoing genocide of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, MMIWG, and advocating for the implementation of the calls for justice of the national inquiry's final report.

Honourable members and Chair, there is a link between resource extraction and violence against indigenous women, girls, transgender and gender-diverse people, as this honourable committee has identified. Therefore, it is essential to consider women's safety during all stages of resource extraction projects.

Resource extraction projects usually create environments described as "boom towns" and "man camps", where transient non-indigenous men, who are paid high salaries, come to work on these sites. These sites are reported to have increased rates of sexual violence and human trafficking. Oftentimes, honourable members, when we think of human trafficking, we think that it doesn't take place in this beautiful country we call Canada, but of course it does. These sites are certainly an area where that does occur.

James Anaya, the former United Nations special rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, investigated Canada in October 2013. I encourage everyone here to read his report. He reported to the Human Rights Council that extractive industries disproportionately impact indigenous peoples, especially indigenous women and girls living near oil, gas and mining operations. It is important to remember that indigenous women's physical, spiritual and cultural relationship with the environment and its resources creates an intimacy. Let's sit there: It creates an intimacy and an invaluable knowledge base for program and policy development.

How did we get here? Colonial expansion is intrinsically linked with resource extraction. However, when Bill C-15, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, received royal assent, advocates breathed a sigh of relief, since this will ensure the minimum human rights of indigenous women, transgender and gender-diverse people will be upheld when Canada's policies and legislation are aligned with that act.

Article 3 of UNDRIP states: "Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination." This guarantees the right to "freely determine" their political condition and their right to "freely pursue" their form of "economic, social and cultural development". That is very much engaged in this discussion, so I thank you for having the discussion.

According to James Anaya, one of the most dramatic contradictions that indigenous peoples in Canada face is that so many live in abysmal conditions on traditional territories that are full of valuable and plentiful natural resources. These resources are in many cases targeted for extraction and development by non-indigenous interests.

Truth and Reconciliation Day is coming up on September 30. We must think about that, too, in this discussion. Indigenous languages that it was attempted to have lost or that were lost during residential school abuses are more descriptive than Latin when they describe fauna and flora, so there are nuances there.

NWAC understands that gender-based analysis must be culturally relevant. I do have resources in both official languages that I can provide to the committee. We call it a "CRGBA", a culturally relevant gender-based analysis.

I will also say that NWAC has a report that I can provide, the "Indigenous Women and Impact Assessment Final Report", and a quick guide.

• (1610)

I'll reiterate that NWAC takes guidance from the MMIWG final report. We want to recommend that a CRGBA lens is provided in a meaningful part of the planning, assessment, implementation, management and monitoring of resource development—so throughout the entire process.

I'll stop there, Chair. Again, it's such an honour to be here.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Lisa.

Now we'll move to the Wa Ni Ska Tan and Dr. Neckoway.

It's over to you for five minutes.

Ms. Ramona Neckoway (Associate Professor, Wa Ni Ska Tan: An Alliance of Hydro-Impacted Communities): Hi.

Dr. Brownlie and I have prepared a joint statement, so we're going to tag-team it, if you will allow us. Dr. Brownlie is going to commence the presentation.

Mr. Jarvis Brownlie (Professor, Wa Ni Ska Tan: An Alliance of Hydro-Impacted Communities): Hello, honourable Chair and committee.

Thank you for including us in this very important process, and thank you for holding this inquiry in response to the national inquiry's call to justice. It's really heartening to see this happening.

We are here representing the Wa Ni Ska Tan Alliance of Hydro-Impacted Communities, which is a group of academics and first nations members who have spent years working collectively to document and call attention to the adverse impacts of hydro projects on Manitoba first nations.

My colleague Dr. Neckoway has worked on hydro-related issues with her own community, Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, and other affected first nations for more than 15 years.

Ms. Ramona Neckoway: I would like to take this opportunity to thank you as well.

I speak to you today not just as an academic, but as a Cree woman and grandmother who has experienced the effects and impacts of hydro power.

My colleague Dr. Brownlie has worked as part of the Wa Ni Ska Tan community-based research team for the past eight years. We have learned first-hand from many community members about the ongoing effects they have experienced over the past 50 years as a result of hydro power operations on their territories, which affect nearly every aspect of their lives and communities.

• (1615)

Mr. Jarvis Brownlie: We submitted a brief to this committee in May. In that brief, we offered a short summary of some of the key impacts of hydro power, which commits serious violence against the environment and the waters, despite its image as clean, green energy.

Ms. Ramona Neckoway: Our languages, the water, the land and our families contain the foundations of social bonds, identity, community strength and resilience. They also anchor us to the past and to the future.

Hydro power, combined with multiple other harms resulting from practices of colonization, has made the practice and transmission of our cultures much more difficult. Ongoing damage to land and water has resulted in great social and cultural harm, yet these types of consequences are not widely known.

Mr. Jarvis Brownlie: The practice and teaching of indigenous cultures happen out on the land and on the water. These were the sites where ceremony took place and, in many forms, they are where connections were forged with the land and with families.

The disruption of these teachings and practices is itself a form of cultural violence. The cultural, linguistic and spiritual losses that result from hydro power are key factors contributing to other forms of violence within indigenous communities.

Ms. Ramona Neckoway: A recurring theme we hear from community partners and friends relates to grief and loss that have been suffered, including the loss of culturally meaningful and sacred places that have been destroyed. Life on the land and water was a focal point in the lives of our parents and their parents and so on.

We are hearing concerns related to water and contamination of the waters, and even concerns related to mercury poisoning. Animals have moved away or been drowned in their burrows, and the ability to provide for families has been largely been taken away. Today, many peoples have to travel far away from hydro-affected waters to hunt, trap and fish.

We want to be clear that there is a great deal of strength in our communities, but for many, providing the basics of life for themselves and their families—just ensuring they have water to drink and food to eat—remains an ongoing struggle.

Mr. Jarvis Brownlie: In recent years, members of several Manitoba first nations have spoken out about the prevalence of violence committed by members of hydro construction crews—in both the past and in recent times—disclosing that many women were sexually assaulted by workers who lived in those temporary hydro construction camps. Four Manitoba first nations have recently called for a public inquiry into these abuses, which were also documented in the 2018 “Regional Cumulative Effects Assessment” report by the Clean Environment Commission. We support this call for inquiries into these abuses.

Indigenous societies understand water as a living being that must be respected and protected. This understanding of water makes the harm from hydro dams even more painful, dangerous and a form of violence. They also understand women as having a special relationship to water, in part through the water associated with carrying and birthing babies. Because of this, women have a special responsibility to protect water and tend a relationship with it. Canada's exclusion of indigenous women from having a voice in relation to water and water use is another form of cultural violence that also squanders important knowledge and strength that would benefit Canadian society.

We also want to stress that while communities have suffered a lot of harm from hydro dams, they are also communities with a lot of strength. There are concrete steps that can be taken to reduce and partly reverse the damage from hydro power. We'd be happy to talk about that more. These are steps to help communities regain safety, identity, cohesion and, even more importantly, to support their revitalization and the transmission of languages and cultures as the essential foundation for healthy and vibrant communities.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Dr. Brownlie and Dr. Neckoway.

Finally, we will go to Kilikvak Kabloona from Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.

You have five minutes.

Ms. Kilikvak Kabloona (Chief Executive Officer, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated): Thank you, Madam Chair.

My name is Kilikvak Kabloona. I am the chief executive officer for Nunavut Tunngavik. We are responsible for upholding the Nunavut Agreement, a constitutionally protected treaty.

I am joining you virtually from Iqaluit, Nunavut with really slow Internet speed. If I get disconnected, I will try to connect again.

Before I begin, I would like to recognize Savanna Pikuyak, a 22-year-old from Sanirajak who moved to Ottawa earlier this month to attend college in order to become a nurse. She was murdered by her landlord—a man who was on probation after being convicted and sentenced for assaulting his former girlfriend.

Violence against Inuit women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+, including in the resource sector, is a systemic issue based in colonization. The racist and discriminatory legacy of colonization disrupts, undermines and ignores Inuit women's place in society, and diminishes their roles and responsibilities as Inuit. Colonization leaves Inuit women untethered from their identities, families and communities, with patriarchal values informed by colonial standards that replace Inuit values.

From colonization, there is a long history of racialized, gender-based violence perpetrated against Inuit women. Today, in the Nunavut context, Inuit women are being forced to accept low-wage work on a rotational basis at mining camps and to leave their children, for two weeks at a time, with extended family. However, if governments had provided the training guaranteed under article 23 of the Nunavut Agreement, many of these women would be working in their home communities as nurses, teachers or administrators of their local governments.

More specifically, regarding resource development, “Reclaiming Power and Place” found that indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people across Canada have been targets of violence due to their communities being near natural resource industries. The culture of gender-based violence fostered within these camps has been described as one that exacerbates isolation, drug and alcohol abuse, violence, misogyny, hypermasculinity and racism among the men living there, which all contribute to indigenous women and girls being at high risk for experiencing violence.

In Nunavut, there is a lack of information about the connection between resource extraction and human trafficking. Further considerations and research into violence mitigation strategies, as they relate to man camps, are high needs among all communities in proximity to resource extraction.

I was encouraged by budget 2021's funding commitment of \$2.2 billion over five years to respond to the tragedy of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. Our territory was devastated 14 days later by Emerald MacDonald's murder in Kugluktuk. I am discouraged by bureaucratic delays in accessing this funding. As far as I am aware, none of the funding announced in budget 2021 has been spent in Nunavut. Funding for one shelter has been committed.

I would be pleased to accept your questions at the appropriate time.

• (1620)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Ms. Kabloona. Thank you very much for your time.

We will now start our six-minute rounds. We will start with the CPC.

Michelle Ferreri, I'm going to pass the floor to you for six minutes.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all of the guests joining us in person and virtually. I would love to start with Ms. Kabloona.

Ms. Kabloona, I had the privilege to visit your beautiful territory this summer and was in Iqaluit. It is an absolutely outstanding and beautiful place. You have a lot to be proud of. Thank you so much for telling us about the young woman who was murdered by somebody who was obviously known to the police.

Could I just, if I may, clarify something you said? You said the government has an agreement to honour with respect to training. Can you clarify that point?

• (1625)

Ms. Kilikvak Kabloona: The Government of Canada and the Government of Nunavut have a constitutionally protected treaty with the Inuit of Nunavut called the Nunavut Agreement. Under this agreement, article 23 is about Inuit employment in government to a representative level of 85%. Currently the Government of Nunavut is at approximately 50% Inuit employment, and the Government of Canada is at approximately 30% Inuit employment. Article 23 outlines the steps to achieve representative Inuit employment, including pre-employment training.

The agreement was signed in 1993, and it was expected that training would occur in our communities in all government-related fields of teaching, nursing, accounting and law and that Inuit would take the positions within our communities. That training has not occurred.

In 2015 there was a settlement between the Government of Canada and Nunavut Tunngavik for failures to train Inuit for government positions. We are still concerned with the slow pace of this

training and, as a result, Inuit women often have no choice but to accept low-paying work on a rotational basis at camps such as mining camps.

Thank you.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you so much for that answer.

Has there been any reason given to you as to why this training hasn't been provided? Also, has there been any discussion in terms of including Inuit in how they can be a part of the hiring process and be trained?

Ms. Kilikvak Kabloona: Currently, the government is stating that the timelines and the targets are not enforceable, so there is no way forward to training. It's just an open-ended commitment. We challenged that and expect that pre-employment training plans and targets would be put into force. Of course, they would need to be adapted based on new information and address new challenges. We'd like to see new campus facilities built. We'd like to see more training programs in our communities, day cares for our students to attend training and a number of initiatives under article 23. There is some interest in both governments for a pre-employment training strategy, but we would like to see more progress on that.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you so much, Ms. Kabloona.

I know I'm probably running out of time, so I just want to say into the record that you would like to see some accountability on follow-through and that this training needs to happen so that these young women can make the wages they need to get out of poverty cycles. The government obviously needs to be following through on what they're saying and doing what they say, not just writing the words.

Ms. Kilikvak Kabloona: Yes, that is correct.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Michelle.

Now we will pass it over to Anita Vandenberg.

• (1630)

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

Before I begin, I'd like to honour Savanna Pikuyak, who came to study in my riding and was murdered in my riding. All she wanted to do was study nursing, and she was new to Ottawa. It clearly shows that we have to do more.

Thank you very much, Ms. Kabloona, for bringing that up, and also sympathies to her community and her family.

I want to start my questions with Ms. Smith. You mentioned CRGBA, and, if I'm not mistaken, I think it's the first time that term has been mentioned in this committee. It's culturally relevant gender-based analysis. I think it would be of interest to all of us if you could perhaps elaborate a little bit on that.

Ms. Lisa J. Smith: I think having a gender-based analysis that's culturally relevant for indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people has to be trauma informed. We don't want to perpetuate colonial attitudes in our gender-based analysis. We have to safeguard our policies so that those colonial attitudes aren't enriched by our policies, even though there is a gender-based analysis.

Our report says that the CRGBA “considers the historical and current issues faced by Indigenous women, including the impacts that colonization and intergenerational trauma have caused”. We go on to talk about “a risk of perpetuating further marginalization, oppression [and] violence against indigenous women”, as I mentioned.

If it's helpful to the committee, I can certainly send this report in both official languages.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Yes, I think we would very much appreciate that.

The other thing you alluded to, and it's something we see quite often both internationally and here in Canada, is this concept of “rich land, poor people”. One thing we've heard in this study is that even if women are finding jobs in the resource extraction sector, it's often low-paying and very precarious work. They're not in the leadership positions. They're not the CEOs, the executives or the board. Even if they get to those board positions, there's a toxic culture that pushes them back out.

I wonder if you could suggest what we do to make sure that the women are also benefiting from the tremendous wealth that the land and the resources provide.

Ms. Lisa J. Smith: Thank you again for that question. It's very well put.

I think it goes back to really understanding and having space for indigenous women leadership. That's so important.

On climate action.... I kind of went off my notes and talked about indigenous languages and the nuances we've lost. I would say, too, that indigenous leadership and indigenous knowledge in general can really help in terms of climate action and all our interactions with the land and water because there is that specialized knowledge there that we hold, especially as indigenous women.

It's creating a space for truly understanding that and then applying it. It's okay to study that connection, but we must ensure that it's implemented and given high regard in terms of the entire process of resource extraction.

It is something I feel very passionate about. I'm happy to submit further to the committee on that as well.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you so much.

I do have another question for Dr. Neckoway and Dr. Brownlie.

In your testimony, you spoke about land and water and the intrinsic connection between that and culture and gender. Usually when we think about land and water, we think of physical health. We don't always think about culture and certainly we don't think about culture in terms of how women are more connected.

I wonder if you could tell us a little bit more about that, looking at the potential avenues where, rather than causing harm, we can actually make this something that will have benefit.

• (1635)

Mr. Jarvis Brownlie: We've been thinking a lot about solutions as we've worked with communities. The thing that our community partners talk about all the time is culture, the harm to culture because of residential schools and other colonial histories, but very much because of the hydro dams, and that's ongoing damage. They talk about the fact that restoring the culture is essential to heal the communities and reverse some of the negative effects of colonialism.

In doing so, we can restore women to the position that they held in Cree societies before colonization, which was a position of honour, authority and equality. Women were seen to have a special connection to water, partly associated with the water in the womb in which babies are carried and the water that breaks when babies are born. Women also traditionally were responsible for being midwives, of course, bringing children into the world, and also, at the time of death, caring for the deceased. All of that involved water, so there's this very holistic body of understanding that associates women and water, and women having a special responsibility to water.

You'll see that with women holding water walks in these times, trying to protect and heal the water.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you.

Now I want to move to Madam Larouche.

You have six minutes, Andréanne.

[Translation]

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

I thank all the witnesses for being with us this afternoon for the continuation of this study, which comes in a particular context. Indeed, we are a few days away from September 30, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. It is in this context that we are gathered today.

Ms. Smith, I would like you to tell us a little bit more about how this date, which you mentioned, could relate to our study. When you institute a national day, you hope that it's not just another holiday and that it's used for learning.

In the context of today's study, what would you like us to think about? What connection could we make to September 30?

[English]

Ms. Lisa J. Smith: That's an excellent question. I apologize for not speaking in French.

I wrote an article today on that very issue. Of course the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released 94 calls to action, and those were obligations on governments and civil society, but in my opinion, truth and reconciliation is everybody's obligation. You and I have a role to play in that. It's decolonizing your thoughts.

In this committee, when you go back and you reflect on our testimonies and read the reports, you deconstruct. I went to law school. I have formal colonial education, so I am consistently trying to decolonize those thoughts.

I'm going to share a story with you briefly, honourable Chair. I was in a meeting and I was humiliated, but that's a part of truth and reconciliation. I had said to a chief that the Supreme Court of Canada said whatever it was they said, and I said, "That's the law. That's the reality." The chief looked at me and said, "Yes, according to the Supreme Court of Canada."

We have to question these things. We have to decolonize our thoughts and what we knew. That's the process of truth and reconciliation. It's not supposed to be easy. It's supposed to be hard. It's supposed to be reflective.

I ask everyone on September 30 to reflect, to question things that you took for granted your entire life. That's not easy, but that's all we can ask of you.

I want everyone to remember we're all in this together. We're all fighting the same fight, so we need to lean on each other, and we need to grieve. I think grieving is a part of truth and reconciliation as well. I know the council of truth and reconciliation has an interactive map. I encourage everyone to look at that map, to look at how plentiful residential schools were, and to look at the facts therein and have an intimate knowledge of that, and grieve that. Then, go back to committee, read your reports with that lens and question what you always took for granted. Like I said, it's not easy, but it's worthwhile.

Thank you.

• (1640)

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Ms. Smith, thank you for your testimony, which reminds us of the importance of this September 30 date. I hope we will have another opportunity to speak, perhaps in a second round, during which I will have further questions for you.

Professor Brownlie, you mentioned the link between water and women. To me, it is completely absurd and unfair that in 2022, so many indigenous communities still do not even have access to clean water, which is essential for life. This creates a form of impoverishment, and the link between poverty and violence has been proven.

I would like to hear you explain the importance of the government taking action to provide clean water to those communities that still do not have access to it.

[English]

Mr. Jarvis Brownlie: Thank you very much for your question. I would like to answer in French, but my French is too rusty, so I will answer in English—but it's nice to hear French.

The fundamental problem with drinkable water is that we have contaminated our rivers and lakes. I hear from the community members that Ramona and I work with. For thousands of years if they needed water, they would dip their cup in the water and drink. The rivers and lakes in northern Manitoba used to be as clear as

glass. You could see all the way to the bottom. Now they are mud soup, full of chunks of mud and whole dead trees, dead animals, and debris from the hydro dams and the water level manipulations.

We wouldn't need water treatment centres in these communities if we weren't destroying the water and the land. This is where extractive industries, again, are something that we need to overhaul. We need to do things differently because that will be the solution: if we just let the lakes and rivers return to the healthy state they used to be in.

At the same time, I agree that until that happens, it is a national disgrace that we have whole communities that don't have drinkable water. I know that the government has committed to ensuring that all communities do have drinkable water, but we are not there yet.

I just heard from one of our community members, as I asked them what they wanted us to say to you all today. One was talking about the burden every day on women. The women carry the burden of trying to ensure they have drinking water every day for their families.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you.

Now we will move to Leah Gazan.

Go ahead, Leah, for six minutes.

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

My first question is for Dr. Jarvis Brownlie. It's so good to see my friend here.

In the last Parliament we passed Bill C-15 to see the adoption and implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, which includes article 22:

1. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities in the implementation of this Declaration.
2. States shall take measures, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, to ensure that indigenous women and children enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination.

We also accepted the calls for justice that came out of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. I want to point specifically to call for justice 13.1:

We call upon all resource-extraction and development industries to consider the safety and security of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people, as well as their equitable benefit from development, at all stages of project planning, assessment, implementation, management, and monitoring.

Where are we at? I'd say we're failing, particularly because I put in an Order Paper question on June 20, asking specifically about what progress the government has made towards a benefit agreement that ensures the security and safety of indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+. What activities have been co-developed to mitigate this current crisis of violence? How much attention has been placed on supporting an analysis of gender-disaggregated data? How much money has been spent through the aboriginal community safety plan?

You know, to my disappointment actually, most of the money has been spent on training in resource extraction, which is great, but we can't talk about economic benefit without talking about social costs. Certainly, it's costing the safety of indigenous women and girls and diverse-gender folks.

In fact, currently in this area, for the whole country, under \$13 million a year is being spent to address this crisis.

One of the things you mentioned was the impact, the burden that is on women, particularly in hydro-affected communities in Manitoba. You've also come up with policies and solutions. I'm wondering what recommendations you have for solutions to end this kind of violence. What do you think needs to be done to really critically address this ongoing genocide?

• (1645)

Mr. Jarvis Brownlie: Thank you, Leah, for the question.

I think Ramona and I will both answer. Ramona, I think, will have some thoughts on the funds and resources for cultural programming.

Just in terms of changing the situation, these communities need to have a say. UNDRIP says that indigenous people have the right to control their territories. They have the right to self-determination. They have the right to decide what happens in their territories. They have the right to free, prior and informed consent.

Many of the hydro dams are 50 years old, so it's a *fait accompli*. What we're saying is that things can still be done differently. The dams aren't going to be removed, but the water level manipulations are a big part of the problem. If Manitoba Hydro would work with communities, including women, and consult and really listen, we could have major improvements. There's a program under which they depart from the original water levels allowable. If we could go back to the original water levels, that would help a lot.

Ramona, do you want to talk about—

Oh, sorry.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I'm sorry but I just want to ask a question specifically to Dr. Neckoway.

One of the things we heard in earlier testimony was that free, prior and informed consent absolutely doesn't happen often, and even when consent occurs, often it's absent women's voices.

Would you agree with that statement? If not, could you please expand?

Ms. Ramona Neckoway: That's a complicated question.

I think there certainly has been an absence of women. I think that's partly due to the structures that are being used in the consent process. Again, when we think about the level of education in the communities, not everybody speaks English as their first language. There are a lot of pressures that may impact the ability to provide consent or even provide enough of a description so that folks know what's going on in the communities. That can be problematic at times. I haven't investigated that myself, but from having conversations and from the work that we've done with people, I think an ob-

servation that can be drawn is that there isn't a lot of direct involvement of women in that process.

If I could just chime in, I know you asked Mr. Brownlie about possible solutions—

• (1650)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Ms. Neckoway.

Thank you, Leah.

We are moving now to our second round, starting with Dominique Vien.

You have five minutes. Go ahead, Dominique.

[*Translation*]

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

Good afternoon, everyone. I thank the witnesses for being here this afternoon.

What I am very interested in is finding a way to bring everyone together around a common goal: to end violence against women and girls. How can we strengthen the leadership role of women? There's a lot of talk about that this afternoon.

I would also like to hear from the witnesses about the resource companies, civil society, police, law enforcement present in the territory, and municipalities. How can we bring all these people together? We're talking about broad principles, but we must be pragmatic. How do we go about changing the trend and the situation quickly and concretely?

Ms. Smith, I would invite you to answer first.

[*English*]

Ms. Lisa J. Smith: That's a powerful question, and I thank you for asking it.

I'll touch on a couple of things. You mentioned a common goal and asked how we get there together. I do want to say that we need to encourage men and boys to be a part of this discussion. You know, there is a toxic masculinity, and we need men and boys to feel a part of this discussion as well. We need them to feel safe to be emotional. Under that umbrella of toxic masculinity, a lot of times men and boys don't feel comfortable in emotional spaces, so they need to be a part of this fight as well. I think that will help bring a common goal, if we all work together and not just segregate women and gender-diverse people, but also bring men and boys into that discussion as well. At NWAC, we have tool kits on toxic masculinity that can be used in communities.

It's such a good point, and I think, as we're coming up, this theme, if we look through the lens of reconciliation.... Let's focus on—and I think it's a common goal people can rally behind—economic reconciliation. Many of these issues are because of poverty and because women, specifically, aren't benefiting from resource development. The MMIWG report calls that “economic marginalization”, and that's one of the reasons we find ourselves in this genocide. If we fill that gap and get our men and boys in on this and rally behind economic reconciliation, then—

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: And how do we do that, Ms. Smith?

[*English*]

Ms. Lisa J. Smith: I think....

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: It's complicated, I know; if it were simple, we would not be here this afternoon.

[*English*]

Ms. Lisa J. Smith: I'm trying really hard to foster positive relationships with police, with civil society and these sorts of things. Maybe it's not this simple, but I'm going to put it in a simple way. I think that, as Canadians, we all want the same thing at the end of the day, right? We want our women, our mothers, our sisters, our daughters, our nieces, to stop being killed, to stop being murdered. I think that's where we start. It is a common goal, at the end of the day, for all of us. We all speak different languages. You know, the police—I'm a former Crown prosecutor—we speak a different language, so it's having that common language. So often, we lawyers try—

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Ms. Smith, you say that you go to the police, among others. To your knowledge, are there any efforts that are being made with the boards of directors of large corporations or municipal councils, where there are indigenous women and natural resource development projects, to talk to these people and make them aware? They have to be involved too.

[*English*]

Ms. Lisa J. Smith: I honestly don't see much action on the municipal side of things because, as you know, the calls for justice and the calls to action really focus on provincial and federal policy-makers. Also, law societies and civil society in that regard are not seeing as many obligations put on industry or municipalities. I think you identified something really good there, and I think maybe you're answering your own question. Maybe that's how we need to all come together.

I think when we tried with Bill C-15, which has been brought up with UNDRIP being a part.... Canada is leading the way in UNDRIP implementation. When we align all policies and legislation with UNDRIP, that's the answer. It's part of the answer. It's more complicated than that, but I think we're going in the right direction in that regard.

You're right. More attention and awareness and education need to be focused on the community level.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Ms. Smith.

Thank you, Dominique.

Now we move to Jenna for five minutes.

Ms. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you to all of the witnesses for the excellent work you're doing and for sharing your expertise with us today.

I will direct my first question to Ms. Kabloona. I believe there was some work done by your organization. There was some research into women's economic security and prosperity specific to the resource extraction industry.

Can elaborate on that study and the results or output from that?

Ms. Kilivak Kabloona: I believe you're referring to a report that was initiated by Pauktuutit, the national Inuit women's organization. It's an introductory review of extractive industries in Inuit Nunangat, which is all across Canada's north, so from the Yukon to northern Labrador. It is the basis of a lot of the context that I provided earlier.

We're very specifically involved under article 23 of the Nunavut Agreement for employment opportunities for Inuit women. Also under the Nunavut Agreement, we have the land title to some portions of land in Nunavut. Under that, we have three operating mines. These are grandfathered land leases with the Government of Canada, so they were leases with mining companies established before Nunavut was created. We inherited the agreements under the federal government system. Those three mines are operated on Inuit-owned land, so we are also involved in supporting Inuit women and Inuit workers in that context.

Under those agreements, we have Inuit impact and benefit agreements with the mining companies and require training of Inuit. The mining companies have lower Inuit employment levels than the government. They have more robust training programs for their staff under the IIBAs—Inuit impact and benefit agreements—but they have all stagnated on Inuit employment and largely employ Inuit at the lower levels of income.

I hope that answers your question.

• (1700)

Ms. Jenna Sudds: Thank you very much.

Maybe just as a follow-on to that, from your perspective, what will it take or what is needed in these agreements in order to incentivize for a higher level of Inuit employment?

Ms. Kilivak Kabloona: There are penalties under the agreements we have. I would note, though, that most of the land in Nunavut is still under Crown control. That process is separate.

On Inuit-owned land, there is a system whereby communities and regions need to agree to exploration prior to it occurring. On Crown land, though—which is the majority of the territory—that doesn't exist. It's a web-based system for staking land. Somebody could be staking land, definitely, from outside the territory and they only have an obligation to do exploration within two years in order to maintain that stake.

After exploration has occurred, it goes through an approval process when companies want to develop or do more exploration. At that point, communities are often told that it's too expensive and costs money to do the work so far, so there's some pressure for communities to approve the project even though they had no say in whether the project would be explored. Part of that reason is that under the Nunavut Agreement, there's a requirement to complete a Nunavut land use plan. Right now in Rankin Inlet, hearings are happening on the draft Nunavut land use plan.

Here we are in 2022, almost 30 years after the Nunavut Agreement was signed, and we still don't have established boundaries on where environmental protection will occur, where mining will occur and where culture activities will occur. There's an open system to take staking [*Inaudible—Editor*].

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Ms. Kabloona. Thank you, Jenna.

I will now pass it to Madam Larouche.

Andréanne, go ahead for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Once again, I thank the witnesses today, who remind us of the importance of addressing this issue.

I am listening to everything that is being said, and I want to reiterate that if we want to achieve something concrete, we need to talk nation to nation, an expression I like. We are also present when it comes to co-operation.

I hear that we must look for solutions. But there are calls for justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. We have recommendations. There are calls for action. I am a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group to End Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. Researchers and organizations that are looking at this issue also have proposals to make.

I hear there are sums of money, but I am told that these sums of money do not make it into the field. I find that very sad.

Ms. Kabloona, in closing, I want to join my colleagues in offering my condolences to your community. The young woman you referred to in your opening remarks is not just one more woman, she is one too many murdered. You also talked about money not going to the field. You mentioned the agreement made 30 years ago, recalling that nothing happened on the ground.

Do you think it's a lack of political will to talk nation to nation and deal with this issue to close the loop?

• (1705)

[*English*]

Ms. Kilikvak Kabloona: We have been developing a relationship with the Government of Canada through the Inuit-Crown partnership committee. We've seen considerable progress over the last few years. There are still challenges with the bureaucracy.

Mostly recently, in June, the Inuit-Crown partnership committee approved an Inuit Nunangat policy. This is a policy to guide bureaucracy through relationships with Inuit. We have some optimism that this will help, but I agree that it is disappointing that the funding has not flowed. We are ready to do the work and we have been doing quite a bit of work with our own money. We've put money into shelters and have been taking steps where we can.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Ms. Kabloona.

Thank you, Andréanne.

Now I'll pass it to Leah.

Leah, you have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much, Chair.

I want to follow up with Dr. Neckoway.

You had written a brief to the committee supporting, specifically, call to justice 13.4. I'm really proud of our committee for heeding that call to justice in this study. You state specifically in that brief, “At a minimum, we support the call of Indigenous women and leaders for a public inquiry into the sexual violence and racism at hydroelectric projects in northern Manitoba.”

Who do you think needs to be part of that public inquiry and what do you want to see as a result of that public inquiry?

I know we have limited time; I apologize. You can submit a written brief after.

Ms. Ramona Neckoway: We would welcome that.

I think that's a great question. We do support something like that. Again, the federal and provincial governments need to be involved in that. Again, the federal government has a fiduciary responsibility, and they've been largely absent from conversations.

There was a cumulative study undertaken provincially, but it was, to put it bluntly, pretty inadequate. We need a study to look at the effects and impacts of this particular industry in Manitoba and what it means for folks on the ground. I don't think we have a good view of what that looks like quite yet.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I appreciate that.

I also want to note the correlation you're making between resource extraction and impacts on community. I would point out that Manitoba is a hydro-rich province, yet in northern Manitoba we have the second-worst housing conditions in the country.

Can you please comment, either one of you, on the fact that often people are pushing resource extraction where communities get all of the impacts and none of the benefits? I think Manitoba Hydro in many ways emulates that.

Mr. Jarvis Brownlie: Yes, that is exactly the situation.

Electric power is being extracted from northern Manitoba for the benefit of southerners in southern Manitoba, and some of the power is sold to other provinces and American states. The benefits go to Manitobans and largely to Manitoba Hydro itself and the provincial government, which gets a lot of money from Manitoba Hydro, but the benefits don't go to northern first nations.

In recent years, we've seen some partnership agreements between Manitoba Hydro and first nations, which make it look as if there's a broader consent and a partnership happening, but these deals are very poor deals for first nations. They still aren't getting a lot of benefits. They're not getting even the benefits they were promised. Still, the harms continue.

There was a treaty made in 1977, the Northern Flood Agreement. It's been nullified, first by just delaying and litigating everything, then eventually by passing new agreements.

• (1710)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Dr. Brownlie.

Thank you, Leah.

Now I'll pass it over to Shelby to start with her round for six minutes.

Go ahead, Shelby.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Just before we begin, I was respecting the new amended schedule and the notice of the amended meeting. I'm more than comfortable going ahead, but....

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Yes, at the start we said that we would go over a little bit.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Perfect. All right. Then I'm certainly happy to continue.

Thank you to all of the witnesses who have shared their testimony and their comments, concerns, questions, queries and what have you.

I think as far as I see this, there are two main issues that this committee is concerned with in regard to this. First of all, there's the issue of ensuring that our indigenous communities benefit positively from resource development. That's clearly step one for all of us. We're hearing that in the testimony. Furthermore, we need to ensure that internally, the women of these communities benefit as well. Again, I can suggest that we're hearing that in complement from all the different testimony. But how can we ensure that second point? Is there something that should be happening at the community and company level in the contracts, for example? Corporate responsibility needs to come into play here. I think corporate responsibility and accountability are paramount here.

Is there something we can do to promote more action in the community? How can we get more women involved in making these

decisions? How can we involve more indigenous communities in the resource development of these particular resources?

I'd like to pose that question to Lisa Smith.

Ms. Lisa J. Smith: Thank you for that question. It is something that's very important when we talk about this issue. It's intrinsically linked into this issue by virtue of the calls for justice of the MMI-WG, in number 13.2, I believe. I don't have the calls in front of me.

So often we say, "Oh, funding, funding", but funding equals capacity when the funding is I guess streamed correctly. As we heard today, that's probably not always the case, unfortunately. I think we need indigenous leadership. Indigenous women need the capacity to advise and ensure that their specialized knowledge by virtue of being indigenous women really is a part of the entire process.

Now, it's harder when the players are industry and the province, to be quite frank. How do we ensure that all players around the table are providing capacity for indigenous leadership to be a part of the entire process? Is it political will? I'm not sure. I think funding is part of that process, and I think upholding our inherent rights, and I guess getting everyone on board. Again, with regard to Bill C-15 and UNDRIP, I don't want to be naive about its reach, but I'm thinking that is part of how we get there.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Okay. That's perfect. I appreciate that.

Perhaps I'll move on to a quick question for either Dr. Jarvis or Dr. Neckoway.

You mentioned in your testimony that "concrete steps" had been taken to reverse the damages that you identified regarding the hydro development in Manitoba. Could you possibly elaborate on what those concrete steps were?

Thank you.

• (1715)

Mr. Jarvis Brownlie: I believe what we said was that concrete steps could be taken. They haven't been.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Thank you for that clarity. Do you have any suggestions or ideas on what some next steps could be?

Mr. Jarvis Brownlie: We need the communities to have a say and not just consultation, because consultation as currently practised is not listening. They just send people into the communities in suits. They may give people an opportunity to talk, but it doesn't change anything. They don't change their plans.

We need real a way [*Inaudible—Editor*] for communities—

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Okay. I don't mean to interrupt you, but maybe I'll get one quick thing for clarity.

If we can perhaps avoid having people from positions of authority, and getting indigenous communities and people involved from the community who are not necessarily from the “suits”, as you called it, or positions of authority, would that be an example of a concrete step?

Mr. Jarvis Brownlie: Yes.

When I said “suits”, I didn't mean to insult anyone. It's just the way the community members have talked to me, because they have an immediate reaction to that. It sends a certain message. As you say, it sends a message of authority.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Thank you. There's no insult taken. It's all good.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Dr. Brownlie.

Thank you, Shelby.

Next we have Emmanuella for six minutes.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to first thank all of the witnesses who are here with us today to inform us and to help us come up with some solutions to some of the issues that are facing indigenous women and girls due to resource extraction.

Most of my questions at this point have been answered, but I'm going to go to a higher level.

Ms. Smith, you were speaking a little earlier about what potential solutions could look like and how to get more people involved in implementing sustainable and lasting change so that women and girls are less impacted in a negative way and benefit more from resource extraction.

The conversation you were having with my colleagues earlier was making me think also of what potential solutions could be and I'm curious to see that, because there are issues at several levels. Whether it's in government, in policing or in the communities themselves, or whether it's in the companies that are doing the extraction of resources, getting more women involved at all of these levels I think would be key and important, because in order to change, I think what's needed here is a cultural change at every single level.

Can you comment a bit further on that?

Ms. Lisa J. Smith: Yes. Thank you for that.

I completely agree with everything you've said.

I think that something I forgot to mention that's key to this is that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission focused on the truth, on getting the truth out there. Now we need to focus on reconciliation, and “reconciliation” as a word requires action, so what does that look like?

I think the entire committee—everyone, I think, from the questions being posed—is concerned about concrete action and outcomes, and I'm very glad to hear that. I think we need to focus on healing now, right? We need to heal as a country. Indigenous peoples need to heal.

Something that NWAC is doing, which I would love to inform everyone about, because we are hoping for it to be far-reaching in every province and territory in this country, is that we have what's called a “resiliency lodge”. The pilot project was done in Chelsea, Quebec, and it's a huge success. It's healing traumas from residential schools. It's connecting with the land, and that in itself gives women courage to be a part of the process because, as you can imagine, violence against indigenous women and colonialism sometimes prevent women from having the confidence to be involved and share their knowledge. We need to really focus on that.

We're about to open up another resiliency lodge in New Brunswick—Wabanaki—and that's going to have...we bought a farm. We're saving turtles. We're reconnecting with the land. It's going to look different in every province and territory, but our dream, our vision at NWAC, is to roll them out. We have a pilot project that worked in Chelsea. We want to roll these out across this nation, and that's a concrete action that I think the committee is looking for in terms of where we go from here. Well, we need to heal our people, and we need to heal this country.

Thank you.

• (1720)

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: If you don't mind, maybe you could send us some of the information that came out of that. That would be great. Maybe you could bring it to the committee so that we have it and can use it in our recommendations later on.

Ms. Lisa J. Smith: I'd be happy to do that.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Okay, thank you.

For the remainder of my time, I'm not sure, Dr. Neckoway, if you would explain what possible solutions there would be to undo the damage caused by the hydro dams in these communities. Perhaps Mr. Brownlie or Dr. Neckoway wants to continue on that and give us some concrete solutions. I know that you mentioned bringing the water level back to the level it was at before, knowing that most likely they won't be removing the dams.

Do you have any other recommendations in that area?

Ms. Ramona Neckoway: Why don't I start this one? I think the reference to the regulating of the waters is—correct me if I'm wrong, Jarvis—with respect to the CRD licence, and some of the parameters that originally were built into that would stabilize the shorelines. Again, we're talking about pretty substantive waterways, rivers and tributaries in northern Manitoba. We have three pretty significant waterways in the north that have been dammed and diverted, if you will, to borrow from a colleague of ours. Just finding a way to operationalize the system so that isn't so severe.... We have times when water is really high. This summer, water is really low at our end of the hydro system. That's one thing you can do.

Start thinking about cultural revitalization. What is that going to look like? How are you going to help communities to access land and territory that is now inaccessible because there's simply too much debris. The water is moving and flowing dangerously too fast for anybody to be able to access it. How are you going to help us revitalize language and culture? How are programs going to be carried out at the community level, supported both by government and industry?

Again, as we stated in our opening statement, the land and the water were our communities.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Dr. Neckoway.

Now we're going to move to Madame Larouche. You can go ahead for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

We are still looking for solutions. It is unacceptable that in 2022, resource exploitation has such an impact on indigenous women and girls.

Ms. Smith, as you mentioned, the fact that Bill C-15 recognizes the rights of indigenous peoples is the least we can do. Moreover, Canada's unwillingness to ratify this agreement has long tainted its international reputation. The way Canada treated its first nations tarnished its image abroad and was a dark cloud over us. Do you have anything concrete to add on this subject? You really emphasized that Bill C-15 could help.

I'll invite you, Mr. Brownlie, Ms. Neckoway, and Ms. Kabloona to speak later on on something else. Before that, though, I'm going to let you talk about the importance of Canada's image internationally in relation to how it treats its first nations, as well as Bill C-15, which we think is important.

• (1725)

[*English*]

Ms. Lisa J. Smith: Thank you. I did a lot of work on advocating for UNDRIP implementation, so I'm thrilled that Bill C-15 received royal assent. I'm going to focus on a key component of the bill, the alignment with policies and legislation. Ergo, everything that Canada does will have to align with the declaration. So often people forget that's minimal: That's the floor of human rights for indigenous peoples. This hasn't been done yet. Yes, the bill was passed, but once all our policies and our laws are truly aligned with Bill C-15, then our basic human rights as indigenous peoples will be upheld—"will be". There's still work to be done.

It's encouraging that the government passed this bill, and that's the way we're going. I also think that a lot of this advocacy and getting on the same page is about communication. You may have touched on this earlier. I think there needs to be a focus on that, on awareness and educating. The people around this table are plugged in, but to truly educate and make Canadians aware, perhaps sometimes in plain language, will help this cause. We'll come together as a country, hopefully, and with the guidance of UNDRIP I think we're going to get somewhere. We're not there yet, but I'm encouraged that we will get there.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: We all believe in it, absolutely.

Ms. Smith, I was going to speak to the other witnesses, but time is running out. So I will ask my question and you can answer that or my other question. If Mr. Brownlie, Ms. Neckoway or Ms. Kabloona have anything to add, they are welcome to do so.

You mentioned boom towns and man camps in your opening remarks. I would like to come back briefly to the question of the responsibilities of companies that exploit resources on the territory and hire employees from far away, which leads to the appearance of these camps. Yet these companies also have a duty to put in place internal and external measures to counter acts of violence.

We have talked about many things. Among the concrete solutions, could there be a federal policy to frame and regulate resource companies in Canada, which would include ethics and harassment? Could such measures help curb this violence?

[*English*]

Ms. Kilikvak Kabloona: I know it's enticing to think about concrete solutions. I stand by a lot of the comments that were made earlier by all of the panellists here in terms of fully implementing UNDRIP.

I want to speak to our majority language in Nunavut. Nunavut is the only jurisdiction in Canada where the majority homogenous language of the population is not English or French. It's Inuktitut or Inuktit, yet this is very often the last language in which materials are prepared on any resource project. That results in a lot of people not knowing about the project through the environmental review process.

We want to see the Official Languages Act in Nunavut recognize that Inuktit is the majority language in Nunavut.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Ms. Kabloona.

Before I go to Leah, I just want to say that we are running out of time. This is our last witness. We're going to do committee business in the next meeting.

We'll go over to Leah for five minutes.

• (1730)

Ms. Leah Gazan: I'd like to start out by thanking the committee for its grace in letting us go a little bit over. I really appreciate your respect.

I want to start by first asking questions of Madam Kabloona.

Before I do that, I do want to offer my condolences about the death of Savanna Pikuyak. It's a tragedy that is, unfortunately, a common one. It needs to end. My condolences go to the family and, of course, to the community.

You spoke a lot about violence against indigenous women. One thing that you pointed to was a failure of the government to allocate, even in the 2021 budget. In fact, I called for an emergency debate in the last session in response to the fact that in this current 2022 budget, there was zero allocated to address the ongoing genocide against murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. Like Madam Smith has indicated, I was very heartened to see Bill C-15 pass, but human rights are as only as good as our ability to respect and uphold those rights through action.

When you're negotiating impact and benefit agreements, is a part of the negotiations dedicated to ensuring that, in any project in communities, money is allocated to ensure the safety of indigenous women, girls and two-spirit...?

Ms. Kilikvak Kabloona: I think you're speaking about the Inuit impact and benefit agreements that Inuit organizations hold with the mining companies. They are all different. We have a standard mineral exploration agreement whereby Nunavut Tunngavik is the signatory with the mining company. Those are more specifically around the royalties and the general conditions the mining company will operate under.

The regional Inuit associations in Nunavut also have an Inuit impact and benefit agreement with the mining company, and those are all different. They have been evolving. I would say that all of the agreements have employment requirements, Inuit employment and training requirements. Generally, companies are not meeting those targets. They also have contracting requirements. Usually companies are not meeting those targets either.

More recently, there have been more advances. For example, the IIBA with Baffinland had day cares and funding for communities to do social initiatives that they identified as important. Unfortunately, that IIBA is not on an approved project, so the negotiation is likely ongoing.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I'm just trying to clarify. Companies will come in. You will negotiate mining contracts. People will agree on certain things. They are not living up to the agreements.

We've heard about Manitoba Hydro, and I think we are a living legend in terms of smashing down agreements and disrespecting indigenous peoples.

What are the consequences for mining companies that come in and fail to live up to legal agreements? What are the consequences?

Ms. Kilikvak Kabloona: We typically go back to the drawing board, and it's more time.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I'm just want to understand this. Mining companies come in. You make impact and benefit agreements. They don't live up to the agreement. You go back to the drawing board. While you're going back to the drawing board, are they still benefiting from the extractions that they are taking off your lands and territories, or does it halt until people respect their legal obligations?

• (1735)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Leah.

Ms. Kabloona, can you answer that quickly?

Ms. Kilikvak Kabloona: The projects have not been halted to this point, and I would note that all of the current mining projects are on land that had been grandfathered, so the lease had been agreed to by the federal government, so the companies have those leases.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Sonia Sidhu): Thank you, Ms. Kabloona.

Thank you to all the witnesses.

With that, we will be meeting next week on Monday, September 26 to commence the study of the mental health of young women and girls. Also we will address at the next meeting the drafting instructions for the study.

This meeting is adjourned.

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