



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

FEWO



NUMBER 013



3rd SESSION



40th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Monday, April 26, 2010



Chair

The Honourable Hedy Fry

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• (1530)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC)): I would like to call this committee meeting to order.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we continue our study on violence against aboriginal women. Today is our second meeting on this very important issue. We are very pleased to welcome the Department of Indian and Northern Development, the Department of Justice, the Department of Public Safety, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to help us in our deliberations.

Each of you will have ten minutes to present, and then we will have a question and answer period.

We will start with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Ms. Mary Quinn, are you doing the presentation?

Thank you. Go ahead, please.

Ms. Mary Quinn (Director General, Social Policy and Programs Branch, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for inviting the department to appear before the committee. It is indeed a privilege for my colleague and me to appear before you as you commence an important study on violence against aboriginal women in Canada.

[Translation]

In my opening remarks, I would like to outline some of the program areas in which Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) supports healthier and safer Aboriginal families. I would also like to share with you the INAC initiatives that specifically target violence against women, and explain how INAC works in partnership with other federal departments, provinces, and Aboriginal peoples in order to contribute to the overall response to this serious issue, particularly on reserve, but also in Aboriginal communities and urban centres.

[English]

The department is responsible for two mandates, Indian and Inuit affairs and northern development, which together support Canada's aboriginal and northern peoples in the pursuit of healthy and sustainable communities and broader economic and social development objectives. Indian and Northern Affairs, or INAC, also works with the urban aboriginal people, Métis, and non-status Indians through the Office of the Federal Interlocutor.

As you know, there are a number of ongoing social and economic challenges that make aboriginal women more vulnerable to violence against them. These include factors such as the unemployment rate, family situation, and education levels.

Through INAC's support for child and family services, community development, and education programs on reserve, we work closely with aboriginal, federal, and provincial partners to help address these underlying risks and build healthier and safer aboriginal families.

Provincial governments typically provide or fund services to aboriginal women residing off reserve, and in the north, the Government of Canada provides territorial formula financing to the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut governments. This funding is to support public services such as hospitals, schools, infrastructure, and social services.

[Translation]

The ongoing reform and development of INAC's social programs on reserve is critical to tackling root causes that may contribute to violence against women on and off reserve. For example, a preventative approach in INAC's Child and Family Services program on reserve aims to support parents and keep families together, which ultimately will enhance a sense of security among women who reside on reserve, and can decrease the risk of violence.

[English]

The department is moving its income assistance program on reserve to go from solely meeting basic needs towards implementing an active measures approach that will help individuals participate in job readiness and training so they can find employment. As we make progress, this will enable individuals on reserve to become more self-sufficient, and it will ultimately reduce the impact of poverty.

A related program is the department's national child benefit reinvestment project, which is focused primarily on reducing child poverty and strengthening families on reserve in the areas of providing child care, home-to-work transition activities, parental and nutritional support, and culturally relevant programming. The department also targets programs directly to address violence against women. The family violence prevention program aims to ensure that first nations women and children on reserve have a safe place to turn during situations of family violence and supports first nations communities to address the root causes of family violence through a range of prevention activities. In 2007 the department announced an investment of approximately \$55 million over five years to support the existing network of shelters, including \$2.2 million to support the construction of five new shelters. The department currently supports a network of 41 shelters on reserve and approximately 350 community-based prevention projects for first nations people residing on reserve.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's shelter enhancement program covers the capital costs for construction and maintenance of shelters.

[Translation]

In terms of urban programs, the Office of the Federal Interlocutor (OFI) works to improve the socio-economic conditions of Métis, non-status Indians and urban Aboriginal people who reside off-reserve.

The Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study, released April 6, 2010, found the majority of women surveyed move to the city in order to be closer to family, pursue education and to escape a bad family situation and/or find a better place to raise their children. Ten percent of these women moved to escape a bad family situation.

[English]

Through the urban aboriginal strategy, the Office of the Federal Interlocutor partners with the aboriginal community, local organizations, municipal and provincial governments, and the private sector to support projects in three areas of priority: improving life skills, promoting job training skills and entrepreneurship, and supporting aboriginal women and children and families. Since 2007, approximately \$7.5 million has been provided for more than 140 projects under this third priority, focusing on areas such as healing and wellness, leadership and empowerment, and harm reduction and violence prevention in some of Canada's largest urban centres. In the area of legislative reform, in such measures as the proposed Bill S-4, Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act, as well as in the changes made to the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Government of Canada is taking steps to provide first nations women protection and rights similar to those enjoyed by other Canadians.

Once enforced, Bill S-4 will provide basic rights and protection with respect to the occupation and fair division of the value of the family home to on-reserve individuals facing the breakdown of a relationship or death of a spouse. The legislation will also provide protection for individuals in the event of family violence.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada participates with the Public Health Agency of Canada as it leads a broader family violence

prevention initiative. Launched in 1988, this is an approach to family violence across 15 federal departments and agencies. The Native Women's Association of Canada, through its Sisters In Spirit initiative, has contributed to an understanding of the extent and nature of violence against aboriginal women. The department also works with such stakeholders as the National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence, provinces and territories, and other government departments such as Health Canada, the Department of Justice, Status of Women Canada, and others, on the coordination of family violence prevention programming.

•(1535)

[Translation]

Together, we are working to make a difference and put an end to violence against Aboriginal women and make a difference in combating the factors that place them at risk.

My colleague and I will do our best to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you so much.

Now we will go to the Department of Justice and Carole Morency.

Ms. Carole Morency (Acting General Counsel, Criminal Law Policy Section, Department of Justice): Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee as you begin your study on violence against aboriginal women. As requested by the committee, my comments will provide a general overview of the current criminal justice framework regarding violence against women in general.

As the committee knows, responsibility for Canada's criminal justice system is divided between federal and provincial territorial governments. Federally the government is responsible for developing and enacting the criminal law, including the Criminal Code of Canada, and through the Public Prosecution Service of Canada is responsible for the prosecution of criminal offences under federal mandate as well as prosecution of Criminal Code offences in the territories.

The provinces and territories are responsible for the administration of justice. That includes policing, prosecutions, delivery of services to victims of crime, and the administration of courts. The result is a criminal justice system that requires ongoing collaboration and coordination between both levels of government.

Within the Department of Justice of Canada, the nature of our work necessarily requires consideration of the direct and indirect impacts of any contemplated measures and responses addressing violence against women, including consideration of any differential impacts that are based on diversity factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, culture, age, and ability.

Violence against women is a complex issue that affects women's physical and mental health, well-being, and economic security, and it impacts on their achievement of equality in Canadian society. This impact is compounded for aboriginal women as well as for women of colour, women with disabilities, older women, and poor women. Accordingly, our responses to violence against women are diverse and include legislative, policy, programming, research, as well as public education responses.

Turning to our legislative responses, a comprehensive, strong criminal law framework serves not only to ensure adequate sanctions against such acts of violence when they are committed, but also to prevent or deter the commission of such violence in the first place. The Criminal Code provides a broad range of measures designed to protect all Canadians from violence, including, for example, provisions prohibiting assault, sexual assault, criminal harassment, forcible confinement, trafficking in persons, and murder and manslaughter.

These offences do not differentiate between female or male victims, with perhaps one exception. Section 268, which is the offence of aggravated assault, includes a "for greater certainty" clause that specifies that female genital mutilation constitutes a form of aggravated assault.

Similarly, Criminal Code prohibitions do not differentiate between other types of victims, with the exception of child victims of sexual assault, although the general sexual assault provisions are often used as well when you have a case involving a child victim.

The sentencing principles and objectives of the Criminal Code do, however, recognize the different impact that certain crimes may have upon some victims. It does so by directing sentencing courts to treat specific factors as aggravating circumstances for sentencing purposes, including where the offence was motivated by bias, prejudice, or hate based on specific factors, including race or sex, and where the violence in question was committed against the offender's spouse or common-law partner or against a young person under the age of 18.

As the committee will know, the government's commitment to tackle violent crime continues to strengthen this criminal law framework, particularly with a view to better protect Canadians, including vulnerable groups, against all forms of violence. For example, the Tackling Violent Crime Act, 2008, raised the age of consent to sexual activity to better protect youth against adult sexual predators and enacted more effective sentencing and monitoring measures to prevent dangerous and high-risk offenders from reoffending.

In addition to these substantive protective measures, the Criminal Code also contains numerous provisions to facilitate the testimony of vulnerable victims and witnesses, including complainants in sexual assault, spousal abuse, and criminal harassment cases, who are primarily women.

Testimonial aids such as testifying from behind a screen, through closed circuit TV, or with a support person are available upon application where, based on the surrounding circumstances, including the nature of the offence and any relationship between the victim and the accused, any physical or mental disability, or any other

relevant circumstance, the victim would be unable to provide a full and candid account without that testimonial aid.

The department has a number of policy and programming initiatives that also contribute to the overall criminal justice response to violence against women. I would note in particular the Justice-led federal victims strategy, which aims to improve the experience of victims of crime, including women who have experienced violence, in the criminal justice system. Working in close collaboration with the provinces, territories, and key stakeholders, the strategy supports initiatives to identify and respond to the needs and concerns of victims of crime.

An example of related research undertaken by the department's Policy Centre for Victim Issues, which administers the federal victims strategy, is the January 2006 report, "A Review of Research on Criminal Victimization and First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples 1990 to 2001". It's a report that's also in the process of being updated right now.

The Policy Centre for Victim Issues also supported the Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System to develop its 2009 handbook for young victims/witnesses entitled, *The Journey to Justice, A Guide to Thinking, Talking and Working as a Team for Young Victims of Crime in Canada's North*.

Another relevant example from the federal victims strategy that I would note was its September 2009 conference entitled "Northern Responses and Approaches to Victims of Crime...Building on Strength and Resilience". This three-day conference brought together over 275 professionals who work with victims of crime in the three territories. It included a number of workshops addressing aboriginal women as vulnerable victims and witnesses.

● (1540)

The other strategy I would note is the Justice-led federal aboriginal justice strategy. It is cost-shared with the provinces and territories. This strategy uses traditional dispute resolution methods to address crime and victimization and currently supports more than 120 community-based justice programs in approximately 400 aboriginal communities across Canada. Through this holistic process, offenders are held accountable and attempts are made to repair the harm suffered by the victim while at the same time restoring relationships between victims, offenders, and communities.

Lastly, I'd like to note two examples of federal-provincial-territorial collaboration on issues of violence against women. These are issues addressing missing women and spousal assault.

The federal-provincial-territorial working group on missing women was established in early 2006 by federal-provincial-territorial deputy ministers to examine the issue of missing women in Canada. The working group, which is co-chaired by British Columbia and Alberta, is focusing on the effective identification, investigation, and prosecution of cases involving serial killers who target persons living a high-risk lifestyle, including those in the sex trade. This work, which is expected to be completed later this year, includes an examination of best practices to enable earlier detection of potential serial murderers as well as strategies to protect potential victims.

The second example I would point to is the 2003 final report of the ad hoc federal-provincial-territorial working group reviewing spousal abuse policies and legislation. The Department of Justice served as the federal co-chair of this review through its partnership in the family violence initiative. This final report provided a comprehensive review of the implementation and status of criminal justice measures adopted in the last twenty years on the issue of spousal abuse, including the pro-charging and pro-prosecution policies adopted by all Canadian jurisdictions in the 1980s.

The review included a consideration of the particular impact of spousal abuse on aboriginal women. In addition to its specific recommendations, the report identified three objectives that should inform future criminal justice responses to spousal abuse: firstly, criminalizing conduct—in this case spousal abuse; secondly, ensuring that the measure promotes the safety and security of the victim; and thirdly, ensuring that the measure maintains confidence in the administration of justice.

In conclusion, we recognize that violence against women is a complex issue and that ensuring a comprehensive and effective criminal justice response to violence against women requires significant collaboration between all levels of government and a range of responses to combat it, including strong criminal laws and policies to prevent its commission and to effectively respond to acts of violence, once committed, to provide victim support, to continue to provide public education, awareness, and professional training.

Thank you.

• (1545)

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you so much.

Our third presenter today is the Department of Public Safety.

Are you both going to share the time?

Okay. Please proceed.

[Translation]

Dr. Daniel Sansfaçon (Acting Executive Director, National Crime Prevention Centre, Department of Public Safety): Good afternoon, my name is Daniel Sansfaçon, Acting Executive Director of the National Crime Prevention Centre with Public Safety Canada. I will be sharing the speaking time with my colleague, Ed Buller, who is the Director, Aboriginal Corrections Policy.

I will be basically talking about three things. I will try to go over them fairly quickly, so that we have enough time for discussion together. First, I will talk about the broad direction of the National Crime Prevention Strategy. Second, I will talk about the current

situation and third, briefly, I will give you at least one example of a program that we are currently funding.

The objective of the National Crime Prevention Strategy is mainly to reduce offending behaviour as much as possible. We feel that well-thought-out and properly implemented prevention measures are the best way to reduce the number of victims. At the same time, we are obviously aware that this is a long-term process, and the effects will only be felt several years later, after the projects have been carried out, especially since our targeted groups are youth aged 6 to 24. I will talk about this in more detail later.

The strategy uses three mechanisms in particular to finance prevention actions in the field, across the country. The more general mechanism is the Crime Prevention Action Fund, which is approximately \$37 million for the year 2010-2011. This is the principal fund in the sense that we use it to try to fund initiatives that are largely based on the knowledge of what “works to reduce crime.”

The second mechanism, created specifically at the recent renewal of the strategy in 2008, is the Northern and Aboriginal Crime Prevention Fund. As the title indicates, the objective is precisely to help the Aboriginal communities to implement prevention actions that are focused, but also adapted to their realities and their circumstances. This fund amounts to \$8 million for 2010-2011.

Finally, even if it is less relevant at the moment, there is the Youth Gang Prevention Fund. This fund is limited, ending on March 31, 2011; it has \$6 million available for 2010-2011.

As I told you earlier, the strategy's main priorities are to prevent offending behaviour—especially in youth aged 6-24, since that is when the main delinquent tendencies are seen—among the Aboriginal people and Northern communities, and to prevent the recidivism of former offenders who have completed their sentence.

• (1550)

[English]

NCPC funds interventions that focus on high-risk children and youth who present multiple risk factors for later delinquency. These risk factors include things such as having been exposed to or indeed having been a victim of family violence, for example. NCPC also funds interventions aimed at preventing re-offending among high-risk chronic offenders in communities, including those who have a known history of spousal or child abuse.

My colleagues mentioned this earlier. Through census data and other data, it's well known that many aboriginal people are exposed to greater risks for crime and victimization than non-aboriginal people would be. One of NCPC's priorities includes supporting culturally sensitive initiatives that will foster the development and implementation of crime prevention approaches in aboriginal communities, both on reserve and off reserve, and build the knowledge and capacity required to develop and adapt effective ways to prevent crime.

Over the course of the past two years, the NCPC has been an active and supportive partner in many aboriginal communities across the country by investing over \$46 million to fund 40 crime prevention projects aimed at aboriginal communities, most of which are currently active for the next couple of years.

This is part of the documentation you were given. Historically, the NCPC has funded projects to reduce offending and indeed prevent victimization, which have produced quite positive results, such as the domestic violence treatment option in Whitehorse that was funded in 2000 or the Gwich'in outdoor classroom project in the NWT.

[Translation]

But I will not dwell on these programs since you have in front of you the summary of the evaluation, which shows that these initiatives helped to reduce the offending behaviours among youth.

One of the current ongoing projects is the Aboriginal Women's Support Centre at the Minwaashin Lodge, in Ottawa. This is a multi-service centre that provides culturally appropriate healing, educational and recreational services to the Aboriginal communities. The three-year project will employ an educational approach to try to prevent forms of violence, including violence against women, among girls and boys ages 12-18. Participants will be drawn from those youth who are currently using the services of the sponsoring organization and its partners. Over the course of this three-year project, it is estimated that 200 Aboriginal youth will participate.

These are examples of the types of projects that are funded by the National Crime Prevention Strategy. We have good reason to believe that they will help to reduce violence against Aboriginal women, and violence in general.

Thank you.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you.

Mr. Buller, there are four minutes remaining in your time.

Mr. Ed Buller (Director, Aboriginal Corrections Policy Division, Department of Public Safety): Okay.

Good afternoon. My name is Ed Buller. I am currently the director of aboriginal corrections policy within Public Safety.

I would like to take my time to share an approach to preventing violence against aboriginal girls and women that recognizes that reducing violence in the community as a whole will result in improved safety for aboriginal women and girls.

A number of aboriginal communities have demonstrated that cultural processes based on their traditional beliefs and practices are effective in addressing criminal activity, support the treatment of victims, and also provide a platform for sustainable economic, social, and cultural development.

For example, a study of the Hollow Water First Nation healing process in Manitoba showed that over a 10-year period it provided treatment in the community to more than 100 offenders and approximately 400 victims of sexual or physical violence. The recidivism rate for offenders through their healing process was less than 2%, compared to what is generally accepted, a 19% recidivism rate for sex offenders who go through the regular Canadian justice and corrections system. The study concluded that for each dollar invested by the Government of Manitoba, it would otherwise have to spend \$3, and for every dollar the federal government invested it would otherwise have to spend between \$2 and \$11.

While the study showed that support to Hollow Water was a good financial investment, the community also recognized other benefits that impacted positively on its members: substance abuse was significantly reduced; parents were taking a more active role in their children's upbringing; and youth were staying in or returning to school. Approximately 40 children from other communities were fostered in Hollow Water, and former residents were moving back into the community. They saw this community as a safe place to live. While starting as a healing process for victims and offenders of sexual and family violence, Hollow Water's healing process has been shown to have had a significant impact on the safety and wellness of the whole community.

Many aboriginal communities are returning to traditional approaches to mobilize their communities to overcome barriers to common problems. After several decades of government attempts to break them into pieces through the provision of discrete programs to respond to problems, communities are looking to traditional strategies that bring the community together and mobilize to resolve community-wide issues.

Healing approaches move communities from fixing problems to building communities into a civil and sustainable society. This translates into healthier communities for all of the communities' residents directly through integrated programming and indirectly by being responsive to individuals' needs and aspirations.

Over time, we have come to believe that the first step of community healing is a community safety plan, which would enable communities to develop comprehensive and integrated responses to safety issues. These community safety plans would identify key issues and challenges relating to community wellness and safety, while providing guidance and focus for the years ahead.

Community safety plans will enable communities to define risks that lead to crime and victimization, build on assets, and identify gaps in responding to those risks. Because community safety plans are comprehensive in their nature and are not restricted to the mandates of either Justice or Public Safety, these plans provide the opportunity to work collaboratively with other funders to respond in an integrated manner. The community safety plans will then serve as a blueprint to systematically address the root causes of victimization and respond to current community safety issues.

Various funding programs currently exist to respond to violence against women; however, in many cases, these programs respond to specific issues only and do not allow communities to coordinate or combine their responses.

• (1555)

Supporting communities to more strategically tailor their responses to community safety will allow programs to build on existing resources, while optimizing communities' ability to access existing and new sources of funding.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): If I could get you to quickly wrap up your remarks, I'm sure people would be very interested in questions.

Mr. Ed Buller: The benefits of this approach will be that as communities define their priorities and strategies for reducing violence against women and girls, federal departments will be able to target more effectively their individual services to meet community needs. Furthermore, governments will gain knowledge about community needs and expectations, leading to improved federal policy based on actual needs and approaches that work.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): As I said, I'm sure people will want to know some more details within their questions and answers.

Could we finish up with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police? I'm not sure who is speaking for you today.

• (1600)

A/Commr Bob Paulson (Assistant Commissioner, Contract and Aboriginal Policing, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): I will speak. I'm Assistant Commissioner Bob Paulson.

[Translation]

Madam Chair, hon. members of the committee, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak about violence against Aboriginal women in Canada.

[English]

As you know, the RCMP, in partnership with other police services, has an important role to play in making our communities safe. We are the provincial police service in eight out of ten provinces. We provide police services to the territories and many municipalities throughout Canada. As such, we also provide essential police services to first nations, Inuit, and Métis communities.

Aboriginal communities are one of the RCMP's five strategic priorities. Violence of any kind in aboriginal communities, as in any other Canadian community, concerns us. Prevention, education, and

enforcement are areas where we are focused and actively improving our efforts. The key to reducing violence is the need to have broad and meaningful engagement across all levels of government and civil society.

I have my colleague, Chief Superintendent Russ Mirasty, and other colleagues here with me today and we will be happy to tell you about our initiatives and answer any questions.

Merci.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you so much.

I guess we will go into our first round of questions, a seven-minute round for questions and answers, starting with Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all of you for being here today. I have many questions and not nearly enough time.

I have a bit of a preamble or preface. Let me just say to you, Mr. Buller, that I know the Hollow Water initiative in Manitoba. I know that it is an integrated, holistic approach that has been going on for a long period of time, with many different resources going into it. It has had many successes and a number of setbacks along the way, but it is perhaps a model.

To the RCMP, I had the opportunity to meet with the governing council of the Highway of Tears initiative and was pleased to see your involvement there in an effort to have a more united, holistic response to the issue.

But I guess I'm really concerned. At one point last May, my colleague, Todd Russell, and I wrote to the Minister of Justice calling for an inquiry on the missing and murdered aboriginal women, and we virtually received a letter of response that talked about all of the isolated initiatives going on. And there are a number of initiatives going on, but what I am struck by as I listen to the presentations from government primarily is the question, do you talk to each other? Is there an overall integrated approach to the issue? It is a very complex issue.

The funding for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, which dealt with many of the issues related to violence against women, has been cut, and there doesn't appear to be an overall plan. There are lots of one-offs, but there doesn't seem to be a comprehensive strategic, integrated, holistic plan.

When we talk about root causes, some of them have been identified, but we didn't hear anything about issues related to housing, and we didn't hear anything about the generational impact on aboriginal people, the cycles of poverty, or any of that. So tell me what is happening in government that gives us hope that there is some real effort to deal with this. It is a complicated issue, but one-offs are not going to do it.

I don't know who wants to answer that.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Who'd like to tackle that question?

Ms. Quinn.

Ms. Mary Quinn: Thank you very much for the question.

I can tell you that the Public Health Agency of Canada does lead a family violence prevention initiative where 15 departments come together. There are three objectives to that initiative: one is promoting public awareness about the risk factors of family violence and the need for public involvement in responding to it; a second is to strengthen the capacity of health, housing, criminal justice, and social systems to respond; and the third is to support data collection and research and evaluation efforts.

The role of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development specific to family violence prevention is through our family violence prevention program. We also work with stakeholders, such as the National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence and the Native Women's Association of Canada.

We do make efforts at integration and coordination. It's an area where we can always do better, particularly in an area as important as family violence prevention.

With respect to the related issues around housing and education, clean drinking water, child and family services, we're now working in five provinces to introduce prevention measures, so we're not always looking at protection and removing children from the home. We're working on many fronts in the department and with colleagues and with provinces, because social services is largely a domain where provinces either have jurisdiction or have tremendous expertise that they can build on.

So there are efforts under way to ensure coordination and set priorities for coming years, but as I say, it's also an area where we can and must always improve.

• (1605)

Hon. Anita Neville: I have so many questions. You talk about the Public Health Agency leading. Would you say the Public Health Agency is leading a government-wide...and does it include Justice and Public Safety as well? If so, should we be calling them to the committee?

Is there such a thing as a plan where you can look at a graph or a flow chart or something that says we're doing this with these goals and anticipating those outcomes? It simply strikes me that there are so many one-offs and no planning.

I'm repeating myself.

Ms. Mary Quinn: In terms of the agency, they do lead the initiative, but it's largely a coordination role. It's not as if they have so many programs themselves.

Then, in terms of programs, each department has its own mandate, of course. So there's housing, because there's a need for housing on reserve, but obviously with good quality housing and good clean drinking water, we can help on the—

Hon. Anita Neville: I've travelled in northern Manitoba extensively. I've been in the houses, where I've seen families of three, four, and five generations living—many people. It's a boilerplate for violence, not only because of the overcrowding, but the conditions of it. Is that all factored into this?

Ms. Mary Quinn: Yes and no isn't a good answer, but in the initial—

Hon. Anita Neville: It's largely no, in my experience.

Ms. Mary Quinn: Well, as part of the initiative we all bring what we can do through our own mandates, and we all keep each other informed of what's going on and how it could be better coordinated. We have increased funding to deal with housing and water. We're trying to make efforts with aboriginal first nations organizations on education. We are working with colleagues in terms of how to advance our objectives and get better results.

Ms. Anita Neville: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): We'll go to Madame Demers.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Thank you for being here today. I have a lot of questions for you.

I see a lot of money is being invested, and I am wondering where it all goes. Personally, I went to Nunavut and visited a shelter. That shelter receives \$1 million per year, but there are things that I do not understand. There is no transition house or programming. The people at that shelter have no clothes. They have to beg for clothes for the children. They have to beg for clothes for the women at the shelter. The women have to stay there for more than six weeks because there is no transition house.

About \$30 million a year go to 35 shelters, whereas we know that women's shelters in the Aboriginal communities receive \$190,000 per year and that they are under-funded compared to shelters in the other Quebec communities, for example.

In some Aboriginal communities in Quebec, the situation is so tragic that some families have two or three children who commit suicide. I spent three days in Nunavut, in Iqaluit, and three young people, aged 15, 16 and 17, committed suicide. Money does not seem to be the answer. And maybe the way it is used is problematic. Are we working too much in our offices and not enough in the field?

It worries me a great deal to know that there is so much money allocated, currently \$30 million per year, and the additional \$56 million that were invested in 2007 over five years. That is a lot of money. Where did that money go? You talked about programs, Ms. Quinn, but that is not enough.

Ms. Morency: could you tell me what you are going to do with the \$10 million that were invested in the justice system for the purpose of determining what happened with the unsolved murders? You are telling us that, since 2006, you have been investigating the unsolved murders, rapes and disappearances of Aboriginal women. What have you discovered during these four years? Have you shared your information with the people who work for the Sisters in Spirit initiative? Have you told us about your findings? Actually, we have been asking for an investigation for a few years, and now, you are telling us that you have been doing one. Obviously, we were not informed. Otherwise, we would not have asked for one.

I will stop at these two questions for the moment.

•(1610)

Ms. Mary Quinn: Thank you for your questions.

The funding from my department goes to prevention and protection, if I may describe them like that.

[English]

We are currently investing \$7 million of the \$29 million per year

[Translation]

in the prevention projects.

[English]

So these are projects across the country that help aboriginal women, children, and families. They help these people learn life skills and parenting skills. There are some projects that work with youth gangs.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Would you be so kind to provide us, if possible, with a list of those projects, (please)?

Ms. Mary Quinn: I have the list here, and I could share it with you. I will do that.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Please.

[English]

Ms. Mary Quinn: The other funds go to the shelters. Approximately \$22.6 million goes to support the running of the shelters. It pays the salaries of the workers, the case workers, the directors of the shelters, etc.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: They do not know that they receive that money, Ms. Quinn. They receive only \$190,000 per year. We do not know where the rest of that money goes, but we know that it does not go to the shelters. The shelters receive only \$190,000 per year for their basic operations, that is all.

Ms. Mary Quinn: The funding from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada goes to 41 centres. But in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories,

[English]

the funding is largely covered in the territorial formula financing. This is the financing envelope that isn't with our department. It goes out to the territories, and the territorial governments in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut work to support shelters in those territories.

[Translation]

We have funding for prevention projects for those two places, but we do not have funding available for the centres themselves.

Ms. Nicole Demers: In that case, where does the funding come from? The territories, specifically Nunavut in this case, have no taxation power. So, Nunavut gets all its money from the federal government. If it does not receive money from you for the shelters, where does the money come from?

Ms. Line Paré (Director General, External Relations and Gender Issues Branch, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Nunavut and the Northwest Territories receive funding from the federal government through the financing

formula. It is up to the territories to decide what the priorities are for investment. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada does not fund shelters in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. The Government of Canada transfers money to the two territories through the federal financing formula.

Ms. Nicole Demers: So there are only 41 centres that get the \$22.6 million.

Ms. Line Paré: That is right. They are funded by...

•(1615)

Ms. Nicole Demers: We are not counting the Northwest Territories.

Ms. Line Paré: or Nunavut.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Ms. Morency?

Ms. Carole Morency: You asked me two questions. First, the government's announcement in the 2010 budget referred to a \$10-million investment.

[English]

The Minister of Justice will be announcing the details of that budget allocation in the coming months. As the budget indicated, it will be looking at expending this amount of money over two years to address the issue of missing and murdered aboriginal women, and in particular to take concrete actions to ensure that law enforcement and the justice system meet the needs of aboriginal women and their families.

[Translation]

The second question was about the work of the federal and provincial governments. I was talking about work...

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Excuse me, I think we'll have to leave the second question until the next round. We're already over time.

We are now going to Ms. Boucher.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Good afternoon, everyone.

Today's discussion is very interesting. I also have many questions and I am not sure where to start.

Many people appeared before the committee and we worked very hard here to understand the violence against Aboriginal women. As we discussed last week, I am white and I have no experience of this. We often fail to grasp the situation or we have a bad image about the reserves in the Northwest Territories and the violence against Aboriginal, Inuit and Métis women.

Ms. Demers asked whether you talked to each other. Is there good co-operation between the various parties? Are Aboriginal women informed when programs are implemented? Do they know they have access to those funds?

As a woman in Quebec—and as a woman, period—I ask myself the following question: how can we help you to change the image we have of the violence against Aboriginal women? Often, far too often, Aboriginal women are portrayed as always going through crisis. Violence is also part of education. How can the government help you to move towards positive solutions to combat the violence against Aboriginal women?

Ms. Line Paré: I will try to answer for all my colleagues.

Co-operation does in fact exist. It is not the first time that we have seen each other, those of us here at this table. We know each other and talk to each other. Of course, under each of our departments' mandates, we work on implementing initiatives and we try to work with our partners.

Violence against Aboriginal women is a complex issue. A great number of factors come into play or cause violence against Aboriginal women. Finding the required solution is just as complex. There are stakeholders at the federal level, but also at the provincial and territorial levels, and even at the community level. With this co-ordinated approach, we will be able to achieve results.

Let us look now at the question of involving Aboriginal women's associations in our initiatives. When we are working on implementing initiatives and programs, each of us has a way of involving these associations. We also have the possibility of funding Aboriginal women's organizations, such as the Native Women's Association of Canada and the Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association, which represents Inuit women. In Quebec, the Quebec Native Women's Association receives funding for projects that it presents to the federal or provincial government in order to implement initiatives to help meet the specific needs of these groups.

● (1620)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: If I understood correctly, when the government gives money, it does so horizontally. Then you give that money to the provinces and territories, after which it is up to them to decide where the money goes, whether to shelters or other things. That is what I am sort of understanding.

Ms. Line Paré: For the shelters in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, it is the territorial government that makes the decisions.

As to the reserve programs of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, the funding will go to the communities through contribution agreements, based on each program. For the initiative to support the Native Women's Association of Canada, for example, the money comes from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

I am not sure if Daniel is able to talk about the allocation mechanism for the funding from the National Crime Prevention Centre.

Dr Daniel Sansfaçon: We are basically funding community organizations going out into the field. It may happen that we fund provincial and territorial governments, but it is quite rare. It really is about community organizations, in this instance, associations that are working directly in the Aboriginal community.

The original question, the difficult question of the horizontality of work between the various departments, is an excellent question, a nagging question, and it applies to all areas. But we have noticed some progress. I am referring particularly to the work that is

currently being done in the community of Pangnirtung, Nunavut. We can see the willingness of seven or eight departments to work on site, using a holistic, overall approach, and to work in a coordinated fashion in the field so that all the funding from the various partners goes through the same vehicle, the Inuit Relations Secretariat of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

That is one example of one initiative. It is just one example; we agree that it does not solve the problem. But we are moving in the right direction, towards a better integration and coordination of federal activities.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): You have about 30 seconds left for a question.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: My question is for the police officer.

Since you are out in the field, what is it that you do to try and combat violence against Aboriginal women?

A/Commr Bob Paulson: I will answer in my mother tongue.

[English]

Obviously, we respond to the community's needs when things go bad, so we have to have a fulsome response to the crisis when violence occurs. That requires educating our officers and doing these legalistic, evidence-gathering things that we do day in and day out.

Beyond that, in the areas of prevention and education, we find ourselves challenged to educate our officers, which we do from start to end through Depot and ongoing training initiatives, to cultural sensitivity matters, to building teams, and to being part of the team that you just heard being described.

And I'm being shut down, so there's lots more to talk about.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): I'm sorry, Mr. Paulson. They're asking very complicated questions with 30 seconds left in their time.

Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

And thank you for being here and providing your expertise.

I'd like to start with Mr. Buller. You were talking about traditional approaches, a healing process in communities that has been effective. I wonder if you could describe some of that, if you could put some meat on the bones. What kinds of processes do you engage in? What is being effective?

Mr. Ed Buller: I think we have to look at it from a variety of sources and a variety of different approaches that take place. It's not one size fits all, and that's the basis of the work we do.

First of all, I should say we're not a program, but rather a policy initiative. So when you hear about millions of dollars being spent on certain things, my budget is considerably less than that.

We look for communities that have taken responsibility for addressing some of the underlying issues around crime and victimization and that may pose a unique approach or help us understand better how communities themselves approach the issue of crime and victimization.

One of the common denominators in all of the work we've done is that it has been women in the community who have established and maintained these healing processes, regardless of the jurisdiction or the community.

There is a sense that if someone admits to being abused or being an abuser, the key issue is that the community itself takes responsibility for addressing that disclosure. In Hollow Water, in Mnjikaning, and in a number of other communities we work with, that involves a group of dedicated people within the community who have worked with the leadership of the community to say that the succession of violence, be it against men, women, boys, or girls, is not acceptable in this community. So community leadership and commitment is key.

The dedicated workers spend time with both the victim and the offender to get the information in a form that could be given to the police. The information is then transferred to the courts, and the court and crown in some communities have developed memoranda of understanding with the community that allows these issues to be addressed by the community. They go back into the community with the victim and the offender. They work in one-on-one counselling, group counselling, or in ceremony.

The key to many of the successful processes has been the work done to address colonization. What they do is help the individuals through a process of decolonization to show where they may have come to in their life and their life experiences that has brought them into conflict with the law or to become a victim. That, in and of itself, is a major process. You undo a lot of the activities that have become normalized in the community, because parents don't know how to parent. Victims in some cases have felt that they are responsible for some of the actions that have happened to them.

A healing process looks less at the incident but at the underlying reasons for why the crime took place. In all cases, the victim is given treatment by a group of women, many of whom have been victims themselves. They have been able to share their stories to be able to show how, over time, they have addressed the issue of victimization, to the point where they no longer feel they are victims.

The offender, to be a part of these processes, must admit responsibility in public and be made aware of the impact that his or her act has had on his or her family, the victim, the victim's family, and the community as a whole.

• (1625)

It brings the issue out into the open and shows that the community itself has both the willingness and the capacity to address these issues in an open way.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: You are touching on something quite fundamental. We heard from witnesses from NWAC and Pauktuutit and from Métis women about the need for the community to take control of the situation itself.

A lot of numbers have been bandied about in terms of how much money is being spent. We know that \$10 million was promised in the budget, but it seems that a lot of that \$10 million is going to be for law enforcement and the justice system. How do we make sure that the support, funding, and initiatives are given back to the people? I think the only people who can make this work and undo what is a horrific wrong in this country are the aboriginal peoples themselves.

How do we get that message out that there are experts and it ain't us—meaning the non-aboriginal community?

• (1630)

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): I'm going to have to cut in here. That's another complicated question with only three seconds left. Certainly, hopefully, we'll get a chance to go back to that.

We are on to our second round now. It is a five-minute round for both questions and answers. We'll start with Ms. Simson.

Mrs. Michelle Simson (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for appearing today. It is a very complicated issue.

I'd just like to pick up on something my colleague said. There appear to be the best of intentions and reasonable funding, but there's a lack of a national strategic plan dealing with this. It sounds to me a little as though as a country we're taking a band-aid approach as opposed to anything else.

I'd first like to go to Ms. Morency. I'd like you to elaborate, for instance, on the \$10 million that was in the 2010 budget, over two years. Was that funding a result of a plan that the justice department came up with, for which they received that funding? Did they have a plan in place? Or did they just say "Here is \$10 million, and here's what we'd like you to do with it"? Is there an actual plan that we could read or see to determine if it has any merit? Could you please go into a little bit of detail on that?

Ms. Carole Morency: I'm not in a position to provide the committee with any details about the forthcoming \$10 million allocation. All I can do is reiterate to the committee what has already been announced in the budget and indicate that the Minister of Justice himself will be coming forward with the details about the approach to that expenditure.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: It was specific to address the issue of the high number of missing and murdered aboriginal women. It was rather specific to that. So the money is there, but nobody knows if there's a plan, or there doesn't appear to be a formulated plan.

Ms. Carole Morency: I didn't say that.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: Okay.

Ms. Carole Morency: I said the Minister of Justice will be announcing the details in the coming months. That's all I can say.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: There will be an announcement with specifics in it from the Minister of Justice.

Ms. Carole Morency: That's correct.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: Okay.

Turning to another matter, I'd like to address Assistant Commissioner Paulson with respect to the training that officers and civilians receive. You touched upon the idea that there was cultural sensitivity training. Could you walk me through what that training is specifically in terms of how much time is devoted to that and whether it is ongoing? Does it include the civilian members of the force?

A/Commr Bob Paulson: Thank you for the question. I can speak about what we would refer to as regular members of the force and their training at Depot, which begins with about 35 sessions on family violence or domestic violence.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: That would be in general.

A/Commr Bob Paulson: Yes, but I'll pare it down for you.

In addition, there are probably 14 or 15 classes on aboriginal cultural issues and issues relating to aboriginal communities. Depending on where the officer is stationed, almost without exception, additional training is then given to the officer through what we refer to as "recruit field training".

Mrs. Michelle Simson: That's what I'm referring to. If a new officer is dispatched to a detachment where there's an aboriginal community, there will be ongoing interaction. Would there be additional or ongoing training at the detachment?

• (1635)

A/Commr Bob Paulson: Yes, there would be, and it would vary from detachment to detachment. But it would be consistent in the sense that within the six months following the transfer or posting of recruits to a detachment, they would do recruit field training, which is the development of skills that they began to acquire at the Depot. It's consistent in terms of engaging with local aboriginal communities, understanding local issues, and refining the training. Additional types of centralized and localized training are ongoing throughout a member's career.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: In media reports over the years, there appears to be ongoing tension between the RCMP and some of the aboriginal communities. It could be argued that it's the same for our Ontario Provincial Police. There's no level of trust in order to make it work.

My question is in terms of hiring practices.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): I'm sorry. You've had five minutes. We're on to the next one. There might be a chance for a third round.

Ms. Brown, please.

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

In deference to my colleagues who spoke earlier about the coordination of programs, I did a little research before we started this

entire investigation. I discovered that over 21,000 studies have been done in Canada on violence against aboriginal women. It's been well documented that this has been going on. Our chair, who's not here today, personally told me that she has taken part in studies on this issue for 17 years.

I hear today this is probably the greatest coordination of programs and services that we've seen in some time. I'm really pleased to hear this is going on. Health Canada has a part in this. Indian and Northern Affairs has a part in this. You're working cooperatively with provincial and territorial governments and with municipalities in order to get funding that has been put aside to where it needs to be.

As a woman, and I hope for all women on this committee, when we look at violence against aboriginal women, we have zero tolerance for this. We've looked at the causes. From some of the psychology I've read, I would suggest that violence against any person oftentimes occurs because the perpetrator has low self-esteem. How do we work towards solving that problem?

Mr. Sansfaçon, you said there are tremendous projects going on in education. One of the things I read here is particular to one of your projects. It says:

The project increased the development of positive social skills in boys aged 6 to 9. A significant difference in school achievement levels (reading, math and spelling) was found for both boys and girls at the intervention site.

I'd like you to talk about the education process. What's the retention for boys and girls in the school system, particularly for boys?

To the RCMP, who was somewhat cut off, could you elaborate on your initiatives for the prevention issues?

Dr. Daniel Sansfaçon: Thank you for your question. I'll try to address it as quickly as I can to leave enough time to Mr. Paulson.

Essentially, you're right. There is a lot of knowledge about the risk factors, the causes of later violence, whether that be...you mentioned self esteem. There is an intergenerational cycle to violence within the family, as well as other factors, for example, substance misuse, substance abuse, to name but a few of the known risk factors and the broader social contexts.

What is less well known is what the effective practices are. What can we do best to prevent these risk factors, particularly with young persons, leading to later lives of delinquency and crime and committing acts of violence against women? That's where we still have to learn a lot about what works—and this situation is not unique to Canada—to actually prevent....

These are some of the examples. We like to think that these are indeed examples of programs, of interventions, with some degree of success that could be replicated, adopted by other jurisdictions, other communities, to become part of what Ed was mentioning earlier as more comprehensive approaches. There's not one single unique approach that will suffice. We'd like to think these successful interventions will gradually lead to the building of a good knowledge of what works, and that these are the types of programs we would then be supporting to ensure there is less violence against women.

• (1640)

Ms. Lois Brown: Thank you.

Mr. Paulson.

A/Commr Bob Paulson: In respect of your question around prevention, I think I've already spoken of our training, starting from an officer's entry into the force and ongoing throughout his or her career, but also in terms of localized efforts among our detachment commanders and the people who make up the local detachments. We provide a broad strategic framework, with materials from headquarters.

There are things such as our aboriginal shield program, which is an educational program for youths within their respective communities. We encourage local detachment commanders to create local groups with community members, to bring the educational component to community members, and to engage broad sections of the communities. We try to lead social workers and other areas in our communities to look for proactive solutions, mostly in the area of engagement with youth at an early stage.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you for that.

Mr. Desnoyers now, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Welcome, everyone.

Like all my colleagues, I am trying to understand how we are coordinating all that. I was told last week in a meeting that 582 women are dead, missing, murdered.

Ms. Morency, you told my colleague earlier that you have had an investigation going since 2006. We are wondering what this investigation is all about and what you are doing. My question is also for the RCMP because it seems that you are also saying that there is some coordination, some sharing.

Is the RCMP also involved in the investigation? We want to know what is happening to these women. What are we doing in terms of justice to try and solve this problem?

Ms. Carole Morency: First, it is not an investigation. It is a provincial and federal government working group. We also have partners from all sectors, like the RCMP and other federal, provincial and territorial departments.

This working group is doing a study. We are examining all the questions that come up in relation to the cases of missing women.

[English]

While the focus is to look specifically at whether we can identify best practices, and ultimately risk factors that perhaps lead to somebody who becomes a serial killer and targets women in particular, obviously the spectrum is broad, from a missing person to the situation where police and criminal justice professionals may think a person is a victim of a serial killer.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: What stage is the study at?

[English]

Ms. Carole Morency: We hope to conclude the report and the study for federal-provincial-territorial ministers later this year, so it is an ongoing—

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: When?

[English]

Ms. Carole Morency: Later in the year—that's all I can say.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: Did the RCMP participate in this study? If so, how?

A/Commr Bob Paulson: Personally, I am not aware of that study, but that is not to say that...

An hon. member: She said they were partners.

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: You should be aware: 582 dead, missing women...

A/Commr Bob Paulson: I am aware of that study.

[English]

I'm aware of the study of the 582 missing women; I've read that study. I understand all of that.

[Translation]

Is that the study you are talking about?

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: We are listening.

[English]

A/Commr Bob Paulson: Okay. I'm aware of that study.

In terms of our responses to missing women and murdered women, I also wanted to give you some examples of some task forces that we run right now in northern British Columbia along the Highway of Tears and the current study that's going on in Manitoba right now.

I wanted to say that the RCMP and other police forces are working collaboratively to investigate, to search for the killers, the perpetrators. But it's not only the investigative steps that we focus on, because we do that. We also work with our colleagues in Justice and other areas throughout communities, to begin to get an understanding of the nature of the crimes that we're investigating to the communities to—

• (1645)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: You have known that these crimes have been committed for some time. Other crimes are happening right now. Predators are still around. You are saying that you are doing a study to try to understand how that happens.

A/Commr Bob Paulson: That is not what I said, Mr. Desnoyers.
[English]

I said there are two dimensions to recognizing the magnitude of the problem, as evidenced in the study you started speaking of. When you realize that someone is preying upon vulnerable areas of our society, you want to try to stop that immediately, and we are advancing many best practices. There is the Picton case, for example, in terms of how we organized the detective work and the forensic work. Similarly, in other cases we're working very hard at bringing leading-edge technology and forensic techniques to bear to find the suspects. Simultaneously, though, we've recognized the community's need for information, for understanding, and for a fuller comprehension of the impact of those types of crimes on communities, so that can contribute to the prevention.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: Thank you.

Mr. Buller, have you also contributed to this study? If so, how?
[English]

Mr. Ed Buller: I've sat as a representative of Public Safety Canada on the FPT working group for two or three years—a number of meetings.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: Are you saying that you have been working on this study for two or three years?

[English]

Mr. Ed Buller: I've been—

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Excuse me, I'll have to cut in now and go on to Ms. Mathysen. Sorry.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I feel I should give everyone an opportunity to finish the statements that have not been completed, but I did want to talk a little bit about some of what we heard from other witnesses.

One of the things we heard was that it's problematic. They estimate that there are 582 missing or murdered women, but there is no clear and definitive answer to that. It could be far more, because there's no way of collecting data about the race of the victims. There was a suggestion that this would be an important piece, in terms of really coming to grips with what is happening in our communities. I know Amnesty International advocated for that.

Is that something that's possible? I know there's a lot of sensitivity about that kind of data collection, but is it something that would be a positive step?

A/Commr Bob Paulson: We're very careful about the information we collect with respect to people's ethnicity or their race and so on.

By way of numbers, though, I wanted to share with the committee that, as recently as March, we had 10,477 missing people reported in Canada, of which 5,824 were characterized as white and 4,653 were characterized as non-white. That's about as close as we can get to informing that sort of a discussion.

We do collect some data in respect of ethnicity and race, but only insofar as it advances the investigation in terms of trying to identify the victim, ultimately. It's a very sensitive area. It's an area that we, frankly, are careful about because we don't know.... We know that it informs the sort of public policy work that you are engaged in right now, but it's not necessarily helpful, and it's not always instructive to the investigative response that we have to bring to bear on some of these things.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Okay.

Mr. Buller, I know this tends to be provincial, but I wanted to ask about the issue of children in care, children who have been apprehended. It would seem to me that the impact that has on children is very negative, because they're removed from their community, from their family, and they're unable to have the kind of bonding that strengthens family and community, the kind of bonding, strengthening, that you're talking about in the healing process.

Have you taken a look at that? Have you any comments or suggestions to make in regard to the fact that so many children are being apprehended and taken into care?

Mr. Ed Buller: We haven't studied that specifically, but from having worked in a number of communities over the years, I feel there are two aspects to that question. First, if they're removed from their homes and sent to a non-aboriginal family, we know that creates problems later on when they come to realize that they're aboriginal but they don't live in an aboriginal environment or follow their own traditions or culture.

A number of first nations and tribal organizations have taken responsibility for the child welfare system. They will remove the child from the home but will try as much as possible to keep the child in the community or in another community where there are relatives of the child. So you wouldn't see an Ojibway child being sent to a Blackfoot community. Rather, they would look for a place for that child where he or she would be safe and would be able to live the life of an Ojibway child.

• (1650)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: We did have such a project in my community, but the funding was cut, and unfortunately it seems to have gone by the wayside.

Thank you for that.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you.

The last person in the second round is Ms. Wong.

Mrs. Alice Wong (Richmond, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

And thank you very much for coming to our committee.

I have a question specifically for the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. I understand you had the family violence prevention program. I just want you to comment further on how successful it has been, on what sorts of expectations you may have, and on whether this program is still around.

Ms. Mary Quinn: Thank you.

With respect to the program, since 2007 there has been an injection of over \$55 million over five years. That funding has allowed for more prevention projects in the communities. As in most areas of social policy, the prevention side is where you want to focus. There are remedies on the other side, but having the problem not occur is the first issue.

I think one of the significant developments in recent years was the funding for five new shelters. Three of these new shelters have been built, and two are expected to open in May.

In terms of results, that's a hard question to answer. The fact that the shelters are being used shows that they're being used. We would rather work on the prevention side to get to the point where we don't have shelters, but the shelters are being used. There are prevention projects in place, and we will soon have the two new shelters coming into operation.

Mrs. Alice Wong: Thank you.

I have another question. I want the RCMP to comment further on the missing aboriginal women and girls, especially in B.C. I come from that province. I understand that there has been some collaboration of efforts, because according to a report, it says that you are making a task force to review cases involving missing and murdered women. Also, besides actively investigating, you are developing best practices related to information sharing, file management, and file coordination. Can you highlight some of the best practices developed so far?

A/Commr Bob Paulson: Yes, I can. What we're referring to is the Highway of Tears investigation, along Highway 16 in northern British Columbia. I believe that 13 young women have been found murdered and five are missing. In fact, I investigated one in Smithers when I was a corporal investigator in northern British Columbia.

Each investigation is done generally starting from a missing persons complaint. One of the best practices we've developed is a policy the RCMP has now that requires missing people to be presumed murdered until the investigators can demonstrate a different or alternative explanation. In terms of information sharing and the comparison of crime scene evidence from all those disparate cases, we have used computer programs to link those investigations so that they can make comparisons and share information with other task forces. For example, there is the one in the Lower Mainland in British Columbia with respect to the missing women in the Vancouver area. There is also Project KARE in Alberta.

Those information exchanges and the comparison of evidence and those types of things are the best practices that have come out of that.

•(1655)

Mrs. Alice Wong: Thank you.

Another thing is about healing. I understand that the funding for healing and other aspects has been moved to Health Canada, so I

don't know which one of you would be able to comment on the healing part.

Ms. Mary Quinn: I can tell you as well that the funding for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation wasn't continued in this budget. However, there was funding in the order of \$200 million over the next few years for Health Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs, and Service Canada to provide services. These are largely for the people in the resolution health support program. What the foundation was supporting and what the funds are for in terms of the number of participants accessing the settlement agreement...it's the healing related to the people in that process as a result of the residential schools.

In terms of the impact of residential schools and the propensity for family violence or needing parenting skills or the kinds of things people may encounter that send them down another path, there is a fine line between the residential school impact and what healing can assist in. I wouldn't say it's multi-dimensional, but there's a deep recognition of the need to continue healing through the funds that are continuing.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you so much.

We will have time for a short third round of three minutes each, so we'll start with Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you very much.

I'm wondering, Madam Chair, if we could please have tabled with the committee the list of projects funded through INAC in their prevention program.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): I think they agreed they will be sending it.

Hon. Anita Neville: That's fine. Sorry, I missed that.

Ms. Mary Quinn: I'm happy to look into that and get back to the committee.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

My question is for the RCMP, and I didn't intend to go in this direction.

I have been up in Prince George. I've met with the council. I've met with the families of the missing and murdered aboriginal women, and I appreciate that you were involved in the investigations. I've heard from families that their family members have been found but the perpetrators have not been found.

Can you tell me why, in your opinion, they haven't been and why it has been necessary to set up special task forces? Why has this not been done all along as part of the ongoing investigations? I've met with players in Manitoba on their task force as well.

A/Commr Bob Paulson: First I'll answer why I think the offenders haven't been caught yet. It's somewhat speculative on my part, but when a lot of these crimes are sexually motivated...and a lot of these crimes have no background connection between the victim and the perpetrator; they're what we refer to as "stranger-to-stranger killings". When that is the case, that is perhaps one of the most difficult, if not very challenging, cases to solve. You require aggressive forensic work and aggressive, innovative thinking about catching the person as he does what he does. It's a very challenging set of facts.

In terms of why it took so long to create a task force, I think—

Hon. Anita Neville: Why was it necessary to create a task force to address this overarching issue? We're calling for a national inquiry.

Why hasn't it been done over the years? It was 580—

A/Commr Bob Paulson: It has been done in many respects.

In the case I spoke of, it was the murder in Smithers of Ramona Wilson. I remember—

Hon. Anita Neville: That's who I'm speaking of. I met with her family.

A/Commr Bob Paulson: I remember it as if it were yesterday. She was a missing person for months, and she was found in a remote area by the airport with hardly any forensic evidence to pursue.

It's very difficult. In those days we worked on that very aggressively. We had the regional major crimes section come in, and as the regional major crimes section, we had contact with all the other homicides: Alishia Germaine, Nicole Hoar—I can remember all of these people's names because we worked it as a collective series of offences.

Did we call ourselves a task force and give ourselves a name? No, but we worked it very aggressively. When you realize that the scope of the challenge in all of these cases requires the focused delivery of intense resources, I think that's a good thing.

• (1700)

Hon. Anita Neville: I've met with Mrs. Wilson and her sister.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): You're out of time.

Hon. Anita Neville: Okay.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Mr. Calandra, and again, it's just three minutes. It's a short question and answer.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Yes. Three minutes is not a lot.

I don't have the perspective of a rural, remote northern guy, so I'm just going to ask you to describe for me, from the policing perspective, what one of these communities looks like. How many people are in it? How many officers would you have patrolling in a community like that? If I went there, what would I see? What kinds of job opportunities are there? What does one of these remote communities look like?

A/Commr Bob Paulson: I'll give you maybe a 15-second description of Smithers, and then perhaps I'll ask my colleague to give you a description of another area he policed in northern Saskatchewan.

Smithers is a fairly good-sized town. It's a logging community. It's policed by approximately 20 officers, with support staff and so on, but supported by a regional infrastructure of a regional office, a district office. The community is a beautiful community, with a lot of tourist areas mixed in with a lot of logging.

Maybe Russ can describe a community in northern Saskatchewan.

C/Supt Russ Mirasty (Director General, National Aboriginal Policing Services, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): It's a difficult question to answer in that our communities are so diverse.

First of all, I'll start from where I come from. I am first nations and I come from a community called Lac La Ronge, which is more central Saskatchewan, but it used to be the end of the road, quite frankly.

In that community it's fairly mixed, meaning there are about 2,500 non-aboriginal and about 3,000 first nations people. It's a fairly modern community in that it's the centre of government for northern Saskatchewan. There are a lot of services that are provided to both the non-aboriginal and first nations people.

There isn't a lot of local industry. There is mining in the area where people do get jobs. There are obviously the government jobs and the support jobs that arise out of that. There is some tourism. There was logging until probably about four years ago. So really, in terms of an economic base, there is very little. It's almost self-supporting in terms of government services.

If we go a little bit further north from La Ronge—and you don't have to go very far north—a related community is Stanley Mission, which is actually part of the Lac La Ronge Indian Band, of which I am a member. It's a community of about 2,500 first nations people and probably 100 non-first nations or non-aboriginal people.

There is no industry there; there is some tourism. There are still people who practise a traditional way of living, living off the land by trapping and fishing, but that's diminishing very rapidly as well. They do take advantage, again, of the mining industry that's in close proximity, so more and more people are employed there.

The people who are successful and come back to the community have done so through education. There are many local teachers who have gone off to Saskatoon or Regina to get their education degrees and come back to teach the children.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you.

We'll move on to Ms. Demers.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Morency, since 2005, Sisters in Spirit has been accomplishing important work on the disappearances and murders of First Nations women. Have you asked them to participate in your working group?

[English]

Ms. Carole Morency: The work that's been undertaken through the federal-provincial-territorial working group on missing women is being informed by the work that exists and has been done elsewhere. So officials at the federal and provincial levels who work on this working group are very much aware of the Sisters in Spirit project.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: I asked if you invited Sisters in Spirit to participate in your working group.

[English]

Ms. Carole Morency: No, it's a government official working group. But obviously we do take into consideration the substantial work undertaken by the Native Women's Association of Canada.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Ms. Quinn, when you talked about the Healing Foundation, you said that the money that had been redistributed to health would still be used for the healing process. Will this money be used by the Healing Foundation or by individuals? Did I understand correctly that you said it would be for the individuals rather than the organization, serving the individuals' interests?

• (1705)

Ms. Mary Quinn: Thank you for asking the question.

I would like to clarify my answers. From what I know, the funding is not going to the foundation because it no longer exists. The funding is...

[English]

from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Service Canada, and Health Canada.

My understanding is that it goes to the individuals, but I would need to clarify that for the committee. I have some information with me, but I don't have all the information about the funding and the budget and who it goes to.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Mr. Paulson, two young women disappeared in Maniwaki two years ago. Unfortunately, their disappearance went unnoticed. Moreover, we still have no news about them. It seems that no one cares about the situation. It is very discouraging. When it is a white male or female disappearing, the photo is in the media, on TV for months. When it is an Aboriginal woman, a First Nations woman—the two young women were 16 and 17—there is nothing; we see or hear nothing about it.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): A very quick answer, please.

A/Commr Bob Paulson: Okay.

That's the case in a lot of missing persons cases. It's the tragic aspect.

One of the things we're working on is trying to put together a little bit more of a coordinated effort at making information available to victims and communities, so they can access in a central location

information about the state of their case or what's going on around them.

It's very frustrating, I agree.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you.

Our last of the day is Ms. Mathysen for three minutes.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to pursue what Madam Demers was talking about, because this is not clear to me. I want to know what role NWAC, in the Sisters in Spirit campaign, will play in regard to the working group and the work that continues from this point on. I want to know what they will be doing and how their expertise will be utilized.

I, too, am very unclear about the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. I know it's gone. I know you said there is \$200 million for INAC and Health Canada. I know what the healing foundation did—family outreach, counselling, advocacy—but what is Health Canada going to do? What specifically are they going to do? It seems to me that the expertise was with those people at the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. This seems very much like...well, there's a little bit of paternalism, but it seems like taking the ability of those who have the expertise, the will, and the passion to continue with the action and throwing it away, disseminating it.

So if you could help me with that, please....

Ms. Carole Morency: On the first question about the federal-provincial-territorial working group on missing women, it's a group of officials of the different federal and provincial governments that brings together their expertise, which is informed by work undertaken at local, regional, and provincial levels to address issues of all missing women in Canada, including, obviously, aboriginal women. In terms of the Sisters in Spirit or NWAC sitting in as part of this group, no, they do not. But that's not to say that the substantial work that Sisters in Spirit has done with their report is not being taken into consideration by this working group. There are other groups that have been very active in this area. I would note, for example, the Saskatchewan 2007 report on missing persons as well.

The work of the working group is to look at how all points in the criminal justice system deal with reports of all missing persons, from the time a person, the family, or a loved one contacts police, victims' services, or another social service. Is there a way we can enhance collaboration between agencies? Is there a way to address some of the issues that have been identified by the RCMP as best practices?

The intention here is to try to come at it from a broad, systemic approach to facilitate how we deal with the victims and how we support the victims' families through these cases. Public Safety has estimated that 100,000 persons are reported missing annually and that approximately 4,800 persons may still be missing after one year. What we're trying to do is identify best practices that will get to the core of those persons who are truly missing and not, for example, runaway kids or persons who leave for other reasons and then come back or are found by family.

• (1710)

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you very much.

I'd like to thank all of the witnesses. I think you've added some
very great value to our study.

We'll suspend now. We're going to go in camera, so we'll take a
minute to clear the room.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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