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**Wednesday, January 12, 2011**



**Chair**

**The Honourable Hedy Fry**



## Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Wednesday, January 12, 2011

• (1240)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)):** I'd like to call the meeting to order.

I want to welcome the witnesses, who have come out on a freezing day. It is cold out there, so thank you for coming.

I want to just tell you that pursuant to what is known as a standing order, in this case Standing Order 108(2), this committee on the status of women is studying violence against aboriginal women: the root causes of that violence, the nature of the violence, and the different types and extent of the violence, whether it is domestic, societal, psychological, sexual, etc. We're looking at the whole breadth and depth of violence against aboriginal women in all of its forms, and of course the root causes.

Definitely we hope that aboriginal communities will be able to furnish us with some solutions, because it seems to the committee that we have done this, that we have been addressing this thing, for years and years, and we don't seem to be getting a lot of positive outcomes. We're very well aware of the work done by Sisters in Spirit. We feel that it has furnished us with a fair amount of background, but we wanted to talk to women and visit the country.

Now, does anyone know where Marlene Bear is, and if she is coming? No? Then we'll begin with the five groups here, and if Marlene comes in, we will add her.

To let you know what we usually do here, you give us a presentation of anywhere between five and seven minutes. I will give you a two-minute signal and then a one-minute signal so that you know when you should wrap up. At the end of that, we will open it up to questions from members of the committee.

A standing committee, as you know, is made up of all parties in the House. We do have members here from the Conservatives, the NDP, the Bloc Québécois, and the Liberals. Therefore, we will be asking you questions in a particular rotation.

I'd like to begin with the representative from the Prince Albert Métis Women's Association, Lisa Cook, urban aboriginal coordinator.

Lisa, could you begin?

**Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook (Urban Aboriginal Coordinator, Prince Albert Métis Women's Association Inc.):** Thank you very much, Mrs. Chairperson.

First of all, I'd like to say thank you for inviting us here today. We don't get the opportunity very often to have a standing committee arrive in Prince Albert. I know it's the first stop here in western Canada, and I really appreciate that you've come here today despite how the weather is treating us outside. Maybe some of you are not used to this, but once it gets started here in Saskatchewan, it really gets started.

I'd like to briefly introduce myself. My name is Lisa Goulet-Cook. I currently reside here in Prince Albert. I live here with my family, which includes my husband of 19 years and my three teenaged children. I currently work for the Prince Albert urban aboriginal steering committee. We are being housed over at the Prince Albert Métis Women's Association office building. Actually, they're the capacity-holder. At this point in time, I've been employed by them for about six months. They do quite a bit of work with not only aboriginal women and children but also the entire family.

But the organization I work for, as I said, is the urban aboriginal steering committee. We receive an allotment of funding from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. With that funding we are supposed to carry out, as a steering committee, basically the action orders from the steering committee itself. We make selections and then we put out a call for proposals to the city of Prince Albert.

Whichever agency wants to submit a proposal to enhance their current programming can do so. They state their proposal, and then we as a committee rate those proposals. Basically, we don't want a duplication of services. We want an enhancement, such as capacity-building for their employees or changing the programming they currently have, when it comes to our mandate.

Currently our mandate is basically to help aboriginal women and children, first and foremost, and the way we do that is by improving their life skills. We try to liaise with different agencies around Prince Albert to try to assist these women in finding further help for the situations they find themselves in.

We support a lot of off-reserve Indians. Our mandate is to try to help off-reserve Indians who are currently living in Prince Albert.

If you know Prince Albert's population, we are currently sitting at 54% in terms of aboriginal population. That comes from a census done by the community development department of First Nations University. It's not an official census population statistic, but it comes from a census that First Nations University students completed.

So when you look at the ratio across Canada, Prince Albert has the highest ratio per capita when it comes to aboriginal people. When I say "aboriginal" people, I mean first nations, Métis, and Dene people, and non-status as well. There are a few people who declare themselves as non-status.

That ratio of 54% is not surpassed by any other city in Canada. The population may be higher in other cities, but the population ratio is not that high. Other cities are averaging around 35% to 40%. Here in Prince Albert we're sitting at 54%, which means that over half of the population is aboriginal. A majority of those are children.

That's the highest population ratio of aboriginal persons throughout Canada. We have a diverse population as well here in Prince Albert, but as I said, our mandated focus deals with aboriginal women.

• (1245)

You said in the e-mail you sent me from the procedural clerk that you guys are looking at the root causes and at ideas for solutions. On the root causes that we see for a lot of our individuals and clients—not only those who I'm currently working with but those who other agencies are currently working with—we're running into a lot of individuals who have faced many abuses, such as sexual abuse and physical abuse in their past, and they think that's okay to carry on into future generations.

That, I find, is the most detrimental factor in the root causes. Individuals who go through those types of abuses don't have the self-esteem to say that it's not okay to live in that type of situation, so that whole scenario is perpetuated generation after generation. It didn't help that we went through residential schools; that didn't help either.

But what is most needed at this point in time is really accurately getting statistics in order to start giving more funding to aboriginal agencies that are operated by aboriginals. There is nothing more discouraging to a woman than going to an agency and not getting the help she needs. Ultimately, the children suffer in the end.

What we basically would like to see is more funding coming to aboriginally run agencies so we can help our own people. That's the only way we could see this cycle of violence—in any form, whether it's systematic, personal, domestic, what have you—this system of violence, being basically dragged through the dirt over and over again...it has to stop by having our own people looking after our own people.

Thank you very much.

• (1250)

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

Marlene has not come, so we will move on to the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle. I have two people here.

Wanda and Eva, are you going to share your time or is one of you going to speak for the seven minutes?

**Ms. Wanda Daigneault (Treasurer, Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation):** I will speak for those seven minutes.

**The Chair:** All right. I'll do the two minutes and the one again, just to give you a heads-up. Please begin.

**Ms. Wanda Daigneault:** I would like to say thank you to Hedy Fry for inviting us here and to all the women who are here—and for those who are not here.

I bring greetings from our president, Judy Hughes, and me, Wanda Daigneault. I'm a new member of SAWCC, and I'm also SAWCC treasurer. With me is my mother, Eva McCallum, our SAWCC north elder. I would just like to say that I'm new at this, so I may make a few mistakes. Just bear with me.

**The Chair:** There are no mistakes when you're presenting; you're just presenting, just telling us what you think, so not to worry. Don't be nervous.

**Ms. Wanda Daigneault:** The Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation is a provincial membership-based organization dedicated to promoting and enhancing the status of aboriginal women in all areas of our lives. SAWCC works to unite and involve women by addressing issues of concern through education, advocacy, research, and resource sharing. We strive to advance the issues and concerns of aboriginal women by assisting and promoting common goals towards self-determination and self-sufficiency for aboriginal peoples in our roles as mothers, grandmothers, sisters, aunties, and leaders. Working in partnership with agencies, organizations, and governments in Saskatchewan, across Canada, and internationally, the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation seeks to increase communication, collaboration, and access to necessary resources toward our common goal of equality for all.

SAWCC is one of the 14 affiliates of the Native Women's Association of Canada. Our membership is open to first nations, Métis, Inuit, and non-status women in Saskatchewan. Our programs and services are open to all women and families and have the following three priorities: to decrease vulnerability by addressing violence against aboriginal women, the elderly, youth, and children; to do networking and outreach to support individual and community participation; and to strengthen capacity and leadership creation and enhance youth capacity.

I'm here to share with you the reality of violence experienced by aboriginal women and girls and to discuss how we can take action to address this critical issue. Aboriginal women and families are suffering from a wide range of indicators that place them in a situation of vulnerability to violence and exploitation. To address this issue, we'll look at the root causes, circumstances, and experiences as well as at the responses to violence. The disproportionate level of violence experienced by aboriginal women has been traced to a number of factors rooted in the intergenerational impacts of colonization that have undermined the role of aboriginal women and families in communities—through legislation, such as the Indian Act, and various government initiatives, including residential schools, the sixties scoop and the widespread apprehension of aboriginal children into the child welfare system. Today's disturbingly high rates of violence against aboriginal women and girls, including violence that leads to disappearance and death, have both historical as well as other contemporary root causes and factors.

Through national initiatives such as Sisters in Spirit, the Native Women's Association of Canada has spent the last five years collecting new information about the experience of violence against aboriginal women. In the recently released report, "What Their Stories Tell Us", NWAC reported 582 cases of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls. In examining the cases of violence that have led to disappearance and death, we have to come to understand the much broader spectrum of violence and victimization impacting aboriginal women, girls, and communities.

My presentation will begin with the background and context of violence against aboriginal women and girls in Saskatchewan and in Canada. We will adopt a coordinated approach involving federal, provincial, territorial, and aboriginal leaders. As well, we will share recommendations and the next steps for moving towards action. My presentation expands on the three identified themes from the SWC hearings from last spring: one, murdered and missing aboriginal women; two, culturally appropriate services and filling the service gap; and three, the need to heal victims, families, and communities.

The background and context of violence against aboriginal women and girls in Canada is not easily summarized. However, the reality is that aboriginals are over-policed and under-protected. Statistics on violent crime, victimization, and missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls indicate that the rates of victimization for aboriginal women and girls are 3.5 times higher than they are for non-aboriginal women.

• (1255)

The rate of homicide for aboriginal women is seven times higher than for non-aboriginal women. According to Statistics Canada, aboriginal identity is one of the strongest indicators of violence, even when taking into consideration....

There are over 582 missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls in Canada. Seventy-eight per cent of the cases are from Ontario and west of Ontario. B.C. has the highest number of known cases at 160. These women and girls are young. More than half were under the age of 30 at the time of their disappearance and death.

With the information we have, we know that the vast majority of the women were mothers. This indicates significant issues related to the intergenerational impact of missing and murdered women, as children have lost mothers, aunts, grandmothers, and sisters. There are many questions about how children cope, where they live, and where their support system is.

One of the most important findings is that aboriginal women and girls are as likely to be killed by a stranger or an acquaintance as they are by an intimate partner. Another critical finding, which is consistent with the Sisters in Spirit report, is that only 53% of cases of murder have been cleared by charges of homicide.

SAWCC sits on the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons, which is chaired by the Saskatchewan justice department.

**The Chair:** Now what will happen is that as we go through the questions you will get an opportunity to expand on things if there was something you didn't get to say.

**Ms. Wanda Daigneault:** Yes.

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

Now I'll move to the Women's Commission of the Prince Albert Grand Council, with Shirley Henderson.

**Ms. Shirley Henderson (Chair, Women's Commission of the Prince Albert Grand Council):** Good morning. My name is Shirley Henderson. I'm the chairperson of the Prince Albert Grand Council Women's Commission.

We've been in existence for 20 years as the women's commission of the grand council. Our population within the grand council is well over 35,000. We have 14 members on our commission and also 12 first nations communities within the grand council. Three of those communities are fly-in communities: Hatchet Lake, Black Lake, and Fond du Lac. For many years we've been trying to get funding for a women's and children's shelter within the grand council area, but many struggles have occurred, and we have not been able to access any funding.

As for the shelter in Prince Albert, there are a lot of barriers for our women from the far north. The food is different, as is the language. A lot of our ladies only speak their first nations language when they come into the city. The culture is totally different. We do have a lot of barriers for our women from the far north. We're hoping that eventually some programs can be taken to the communities because of the vast distance the women have to travel. For those few who do come to our shelters, a lot of times they have no choice but to go back to the same situation.

The languages within the grand council are Cree, Dene, and Dakota. We were hoping that if we did establish our own shelter we could bring in all three languages, because this is such a barrier to our women.

The communities from the far north are very poor communities. The cost of living is very high. A lot of times, the first nations of a community can't even afford a plane ticket to send an individual out of that community into a shelter—for instance, in Prince Albert. The other shelter they have is in La Ronge. I'm hoping that eventually programs and shelters can be established for some of our communities, because for our ladies it is definitely home-based for them.

• (1300)

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

Now I'm going to go to the ISKWEW (Women Helping Women) Co-operative Health Centre, and Angie Bear.

**Ms. Angie Bear (Community Development Worker, ISKWEW Women Helping Women Co-operative Health Centre):** Thank you so much. I appreciate the opportunity to come here and speak on the issues today.

I want to reiterate that some of the issues at the core of the violence against women are colonization and having generations of people going through the residential schools. You can imagine the turmoil and the upheaval of families. Traditionally in our communities we didn't have a whole lot of family violence because of the way we lived and because of our belief system. Our women were highly looked upon and honoured in that traditional setting. That is not the mainstream thinking today. Part of it is that the man is the head of the household. That clash of belief systems has been the downfall for first nations women in Canada, I believe.

Just to let you know a little bit about myself, as I said, my name is Angie Bear. I work with the ISKWEW program. It's a women helping women program that deals directly with abuse issues. Our services provide individual counselling. We offer support and referrals for abused women. When we are requested to, we support and advocate for women who are dealing with other agencies and government departments. We strengthen networks and cooperation among community-based organizations and groups. Through public education, we want to increase awareness regarding family violence.

I have just recently come on board with the ISKWEW program. I started November 26. I came from the Prince Albert Grand Council. I worked in the family violence area there for four years.

I've seen first-hand a lot of the core issues and where they come from. I understand the dysfunctions in our families and where they're coming from. I believe that when people wake up in the morning and look out the window, they don't understand a lot of the time where all of those issues come from and how they have gotten here.

I am an aboriginal woman. I grew up in Edmonton, and my family was from Saskatchewan. When I grew up, I had a lot of self-loathing, and I never understood why that was. I remember going home from grade 1 and saying, "I don't want to be an Indian because everybody hates us", and feeling that way. I think it's those core issues that affect you, even when you grow up and you realize those aren't there anymore.

So first of all I'd like to address some of the issues that I think are really important.

Excuse me.

• (1305)

**The Chair:** If you want to take a minute, some time, we'll stop the clock.

**Ms. Angie Bear:** I'm fine. I just get a little choked up when I talk about that part, but I'm okay. Thank you. I appreciate that.

I want to address some major concerns that I have in working with women on a daily basis in Prince Albert. When women come into my office and are prepared that day to leave a situation and I can't find any shelter space, this has to be one of my major concerns. When somebody is in a place where they're ready to finally leave that abusive situation, sometimes that window of opportunity is very small. Maybe they go back into the home, where they continue to be dominated, and it's not safe for them to come out until some time later. So when those opportunities come when somebody is ready to leave, and they want to leave now, it's really imperative that we have some place to place them.

What usually happens is I will get a lady who comes into my office and she's fearful for herself and her children. Maybe her partner has her children at that point and he's looking after them, so she can't leave at that moment because she won't leave without her children. When women leave without their children, they become separated, and then there's the whole issue of child apprehension. So they won't leave without their children, and they end up going back. They are put on long waiting lists. We have the YWCA in Prince Albert. If I can't get somebody into the shelter—and the statistics show that the shelter is full 99.9% of the time. So at any time there's never really any space available. You end up being put on a waiting

list, and then you just have to keep calling daily, maybe a couple of times a day, just to see if a space becomes available, because there's so little space available.

As I said, there's the YWCA. They house women and children. And they have Our House, which is attached to the YWCA, and it's for both males and females. That space doesn't help children, though. Unless they can get into the YWCA, they will basically have no place to go. So it's really important that something happen with the shelter space in Saskatchewan.

As Shirley Henderson mentioned, first nations women need that space where they can feel welcome, where their language is spoken, where their food is being served, where they can feel comfortable and safe and secure.

There are other programs that need to happen. There needs to be funding for cultural ceremonies and programs to deal with those barriers when women get into those relationships.

The other major thing I want to talk about is sexual abuse. A lot of women come forward and tell me they've been dealing with sexual abuse for a number of years, and they don't have the resources to continue fighting. Sometimes their children are left in those homes and they are told it's a custody issue. They go to doctors.... They just can't get the support. There needs to be more education and support around sexual abuse.

One of the biggest things I deal with is when children are apprehended and there is no place for the women to really go to get the support they need. They're victimized. I think it has to be looked at, as to what is happening when children are apprehended when there's violence in the home. I don't think it's agreeable to have the woman be further victimized by having her children apprehended because she's with somebody who is abusive. I think we need to deal more with the abuser.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Marlene has not arrived, so I guess we will just carry on without her.

I'm going to move to questions. The first round of questions is a seven-minute round. The seven minutes includes the question and the answer, so if everyone could try to be as succinct as they can, we can get more questions in.

I will begin with Ms. Neville for the Liberals.

• (1310)

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

Let me begin by thanking each of you for coming forward. I know it's not always an easy thing to do, and it's certainly appreciated.

I have many questions, but I'm going to start first with Wanda. If you wouldn't mind, I'm going to ask you, in half of my time, perhaps three or four minutes, to give us some of the recommendations that you had in the brief that you prepared that you didn't have time to finish reading.

**Ms. Wanda Daigneault:** I forgot where I left off. I'll just add on to where I ended.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** I don't know how much more time I've got, but I'm really interested in the recommendations you were going to make to the committee.

**Ms. Wanda Daigneault:** I think I started off with the information we have that the vast majority of women were mothers, and this indicates significant issues related to intergenerational impacts of missing and murdered women, as children have lost mothers, sisters.... There are many questions about how children cope where they live—where is their support system?

One of the most important findings is that aboriginal women and girls are as likely to be killed by strangers or acquaintances as they are by an intimate partner.

Another critical finding, which is consistent with Sisters in Spirit, is that only 53% of cases of murder have been cleared by charges of homicide. This compares to 84% for the overall clearance rate of homicide in Canada. We have also calculated the clearance rate by province and have found it ranges from a very low 42% in Alberta to 93% in Nunavut. The clearance rate for Saskatchewan is 78%. This is the highest clearance rate for provinces with a sizeable number of murdered aboriginal women and girls, which suggests that we need to look closer at what Saskatchewan is doing right.

While there are few government initiatives under way to address the issue of violence—such as the federal-provincial territorial working group on aboriginal justice, the FPT family violence initiative, and the FPT status of women forum—the evidence tells us there is a clear need to invest in programs and policies that will change the experiences and outcomes of violence.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Thank you very much.

This morning we met with another agency and we heard many things. I guess I would ask each of you what your relations are with other organizations in the community, or what you find the relations of the women who come into your organization for service support, care, whatever you want, are with other organizations in the community. That is, do they get support from social services? Do they get the kind of support required from police? Do they get it from organizations like Second Harvest Circle and other community organizations?

What's been your experience with working with these women and their relationship with other organizations?

**The Chair:** Who wants to answer that? Would you like to try that, Lisa?

• (1315)

**Ms. Lisa A. Goulet-Cook:** Thank you very much for the question, Anita.

Usually when anyone comes to our agency for help, it's already gone past that point where they've been involved with social services or they've been involved with child and family services. Most of the time they are involved with the judicial system, whether they have to go to court for charges, whether they have to go to court to serve as a witness against their abuser, which most likely is their husband or their common-law. So they are involved with the judicial system in many respects. They are involved with other family members who are trying to help them, but the most important fact is that they are there to help themselves and they really don't know where to turn.

I've been put in that situation where I've been faced with family violence. I didn't have a violent upbringing, but I've faced violence with my husband, which we had to heal from, and that wasn't easy. That's probably one of the worst times in my life. So not only do I have that personal experience in dealing with those situations, but we see clients coming into the office where I work involved with all of those systems and really not getting the help they deserve, especially when they have some type of evidence on their face or their body that they've been severely abused.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** That's what I'm trying to get at, Lisa. I'll have to do it on my next round. What I'm trying to determine is whether they are getting the help that's required from the community organizations, and if they're not, why they are not. Do you have recommendations that we as a committee can put forward to government, recognizing that there are different jurisdictions? Some fall within the province and some fall within the federal jurisdiction. We'll come back to that on my next round, which I hope I'll get.

Madam Chair, thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll now hear from Madam Demers from the Bloc Québécois.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much, ladies, for meeting with us. Your being here this afternoon is very important to us.

I will continue along the same lines as my colleague Ms. Anita Neville. The question she asked you is of great importance.

This morning, witnesses told us about the prevalent racism against first nations women living here, in Prince Albert. Unfortunately, this kind of violence is more systemic than simple family violence or other forms of violence seen elsewhere.

We were told about violence perpetuated by social services, police services and food banks, all of which treat aboriginal women harshly. We must discuss this. If this is true, we must find the source of the problem. This is not normal. I am sure that the issue is not due to bad faith, but there must be a reason for it.

I see there is someone from the law enforcement community present here. I would have liked to see this person testify today, so that police services could be represented. I am wondering why this is not the case, given the seriousness of this situation. We are talking about violence against first nations women, and I believe that the law enforcement community is also part of the solution. In other towns, members of police services testified.

I would like you to answer me and to continue answering Ms. Neville's question.

• (1320)

[English]

**The Chair:** Who wants to start?

Wanda, your mike is on. Does that mean you want to start?

**Ms. Wanda Daigneault:** Yes.

I would like to add to what you just said. I had a niece come here to a women's shelter. She came here because she was being abused, but then she came back home. She was crying. She said, "Auntie, guess what?" I asked, "What, my girl? What happened?" She said, "You know, Auntie, I went to Prince Albert. I went to a women's shelter to stop being abused." She'd brought her little girls with her. She broke down in tears. I asked, "What's wrong, my girl?" She said to me, "Auntie, I went to Prince Albert to stop being abused, and at that women's shelter where we went, I got abused. I got called down. My kids got called down", is what she said. Then I told her, "Well, we'll work it out. We'll talk."

So I could just feel what you said about the two police officers sitting at the back of the room here. I come from a northern community, Ile-a-la-Crosse. There's not much police help. When you call a police officer in the middle of the night, when your spouse is abusing you or whatever, they don't come right away. You know, we had a youth stabbed to death in Ile-a-la-Crosse. He died there. It took police officers one hour to come there.

So I understand where you're coming from in terms of what they're saying.

That's it.

**The Chair:** Nicole, would you like to have somebody else answer? Lisa looks like she's interested.

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** *Oui.*

**Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook:** Yes, I can answer.

She's asked why we don't get those services. I can attest to what Wanda is saying. I'm originally from Cumberland House, and I still see a lot of our people come here into the city and not get those services only because we don't have enough of our own people serving our own people. When you go in for social services, they're not very welcoming. They're not very nice to you. They don't really want to help you.

A lot of our women, when they leave, will leave, yes, with their children, but they will also leave behind financial stability. When our women leave, they leave with their identity and that's about it. They leave everything else behind, including a stable home. Even though it's violent, even though it's dysfunctional at a certain level, it's still their home. It's still their bed. It's still everything they own. It's still their clothing and their personal effects.

A lot of our women leave without anything. I've known women to be kicked out of their homes with literally only their underwear on. They've been beaten up and thrown out into the snow like that. That's the harsh reality for our women. Whether we're in northern Saskatchewan or in the city, that's the harsh reality.

Do we ever realistically get a helping hand from the police services? A lot of the women I've spoken to have been treated very harshly. They haven't been treated with the same respect as our non-aboriginal counterparts. That's just the reality of the situation. You can ask women time and time again. You can ask children time and time again.

When women do leave, they enter into that realm of child and family services. I worked in that realm for quite some time. I don't work there now. I don't believe it's a system that's made to pull

families together. I think it's there, realistically, to pull families apart in order for social workers to have a stable job. That's what I really, truly believe.

• (1325)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Lisa.

Nicole, I'm sorry; we'll come back to you.

Ms. McLeod, from the Conservatives.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to also thank all the witnesses. It is certainly a cold day but with a very warm welcome, so thank you. I appreciate the frankness that everyone brings to the table.

I come from British Columbia, which has a horrific history with this issue. What our committee is doing is going across Canada and really trying to determine not only root causes, but where we can go. Unfortunately, we can't change history, but where can we go that will be effective in the future?

Let's say there's no budget restriction, there are no jurisdictional issues. If you were looking at your community—and perhaps I'll leave time for each person to tackle this one—what would you do in terms of prevention? Where would you go with that issue if you had no constraints around money and jurisdiction? Also, the second part of that would be where would you go in terms of supporting current victims? I'll leave that open.

**The Chair:** We'll start with Angie.

**Ms. Angie Bear:** That is a really good point to bring up. That's one of the things, when I'm working in my programs, I'm looking at for dollars for programs so that I can develop some of the programs.

Some of the things I can see that would really help families, the kinds of programs.... When I was at the grand council I developed a program called "Honouring our Traditions: Shaping Healthy Behaviours". It was an anger management program that was to be developed in Prince Albert. It went through the UAS committee and then was to be delivered out into our communities. Hopefully that initiative will continue, because that is where I believe that capacity needs to be. We need to give the education to the people so that they can deliver it to their own people. We need to provide them with services and education and programs so that they can continue to deliver those programs.

Part of what that anger management program would do in our first nations communities is it wouldn't just deal with anger management. It would deal with.... You are holding onto all this anger, but where is it coming from? Is it coming from...? And we'll go back into colonization. We'll talk about tools for how to deal with anger management. We'll talk about family violence. We'll talk about traditional lifestyles. There is so much that was put into the program. It was nine full days long, and I'm hoping that continues.



If I saw an opportunity where we could deliver programs to people and address those issues, that's where it would come from. It would come from programs coming from our grassroots people and it would be deliverable to our community so that it would be like the trainer type program so that people can take that program and run with it. If they are from a Dene community they can put a Dene cultural component to it, and it still sticks with the program so that they can kind of tailor it to their needs as long as they have the basic tools.

That is where I would really like to see a lot of funding and initiative go toward, to develop something really powerful like that. Part of being in a family violence situation is women have no self-esteem. If we can empower these women and give them some tools so that they can understand where they have come from, what has happened to them, and where they want to go, give them some tools on some child programs so that they can do some parenting, so that they know themselves and can feel empowered that way, that's the way to go. That's what I would like to see.

• (1330)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Does anybody want to add to that? We have three minutes left, so if you wanted to be very quick about what you're doing, everybody could get a chance.

Lisa, do you feel you want to add something?

**Ms. Lisa A. Goulet-Cook:** I want to add something.

I do agree with that statement that we should be adding a traditional component onto teaching our current families, especially the women and children, but I'd also like to see a traditional family one. I mean that help should be brought to the perpetrators as well. They need help as much as the women and the children do. Without helping all facets of the family, all members of the family, how are we going to truly say that we've helped them to heal from their past?

And not only that, but having traditional programming in with very contemporary counselling practices as well and getting to the root causes of those issues is really important in order for a family to really heal, and getting them educated enough to not only improve their life skills but to improve their educational levels as well. That's really important in order for them to start taking further steps toward independence.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Wanda, do you have anything to add?

**Ms. Wanda Daigneault:** Since we're focusing on women and children being educated about violence, why not men? That's what I'd like to ask. Why not men?

**The Chair:** Shirley.

**Ms. Shirley Henderson:** I agree with what the lady said. I think the main focus has to be that we have to heal the whole family. Everybody needs counselling—the husband, the wife, and also the children—because in a domestic violence situation everybody suffers. The man suffers. He feels guilt after the incident occurs. After the honeymoon stage has come, he's sorry for what he did. He's sorry to the wife. He's sorry to the child. Everybody's involved. So I

think we need to focus more programming on healing the whole family.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We have 30 seconds left. Eva, do you have anything? You haven't spoken. Do you want to add something or are you in agreement?

**Ms. Eva McCallum:** No.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Cathy, you have 30 seconds. What do you want to do with it?

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** I'll leave it for my next round.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you.

Now we're going to go to the second round....

Oh, sorry, Irene. We have Irene Mathysen from the NDP.

**Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Clearly I've been far too quiet, and I will remedy that.

I want to say thank you to all of you for being so candid. We're hearing some very difficult things. People have been very forthright in terms of speaking to us, and I appreciate that very much. So thank you for that honesty and clarity.

At the end of the Sisters in Spirit campaign, or when NWAC came to their conclusions, they said that in the course of the work they did across the country, they came across some real ways to resolve a good many of the issues that face first nations women and their children. It seems to me that's what you're talking about here today.

I want to touch on some specifics in terms of what you've said. The first one is the issue of child apprehensions. In my community, which is largely an urban first nations community, we hear over and over again how profoundly destructive that is. For a very brief time the province provided some funding, a small modicum of funding, to the local community to address that so that first nations families could take in kids who needed help and support, so that they had that balance, that cultural support. I'm not sure where that program is. I think the funding has fallen off.

Is that a solution? I'm assuming that here the province is responsible for child welfare and that there needs to be some discussion with the province in terms of a way for first nations to nurture your own children. Do you see that happening, and how could that happen? Is there a possibility of that being something you could take to the provincial government and get action on?

• (1335)

**Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook:** Thank you for that question, Irene.

I've worked as a social worker both in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. When I was working in Manitoba I saw a system that was much more sensitive to the needs of first nations individuals, Métis individuals, and non-aboriginal counterparts. There were four authorities at that time made to be sensitive to all four, because they had a first nations north and a first nations south.

With the diversity in Manitoba, in the first nations northern authority many communities are fly-in or train-in only; they don't have any roads going up there. Those authorities were more sensitive on how we dealt with first nations children. If you were a Cree person wanting to adopt, let's say, a Dene child, you could not do that. A Dene child had to be adopted by a Dene family, and so on and so forth.

Here in Saskatchewan it's a little bit different. A lot of the first nations have their own childhood family agency, but still there are a lot of non-aboriginal caregivers. Basically, you're tearing a family apart during the apprehension stage, and placing them outside the community in a non-first-nations home or putting them in a group home that is run by non-aboriginal people. Basically, you're separating the family, and we workers didn't really have much of a choice in saying we're going to tear your family apart and put you back in the 1960s again and show you an entirely different educational system away from your family and an entirely different family system away from your family. It is not constructive.

Actually the Saskatchewan government is going through harsh criticism because of it at this point in time. It's in the news. It's in our newspapers. Everybody knows that this system we have here in Saskatchewan is not good right now. It is so harsh to take a child away from their family. I know that because I was adopted. Right now, I don't speak to my biological parents only because there was a system there that tore me away from my family. I was very fortunate to grow up in the same community, but it still tore me away from my family. Children are going through this over and over and over again, which is what's happening here in this city. When we see our moms going through violence or something that's happening in the home where the children have to be apprehended, it's one of the worst things to place a child in a different home setting. They don't know anybody. There are no familiar faces. There's nothing familiar about that home. It is one of the worst things to hear a child cry or hold onto your pants because they don't want to stay there. That is one of the worst, most gut-wrenching, heartbreaking things you'll ever hear.

To say that we need more aboriginal people in the workplace, yes, we do. Yet when we apply for those jobs the door is always slammed in our faces.

• (1340)

**The Chair:** We've got about 30 seconds left, Irene.

**Ms. Irene Mathysen:** Angie is nodding. I would like to hear from her.

**Ms. Angie Bear:** Thank you so much.

The one thing I have a really hard time with when I'm working with the women is they come in, they tell their story, and they talk about how they reported domestic violence. When they begin to report domestic violence it goes on a police record and the crisis centre is called. Maybe they leave their partner, go into the shelter, and then they reconcile sometime later, or the partner keeps stalking and stalking and they feel like they can't get away from them. Maybe there's a whole issue with family. The abuser ends up coming back in the home and then the children are apprehended. It further abuses the women.

So that policy needs to change. There needs to be something different with the abuser. If he's continually going back into that

home, it shouldn't be the children who are being removed from the mother and being put into the system and everyone being further victimized. It should be the person who's doing the abuse. Why does he always get off the hook? He then goes into another relationship and then that family is put into turmoil. It keeps perpetuating itself. You have this one abuser and maybe he has three or four families he's been involved in and there's been abuse in those families.

**The Chair:** Angie, I think we're going to have to move on. Thank you.

Now we'll go to the second round, and it's five minutes. Everyone is going to have to be far more concise if you are going to get enough questions and answers in.

I'm going to go again to Ms. Neville for the Liberals.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** I don't know whether I can be concise, but I'll try.

I'm listening carefully, and the whole issue of child apprehension and the impact of domestic violence has really been at the forefront today. I think it gives us a lot to think about.

We're here as part of a federal government committee to look at what we can recommend to government to address the issue of domestic violence. You're all undoubtedly aware of the jurisdictional issues: the province has responsibility for some things; the feds have responsibility for others.

I would like your thoughts or recommendations as to what we can recommend to the federal government that would make a difference in the lives of those people who are victims of violence.

I am going on too long.

You've certainly talked about the intergenerational and the colonized aspects of it, but what is happening today that could be changed by the federal government that would perhaps not eliminate but alleviate domestic violence, or violence against women, however it's manifested?

**The Chair:** Shirley, would you like to try that?

**Ms. Shirley Henderson:** Okay.

Recommendations to the government.... I think right now for first nations the government has a band-aid effect. They give a little bit of money for a program; you just get a program going and the money runs out. At different times we have had different people employed in different areas, and the money will maybe go on for one year or it may go for five, but the funding is never continuous, and it needs to be.

As I said, if you look at the budget of the Department of Indian Affairs, we do not get hardly any money for counselling. Social services on reserve means handing out a welfare cheque, but there's nothing that comes with that cheque to provide services to the individual. It's a place where they go and get their food allowance, their housing allowance, and that's it. Nothing else comes with that cheque, not even in terms of our social workers being trained for counselling. So where does an individual go? They go to the band office and pick up the cheque. Sometimes health centres have some counselling available, but there too, if you look at budgets within health...as the health director, I am aware of this. I've been health director for a number of years in Montreal Lake, and not much money comes for counselling. We talk about our child and family services agents. There's too much focus on child apprehension without the counselling to the families. It's a cycle that needs to be changed in all areas of our communities, right from social assistance to health, to child family agencies, to the RCMP for the support they should be providing these families.

• (1345)

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Anybody else?

**The Chair:** Anita, you have 25 seconds left. Do you have another question?

**Hon. Anita Neville:** I'm just going to come back on this one. Does anyone have any concrete recommendations that we can put forward?

I certainly heard your comments, Shirley. You spoke earlier about shelter support. I agree that's important, but that's at the other end. That's dealing with the symptoms, not the causes. I'm trying to determine what we can do to eliminate the causes of domestic violence.

**The Chair:** We're going to have to wait for that answer to come, because Cathy asked for it originally too—prevention. What are the preventative measures that can be taken?

Having said that, it gives me an intro into Cathy's time now.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** I will ultimately go to prevention, but quickly...we had talked about some of the challenges that police services have. Unfortunately, they're not at the table, but I think it was Wanda who was saying that you've had significant success compared to other provinces in terms of solving cases. Is that what you said? Did you say that we could learn from what Saskatchewan was doing right?

**Ms. Wanda Daigneault:** Yes.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Any idea of what is happening right there...? Would we have to perhaps pursue it through other panels?

**Ms. Wanda Daigneault:** You would have to pursue it through other panels.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Okay, but there's something significant there that has created a much better resolution rate. I think it's something that we do need to explore in terms of what's happening there.

Having had that quick question, I'll go to prevention. Angie did start to talk about it.

Your program seems like it would support prevention to some degree.

**Ms. Angie Bear:** Going back, could I talk a little bit about the police service? I believe that's part of the prevention portion.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Absolutely.

**Ms. Angie Bear:** In my experience with the police service in Prince Albert, I've done a number of things. When I worked for the grand council I used to do the memorial walk; we honoured our brothers and sisters who were missing and murdered. Through that, I got to know the police service very well. We also do a rally in Prince Albert for a violence-free city, in which we honour our police services that we work with in Prince Albert.

I think we're in a really unique situation. For the first time now, I've been asked by one of the police officers to assist them on a domestic violence call. That's never happened, to my knowledge, and I'm really excited to see that they're working with community agencies in developing it.

I've also been in contact with Constable Matthew Gray, who's developing programs and wants to work with community organizations. Yes, you can honestly say that there have been some real problems with working with police services in the past, but I believe those bridges are now being mended and people are really trying hard to work with our first nations communities. I feel very respected when I work with them. I work with victim services and I work with a lot of those community agencies, so I'd like to speak to that.

As well, in some of the programs they're developing, they are trying to work with the missing and murdered women programs. I was invited to sit on a cold case file unit with them. I think the officer, Rhonda Meakin, has moved on since then. But always, the new person, the new officers, because officers get dispersed around the community quite a bit into various communities.... There's always somebody new that we need to work with and they always make that connection, so I really want to say that there's been a really good effort by the police service in Prince Albert to make that connection with community services. I think they're really trying hard to develop good programs.

We're working together at developing them. We're actually going to be setting up a committee that's going to address it and talk about it first-hand, and it's the police officers themselves who are setting that up and inviting people from the community to do this. I hope everyone participates in that when they do, because I think that's a preventative tool.

• (1350)

**The Chair:** Cathy, you have one minute.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** That's great.

I'm not sure if Wanda might be able to focus in on this. The northern and isolated communities have their own particular challenges. If a woman is a victim of serious abuse within her home—and we've heard that the options in Prince Albert are somewhat limited—are there any solutions you would see that would allow the woman to stay in her own community in safety, solutions that aren't happening right now?

**The Chair:** I think Shirley was actually the one who brought that up.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Sorry, Shirley.

**Ms. Shirley Henderson:** Yes, definitely, the service in the community...if it was there, I know the ladies would attend. But because of the distance to travel into the city and to try to accommodate their children—they don't want to leave their children behind. If we could have more services within the community, it would be a lot better for all of the family—for the husband, the wife, and the children. We need those right in our communities. Prince Albert is a long way away from Black Lake.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Is there any travelling support right now at all?

**Ms. Shirley Henderson:** No.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Perhaps most of those communities have a nurse and maybe a few community health reps?

**Ms. Shirley Henderson:** Yes, and that's it for support services in the communities.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I'll now go to Madam Demers.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Wanda, you said earlier that, to reduce the incidence of violence against women, we absolutely must get men involved in the process. I agree with you. I saw that, as part of one particular program, abusers who agreed to participate in treatment avoided imprisonment and could return home to their spouse. Does this program still exist and, if so, is it effective?

[English]

**Ms. Wanda Daigneault:** There are none with the program we have in our community. The men who want to get help have to come south to Prince Albert or Saskatoon. Most of those men don't want to leave the community. They like to stay beside their children. Men too have feelings, just like women. They cry just like women. They hurt just like women. I feel that if there was a counsellor, a therapist, whoever, to come in and talk to these men, there would hardly be any violence for women. It would just be all happy.

•(1355)

[Translation]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Earlier, you talked about a family healing centre. Do you believe that similar centres could be established within communities? Could that help matters?

[English]

**Ms. Wanda Daigneault:** Yes, it would.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Does everyone agree with this? Yes? Would the operating of such centres be expensive? Do you have an idea of how much it would cost?

[English]

**Ms. Wanda Daigneault:** No, we don't.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Do centres of this kind already exist?

[English]

**Ms. Wanda Daigneault:** We have a detox centre in Ile-a-la-Crosse. That's the only centre we have.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Is that a family centre?

[English]

**Ms. Wanda Daigneault:** No, it's not.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** So, there are currently no centres where the father, the mother and the children can come together to encourage healing.

Angie?

[English]

**Ms. Angie Bear:** Thank you.

I am also employed by the mental health...and I do work with the program, Choices for Men. I'm a co-facilitator for the Eve program, which is kind of a mirror.... Where the men go into the program, the women get the exact same program. I have also worked with probation services for the past four years, which work with the men who are charged with domestic violence. That one is done by probation services. I've worked in that one for four years.

The problem we have in Prince Albert is we've been trying to develop a domestic violence program. In Saskatoon and Regina they have a domestic violence court. When men are charged with domestic violence, they go into a program. In Prince Albert we do not have the funding for that type of program. We've put a proposal together. We've had the chief of police, prosecutors, and judges sit on that. It's gone forward. A little bit of funding was given to the police services to develop some programs around that, and they're doing their portion of it. But that domestic violence program is really essential, especially since we service so many of our northern communities. That's a really key part of what's missing in Prince Albert.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** I am very pleased with the work done by police services; I congratulate you on that.

Do you feel that similar work could be done in collaboration with other services, such as social services?

[English]

**Ms. Angie Bear:** Yes, we're actually trying to put together a child apprehension program. Usually when a woman's child is apprehended, it is kind of like going to the doctor and being told you have cancer. When your doctor tells you that you have cancer and then goes on to tell you what your treatment is going to be, you walk out of that office and all you remember him saying is that you have cancer. When a woman's child is apprehended, social services tells her what her rights and responsibilities are, but when she walks out, all she has heard is that her child has been apprehended.

We would like to develop a program, and we're working with social services right now to put that program in place so that when children are apprehended, there will be a program delivered in our community to address that, so that they will have somewhere to go to talk about their challenges, their rights, and their responsibilities, and so families can be worked with on a first basis like that. We are all working toward that at the Co-operative Health Centre.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We're going to move on now to Ms. Mathysen.

**Ms. Irene Mathysen:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have a couple of questions.

Wanda, you said that very often women are killed by strangers, and you also said that your niece came into a shelter and she was called down. I'm assuming that you mean there were racial slurs. If we look at that and at the fact that first nations women are being killed by strangers rather than by intimate partners, what do you think that tells us? Is racism a serious issue in the communities we're talking about?

**Ms. Wanda Daigneault:** Yes.

**Ms. Irene Mathysen:** This has to do with the proposal to have a family centre and cultural programs and counselling. Is there a role for the federal government in terms of providing support funding for capacity building? It would seem to me that capacity building is at the centre of what you are talking about and the needs you are talking about. I wonder if everyone or anyone could respond.

I see you nodding, Angie and Lisa.

• (1400)

**Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook:** Thank you for asking that question.

At this point in time one of the mandates of the urban aboriginal strategy is to get all the stakeholders together here in Prince Albert to get them to the table to provide almost—I hate to say it—a one-stop shop where we can provide services to the clients who come forward to us once we put them through a needs assessment. That's on the table right now with our committee. I developed that program and we're going to be going through that.

Once we do that we're going to be contacting stakeholders within Prince Albert, such as Angie, various agencies that we are going to invite to a meeting and ask how we can best serve the clients that really need our help the most here in Prince Albert. It can't keep on going the way it is. There are so many different innovative programs here in Prince Albert, but not all the clients know about those programs and how we can help them. We've got to actually do that work, bring that information and educate our clients on what they have offered to them.

The UAS is a pilot project with the Department of Indian Affairs that's being run through different cities within Canada. What we need more and more often is to get core funding for us to develop more preventative programs. What I'd like to see here for Prince Albert is for all the agencies to come together and start developing how we are going to best serve our clients. Yet we don't have that core funding. Our project ends at the end of 2011 fiscal year, which is next March. So we don't have any money to survive past that. That was one of the issues we all have here: once we have a really good

program across the board, across the spectrum for aboriginal agencies, whether it is preventative, whether it's an action plan of some sort, or what have you, once it starts working for our clients the core funding just stops like that. What are we supposed to do with our clients?

With traditional programming that comes right from community-based organizations and that most of the time is based on client needs, once that program is developed a year or two and it really starts making an effect on people, that funding is shut down. That long-term sustainability is not there. How are we supposed to treat clients and send them over here and treat them like a pinball and in the end they start giving up on their wellness plan? They are starting to get independent and then all of a sudden those services are not there for them.

**Ms. Irene Mathysen:** I assume also you would lose the expertise of your staff. If you can't guarantee a job, you would lose that experienced staff person. It's interesting, because it comes right back to cost. It is certainly much less expensive to fund those support systems than a lot of jails and the mental health costs and the apprehension costs and overall.

I take it I'm out of time, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Yes.

We have actually about 25 minutes left, a little over 25 minutes, so we could go to a third round.

I just wanted to ask the committee and the witnesses to look at the mandate, which not only speaks to the issue of domestic violence, which seems to me what we have been speaking about a lot, but it talks about the nature of the violence. In other words, is it only domestic violence that aboriginal women face, or are there other types of violence? If so, maybe this round might be a way to explore other kinds of violence, other than domestic violence. Is there society violence? Is there community violence? Is there systemic violence? If so, what are the ways in which one can deal with those and try to either prevent them or find therapeutic ways to deal with them or look at rehabilitation, education, or whatever?

I just thought that one might want to explore that, because we have only been talking about domestic violence, and I know we've been to other places where they've told us it's not the only form of violence that aboriginal women face, especially in urban areas; it's not the only type at all.

I'll leave that up to you. I just throw that in there. I know you will ignore me if you don't want to do it. So you can just go ahead and ask whatever questions you want anyway.

Anita, five minutes.

• (1405)

**Hon. Anita Neville:** How can I let that pass? I would like you to comment on what Ms. Fry said, but I also have one other question for you. I had others, but I have just one quick one.

Are there, in your experience, many instances of violence that go unreported? If so, is that because of fear of child apprehension or other issues? I'm curious about that, but I also would appreciate comments on what Hedy Fry just indicated as well.

You were nodding, Angie. Do you want to go ahead?

**Ms. Angie Bear:** Yes. I just had a healing circle last night and that was a major thing: there are women who will not come forward. They have the security of that healing circle to be able to say those things confidentially. I asked them if I could mention this if something should come up. That's exactly what's needed: they do need that support there and it's not there for them.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** It's not there, so they're fearful of coming forward. Is that it?

**Ms. Angie Bear:** Well, there are a lot of women I'm working with. One lady in particular said she was walking down the street after she left her partner, and her partner saw her walking on the street and attacked her. A neighbour saw what was happening and called her into his place of residence. The police were called. Then her child was apprehended: social services didn't believe that she wasn't with her partner, because it was her partner who attacked her.

She felt that if she hadn't reported the violence to begin with, if she hadn't put it on the radar, maybe she would still have her child. It's in those kinds of incidents where that type of thing happens, where social services doesn't believe what the women are saying when they're saying, "I'm not with my partner anymore."

**Hon. Anita Neville:** I'm sorry, I did want to follow up on Hedy's point, but this really is distressing. To what do you attribute that? I know it's difficult to generalize. Is it because they don't believe the women? Because they're interested in protecting the best interests of the child? What is it? Because that's a real conundrum for women.

**Ms. Angie Bear:** It is. I think it's because they do want to protect the best interests of the child. I think that's important, but you can't do so by walking over the woman's rights. That further victimizes that child as well, because then the children don't want to come forward. They don't want to be pulled from their home.

If you can somehow work with the family so that they're not being torn apart and somehow deal with the abuser.... If it's the abuser who needs to be put out of the home, then deal with that. Have him go to court. Have him attend a program. Have him away so that he can't further victimize the family. Something needs to be done in that respect.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Thank you.

Are there any comments from anybody on Hedy's point?

Lisa, go ahead.

**Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook:** You asked about how a woman faces repercussions from phoning in. I worked as a health worker at Cumberland House for many years and I did have to work with women when they were going to court. They'd ask me to go in there and help support them.

As for what they were going through, believe it or not, it's in the Criminal Code.... Their partners come in, practically kicking in the door, kicking and screaming and threatening that they're going to kill them, yet when she takes one of their children's toy trucks and hits her husband or boyfriend with it, the woman gets charged with assault. She gets put through the whole judicial system, gets embarrassed and humiliated, and has a criminal record. Then when she applies for a job later on, it comes up on her criminal record check that she assaulted another individual.

● (1410)

**Hon. Anita Neville:** So what's your recommendation, Lisa? What should we be recommending on that?

**Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook:** Can you go to the people who are in charge of the Criminal Code of Canada and—

**Hon. Anita Neville:** We can look at it, certainly—

**Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook:** —look at that? Because that's not right either. That's not right, especially when the woman has been threatened and the RCMP say it's all her fault when that's not the case.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Now we'll go to Cathy McLeod.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I've been hearing a number of things. I can appreciate the concerns around core funding versus temporary funding. Certainly it's not just the federal government. I worked in the provincial system, and I really came to be very leery of.... It's great to have project funding that builds things. It's great to have project funding that pilots something, but it really is tough once you have a program that is achieving success but it's only for five years. Again, that is throughout the system. You almost wonder if you're in for a penny, you're in for a pound if you have programs that have proven their value. I know it happens provincially.

I would be curious about two things. I heard "train the trainer", integrating the traditional with the modern-day, and certainly in health care the chronic disease self-management program that was then adopted had some great success. Is that something that has been envisioned for some of the more northern remote communities where you have lay leaders who have been trained? Have you had any success as it relates to violence and abuse?

**The Chair:** Shirley, do you have a comment?

**Ms. Shirley Henderson:** Yes, we have had some really good programs in place. As I mentioned before, the funding seems to cease. Once the program is up and running and going very well for the community, the program ceases. Even with our women's commission, I'd say about 10 or 12 years ago we had a family violence training program where we trained individuals from each of our communities to work in a community on family violence. Well, they provided the training dollars but no funding to the community after to employ them. It was a really good training program. We tried again to get further funding for a future training program for family violence but were unable to.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Sometimes the jurisdictional issues do tend to complicate what are logical community-based solutions. Is there enough flexibility when programs become available to do what makes sense at the community level?

I'll use health as an example, where we have on reserve, off reserve, and it was very costly because we were almost duplicating; there wasn't the ability to connect and partner in a way that made sense. Is that an issue at all?

**Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook:** At Cumberland House, where I was a health director for many years, at one time when we wanted to partner and build a health centre together, because of jurisdictional issues and other political issues as well, it became impossible.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** What about as it relates to violence and programs? Are there any issues, or is it more of a health issue?

**Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook:** They've always put it on the health issue front. They always have. They always put it on our plate, and they have always said, well, because this person needs transportation, it should be coming from the health budget. A lot of our health budget, I think 75% at that time, went to transportation to bring the victims out, only to bring them back to the same dysfunctional domestic home, I guess you could say. A lot of our dollars went to transportation.

We tried in so many ways to partner with our provincial counterparts, to say "Here's a program; let's develop a program where we not only educate the mum and the children, but let's get the dad involved as well." What we basically had to do was go to the judge and the government and ask if they could please mandate this man who had been charged with domestic violence or assaulting his wife to come to the counselling with his wife and children. About 99% of the time he did, and a lot of the time it worked, as long as the support services were there, but as soon as you take out those support services, without providing core funding, a lot of it falls by the wayside.

Some people had great success with it. I can guarantee you that. It was about 60%, but it's the 40% that you really need to help. We've transitioned these families to become more independent. That's what you really ultimately want to do.

• (1415)

**The Chair:** Yes.

Thanks, Lisa. We've gone over on that one.

Nicole.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for allowing me to speak in French.

Based on everything I have heard this afternoon, I believe that one of the key causes of the violence is the extreme poverty first nations women live in. In my opinion, this extreme poverty is also reflected in the lack of social housing, lack of education and lack of power among women.

Should we not use programs provided by Status of Women Canada related to the empowerment of women? First nations women would gain a lot by participating in these programs and by taking charge of their lives, taking charge of who they are and becoming proud of what they are, becoming proud of being aboriginal women and becoming leaders in their community, as you undoubtedly already are. That way, they could become leaders within the Prince Albert community and within other communities, sit on city councils, hold decision-making positions in order to change the power structure and the way things are done. That is the only way to truly change the situation and stop the violence.

I appreciate that you are all working very hard, but you are going against the current because the violence continues to be a problem. To stop the violence, we must put an end to poverty and we must encourage women to believe in themselves and love themselves. That is how we will put an end to the violence.

Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Does anyone want to tackle that issue—that if poverty ends, violence will end?

**Ms. Angie Bear:** Poverty is a major issue with everything. Part of it is why are people so impoverished? Whenever we talk about poverty we need to go back and look at when Canada was first colonized. We have no rights to our resources and our minerals.

I live on a first nations community, and when we try to get programs and some economic development there are always those barriers: you have to do this and you have to do that. There are so many things that you're mandated to do before you can even get a small business operated on a first nations community. With those barriers put in there, if that's what's holding people back and that's where the poverty is coming from.... It's twofold: yes, it's poverty, but there are many poor people who don't have violence in their lives and who can live good lives. Part of it comes from understanding where they came from and understanding their traditional values, connecting with those values and being able to be in a place where they can practise those traditional values in a respectful way with people in the community accepting that.

Even a simple thing such as—and I'm not sure if you understand the term—"smudging", where you take the sweetgrass or the sage and you burn it. A lot of our buildings don't allow for that. So when we run groups or put programs together, even a simple thing such as smudging becomes a major issue. We end up not being able to practise some of our traditional beliefs. When we put meetings together we feel that's an important part of practising who we are as first nations people.

• (1420)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We will now move on to Ms. Mathysen.

**Ms. Irene Mathysen:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm going to pick up from Hedy's comments, and from Nicole's comments, because she touched on something I was going to ask, and that is in regard to the social violence and how it's perpetuated through communities.

Specifically, is the lack of affordable housing an issue here in Prince Albert and in other communities, the communities you serve? Could you describe your experience with that?

In terms of poverty, it seems to me.... Someone mentioned the fact that first nations people are often denied a job. They show up looking for a job and it's, "No, not you, we don't want you." So to what degree is unemployment feeding that social violence in terms of what we're all talking about, that need for job training? Someone told us this morning that a lot of first nations people just don't have the skills or the academic background to get the training they need.

Finally, would some kind of child care, some kind of affordable and dependable child care, help women who are perhaps looking for training, trying to find a job, or just trying to sort themselves out in terms of dealing with addictions or the trauma of the abuse they have experienced? Would all of those things be part and parcel of what we've been talking about in terms of a community helping itself?

**Ms. Angie Bear:** With regard to the housing, that should have been one of the first things that was brought up in this meeting today. Housing is so hard for women. That's probably a big portion of the problem of why it's so hard to get into the women's shelter, because it's not just women who are being abused who are in there; it's people who have no place to go, people who have no housing, so they're taking up space.

I hate to say that, but somebody who is fleeing a violent situation won't have that space available because the housing issue is so bad. Even once they get in there, they are applying all over Prince Albert. Trying to find affordable housing is impossible. Usually women end up taking whatever they can get. The housing isn't always the best. They usually end up having to pay a large amount out of their food allowance to have the house so they have a roof over their head.

Further, there is the child care. I'm raising two of my granddaughters. I have a nine-year-old and a four-year-old. Child care is horrendous. It's so hard to get into day care. There are waiting lists. If you're a working person like me and your income is maybe just a little too high, you have to foot the whole cost of child care even though you're a grandparent. There is no support for grandparents. That's another thing. Some support needs to be put in place for grandparents when they are dealing with their grandchildren, because they're a large portion of the caregivers in the communities.

• (1425)

**The Chair:** You have one minute.

**Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook:** When it comes to housing, employment, and shelter, yes, a lot of that perpetuates a lot of the abuse. It all ties in together.

The housing here is unbelievable. People are spending anywhere between \$1,000 and \$1,200 for a three-bedroom, with just a main level. Plus, with the utilities to run and operate a home with three bedrooms, you're looking at upwards of \$2,000 a month. If you're not a working professional and your spouse is not a working professional, I'm sorry, it's just not going to cut it here. In social housing, there is nothing available. We checked around last week, and there is no social housing available, period.

The basic rent at Weidner Investment Services, which is a company that is buying up a lot of the apartments here, starts at around \$850 for a one-bedroom apartment. The three-bedrooms are going for around \$1,100, so how can we say we're providing a lot of services here for people when we can't even get them into affordable housing?

**Ms. Irene Mathysen:** So there's a concentration of housing in the hands of a small group, and they're controlling the market and charging whatever they feel like?

**Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook:** Yes. And they're kicking out a lot of single mothers who are trying to make something of themselves by going to school or seeking minimum-wage jobs. A lot of them are

doing that and trying to help themselves. Yet you have this company coming in and literally throwing seniors out onto the street as well, senior citizens.

**Ms. Irene Mathysen:** So social housing is a desperate need.

**Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook:** Yes.

**The Chair:** I want to thank you all for coming and presenting to us.

There are some things I would like to ask, now that everyone has had their turn. I would like to follow up on a couple of things.

You had a question from Madame Demers about if you stop poverty you will stop violence. I used to be a physician in my other life, and I found that very wealthy women were also victims of violence. So I think it has to do with empowerment, and education might be one of the most important sources of empowerment. If a woman can find a job because she's educated she can basically walk away and say "I can take care of myself. I don't need you and I don't need the support systems you have. I can take care of myself and my children."

So as you say, there are many factors, but I wanted to follow up on this issue we had talked about, domestic violence. I know that this morning when we met with other groups they talked about systemic violence. The missing and murdered women were not killed in domestic violence, were they? The question is why there are so many aboriginal women missing and murdered and have not been followed up on in our communities. Obviously there is another form of violence that we haven't talked about, and that is social community violence in urban areas, because this tends to happen to urban aboriginal women.

What I wanted to explore very quickly is on reserve—and that is why we are visiting reserves, we are visiting urban areas, we are visiting isolated areas, because we think that the issues are very different in each of those areas.... What we find and have found in all the things we've heard so far is that in urban areas there is always this inter-jurisdictional wrangle: is it a city issue, is it a provincial issue, or a federal issue? So we have jurisdictions that are coming into play in urban aboriginal problems where there is societal violence, etc., as well.

My question is twofold. Why is it that there aren't resources made available on reserve? The federal government has the fiduciary responsibility on reserve. Why is it that INAC is not providing all of the one-stop-shopping services, the shelters, and everything that is necessary on reserve? That's my first question. And if they did, will that at least deal with the on-reserve problems?

My second question is why is it that urban aboriginal people who leave the reserve and come into the city do not have the care and the funding from the reserve following them in? That's the second question.



And thirdly, there was an attempt by Paul Martin when he was Prime Minister to bring in something called the Kelowna accord, which was going to place in the hands of aboriginal people, whether they were urban or on reserve, the ability to take care of the three components: housing, education, and health. Would that, if it had in fact continued on, have been something that would have answered some of your problems?

That's basically what I'd like to hear from you.

● (1430)

**Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook:** In those areas, if they were tackled and if those fiduciary responsibilities followed us from the reserve to the urban centre, if we had all of those at our disposal for most of the time it would have made a lot of difference for a lot of people living here in the urban setting.

**The Chair:** Why is that not happening?

**Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook:** It is not happening because a lot of the funding that reserves have for their people will be given first to people who are living on the reserve, first and foremost. That's the way most chiefs and councils operate. I know because I've lived on a few and worked on a few different reservations. That's who we look after first, the people living on reserve. As soon as you move into the urban setting, you are basically on your own.

A lot of the times we can't access the educational portion of your entitlement as a treaty person. I've been treaty since 1993 only, because I lost my treaty rights when I got adopted by a Métis family. I got my treaty rights back in 1993, and I have not accessed or been able to access one cent of my right to education.

**The Chair:** Is that educational allowance lost by the reserve when you leave the reserve, or does the reserve still get your educational allowance?

**Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook:** They still get the educational allowance. They get the housing allowance or the portion for housing, and they get a portion for social development or social assistance as well. So even though you're not living on that reserve, you're still getting your allotment going to that reserve and being administered by that first nation.

**The Chair:** Do you think that if one looked at legislative and other ways of ensuring that this followed the person, that would make a difference? Could that happen? Is that a solution?

**Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook:** You know, I don't want to disrespect chiefs and councils that are on reserve....

**The Chair:** This is not about chiefs and councils; this is about a solution, a concrete thing.

**Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook:** About a solution? Yes, it would help a lot.

For me, because my family placed a lot of value on education, and because my mom and dad educated all of us and helped us the most they could to get educated...if they couldn't afford it, then we had to pull student loans. Because I got myself educated, I've been independent enough that if I found myself in a violent situation, I was able to pick myself up only because I had my education to help back me up, to help get me back up, to start walking again, and to start living a better life.

You know, if we did have this, that access to housing, education, and health that would follow you wherever you went, yes, that would help a person become very, very independent in many ways, in many respects.

**The Chair:** Would the Kelowna accord have addressed that?

**Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook:** Yes, it would have. That's what many first nations people were hoping for. That's what we were counting on and it never happened.

**The Chair:** It was a signed interjurisdictional agreement between provinces and the federal government and aboriginal communities to be able to have access to that money specifically for those things....

Thank you very much. I want to thank all of you for coming and for being open and honest and answering our questions as well as you could. I know that we really need to have six hours if we're going to do a proper job, but I want to thank you for giving us the answers.

I think I can speak for the committee when I say thank you very much for helping us to understand some of these issues and to try to sit down.... As you know, what will happen with this report is that we will write down what we've heard and out of that we will discuss what we as a committee think are recommendations, based on what we heard. That will then be tabled in the House of Commons, as parliamentary committees do. The government will respond within 90 days. That's what happens with these reports, just so you know.

● (1435)

**Ms. Lisa Goulet-Cook:** Will we be able to get a copy of that report?

**The Chair:** Once the report is tabled, it goes onto the website of the Status of Women Commons committee.

Thank you.

**A voice:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** I forgot, because we were so busy having a nice chat here.... Could someone move that the meeting be adjourned?

**Hon. Anita Neville:** So moved.

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

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