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Chair: Mrs. Karen Vecchio



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• (1530)

[English]

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

I would like to begin by thanking Vice-Chair Sonia Sidhu. She is always there in a pinch.

Sonia, thank you so much for your leadership and for helping me through these last couple of days.

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

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to the House of Commons order of November 25, 2021. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application. Per the directive of the Board of Internal Economy on March 10, 2022, all those attending the meeting in person must wear a mask, except for members who are at their place during the proceedings.

I would like to make a few comments for the benefits of the witnesses and members.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mike, and please mute yourself when you are not speaking. For interpretation for those on Zoom, you have the choice at the bottom of your screen of floor, English or French. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel. As a reminder, all comments should be addressed through the chair.

Witnesses, we do have a couple of items that we have to take care of for committee business. If you don't mind, we'll just go through them now.

We need to adopt our budget for the study. You received from the clerk the preliminary budget in the amount of \$14,345 for the study of resource development and violence against indigenous women and girls. Those are the things like the microphone sets and any additional expenses.

Is there a will of the committee to adopt the preliminary budget?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Moving on to this very important study and the briefs in indigenous languages. The clerk and the analysts have looked into the possibility of receiving briefs written in indigenous languages for its study of resource development and violence against indigenous women and girls.

If it is the will of the committee, I would like to propose that the committee accept briefs written in these following languages: Inuktitut, Algonquin, Denesulin (Chipewyan), Cree Michif and Blackfoot.

It was advised that we would be able to take four indigenous languages; that is basically based on what's available through interpretative and translation services.

Is it the will of the committee that we have agreement that we'll accept documents based on that?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: I now want to welcome our witnesses. Today we're going to be changing up our format a bit. We're doing it live, so we will be working through it together.

I would like to welcome Diane Redsky, executive director, Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre Incorporated; Debbra Greig, clinical social worker, mental health services provider, Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council; Ninu Kang, executive director, Ending Violence Association of British Columbia; and Leslie Varley, executive director, British Columbia Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres. They are part of the Ending Violence Association of British Columbia and the British Columbia Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres.

I would like to thank all of the witnesses today. Each of you will be provided five minutes, and I have my little card here, which will show you when you have one minute remaining. With our new format, we will be able to be a little more flexible, for up to maybe 15 to 20 seconds, but we want to make sure that we have many opportunities for questions.

Diane, you have five minutes. The floor is yours.

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

[Witness spoke in Ojibwe]

[English]

My spirit name is Love Eagle and I'm from the Caribou Clan. My English name is Diane Redsky. I acknowledge the traditional territory and Shoal Lake first nation for the water that is provided from my community to the city of Winnipeg. I also acknowledge the ancestors of Treaty 3 and acknowledge your ancestors, who I believe walk with you each and every day.

Today we're here to focus on the MMIW calls for justice 13.4 and 13.5 of the national inquiry, with recommendations to address the relationship between resource development and violence against indigenous women and girls.

I would first like to acknowledge the MMIW 2S+ families and survivors here today and the families who continue to seek justice. It is your voice, and the voice of generations of families and survivors, who never gave up on being heard, respected and treated equitably, and on being secure and safe. Your strong and powerful voice made the national inquiry in Canada happen. Thank you. *Meegweich* from all of us.

I would also like to thank the MMIW 2S+ national inquiry and acknowledge and honour the voices of our families, survivors and stakeholders and the 231 calls for justice. I presented at the national inquiry on sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of indigenous women and girls in Canada. I chair the urban working group for the MMIW national action plan. What is also relevant to today is my work as the project director for the 2011-15 national task force on sex trafficking of women and girls in Canada, and of course my role as the executive director for the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre.

This is a very important issue. Thank you for looking into this relationship between resource development and violence against women and girls in Canada. First, there are a couple of reports that I feel are really important for you to look at, the MMIW 2S+ national action plans. There are a number of those national action plans. These reports get into the implementation of the recommendations. They really need to have a voice and a place in this process. The urban report, of course, specifically talks about co-development, which I'll get into in a minute.

The Manitoba Clean Environment Commission report was a study that was done of the social impacts of hydro development in northern Manitoba. I would strongly encourage this committee to reach out to MKO, which is the northern political organization led by Grand Chief Settee. That is a very important part of this process as well.

My experience working in the sector for over 20 years, and specifically regarding resource development...also known as "man camps", are breeding grounds for predators to have full access to victimize indigenous women and girls, not to mention the unique vulnerabilities of our relatives who are two-spirit LGBTQIA. There is also a clear connection between sexually exploited women and these man camps, which are notorious for normalizing prostitution and buying and selling sex at all social, physical and financial costs. This is sexual exploitation and violence against women and girls.

My experience is that any time there are men with money who are transient, you're going to have sexual exploitation of women and girls and some form of violence against indigenous women and

girls. There is a very scary sense of entitlement that men from these man camps have, which is further perpetuated by society's harmful stereotypes that indigenous women will do anything for money and that you can do anything to an indigenous woman and no one will do anything about it. Men get away with victimizing indigenous women all the time.

I have a very quick example. I won't mention the city or the organization, because I don't have their permission. What is important is that their experience is very common. This organization is located in a city with significant resource development. Their local organization, which is dedicated to empowering girls, regularly—I emphasize "regularly"—has men coming into their organization asking if there are young girls for sale. Resource development is harmful to our women and girls, and is 100% preventable.

I'm going to conclude with six recommendations.

• (1535)

First, when looking at the MMIWG calls for justice 13.4 and 13.5, you also have to look at the four pathways and the principles for change outlined in the national inquiry. Failing to do this results in missing that whole big picture and that transformational change necessary to solve this genocide and the violence against indigenous women in this country. I would also add the UNDRIP and TRC.

Second, I understand there's a vital balancing act among industry, government and communities, and I strongly believe there needs to be mandating of corporate social responsibility in industry, in order to understand and plan for the impact its actions will have on the land and local communities.

• (1540)

The Chair: You have about 20 more seconds.

Ms. Diane Redsky: The third one, of course, is the MKO—the work done by the northern first nations in Manitoba.

The fourth one is the urban sub-working group's report.

The fifth one is the Grand Council Treaty No. 3, which has a great earth law. These are traditional laws made for and by indigenous people within their territory. Those need to be valued and respected.

Their short-term job should not leave a legacy of victimization.

Meegwetch.

The Chair: Thank you so much, Diane.

I'm now going to move the floor over to Debra Greig from the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council.

Debra, you have the floor for five minutes.

Dr. Debra Greig (Clinical Social Worker, Mental Health Services Provider, Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council): Thank you very much for inviting us to participate.

I'm here on behalf of Terri Szabo. I am a clinical social worker and a mental health service provider. I've been working with first nations people in rural communities for more than 43 years.

I am trying to put all this together. I had short notice. I'll do the best I can here.

The Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council needs the committee to know that colonization has played a great role in the disempowerment of first nations people all across Canada. Resource development has fed into the continuing process of colonization. We have seen that industry has pillaged the land and that the people have not authentically been involved in an empowering way. They tend to have low-paying jobs and they tend to not stay in the industry, because they do not have the continued opportunities for development to take on more powerful positions.

Industry needs to be educated regarding the plight of the first nations people and the result of colonization all across Canada, particularly in the north, which has so greatly disempowered the people of the first nations communities.

We need to have the committee consider who plays a role in the educational transformation of the resource developers. They need to be enlightened about the damage that has been done. They need to see that first nations people have been disempowered. There needs to be resources put in place so that first nations people can take on equivalent opportunities for development in education and in the planning of resources.

Gender-based violence has been an outcome of resource development all over the north and, I'm sure, all over Canada. Industry needs to be educated about the extent of the oppression of the people. Things need to be put in place to mitigate the damage that has been done. The government needs to consider who plays a role in the educational transformation of resource development.

There needs to be security for the women who work in and near the resource development sites. This would include such things as on-site indigenous security, as well as available 1-800 numbers so that female workers can call with the confidence that they're not going to lose their job for reporting situations that they see as violence towards them. This includes derogatory comments, racial comments or sexual misogyny going on in the camps. This needs to be

addressed, and it needs to be addressed right from the get-go, so that the security of the women can be put in place.

The Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council also asks you to consider who provides the funding for the engagement of the economic development for first nations people and resource development. The IBA agreements must be implemented so that they work for the benefit of the empowerment of first nations people.

When you think about the way personalities develop and you think about the way societies develop, everything starts from the self. If you look at colonization as a form of aggression, you can see that they were the bullies and that first nations people all across the land were the victims. That relationship has always stayed the same. The government and resource developers have bullied first nations people everywhere, and first nations people have become more and more passive, and more and more disempowered as time goes on.

They're in a state of apathy. That needs to be shifted, and that can only be shifted if there are enough resources and enough opportunities for positive change and positive empowerment of the people all across the land, so that they can be equal partners in all of this and not just the recipients of what is done to them. Instead of just having the pick and shovel jobs, they need to have the jobs all up the line, so that they can be in control of what is happening in their communities and of the resources in all of the areas where resource development wants to take things, as colonization has always done. Colonization has always taken.

We want a more level playing field, and we want supports put in place so that the opportunities are more equal for all first nations people, they can rise to the challenges and become more empowered.

I'm sure you're all familiar with Abraham Maslow and his theory of self-actualization. I'm not sure if you're aware that he was studying the Blackfoot people in Alberta when he came to that conclusion. The Blackfoot people in Alberta, at that time, were a very empowered people.

• (1545)

We want to see the people empowered again, so all the steps of self-actualization have to be put in place. This will allow for the people to be on a more level playing field with everybody else in resource development.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

I'm now going to move it over for the next five minutes. This is shared time between Ninu Kang and Leslie Varley, who are both from British Columbia.

Ninu, I'm going to let you two decide how to work this out and I'll pass the floor to you for the next five minutes.

Ms. Ninu Kang (Executive Director, Ending Violence Association of British Columbia): I'm going to yield to Leslie to start and then I will pick up the last minute of our five minutes.

Ms. Leslie Varley (Executive Director, British Columbia Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres): Hi, everybody. I'm Leslie Varley, the executive director at BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres.

I belong to the Giskaast clan of Nisga'a nation and reside at Musqueam territory in Vancouver. I'm calling in today from beautiful Lekwungen territory in Victoria.

I'm just going to jump right in to some recommendations. There is so much that needs to happen and that needs to happen collectively and collaboratively.

First of all, we indigenous women know that our women and girls are known and accepted as collateral damage by both government and by the resource sector in the sense that this stuff happens and we pay. However, we still don't hold the sector nor the government accountable for their workers. My recommendations are mostly around funding indigenous organizations to provide services to our own people, but I have a few more.

The first is that we need to require resource industries to work with local nations and urban indigenous women to develop credible and practical safety plans for indigenous women and girls. Those plans also need to include the accountability of the resource sectors themselves and accountability for their workers.

In a recent situation in northern B.C., a resource industry company presented a so-called safety reconciliation plan to the town council. They proposed a safety plan for indigenous women and girls. This plan was for all men to wear a little awareness campaign item on their clothing. I'm sure you know what I'm talking about. These awareness campaigns are never evaluated for effectiveness. Their leaders are not vetted thoroughly from a women's safety perspective. Industry and government seem to love these visual but ineffective responses where they are essentially seen to be doing something.

These actions are meaningless to indigenous women. Any racist can wear that little pledge button. It really isn't helping. These man-made solutions help the entrepreneur make a profit off the violence that we indigenous women experience. In this instance, indigenous women were never consulted by that resource company in developing safety plans for indigenous women. This is a very common experience for us. That one was fresh. That was this week.

I also think it's really important for us to support realistic and practical funding for indigenous people and meet them where they live. In B.C., 85% of us live off reserve and we still have no long-term funding for violence against women and the wraparound services needed to support us. We still have to go through our mainstream colleagues to get funding. We at BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres—the 25 centres—are only project-based to develop capacity. I remind us that it's 2022 and we are still project based in anti-violence funding.

There's a shortage of indigenous wraparound services. Indigenous organizations are grossly underfunded compared to mainstream organizations. There are too few culturally appropriate services for indigenous people and therefore we have fewer ways to interface with professionals who can help us and who can provide us with support or connect us to support services. All these areas need to be supported comprehensively, so that we can properly serve our own communities.

Another area is the police. We need to work with the police to make them investigate. They have it within their discretion to de-

cide whether they will investigate or not, so police are in fact gate-keeping many of these issues. We need to hold them accountable for collecting data. The police input the data that goes to Stats Canada, yet Stats Canada clearly indicates to us that there is severe dearth of data.

Finally, I'm just going to talk about housing. The housing situation for women fleeing violence is horrific. A home where a woman can raise her children is a luxury most of us cannot afford in this province. We need to fund indigenous urban groups and first nations to develop more second-stage housing.

There's often nowhere to go and men exploiting women know that there is no security without the safety of housing. Housing is what we need to keep women and their children grounded and safe, so they have less need to go into the survival sex trade, put up with violent relationships and endure violence against their bodies, and so they can better protect their daughters and sons from sexual exploitation.

Thank you.

I'll pass it over to you, Ninu.

• (1550)

Ms. Ninu Kang: Thank you, Leslie.

Hello. I'm Ninu Kang, the executive director of the Ending Violence Association of BC. I'm calling from the unceded ancestral territories of the Squamish, Musqueam and Tsleil-Waututh nations. I'm honoured today to present with Leslie Varley.

Here at EVA BC, we recognize...When I was invited to join this panel, it was important that, in the local context, Leslie and I, who are working as executive directors in our local areas...I called on her, and asked her to lead this discussion.

At the Ending Violence Association of BC, we recognize that, as an organization, we are part of the structures of colonial systems, and, as Leslie has mentioned, many times we speak about indigenous women, and really look at any issue related to indigenous women—

The Chair: You have about 10 more seconds.

Ms. Ninu Kang: —it's not only about indigenous women. It's about their families and communities, so today I'm here as an ally. I'm going to yield back, and be happy to answer any questions in partnership with Leslie.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you so much, and thank you to our panellists.

For the first round, each party will have six minutes. For the second round, five minutes will go to the CPC and Liberals, and two and a half minutes to the Bloc and NDP. We'll then go to the third round, where each party once again will be given six minutes. For the fourth round, it goes back to the CPC and the Liberals, for five minutes, and then two and a half minutes to the Bloc and NDP, and then back to the CPC and Liberals for five minutes.

We've worked out those times so everybody can get their share. Everybody should have similar amounts at the very beginning when we're asking many of the questions. I'm going to be watching the clock on this one.

We'll turn the first six minutes over to Ms. Ferreri.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Thank you so much, Chair, and thank you so much to the witnesses for joining us today. We're very honoured to have you here.

I'm going to ask a quick yes-or-no question before I go into questioning, just so we're on the same page. If everyone can give me a yes or no, would you consider building pipelines a resource development?

Ms. Leslie Varley: Yes.

• (1555)

Ms. Ninu Kang: Yes.

Ms. Diane Redsky: Yes.

Dr. Debra Greig: Yes.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I have four yeses. Great. Thank you so much. I appreciate that.

Diane, do you have any stats on the reduction in family violence with economic development in the community? If you don't, we can table them for the committee.

Ms. Diane Redsky: I do not have stats.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Does Debra, Leslie, or Ninu have any of those stats?

Ms. Leslie Varley: No, I don't.

Ms. Ninu Kang: No, I don't.

Dr. Debra Greig: No.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Okay, thank you.

If there is an opportunity, I'd really like some recommendations from all of you in terms of mandating corporate social responsibility.

I had the privilege this past week to visit Alberta, Jasper and Banff, and I had the privilege to speak with a chief, a female chief of the Simpcw First Nation. It is very pro-pipeline regarding how much it has injected into the community for jobs and opportunity.

How do we find that balance of bringing economic growth and decreasing poverty with a decrease in violence? I would ask for your key recommendations.

I'll ask Diane, in particular, what does that mandate in corporate social responsibility look like for you?

Ms. Diane Redsky: I would like, first of all, to say that all the answers and the solutions are always at the community, the grass-

roots, level. We strongly believe that in doing all this work on violence against women a co-development approach is critical, so you have government, industry and communities sitting at a common table to co-develop and co-create what the solutions are to really get ahead of it and be proactive.

Then there are the recommendations. I will be very quick on what we would like to see in terms of some industry standards around corporate social responsibility. There should be mandatory training on violence against women and sexual exploitation. They should have to contribute to a fund that is managed by an indigenous-led organization to address the harms of the social impact. There should be mandatory child abuse and criminal record checks so that there's some management of violent offenders coming into neighbourhoods. And there should be a monitoring body and hefty fines for non-compliance. We should look at strategies that have worked across the country.

I'm only aware of one initiative in Quebec that had some promising results.

Meegwetch.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: And the economic injection that happens is beneficial as well to these communities.

Ms. Diane Redsky: Absolutely. Everybody needs to be at the table planning for that in a meaningful way and, again, getting back to co-development and co-management.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Debra, I'm looking at our Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Under "Business and Reconciliation" 92.ii it says:

Ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.

Debra, do you feel that the government is delivering on this mandate?

Dr. Debra Greig: In my opinion, they are starting at the wrong place. They are offering all sorts of technical skills development, but they haven't addressed the emotional trauma that still permeates everywhere from colonization. If you're coming from a place of low power, you can have all the applications of credentials that you want, but you're still not whole from the inside out and that is what needs to be addressed.

I can tell you in the north there's a tremendous amount of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, and a tremendous amount of apathy and there's a tremendous amount of dysfunction. All of that is not addressed.

You can keep applying the college diplomas and the certificates, but if you don't address the root issues of security, and self-worth, and personal empowerment, nothing's going to hold because it falls through like sand because the core of the beings, the core of the people, has to be healed. That's where the attention needs—

• (1600)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you.

The Chair: You have about 10 seconds, Michelle.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you, Debbra.

I think I have another round of questioning so I will come back to that and pass it over to my colleague.

The Chair: Thanks so much.

We're now going to turn it over to Emmanuella Lambropoulos.

Emmanuella, you have six minutes.

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

I would like to begin by thanking all of the witnesses for your great testimony and for being with us here to answer some more questions on this very important issue.

My first question is going to go to Ms. Varley.

You mentioned that one of the first recommendations you raised was the fact that safety plans need to be put in place for women and girls by these industries. Can you expand a little bit more on that in terms of what specifically we should be taking into account.

I know you also said that indigenous women should be consulted in coming up with these plans, absolutely, but can you also give us a couple of pointers as to what direction that should go in if this were to be mandated.

Ms. Leslie Varley: In the same way that Debbra Redsky has addressed this as well, we need to be working with local first nations and indigenous urban communities when the resource sector is coming into town to start developing those safety plans.

I would say the same things. We need really in-depth criminal records, and setting some no-tolerance rules for violence that are within an employee's contract so there doesn't have to be a proof of violence at the end of the day through the criminal justice system, because indigenous women don't go through the justice system for the most part. It's not safe for us. We really need to work closely with the sector to develop some really strong safety plans.

The trouble for me in this process is that the onus falls on indigenous women and organizations to create safety plans for ourselves. We really need to balance that with creating strong safety plans through the resource sector itself. Government needs to work with us to hold that resource sector accountable for these safety plans, because if indigenous women are not going to the police and reporting violent crimes—and there are plenty of stats to say that we don't—then we need to find other ways to address this. That is putting some really strong human resource policy around safety for local women, for those workers who are working in those work camps.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you very much.

My next question is for Ms. Debbra Greig. You've mentioned that you've worked over 40 years as a therapist and helping indigenous people in the north.

Can tell us whether there have been programs to address the mental health issues and, in general, whether there's been funding towards mental health? I'm not aware of specific funding in indigenous communities.

Dr. Debbra Greig: There has always been funding, but it's always short-term funding. Nothing's perpetual and the problems are perpetual. The agencies that get the funding are always in a state of anxiety as to whether or not they're going to get the funding again.

All of that has to be changed. The damage is deeply rooted in generations of people who have lost their power and can't give power to their children and can't motivate themselves to empower themselves. There's a tremendous amount of damage that has been done and the tremendous amount of damage needs to be addressed; otherwise, you can put all the blanket things on top of everything and the root is still going to be there. You have to heal the people; you have to heal the spirit of the people. That funding must be perpetual and it must be enough that it can actually be done professionally, instead of by people who come in with the best of intentions, but they may not have the best of skills, and so things just stay the same.

We want to mitigate damage and we want to see positive change. In order to do that, you have to have assessments; you have to have resources; and you have to have people who can apply the resources in order to heal the people. That's absolutely huge. The government has been hugely in deficit on that for 500 years.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: I hear you.

My next question for you is more related to resource development. You mentioned that a lot of the reason behind much of the gender-based violence is colonization and resource development and the fact that the police and the colonizers continue to.... It's a cycle of violence that continues because of this power relationship.

I understand that a lot of that impacts mental health. Could you maybe talk a little bit about what you think would help change that? Let's pretend that we were able to completely address mental health. What would be the next step to help empower indigenous women and other people in these communities by way of job availability out there and in these projects once they're available?

• (1605)

Dr. Debra Greig: If you could fix all the mental health problems first, that would be fine. Then you need to have educational opportunities, because people have to take the steps to empower themselves to be self-actualized. The root problems have to be solved; all the addictions have to be solved; all the resources need to be applied so that there are treatments for the addictions. Then there needs to be funding for perpetual, accessible education. Some of the remote areas don't even have colleges accessible and they would have to go on Zoom, and the people don't even have computers, so they can't go on Zoom. It's outrageous some of the deprivation in some of the rural areas. The people are in states of apathy; they feel like they're not going to get there, so they do nothing, and that's really, really sad.

Education would need to be second after first fixing all of the mental health problems. Then opportunities for economic development would have to be there.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're now going to move it over for six minutes to Andréanne Larouche.

Andréanne, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

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

I thank the witnesses for being with us today.

I would like to address Ms. Redsky first.

Ms. Redsky, you talked about the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and how important it is that Canada recognize it, especially since it opens the door to better protection for women and better dialogue between peoples.

Can you tell us a bit more about the importance of this declaration?

[*English*]

Ms. Diane Redsky: The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People is a really important human rights instrument to recognize the inherent rights of indigenous people. This goes also to what I was speaking of in my opening: We have our own laws and we have also our own solutions to very complex issues.

The challenge and the reality for many of the communities is that those answers are never listened to, supported, funded or properly evaluated so that there could be a business case. They are often ignored and then nothing gets done. Then we always end up in this perpetual cycle of having all the answers, but yet we don't get the resources to implement those solutions to make significant change.

The will and the spirit and the vibrancy and the inherent values of our culture are strong and always have been. We're here for a reason. I really think that's important. UNDRIP is an important recognition of that strength of indigenous people in Canada and it needs to be supported in all aspects.

Again, I want to refer to how you get there, which is really by that co-development approach and by engaging with industry, government and communities all sitting at the same table.

That, to me, is the answer and the opportunity.

Meegwetch.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Ms. Redsky, there has been a long-standing request to sign the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, but this has not been done. My understanding is that this is harmful and may have contributed to the violence perpetrated by some companies against women in indigenous communities.

Am I correct in saying that refusing to sign the declaration has had an impact?

I see you nodding; I interpret that as a yes.

[*English*]

Ms. Diane Redsky: Yes, I agree with that. It's just another way that our nationhood is not validated.

The Chair: Is there quite a bit of audio feedback?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Yes.

May I continue, Madam Chair?

• (1610)

[*English*]

The Chair: Did you get the answer to the question from Ms. Redsky?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: I did have difficulty hearing the response, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Andréanne, did she get the answer from Ms. Redsky, or would you like to ask that question again. I have stopped the clock for you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: It's true that there was a lot of feedback.

Ms. Redsky, after nodding, you added something.

My question was this. Has the long-standing refusal to sign the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples contributed to the exploitation of indigenous peoples by companies?

I would like you to repeat your answer. You can also add to it.

[*English*]

Ms. Diane Redsky: Thank you. I said yes, and this is another example of not signing on to UNDRIP, and thus not valuing the strengths and the inherent rights of indigenous people in Canada, which has implications that bring us here today and what we're talking about.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: That's fine.

I would now like to ask a more general question, which all witnesses can answer.

There is a need to consider economic development in some communities, as well as security and violence reduction. A balance must be struck between economic development, women's safety and environmental protection. Sometimes such projects can have an impact on the surrounding resources. I know how important, even essential, the protection of the environment, of Mother Earth, is for indigenous peoples.

Can you talk about this balance between the economy, women's safety and the protection of resources and the environment?

[*English*]

Ms. Diane Redsky: It's really important to acknowledge those natural laws that are inherent in the lives of those in our first nations communities.

I will make reference to one, Grand Council Treaty No. 3, which is one of many that I hope this committee explores. It has a Great Earth Law. Reading that law will really help you understand how everything is interconnected—valuing the connection to the land, water and sky, and also to the implication of what happens to people. We really have to look at this as holistic. Indigenous peoples and the first peoples have been on that from time immemorial with their natural laws. They do exist and would be helpful for this process.

The Chair: You have 15 more seconds.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: I did understand that we can't just consider the economy and women's safety, and that we must also consider environmental protection. That is what I took from your statement, Ms. Redsky.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're going to pass it over for the next six minutes to Leah Gazan.

Leah, you have the floor.

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

Thank you to all of the witnesses for being here.

I've heard a number of questions during committee. We very often talk about economic prosperity in terms of resource development. I think often in this discussion, particularly in places like the House of Commons, we forget that the prosperity of this country was built upon and continues to be built upon the exploitation of lands, territories and resources. The peoples in indigenous territories...that the reason we suffer from poverty is from development in the absence of lifting up human rights and involvement.

My first question is for Diane Redsky, whom I am privileged to work with in Winnipeg, and know very well. You spoke about sex-

ual predators. One of the reasons this study is so important is the reality that we have many sexual predators who come into our community and work in these industries, and don't have safety checks or criminal record checks. As a result of that, we've seen a lot of sexual exploitation of women, girls and two-spirited, from as young as little kids. I heard a report of a young 13-year-old girl, in fact, in B.C.

Could you please paint a picture about how this sexual exploitation crisis around resource extraction companies impacts the health and wellness of communities? I know I only have six minutes, but I'll start with that and move forward.

Thank you.

• (1615)

Ms. Diane Redsky: Thank you, Leah. It's nice to see you.

There are two important things. It's really as basic as having men with money who are transient. You're going to have forms of sexual exploitation and violence. Through the national task force, as well as my experience working in an organization providing family violence support services, I have to say those are pretty consistent, almost guaranteed dynamics that exist. The impact on those communities and the women in those communities is terrible.

We also have to remember that these industries promote, allow or don't do anything about it. Silence is the same as consent. They do nothing about the violence that is being perpetuated. There really is an important role and responsibility in all of that.

Again, I want to draw this committee to the Manitoba Clean Environment Commission report that is really outlining what is happening in northern Manitoba. There is a lot of opportunity to not only learn from that report but also to ensure that our leadership is involved in developing those solutions.

Meegwetch.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much.

My next question is for Madame Varley.

Call for justice 13.5 calls for resource development industries, government and service providers “to anticipate and recognize increased demand on social infrastructure because of development projects”, and social infrastructure to be expanded “to meet the anticipated needs of the host communities”. We have numerous examples of what this looks like on the ground.

Briefly, can you tell me what that would look like? Is there currently adequate funding being provided to communities to make sure that communities can mitigate and put in place a proper safety plan for women, girls and two-spirit?

Ms. Leslie Varley: The biggest issue in northwestern B.C., where there's a pipeline going in, is in anticipation of all the housing needs. All the spare housing got taken up and all the worst housing, which is the housing that indigenous single-parent families are in, with mouldy, cold basements, even those went into impossible rental levels for indigenous families. We render a lot of indigenous people homeless even at the start of any major industrial project because those folks come in, swoop in, and buy up all the housing and stuff because they know they're going to live there for a few years.

That's the biggest issue, making sure that we're creating that safe housing for people.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I have a question on that because I'm running out of time. Would you say that the resource extraction is taking up space, is resulting in exacerbating the housing crisis in nations?

Ms. Leslie Varley: Yes, absolutely.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you.

Is there anything else? I think we have a couple more seconds.

Chair, is that right?

The Chair: You have 33 more seconds.

Ms. Leslie Varley: Then again, I'm really troubled by this concept of finding a balance between violence, essentially, and resource development. I really think that we need to have zero tolerance for violence against indigenous women and demand that of the resource sector. I think that's an important change that we need to make in our sector, but again, it's housing, it's resources, it's access to food security. Child care becomes a big issue. Every single area of a family's expenses and outgoing costs are impacted when resource industries come to town. They don't actually benefit the people who are on the lower end of the financial spectrum. They get bumped out and their housing situations get awful and then the family becomes destabilized.

• (1620)

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're now going to go into our second round, so to begin we'll have five minutes with Shelby Kramp-Neuman.

Shelby, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

I'll start by suggesting that the safety of women and girls is important and all possible impacts of resource development need to be explored.

Leslie, you mentioned zero tolerance, and indeed I think of course that would be a goal.

Deb Greig, you raised the question of who plays the role in educating industry about resource development? I couldn't agree more. The government, industry and communities all need to be proactive.

We also heard earlier that there's often a link between poverty and violence, and further, that there is a link between resource development and economic reconciliation.

My first question would be for either Leslie Varley or Deb Greig. What current resources do you see that are currently being used to gauge the situation? What kind of enforcement is happening? Are the numbers consistent across the board?

Dr. Debra Greig: I'm sorry, I don't have the statistics. I can't really see what else is going on. I can only see from my little community, which is Watson Lake in the Yukon Territory, and there are no resources. It's a mess. Everything that comes is short term. Everything that comes is not adequate. Everything that comes is not dealing with the base problem, which is the healing of the people.

Ms. Leslie Varley: My answer is the same. We don't have the resources to address the increase in violence against indigenous women and girls, particularly in the northwest, where the pipeline is going through. There have been no additional resources that I'm aware of that have been sent to indigenous women and girls.

I gave you the example of their resources. They came in there with their safety plan, which they hadn't bothered to consult a single indigenous woman on, and it was a ridiculous plan.

There are no resources and there should be. I agree with Diane Redsky that it's inevitable that there's going to be violence, even though we expect zero tolerance and we know that we are the commodity. At the end of the day, that gets tossed aside.

Why isn't the industry going in ahead of time and setting up some really strong resources with community, by and for indigenous women and girls? I think that's an important question.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: I'll ask another short question of Diane Redsky for clarification.

Earlier, you had an exchange with my colleague with regard to a program in Quebec. Could you possibly share the name of the program or the company itself?

Ms. Diane Redsky: I'll have to look at that again. It was through the national task force.

This industry company was, at their own expense, bringing families to the camps. It's primarily men within these camps. Rather than isolating them, they were bringing in funding for families to come into the camps on a regular basis. They were constantly looking at problem solving with the community.

I'll go back into my notes and provide that information to the committee, or I can pass it on to Leah Gazan to forward to the committee as soon as I find it.

Again, we hope that we can find companies that are committed to what Leslie was saying, which is coming in in advance and really wanting to do some meaningful problem solving with the communities that will be impacted.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Perfect.

My last question is how, if at all, you see indigenous women and girls intersecting. Identify how factors such as disability, socio-economic status and age affect their vulnerabilities to and experiences of violence in the context of resource extraction projects.

• (1625)

Ms. Leslie Varley: Can I clarify the question? Is it how we see the intersection?

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Yes.

Ms. Leslie Varley: To answer very quickly, they're very strong. We often see indigenous women with mental health issues or who have been born with disabilities in crisis and seeking support services. They're being exploited, generally, by older men.

Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth, a children's advocate here in British Columbia, is about to start researching and putting a report together on that very issue, so stay tuned.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're now going to move over, for the next five minutes, to Marc Serré.

Marc, you have the floor.

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*Translation*]

I thank the witnesses for their recommendations. I also thank them for providing the committee with examples of their work for enrichment.

My first question is for Ms. Greig from the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council.

How was the money you received from the federal government used? Do you have any specific recommendations on how to distribute it so that it benefits as many first nations organizations as possible?

[*English*]

Dr. Debra Greig: Could somebody translate that for me, please?

Mr. Marc Serré: Essentially, my understanding is that you received financial support from the federal government for some of the programming. I want to hear your recommendations on the criteria of the funding, and any recommendations that you have to try to look at how to enhance that funding so that it could be utilized in other organizations.

Dr. Debra Greig: I'm so sorry. I can't address your question. I'm the stand-in for Terri Szabo, who's the president of the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council. I don't know the answers to your questions.

Mr. Marc Serré: On the other question, Madam Redsky, you talked about the IBAs. Earlier, you mentioned the example about Quebec to my colleague.

I'm part of Sudbury, and the mining community for decades talked about IBAs and how important those agreements are, but I don't think that a lot of the IBAs, especially in the past, focused on social determinants or looking at housing or looking specifically at violence against women. I'm wondering if you have any examples.

How do you feel about the recommendations by the federal government that we should be looking at funding organizations to provide education to resource bases, like MAC, for the mining industry, and COSIA, for the oil and gas, so that they then could educate their private sector members, to make sure that in impact benefit agreements there are criteria set?

What role do you see for the federal government? A lot of these agreements are negotiated with local chiefs—who, sadly, are probably men—and councils. Do you feel that the role of the federal government should be to provide that leadership to try to educate the associations so that they then could educate their members?

Ms. Diane Redsky: I would say specifically for the role the federal government can play that I would prioritize giving the resources to the indigenous communities and to the indigenous leadership for those answers, rather than giving the dollars to the industry itself. I think the industry itself can probably afford to invest and should be investing into their own growth and development when it comes to addressing violence against indigenous women and being proactive when they are entering into communities when they're setting up shop. As Leslie was sharing, it would be nice for them to be able to do that in advance and to do it in a meaningful way.

Meegwetch.

• (1630)

Mr. Marc Serré: Ms. Varley, you mentioned the lack of stats. Do you think the federal government's role at Stats Canada is to collect more data to support organizations and services? There's a wide range here. Do you have any specific recommendations on the collection of data?

Ms. Leslie Varley: No, I have nothing specific. I'm not a data expert, but what I see and what I know is that if we don't have data, then we don't get the funding to address the problem. Without data we can't prove that we have a problem, and so around it goes, yet the data is that indigenous women don't report violence because it's not safe for them to report it to the police. They might get apprehended or have their children apprehended or be accused of being a sex worker, so they don't report. I think we need possibly an external source to collect data, because it's not safe for us to report data. Stats Canada needs that information.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're now going to switch over to two and a half minutes.

I'm going to pass the floor over to Andréanne.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Good afternoon.

My name is Sylvie Bérubé and I am the member of Parliament for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

I am replacing Ms. Larouche, and I am very happy to be here.

[English]

The Chair: Thanks, Sylvie. Please go ahead.

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: My question is: can you help us understand the link between resource extraction and other development projects and violence against indigenous women and girls?

[English]

The Chair: We have a variety of witnesses here. Who would you like to put that to, Sylvie?

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: My question is for all of the witnesses.

[English]

The Chair: Leslie, do you want to get started?

Ms. Leslie Varley: One of the go-to books that I look at is called *The Beginning and End of Rape* by Sarah Deer. There are lots of indigenous female academics who have written these kinds of books, which talk about the direct connection between colonization and the rape and abuse of women's bodies, and the idea that indigenous women, prior to colonization, had far more agency over their bodies than female European settlers who came here. The intention was to set indigenous women in their place by raping them. There's also the connection between the rape of indigenous women and of the land, as if both are there for the settlers to take.

I really encourage you to have a look at these kinds of books. There's a lot of explanation here about colonization, settler abuse of land and abuse of indigenous women's bodies.

The Chair: I'm going to pass it over to Ms. Greig.

Would you like to respond?

Dr. Debra Greig: I'm sorry. I can't respond. I don't have any available information to pass along.

The Chair: That's fair enough.

Diane, would you like to respond?

Ms. Diane Redsky: Sure. Again, this is rooted in.... You have resource communities parachuting in and staying for a short period of time, or even a long period of time—but there's a designated time. They're never going to be part of the community permanently. They're all temporary. Many of these industries are male-dominated, so now you're back to that formula of men with money who are transient. That's directly connected to violence and sexual exploitation.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to move on to Leah Gazan.

Leah, you have two and a half minutes.

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

I think that's an important point: the hypersexualization of indigenous women. I brought that up during a committee—how, at Hallowe'en, there are costumes like the sexy squaw or the Pocahot-

tie, and how we're hypersexualized, which makes us more susceptible and vulnerable to violence.

This segues into call for justice 3.7: “We call upon all governments to provide continual and accessible healing programs and support for all children of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people and their family members” and to develop a permanent fund that is “distinctions-based”.

Madame Varley, could you please speak to the importance of accessible and culturally relevant healing programs to support communities and families impacted by violence from transient workers involved in resource development projects?

• (1635)

Ms. Leslie Varley: What I see among many indigenous women impacted by violence, here in B.C., is that their spirits, souls and bodies are traumatized, and they pass down that trauma if they're not able to heal it or provided with the resources and supports needed to adequately culturally heal themselves. I don't mean accessing mainstream services or making everybody in mainstream service organizations polite...so that we can access it. I mean real healing that connects us back to our own culture and communities, and back to the land and our understanding of spirit and soul.

I think this is what is important, and it can't be done by mainstream organizations. It really has to be done within our indigenous communities.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much.

I want to end with Diane Redsky.

I know you are an icon in Winnipeg for indigenous-led and indigenous-driven solutions. Can you speak to the importance of having indigenous-led and indigenous-driven solutions?

Ms. Diane Redsky: Absolutely. In fact, that is one of the foundational principles in the urban sub-working group's national action plan, which I encourage you to read, because it talks about funding indigenous-led organizations. That's where the solutions are. All too often, non-indigenous organizations receive the funding.

The last thing I would add is that “distinctions-based” should be regardless of residency. Wherever you live, you should have access to funding.

The Chair: We're now going to go into our third round. We're back to six-minute rounds. We're going to start with Dominique Vien.

Dominique, you have the floor for six minutes.

[Translation]

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

I also thank our guests.

I am fairly sure that all of my colleagues here, particularly those from the Conservative Party who sit with me on this important committee, support zero tolerance for violence against indigenous women and girls. My colleagues have said that and I will say it again. What I find unfortunate about what I have just heard and what I have also observed is this insensitivity that I feel from various stakeholders on this issue.

If I understood you correctly, Ms. Varley, the sector is not the only party responsible. If I have misunderstood you, please tell me. I see it as a shared responsibility. The industry is involved, as are the communities, the government, the local councillors, the bars and the police. It is, for me, a shared responsibility.

My question is for you, Ms. Varley.

If any of the other witnesses would like to add their views, I would be delighted to hear them.

If you could get all these people around a table today, who would do what and when? That is the question to ask. We need to get to work together, because the responsibility does not lie with any one group.

How do you see this shared responsibility and what duties would you give to each person affected by what indigenous women and girls are experiencing?

• (1640)

[English]

Ms. Leslie Varley: I suppose I would start in that room by reminding everyone that indigenous women are also human beings. They are subject to human rights, the same as every other Canadian in this country, and all the laws of violence against women and girls apply.

I would ask the police to work with us to make sure that they are complying with those laws to make it safer for indigenous women to report violence. I would ask the resource sectors to develop a zero tolerance policy for their workers to make sure that if there is any violence, they are outed. There doesn't have to be this burden of proof through the justice system where women have to take it, and are essentially revictimizing themselves going through the court process. We want to get rid of all that. If we have reports of violence from men working in the sector, then we move them out of that sector, and we don't get them back.

I would ask the resource sector to do in-depth reference checks and background checks on the people who are working in the sectors, so we're not bringing dangerous predators into the community to the degree that we are now.

I would ask the communities, municipalities, town councils and indigenous communities to collaborate and work together to ask themselves what they can do to support and protect women and girls, and to make sure that indigenous women and girls, in particular, are enjoying the same level of human rights protection that every other Canadian gets to enjoy.

What do we need to put in place in our communities to ensure that all of these processes are there?

Debra, maybe you have more to add to that.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Ms. Greig, I don't know if you want to add something.

This all seems so simple to me. All it takes is leadership. Someone needs to ask all the leaders to look at the situation and look at it dispassionately, with a desire to change things.

Does this kind of committee, so simple to set up, exist where there is industry?

[English]

Dr. Debra Greig: Can someone interpret for me, please?

Ms. Diane Redsky: If they're not doing it now, they're not doing it at all. If there is no interest in changing that, it needs to be forced. There needs to be some way in which that industry is mandated well in advance to work with communities to identify all of the impacts that its presence is going to have for the entire community in all aspects, and then create that common table to problem-solve issues pertaining to all of them.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Ladies, do you think that, as part of the impact assessments that are being advocated, we should assess a company that wants to come in from the perspective of gender differentiation and the protection of indigenous women?

Is this a good idea, a good direction to go in? Do you believe in it?

My question is for Ms. Varley.

[English]

Ms. Leslie Varley: I'm sorry, do you mean the history of the indigenous group, the land, the people or the history of the company? I'm not sure what your question is.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls talks about the possibility of doing impact assessments before a project takes hold. I'm paraphrasing.

It proposes impact studies, not only environmental, but also studies on the socio-economic aspect and on the presence of women. The idea would be to look at a project through the lens of women's protection and gender differentiation to see what kind of impact a project may have on men, on women and on indigenous women.

Do you believe in this?

[English]

The Chair: I'll give you about 15 seconds to reply to that.

Ms. Leslie Varley: Absolutely, yes, I do.

Of course, protecting indigenous women and protecting all women and girls is going to benefit all of society. It's not going to harm anybody to add further protection for us. It's going to enhance and improve society.

• (1645)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Greig seems to be having trouble getting the interpretation. Could we have somebody from IT call her and work that through?

I do know that we have votes this evening as well and there's lots coming up. We have a vote at 5:45 and I don't want to delay too many things.

Perhaps we can switch over to Jenna for her six minutes, if that's okay.

Jenna, if you have something specific for Ms. Greig, then you could ask it in the latter part of your six minutes. I'll pass the floor over to you.

Mrs. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Thank you very much to the chair.

My sincere thanks go to the witnesses who have joined us today. I'm learning a lot, to be completely candid. I really appreciate the expertise and the insights you're sharing with us.

I think I'll start with Ms. Varley.

I had read a bit about some of the various prevention programs that you run at the association of friendship centres. Obviously, we're hearing today about demanding zero tolerance for violence against women from the resource sector.

I'm wondering if you can speak to some of the prevention programs that you have tried. This is twofold: What is the impact and what else you would like to be doing or would you suggest be done?

Ms. Leslie Varley: We've had many project-based funds to develop some capacity. We've worked with indigenous youth, for example, to teach them about their body and their agency over their own body and how they get to decide if and when somebody gets to touch them and how. We've spent some time doing that, but that was through project-based funding and that's over.

We've done a lot of research work looking at the sex trafficking of indigenous girls who are sometimes in our housing projects or in our poorer neighbourhoods and who are being targeted by traffickers. We've worked with those women and girls to try to teach them how to protect their bodies and protect themselves and how to seek help and resources.

A telephone company has very generously donated to us 1,000 phones with talk and text so that if indigenous women and girls are reduced to having to hitchhike to and from their community into a local town or wherever, then they hopefully have some safety. Sometimes that works. Oftentimes, there are dead spots. There are still very many dead spots in B.C. for cellular service, so that's not always applicable.

Recently, we started to develop some training and capacity for indigenous women to provide anti-violence support services to in-

igenous women and girls. Generally in B.C. it is not the case that you can call a helpline and get an indigenous person on the end of it. One of the areas we've been really working on lately is developing our own capacity to provide services by and for indigenous women and girls.

• (1650)

Mrs. Jenna Sudds: That's amazing. Thank you so much. Obviously, it's incredibly important work.

For my next question I'd like to just follow up with Ms. Redsky.

Previously one of my colleagues asked you a question about how government, families and partners can all work together as a community in order to develop community-based solutions to best support indigenous women and girls. I think your answer was along the lines of forcing or mandating the resource industry to work with the community proactively.

That was a very stark statement, and I'd really love for you to build on that. What does that look like to be really impactful?

Ms. Diane Redsky: Thank you for following up on that.

I'd like to begin by saying that most of industry.... It has been very rare. In fact, in my entire career, I've heard of only one in Quebec who actually made an effort to be proactive in their impact on the community, socially, to the environment, and so on. That tells me a lot. Why aren't others doing it?

I think it's a resource problem. It eventually cuts into the bottom line because it will take investments of resources, enough money, in order to do it well. I do think we have to mandate impact assessments for the environment, and I would say a social impact assessment should be added to that with the full engagement of the communities in the surrounding areas and then there should be adequate resources to problem solve and invest in those solutions and they should be part of the whole package that is mandated.

Meegwetch.

The Chair: You have 20 seconds left.

Mrs. Jenna Sudds: That's incredible. I think I'll leave it there. I appreciate the fulsome answer and the amazing work that you're all doing. Thank you.

The Chair: Thanks very much, Jenna.

We're now going to move over to Andréanne.

Andréanne, you have the floor for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Madam Chair—

[*English*]

The Chair: Sorry about that, Sylvie.

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: There is no problem.

Given everything we've heard, there's no doubt that there must be zero tolerance now. We can't say that enough.

According to the witnesses here today, what other reasons could explain this violence against indigenous women and women in general in a resource development context?

[English]

Ms. Leslie Varley: I can go first.

I think it's still there because we still allow it to be there. We still allow the resource industry to use indigenous women and girls without full accountability. I think that's the only reason it's still there, because we haven't mandated and we haven't required any changes. It's completely possible, as Diane Redsky outlined, how we can make these changes.

Ms. Ninu Kang: Leslie, if I can follow up on what you're saying, one thing we also need to acknowledge is that the leadership and middle management of these companies are predominately still white men. When you think about trying to make any systemic changes within these corporations, on the ground level, you don't have individuals working in those areas who can actually bring the intel of the indigenous experience. What we're really trying to do is to mesh water and oil together.

I think that needs to be acknowledged. Unless there's some promotion of leadership within these corporations, it's very difficult for me to imagine what change would look like there.

• (1655)

Dr. Debra Greig: If I can carry on, the root of everything is the self. If you have a culture of people who are aggressive, they're going to be aggressive in all sorts of ways.

I would suggest that all of the resource developers have psychologists write assessments, and all of the people who are going to work there do assessments. You can screen out misogyny and you can screen out violence. You can screen out all sorts of things through psychological testing. That could be done, and that would improve things all over the place.

The root of all violence and aggressive behaviour is the self. If you have immature, undeveloped personalities coming into these camps, you're going to get all the havoc, the misogyny and the violence. If you have well-developed people coming in, they're going to treat each other respectfully. You need to be looking at who's coming in, and you can see who's coming in if you do psychological testing.

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: You also talked about the changes needed to do this. What concrete measures need to be put in place to counter this phenomenon of violence against women? In your opinion, who should put them in place?

[English]

Dr. Debra Greig: Government needs to have the resources available and make the resource developers responsible for assessing who's coming into these camps and these areas.

Government also needs to make resources available to uplift the people so that they are empowered. If they are empowered people, they're not going to be victims. Everything is rooted in the self, and if you have well-developed selves everywhere, you're going to have a harmonious and respectful environment. If you have areas of the population that don't have well-developed selves and who are immature.... Immature people or violent people will treat each other badly. You need to cultivate the empowerment of the self and make it healthy everywhere.

Ms. Ninu Kang: The only thing I would add is that in addition to looking at the individual as a problem, I think we need to look at it as a systemic issue. In addition to what I said earlier, it is sometimes easier to think about it as these are some individuals who are bad, so we could just pluck them away and put them somewhere else. I think if we're not addressing the systemic issue....

If you think about who can do what, here in Vancouver, if a developer is going to put a building up, they have to give up a certain amount of amenity space to the community for free. When I hear what Debra and Leslie are both talking about, this is about mandating. It is about putting in policy at the highest level of our federal government that says that when these corporations come into communities, they have to put a chunk of their money into that community.

I don't want to repeat what was said with regard to having this be a co-development of resources.

Ms. Diane Redsky: I want to say two quick things. Let's not forget that there are really harmful stereotypes about who indigenous women are, and we are often targeted. It's not because we have low self-esteem, it is because we are targeted by people who are intent on hurting us.

The second thing is that the answers are going to be at the community level. Making significant investments into indigenous-led organizations and indigenous communities are vital in this whole response, because that's where the answers are.

Meegwetch.

The Chair: You have 10 seconds.

Ms. Leslie Varley: I agree. I want to say that indigenous women have long been targeted, and that has been acceptable in Canadian society as a whole. Government has some responsibility in addressing this and ensuring that Canadians understand that we are also human beings and that we should have the same rights as every other Canadian.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're now going to move back to Leah Gazan.

• (1700)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much.

I think the discussion about the dehumanization of indigenous women is really critical here. I think a lot of people still don't realize that indigenous women in real time, today, under the Indian Act, never mind not having the same rights as men, still don't have the same rights as other women. It's why this study is so important and why I am so grateful to the committee for being open to these really difficult discussions.

My question is for Madam Kang or Madam Varley.

You spoke a little bit about safe transportation. I was horrified when Greyhound bus services were cut. The MMIWG Coalition, which your organization was part of, identified the critical need for "safe, affordable and reliable" transportation and noted that its absence would lead to an increase in "hitchhiking, which is directly correlated to the ongoing crisis of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls across the country."

I can only think of the Highway of Tears in B.C., where you're from, and the tragic stories and unsolved stories that we've heard.

Could you please share how safe, affordable and reliable transportation would make a difference in keeping indigenous women and girls, 2SLGBTQ+ individuals safe in rural and remote areas where resource development projects frequently take place?

Ms. Leslie Varley: I'm happy to speak to that.

I grew up in northern B.C. and even as a young girl going to elementary school and starting high school, if I were walking in my little town, I was being cruised by older men trying to pick me up. Physically, indigenous women are always targeted in this way and that hasn't changed in those small northern towns. Now one of the best places to look for indigenous women is along the highways where they're trying to hitchhike to go to visit a friend or go to a doctor's appointment, or for whatever reason.

So, yes, these transportation.... It's not just the Greyhound bus closing down, but also we have some other sectors that are providing services. You can only get on the health bus if you have a health issue and you have to have a prescription; or you can only get a ride into town if you're from one of the first nations communities, or if you have proof that you're going to see your doctor. It's ridiculous how that bus drives empty up and down the highways all day and through our communities because people don't have the right documentation to get a ride.

Yes, it could be better coordinated and better organized for our people.

Friendship centres are trying to provide little routes between centres. We have a few buses and cars up there, and we're trying to provide cellphones to make it safer for women who, indeed, actually have to hitchhike.

It isn't safe and we need to create more safety. We enjoy this kind of safety in the city. I can hop on a bus any time and go just about anywhere I want within the 50-mile radius, but up in the north that's absolutely not possible and it's not safe.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Would you say that providing transportation would actually save lives, yes or no?

Ms. Leslie Varley: Yes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much.

I want to move on to Madam Diane Redsky.

Part of this study, and it's certainly related to our notes, has to do with Manitoba Hydro and resource development's impact on indigenous women and girls in northern Manitoba.

I know you spoke to that. Can you talk very briefly about MKO and some of the research findings and recommendations they've come up with to improve safety for women and girls and two-spirit living in northern Manitoba?

Ms. Diane Redsky: Yes, I can. Very briefly, this is a really important voice. It's MKO's voice. It has been really leading this issue ever since the Manitoba Clean Environment Commission released its report in 2018, which is critically important.

I am aware, and certainly would stand beside MKO on its call for a public inquiry to address all of the implications that have come out of documenting the horrific reality of indigenous women and girls, as it relates to many resource developments, and specifically, the Manitoba Hydro report.

That is critically important moving forward, to support them, to really do a deep dive, similarly to what you're doing here. We really have to get at the root of what the challenges are. Most importantly, how can we prevent this, and how can we support those relationships that exist?

It's really important that in our society industry, government and communities work hand in hand to ensure they are all working toward public safety, and in particular, the safety of indigenous women and girls in all aspects of what they do.

• (1705)

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're now going to go back to our rounds of five minutes, and two and a half minutes.

I'm going to start that off with Shelby, for five minutes.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Shelby has passed her time on to me.

This has provided many solutions for me as we go around the table, and I listen to each of you.

Ms. Redsky, I'm wondering if there are any stats on men with money who are transient.

Ms. Diane Redsky: That would pretty much align with the industry sector. That would be my answer.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Okay, fair enough.

I want to go back to Debra, because we were talking, and I aligned greatly with what you were saying about self and self-regulation. It's sort of a key to breaking a lot of systemic trauma and patterns that we do as people. I'm very interested in that, as well. What do you think those solutions are?

I asked you about truth and reconciliation. I'm going to go back to another recommendation, and I have a feeling you're going to say the same thing. This is under "Education":

7. We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

Do you feel the federal government is doing this?

Dr. Debra Greig: No. It might be trying, but it's not very good at it. It's a huge problem. It's a programming system, and that program doesn't match the indigenous program. The indigenous natural program is self-sustaining, vibrant, balanced, harmonious and equilateral. The government system preaches something else, and indoctrinates people with something else. It's indoctrinating a conflict of consciousness. That's very wrong, as far as I'm concerned. It's another sign of colonialism.

The entire education system needs to be sensitized. It needs to take lessons from the lifestyle, spirituality, and the mindset of indigenous people, and it doesn't do that. It's pooh-pooed and minimized, because [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I agree with you.

That comes back to the recommendations from Diane about holistic.... I'm going to go back to what I witnessed this past week. It was very timely for me, being in Alberta and sitting at a chamber of commerce meeting where we were talking about employment, the tourism sector and pipelines.

We had this beautiful amazing chief. It was the first time she had been invited to the table, and an amazing thing happened. The city didn't realize its housing issues were being extremely stressed because of the workers on the pipeline. Many indigenous from the first nations were working on it, and she said, "Well, we're injecting money into your economy." Until the city sat at the table, it didn't know the stress that had been created. Both wanted to reap the benefits of the resource development and economic reconciliation, and they were both happy with that.

Would everybody agree on this panel that we do need resource development and we need economic reconciliation? Is there a big but after that? Can we agree we all need resource development to inject money into our economy?

• (1710)

Ms. Leslie Varley: Yes.

Ms. Diane Redsky: Yes.

Ms. Ninu Kang: Yes.

Dr. Debra Greig: Yes.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I think now the "but" of implementing how it can all work to benefit better comes into play. I'm going to ask if some of these things would work.

One of the big issues.... I want to point out what my colleague from the NDP said. It is important to recognize that we wouldn't be in this position had it not been for colonialization. I want to take a moment to recognize that we're here because of that. We're here now, so what are we going to do now? I want to be on the record as recognizing that.

"For indigenous, by indigenous" is very much a Conservative mandate. When I saw this chamber of commerce table.... All of a sudden, by the end of it, they had come up with amazing solutions. I'm a big believer in incentivization. What about incentivizing—

The Chair: You ran out of time. I'm sorry about that.

We're going to now go to Anita for five minutes.

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

I really want to thank our witnesses today for the very enlightening and also some very powerful recommendations that you've provided us.

I'd like to delve a bit into what I'm, in my mind, starting to hear, which is really about impunity. It goes back to some of the things that you've said. Ms. Varley, you used a term that was really quite alarming: "accepted collateral damage". Indigenous women and girls are accepted collateral damage.

Ms. Redsky, you described the stereotypes and this assumption that indigenous women will do anything for money. There was the cruising that Ms. Varley referred to. Ms. Greig, there's this notion—and it's interesting you used the word "apathy"—that there's a disempowerment and indigenous women are in a state of apathy. It is really hard, as legislators, to try to develop programming or funding models that can address those kinds of very deeply entrenched, historic, colonial and societal notions that, in many cases, are probably even unconscious. They're perpetuated and they're internalized, but they're also perpetuated when women are treated as objects and objectified.

There's a lot of money in the budget. In the last budget, there was something like \$860 million for safety in indigenous communities. We've got money in this budget, with \$500-and-some million to fight gender-based violence, yet what I'm hearing from you is that resources aren't there or when resources are there, they are not being co-managed and developed with the input of the women who are impacted.

Can you give us advice? What is it that we can do, particularly as a committee making recommendations, that will allow us as legislators and the government to provide the resources that could then be used to address this overwhelming impunity with which the transient men and others who you're talking about are getting away with these things?

I'd like each of you to answer, but I'll start with Ms. Redsky.

Ms. Diane Redsky: First, the solutions around... Everything that was done throughout the national inquiry—looking at the pathways, as well as the principles of change—you really need to read in and look through that lens, because it is a holistic, interconnected approach that will no doubt change things.

That is critically important, and it could be a policy decision by this government. If you're funding indigenous-led initiatives, fund the indigenous-led organizations that go with those indigenous-led initiatives. All too often, it is not indigenous organizations receiving the funding to help us, so that only goes halfway.

The solutions have always been there. They just need the opportunity to be supported to help realize those initiatives.

• (1715)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you. I heard your earlier comment about long-term funding as well.

Ms. Varley, go ahead, please.

Ms. Leslie Varley: I agree with what Diane has said.

I would just emphasize providing resources to indigenous women and girls and letting us decide how we're going to use that funding to safeguard ourselves, support ourselves and provide the right services for us. That's going to look different from province to province and community to community.

It's really important. The whole one-size-fits-all approach to violence against women nationwide isn't going to be effective for us. We need to work within our own cultures in our own communities to understand what it's going to look like for us and how we're going to support ourselves.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you.

I'm thinking on the impunity side as well about what we'd do to make sure that people are held accountable. I don't know, Ms. Greig, if you wanted to weigh in on this issue.

Dr. Debra Greig: I agree with what the two previous witnesses have said, totally. As far as impunity goes, the resource developers have to have commitments to be invested in the communities. The resource developers have to be held accountable for the fallout of the resource development wherever they go, constantly, and it has to be regulated, it has to be implemented and there are sanctions that have to be done.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm just going to let you know that the bells are now ringing. We are almost through the fourth round. If we wish to finish it off, I would need consent from the committee to continue with our fourth round so that we can do that. The fourth round right now is scheduled to be 15 more minutes. I would need approval from everybody to continue with that.

Okay. Seeing no nays, we're going to continue with this round of questioning.

I'm now going to pass the floor over to Sylvie, then to Leah and then to Michelle. Then there is one more round for the Liberals for five minutes.

Sylvie, you have two and a half minutes. Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I am addressing the witnesses.

You talked about the industries that develop the resources in their area. I would like to know if they should not also have a duty to put in place internal and external measures to counteract acts of violence.

Are there things that are being done or should be done about this?

[*English*]

Ms. Leslie Varley: I can begin.

Yes, I think we need to put measures in place any time that we're going into any resource development or extraction. Somebody mentioned incentivizing. We can incentivize these industries by making them put 10% up front, and they get it back if they clean up the environment and don't abuse any indigenous women and girls. That would be a great incentive, I think, and we would see some immediate change in behaviour.

Dr. Debra Greig: I agree with that statement totally.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: There is a problem of access to resources to support women victims of violence, particularly because many indigenous communities are remote or in rural areas.

What do you think the needs of these communities are?

[*English*]

Ms. Ninu Kang: I believe Leslie spoke to some of these earlier.

Leslie, you spoke to housing. You spoke to transportation. I don't know whether you want to speak to some of the rural pieces in addition to that.

• (1720)

Ms. Leslie Varley: Yes, for sure.

In our rural northwestern and northeastern communities we really find it hard to hire professionals—anybody who has a social work or psychology designation. Also, are those really effective for working with indigenous families? That's something we're trying to do—to develop that capacity—but we don't have a whole lot. We don't have a history of capacity-sustained funding in order for us to develop this expertise over time. It's something that we definitely need to start working on.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

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

Leah, you have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just to correct the record, there was zero additional funding provided in this budget for MMIWG2S.

I have a question for all of the panellists. Would you say it's a false choice to force indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people to have to choose between economic reconciliation and safety from violence and exploitation? Yes or no, Madam Redsky.

Ms. Diane Redsky: I'm sorry, I want to make sure I understand the question.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Is it a false choice, like it's not really a choice to say you either choose your safety or economic reconciliation?

Ms. Diane Redsky: Right.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Is that yes or no?

Ms. Diane Redsky: Yes.

Ms. Leslie Varley: Yes.

Ms. Ninu Kang: Yes.

Dr. Debra Greig: Yes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Okay.

Just moving forward, Madam Kang, based on your organization's more than bystander initiative for resource industry workplaces, could you please expand on how programs engage industry workers, working with industry workers to stand against violence.

Ms. Ninu Kang: When we think about engaging men through "Be More than a Bystander", we're really targeting leaders. What we're really doing is asking them and challenging them on having policies in place that are going to hold their employees to account and having procedures in place to be able to properly investigate when complaints come forward. Furthermore, we've taken it beyond looking at it just from a gender lens and looking at it as violence against women. We do see the intersections with the discrimination and the racism that also happen for indigenous workers as well as other marginalized workers.

"Be More than a Bystander" is a simple program that is to stand up...but when we speak to leaders, what we really look at is if there is a will in that leadership to create a change. If there isn't a will, if we don't see that leadership is ready, or they're just bringing us in because there have been some incidents that have happened and they want to do this as a PR exercise, we do not go in and work with those corporations.

The Chair: Thanks very much.

I'm looking at the time. I'm going to reduce your time down to four minutes.

Michelle, you have four minutes.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

I'm curious to know if all four witnesses have read the book *If I Go Missing* and would recommend it. I can see it as maybe an age-appropriate educational piece when I look at Diane.

You work with youth development, as do Debra and Leslie.

Leslie, are you familiar with this book *If I Go Missing*?

Ms. Leslie Varley: I am familiar with it; I haven't read it.

Ms. Ninu Kang: I have not read it.

Ms. Diane Redsky: I'm not familiar with the book, but I'm certainly familiar with the phrase. Many indigenous women reflect on that, including myself.

Dr. Debra Greig: I also have not read the book, but I'm familiar with it.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I would love everyone on this committee and witnesses today to do that.

In terms of solutions for this, I'd love to get to the crux of this. One of the things that came up was transportation and having standards for these companies.

Diane, would you be open to incentivizing these companies to reinvest into the community, say into transportation?

• (1725)

Ms. Diane Redsky: I think it should be part of their corporate social responsibility to make those investments, given that they profit off whatever industry they're doing. I would have liked to see them do it on their own, but in lieu of that, we need to figure out how to help them get there. I don't think incentivizing is a hundred per cent the way to go because it would be motivated for the wrong reasons. I'd like to think that they could be motivated for the right reasons, because they really, genuinely care about the safety and protection of indigenous women and girls.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Okay.

To go back to my point about "for indigenous, by indigenous", Debra, with regard to bringing in indigenous women in particular, offering them a seat at the table when resource development is happening in a community, and perhaps having jobs or something available for them, do you think that would work?

Dr. Debra Greig: Yes. It would be a step in the right direction.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Did you want to expand on what building relationships would look like, if you were in charge, between the resource development and the indigenous communities, and women in particular?

Dr. Debra Greig: I think for all the indigenous communities, if they have women's groups, those women's groups should be informed that this is going to take place, and they should then be able to speak to who should be sitting at that table. I think in the rural communities especially there are indigenous organizations. Many of them are for women. All of those women's groups should be deciding amongst themselves who should sit at the table.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you very much.

Overall, is there a recommendation you would like that?

Diane, I know that you said there were not specific stats, and that it was just basically the corporations that were coming through. Do you think it would be valuable to invest, from the government, in the stats on men who are transient who abuse indigenous women?

The Chair: We have negative five seconds to answer this, so if we could get yeses and nos, that would be great.

Ms. Diane Redsky: No.

Ms. Ninu Kang: I don't think there's value in putting money into that. We know; we already have that data.

Ms. Leslie Varley: No.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm now going to turn it over to Sonia Sidhu.

You have the floor for four minutes.

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

Thank you to all the witnesses. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for the work you are doing in the community.

You have spoken about the lack of services in remote communities, including virtual services, as many people who need services do not have access to a computer. What recommendation do you have on how the government can facilitate connecting residents in the community? Which programs are you recommending, and what kinds of services?

That's for Ms. Greig, and then perhaps Ms. Redsky can answer.

Dr. Debra Greig: Thank you.

Yes, the rural communities are very hard up as far as technology is concerned. Oftentimes, the Internet systems don't work anyway. It's really hard. I think the government needs to invest in getting credentialed professionals made available who can come to these communities and provide services to the communities. The support staff in the communities should also be trained so that they can be made available to support people who are looking for development in all the areas we're addressing here.

As well, the government needs to make those funds permanent—not just project funds.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Go ahead, Madam Redsky.

Ms. Diane Redsky: Yes. All of that, and I would also say that what is really important is equitable funding, time and time again. Winnipeg is in the south, so my knowledge is limited, but our northern friends constantly share about the inequality of funding. What it costs to run a program in Winnipeg is not the same as what it costs in northern Manitoba or anywhere in the north.

We really need to ensure that there is an equality lens placed on funding and on the resources going into the north. I think we just got used to not doing that. We need to really shift to looking at equitable funding models so that people have enough resources to do the work.

• (1730)

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Thank you.

Mental health is also a very important issue. Often remote and virtual tools are utilized for some individuals. How can we provide quality mental health services to the more remote and northern areas? Do you have specific programs?

Ms. Diane Redsky: Everywhere you go across the country, everybody will have their own strengths and solutions on what works within their community. My go-to is always to look for the women and the community. You start there and expand from that point, because they're the ones who are going to know what's going on and what the solutions are, and they really need to be supported to facilitate those solutions.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Ms. Greig, do you want to add to that?

Dr. Debra Greig: Indigenous Services Canada does fund mental health services all across the north. In the Yukon, there are also non-insured health benefits. There's a process to get involved. It's a bit tedious, but it does provide resources, and there are servers for remote areas, which is very important. All of that is a valuable resource. It's not enough, but it's a valuable resource to get things moving in the right direction, because everybody, especially in the rural communities, needs to hear that they are being supported somehow. The treatment programs need to be further funded so that the people can get the addictions treatments they need.

The Chair: Sonia, you can do a 10-second round.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: The reason I'm asking that is there are federal programs and tools like Wellness Together, but we know we have to first listen to the grassroots solution.

In your opinion, can the virtual care model be utilized in remote and northern areas?

The Chair: Sonia, I love the question, but we're already past time. I will leave that for everybody to think about. If there is an answer to that, please write to our clerk.

Thank you so much, and thanks, everybody, for staying on. I hope that this new format has worked well for everybody.

On behalf of the status of women committee, I'd really like to thank our witnesses for today.

We will see you all back on Friday afternoon.

We are adjourned for today.

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