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—
Chair

Mr. Colin Mayes

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• (1110)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC)): I'd like to open this meeting of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development of Tuesday, May 15, 2007.

Committee members, you have the orders of the day before you. Today we're going to continue our review of Bill C-44, An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act.

Today the witnesses who will be appearing are, from the Ontario Native Women's Association, Dawn Harvard, president, board of directors; and from the University College of the North, Doris Young, adviser to the president, and Esther Sanderson, researcher, Aboriginal Language Institute.

Welcome to the witnesses.

The chair would invite each of the witnesses to make a 10-minute presentation, and then we'll move into question time.

To begin, we can start with Madam Harvard, please. Are you ready?

Ms. Dawn Harvard (President, Board of Directors, Ontario Native Women's Association): I am.

The Chair: Mr. Lemay.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): I think that there is a problem with the translation.

[English]

The Chair: Is there a problem with the...?

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Yes. The mike was not on. The problem is fixed now.

Oh, what we do for our country!

[English]

The Chair: Madam Harvard, if you would, please continue.

Ms. Dawn Harvard: I want to apologize right off the bat. I have a terrible case of laryngitis and I've been dragged from my sickbed to come here today. That's how committed I am, but I apologize if I'm not as clear as I could otherwise be.

The Chair: Thank you for your dedication.

Ms. Dawn Harvard: We do our best.

I wanted to briefly start off by letting you know that the Ontario Native Women's Association began back in 1971. This date was actually very historic. If we look back at that era, that was the particular timeframe when aboriginal women across the country were working to end the discrimination against aboriginal women under the Indian Act when they married a non-aboriginal man and were cast out of their communities. That's how a lot of our associations came to be, as those women came together.

Here we are, many years later, still fighting discrimination specifically based on gender, and this is why we are here today.

The Ontario Native Women's Association exists to give voice to the aboriginal women in Ontario. We're located in Thunder Bay and have at least 80 different local chapters throughout the province of Ontario. Each chapter has its own local membership and autonomy, so we have a very wide distribution of perspectives from aboriginal women across Ontario. Over the course of the year, we estimate that we provide services and programs to 10,000 aboriginal families—children, women.

As I'm sure everybody here is well aware, the Human Rights Act created back in 1977 was put in place at a time when the question of those women who were cast out of their communities was still up in the air. My own mother, in fact, was Jeanette Corbiere-Lavell, who was the first woman to challenge the Government of Canada on the discrimination against her, specifically based on gender, because she lost her status when she married my father, a non-aboriginal man.

She eventually lost at the Supreme Court, and the Human Rights Act came into place, and then eventually we all know that Sandra Lovelace took it to the United Nations, and things were changed with Bill C-31.

Unfortunately, what a lot of people don't realize is that through Bill C-31, these women were taken back to their communities, but they were not restored to their original status. They were returned as reinstates, which is a second-class position. They have fewer rights and less ability to pass status—the rights of their heritage—on to their children and their grandchildren.

In my own family, I have one daughter who's a full status Indian and another who's completely non-aboriginal, although these are both my own birth children—simply because of the discrimination, because of the way these women were put back into place in second-class positions, simply because of their gender.

I give you all of this background because this is a very important example of why we need to look at removing section 67 and why people see it often as a women's issue. Even though it affects both genders equally, discrimination based on gender is primarily a problem for women. Aboriginal women specifically face discrimination based on both race and gender, so they have double barriers when trying to provide for their families, trying to give their communities and their children the quality of life they deserve.

The poor translator—I realize I've completely gone off what I told her I was going to say.

Before we can move forward, we must understand our past in order to understand our present situation as aboriginal citizens.

My mother always said it was quite a trick to have gone into the church an Indian girl and come out a white woman. She said, "That place had real power back in those days."

Again, this discrimination continues. In families like mine, we are still faced with these divisions under our own roof. How do we look at one child and say, "You are a member of our community", and look at her sister and say, "You're not"? This is the kind of division that it's creating.

Unfortunately, oftentimes when questions of gender discrimination come up, there's a lot of fear-mongering in our communities; that if we recognize human rights.... I've heard people say, "We will have some man from Iran come, and they will be taking over the reserves if they have matrimonial property rights. We will have men coming in and taking over our communities."

I don't think this is the right perspective. Aboriginal women, aboriginal people are human. We deserve human rights.

But our position with Bill C-44 is that we need to be very careful about the process, about looking at the long-term consequences of what is going to happen.

Like Bill C-31, which everyone thought was a wonderful solution, many women were returned to their communities, but in the long run, it's endangering our nationhood because it doesn't guarantee the ability to transfer status to our children past the second generation. So now we are coming into situations where a lot of our communities are declining in membership because of this. We need to be careful.

We support this in principle. But we want to make sure there's an appropriate consultative process to ensure that those visions we have not yet been able to think of, those consequences and those potential problems, are well thought through so we protect our communities, our land base, and our rights while ensuring that aboriginal people are no less human than any other citizen of this country.

Thank you.

• (1115)

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam Young.

Ms. Doris Young (Advisor to the President, University College of the North): Good day, everybody.

[*Witness speaks in Cree*] I'm saying greetings to all of you in my language, which is Cree.

My name is Doris Young. I'm here to talk about this very important section of Bill C-67. I am a first nations woman and a member of the Women's Advisory Council of Manitoba; of the Keewatinook Ininew Okimowin, or MKO; and the Opaskwayak Cree Nation Women's Council, which is my community. I understand the MKO was here last week speaking to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development about this issue. I work at the University College of the North, in The Pas, Manitoba, as adviser to the president, and I live on the Opaskwayak Cree Nation.

First of all, I want to say that the government's plan to repeal immediately this section 67 without a commitment to ensure that there is adequate consultation and engagement of first nations is something that we cannot support, because if it's repealed without proper consultation it impacts on the lives of first nations communities, and in particular, native women. It will impact us in a negative way more than it would benefit us.

We believe, as northern first nations women, in our right to be protected against discrimination, and we also support the idea of empowerment, which is what this bill is designed to do. But empowerment really means to us the ability to make decisions on relevant information, which we don't have. We haven't received any information, there was no consultation with first nations women in Manitoba, and no information has been provided to us about this bill. We are therefore not able to make an informed decision about it, and that's why we can't support it.

I want to say a little bit about this colonization process and the residential school experience, which I myself have been affected by, and we've been personally harmed by both of these—first of all, colonization, and then residential schools. These laws that were passed were not really ours, but nevertheless we were forced to accept them, and it's caused us a lot of misery. Possibly this section 67 will have the same consequences if no consultation is made and no input on our behalf is given to the government about the effects.

We do believe that discrimination should not be occurring to native women, and neither violence nor abuse, because it harms our families and it harms our communities. We are dedicated to our families and we know collectively what is good for them and for our communities. We have the strength, courage, and of course the resilience to continue fighting for our place in society and to plan for the enjoyment of a good future for our children and our communities. This is why this issue is so very important for us.

One of the issues that need addressing is that it's really imperative that measures are in place so that our collective and human rights are protected, and they include our customs, our practices, and our languages. There must be assurance that our ability to create our own human rights laws and decision-making bodies is enhanced, not weakened. There must be provisions in place to ensure that first nations women are meaningfully engaged in the development and implementation of first-nations-driven human rights mechanisms, and there must be adequate resources available to us to be involved in this process.

Twenty-two years ago, in 1985, when Bill C-31 was passed, we did not have the knowledge of or insight into its impact on our future generations. We were so happy that at last the prospect of discrimination would end. Of course it didn't happen.

• (1120)

Now 22 years later, in 2007, the Canadian government is imposing a bill, Bill C-44, that is designed to empower first nations people when seeking redress against discrimination. Those of us living and working on first nations territories are not permitted to seek redress under section 67 of the Human Rights Act. We have no protection against discrimination under the Indian Act.

Bill C-44 is theoretically designed to end that situation. Once again, when we heard that, we were hopeful, but we're really more cautious about this today because of the unintended consequences that resulted from Bill C-31.

The intent to end discrimination is a sound idea, but there's no process in place right now to assess the results of repealing section 67. Native women are the ones who will most likely feel the results. We're the backbone of our communities; we're the daughters, the mothers, and the grandmothers. Whatever decisions are made impacting our community, it's always the women who bear the greatest amount of work in maintaining familial kinship and communal systems.

As noted earlier, we have experience stemming from Bill C-31 and are now beginning to feel its impact. Today we are fearful of its consequences because of our inability to continue to pass on our legal rights to future generations. You heard Dawn mentioning some of the direct impacts on her family. This inability to pass on our rights has a domino effect on the legal and political future of all first nations and its impact on our governments, our lands, our housing, our education, and our other rights. We don't want to enter into another situation that will jeopardize us.

There's another issue that's related to discrimination and first nations women living on first nations territories, and that's accessing protection against discrimination through the Canadian human rights legislation. We can say at this time that this present legislation does not serve us well. It's not a good option for a number of reasons.

It doesn't provide us with adequate due process.

The problem is in the way the tribunal currently operates. Decisions made by the tribunal take too long. It's too cumbersome, too expensive, and the tribunal process will be removed from first nations areas.

The tribunal decisions that are made are not made by first nations and generally are not related to relationship building, which is really an important value for first nations. This results in more alienation, resentment, and very often does irreparable damage to families and the kinship system.

The process is also not understood by first nations women on the reserve, and therefore they'll likely not use the Canadian human rights legislation.

That's another fundamental injustice that needs examination, the fact that there is no safe place for us to get redress from any government. For example, Bill C-31 and the Canadian human rights legislation: first nations women sought redress, and the result did not end discrimination, as stated earlier. On first nations territories, discriminatory practices are prevalent against women in areas such as housing, education, and the right to remain in the family home when a relationship breaks down or when the death of a spouse occurs. In this particular area, lack of adequate community resources often perpetuates these unfair situations.

In spite of all these obstacles, first nations women continue to strive to be involved in the system so we will be able to maintain healthy communities and a balance and justice for all of us.

• (1125)

We need education, resources, and time. We need to educate ourselves about this issue so that we can make informed decisions. We need resources in order to educate ourselves and to be able to meet. We need time to consult with first nations women on the reserves so that their human rights are protected and the discrimination is properly addressed.

Given the opportunity, we could be involved in developing first nations human rights legislation that would help resolve discrimination in our communities. We believe that this process would give us the opportunity to reflect our time-honoured values and beliefs in fairness and justice. Also, this process would not compromise first nations jurisdiction.

Finally, first nations women must be part of this important process. We must be part of the solution to end discrimination.

[Witness speaks in her native language]

I'm saying thank you for the opportunity to come and speak to you on my relations.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Sanderson.

Ms. Esther Sanderson (Researcher, Aboriginal Language Institute, University College of the North): Good morning. My name is Esther Sanderson. I'm from the Opaskwayak Cree Nation as well, and we're sisters. The issues that have faced both of us have been tragic in a lot of cases, but I want to say a little bit about the language with the Canadian human rights.

We come from Cree territory, and most of the people in the northern part of Manitoba still speak Cree, an aboriginal language. In terms of having people understand what is presented before them, the laws and the legalities that come into our communities are often not understood. So the process in itself with the Canadian Human Rights Act and section 67, or Bill C-44, are not understood simply because of the language difference. In terms of resources we would need, we would like translation services in order for our people to understand what is before them, so that they will also be able to make informed decisions.

There are a lot of words in the English language that the Cree language does not have—for instance, the word “guilty”. We have no word in our Cree language for guilty. So how do we explain those kinds of concepts and those kinds of words to our people? So it's a matter of translation that's really important to us, and to get the concepts right. Those are the kinds of services that we will require.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move into questions now.

Madame Karetak-Lindell.

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much for your presentation. I totally understand where you're coming from, because in my language we don't have a word for “guilty” either. That's one of the ways that we're trying to make people understand that you have to do due process and have respect for the people whose lives are going to be impacted by legislation.

Our party certainly feels that in order for the country to have good legislation we have to also look at the consequences of the legislation before we put it into law, to find out what will be the results of this, so that we can help people, whether in capacity building or just in the understanding of how to apply the law. And that way, a law that is passed will have an easier time afterward—not just “rush it and then see what all blows up, and if they do, well, we'll try to deal with it after”, which is the way I think they're trying to do this legislation.

Personally, I was very insulted yesterday in the House of Commons at question period, when we were being accused, in our committee, of delay tactics, when really what we're trying to do here is hear from the people who are going to be impacted by the legislation, especially when there is only six months for implementation in the communities. I can tell you right now that if that was the legislation and I was asked to explain it to my constituents in six months, it would not work. And I can say right now that my community is smaller than yours, so it's going to be that much harder.

We've been fighting for a longer implementation period, we've been fighting for resources, so that people can better understand, but most of all we've been fighting for consultation. Everyone around here agrees that in principle, section 67 needs to be repealed. It's the process that we're upset about. And for us to be accused, as a committee, of delay tactics and not allowing human rights to be practised in the communities is very insulting to me and, I'm sure, to the other members here.

My question then is in two parts. Am I right to say that you both agree that section 67 has to be repealed but that we have to go about a better way of consulting with the people? And in that, would you then include that there should be an interpretive clause in the legislation?

I am, on behalf of first nations, very worried about individual rights versus collective rights. Could you comment on that one particular aspect of it?

Thank you.

• (1130)

Ms. Esther Sanderson: Who would you like to answer first?

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell: Either one. Both of you, if I have time.

Ms. Doris Young: The repealing of section 67 has to be done in consultation with the people. For me, and for the first nations women, we think that where the legislation really belongs is with first nations. We have the ability to develop a human rights legislation for first nations. I think that's where we would make the most important strides, because the values of the people would be recognized in that human rights legislation of first nations people. I'm not sure how it would affect the interpretive clause, if that's the process that would be used.

Ms. Dawn Harvard: I like the way you ask questions; it's like my mother does. She tells me what to say when she asks the question. She knows the answer.

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell: I'm a mother.

Ms. Dawn Harvard: It makes my job easier.

That said, of course we have been fighting for and demanding the repeal of section 67 for a great many years. We are now faced with criticism that now that it's happening we're dragging our heels.

That certainly isn't the case. As we said, this has gone on for a great many years, and we cannot rush headlong into this without considering the unforeseen consequences, and without an appropriate consultative process, because unfortunately that will just lead to mass rejection in the first nations communities of something....

That would be such a shame. We have such an opportunity here to do the right thing and to make the difference. To have it thrown out because of process would be a real travesty. So we would certainly agree that we need to see....

We had recommendations that I hadn't gotten to because my voice gave out, but we recommended also that effective dialogue needs to take place between the governments and the aboriginal community before the implementation of the repeal of section 67.

When we say “effective”, that means with appropriate resources, appropriate information, adequate education at the community level, so that people can really understand what they're being consulted on.

Just to give an example, with the recent MRP consultations, many women were very concerned, because they were brought in and were asked to give an opinion on what the best solution would be, when they were not lawyers. They were community women who had maybe experienced violence. Many lawyers don't even have the full understanding and were therefore not in a position to give an informed decision.

This is the fear: that we do not want to rush into that same situation. We need to ensure that we have adequate community-level education and understanding of what we're talking about, what the consequences could be, what possible solutions look like. That interpretative clause is certainly a part of this.

We also recommended that during the repeal process there be an 18- to 30-month transitional period for the first nations.

The concept of first nations originally was not meant to mean that Wikwemikong and Sheguiandah or each little reserve was not a nation. We were the Ojibway Nation, we were the Anishinabe Nation, and my family belongs to several of those specific communities. We need to have some kind of overarching legislation to ensure consistency, because our members often go from community to community, and we cannot act as if each little small band.... Until some day when perhaps we achieve sovereignty and are able to make those kinds of decisions and put those kinds of policies in place, we need to ensure that when we're protecting the most vulnerable citizens of our nation, the women and the children, we have that consistency, so that they can have that understanding regardless of which specific community they choose to live in at any given time within our nation.

• (1135)

The Chair: Mr. Lemay.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Ladies, thank you for being here. It is important that you make your presence felt at this committee because, believe it or not, hearing from you three today is consultation in the government's eyes. My definition of consultation with aboriginal people is not the same as the government's. I do not know if you have the same definition as the government, but it sees you as being among those with whom it has consulted, and so the bill should be passed and put into effect.

I agree with my colleague when she says that there are many things we do not understand. You are aboriginal women living in aboriginal communities. You talked about a consultation process. We are told that this section ought to have been repealed 30 years ago, and that we should be looking at how the act is working.

What would you say if the bill were to be passed tomorrow but not put into effect for about 36 months? It took three years to put section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms into effect, so we can certainly take three years to allow everyone to get ready. What does a genuine consultation process mean for aboriginal women who are experiencing real discrimination in a number of communities?

Any one of you can respond, or all three. Since this is my only question, you can take the rest of my time for your answers.

• (1140)

[English]

Ms. Doris Young: Thank you for your very important answer about consultation.

Of course, the definition of consultation means different things to different people. I don't know if anybody's defined consultation, and what that means, in a very broad way. I think that's part of the problem when we talk about consultation, particularly with aboriginal people, because we have a different way of thinking what that means and the government has a different way of looking at it as well.

I'd like to speak a little bit about what consultation took place in my community in northern Manitoba when we were making a new program called the aboriginal midwifery program, which is a four-year degree program now at the University College of the North.

I was the consultation coordinator of this program. That whole process took about 10 years, because the women said what they wanted in terms of bringing birth back to our communities, making sure life starts there again and not in a hospital, in a foreign place. That issue of midwifery back in our communities lay dormant for about four or five years, and then we got a number of dollars about three years ago to start up that process again. So it became a really good issue for us to become involved in.

We had large meetings with northern women, to begin with, and they said the very same things as they had said a number of years ago about wanting birth in our communities, and they defined what that meant to us. We had small meetings in the communities because we wanted to involve the smaller communities and the women in those communities, particularly the elders. We used translation services, which would be the Cree language, and then when we were in the Island Lake area, which is the Oji-Cree, we used that Cree language with the elders. It was a very slow process, but it was a very worthwhile one.

We would write what they said to us, and then we would take it back to the communities and ask them if this was what they wanted, if that was the meaning of our consultation. Mainly because we understood the language—at least I did, and maybe a couple of others who worked on this process understood that language—we were able to communicate more quickly than if we just had translators. And then we went back to the bigger community again to say what we were going to develop, in terms of the consultations we'd had.

All in all, it took three years to get that program. That is a consultation process that I was most happy with, because we were able to understand what the people in the community wanted, the elders were involved in it, and we had a very good process. That's just an example.

Is that helpful to you on what consultation means to us?

The Chair: We don't have time for the answer to that question, unfortunately.

I'd like to mention, Madam Crowder, before you start, that Sharon McIvor is not able to be here, so our meeting is likely going to be a little shorter than usual, just so you're aware of that.

Madam Crowder, please.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses for coming before us today.

I'm going to give Ms. Harvard a chance to answer the consultation process, but I'm going to couch it in a framework.

I thank Ms. Harvard for speaking about the personal impacts of Bill C-31, section 6.2, because I think that's a really good example of how concerned many women and men are who have come before the committee to talk about unanticipated consequences. When we're talking about consultation, what we've been hearing from people, almost without exception, is that if you are going to develop legislation that is going to impact on our lives and our communities, you absolutely must include us in developing that legislation. You cannot unilaterally impose legislation upon us and then ask us to live with the consequences.

I think our struggle, in part, at the committee has been that we don't all come from the same understanding around what consultation means and how absolutely essential it is for nations to be included.

Ms. Harvard, I wonder if you want to pick up on the consultation piece from there. And that's the only question I'm going to ask.

• (1145)

Ms. Dawn Harvard: Actually, I appreciate the opportunity, because it's very easy to tell you what the consultative process is not.

It is not going out and asking the chiefs, even the regional chiefs or even, with all due respect, President Jacobs or any other president of our PTMAs. It needs to be grassroots, community level. Yes, that's messy, and yes, it takes a long time, but if we look again back to the MRP consultation process and look at the months, verging on a year, that it took to decide on the budget, on how it was going to happen, on how to decide budget line items, certainly we can take that kind of time to be in the communities getting the voices of the actual community members, and that's something that has not been happening.

I can say this because I'm in this position for love, not money. I'm not going to go out of here worried that I'm not going to have my paycheque; I have to support myself some other way. But really, I am not held accountable to any one government position or policy out of fear about funding. This is what our women at the community level have said. Our community members say it needs to be in the communities. If we need interpretation, then we need interpretation from legal language into everyday language and from everyday language into our native languages, and we can certainly be partners in facilitating that process, but we don't ever want to be seen....

And I would fear being seen as the consulted person in this process. It did strike great fear in my heart when somebody mentioned that this was considered consultation and my name is going to be on rubber-stamping something, so I wanted to make it very clear that I would never have the audacity to say that I speak for all of those members, only that I want to be here with the opportunity to request their desire to use their own voice to speak for themselves where they are comfortable to come out, in their communities. And it's about dialogue, not a monologue. It's not picking option A or B; it's about dialogue, communication going both ways so that people can hear.

The Chair: You still have three minutes.

Ms. Esther Sanderson: Thank you.

I also believe that consultation ought to be from the community level, and that if we don't have that consultation process at the community level, to repeat what was said earlier, our people aren't going to use that. Bill C-44 is supposed to protect us, but right now we live in discrimination. In almost everything we do, because of the Indian Act and, right now, section 67 the way it stands, human rights do not protect us, and they haven't for a long time. I think that women are feeling that to wait for another three years, if it takes that long for us to get it right this time, then they are willing to do that, but they are not willing to jump into something that is not ours, that we do not understand. And that's a message that was given to us by the women to bring here.

Thank you.

• (1150)

The Chair: Okay.

Are you finished, Ms. Crowder?

Ms. Jean Crowder: I think it's a really important message that women and men by and large support the repeal of section 67, but it is so important that community members are involved at the community level, that they have an opportunity to discuss the information that's before them, that they have an opportunity to talk about what would work and what wouldn't work, and they absolutely need to have the information in their own language. And that will not happen in a short period of time. It just won't.

The Chair: Turning to the government side, Mr. Albrecht.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to each of you for appearing here today. You've certainly outlined for me some very important issues that we as a committee need to consider. While this is not considered full consultation, I would be disappointed if the government didn't at least take into consideration the people who've appeared before this committee.

You've also pointed out some of the barriers that aboriginal women face. I think the one that you mentioned, Ms. Harvard, about the double barrier of race and gender is particularly pertinent, and also the negative impact of previous legislative changes. You mentioned Bill C-31, with the second-class citizen issue. Certainly that is a very real issue that we should all be concerned about.

But I think we need to realize that in spite of all of the attempts to create a perfect bill, that probably will never happen. I think we need to remember that this bill does include a clause that mandates a review within five years, and it doesn't have to wait five years if there are unintended negative consequences that appear. I'm sure we're all eager to address those.

Both of you and other previous witnesses have also mentioned the need for more consultation on Bill C-44, and while I'm not in a position to say whether that should go on for another six months or six weeks, I do think we need to remember that this is not the first attempt to repeat section 67.

In 1992, Bill C-108 died when Parliament was prorogued; and in 1999, another attempt, by the Canadian Human Rights Commission in its report, recommending that section 67 be removed. In 2002, there was Bill C-7, another attempt; and in 2005, Bill S-45. In 2005 again, the Canadian Human Rights Commission, in its report, *A Matter of Rights*, strongly recommended the repeal. And then again, just most recently, in March 2006, the United Nations commission criticized Canada for our failure to repeal section 67.

In light of all those previous attempts, my question is this: have you or any of your groups taken any steps over the years to inform your people, first nations women especially, about the potential impact of not Bill C-44—admittedly, that wasn't there yet—but the potential impact of the repeal of section 67? Has there been any dialogue? I would have thought there may be some dialogue, and I'm sure there has been.

I'd like you to outline that.

Ms. Dawn Harvard: Actually, this is a fabulous question, and I would like to assure you, absolutely, every given opportunity I have. But as I mentioned, even though we are a provincial organization overseeing services to over 10,000 aboriginal people, I am a volunteer, and we do not have the funded capacity to roll out the kind of consultation, the kind of education that we're talking about really needing to be here.

So certainly, and as I mentioned earlier, this is something we have been fighting for, here and abroad, for many years. It certainly isn't going to be new. Again, with each legislation, each wording, there are consequences. Each time it comes out, we do need to understand what the nature of the beast is this time, to make sure we're all on the same page.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Thank you.

Ms. Young.

Ms. Doris Young: Thank you for that very important question as well.

The women in northern Manitoba have always been interested in taking an active part in every opportunity we can have to look at how to end discrimination and how we can be involved in that process.

These particular bills that you just mentioned, we haven't really looked at as Bill C-108, or Bill C-99, or Bill C-7, or Bill C-5, or Bill C-45. What we do look at in our communities are the ways in which we can be involved in ending discrimination, not only for us but for our children. So we try our very best. We're a dispersed community, meaning that we live in a very large territory, so our consultation is quite difficult when we don't have the funding capacity to do as much work as we would like to do.

But of course we do. We are involved in the process whenever we can. That's what women do.

• (1155)

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Thanks.

I did have a chance to just briefly browse through both of your websites, and I guess I would have thought that maybe there would be some beginning consultation or opportunity. I know that not everyone has access to the web, so I'm not implying that would be adequate consultation, but could that be one of the resources we could use to begin to get feedback on an issue like this, through your websites?

Ms. Esther Sanderson: Can I answer that?

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Sure.

Ms. Esther Sanderson: Thank you for the question.

I'm often amused at the thought that in the north we have access to high-speed Internet.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: I realize you wouldn't all have it.

Ms. Esther Sanderson: There are portions of my community where we still have dial-up, and that's not really truly far north according to the other northerners.

It is a good way for those people who are able to use the Internet. The other drawback would be that a lot of people don't know how; they're not computer literate. So that would be another area that we might need to look at in terms of getting information out there.

The other big issue is that it comes in English, so therefore it's going to need to be translated again in order for the people to understand it.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: I think that's a point well taken. As I said, not everyone would have access, and probably a very small percentage, but again I think it could be one tool.

I'd like to ask one last question, if I could: have you contacted the Canadian Human Rights Commission to begin a dialogue as to what they could offer you in terms of resources at this point to begin the process?

Ms. Doris Young: No, we haven't.

Ms. Esther Sanderson: I'd like to say that we did have our human rights person in our community who worked for the province. She worked there for about a year. Before I left, I was talking to her, and she said there were hardly any people who ever came there. In any case that they were looking at, she never heard back again from Human Rights as to what was happening. So that's the problem that we face.

The Chair: Mr. Russell.

Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, or almost good afternoon, to each of you.

When the comment was made by my colleague that there have been various attempts to repeal section 67, I think it should be noted that the bill we have in front of us is not the same as other bills that have come before the House and been put to the test. Maybe we should just reflect on why those various attempts have failed in the past. One of them could very well have been that we didn't engage in an appropriate process of consultation and engagement with those who were going to be most affected by various pieces of legislation, in this case a bill that would repeal section 67.

If we were going to honour your voices and your intentions and your aspirations for your community, would any of you have a problem with taking more time and repealing section 67 in an appropriate fashion? Would each of you want to see an appropriate consultation, whatever that is?

We have to remember that the definition of consultation is not only an onus that should be placed upon aboriginal communities, but the government itself has a legal obligation to consult. And it's supposed to come forward with a policy on proper consultation, which we haven't seen yet. So the onus is not only on aboriginal communities to define what proper consultation is; the government has its own obligations as well.

So would you feel comfortable that, if we could, we would take more time to do this properly? Would that be your wish?

• (1200)

Ms. Dawn Harvard: I'd like to respond to that in conjunction with the previous question. While this notion of a website and all of that is a good start, it's not a dialogue; it's one-sided—a good start, but there needs to be interfaced dialogue. But I'm very glad you picked up on the onus of the government to facilitate the consultative process.

To give you an idea of what we do on a day-to-day basis, there's not exactly an opportunity for us, when we are working to help an aboriginal woman standing in a line-up at a shelter at four o'clock to get a spot, as she's standing there with her baby stroller and her baby on her hip, trying to find a roof over her head for tonight, to say, "Oh, and what do you think about Bill C-whatever?" Hence my earlier comment about the initial education process that needs to take place, so that it's not going to be just a polling-of-opinion kind of situation.

But that said, somebody once asked me why I do this, being president, and I said, because I can, because I have the luxury of a roof over my head, I have the luxury of knowing I'm going to eat tonight, and of knowing my children will have clothing, and that

we're safe. That allows me the luxury to entertain ideas and larger concepts, such as the concept of human rights. When you're struggling on a day-to-day basis trying to find a place to sleep and food, those aren't the kinds of things you have the time to deal with.

So that's certainly where our organizations can help, but it definitely needs to be about capacity, because we are already stressed to the limit and going way above and beyond. We rely on hundreds and hundreds of volunteer hours just to make sure our women are safe and fed and have roofs over their heads. I would be very hard-pressed to find more volunteers to implement something like this, when it really is the onus of the government to make sure the membership is well educated, that all of the citizens are well educated, before this is put in place.

Mr. Todd Russell: Ms. Young or Ms. Sanderson.

Ms. Doris Young: I totally agree that there should be appropriate consultation and that time should be given to do it; it should not just be in a rushed fashion. Our people can't provide the proper knowledge to the government about what it is we need when we're asked to rush into this process. Rush in and rush out; that is not the way we do things. I don't think it's the way anybody should do things, especially on legislation or an issue as important as human rights.

Dialogue with a computer is very difficult. Most of our people don't speak the language. The suggestion of working with and through a computer is good for those of us who know how to do it—and sometimes we're not so good at it—but not for the community.

The Chair: Can we move on to the government side? Mr. Storseth, please.

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much for coming forward today. I found this to be, as always, very educational, very interesting to listen to. I find these consultations, or whatever you want to call them, to be very informative.

I want to start out by asking Ms. Harvard a question.

You talked today about how your organization has been fighting for this for many years, and my colleague pointed out the number of attempts the previous government had made to repeal section 67. This has been a topic for several years. It seems a stretch to me to think that in all those attempts and all those years a proper consultative process has never taken place.

Is that what we're saying here today, that with all those attempts there has never been a proper consultative process?

Ms. Esther Sanderson: Not that I know of in our community.

Ms. Dawn Harvard: Not to my knowledge, but I'm a relatively young person.

Ms. Esther Sanderson: We've been around for a while, so we know.

•(1205)

Ms. Doris Young: We've been around as long as Dawn's mother has been around. That is correct.

Mr. Brian Storseth: So then, if you don't mind my asking, what is your vision of a proper consultative process? You must have a vision of what you perceive as being.... And I ask you to be somewhat definitive with it.

We talk about grassroots, but in point of fact, we're talking about a general Canadian population in which 64% actually vote, and 50% of those who don't vote say they aren't learned enough to have an opinion even to vote. So I don't understand how we're going to find this great process where 100% of people who are going to be affected by this legislation are going to get this proper consultation that we've talked about.

Lots of times it is after people have the ability to reach out and utilize these human rights that they become entrenched and they take it upon themselves to learn them.

So I just ask you that question.

And I ask the chair, if you would, to let me know when there's about a minute left.

Ms. Esther Sanderson: Can I be the first to answer that?

Mr. Brian Storseth: Absolutely.

Ms. Esther Sanderson: In the prairie provinces, there are more aboriginal young people than old people. The aboriginal population is fast becoming a major issue within those provinces. If our people do not understand how the Canadian human rights are going to affect them, then it's not going to be a very effective law anywhere within those provinces—and I can speak for Manitoba.

With the consultation process, what I would like to see is that we ask the question of our people: What are human rights to you? What does that mean to you?

It may not even be the same as what's coming down from this area in terms of what human rights mean, but I'm sure there's a meeting place in there. We do not want to be discriminated against because we're women or because we're old or because we're disabled. I know those are principles that we certainly would want within that human rights law, but the rest then is up to the people to define: how are we going to carry this out?

The people in our communities know what they want and how all of this is going to affect them, but no one has ever come to ask us, what is it that you want?

Mr. Brian Storseth: Sorry, could you be brief, Ms. Harvard? I have one more quick point.

Ms. Dawn Harvard: I consider myself a fairly well-educated person. I will have a doctorate in August. It was not until well into my studies that I realized section 67 even existed. Many people do not realize until it affects them personally. So a large portion of our community is that way. You'll never be able to get 100%. That's just a fact. But certainly there has to be somewhere between 100% and nothing.

Again, I point back to the problems with the MRP. We had a consultation, expecting women to come from our communities to one centre—

Mr. Brian Storseth: I don't mean to interrupt. I just want to make my last point.

That's exactly my point. Until these people are actually affected by this legislation...that will be one of the catalysts to get them to become more engaged with it.

I find it rather rich to have the opposition sitting across the way and saying that we're trying to jam this down people's throats after 30 years and they're just wanting to do things properly. If they're going to accuse us of one thing, I think they should own up to the fact that they are trying to delay this process.

Mr. Lemay consistently threatens to bring a motion of suspension toward our witnesses, and I find it rich to have the Liberal opposition point out the fact that their government didn't provide any consultation process over the last 15 years.

Anyway, I'm sure my time is up, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: It is.

Mr. Lévesque, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Ladies, thank you for having made the effort to come here. You really have to love what you are doing to do so. You may say that I am paid very well to love it, but I do it out of love as well.

I remember having heard a prime minister say that you would be consulted in the future and that significant changes to the act would be discussed with you. I think that this is a significant change. Just as we have done with other witnesses, I would like to draw your attention — I do not want to force or pressure you — to the fact that we now have a minority government.

I would like this bill to be passed and to be sensitive to the situation of first nations people. I wonder if you have looked at the changes that could be made to Bill C-44, an application protocol with an interpretation clause, in order that it could go into effect gradually. Other witnesses have mentioned a notwithstanding clause. If you suggest the time necessary for the bill to come into effect, we will see if it is feasible.

I will give you the floor.

•(1210)

[English]

Ms. Doris Young: The question of amendments being made and enforced gradually is the thing that we're against, because we need to let the women know, and they need to let us have a dialogue with them about what this bill is actually supposed to be all about. If it's passed and they have the opportunity to come and speak about it after it's passed, it's not the same. It's not the same, because they're being asked to speak to something that is already in place, and then it's more or less like a rubber stamp.

I don't think that's good consultation.

Ms. Dawn Harvard: I would like to say that nobody has ever yet asked for my opinion on what I think amendments should be, so I am not yet prepared, but I'm positive we have some that we will certainly look at and be able to forward.

On the concept of gradually enforcing human rights, I really struggle with these things, because on the one hand, a fundamental principle that my elders, my grandmother and my grandfather, have always taught me is that we were the original people. We are human beings, and so there really shouldn't, in principle, be any problem with that expectation that we be treated as such, the same as everybody else in Canada. So I think we really do need to just make sure we have those legal minds, those who have the knowledge of those possible consequences, to help guide us through that process of ensuring the safety and protection of those who are vulnerable, because they are the ones who are most in need of the protection of their human rights, and they are the ones who are least likely to be able to come here or to have their voices heard.

The Chair: On the government side, Mr. Bruinooge.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for coming today.

I was happy to hear your presentations. Perhaps, Ms. Harvard, you could talk a bit further about your own family's experiences in relation to, in your own opinion, becoming second-class citizens in your community.

Ms. Dawn Harvard: Actually, I find this very interesting because I do know a lot about what a consultative process is not or what a bad consultative process is.

My mother's experience when she went to court was that our women in our communities had to ride Greyhound buses, they had to bake cookies for bake sales, raffles, to come here to Ottawa to fight her own court case. The National Indian Brotherhood at the time was paying women to come to speak against her. Chiefs were flying in airplanes and staying in deluxe hotels to come to speak against her, and that is not a fair process. It clearly was biased. And these are the kinds of things we need to keep in our minds, not to berate anybody or to point fingers but to remember what has happened in the past so that we do not repeat these mistakes, so that we make sure that those who do not have the financial ability do have the ability to speak. I am pretty sure that is what Canada is all about. It's not about only the rich having power and voice. It's supposed to be about everybody having equal voice.

In my own experience, again when my mother was going through her court case, is that it's not always easy to be the person who stands up. Initially she was supported. There were times when there were members of our own community—those who had non-aboriginal wives, those who had status children but who were only half aboriginal by blood—who were afraid of what they might lose if she was successful, so rather than seeing the benefit of bringing these women back to our community and broadening it, they were afraid that their status was going to be taken away.

So there was a lot of division in the community. She was told, "You will be having accidents; people have accidents, you know." She was threatened in the hope that she would stop, in the hope that

she would not pursue her rights. Luckily, she is very stubborn and it takes a lot more than that to stop her, and eventually things were changed. But again it took many years for us to realize it wasn't the solution she had hoped for.

Interestingly, there have been others recently who have come forward and criticized her and said that she had ruined it: "My mother was white and she could have been Indian had you not done that", or "Now nobody gets to pass on that status unequivocally, so you made it worse for everybody." She said she was standing up for her rights as an aboriginal woman and she was certainly not responsible for the consequences that happened afterwards.

Those are the kinds of unintended consequences that we need to be very careful of.

• (1215)

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: You said everyone should have equal representation. I think those were your words. Do you think providing a forum such as the Canadian Human Rights Commission, able to offer a forum to first nations people on reserve to voice their perceived human rights afflictions, is a good thing?

Ms. Doris Young: Let me answer that. I believe any forum that the public, and particularly in this case the first nations people, are engaged in is a good thing. But it shouldn't be about that particular topic that you're.... It should be about human rights and what they believe human rights are, and how they could be involved in addressing them.

I'm really saddened by the situation of Dawn's mother, that this has happened. I think it is so important right now that we not go into this process without consultation. What is happening right now is that it's continuing. People are pointing fingers at this woman who was so brave many years ago, and it's still following her around as though she's a culprit, because adequate consultation wasn't made about Bill C-31.

I mentioned earlier that we were really happy that it was going to be finally ending discrimination. There was no consultation made in the communities about that Bill C-31 before it was passed. We do not want that to happen again. It's just so sad. It breaks up communities; it breaks up families.

I don't think this government wants to be involved in a situation like that again.

• (1220)

The Chair: Madam Crowder, do you have any more questions?

Ms. Jean Crowder: I want to come back to Bill C-31 for a minute.

One of the points that have been made is that under the current Bill C-44, in five years' time we would be able to take a look at it. Bill C-31, I think, was passed in 1985. In 1986 there was a report out by a couple of people called Clatworthy and Smith. These researchers did a bunch of projections, based on section 6.2 of Bill C-31, and demonstrated when key communities across the country would actually have no status Indians left in their community as a result of section 6.2.

I've raised a couple of times the issue of the impact of Bill C-31 and what we can do about it. What I've understood is that no action will be taken until some court cases have unfolded. Anecdotally, there are already nations in Canada where the last status person has been born.

When we're asked to trust that a five-year process on Bill C-44 would enable us to examine unintended consequences, I just see that with Bill C-31, here we are, however many years later—22 years later—not able to currently address the impacts it is having on communities.

And it's not only the impact of people's loss of status; all of you talked about resources. One of the things that happened with Bill C-31 was that there weren't adequate resources in the communities to allow women to return to the community and have access to adequate housing and adequate education.

I wonder whether you could comment on that.

Ms. Esther Sanderson: I would like to comment on that first.

At one time in our communities, we had our own membership. We were allowed to have members join our communities, and they were put on the band list. Somewhere along the line, something happened. I guess it started with the Indian Act, regarding who could be an Indian and who couldn't be. That's when the injustices began in our communities.

Given the opportunity, we could do that again with the human rights in our communities, because it was done fairly. It was done as a process as to who could be a member and why they should or shouldn't be a member. In my mind, it would be the same process. The issues will probably come out the same in terms of membership, and that's what we were talking about in Bill C-31.

I'm also someone they call a Bill C-31, and I hate the way we define ourselves in our communities, where we're numbers and initials instead of people.

That's what Bill C-31 has done to us. It was a termination clause for all of the Indian people. Those consequences were bad. I would not like to see something like that happen again with Bill C-44.

We're adamant that we want a consultation process, so that our voices can be heard in Parliament and adequately addressed.

Ms. Dawn Harvard: I always find it very interesting that the last community, the real hold-out community, that is fighting legally right now to not have to take back those women is not a poor community. It's not Muskrat Dam. It's not somewhere where they really would have hardship in their community because of lack of resources and having to share. It's a very wealthy community. That really points something out to me. This wasn't about taking in outsiders; these were members of that community. These were their resources to start with.

In our community, we see women and children as resources. We need to look at investing in people and seeing them for what they can bring to the communities, and how to keep our women, children, and families strong and vibrant, so we can reinvigorate our communities. We know that just more money and more houses isn't going to change things, when our best and brightest keep leaving our communities. This is what we want to look at.

Again, there was a lot of perceived hardship in the communities when these women came back. These are the kinds of fears that I would worry about coming into play with this particular bill. There is a lot of perceived hardship that people think is going to be happening. There will be perceived losses if this comes into play, and we need to have some time to make sure that the community members are not making decisions based on fear-mongering, on fear that the Indian Act is the only thing that defines us, and that we are stuck with it here and forever after, for fear that we will be nothing without all these legislative acts that define us.

So we need to move past that fear and envisage new ways of moving forward that recognize our human rights as well as our aboriginality.

• (1225)

The Chair: Mr. Bruinooge.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Perhaps I'll give Ms. Harvard an opportunity to answer the question I posed in my previous round, which was on the topic of how the Canadian Human Rights Commission will provide a forum for individuals in first nations communities to voice any perceived or actual human rights abuses that they might see being perpetrated on them.

Do you see that as a good thing for the communities?

Ms. Dawn Harvard: What I see as a good thing is aboriginal people and aboriginal communities having recourse, having the ability to address human rights abuses. I don't necessarily see forums of airing human rights abuses to be.... It's a means to an end, and that's what we need to focus on.

Continually focusing on the problems and the abuses...we know they're there. We don't need to reiterate them anymore. We need to look at how to fix them, and if that's a necessary first step, then it can work. But it's only a step.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: What do you think the repeal of section 67 will do beyond that? In essence, that's the basic premise: it opens up the Canadian Human Rights Commission to receive complaints from first nations people on reserve, so that these complaints will be filed. Is there anything beyond what I've described that is going to occur, in your mind? Aside from this forum, and remedies potentially, what else do you see occurring from this legislation?

Ms. Dawn Harvard: I suppose that is the million-dollar question, isn't it? If I had the answer to that, I would be the superstar.

I guess the point, really, is that it's not so much about sitting here and defining what that is going to be as saying, let's at the very least take that step of removing this barrier, something that we know is a barrier, something that is causing hardship, that is preventing aboriginal community members from seeking restitution or resolution of their problems. Let's make that first step; let's remove that barrier. Let's do it with a clear understanding of why we're doing it and how we need to move forward together.

I'm sure we can sit down together and envisage how we will create resolutions to these human rights problems once we have removed that barrier.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: That sounds like what we are wanting to do with this piece of legislation, there's no question.

Perhaps I could go to another comment that I believe Ms. Young made, but you ladies being sisters, you look so much alike that I'm not sure who's Esther.

You made the point that we should be able to decide what human rights are. I point this out and make reference to your comment, in the sense that I think one thing we've learned in trying to administer human rights is that it really comes down to the individual. If an individual feels that their human rights have been impugned, they tend to raise that themselves. It's very difficult to say, as a governing body, these are the human rights.

Perhaps you could speak to what you meant when you said that, if you think there is a way we can devise what human rights are.

• (1230)

Ms. Doris Young: I think the people in my community would say that they want to say what those human rights are. I think they would be the right to decide how they want to go about living in the community, what the rights are when you get housing, your right to vote, your right to live in the community, the right for our people to decide what jurisdiction they want to become involved in when they talk about human rights. Those are the things that I think they would say are human rights.

When these human rights are defined by somebody else, that's what makes it really hard. Going to a tribunal that's not within their area makes it even harder for them to know what a human right is outside their community and what they think human rights are.

I hope I'm making sense in saying what I'm saying.

The Chair: We're finished the first and second rounds. Does the committee want to continue? Are there further questions?

Mr. Bagnell, you are next, for five minutes.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Thank you for coming. I think you made your points very clearly and very understandably.

I certainly disagree with the point in the response to there being no consultation when the government member said 64% of Canadians don't vote. That doesn't mean we take away the vote from everybody. We give everyone—

Mr. Brian Storseth: On a point of clarification, Mr. Chair, I don't believe that is accurate in relation to what was said.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: As you said, Dawn, the result is not to give zero people an opportunity for consultation. There should be

consultation, and however many choose to show up, they've had the opportunity. It's never 100% of anything.

You raised a very interesting point we haven't talked about yet. It's about the potential different laws in different areas. For instance, the way the government is dealing with matrimonial rights is to suggest that there'll be a national law, but when self-governing first nations make their own laws, then they can have a law in their area to fill that capacity, which would result in one law here and one law there.

Some people propose that this be the model used for human rights under Bill C-44, so that there be the national system available to people. But when a first nation decides to create its own law, as Ms. Young has suggested—defining your own laws on human rights—then each first nation would have human rights protection, but it would be defined by themselves.

My question is, and I think you raised this question, what happens if you have a number of first nations in the same area that all have different laws? Is that a problem, or is it not a problem? Or is it a minor irritant but not as important as getting it right?

Ms. Dawn Harvard: Actually, I have two points to make on that, the primary point being that we are talking about human rights. We are not talking about Wikwemikong humans or Toronto humans. We don't divide up that way. That's why it is important to have some kind of overarching.... We are all human beings and can all expect some basic standards: living free of fear of discrimination, the ability to pursue the best life in the way you see fit. There are all kinds, and there's no point in going through the list.

We need to look, then, at having that overarching concept, but also, when we talk about opportunity to come, we need to assess realistically what a real opportunity to come to a consultation would be. Because of geographic diversity, the kind of people who would have the financial ability to come to a meeting in an urban centre—to fly, to drive—is going to be very different.

This gets to my second point, which is that there's a reason that the Native Women's Association of Canada came into place, a reason that the Ontario Native Women's Association came into place. It was that a lot of women, a lot of vulnerable people at the local community level, were not feeling that their voices and their concerns were being heard or addressed at the national level through the chief and council system, which was an imposed system.

So that's it. We have to look again locally, to make sure that the opportunity to have your understanding and then to have your voice, to have your dialogue, happens locally, so that we can share a maximum diversity of opinion in that process—not just chiefs, not just those who have the financial resources and the education to get here, and not just Ottawa, in this kind of room. That's the kind of thing we need to make sure we're doing.

• (1235)

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Let me propose a compromise to see what you think, with both the national law and individual laws.

If you had a national law for first nations who didn't have anything, but you allowed self-governing first nations to create their own law to fill that territory, and—because you said human rights affect everyone—you put in certain conditions that had to be covered in that local law for it to be eligible, so that certain areas or certain areas of rights were at least covered in the law, then no one would be denied.

Do you think that might be an appropriate compromise? This is to all the witnesses.

Ms. Doris Young: Yes, I think that would be an appropriate way of starting, that there's a basic way of looking at what human rights are, and that the concepts are clear to everyone, and that there's opportunity within those human rights to be able to move, making sure that the rights of the people are protected in the community. That would work.

Ms. Esther Sanderson: I also believe that with the human rights there has to be an overriding arch to define the big things such as housing, education, and health. Those are basic human rights that we all require. Then from there the communities would look at how that would impact on people if this were to happen or this were not to happen.

Some of the words that communities would use...I keep coming back to the language, because in our language we do not discriminate against people who are disabled, who are old, who are poor. Everybody is treated the same in terms of what it is that we require to be human beings and fulfilled human beings. Those would be the important things we would look at in our communities.

The Cree have vast territories. They cover from northern B.C. right up into Quebec with different dialects of Cree. I am sure those same words that we would use in our territory are the same words that would be used in northern Alberta or, say, in northern B.C. So the languages would be the same, and those words would be able to be transcribed and understood in those communities in the same way.

The Chair: Are there any further questions of committee?

I want to thank you, witnesses, very much for your attendance. I appreciate all the information and the great answers to the questions.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Steven Point was coming for an informal meeting at one o'clock, and I think all the committee members got the notice, so I don't know if people—

The Chair: That is not part of our committee business, but if committee members want to stay and meet our invited guest, then so be it.

The meeting is adjourned.

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