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Chair

Ms. Julie Dabrusin

Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

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● (1100)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.)): I want to welcome everyone to the 125th meeting of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

Today, we'll be continuing our study of Bill C-391, An Act respecting a national strategy for the repatriation of Aboriginal cultural property.

[*English*]

We have two witnesses with us today. One is by video conference, and that is Clement Doore from the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park. We also have a witness by teleconference. We have audio only. Apparently the video was unable to work today. It's just to give you a reminder that we do have one other person; you just cannot see them. That is Nika Collison from the Haida Gwaii Museum.

We'll begin with Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park, please.

Mr. Clement Doore (Community Member, Board of Directors, Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park): My name is Clement Doore. I'm an elder from the Siksika Nation in Alberta. Our presentation is entitled “Repatriation and Reconciliation”.

First I'll give you some background. The Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park is a world-renowned cultural, education and entertainment centre located on Siksika Blackfoot Nation reserve No. 146. The Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park was built for the promotion and preservation of the Siksika Nation people's language, culture and traditions. Blackfoot Crossing, the historic site of the signing of Treaty No. 7, is of national and international historical and archaeological significance. It is a designated national heritage site. The success of the Treaty No. 7 commemoration in 1977 intensified the Siksika Blackfoot Nation's vision of building a unique world-class tourist attraction designed to engage visitors in authentic cultural experiences with the Blackfoot people.

In 2007, a 30-year vision became reality. The Siksika envisioned an indoor and outdoor living museum that would shelter and share their precious artifacts, their heritage landscape, and their Blackfoot culture with Albertans, Canadians, and the world for all time. Since its inception, the philosophy of the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park has been based on five pillars: culture, education, tourism, economic development and socio-political benefits.

The Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park is a testimony to the commitment and preservation of the Siksika Nation to mark the historical site of the signing of Treaty No. 7 and to preserve for all time the culture of the Blackfoot plains indigenous people of Canada.

Here are the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park recommendations.

One is that the government support and provide funding to the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park's implementation of their renewal and repatriation plan. The renewal and repatriation plan is critical to the sustainability and viability of the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park.

Two is that the government provide funding and support to the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park in further repatriation efforts to recover any and all remaining artifacts pertaining to and belonging to Chief Crowfoot.

Three is that the government provide funding and support to the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park's strategy and development of a Siksika Nation repatriation plan to align with a national strategy.

The repatriation of Chief Crowfoot's artifacts from the Royal Albert Museum in Exeter, U.K., is central to the renewal of the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park. The repatriation plan for the revival of Chief Crowfoot's regalia will act as a catalyst for the renewal of the Blackfoot Crossing operation, for more successful financial viability, and to strengthen cultural preservation and long-term sustainability.

The renewal plan has addressed the challenges and mitigates the threats facing the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park. The repatriation plan is an analysis of new programming, facility design, sales and marketing, public relations, human resources strategy and financial strategy.

The Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park began to pursue the path to repatriate Chief Crowfoot's artifacts, which are housed at the Royal Albert Museum in Exeter, U.K. The artifacts on display are Chief Crowfoot's shirt and leggings. Meetings had been ongoing with Government of Alberta officials, and subsequently in March 2015 the repatriation grant was approved.

In July 2015, the Government of Alberta funding was approved and received. In October 2016, the Government of Alberta approved grant funding to hire a consultant to develop a Blackfoot Crossing historical repatriation and renewal plan.

● (1105)

In February 2015, another grant was received to hire a consultant to continue repatriation and communications with the Royal Albert Museum in Exeter, U.K. The repatriation of Chief Crowfoot's artifacts defines the significance of the Treaty No. 7 agreement. The treaty was prominent in developing the relationship between the Indians and the European settlers. The repatriation of Chief Crowfoot's artifacts is one of the major steps towards reconciliation. By means of a holistic repatriation plan, current roadblocks and stalls in negotiations can be effectively mitigated. Through this plan, understanding may be gained by both parties to commit their vastly different beliefs into an agreement that this plan is mutually beneficial.

The second recommendation is that the government provide funding and support to the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park in further repatriation efforts to recover any and all remaining artifacts pertaining to and belonging to Chief Crowfoot. Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park is aware of the following artifacts and items that fall under the auspices of repatriation: one headdress, one deerskin robe, a leather shirt, one pair of leggings, one bow-case and quiver of otter fur, eagle feathers, one bow, four iron-headed arrows, three arrow points of hornstone, four pairs of moccasins, one pair of mittens, three whips, three embroidered bags, one rattle.

The third recommendation is that the government provide funding and support to the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park strategy and development of a Siksika Nation repatriation plan to align with a national strategy. The Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park's next step to develop a holistic repatriation plan is creating a framework built on the following.

The first is in answer to band council resolution number 8-2018. The First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Act allows for the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations "respecting the process and procedures to be followed in repatriating a sacred ceremony object" and other matters.

The second is in answer to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta's Bill 22, an act to provide for the repatriation of indigenous peoples' sacred ceremonial objects.

The third is in answer to Bill C-391, an act respecting a national strategy for the repatriation of aboriginal cultural property.

The fourth is in answer to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action 67 to 70.

In closing, when taking into consideration the effects of the treaty, the implementation of the reserve system, the residential school system, and the systematic abuse of first nations people in Canada, the importance of this mission becomes clear. These items are part of the foundations of identity for the Siksika people. When we consider the matters of holistic healing, the usefulness of this process becomes clear. Repatriation will be the cornerstone to reconciliation for all first nations peoples.

Furthermore, I'll reiterate and emphasize the following recommendations from the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park. The first is that the government support and provide funding to the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park's implementation of their renewal and repatriation plan. The second is that the government provide funding to support the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park's strategy and development of a Siksika Nation repatriation plan to align with the national strategy. The third is that the government provide funding to the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park's implementation of calls to action 67 to 70 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, under "Museums and Archives". References include the Blackfoot Crossing renewal and repatriation planned summary, the Siksika Nation band council resolution, and Chief Crowfoot's photograph.

Thank you.

● (1110)

The Chair: Thank you very much for that.

We will now go to Nika Collison from the Haida Gwaii Museum. Would you please start with your presentation?

Ms. Nika Collison (Executive Director and Curator, Co-chair Haida Repatriation Committee, Haida Gwaii Museum): *Haw'aa*.

There's quite a sound lag. Is it possible to turn that down on your end?

The Chair: We're checking into that right now. We're working on the technical side of things.

Ms. Nika Collison: Can you hear me?

The Chair: We can hear you.

We can begin now.

Ms. Nika Collison: *Haw'aa*.

[*Witness speaks in Haida*]

My name is Jisgang. My English name is Nika Collison. I'm the executive director of the Haida Gwaii Museum and co-chair of the Haida Repatriation Committee.

Haw'aa to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

Haw'aa to Mr. Bill Casey for his vision and to all who have done a great amount of work on Bill C-391.

I would also like to take a moment to thank and recognize Mr. Saganash for his work on Bill C-262.

At the second reading of Bill C-391, Mr. Casey stated that he is open to anything that will make the bill better. I appreciate this opportunity to provide insight into Haida repatriation experiences and respond to the bill as it sits right now.

As museum professionals and human beings, we carry the responsibility to effect societal change by mainstreaming Canada's dark history with indigenous peoples while actively working to set things right.

In the indigenous and mainstream museum world, the path toward reconciliation has been shaped by what my Haida Nation calls *Yahguudangang*, the act of paying respect. The Haida Nation sees this work, more commonly known as repatriation, as based upon mutual respect, co-operation and trust. *Yahguudangang* has brought a new depth to our nation's healing and our ability to heal with others. It provides opportunity for western museums to become voluntary agents of change rather than the physical evidence of Canada's genocide against first peoples.

Saahlinda Naay, Savings Things House, also known as the Haida Gwaii Museum, is the result of one of the earliest acts of making things right—or reconciliation—in the museum world. It was a vision of both the Haida citizens and Canadian friends residing on our islands that brought this place into being, which opened in 1976. In 2007, we opened the Haida Heritage Centre, which expanded our museum. It was created for our people but also created to share. This is our gift to the world.

Since most of our treasures left Haida Gwaii during the height of colonial regimes, our museum didn't have much of a collection to begin with, but Haida and settler families generously donated Haida heirlooms. The Royal British Columbia Museum, under the lead of then curator Peter McNair, showed support by returning some monumental poles for our museum's opening. This quiet act of repatriation is probably the earliest in Canada. It was not required by law or policy. This act was done because of the humanity this one person brought to our table.

The Haida Gwaii Museum has since grown to include a considerable collection of treasures, mostly gained from private donations, purchases and long-term loans, as opposed to museum repatriation. We also present new works, as we are a living culture. We are not simply an institution. We are a part of the institution that makes up today's Haida society and the greater Canadian society.

In the mid-1990s, the repatriation of ancestral remains became a primary focus of our people. To date, over 500 of our ancestors have been brought home from museums and private individuals from across North America, and one from the U.K. This work has taken over 20 years and well over a million dollars in cash, sweat labour and in-kind donations.

When we visit these museums to bring our ancestors home, we also visit our cultural treasures and other containers of knowledge, such as archives. We bring the diaspora of our people's lives home through imagery, audio recordings, collection notes and the recreation of pieces, and through the physical, emotional and spiritual connections that forever bind us. A few times, family heirlooms have come home from these museums. We are now ready to bring more home.

Around the same time that we began to focus on our ancestors, the 1992 “Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples” came out. This report has had a very important influence on relationships between indigenous people and mainstream museums, but it's the past four decades of knocking on doors, patience and relationship-building by our people that have been pivotal in having the Haida world and the museum world come together to make things right.

NAGPRA, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of the United States, has played an important role there and, in a roundabout way, for us as well. The first cross-border repatriation of one of our ancestors was spurred by NAGPRA. Legally, the museum was not required to work with us because we are not a federally recognized U.S. tribe, but they wanted to see our relative come home. When we contacted the next couple of U.S. museums, they wanted to repatriate through our Alaskan relatives in order to align their process with NAGPRA, but these ancestors came from Haida Gwaii, and eventually the museums agreed.

● (1115)

England is far behind Canada in repatriation, with many mechanisms—or lack of mechanisms, depending on the situation—to prohibit such work. Despite this, through relationship-building and a lot of other hard work, we were able to bring home an ancestor from the Pitt Rivers Museum in 2010. The British Museum has changed its act to allow for repatriation of human remains, and we will be bringing home an ancestor from there imminently.

What we found in working in *Yahguudangang* is that you can instil a policy and/or laws around repatriation, but true *Yahguudangang*, or repatriation and reconciliation, is not fully achieved without respectful, genuine nation-to-nation relationship-building. We want people to want to give our relatives back and to see our treasures come home. We want people to want to make things right, and want to find a way forward together, not because they have to. Repatriation is the most important work I've been involved in around the work of reconciliation. The work is beyond monumental. It costs time and healing, and it involves everyone in our nation and our friends.

I'm worried about running out of time, so just give me a second here.

The Chair: You have four more minutes.

Ms. Nika Collison: Okay, great.

Yahguudangang has changed Haida history and Canadian history. It has also changed the way some Western museum staff see themselves, their own settler histories, and their museums' histories as we heal together. They also come to accept, learn and practise that our own indigenous laws and protocols must be part of the process and be followed. While museums support our repatriation efforts, it helps their staff address and heal from the shame of colonialism, so the bigger shame then becomes not working towards repatriation.

In 2003, as we prepared our relatives for their journey home from the Field Museum, my cousin Jenny Cross wondered if were repatriating ourselves. We believe in reincarnation, and we know that everything is connected to everything else. I've learned there is a practice in our culture called “putting a string on someone”. For example, during the times of arranged marriages, the family of one young child might endow a great deal to the family of another, effectively “putting a string” on them, ensuring the two would one day move forward in life together.

I like to think that our ancestors put a string on their treasures, on themselves and the museums they were taken to, and on us, binding us to something that transcends the preservation of Haida history, culture and identity, binding two worlds so that we would come together in the future when the time was right, to heal and to redefine our relationships with each other and with the world so that we can move forward together in a respectful and honest manner. In this, you can see that repatriation is not a job but a way of life in which I and my nation are deeply embedded.

In reviewing BillC-391, my understanding is that it is not a repatriation act, but one to establish a process to assist with repatriation. We appreciate that, because then it becomes not overly prescriptive, but we would suggest that the process slow down a bit. Despite there having been consultation, it requires greater engagement and consultation with indigenous nations.

We have been leading the charge on repatriation. We know it best. It requires greater engagement with the Canadian Museums Association, including the newly formed and still-forming reconciliation council. It requires consultation with provincial governments and mainstream museums that hold indigenous collections.

We need to include territories in the wording of the bill, along with provinces, and we need to consider that it must be indigenous self-determination that moves repatriation forward and defines what it means.

The act needs some indemnification for wrongful or incorrect repatriation, as sometimes that could happen because of competing claims or incorrect returns.

As the previous speaker said, funding is critical in moving repatriation forward, for both indigenous nations and mainstream museums. In terms of the research, community consultation, negotiations, coordination, conservation, transport home, building a centre to house these pieces and care for them, capacity-building and longevity, it is so expensive and it is so absolutely necessary and critical to healing our nations and the greater Canadian public's relationship with us.

When we're looking at legitimately sold materials, we need to consider that—

● (1120)

The Chair: Ms. Collison, sorry, it's a little hard because you can't see me.

I'm giving you a heads-up that you're at 10 minutes. Could you try to wrap it up and maybe bring out some of this through questions?

Ms. Nika Collison: Okay. Sure.

The Chair: Also, translation is apparently having a bit of a hard time keeping up with you because of the sound quality. I can hear you well, but could you maybe speak a bit more slowly? I know it seems like a contradiction that I'm asking you to wrap it up and speak more slowly at the same time.

I apologize for that.

Ms. Nika Collison: Okay. I have three more things.

Again, in slowing it down, we also have to consider that once the national strategy is complete, two years is a very short time to review it. As I've said, it's taken us over 20 years—although we need to speed that up—to bring our ancestors home. It's incredibly expensive. We need to understand that in the history.

We would like you to watch the documentary *Stolen Spirits of Haida Gwaii*. It will give you great insight into the work that our nation has done to bring home our relatives, and it will give you insight into the great work that needs to happen to bring home our treasures.

We would like to invite you to Haida Gwaii if you ever want to come up to experience it first-hand.

Haw'aa

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now begin our question and answer period.

The questions will begin with Ms. Anju Dhillon for seven minutes, please.

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here today and sharing their stories regarding the repatriation.

My first question is for both of you. Can you please tell us how being deprived of aboriginal artifacts has affected you and your community?

● (1125)

Mr. Clement Doore: At the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park, it's been an ongoing process for us. We have visited different museums in North America and we are repatriating where we can. The agreement with that museum means we are able to do that. We would like to continue doing that. In particular, our building is now up. We do have space there where we could store and display any artifacts that we bring back.

By the way, our building is a metaphor for our culture. It's recognized as a world-class building.

Thank you.

Ms. Nika Collison: You asked how the removal of our treasures has deprived us. When you go into museums, you see these pieces and you know that they were removed through colonial regimes—most of them, not all of them. Our art represents our identity, our history, our connections to the lands, waters, airways, each other, other beings and the supernatural. This is our form of writing. It's the companion to our Haida language.

When we are able to access even a single piece, the amount of information that comes out is mind-boggling. I could speak for hours about what I learned simply by showing a halibut hook to our elders. It goes far beyond the ability to fish.

The deprivation held back and holds back a lot of knowledge that is out there in the world and a lot of opportunity to heal. Moving forward, this can only strengthen our nation, strengthen our relationship with Canada and make us all stronger.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Ms. Collison, you mentioned that Canada is behind England when it comes to the repatriation of cultural artifacts. Could you please tell us what makes England successful in this aspect? What can we do in our national strategy to make it more successful?

Ms. Nika Collison: Oh, I'm sorry. No, England is behind Canada.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Okay.

Ms. Nika Collison: I would like to point out a great place to look at what is possible through government support. As you may know, the Province of B.C.'s Royal British Columbia Museum put $2 million towards repatriation to get things up and running. What the provincial museum has done with that money has been very progressive and very effective, but it's not enough money.

I believe Lucy Bell is speaking later. What they're doing is a wonderful example of what is possible for greater Canada.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: You also mentioned that Bill C-391 is a process on how to get back aboriginal cultural property. Can you please elaborate on this?

Ms. Nika Collison: I don't see the bill as a process. I see it as a support tool to moving repatriation forward. I don't see it as being prescriptive. Rather, I see it as a very important bill that can address and promote and support, not just encourage but make repatriation happen on a human level. The potential for this bill is humanity.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: You also mentioned that it has taken 25 years, and two years is too short a time. Can you tell us why it has taken 25 years? Were there roadblocks? Were people presenting you with particular difficulties?

Ms. Nika Collison: Yes, despite the museum task force report—we started around the same time—this relationship-building was a very new idea. Even indigenous access to our collections in museums was challenging back in the day. We were breaking down barriers, knocking on doors, but fundraising was also involved, because for 20 years there hasn't been government financial support, and it's expensive for us and for museums. Research is required to ensure we are bringing home the right things, and to find out where these treasures are.

There are negotiations and finding ways to bring things home that align with Haida laws and protocols and values. But predominantly it's huge amounts of work and it takes time.

● (1130)

Ms. Anju Dhillon: This next question is for both of you. How would your organizations like to be involved in the creation of a national action plan? In your opinion, who are the key stakeholders who ought to be involved in this?

Mr. Clement Doore: When the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report was finally presented to Parliament, the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park immediately started thinking about an overall plan on how to revive our culture and our language. One of the things we did discuss and plan was that we want to write a history of our culture and our language, going back before the Europeans came. We want to start there and document our way of life, our territories, and then from there proceed to the residential schools and to the present day and our relationship with Canada.

Different groups on a reserve are trying to teach our language, but there's a problem. The parents don't speak the Blackfoot language, only the children do, and those who do speak it don't seem to get too enthusiastic about it. I think the reason is that they're not aware of their culture, where they came from. If they were, they would be more willing to learn their language, but it's really important that we take a lead role and be part of any overall plan.

I've been asked quite a few times, what's the difference between your museum and the Glenbow museum in Calgary, for example? The answer is very simple. Glenbow is a museum. Another culture is explaining my culture. At the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park, you're hearing from the horse's mouth, so to speak. We're the ones who know the history and so on.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

That brings us to the end of your seven minutes, but perhaps Ms. Collison will be able to bring some of those answers in our next round.

We are going to Mr. Shields, please.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I appreciate the panel today and the explanation of where we're at and where we're going.

With the Blackfoot Crossing, the council has been working on this. You obviously have a long history with the Blackfoot Crossing. Could you give us a bit of your history with this facility and what it's doing?

Mr. Clement Doore: It's 11 years old now. It took almost 20 years before funding was finally approved by the Alberta government and the Government of Canada. We hired an architect, and he went around meeting with the elders and asking them how they would like to see this museum built. As I said earlier, it's a metaphor of our culture. It's very unique. It's been recognized by the UN. When it was built, they said this could become a world-class facility—UNESCO would recognize it. The ongoing programs that we have right now are based more on tourism. People from all over the world have shown up. We have this place that tells the history of the Siksika Nation, and a history of our traditional territories.

For example, this year it's booked almost every day from April to September by people from Calgary—students, political groups and historical groups. They're coming to visit us and they're asking a lot of questions.

I'm reminded of when it was first opened. I went to the museum just to see what was going on. A lady was coming out and was kind of crying, so I jokingly asked the staff, “What did you do to her?” They said that she was crying because our culture is so beautiful. We should have done this a long time ago.

Thank you.

Mr. Martin Shields: Thank you for that answer. I am very familiar with the site, having been there many times.

You mentioned the repatriation of Chief Crowfoot's artifacts. Where are they?

● (1135)

Mr. Clement Doore: They're in England. It's been an ongoing discussion. The previous manager, Jack Royal, was the one who was spearheading it. He is now the manager of the Blackfoot Confederacy organization. A few stalls have occurred, but they were still talking to them. It seems that they're willing now to proceed and to put in place some sort of agreement on how we can get back Chief Crowfoot's regalia and leggings.

Mr. Martin Shields: I knew Jack had moved on.

I think that's really interesting. That's the lead, if you want to do your renewal, because of the historical site and the signing by Chief Crowfoot. I think that's a significant lead for your renewal project, so I'm glad to hear that is part of it. I really appreciate hearing that.

Mr. Clement Doore: Yes.

Mr. Martin Shields: I'll move on to Haida Gwaii. I've had the opportunity to go to Haida Gwaii. It's very different from Siksika. Siksika has one of the very positive positions in that it's close to the Trans-Canada Highway. It has a great, significant geographic location. Haida Gwaii is beautiful, but the problem is that it's so isolated. Where Siksika has the opportunity to show and educate, it's very hard to get to Haida Gwaii.

When you talk about sharing for Haida Gwaii, how can we overcome that geographical barrier for most of us to get there?

Ms. Nika Collison: Mr. Shields, were you on the standing committee studying the state of museums?

Mr. Martin Shields: I was with the environment committee.

Ms. Nika Collison: You just sound familiar. Sorry.

Mr. Martin Shields: Yes. I've met you.

Ms. Nika Collison: Okay, great.

I'm just going to back up quickly, because I think Louis Riel is important. He said something about how a hundred years from now we will rise again, and art will bring us back. That's what we are seeing through true access to our art.

In closing the gap, there are really neat initiatives going on with the UBC Museum of Anthropology in partnership with our museum and other indigenous cultural centres and museums in B.C., where we are working to bring to light our centres and eventually create a sort of cultural corridor that visitors would be inspired to follow.

Our visitation continues to rise. We're hesitant to become like Banff. It's the education through media and educational productions such as documentaries that give great presence of our nation to the greater world. There is usually a two-year lag that follows anything that becomes international.

I'm going to back up and say that infrastructure to get people over —the B.C. ferries, the flights.... It can cost less to fly to Germany from Vancouver than it does to fly from Vancouver to Haida Gwaii. There are such limited flights and ferry schedules that it really impacts visitors' abilities to get here at times. Financial support in that manner would be great, both for transportation and for our ability to market and partner with other institutions to work on bringing people to our doorstep.

Mr. Martin Shields: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Nantel, you have the floor for seven minutes.

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): I want to thank Ms. Collison from the Haida Gwaii Museum, and Mr. Doore from Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park.

As Ms. Collison said, we've very proud that Parliament has passed Romeo Saganash's bill, which constitutes a very clear implementation of the rights of Indigenous peoples with respect to UNESCO and the UN. It's a big step forward. I think that all parliamentarians can be proud. Above all, we can be proud of all the mediation efforts made by the various Indigenous stakeholders.

Mr. Doore, I heard you talk about the artifacts that you were deprived of. One parallel seems natural to me. Saint-Laurent, Emmanuella Lambropoulos' constituency, is home to the Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec. The museum is linked to the furniture and accessories of daily life that Quebecers used to use. The museum also does exceptional mediation work with the public, particularly in Ville Saint-Laurent.

Obviously, these important items must be repatriated to better understand a civilization. I heard Mr. Doore say that all these items are in England. I fully understand the need to repatriate the items in order to explain this way of life.

I think there's also a sacred and spiritual dimension. I can't say that the Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec has a sacred and spiritual dimension. It's really archeology and history, which is very important.

I must congratulate Mr. Casey on the bill. Of all the things he has accomplished, he's the most proud of this bill. He sees the bill's impact on the community.

Mr. Doore, don't you think that the sacred and spiritual dimensions could be further emphasized?

● (1140)

[*English*]

Mr. Clement Doore: To us, it's very important that these acts by the Alberta government and the Government of Canada be implemented. We have quite a bit of knowledge of other artifacts that exist around the world.

We went to the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. one time and there was an incredible number of artifacts that belonged to the Siksika First Nation. We've been making contacts with other museums. We repatriated some artifacts from the museum in Denver. In New York City, we did meet with them. There were some artifacts recovered. All the artifacts are important to us.

We are now working with the University of Calgary, and they're doing archeological digs right on the reserve. They've been finding some very important things there. The people from Siksika are being trained to work with them. We're comprehensive in our approach that we need to practically go around the world and repatriate any artifacts, spiritual or ceremonial, to enhance our culture.

Thank you.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Thank you.

Nika Collison, first, I have to say I accept your invitation. I hope that everyone will have the chance to go see the Haida Gwaii Museum.

After hearing many witnesses, I had a realization that it goes beyond the first parallel I had with the artisans' museum in Ville Saint-Laurent? Can I hear you on this, please?

Ms. Nika Collison: Yes, thank you very much.

I would just like to say, you're bringing up UNDRIP, so thank you again for that. One of the recommendations for the bill is to change the word “aboriginal” to “indigenous”.

In the case of the Haida Gwaii Museum, we have been researching where our treasures and intangible heritage are around the globe. Simply for objects, we're aware of over 12,000 right now. In our community consultations, our elders have directed that we bring home excellent examples of the full spectrum of our material culture and copies of all intangible heritage. But we cannot bring home 12,000 pieces, and there is great benefit to having some around the world, as long as we determine how they are presented.

Going beyond that, repatriation is healing. It's healing for us, and it's healing for Canada. It deepens our spiritual connection to all aspects of life. It also heals the psychological trauma, not completely but greatly, which is intergenerational, the effects of the colonial regime. It actually changes how we make decisions, and it is a true path, one of the truest paths, towards reconciliation. Of course, there are many other paths that need to be followed.

It is not simply saying, “Give us our relatives back; give us our stuff back” and then going home. We have a commitment, a responsibility to work to make this world better, and that is driven by our highest law, or one of our highest laws, which is respect.

I would also like to say that the bill is missing the identity of ancestors as well as intangible cultural heritage.

● (1145)

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Thank you very much.

The Chair: We will now go to Mr. Wayne Long, please.

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses this morning.

Look, while heritage is essential to all peoples, there's no question that indigenous people have had the least control over theirs, so I just want to give a shout-out to MP Casey for Bill C-391. I think it's very meaningful, and it can change the way we look at history, for sure.

My first question is for you, Ms. Collison. You mentioned in your presentation that you want other organizations, groups, countries, what have you, to want to give back indigenous cultural property. How realistic is that? Where do you think we are right now with respect to their wanting to give that back? How much work do we need to do?

Ms. Nika Collison: I think in Canada over the past 20 years, our own work around ancestors—and it's truly transforming to be working at that level of repatriation—has fortified our relationships with major institutions across Canada, as well as in the United States. That comes from working together. We're a little afraid of law and a little afraid of policy, but we also understand the benefit of it.

Our relationship—

Mr. Wayne Long: Can I just jump in here? Is it a cultural shift you're talking about, to want—

Ms. Nika Collison: We're shaping a hybrid culture of indigenous nations and nation-state or mainstream museums. The work that is happening is shifting the societal discourse, essentially, because in the work we've done with institutions, which is what I think this bill should focus on, we celebrate in the media with these institutions. As long as they're working with us, they aren't the face of colonial history.

Celebrating the work we do in the media and through documentaries and through our museum, and mainstream museums, brings a greater education to the greater public and inspires individuals to send home or repatriate incredible treasures, and also our relatives. We've had people send home relatives; they didn't realize when they first took them what they were actually doing.

Educating, celebrating and continuing to move forward are spurring huge change in society, in our opinion, but there is so much work to be done, particularly education around the history: why our ancestors and treasures wound up in museums, and how we can make things right and move forward.

Mr. Wayne Long: Thanks for that.

What would you recommend that we, as the federal government, do to help with that? What can we do to help make the museum in Washington or another country or another group or what have you...? What can we do to aid in this process?

Ms. Nika Collison: A bill like the one that's being proposed, as long as it's kept broad.... This is the conundrum. This is where I think more time is needed to discuss it with the mainstream museums that we work actively with, along with indigenous nations across Canada, who should be the key stakeholders. We need more discussion before we do something like pass an important bill such as this. More time is needed to do such a thing.

● (1150)

Mr. Wayne Long: You've led me right into my next question. I was surprised to hear you say that the process needs to slow down a bit. You just think we're moving too fast. Do you want to pause? Can you just elaborate as to why you're so concerned that we're moving too fast?

Ms. Nika Collison: When I first looked at the bill with some colleagues and friends, it was sort of a blind side for us to even have it come out. Again, though, I thank Mr. Casey so much for initiating this process. I do understand from the minutes of the second hearing that it was asserted that some good consultation with indigenous nations and museums had happened. In my case—and I work with indigenous people and mainstream museums across Canada—it was something that none of us were necessarily expecting. It's such a great idea, but it does need more consultation.

It's not a negative response to the bill. It's saying that we've been doing this work for decades. We've been forging paths with museums and changing the way we live our lives together. That's not going to stop, but can we just back up a little bit and come together to discuss this bill so that it really works for indigenous people, mainstream museums, and the greater Canadian society? It's not to halt it. It's to slow it down, and think and engage harder.

Mr. Wayne Long: Thanks for that.

My riding is Saint John—Rothesay. It's in southern New Brunswick. It's a riding in a city that has a strong indigenous heritage but a very small indigenous population. How can a national action plan for the repatriation of aboriginal cultural property be designed in a manner than ensures that more non-indigenous Canadians learn about indigenous history, indigenous rights, and the process of reconciliation? How can we make sure that our communities are included in that education also?

Ms. Nika Collison: What I've found.... My father said a long time ago, “Why would we do to others what was done to us?” At least from a Haida world view, we have to work very closely with our nation on what is acceptable to put out and what isn't. For example, burial materials are not always the ideal thing to put on exhibit. It really needs to be indigenous-led. The majority of the treasures that have left our ancestors did so through theft or force. Again, as I said earlier, I would assert strongly that the majority of the material culture that left between 1885 and 1951, the life of the potlatch ban, did so under duress, so they're not—

The Chair: That brings us to the end of your time. You're actually overtime now, Mr. Long.

We're going to go to Mr. Blaney for about four minutes.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

Thank you, Ms. Collison and Mr. Doore for coming out in support of Bill C-391, an act respecting a national strategy for the repatriation of aboriginal cultural property.

My first question is for both of you. Do you have an inventory of the artifacts of your nation throughout the world that are spread through other museums?

Maybe you can begin, Mr. Doore. Do you have an idea of the number of artifacts within your new museum, the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park? You mentioned the Crowfoot artifact and so on.

Mr. Clement Doore: The artifacts that are currently at the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park were already available to us and they were simply transferred. I have a long list of those artifacts, but in regard to other artifacts that exist in other museums, we know of some of them and some museums are starting to communicate with us.

The second place our artifacts are stored is with private collectors. They want millions of dollars for them, but we can't afford that.

● (1155)

Hon. Steven Blaney: So your artifacts are either in other museums or in private collections.

Ms. Collison, what about you? Do you have a type of mapping, or would you find it interesting in a national strategy to know where the artifacts of your ancestors are located or are exposed throughout the world?

Ms. Nika Collison: Our nation has been researching this since 2006, I believe. To date, over 300 museums have been contacted, and we know well over 12,000 of our physical objects to be held in these museums around the world, including places such as India. We lost potential pieces in the fire at the museum in Brazil. We know of pieces in Australia. I could go on and on.

There are problems with provenance. A lot of the time, when these pieces were collected, they were called Haida but they might be Tsimshian manufacture, or called Tsimshian but they might be Haida manufacture; or they're simply labelled “northwest coast”. There is a lot of work that we still need to do on that.

We have an inventory. We know that so many of the indigenous nations that we and the Royal British Columbia Museum are working with are just starting out, and we do need to find ways to support this research and create databases. I've done a lot of thinking about a national database, and I don't know that it would be feasible, given the thousands and thousands of pieces out there by the more than 600 indigenous nations in Canada.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Ms. Collison, is private collection an issue for you? Are there many Haida artifacts in the hands of private owners?

Ms. Nika Collison: There are a ton of treasures with private owners, and actually, after that initial repatriation of the totem poles from the Royal British Columbia Museum—

Hon. Steven Blaney: Okay, I'm just rushed—

Ms. Nika Collison: We can't force private people, but we can encourage, educate and build relationships. That's how we've built the majority of our collection.

Hon. Steven Blaney: I have just one last question. Do you see benefit to having some artifacts exposed, as you mentioned, in other places in the world so that the culture is exposed elsewhere?

The Chair: Maybe take half a minute.

Ms. Nika Collison: Yes. First and foremost, we have Haida who live around the world, but also, we love to share and educate, as long as we have a say on how it's presented and shared with the world.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Clement Doore and Ms. Nika Collison, thank you for being part of our first panel. That was really interesting for all of us, and I appreciate it. Thank you for bearing through some of our technical challenges.

We are going to suspend briefly so that we can get our next panel up.

Thank you very much.

● _____ (Pause) _____

●

● (1200)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I want to let the francophone members and everyone who needs French interpretation know that the third witness, Aluki Kotierk, will be giving her evidence in Inuktitut. The interpretation will be from Inuktitut to English, then from English to French, so there will be a delay. I'm announcing it so that everyone will be ready for the delay.

[*English*]

We have with us Lucy Bell, from the Royal British Columbia Museum, who will be speaking by video conference.

We have present with us right now President Clément Chartier, from the Métis National Council.

Also here with us is President Aluki Kotierk, of Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.

We have everyone at the table.

We will start with the video conference, just in case we run into other technical difficulties this morning. Could we begin, please, with Lucy Bell, from the Royal British Columbia Museum?

You have time to make a presentation right now, if you'd like to begin.

● (1205)

Ms. Lucy Bell (Head, First Nations and Repatriation Department, Royal British Columbia Museum): Okay.

[*Witness speaks in Haida*]

Good afternoon, friends. My name is Lucy Bell. I come from the Haida Nation and I work at the Royal BC Museum.

Haw'aa. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. I'll begin with a little bit of the background of why you've probably called me here today.

I'm one of the founding members of the Haida Repatriation Committee on Haida Gwaii. More than 20 years ago, I was an intern at the Royal BC Museum. That's where I learned about human remains being in museums, and I learned there were more than 500 of my ancestors in museums around the world. I took that message home to my Haida community, thinking I could tell them that our ancestors were in the museum. They told me to get busy and start repatriating my ancestors. It took well over 20 years to track them all down and bring them home.

Many, many years later, I started working at the Royal BC Museum as the head of the first nations and repatriation department. With the provincial government's support, the museum responded to the calls of the TRC, UNDRIP and the task force, and really wanted to move the museum in a stronger repatriation direction. My team has been working for about two years now with a renewed focus on repatriation.

The Royal BC Museum has been repatriating for many decades. We are one of the two museums in Canada that repatriate under treaty, and we have been repatriating ancestral remains, belongings and intangible heritage.

I'll mention some of the changes we made in the last couple of years.

We recently revised our indigenous collections and repatriation policy to be more open to repatriation. One of the changes that I'm most proud of is that we changed the policy to say that anything taken during the anti-potlatch law from 1885 to 1951 is considered to have been acquired under duress and is up for repatriation.

Another change we've made is that we've really amped up our repatriation and our work toward repatriating intangible heritage. That means that our very extensive collection of audio recordings, linguistic recordings and cultural recordings is being digitized and provided to communities.

We recently launched a repatriation granting program, with the support of the provincial government, and we've been supporting 21 B.C. indigenous communities in their repatriation journeys. We also support treaty repatriation, and on average two to three nations come to the table with the museum every year.

We are in the middle of creating a repatriation 101 handbook. Knowing that there are not that many nations actively involved in repatriation, we knew we could support them by giving them some tips on how to repatriate.

Today I'll mention a few points.

I had the advice of CEO Jack Lohman, curator Martha Black, and archaeology collection manager Genevieve Hill, and we've come up with a few suggestions. I'll mention a few that I wrote down.

It's important that the strategy that's created be created by and with indigenous peoples and with museums. It's important to bring both to the table.

● (1210)

From my experience repatriating from the United States, we found the NAGPRA law to be very restrictive. By the time we got to the museums, the museums felt really rushed and forced. They were quite tired, and they were feeling obligated to repatriate. It was a big strain. I would recommend the way the Haida repatriation movement went, which was to use the task force report in a much friendlier way. We would bring that document and say, “We're here to work in collaboration and in friendship with you.” That seemed to go a lot further for us than the NAGPRA law.

Something we're facing here with our granting program is that repatriation does take time and it does take money. With the Haida repatriation movement, we estimate that it probably cost us about $1 million to repatriate 500 of our ancestors. That's money we had to raise ourselves.

There are some other things we wanted to speak to. A few definitions could be worked on, ensuring that “ancestral remains” are mentioned in the strategy of the bill and ensuring that “intangible heritage”—i.e., language recordings—is included. It's probably a good suggestion to use the term “indigenous”. Asking museums to be more public about their collections, and more public about having ancestral remains in their collections, will be important as well.

Finally, I would say that repatriation does take time. Reporting out takes time. It is just an absolutely slow and thoughtful process. It took 20 years for the Haida to bring home over 500 ancestors. In British Columbia, with so many nations here, that's what we're understanding here at the museum, too. It takes time and it takes people and it takes resources.

Those are my main points today. *Haw'aa* for the opportunity.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that.

We will now go to President Clément Chartier, please.

Mr. Clément Chartier (President, Métis National Council): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good afternoon, members of the committee.

I begin this presentation with a statement of whom I am referring to when I use the term “Métis”. That is the historic Métis nation based in western Canada—a distinct people with a distinct history and language, Michif; a national flag that is over 200 years old; a significant population; and a defined geographic homeland. It is the people or nation that took both political and military action to defend its people and territory.

To be clear, I am not referring to the modern-day plethora of the hundreds of thousands of people of mixed indigenous and European ancestry, particularly in eastern Canada, who now claim to be Métis, using that term as an adjective and being of mixed ancestry with potential or tenuous claims to some faraway Indian ancestor. This adjective or mixed-ancestry use of the term “Métis” does not relate to the Métis nation, which is a distinct indigenous people, a polity and full-fledged rights-bearing indigenous people with its own distinctive culture and rights, which are inherent in that fact.

Today I am here to address Bill C-391, a proposed act respecting a national strategy for the repatriation of aboriginal cultural property. It is expected that this proposed act will provide for the development and implementation of a national strategy to enable the return of aboriginal cultural property to indigenous peoples in Canada, something now desperately needed. The sense of urgency that the Métis nation, the Inuit and the first nations peoples are feeling is evidence that indigenous peoples want to reclaim their cultures and heritage. While indigenous cultural revitalization also includes languages and land, cultural property held by others is a fundamental component of cultural renewal and reclamation.

From the birth of the Métis nation, visitors to this land appreciated the beauty of our material culture and collected and kept it as works of art. This was the time when some semblance of fair trade and commerce was taking place, as indigenous peoples and settlers exchanged goods and services. The colonization and oppression that followed this dynamic put the power to own and possess indigenous material and culture in the hands of the newcomers. This included limiting and eradicating food sources, restricting freedom, denying land ownership, and curtailing business, trade and commerce.

The Métis are often touted as the middlemen or women of the fur trade era. We were once a vibrant and successful connection between the first nations and the newcomers. However, this too diminished as the Métis nation was dispossessed of land and forced to disperse. It forced many or most Métis families into abject poverty, hiding and denying their identity for cultural safety. This was coupled with over a century of shaming indigenous peoples through unfair treatment, one-sided historical records, relocation, outlawed spiritual practices, heavy-handed assimilation tactics, and numerous other forms of discrimination.

Having to choose between feeding your children and keeping culturally significant property was no choice at all. Forced relocation meant taking only what you could carry. The kind of infrastructure that allowed those in more stable environments to enjoy cultural practices and make cultural property could not exist under these conditions.

Métis women were essential to the family's economy. Métis women made their best and most beautiful cultural property to be bought and collected by others, while at the same time it was impossible for Métis families to keep and enjoy what they made.

● (1215)

The kind of work available to Métis men included sporadic and difficult labour endeavours at very low wages, and these men were considered more fortunate than others. Providing for a family through harvesting plants and animals was absolutely necessary. It was a laborious and time-consuming endeavour.

We ask ourselves what kind of cultural property might be there if these hardships had not been foisted on indigenous peoples and, in particular, the Métis nation. What kind of effort did it take to covertly maintain our culture and to continue to pass on the cultural arts for which we became so well known? In fact, we were known as the “flower beadwork people”.

We are grateful to those who could, and hold no malice to those who could not in order to survive. Some people with origins elsewhere may think to themselves, “I don't know the songs and dances of my ancestors, and I can't make any of the material culture either, so what's the big deal?” The big deal is that the vast majority of Canadians have a country of origin from which to reclaim any part of their culture, your culture. It wasn't outlawed or suppressed as it has been here in Canada for indigenous peoples. It hasn't suffered from decades of indifference and shaming, which drove many people to the cultural safety of letting their traditions go in order to survive.

When we look at the care and attention given to the cultural property of those who were free to make and collect it, and how long they have had this privilege, we can only imagine what might have been if indigenous peoples—in our case, the Métis nation—had had the same freedom and opportunity. The most precious and beautiful items would have been kept as cherished family heirlooms. They would not have been sold or taken. These items would not be mislabelled or unlabelled regarding who the artisan was or the indigenous nation from which they originate. They would certainly not be in keeping houses other than our own.

As an example of proving the provenance of potential cultural items that may be subject to repatriation, in August I joined an organization of a number of American states' ambassadors, indigenous leaders and others on a tour of the Museum of the American Indian at the Smithsonian, in Washington, D.C. In one of the displays of the bonnets, a piece caught my eye, a beaded baby bonnet with distinctive Métis beadwork. The caption stated, "Plains Cree (Prairie Cree) baby's cap/hat, circa 1910, Saskatchewan, Canada”. Anybody from the Métis community looking at that knows it's of Métis origin. This is a potential case of having Métis art labelled wrongly, as the suppression of Métis rights and existence was, at that particular period, being visited upon the Métis nation.

Bill C-391 is a good first step for Canada to reconcile these injustices. It will serve to make way for indigenous peoples to reclaim their cultural property and to guide all involved in processes that should ultimately make everyone feel that this is the right course of action. The repatriation of aboriginal cultural property is going to speed up the process of cultural renewal for indigenous peoples. It will reflect a time Canadians should not be proud of, and support a time in which Canadians can take great pride.

There is also a need to ensure that repatriated cultural property has a home or homes to return to. In too many cases, the Métis nation does not have adequate resources to establish museums and/or cultural centres. This is slowly changing. The Manitoba Métis Federation, on behalf of the Métis nation, after a 20-year effort is in the final stages of being able to establish a national Métis museum in Winnipeg, the former site of the Red River Métis provisional government. Other initiatives are also under way.

● (1220)

Finally, in 2020 the Métis nation will be celebrating its 150th anniversary of joining Confederation, which was made possible by the negotiation under president Louis Riel and the passage of the Manitoba Act of 1870. We look forward to all parliamentarians, and in fact all Canadians, celebrating this historic event with us.

[*Witness speaks in Haida*]

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now be going to Ms. Aluki Kotierk, the President of Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. We also have the Executive Director, Pamela Gross, with us.

Am I correct that you're going to be giving your evidence in Inuktitut? Okay. I'm going to signal to everyone to make sure they have their earpieces.

Ms. Aluki Kotierk (President, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.) (Interpretation): Thank you for the invitation to appear before you. I considered speaking in English, but I am now going to speak in Inuktitut, since you have an interpreter. I'm very proud that I'll be able to talk in my language, in Inuktitut, while I'm in Ottawa.

There are two things I'll be talking about in regard to Bill C-391 and respecting Nunavut. Briefly, I will say that when I'm reading this bill, it indicates that artifacts can be used for educational purposes. This is very important, in my view. It is very important to us Inuit that Inuit artifacts be inside Nunavut, which they are not. They are housed somewhere else.

The young people should see their own way now in Canada. There is a history of shame for being indigenous people. When we see up close the intricate stitching of the Inuit and how they put tools together—for example combs and other tools—it reminds us how indigenous Inuit were distinct from other people. They were ingenious. This would be the case in Nunavut.

This is a commendable aspiration, as we have nothing in Nunavut. This plan would be very useful to us if there were to be a museum in Nunavut. At the moment, how are we going to use the repatriated cultural property? My concern is that despite the national strategy, there is no facility, and no appropriate measures to protect this cultural property have been implemented.

As we know, Nunavut became a territory in 1993 as a result of the Nunavut agreement, specifically article 4. It's been 25 years since the Nunavut Act and the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Act received royal assent from the Canadian Parliament.

In Nunavut, there is no territorial heritage centre that can house Inuit cultural property. As such, there are more than 140,000 Nunavut artefacts in storage, including here in Ottawa. The Government of Nunavut has been spending millions since 1999 to store them outside of Nunavut. The need for such a facility was included in the Nunavut agreement. Article 33.2.4 states:

> There is an urgent need to establish facilities in the Nunavut Settlement Area for the conservation and management of a representative portion of the archaeological record.

In addition, to highlight the need for facilities, the Nunavut agreement established the Inuit Heritage Trust, which is tasked with the safekeeping and safe use of property entrusted to it.

The establishment of a territorial facility has been in the works with the Nunavut government since 2001. In 2006, Nunavut Tunngavik, the Inuit Heritage Trust, and the Nunavut government announced that the territorial facility would be located in Iqaluit. With many competing infrastructure needs, the project was shelved in 2011, and funds that had been budgeted for this were redirected to other projects.

● (1225)

The sense of Inuit is important to us. In 2014, the Inuit Heritage Trust had been working with the Qikiqtaaluk Corporation on the heritage centre project with the intention of bringing home Nunavut Inuit artifacts and building the facility on the Inuit's own lands.

Currently, the creation of the Nunavut heritage project is estimated at a cost of $70 million to $90 million. At our annual general meeting in 2017, Nunavut Tunngavik committed $5 million toward this project, and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association committed the same —$5 million for this new heritage centre to be built inside Nunavut.

Thank you very much for listening to my comments.

● (1230)

Ms. Pamela Gross (Executive Director, Kitikmeot Inuit Association, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.) [Interpretation]: Thank you very much, Chair.

I am from Cambridge Bay.

[English]

I am happy to be here. Thank you for the opportunity and for having us here. My name is Pamela Gross. Hakongak is my Inuinnaqtun name, given to me by my grandmother, and I'm named after one of her cousins.

I am representing the Inuit Heritage Trust, which is under article 33 in the Nunavut agreement. I'm a trustee for the trust, and I also work at the Kitikmeot Heritage Society. In Inuinnaqtun, we call it *Pitquhirnikkut Ilihautiniq*. It is a non-profit organization in Cambridge Bay that works to preserve, protect and promote Inuit culture.

I've been working in heritage for a number of years. I have had extensive role models and been able to work with the Inuit Heritage Trust throughout my university career. It is very important that we have a museum in Nunavut, so we can repatriate our artifacts that are housed in Ottawa and Winnipeg and bring them home for our people to use and to learn from in our home communities.

Iqaluit is the potential home of our territorial museum. It's a gracious pledge from Nunavut Tunngavik and the QIA that they have each pledged $5 million toward building a museum. It's been almost 25 years since the Nunavut agreement was assented to. It would be a great opportunity for us, as we are the only jurisdiction in Canada that does not have a territorial museum.

If you were to come to our territory—and I'm not sure who has been there before—you would see that we do have a few museums, such as the one I work at, but we do not have a territorial one. In the past several years, we have been able to regain a lot of our cultural pride. We're shifting our identity. We're reclaiming who we are in various ways. One really great way is by looking at old artifacts and taking our elders to museums. I've taken elders to Denmark, for example, to look at collections that are stored there because we don't have the opportunity to look at them in our own home community.

We need to learn that knowledge and have that knowledge retained in our culture to keep that identity. When you think of Canada and you ask people what they think of Canada, they'll often think of the inukshuk, the kayak and the igloo. Those are all important pieces that our ancestors worked hard to create with their ingenuity. Those tools and the objects that are stored within those tools—the knowledge, the wisdom, the words, the language—are all a vital part of our identity and who we are.

We are proud to be Canadian. We would like to have the opportunity to have more of our culture showcased in our communities and be used as lesson tools.

The first step for Nunavut is to have a territorial museum and have our objects brought back home. As mentioned, 140,000 objects are stored in Ottawa and Winnipeg. Those are ones we would like to have in our communities and use as tools to pass on to the next generation.

Quanaqqutit for your time.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're now beginning our question and answer period with Mr. Hogg, please.

Mr. Gordie Hogg (South Surrey—White Rock, Lib.): Thank you very much, witnesses, for telling your stories with respect to repatriation and the issues associated with it. Certainly, we want to develop a strategy that looks at and is helpful for informing and leading repatriation.

We had a previous witness from Haida Gwaii. Ms. Collison talked about some of the negotiations that have taken place. She said that they want people to want to do the right thing and to be able to engage. Are there some values or principles that should be reflected in this that would encourage that type of thing so people see what we're trying to do? Maybe it could be in terms of a value statement that reflects the history and the need to do it, in a way that pulls out a little more of that, so that people who might be holding on to indigenous artifacts might understand that it's a little more than just a bill or a piece of legislation. It's something that tells a story or starts to reflect that. There might be a preamble that would help with that.

I'll ask Ms. Bell to respond to that first.

● (1235)

Ms. Lucy Bell: For the Haida repatriation, Nika probably spoke to it. The Haida word *Yahguudangang* means “respect”, and with everything that we did with our ancestors, we always came back to that one word.

As you can imagine, having to repatriate hundreds of human remains is a strange thing. That's not a normal thing that anybody would have to do. We were often asked by the media, for instance, if they could come and film us as we were caring for our ancestors. We were asked if the staff members could participate. Really, there were just a lot of questions that were new to us. We always had to come back to the word “respect” and ask our colleagues as well to understand the meaning of true respect. That just made the path so much clearer for us and for our colleagues.

As I mentioned before, using the task force report really speaks to collaboration and friendship between museums and indigenous peoples. We really stood by that. We asked the museums to honour that as well. We were kind of joking about it at work the other day. We're Canadians; we're known as a friendly country, so this act should reflect that. To work in friendship is an important thing that we need to do with this.

Haw'aa.

Mr. Gordie Hogg: Yes, and we concur with that. We want to have something in this that does reflect the respect that you and Nika talked about. I'm just trying to frame that in some phraseology. Specifically, she described some negotiations they were going through that seemed to be much more toward a legalistic approach than a principles or values approach. I'm trying to find the balance between those and how we might reflect that in the phraseology we're going forward with.

Do the other witnesses have any comments with respect to that in terms of how this legislation could reflect more appropriately the values and principles rather than just actions?

Mr. Clément Chartier: In addition to what's already been said, I would think that it's important in this day of reconciliation that Canadians are.... They are becoming more understanding and educated about various indigenous peoples and nations, but there's still quite a ways to go to educate the public.

I would think that in a preamble there would be the notion of reflecting that indigenous peoples, being the original peoples of this land, have histories, cultures and their own nationhood and peoplehood, and there are distinctions, which I think also need to be kept in mind. Also, indigenous peoples' values are no different from anybody else's. We value what is ours and we want in many cases to rebuild what we've lost in this. I think that is something that is important.

Our cultural heritage has taken a massive assault. It takes the collective effort of all Canadians, I think, to assist in rebuilding that. Some messages along those lines I think would be helpful.

● (1240)

Mr. Gordie Hogg: Do you have any comments you'd like to make?

Ms. Pamela Gross: I think one of the ways we can do this is by incorporating traditional knowledge—*Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* or IQ—and working with our communities and talking with the people.

We're a growing population with growing needs. I think the biggest thing for us is being able to use those artifacts that are close to our people and our culture, working with our communities to pass on the traditional knowledge through those objects, demonstrating how they were made and how you gain so much information by using your hands, listening to elders, working to make something that is almost inherent in who we are, and incorporating IQ.

The Chair: Thank you.

That brings you to the end of your time.

We will now be going to Mr. Blaney, please.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

My first question is for Ms. Bell.

Ms. Bell, I have a very simple question. You suggested that the bill should be amended to have the expression “indigenous” instead of “aboriginal”. Can you just share with me why? I believe this is justified.

Ms. Lucy Bell: In Canada, “indigenous” is more inclusive of all first nations, Inuit, and Métis people. It's the move we're trying to make in British Columbia and in the Royal BC Museum. We're trying to be more proactive and respond to what community members are saying, to be more inclusive.

Hon. Steven Blaney: You also suggested that the bill should be amended to include “intangible assets”. I also heard “traditional knowledge”.

Is it easy for you to recover intangible assets? You have experience over the last 20 years. Has it been easy for you or have you encountered some challenges in that regard?

Ms. Lucy Bell: For the Haida, as we've gone out on our repatriation journeys to museums all over the world, it became more our responsibility to ask for the intangible heritage. They often thought we were only there for our ancestors. As we got a little bit more experience, we learned that it was up to us to ask, because museums were not necessarily forthcoming in saying that they also had Haida recordings and historic Haida photos. I think it was a bit of a challenge.

As you might know, museums are struggling to keep up with technology, so digitizing.... In my department alone, we have 3,000 recordings. Many of them are linguistic, reel-to-reel, so we have added about four new team members to digitize the intellectual property in the last year. It's a big job for museums.

Hon. Steven Blaney: I understand that you support the bill and it's important for indigenous people to repatriate. Do you see any benefit to having some of the collection being exposed in other parts of the country or internationally?

Ms. Lucy Bell: Of course. I think you probably know of the famous Haida carver Bill Reid, and how much attention his beautiful work has brought to the Haida and to the indigenous people of Canada. I don't think I would ever suggest that it's a clean sweep—let's repatriate everything now—because it's a complicated process and relationship.

● (1245)

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Chartier, when is the Métis museum to be built? You referred to a Métis museum that would be built in Manitoba. Is that correct?

Mr. Clément Chartier: Yes, that's correct.

They're in the final stages of putting the resources together to enable it to take place. We feel it's imminent that it's going to be happening.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Okay.

You feel that you will repatriate some artifacts, obviously, for the museum. I understand you raised the issue that there are some Métis artifacts that are not recognized, as well. I understand that this new museum could help with recognizing the Métis culture and help clarify the classification of artifacts.

Mr. Clément Chartier: Yes. That's correct.

That will be part of the exercise. Just as an example, about three years ago, Library and Archives Canada did an exhibit called "Hiding in Plain Sight". Basically, they were looking at their own archival work, where a lot of the stuff wasn't identified. It was basically Métis, but they have to go through all of their stuff to try to extract that.

We'd be going through similar kinds of processes because, after 100 years ago, Métis weren't really recognized anymore as people with rights; therefore we were cast aside by the federal government and made our way through life. That's changed again in the last number of years, so now it's a matter of rebuilding.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you.

My next question is for Ms. Kotierk.

Ms. Kotierk, I think Ms. Gross mentioned that there were 140,000 artifacts throughout the world. I understand that there is a commitment and a necessity to have a facility in Nunavut so that people can have access to these artifacts.

My question for you is the same as it was for Ms. Bell. Do you see any benefit in having the Nunavut culture be exposed in other places of the country and the world? Do you see this bill as a way to help fix a balance between having artifacts owned by the Nunavut people and also shared to expose the Nunavut culture?

Ms. Aluki Kotierk: Because Nunavut does not have a heritage facility as a territory, the focus for us is how to get the 140,000 objects that are currently housed outside Nunavut—which the Government of Nunavut is currently paying to have housed outside of Nunavut—repatriated back into Nunavut.

I recognize that there's a discussion about how these artifacts are of interest to other Canadians, to the Canadian public, but I think the focus for me at this point is how to get them to Nunavut so that Nunavut Inuit can see the artifacts that belonged to our ancestors.

Inuit in Nunavut have gone through a very drastic change in a very short period of time, so it's in living history. My father's generation is a generation that was living on the land, not in communities. Any time artifacts are brought into our communities, it sparks a lot of discussion and there's a lot of knowledge transfer between young Inuit and older Inuit. It sparks the memories, and that is what is so crucially important for us right now.

We need to have a facility in our territory where we can house them, and then we can start looking at whether or not we can have rotating exhibits going into our communities as an educational tool for Inuit about Inuit.

The Chair: Okay.

That actually puts you over your time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nantel, you have the floor.

● (1250)

Mr. Pierre Nantel: I want to thank all the witnesses.

This bill has led to fascinating discussions. Along with other witnesses, we've been discussing the bill introduced by my colleague, Romeo Saganash, with whom I have the privilege of working, and respect for the fundamental rights of Indigenous peoples.

I always say—I even heard it in the question asked by my colleague earlier—that there's an archeological perception of this issue. However, I think that we've been speaking more about the social sciences and a contemporary healing of the people whose past is involved. It's about your past and history. I think that we should address two issues, and I want to do so now.

First, we can start by saying that you're responsible for choosing how you want to repatriate, display and share these artifacts, with your people first, long before the artifacts are used as museum pieces and any cultural mediation with white people. You're responsible for choosing how you'll proceed. That said, the assignment of this responsibility without a proper budget constitutes a poisoned gift.

How should your control over the repatriation be included in the bill, and how should the cost be assessed? Shouldn't the cost be completely covered by the people who carried out all the actions that led to the current reconciliation commission, which means us and the rest of the country? In addition, why shouldn't the cost also be covered by people who benefited from the artifacts in their museums, archeological facilities or personal collections? I don't want to be too negative, but we must discuss money. Where will the money come from?

This question is specifically for Mr. Chartier and Ms. Kotierk or Ms. Gross.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Chartier, go ahead.

Mr. Clément Chartier: Well, that is a very excellent question and comment, because you're right. Without the necessary resources to enable us to find where the items are and to identify them as ours, those that we don't know of.... It will take resources.

I mentioned the museum in Manitoba. We've been working at that for over 30 years. The Manitoba Métis Federation took it on about 15 years ago, and we're getting close. In fact, we started with a stimulus budget, where we were asked to put in a proposal, but in the end the Métis nation didn't get a cent out of that stimulus budget. Through the years, it's been building up a little bit to where it is today, at the cusp of being able to move forward.

In our smaller communities, we don't have museums. For example, in northwest Saskatchewan, where I'm from, for the last 30 years I've been acquiring beadwork from our artisans, moose carvings and so on. I have them, but I have no place to put them yet. I'm thinking that, at some time, if the only place we can put them is in the national museum, then we can put them there, but it would be nice to have them right now in our community, so resourcing is a big issue.

We have the Gabriel Dumont Institute in Saskatoon, our educational arm in Saskatchewan, which has a small museum and also a virtual museum. They're going through this process but have challenges as well. Again, resources are a big challenge.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Just adding to the question, maybe some of you heard about the cultural hub studies we've done here. Could there be a link between those, a cultural hub, funded, that can also accommodate these, according to your plans and your will?

This is for Ms. Kotierk or Ms. Gross.

Ms. Aluki Kotierk: *Nakurmiik*.

In terms of the costs, I mentioned that a Nunavut heritage facility has already been agreed to in our Nunavut agreement under article 33.2.4. One of our challenges is the non-implementation of our current agreements. I think that would be a venue in which monies could be allocated toward seeing something come to fruition. There are different types of money. There's money that would be needed for capital to create a facility, but in terms of operations and maintenance funds, I think the money that the territorial government currently uses to house the 140,000 artifacts outside Nunavut could be diverted to operations and maintenance.

The thing that we need to work on, first and foremost, is getting the capital dollars to create the facility within Nunavut. In addition to that, money would be required to ensure we're building capacity among the Inuit so that Inuit have the specialized technical skill set to be able to work in a heritage facility that is run by Inuit and that is based on Inuit world views.

I think those are the types of.... Right now, we're faced with repatriation of the 140,000 objects that already belong to us and that are housed outside of Nunavut. Once we have those housed, I think another aspect would be to look around to see what other Inuit objects are out there, but we're not even looking there yet.

● (1255)

Ms. Pamela Gross: Thank you for your question.

I really think that the Inuit Heritage Trust is encouraging the Government of Canada to demonstrate reconciliation by working with us to implement article 33.2.4 and to have a museum in the territory. We do have smaller museums. As I said, I work at one of them. It's a non-profit organization started by the community over 22 years ago.

We do want to celebrate who we are in our communities by going to museums. It has been a gracious gift that NTI and QIA have both pledged $5 million towards bringing home those artifacts that are housed at the Museum of Nature's storage and also at the Winnipeg Art Gallery.

We would really love to have those objects sooner rather than later, because our elders are passing more quickly than we know. Their shared knowledge of who we identify with as Inuit is rapidly passing. Along with each elder who is sadly leaving this Earth goes their knowledge and their wisdom. To have them be able to utilize those objects and look at them and teach us at home is most important.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Ms. Bell, would you like—

The Chair: Unfortunately, that is the end of our time for this entire session.

If any of you have extra comments that you would like to send to us, you can do that, but I would ask that you do that soon because we will be looking at this bill shortly. If you have additional comments, please submit them.

Thank you to all of you. You've really added to our understanding of this bill and how we should be moving forward. That will bring this session to an end.

The meeting is adjourned.