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Chair: Mr. Bob Bratina



Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs

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• (1200)

[*Translation*]

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Evelyn Lukyniuk): Honourable committee members, I see a quorum.

[*English*]

I must inform members that the clerk of the committee can only receive motions for the election of the chair. The clerk cannot receive other types of motions, cannot entertain points of order nor participate in debate.

We can now proceed to the election of the chair. Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the chair must be a member of the governing party. I am ready to receive motions for the chair.

Mr. Battiste.

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Yes, I nominate Bob Bratina to be the chair.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Battiste that Mr. Bratina be elected as chair of the committee. Are there any further motions?

Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): I would just like to second that motion.

The Clerk: Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Mr. Bratina duly elected chair of the committee.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Clerk: I invite Mr. Bratina to take the chair.

The Chair (Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.)): Thank you very much.

As the chair, I am going to ask the committee to proceed to the election of the vice-chairs. Do I have any motions?

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): I nominate Jamie Schmale as the vice-chair.

The Chair: Are there any further nominations?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Congratulations, Mr. Vice-Chair.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Thank you.

The Chair: Now we proceed to the election of the second vice-chair. Is there a motion, please?

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq (Nunavut, NDP): I would like to nominate myself, Mumilaaq Qaqqaq.

The Chair: Could someone else...?

An hon. member: I would like to nominate Mumilaaq Qaqqaq.

• (1205)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Are there any other motions?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Chair, we'd like to defer this matter—nomination of the second vice-chair—to the next meeting please.

The Chair: The request is that we do this at the next meeting. What's the pleasure of the committee?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: We'll take that matter up at our next meeting. Thank you very much.

Go ahead.

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq: I'd like to know the reasoning behind that. Is that possible?

It's something that we can get done today, so we may as well....

The Chair: Mr. Anandasangaree, would you comment, please?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Sure.

My understanding is that the procedure and House affairs committee is seized with this, in terms of vice-chairs between the Bloc and the NDP. I think it would be appropriate, once they make the decision, that we then vote based on the decision of PROC.

My understanding is that this matter is now before PROC to see which party will have a vice-chair on all of the committees. Until that is determined, I think it would be appropriate for us to wait. Out of respect to both parties, it would be appropriate for us to defer the decision until PROC has finalized that decision.

The Chair: Is that understood?

What I'm hearing is that this is not something personal about an individual. It's about procedural matters.

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq: Yes, I understand, but I still don't see the reason that the decision can't be made today. I am one of two indigenous peoples on this committee, and I see no better fit than me for second vice-chair.

I see it as a tactic to hold things up. That's just my personal view.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: It's absolutely not personal—just for the record—and it's not tactical. It's in respect of the way that the committees have been operating. My understanding is that between the Bloc Québécois and the NDP, convention would see that the third party would have the vice-chair. That would be the convention, as I understand it.

In this particular case, I think PROC is seized with determining whether there should be three vice-chairs. In respect of that decision, I think it would be appropriate for us to wait. All we're saying is that we defer the decision, that we not vote on it right now but defer it until that matter has been determined by PROC.

The Chair: Mr. Powlowski, did you have your hand up?

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): I was going to ask whether the Bloc is seeking to have a vice-chair or not.

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): We want to wait for the result.

[English]

The Chair: I'm in the hands of the committee.

My suggestion is that, in view of the position that it's not a personal matter—it's a process matter—and that it could well conclude with two second vice-chairs from the Bloc and the NDP, for the purposes of following the PROC processes, we simply defer the decision on second vice-chair until the subsequent meeting to hear the comments from PROC.

Could I have a motion on deferral?

Mr. Gary Vidal: We voted on it already.

The Chair: You have a motion on the floor to defer.

• (1210)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: I believe we passed it, if I'm not mistaken.

The Chair: I missed that because a discussion ensued. The matter will be deferred until the next meeting.

Next, I'm going to go to Ms. Zann.

Ms. Lenore Zann: Mr. Chair, I'd like to introduce routine motions.

The Chair: Go ahead, please.

Ms. Lenore Zann: Regarding the analysts, I move:

That the committee retain, as needed and at the discretion of the chair, the services of one or more analysts from the Library of Parliament to assist in its work.

(Motion agreed to)

I move:

That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be established and be composed of five (5) members: the chair and one member from each party; and that the subcommittee work in the spirit of collaboration.

Regarding reduced quorum, I also move:

That the chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive evidence and to have that evidence printed when a quorum is not present, provided that at least four (4) members

are present, including one member of the opposition and one member of the government, but when travelling outside the parliamentary precinct, that the meeting begin after fifteen (15) minutes, regardless of members present.

The Chair: Ms. Zann, we'll take the previous motion on the subcommittee first.

(Motion agreed to)

Now we'll vote on the second motion that was just read.

(Motion agreed to)

Carry on, please.

Ms. Lenore Zann: On questioning of witnesses, I move:

That witnesses be given ten (10) minutes for their opening statement; that, at the discretion of the Chair, during the questioning of witnesses, there be allocated six (6) minutes for the first questioner of each party as follows: Conservative Party, Liberal Party, Bloc Québécois, New Democratic Party. For the second and subsequent rounds, the order and time for questioning be as follows: Conservative Party, five (5) minutes; Liberal Party, five (5) minutes; Conservative Party, five (5) minutes; Liberal Party, five (5) minutes; Bloc Québécois, two and a half (2.5) minutes; New Democratic Party, two and a half (2.5) minutes.

(Motion agreed to)

For document distribution, I move:

That the clerk of the committee be authorized to distribute documents to members of the committee only when the documents are available in both official languages and that witnesses be advised accordingly.

Mr. Chair, this is a very important issue.

The Chair: It's typical for us to do that.

(Motion agreed to)

Ms. Lenore Zann: For working meals, I move:

That the clerk of the committee be authorized to make the necessary arrangements to provide working meals for the committee and its subcommittees.

(Motion agreed to)

For witnesses expenses, I move:

That, if requested, reasonable travel, accommodation and living expenses be reimbursed to witnesses not exceeding two (2) representatives per organization; provided that, in exceptional circumstances, payment for more representatives be made at the discretion of the chair.

(Motion agreed to)

For staff at in camera meetings, I move:

That, unless otherwise ordered, each committee member be allowed to have one staff member at an in camera meeting and that one additional person from each House officer's office be allowed to be present.

(Motion agreed to)

• (1215)

For the in camera meeting transcripts, I move:

That one copy of the transcript of each in camera meeting be kept in the committee clerk's office for consultation by members of the committee or by their staff.

(Motion agreed to)

For notices of motions, I move:

That forty-eight (48) hours' notice, interpreted as two (2) nights, shall be required for any substantive motion to be considered by the committee, unless the substantive motion relates directly to business then under consideration, provided that (1) the notice be filed with the clerk of the committee no later than 4:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday; that (2) the motion be distributed to members in both official languages by the clerk on the same day the said notice was transmitted if it was received no later than the deadline hour; and that (3) notices received after the deadline hour or on non-business days be deemed to have been received during the next business day and that when the committee is travelling on official business, no substantive motions may be moved.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Ms. Zann, go ahead.

Ms. Lenore Zann: There's one more, Mr. Chair, regarding independent members and clause-by-clause. I move:

That, in relation to Orders of Reference from the House respecting Bills, (a) the clerk of the committee shall, upon the committee receiving such an Order of Reference, write to each member who is not a member of a caucus represented on the committee to invite those members to file with the clerk of the committee, in both official languages, any amendments to the Bill, which is the subject of the said order, which they would suggest that the committee consider; (b) suggested amendments filed, pursuant to paragraph (a), at least 48 hours prior to the start of clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill to which the amendments relate shall be deemed to be proposed during the said consideration, provided that the committee may, by motion, vary this deadline in respect of a given Bill; and (c) during the clause-by-clause consideration of a Bill, the chair shall allow a member who filed suggested amendments, pursuant to paragraph (a), an opportunity to make brief representations in support of them.

(Motion agreed to)

That is the last one.

The Chair: We have our routine motions in place.

Is there any other business of the committee?

Yes, Mr. Schmale.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Thank you, Chair. It will be great to work with everyone on this committee. I think it's going to be a very interesting one, where we can get a lot of work done.

My suggestion can be in the form of a motion if you want, Chair, or however the committee feels we should proceed.

We—and I'm sure others—have a bunch of motions that we'd like to table. Instead of reading out each one and discussing them, would it be more efficient to table our motions with the clerk so that we all have a chance to look them over? Then, in place of Thursday's regularly scheduled meeting, we could change that to a steering committee meeting so it can decide how best to proceed going forward, allowing us to start fresh a week from now on whatever topic.

The Chair: How does the committee feel?

Jaime.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: [*Member spoke in Mi'kmaq as follows:*]

Oelalin Bob, tan tel igenemoin itjga teleogoeno, tan telsetemeg, tan tel notag eltaneo tan oesgotemeg, elnoegatil ag tan gisi telatesno elnoegati Ag oeltasi eimotig Algonquin territory glaman gisi teleogetesnog

[*Mi'kmaq text translated as follows:*]

Thank you, Bob, for giving me the opportunity to speak about what is needed in our native communities. I am thankful to be welcomed in Algonquin territory to be able to talk.

[*English*]

I just start off always speaking in my Mi'kmaq language, and what I did was acknowledge the territory of the Algonquins.

I grew up next to Grand Captain Alexander Denny. He always said, when we were looking at discussing indigenous issues, in order to get a balanced understanding of where we're going, we should first know where we have been. One of the things that not everyone in Canada has been privileged to be able to get education around is indigenous issues and some of the history around colonization within Canada.

One of the first things that I think would set the tone well, as a historic first for this committee, is for us to do some training and to really understand the issues that we're about to discuss and put forward in priorities. The TRC in its calls to action was pretty adamant that we need increased education and training in all areas, and one of them is for us as parliamentarians. I really feel that we could get off on the right foot if we took a historic first for this committee and did something that would increase our knowledge around indigenous history.

Before I became an MP, I was the treaty education lead for Nova Scotia, and I was able to be part of a first there when the provincial cabinet in Nova Scotia took part in a blanket exercise and then had presentations done from groups that informed them about indigenous history.

What I would like to recommend is, following the calls to action, to seek first to listen, to understand and to really get a sense of what the history is...what we are trying to do differently. By taking part in a blanket exercise as our next convened meeting, this could be something that not only we but our staffs could take part in, and it would give us a really good sense of the history that we've been through in Canada and a sense of being able to move forward on this committee by learning first, by listening first, by understanding first and then moving forward with the priorities and values we've come to understand from this.

That would be my recommendation, that first we figure out and take two hours of our time and do a blanket exercise where we would be able to understand the history of indigenous people and the history of Canada in a way that puts us on a good path toward working together for the indigenous people across Canada.

• (1220)

The Chair: I think we can accommodate both of these discussions, but Gary, would you like to comment?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Yes. I was just going to echo that, Mr. Chair.

Maybe we start off with a blanket ceremony and then proceed to what Jamie had proposed that we put in the motions, and once the motions are there, maybe have some discussions among each other off-line to see what kind of study we could prioritize.

I'm not sure if it's feasible to do it for this Thursday, but we could certainly do it the next Tuesday and then have the planning meeting the following Thursday, which will allow us to dive into the study right after that.

The Chair: Marcus.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Are these two motions? Jamie has a motion and Jaime has...?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: That's what I want clarification on from the chair, if I could.

The Chair: Yes. I have two motions and we're only allowed one at a time.

I wasn't sure whether Jaime was going to comment directly on yours, but that's fair. We've had a good discussion on it.

Let me take Mr. Schmale's motion first because it won't interfere with—

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Can I just basically respond to that before we have a vote?

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Thank you.

I agree with what you're saying. That would be a wonderful idea and I'm more than happy to talk about it, but Gary said something about... I had proposed that next Thursday, instead of the regularly scheduled meeting, we do the planning meeting. Then if we want to do what you suggested on Tuesday, that way we've already set the agenda this week and won't have to wait until next Thursday to deal with moving forward. We can actually get rolling.

I guess I'm happy to make the motion in official terms, but...

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: I think the issue is whether Jaime's point was that we do the blanket ceremony first before we proceed to the order of work.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Is he ready to do it on Thursday or do you want to wait until next week?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: It really comes down to our analysts and our clerk to see if it's possible to put that together. It would have to be part of formal business, but whether you are able to convene the right elders to be able to put together a blanket ceremony for Thursday...

• (1225)

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq: Thank you.

I don't even know where to begin.

Being a part of this committee is more than just an exercise that you do once to say, "Okay now I know more about indigenous histories, indigenous peoples." The blanket exercise itself, and I'm one of two self-identifying Inuit in the 338, totally excludes Inuit and Métis groups. For us to have a productive and ongoing discussion,

learning doesn't stop there. You don't do the blanket exercise and say, "Okay, I've learned my history."

People who are fortunate enough to learn and know that history... I'm self-taught. I didn't know anything about my people either until I started teaching myself and looking for that information. It's an ongoing process. I think it's great that we want to have something like that. We need to be careful about tokenism of ceremony and the exercises that we do. That's also something that everybody in the committee should be invested in outside of this committee.

Let's not carve out time for this one particular thing. Let's make a personal investment in educating ourselves and becoming more aware. When we talk about the issues that indigenous peoples face...and wording is so important. It's not indigenous issues. It's not an issue because we're indigenous. It's an issue that we, indigenous peoples, face.

In saying all of this, I think it's important that we know that history. Often the federal government has played the biggest role in the situations we see indigenous peoples and indigenous groups in today. Now we need to be part of that solution. How can we do that if we don't know the history, if we don't acknowledge that there are three distinct groups? Even within our three indigenous groups there are massive differences.

My point is to steer away from tokenism. People need to have a personal investment in educating themselves and in becoming more aware of the history of indigenous peoples to have a better understanding of where we're at today.

Ms. Lenore Zann: Thank you for your interjection. Thank you for your suggestion as well.

Many of us MPs and MLAs—I was an MLA for 10 years before coming here—have first nations communities within our ridings. Some people interact more than others, taking it upon themselves to learn the history, the culture, to spend time with our first nations constituents, and others don't. I think where Jaime is coming from is a place where having two indigenous people on this committee, I think he was hoping that perhaps the rest of us could start on a good foot and come together and do an exercise that might include everybody.

Are you saying that the blanket exercise does not include Inuit culture? Is that the point that you're trying to make?

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq: Yes, and Métis.

Ms. Lenore Zann: Okay.

Are there any other exercises that perhaps could include all indigenous communities from coast to coast to coast?

Ms. Mumilaag Qaqqaq: I'm happy to do my research and provide that. I think that as a committee we could come together and look for those resources, and find them.

You're a Nunavik riding. A lot of your constituents are Inuk. You keep saying first nations. How much do we know around the table. We have an amazing wealth of knowledge around the table. I think we can feed off that, as opposed to steering towards tokenism. We're hoping to learn from you, to hear your suggestions, that you're going to provide this information.

The Chair: I have Bob Zimmer on my list.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Let's go back to the first motion on the table. It sounds as if there needs to be some more discussion about what's appropriate and what isn't, who's included and who's not. That would be appropriate at the subcommittee. It falls in line with the motion on the floor right now. That's where I would recommend it to go, for that group to discuss how we proceed and to give it a full understanding. A study may be a strong word for committees. A study can last for months, but at least we'll have that discussion to know where to go and that we're going in the right direction.

Chair, we should go back to the motion Mr. Schmale has put on the table and let's look at that.

• (1230)

The Chair: Once again, I don't see how one interferes with the other. We need to circulate the information we have.

I'll read the motion:

That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure meet on Thursday, February 20, 2020, to discuss future business of the committee.

That motion is on the floor. Can I ask the committee if you're in favour of that motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: I understand, Mr. Schmale, that you also want us to circulate, through the clerk's office, the material we've already prepared, and that you'll do the same. Then we'll all have it.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Yes. The subcommittee will deal with that. That's also the issue we're talking about.

The Chair: Right.

On the other question, then—I'm fascinated by this conversation, because it's a learning experience for all of us—do I see a problem in having a blanket exercise, as we're not intending to exclude the Inuit people, who aren't represented in the blanket exercise?

Mr. Powlowski, go ahead, please.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: I appreciate that the idea of tokenism but I don't think it's intended that way. I think we certainly appreciate that part of being on this committee is that it's an educational process for all of us. What we know about indigenous affairs doesn't stop with this committee.

I think Jaime has expressed an interest in doing this. Couldn't we, for example, allow you to do something afterwards that you think is appropriate for the Inuit? From our side, it would seem to me that

this is a good way of starting it off, to hear about the history of the indigenous people from the indigenous perspective.

We thought that this was a good way of starting the process. I don't think we intended to alienate Inuit people by doing it this way. Couldn't we have some compromise and say, yes, we can do this, and then you can do something later? I think we all realize that the two of you have a special status in this committee that the rest of us don't have.

The Chair: I have Mr. Battiste on my speakers list, but I'll advise the committee that theoretically we're going to move this to the subcommittee, which, once again, will meet on Thursday prior to our next formal meeting. By then, we should have a more fulsome discussion and move on from there.

Is it the pleasure of the committee to leave the continuing discussion to the subcommittee?

Jaime, you want to make a comment.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: My comment is that one of the things was the hope that we would start off learning a little bit about each other by doing things together. I might be naive in believing that as a committee we can work together on issues, but first we seek to understand. While the blanket exercise is one exercise that we can do, if you have other things you believe, that is important.

This is not about tokenism. This is about understanding. This is about giving folks who didn't have an opportunity in their school system, or who didn't get a chance to learn off the land, a glimpse of our history and, in doing so, hoping that we move forward in the spirit of reconciliation. This is part of the calls to action. This is part of our first steps on this journey towards reconciliation. This is why it has been placed in front of us, in saying, "Can we move forward together as a first step in learning?" If there needs to be an appendix or an additional discussion.... If I look at the blanket exercise, it's not reflective of every single nation—I'm a Mi'kmaq—but I believe it's a really good tool to show the history of colonization in Canada. It talks about some of the things the TRC has mentioned.

Really, what I'm looking at is trying to start off in a good way, to start off in a way that seeks to listen and to hear, and to participate in something that is being used across Canada by different treaty commissions. The whole point of this, I feel, is that we can move forward in the spirit of reconciliation if we first start off by listening and opening our hearts and our minds in a good way. That was the intention of this. I think it would be historic for this committee to take this on.

I'm more than happy to discuss at subcommittee how we can involve the Métis and Inuit if the feeling is that they are excluded from this exercise. The way I've seen it done, it's not excluding, but it's perhaps done differently in Nova Scotia than it is done in other places. I was the treaty education lead for Nova Scotia.

I would just say that I think this is something that would be a historic first for us. It's in line with the TRC calls to action. I would keep the motion as is. I would like to do this and go down this exercise first, before we start making priorities.

• (1235)

The Chair: Let me see the motion again.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: We already passed that motion.

Mr. Gary Vidal: That sends it to committee.

The Chair: Your motion is done to discuss future business in the committee. What's before the committee is Jaime's motion that we move forward with this.

For further clarification, I believe the issue that the subcommittee will deal with is the contrast of the two presented before us. Having passed that motion, it seems to me that the matter will sit with the subcommittee, and we'll go from there.

I have Mr. van Koeverden to speak next.

Go ahead.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to everybody for their contributions.

After having a quick word with my colleague, Mr. Battiste, I think it's really important that, in the spirit of coming together, if we are going to proceed with something like a blanket exercise or with a variety of exercises in the hopes of education and becoming a little more enlightened on issues that many of us have not faced throughout our lives, it be unanimous on the part of the committee. If it's irreconcilable, we should not proceed, because if we don't find consensus there, then I think it's unlikely that we'll find consensus elsewhere, and the work that we have been charged with, the obligation to proceed here, will require us to come together as a committee.

It's my view, and I believe it's shared by Mr. Battiste, that, if it is not unanimous, we not proceed with any of those activities.

The Chair: What we have before us is that the subcommittee will present to the full committee, at which time we would consider the notion of unanimity.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: In our discussion, Chair, I asked that, if we were to move on it at subcommittee and, say, on Tuesday, before we start the agenda, would it be possible to do that blanket ceremony or some combination?

Mr. Jaime Battiste: It's about 90 minutes to two hours.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: We have two hours in our committee that we could use for Tuesday, and then, if the subcommittee so chooses, we start whatever study we're going to do on Thursday. Maybe our NDP friend has another idea, but the subcommittee is charged with this. Could it be done on Tuesday, just hypothetically? Yes, okay.

The Chair: We don't have an issue then.

What we need to do for process is to pass a motion that the committee take part in a blanket exercise at the Tuesday meeting subsequent to this meeting.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: No, the committee's going to debate that. What I was asking is, if the subcommittee were to approve that on Thursday, is it feasible to have it ready to go on Tuesday? That's just for planning. If we're going to decide how to get the committee going and what we're going to move on if, in our minds, Tuesday is a possibility, then we'll just basically—

The Chair: The main committee has to accept the recommendation of the subcommittee, so that creates a timing problem for what Mr. Battiste wants to do.

Gary.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: At least in principle, it would appear that we have agreement that we will have a blanket ceremony, amongst others. If it's okay with everyone, then we schedule that in for Tuesday and this committee can vote on it right now. We will have a planning meeting on Thursday in which we will discuss the motions as well as other ceremonies that could be incorporated as part of what we're going for. I think in terms of timing, practically, the whole committee needs to agree to this, and I don't think we will have an opportunity before Tuesday to have that agreement.

• (1240)

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Could we just vote on it Tuesday morning? It will take 10 seconds. I don't want to over-complicate it.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: My understanding is, if it's a blanket ceremony, the set-up of the room and everything will be quite different. I think the idea is that it's a less formal exercise and an exercise that doesn't involve our being in somewhat of an adversarial position.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Going back to the motion that just passed, it already spoke to this being discussed at subcommittee, so we can't go there until we've had that discussion. I don't believe so. I think that's why that motion went in that direction, because we heard from a member of the NDP who had concerns about that. I think, again, it needs to be discussed in that setting first before we make blanket commitments about ceremonies. I think that needs to be a discussion in subcommittee first.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: With great respect, I believe that the committee is able to make those decisions, notwithstanding the motion that was passed. The motion that was passed specifically involves studies that this committee is going to undertake, and this proposal is not an actual study. This is more of an exercise, so there is a distinction.

In the spirit of moving forward as a committee with one of the first things we're going to do, we will move forward with a subcommittee discussion on Thursday of what our study priorities will be amongst the parties and then we propose—and I think there is an actual motion on the table, which can be voted on—to have a blanket ceremony on Tuesday, next Tuesday.

The Chair: Jamie.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Thank you, Chair.

In light of everything, if we don't want to hold it up, do you want me to move the motion, or are you going to move the motion, that we approve the blanket ceremony on Tuesday? I don't know if that's from you or Gary or....

Jaime, do you want to do that?

Mr. Jaime Battiste: I'm hoping to come to a consensus on this, the blanket exercise. If it's not done with consensus and it isn't done by all of us who want to learn, who want to share, who want to take part in something that helps us over the next two years with the issues that we're going to discuss, then I would take it off the floor. I want to see that it's done by consensus or not done at all.

The Chair: I have Mr. Viersen and Ms. Qaqqaq.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I was just going to make the point that the second motion we passed here was that there be a subcommittee on agenda and procedure. All this discussion that we're having right now is for that committee, the subcommittee on agenda and procedure. It's supposed to set the agenda for our meetings going forward. That's the appropriate place for this discussion.

The Chair: We'll hear Ms. Qaqqaq and then Mr. Zimmer.

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq: Thank you. If we're going to start off in a good way, I don't think a good way to start off is an exercise that doesn't include all indigenous groups and solely focuses on first nations individuals. Also, it's not a ceremony. It's an exercise, and that's what I mean when we're talking about tokenism, and looking to me—again, this is what I'm trying to say—is like me asking you, with whatever your background is, to do work that I can also contribute to.

To ask me for a list of recommendations, sure, I'm okay to do that, but my point is that we all need to make a commitment to being invested in learning. In saying that, I don't think it's a good way to start off, with an exercise that focuses on first nations groups and excludes Inuit and Métis, so I don't agree with doing the exercise.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Zimmer.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I think we want to support what your intent is. Again, we just don't want to cause an offence unintentionally. We like where you're going for that purpose.

Maybe you can explain—

• (1245)

Mr. Jaime Battiste: I move to withdraw. If the NDP does not support training as a starting point for discussion on indigenous history, then I don't need to move forward on it. I will respect Ms. Qaqqaq's thoughts on this, and perhaps we'll have a conversation some other time and we can come back to the committee with some kind of consensus on an appropriate mechanism that would take into consideration all aboriginal peoples in Canada—Inuit, Métis and first nations.

So with that, I withdraw.

The Chair: With the lack of consensus, it is withdrawn.

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq: I just have one comment. It's not that I don't agree with exercises, and this is where I'm already starting to feel outed in a lot of ways. It's that we don't start with this particular exercise, that we start with something all-inclusive, and that might mean reading a chapter from the truth and reconciliation report or memorizing some recommendations from it. I'm not saying I don't agree with doing an exercise. I'm saying not this one in particular.

The Chair: What we're faced with, committee, is two very important approaches to our committee work, which include setting us off on a path that begins with knowledge of first nations and Inuit indigenous people, and I'm wondering whether there's material or a way that we can discuss maybe at the subcommittee level as to what those approaches might be.

I think I'll leave it at that and move to the subcommittee.

Mr. Zimmer, you have a comment.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I would make one recommendation—I'm sure this will happen anyway—that Mr. Battiste and the member from the NDP get together to discuss a best way forward in terms of a motion.

I'm certain we'd be willing to look at it from our side. Again, we support what the intent is, absolutely.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: I'd be more than happy to—

The Chair: The matter will go to the subcommittee.

With regard to future meetings, we have the subcommittee for our future meeting.

With that and no further comments, this meeting is adjourned.

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