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• (1305)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.)): Welcome, everybody, to the 46th meeting of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted in committee on June 11, 2021, the committee will commence consideration of the study of funding to locate the remains of indigenous children buried on the grounds of former residential schools.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, both virtual and in person, pursuant to the House order of January 25, 2021. The webcast will always show the person speaking rather than the entirety of the committee. It will be shown on the House of Commons website once it's available. There will be no photos for social media use. Thank you very much for abiding by that.

I want to make one statement before we commence today's meeting. This is for all staff. Today's meeting might include some difficult testimony that can affect people in many ways. House employees, including members and their staff, can access support through the administration's nurse counsellors at ohs-sst@parl.gc.ca, and the employee and family assistance program at 1-800-663-1142. This information is available on the House of Commons website or you can follow up with me or the clerk.

That being said, I want to welcome everyone on this beautiful Friday. It is a beautiful Friday, at least in my neck of the woods here on this little [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] Newfoundland, the unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq as well as Beothuk.

First of all, I want to acknowledge the fact that we are dealing with a motion from Mr. Waugh. I thank him for that.

I want to welcome our guests. Joining us from the Department of Canadian Heritage is Emmanuelle Sajous, assistant deputy minister, sport, major events and commemorations; and Melanie Kwong, director general, major events, commemoration and capital experience. Joining us from Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada is Amanda McCarthy, director, resolution and partnerships.

As you know, we start with a statement from our officials. We say as a guideline that it's five minutes, but I won't be terribly strict about this. We have perhaps a little bit more than an hour to do our meeting today. I would like to do two rounds of questioning.

Ms. Kwong, you have the floor for five minutes. Welcome.

Ms. Melanie Kwong (Director General, Major Events, Commemorations and Capital Experience, Department of Canadian Heritage): Thank you, Mr. Chair and committee members.

I would just like to mention that my colleague Emmanuelle is having some connection difficulties, so I'll be speaking on her behalf to begin the remarks.

[Translation]

Dear members of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. I'm pleased to be appearing before you today.

[English]

Recognizing that I'm speaking on my colleague's behalf, I would like to acknowledge that today I'm speaking to you from the Treaty No. 7 territory of the Stoney Nakoda and Blackfoot Confederacy, as well as Métis region 3 in Alberta.

[Translation]

I'm here to give you information on funding provided by the Department of Canadian Heritage for activities related to the commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools.

[English]

First, I would like to acknowledge the committee's support in making the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation a reality. This year, on September 30, we will mark the first anniversary of this important day that will help ensure that the tragic history and legacy of residential schools are not forgotten and remain a vital component of the reconciliation process.

In 2019, the federal budget provided \$7 million over two years for projects to raise awareness of the history and legacy of residential schools and to honour survivors, families and communities. The department developed a two-year strategy. The first year we funded large-scale national initiatives that have an educational and legacy component. The second year was for community-based projects suited to meet specific needs, histories and realities.

[Translation]

This funding provided grants and contributions to eligible recipients for initiatives that helped raise awareness regarding the history and legacy of residential schools and for activities that enabled communities to recognize, commemorate and honour survivors, their families and communities. Interest in this special initiative was remarkable with over 350 applications totalling \$14 million in requested funding, despite the challenges caused by the pandemic.

Between 2019 and 2021, several national events and 203 community projects were funded. Examples of eligible projects include: healing gardens, ceremonies, healing workshops, elder presentations, speaker series, commemorative plaques and monuments, educational and awareness material, and cultural and artistic initiatives.

[English]

These numbers show the interest and need for these types of commemorative activities and funding to support them.

I'm happy to report that budget 2021 made the funding announced in budget 2019 permanent, with \$13.4 million over the next five years and \$2.4 million in ongoing support. The department will be engaging indigenous groups, survivor organizations and communities to determine how best to allocate funds. It is critical to engage to ensure this funding best meets the needs of indigenous communities and that we adhere to the principle of "nothing about us without us".

[Translation]

In parallel with this national engagement, the department will collaborate with national organizations for large-scale commemorative events in 2021 that will continue to raise awareness regarding the history and legacy that I talked about earlier.

• (1310)

[English]

To speak specifically on the paths to healing project, I have some points of clarification.

The Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc received a \$40,000 grant for a project they called "paths to healing". This was in the context of the funding I mentioned previously that was announced in 2019.

The objective of the program was to commemorate the history and legacy of residential schools and to honour survivors, their families and communities. The project submitted by the community was in fact for the creation of a permanent memorial site and included improvements such as benches, plants, gardens and paths within the existing heritage park. It also included commemorative events centred around Orange Shirt Day.

The use of the ground-penetrating radar technology was one of the measures taken as part of the development of this initiative. In effect, one can say that the Canadian Heritage funding contributed to the identification of the remains. However, this find was not the original intended specific purpose of the project.

[Translation]

Other federal departments, such as Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, have their own initiatives that ad-

dress certain calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. These initiatives relate to their specific mandates.

In the specific case of missing children and burials, the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada is the lead for calls to action 74 to 76.

This concludes my opening remarks.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Kwong. I appreciate that.

I notice that Ms. Sajous was able to join us. I think she's there right now.

Ms. Sajous, can you please say hello and tell us a little bit about yourself in order to get that sound check?

[Translation]

Ms. Emmanuelle Sajous (Assistant Deputy Minister, Sport, Major Events and Commemorations, Department of Canadian Heritage): Good afternoon. I'm tremendously sorry.

My name is Emmanuelle Sajous.

[English]

I am the assistant deputy minister at Canadian Heritage, for sport, commemorations and major events. It's nice to be here today. Thank you.

The Chair: It appears that your sound should be okay.

Oh, she was already sound-checked. That's very good.

Ms. Emmanuelle Sajous: Yes, I'm really sorry. I lost my connection.

The Chair: Trust me, you're not the first one to say that, and you're probably not going to be the last one either. I appreciate your coming on for this important discussion.

Now, folks, for those of you who are unfamiliar—perhaps you're watching us through webcast—those were our opening statements. We now go to the round of questioning from our colleagues.

We are going to start with the Conservative Party, and the man who brought us this motion, Mr. Kevin Waugh.

Mr. Waugh, you have the floor, for six minutes, please.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our guests. This has been a particularly hard time in our country and I felt it very important to bring department officials forward to speak about the paths of healing and the situation in Kamloops.

When I look at the Kamloops, when Canadian Heritage gave the \$40,000 grant, I see that part of it was for the ground-penetrating radar that identified the 215 gravesites.

How many other residential schools in this country have applied for the grant and the GPR? I know my province of Saskatchewan is actively involved right now, and I'm going to talk about that in a moment, but from the Kamloops story, how many now have contacted the heritage department requesting funding for the GPR?

Ms. Emmanuelle Sajous: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

As you heard in the opening remarks, the purpose of Canadian Heritage's commemorations program is to educate Canadians on the history of residential schools and create a positive environment for reconciliation. The program's goals boil down to awareness, education and promotion. We received over 350 funding applications over the course of the program. Canadian Heritage provided \$3.5 million in funding for 203 projects, and Kamloops received \$40,000 for a project to build a healing garden and a reconciliation centre. The horrifying discovery happened over the course of that project. The funding was earmarked for a healing garden.

I'll now give the floor to my Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, or CIRNAC, colleague, who will provide additional information on the number of communities that asked for radars. Ms. McCarthy?

• (1315)

[*English*]

Ms. Amanda McCarthy (Director, Settlement Agreement and Childhood Claims, Resolution and Partnerships, Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs): Thank you very much for inviting me here.

At this moment, I can say that we've received over 17 requests for more information about the funding envelope. We've provided them with the necessary information for them to access the funding. At this point we've not received more than 10 proposals, as communities work through this very difficult tragedy and listen to their communities and their survivors about the best approach to move forward.

We are here to offer our support and the resources [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] survivors, their organizations and communities are ready.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Thank you.

We have lots in Saskatchewan where I come from, such as the Battleford Indian Industrial School. We have the Star Blanket Cree Nation. We have so many in our province now that are going to reach out.

There was a story in the CBC that now certain organizations want to rent these ground-penetrating radar services and go to the first nations, the indigenous groups, in my province and others. They say they have the expertise. In fact, I see SNC-Lavalin has offered their services to many in Saskatchewan and to others in this country.

I'm a little concerned about the scam aspect of this, because you really need expertise in ground-penetrating radar and how to operate it and identify it. CBC has done a very good story on the scams that are coming forward. I'm very worried that this is going to over-

take what really should be happening—access to funds either from INAN or from Canadian Heritage and doing it properly—because if it isn't done properly, this is going to be another disaster in this country.

Do you have any thoughts on that?

Ms. Emmanuelle Sajous: Maybe Ms. McCarthy would want to answer, because this is more her mandate in the department.

Ms. Amanda McCarthy: Thank you for that.

We engaged with over 150 participants during summer and fall 2020, and we overwhelmingly heard that the approach that Canada should take should be to facilitate access to resources, but the project should be community-led and informed by survivors.

We're currently reaching out with colleagues and other professionals to start the conversation about how to provide a sense of guidance on ground-penetrating radar that communities can access to enable them to make informed decisions.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I sat on INAN for two years, and the money, as you mentioned, supposedly was there. There was \$33 million over three years, and there's still \$27 million left.

I heard the testimony from the National Centre of Truth and Reconciliation. It received \$2.6 million to develop and maintain a student death register. However, it says the money is not flowing, and I would agree with the centre.

The program started in 2019 with over \$33 million, and we've only seen \$3 million to \$4 million out. What is the issue here? We still have \$27 million available two years later. What is the issue we are seeing in this country and the departments?

Ms. Amanda McCarthy: We wanted to make sure we engaged with survivor organizations, indigenous leaders, health practitioners and archaeologists. We did that engagement over the summer and fall of last year. We had delays due to the pandemic. We supported the communities by identifying their priorities, and supported them and their members during that difficult time. We completed the engagement in November 2020, and as you're aware we now have the \$27.1 million available.

• (1320)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. McCarthy, and thank you, Mr. Waugh.

We're now going to Mr. Battiste, who is not a regular member of our committee, but is a special guest today with his expertise. We certainly welcome him.

I know your riding is in Cape Breton, and Sydney is in it, but I've forgotten the official name.

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): It's Sydney—Victoria.

The Chair: I should know that.

You have six minutes. Please go ahead.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: I want to thank the heritage committee for giving me some time today to talk about this really important issue.

I've heard some of the members and some of the discussion regarding the need to raise awareness in commemorating Indian residential schools.

I'd like to begin by looking at some of the work we've done as a government. Yesterday, we were lucky enough to vote on Bill C-15 on UNDRIP, which was mentioned seven times in the TRC's calls to action. We've also done important work in terms of establishing a language commissioner last week, as well as the TRC calls to action regarding the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

We've taken a lot of big steps in government in terms of fulfilling the calls to action, but across the country there were 130 different residential schools. In a lot of these places, there is no commemoration. There is no plaque. There's nothing. As for the only residential school we had in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, there is a farm there now. There's nothing there to commemorate all of the children whose lives were lost, and all of the communities that had to go there.

Could you talk to me a bit about the \$27 million our government has put towards ensuring that we move forward on the calls to action? Why is it important that these processes be indigenous-led and not government-led, community-based and based on the survivors of the residential schools, which were very different all across Canada.

I want you to speak to that a bit.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Emmanuelle Sajous: First of all, budget 2019 did in fact allocate \$7 million over two years for Canadian Heritage to address residential schools.

[*English*]

The objective of the money was to increase awareness; to commemorate the legacy; to honour the memory of the residential school survivors, the families and communities; and to provide an opportunity for survivors to talk about this dark period of our history.

In budget 2021, we were able to get \$13.4 million over five years. We now have \$2.4 million a year to continue on this path and to commemorate the legacy of residential schools.

I will turn to Ms. McCarthy. Maybe you can talk about your own calls to action, and what you're doing on your side.

Ms. Amanda McCarthy: You have my apologies. I was disconnected for a couple of minutes. I'm not sure I heard everything that was presented, but I did catch the fact that you were interested in hearing what the \$27.1 million was for.

Am I correct in that?

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Yes. Could you speak to that and what we're doing around commemoration?

Ms. Amanda McCarthy: The \$27.1 million is the funding that's now available from the \$33.8 million specifically targeted for calls to action 74 to 76. The funding is dedicated to supporting indigenous communities and survivors' organizations and their partners in locating, documenting, maintaining and commemorating burial sites associated with former residential schools, and responding to

family wishes to commemorate and memorialize their losses and the children's final resting places.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Okay. If that's all, then, I want to touch on education a little bit. We're talking about commemoration and we're talking about raising awareness. A lot of the education components of moving forward on the calls to action [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] provinces and federal collaboration. Now with the truth and reconciliation day of September 30, can you talk a little about what opportunities exist around heritage in terms of how we can create more awareness and education around the Indian residential schools?

Feel free to chime in, anyone.

• (1325)

Ms. Emmanuelle Sajous: I'm sorry. The connection is not very good on my side. I'm not sure I understood the whole question.

The Chair: I have paused your time, Mr. Battiste.

I'm not sure if everyone can hear. I'll interrupt if need be, but if Mr. Battiste wants to reiterate the last part of what he said so that everyone can understand, I'll start the clock accordingly.

Go ahead, Mr. Battiste.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Okay.

How can we in Canada, with our provincial governments, create more awareness and education around the Indian residential schools?

The Chair: Is that for Madam Sajous? We lost her, I think.

Would others like to take that question...?

Madam Sajous, you're back again. Welcome.

Ms. Emmanuelle Sajous: I'm sorry. I'm really having a problem with my Internet today.

Melanie, can you take the question?

Ms. Melanie Kwong: Sure.

In terms of education for the national day, we look forward to the first opportunity this year, now that we have the confirmation of the statutory holiday, to work with organizations nationally but also to engage to see where we can all work together on this important day. Using some of the work we've done to date in terms of commemorating a number of projects, we are continuing to work with contacts across the country. We look forward to continuing to build on the success to date.

With respect to the provinces, as you mentioned, there is a component for education. We will explore all avenues to see how we can best work together on that.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Battiste.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: I'm just wondering if I have any time left. I know there were some difficulties there.

The Chair: Yes. We have a few seconds. If you want a quick question for the end, please proceed.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Can you just expand a bit on what the \$2.4 million in permanent funding coming from Canadian Heritage will address when it comes to commemoration?

Ms. Melanie Kwong: If it's all right, just because of the connection issues, maybe I'll start and then Emmanuelle can add to it, if she wants.

What the \$2.4 million offers is the ongoing funding that we're very happy to know will exist in that we will be able to continue [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] two-year funding that was initially announced. Again, building off of the work that's been done to date, I think there's more work to be done in terms of the national piece. It was mentioned earlier that the funding announced in 2019 allowed us to do a two-year plan, where we did a national focus in the first year and then a number of community-based projects in the second year. Our focus will now be on engaging, as my colleague Amanda McCarthy said, with the organizations and representatives who will be most using the funding, now that we have that permanency, to see how best we can use those funds. That will be the approach.

Thank you.

The Chair: I'm sorry. If you hear me say “thank you”, you can finish your sentence. I'm not that strict over time. It's a very important subject for me to be cutting things off like that. Thank you, Ms. Kwong.

I have just a couple of things.

Ms. McCarthy, could you raise your mike up just a little bit so we can hear you? There have been some issues with that.

Also, we've had some Internet issues with Ms. Sajous again. Perhaps, Ms. Sajous, if you want to, you could turn off your camera to give us more secure sound. That's no reflection on you, of course. It's just that it gives us a better connection so you're able to testify.

I thank you for your patience, everyone.

[*Translation*]

Next up for questions is Sylvie Bérubé, Bloc Québécois member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

Welcome, Ms. Bérubé.

The floor is yours for six minutes.

• (1330)

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm speaking today from the traditional Cree and Anishinabe territory of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, Quebec.

I'm pleased to participate in this meeting of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. I wish to welcome all the witnesses who are with us today.

My question is the following: what is the government's plan for excavations? We know full well that several indigenous communities, in the wake of what happened in Kamloops [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] Quebec, and elsewhere in Canada—I'm not forgetting that—have decided to start excavating.

So, what is your action plan to help indigenous communities?

Ms. Emmanuelle Sajous: I'll ask my CIRNAC colleague, Amanda McCarthy, to answer that question.

[*English*]

Ms. Amanda McCarthy: Thank you very much.

I'll try this with the video on, but I'll turn it off if I'm signalled that people can't hear me clearly.

The \$27.1 million was announced in order to support the implementation of calls to action 74 to 76. It is accessible to indigenous organizations, communities and survivor organizations.

We are waiting to hear from indigenous voices on how best they would like us to proceed. The plan at this point is for Canada to be a facilitator of access to the support and the resources [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] obstacles to providing that support and listening to them on how they would like to proceed.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Let's clear the air on the \$27 million that were earmarked to excavate residential school grounds. Why didn't these excavations proceed? What happened? The Prime Minister has been claiming to uphold reconciliation with indigenous peoples and communities for over six years now, yet nothing has happened.

Why aren't things moving forward, and why is it taking so long?

[*English*]

Ms. Amanda McCarthy: Thank you for the question.

We invited over 200 organizations, and approximately 150 participated in a national virtual engagement last summer and fall, in 2020. We wanted to hear from [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] on the best way to proceed. With the COVID pandemic, we suffered some delays in giving communities the time and the space to take the preparations they needed within their communities to address the pandemic. Then we received all of our authorities for us to proceed, and now the \$27.1 million in funding is available.

We understand that this is an initial investment and that we may need to consider additional resourcing or sourcing in the future. At this point, we're listening to indigenous voices to determine the scope, the interest and how we should proceed.

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Why is it that the funding that led to the discovery of 215 indigenous children in Kamloops [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] from British Columbia? Didn't the federal government commit to providing funding for searching for unmarked graves on residential school grounds?

Ms. Emmanuelle Sajous: Perhaps my colleague could answer that question.

[English]

Amanda, do you want to answer this one?

Ms. Amanda McCarthy: Could you please repeat the question?

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Yes, of course.

We heard that the funding for searching for those 215 indigenous children in Kamloops came from British Columbia.

Didn't the federal government also commit to providing funding for searching for unmarked graves on residential school grounds?

• (1335)

Ms. Emmanuelle Sajous: Canadian Heritage funding went to building a healing garden in the Tk'emlups community. A radar was purchased for that purpose and for searching for other artefacts, and that's when the remains were found.

Canadian Heritage provided direct funding of \$40,000 for this project.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Thank you.

In December, the government answered my written questions regarding a status update on calls to action 81 and 82. In its response, the government revealed that only the equivalent of half of one full-time employee was tasked with implementing call to action 81, which consists of building a monument in Ottawa to commemorate the victims of residential schools. When I asked Indigenous Services Canada officials this question [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]. So, I'll ask you the question.

Wouldn't you say that this effort isn't enough to implement the call to action?

Ms. Emmanuelle Sajous: I'll start answering the question, and then let my colleague, Ms. Kwong, have the floor.

Call to action 81 calls for a monument in Ottawa to commemorate residential schools, the survivors and the families. An entire team at Canadian Heritage is dedicated to monument planning. I'm not too sure that I understand what the 0.5 number refers to.

Ms. Kwong, would you like to add something?

Ms. Melanie Kwong: I wonder whether the response to the question was in fact related to this project.

If I may, I would like to provide a small update on call to action 81, which calls for a monument. Obviously, we would like to continue working on this project. We've already had discussions with key stakeholders to determine their vision for the monument and to be able to proceed to the next steps.

We have a lot—

The Chair: Your time is up.

Thank you very much.

[English]

Up next we have the NDP.

[Translation]

I would once more like to welcome Mr. Boulerice from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Thank you.

The Chair: You have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses who are here with us this afternoon as we study this crucial, fundamental issue.

I can't help but make two brief remarks as an introduction.

First, the discovery of 215 children's bodies next to the Kamloops residential school shook not only Canadian politicians, but all of Canada and Quebec as well. It provided human-scale evidence of a harrowing tragedy that went on for almost a century, where children were uprooted from their communities and abused. Several were buried without their parents knowing about it. This discovery sent out shockwaves in Ottawa. The flags are still at half-mast, and there are flowers, teddy bears and toys next to the Centennial Flame on Parliament Hill.

I'd like to thank my colleague, Kevin Waugh, for moving this motion.

However, eloquent speeches and good intentions unfortunately don't always lead to concrete action.

This isn't a question for the witnesses, but, nonetheless, something that I would like to be recorded in the archives.

My colleague, Niki Ashton, asked the House earlier today for unanimous consent to move and pass a motion to create an independent commission with the resources to conduct searches on the grounds of residential schools and determine whether other children are also buried there—because more have been found since the Kamloops discovery. The motion also seeks to obtain the records needed to conduct those searches.

Unfortunately, the motion was defeated, particularly due to the votes of certain members of the governing party. This is extremely disappointing.

I'm not asking you to respond to those questions, Ms. Kwong, because they're more of a political nature. I have something more tangible for you.

The final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has 94 calls to action. There has been little to no progress on calls to action 74, 75 and 76, despite the fact that funding has been earmarked since 2019.

When do you believe that the federal government will move forward on these calls to action?

• (1340)

Ms. Melanie Kwong: Thank you for the question.

As the specific mandate falls to my colleague Ms. McCarthy, I'd ask her to answer your question.

[*English*]

Ms. Amanda McCarthy: Thank you for the question.

It's difficult to say at this time, as we're still listening to indigenous voices as they go through this recent tragedy. As I mentioned, it's the role of government to facilitate the access to the resources, but when requested, when people are ready. This is not something that we wish to rush.

We need to make sure that we do it right. We need to make sure that it's survivors who are leading and informing the decisions. It's difficult to say at this time what the timeline may be, other than to say that Canada is here and it's ready to support and provide those resources.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: I understand your point of view and where you are at in your responsibilities, but it isn't very clear. It's still rather vague, unfortunately.

Earlier, Mr. Battiste asked a good question, and I would like to pick up on his idea.

I know that the federal government isn't in charge of this, but when I was young, when I was in school, in elementary or high school, I wasn't told much about the residential school tragedy. In fact, we learned about it a little late. I know that there has been a revamping of the Canadian citizenship education guide, which talks very clearly and specifically about the reality of the residential schools and this historical wound.

However, beyond that, what do you plan to do, in collaboration with the provinces, to be able to tell this tragic and dramatic story so that Canadians and Quebecers are aware of what happened, much more than what we've been told in the past? It seems to me that we have looked the other way in the last few decades. We didn't dare face the past.

Ms. Emmanuelle Sajous: As I mentioned a little earlier, the money we obtained was set out in the 2019 and 2021 budgets.

The purpose of our commemoration program is really to raise awareness, to commemorate the history and legacy of residential schools, to honour survivors and their families, and to give them the opportunity to tell their stories in the context of a healing process.

In terms of examples of projects, education and awareness materials can indeed be funded from these funds. There are also commemorative plaques, exhibits, travelling displays, healing work-

shops with elders, and community meals and ceremonies. There are many ways and many tools available to us to make sure that this story [*Technical Difficulty—Editor*] this hidden side is told.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: In terms of the process and how you carry out your program of commemoration and remembrance of these tragic events, I would like to understand a little bit more about how you work with indigenous organizations and jurisdictions to make sure that this is done not only with them, but also by and for them.

Ms. Melanie Kwong: I'll answer the question, if I may.

That's the way to move forward. As I mentioned, we have the experience of these 200 projects across the country. The goal is to learn what works well and what can be improved, and to determine the demands and needs.

In response to the question about education, I would say that many of the projects funded by Canadian Heritage come from indigenous communities. For example, there are books that speak to the importance of these stories locally and nationally.

• (1345)

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Boulerice.

[*English*]

We will now go to our second round.

Mr. Shields, you have five minutes, please.

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

Thank you to the department officials for being here with us today on this very important topic.

I have a couple of comments, in the sense that as a fifth-generation family in southern Alberta, I'm very familiar with Treaty 7 and the Blackfoot Confederacy. We grew up going to school with them, knowing residential schools. My mother actually taught in a residential school. This is something I'm familiar with.

I have met with many elders, some of those people I grew up with. I have met with clans, clan leaders, hereditary chiefs and elders who have survived residential schools. I've been to grave sites, marked and unmarked, in my riding. It's probably a history that some of us are very familiar with.

When we see the \$33 million and only \$27 million unspent, on that \$27 million unspent, you sort of wonder, why is there confusion, is it a program that has been silent? I was on the heritage committee when we did the national day of recognition. There was a lot of discussion about that one. Some of the concerns I had about it were that it's federally regulated. It's not a statutory holiday for everybody. We have a problem with that one in itself, because it doesn't apply to everybody in our country.

When we talked about that day of recognition, my questions were often, "Are you putting this on their shoulders without any supports to indigenous people? Where is the connection to the rest of society, and whose onus is it going to be to carry this? Is it the school system? How are they going to do it?"

You mentioned the book. I mentioned that book should have been written and distributed everywhere in the country.

I think we have lots of problems here, in the sense of where we are going forward.

Our national [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] to indigenous people, the government hired...and I met with them. There was a play written about reconciliation, to do with Siksika and the first nations, by the Strathmore High School. It was viewed in a number of places. It's a phenomenal play. I said that's the kind of play that should be in Ottawa at the National Arts Centre, to bring things to people. They said they were given no money: "We were just hired, but we have no money."

I think we have a huge challenge here, in the sense of, one, confusion on who can get the money and how, and two, it's directed, I think, to indigenous people to carry the load on this, which is problematic. We're putting it back in the wrong place. We need to have a different way, because provinces do education.

Anyways, I have rambled. To the department officials, do you have any response to the concerns I have going forward on this?

Ms. Melanie Kwong: I might start. There was a lot of information there, and I hope I can touch on most of the pieces, Mr. Shields.

I'm glad you mentioned your experiences, because, again, perhaps using this example from the funding that Canadian Heritage has been able to provide, just exactly.... When I speak about a book, I'm just looking to make sure that I have the name of it right. Part of the funding was to support the Piikani Indian residential school interviews project, for example. It's those local projects that often include commemorative programming and the component for Orange Shirt Day, like we saw in these 200 projects, which does have the ability to join some of the recognition and commemoration pieces with activities that are happening.

I think what we've seen with these 200 projects—again, this was the second year of the two-year funding—is that we have an opportunity to learn from what has happened here and, as my colleague Amanda has said, take the feedback that we're getting in terms of indigenous voices about what we can do with this money to best [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] we still need to do, but a lot we can learn from what's been done.

Mr. Martin Shields: When you said that it was a "statutory holiday", it's a statutory holiday for federal and federally regulated.... We have a problem right off the bat in the sense of how that's going to be viewed and worked with, as provinces don't do that.

• (1350)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Emmanuelle Sajous: One of the goals was to make this day similar to Remembrance Day on November 11. This would be timely, as children across the country would be in school on that day. The day could be used to educate them. We could talk to them about the purpose of this day of remembrance and why it is important to remember what happened in the residential schools.

The model that will be chosen for the day of remembrance will be based on Remembrance Day of November 11.

[*English*]

Mr. Martin Shields: In western Canada, Remembrance Day is a statutory holiday, but not in the rest of the country.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Shields. I appreciate that.

Ms. Ien, you have five minutes.

Ms. Marci Ien (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Chair, thank you so much.

I so appreciate the witnesses who have joined us here today.

I want to thank my colleague Mr. Waugh as well for bringing forward this very important issue.

There seems to be a theme here today, and that is education or the lack thereof. Why didn't we know? It lent to the shock that everybody seemed to be in.

I want to talk a bit more about pathways to healing and what I call the "information gap". Specifically, who is targeted in raising awareness and fostering education? Who are you targeting with that education? Who are you targeting with regard to raising awareness?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Emmanuelle Sajous: As we work to implement the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, on September 30 of each year, our first goal will be to work with indigenous communities.

So we will begin with consultations with indigenous groups, survivor groups and national indigenous organizations. We will see how best to implement this day of remembrance, how to distribute the funding, and how to properly explain the story of these people. Only after we gather all these ideas can we see how to implement them across the country.

The first thing we need to do is really engage with indigenous communities and groups to find out how they want this story to be told.

[*English*]

Ms. Marci Ien: Yes, which makes a lot of sense because, unlike my colleague Mr. Boulerice, I didn't learn about residential schools at all when I was at school. The education gap was there and, of course, these are not stories that are being told in the media, frankly. I had a good conversation with author and journalist Tanya Talaga recently, and she said that it got to a point where she created her own production company to make sure the stories of her people were told, because there was such a gap.

I'm just wondering more about engagement with the communities. The way that it's set up, it's not top-down but bottom-up, because there are distinct indigenous nations across Canada. That is a very good thing, but I'm wondering with this engagement how children are involved. Are you involving children, who no doubt see themselves in these 215?

Ms. Emmanuelle Sajous: We will begin when we do the engagement. One of our principles will be a distinctions-based consultation. We will make sure we include Métis, first nations and Inuit in those consultations.

With respect to kids, we will work with indigenous organizations, elders, survivor circles and other groups to see how they want to be consulted.

Maybe I will turn to Melanie and my colleague Amanda to see if they want to add something to this question.

Ms. Melanie Kwong: I'm afraid I would be repeating just that, the initial consultation to ensure we're taking all of the considerations into account.

Ms. Amanda McCarthy: I have nothing to add at this time.

Ms. Marci Ien: That's not a problem.

How has the vision changed following the 215. As my colleague Mr. Battiste mentioned, with 130 residential schools across the country, we know there will be more. The 215 will be followed by many more.

What is the vision now, and how might that have changed with this discovery?

• (1355)

Ms. Melanie Kwong: Thank you for the question about the vision and the events that are shaping what that might look like. Are you asking about the vision with respect to the national day?

Ms. Marci Ien: It's with respect to the national day, yes.

Ms. Melanie Kwong: Thank you for the clarification.

The thinking is that, with this increased attention right now, we will be able to amplify the first official day this September 30. In terms of the vision, it was a very tragic event that has raised all of this attention. It's actually going to be capturing people's interest for some time. We hope to hear more voices about what this day means to all Canadians. We will see.

In fact, for us, the vision would be to listen and understand what people want to hear. We have that attention now.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kwong, and thank you, Ms. Ien.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Champoux, please go ahead for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses once again for being with us today. This is an extremely sensitive topic we're discussing today.

I just want to be reassured, in a way. Earlier, I heard the people from the department make a connection between the funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage, that is to say the \$40,000 earmarked for the creation of a memorial park, and the discovery of the children's bodies. I hope you're not making a connection between this funding and this discovery, because I would find that a bit indecent. It's a chance discovery, and I think we need to make every effort, with all of our energy and heart, to provide indigenous communities across the country with the means they will need and consider appropriate and necessary to uncover these too many tragedies that we will most likely discover in the coming months and years.

Earlier, my colleague Mr. Boulerice spoke about education received regarding indigenous history. We're from the same school system, he and I, and indeed, when we were young, in our school, we heard almost nothing about the reality of indigenous people. We heard about indigenous folklore. We thought it was charming, and it was a great story, but we realize now that the real story is completely different from what we learned in school.

We discussed this at the meetings of this committee on September 30 last year. What we were saying was that this day had to be used to correct the lack of education that existed on this issue, and that something needed to be done with this day so that it wasn't just another day off for federal public servants. We want it to be serve a purpose. It has to serve a purpose.

So I'd like you to tell me what you have in mind, because September 30, in an organizational context, is just around the corner.

What is planned, and how will you make sure this day is used, in an effective way, to educate [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] about the history and legacy of residential schools?

Ms. Emmanuelle Sajous: Thank you for the question.

The bill received royal assent on June 4. This is an important day and an important step in our reconciliation with indigenous peoples.

As I mentioned a little earlier, the first step will be to consult indigenous communities because what's important is to see how they want this day to be celebrated. The funding—

Mr. Martin Champoux: Ms. Sajous, I'm sorry for interrupting you. I don't mean to be rude, but I only have two and a half minutes of speaking time.

This day has been planned for several months. What have you done so far and what's coming up for September 30 this year?

Ms. Emmanuelle Sajous: This year, we're going to organize a national event.

We're already working with indigenous organizations, including the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, or APTN, to organize a national event.

At the same time, we're working on a consultation plan with indigenous communities to determine how we'll celebrate on September 30 in future years.

• (1400)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Sajous.

Mr. Boulerice, you have two and a half minutes.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to use my time to speak to Bill C-15, An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which is before the Senate.

I'm not necessarily speaking to the witnesses, but to the chief justice of the Supreme Court, who is serving as Governor General right now. I would ask him to please give royal assent to this bill as quickly as possible. We would appreciate it very much, because we don't want to have to go through this process again, which was started by my colleague Romeo Saganash.

At the same time, I would like to reiterate that the Liberal government should end court challenges related to compensation for residential school victims and children who are not receiving their fair share of health and social services.

My question is more directly addressed to our witnesses.

There is talk of implementing a program to commemorate the victims of residential schools and to talk about the reality of residential schools. How do you plan to distribute the investments in the communities to fulfill this duty to remember? The reality has been different in many parts of the country.

There were 130 residential schools in Canada, only 11 of them were in Quebec. Of course, that doesn't take any responsibility away from Quebec. Still, I wonder if the investments will be made in proportion to the number of residential schools, victims and children who attended these institutions or if 10% of the funding will be provided by province.

What are you considering? What is the plan?

Ms. Emmanuelle Sajous: Thank you for the question.

First, we'll undertake a consultation phase, which will be conducted in a manner that takes into account the particularities of

rights-bearing communities. We'll work with first nations, Inuit and Métis.

Then we'll have a better idea of how the money will be distributed. [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] regional to ensure that the money will be distributed across the country.

At this point, I can't tell you if these investments will be made on a per capita basis, but it will certainly be discussed in the conversations we have, and the decision will be made with indigenous communities and survivor circles.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Thank you for the answer.

I'll ask one last question if I have enough time.

You talk a lot about the work that needs to be done in collaboration with indigenous communities, and rightly so. How do you plan to work with the provinces? This is another aspect that has been raised.

Ms. Emmanuelle Sajous: At this point, we are planning to work primarily with indigenous communities across the country. We don't have a specific plan for the provinces yet.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, everyone.

[*English*]

Because we started late, I have about five minutes left.

I don't normally do this, but given the conversation that we were having and the importance of this issue, if anybody has any quick questions—and I mean very quick, for clarification or something of that nature—would you like to ask it now before we end the meeting? All I need is a virtual show of hands if someone would like to ask something.

Okay.

Folks, I just want to say thank you very much. I want to say a big thank you to our guests here today.

Emmanuelle Sajous, I apologize for the Internet inconvenience.

She's the assistant deputy minister of sport, major events and commemorations. That also goes to Melanie Kwong, director general of major events, commemorations and capital experience. Joining us from Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, we had Amanda McCarthy, who is director of resolution and partnerships.

Now folks, this is the first half of a motion that was put forward by Mr. Waugh, as I mentioned. The other half is regarding Chief Casimir, who wanted to be available but she could not be available today. We are not done with this particular part of the motion; therefore, we'll have to make that up when we return. That would have to be after Monday, whenever that may be. I won't presuppose when that will be.

Nevertheless, is there anything further to add? No.

[*Translation*]

I just want to say thank you again to our guests.

I want to say a very special thank you to our colleagues who are guesting here today as well as my own colleagues. I want to end by saying thank you and have a great weekend, everybody.

Have a good weekend. *Meegwetch.*

Ms. Emmanuelle Sajous: Thank you very much. Goodbye.

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