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• (1135)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order. We'll get started.

Thank you, members, for your indulgence. Thank you, witnesses, for waiting for us to get going.

Welcome to meeting number 73 of the Standing Committee on Science and Research. Today's meeting will be taking place in a hybrid format. Members are attending in person and....

We have Mr. Lobb online. I welcome Mr. Lobb. While I'm doing welcomes, I can also welcome Ms. Kayabaga, who is a new permanent member of our committee.

You can speak in either official language. For interpretation of what is being said, please use the earpiece provided. If you're on Zoom, you can choose "English", "French" or "floor". For members in person, be careful with your earpiece. Make sure it doesn't get close to the microphone so that we don't have any feedback on our translators.

Thank you, translators, for the work you do for us.

All questions should be addressed through the chair.

We'll get started now with the meeting.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(i) and the motion adopted by the committee on Monday, September 18, 2023, the committee resumes its study on the integration of indigenous traditional knowledge and science in government policy development.

It's my pleasure to welcome our witnesses today from Environment and Climate Change Canada. We have Patrice Simon, director general, wildlife and landscape science; Dominique Henri, research scientist; and Cheryl-Ann Johnson, researcher, wildlife ecology.

You can present to us in five minutes. Then we'll go to our questioning round. I'm looking at the clock. We should be able to get a round of six minutes in for each party in the room.

You have five minutes, Mr. Simon.

Mr. Patrice Simon (Director General, Wildlife and Landscape Sciences, Department of the Environment): Thank you, Mr. Chair, for this invitation to speak about the use of indigenous traditional knowledge in addition to western science in federal government policy.

[Translation]

I want to take this opportunity to recognize that I am speaking today on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin people.

[English]

I'm the director general of the wildlife and landscape sciences directorate within the science and technology branch of Environment and Climate Change Canada. The importance of conducting interdisciplinary research and considering different knowledge systems is increasingly seen as critical in science.

We are the largest scientific research organization on wildlife in Canada. Our team of scientists conducts research across the country on issues related to wildlife and their habitat, including drivers of population change, health, disease and contaminants, focusing on species of federal responsibility. We apply many novel approaches and methods to address urgent wildlife conservation questions, including genetic and genomics techniques, earth observation and remote sensing technologies, ecotoxicology methods, high-performance computing and machine learning, and modelling.

We also work with indigenous knowledge. Our teams collaborate with indigenous peoples across Canada on collection and interpretation.

[Translation]

I am pleased to be joined today by two of our accomplished researchers, Dominique Henri and Cheryl-Ann Johnson. They have spent much of their careers working with indigenous knowledge and its incorporation into science advice.

I would like to invite them to describe to you their work that demonstrates their commitment to co-developed research with indigenous partners, and the use of innovative and inclusive approaches that bridge, braid and weave indigenous knowledge into scientific research that leads to more comprehensive knowledge.

Ms. Henri undertakes research that addresses indigenous community priorities related to wildlife, climate change and cultural heritage. She leads an interdisciplinary research program aiming to mobilize indigenous and western knowledge systems on culturally significant species under federal jurisdiction, to support wildlife co-management and sustainable use, particularly in Arctic and northern Canada.

Ms. Johnson is an acknowledged national expert on caribou who has been instrumental in developing the identification of critical habitat requirements for the recovery of boreal caribou. She has spent 10 years co-generating knowledge with Arctic Inuit communities for the identification of critical habitat, including sea ice, for the threatened Peary caribou.

I will now turn it over to Ms. Henri.

Dr. Dominique Henri (Research Scientist, Department of the Environment): Thank you, Mr. Simon.

Good morning.

It's a pleasure to be participating in today's meeting.

My name is Dominique Henri.

[*English*]

I'm a social scientist with Environment and Climate Change Canada, with training in human geography and anthropology.

As a non-indigenous researcher, I have had the privilege over the years of working with and learning from many indigenous elders, leaders, scholars and hunters. Most of the projects I have contributed to have taken place in Inuit Nunangat, the Inuit homelands within Canada, and I have focused on species that are culturally important to Inuit, especially polar bears—*nanuk*—white geese and common eider ducks.

Our research program relies on community-based, community-engaged and participatory processes. Indigenous partners actively take part in decisions about the research at every project phase from design to the interpretation and sharing of our results.

We employ social science methods, such as interviews and participatory mapping, to gather and document indigenous knowledge and science about the environment and human-environment relationships. We then create spaces through workshops and sharing circles where indigenous knowledge holders, social scientists, natural scientists and decision-makers can engage in interdisciplinary and intercultural dialogue. We weave together indigenous and western sciences through collaborative research, with the ultimate goal of supporting wildlife co-management and policy development.

We work closely with indigenous partners to ensure that our research supports free, prior and informed consent, as well as indigenous data sovereignty. We are committed to involving and training indigenous youth to enhance indigenous research capacity and foster intergenerational learning.

In this way, not only is indigenous knowledge documented through our projects; importantly, it guides and drives the research process—

• (1140)

The Chair: Thank you. I think we'll have to call it there, because we are at five minutes.

We will start our six minutes with Ms. Rempel Garner.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Simon, would your department have the responsibility for informing the content of recovery strategies for species listed under the Species at Risk Act?

Mr. Patrice Simon: The department would, yes. Our group provides science advice to be considered by the recovery team for species at risk.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: I read a paper written by Hill, Schuster and Bennett in 2019, entitled "Indigenous involvement in the Canadian species at risk recovery process". It said that "fewer than half of recovery strategies show evidence of any involvement of indigenous people in their preparation, and involvement varies drastically among regions and federal agencies."

Would that be a correct assessment today? It was published in 2019.

Mr. Patrice Simon: There are probably people better placed than I am to do this assessment. We're working on several of the key species to provide science advice that is also considered indigenous knowledge.

I don't know the specifics of the answer.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Thank you.

The Chair: If there is some detail that could come to us later in writing, that would be great.

Ms. Rempel Garner, could you move a little closer to the mic for the translators? Thank you.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: I'm sorry. I'm blocking the sound.

How many indigenous or first nations persons are directly employed within your directorate?

Mr. Patrice Simon: I don't know the stats by heart. We have research scientists who are non-indigenous who work on indigenous knowledge. We have scientists and staff who are indigenous who also work on it.

We have just created a new indigenous science division within the science and technology branch that is a group of probably around 10 people. I think all or most of them—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: What percentage would that be of your entire unit?

Mr. Patrice Simon: Excuse me?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: It's okay.

I guess I'm also looking at how Environment Canada would incorporate concerns from various first nations and indigenous groups about recovery strategies or the listing of species.

About two years ago, there was push-back from various first nations groups regarding a decision to list the black ash tree under the Species at Risk Act. How is it that a decision to list a species under SARA could get to the point where first nations groups say, “No, it is not”? How did it get this far down the path? At what point...? I will leave it at that.

Mr. Patrice Simon: The way I see it, there are different processes by which indigenous groups are at the table. When I see indigenous knowledge, it's not consultation. They're building the research and providing the evidence, and that informs a decision. When there's a decision, there's a process for consultation about the decision. I'm not sure if that's clear.

I have Dr. Henri here, who works on several species, including the polar bear, and maybe she can go into some detail.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: I think we're looking at the process. I think what happens—and not just with your department—is that often policy happens “to” first nations rather than “with” first nations. I just worry that the current process, especially even looking at recovery strategies for species at risk, perhaps doesn't adequately take into consideration early enough in the process the cultural context of first nations, particularly when it comes to traditional practices and rights like hunting.

Would you say that's an adequate characterization?

Mr. Patrice Simon: I think I'm more aware of the one that we do on caribou, for example. I'm talking about caribou and polar bears because I do have the expertise on both sides of me.

I think they're involved at the beginning, in the design of research and in the priorities. Often they have a role in the decision-making process as well.

• (1145)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Is that role at a senior level—

Mr. Patrice Simon: Again, it depends a bit on where—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: —or is it more of a checked-box exercise?

Mr. Patrice Simon: It depends on where in Canada. Again, if we look in the Arctic, there are co-management boards that have a very important role in the decision-making process.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: However, it's not consistent across the country.

Mr. Patrice Simon: It's not consistent across Canada. You're right.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Okay. I think I'll leave it at that. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll move to Ms. Metlege Diab for six minutes, please.

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for coming.

Mr. Simon, you started to say that there's a new indigenous division. Would you please elaborate on that and tell us when it started,

what it does and how you use indigenous traditional knowledge in the decision-making to develop policy?

Mr. Patrice Simon: Okay.

Maybe I'll go back a little bit.

Environment and Climate Change Canada has been working collaboratively to collect indigenous knowledge for quite some time. It was done on the part of western-trained scientists for some time. Then, over time, we got people who are more expert, like Dr. Henri, a social scientist, to really kind of focus on that but also help the rest of the group to do that.

I think it was about 12 months ago when an indigenous science group was started up, and it's still building. Directors and managers have been hired, as well as some research scientists. I have a bit of an element of their work plan; they're working on a diversity of things, not only on wildlife but also on ecosystem health, on predicting weather, on assisting in identifying targets for biodiversity objectives and these types of things.

The group is building up, and this is just to inform decisions by using various knowledge systems. For a long time, it was focused on western science, and we are developing more capacity to look at indigenous science to, again, inform policy and decisions based on these too.

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab: Thank you.

Dr. Henri, can you tell us what you do and give us some examples specific to your work and what you do, just to give us an idea?

Dr. Dominique Henri: Certainly. I'll speak about polar bears for a moment.

For the past eight years, I've been engaged in a study working together with local hunters' and trappers' organizations based in Nunavut to collaboratively sit down to speak about the expertise that Inuit polar bear hunters have and that women specialized in polar bear hide cleaning have to write this knowledge down and to assess polar bear health using metrics and indicators that are used by hunters on the land, such as looking at polar bear bodies' condition, how many bears there are, how fat or how skinny they are, etc. At the end of the day, we write down all this evidence and we submit it to decision-makers and policy-makers who will establish, for example, polar bear harvesting quotas based on indigenous knowledge, based on the evidence we gathered through the study and based on western science as well.

As Patrice mentioned, under comprehensive land claims agreement areas up north, you have co-management systems whereby it is a mandated responsibility, mandated legislatively, to have indigenous knowledge and western science both included in the decision-making process, so that's where research supports the process.

I think this is a great model of how resources are invested to support the building of evidence from both sides. I think a key to the future of this approach is really to invest in capacity, as we are doing right now within ECCC with the indigenous science division. For a long time, western sciences have had a lot of voice, and I think it is imperative nowadays that indigenous sciences and knowledge systems have equally powerful voices in the research realm and in the policy realm.

• (1150)

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab: How has the indigenous science changed what would have been done without it, in your opinion?

Dr. Dominique Henri: Are you asking me?

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab: Yes, I am, because you're working on the ground with it.

Dr. Dominique Henri: Indigenous experts living in communities and travelling on the land offer year-round observations of ecological phenomena that are oftentimes carried and shared through generations. Often, western scientific studies offer snapshots in time, and inventories are conducted periodically but only during certain seasons, whereas indigenous hunters and experts are the eyes and the ears of the environment and the changes we see. Especially at a time of rapid climate change in the Arctic regions, I think people on the ground provide us with really in-depth expertise.

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab: Ms. Johnson, I know you didn't get a chance. Can you tell us what you do in the department?

Dr. Cheryl-Ann Johnson (Researcher, Wildlife Ecologist, Department of the Environment): I work on species at risk. My main research is focused on generating the knowledge to inform recovery strategies and then the required monitoring that comes after you develop a recovery strategy or an action plan.

My experience with indigenous knowledge, like Dr. Henri's, has occurred mainly through partnerships with Inuit communities. I work with 10 different Inuit communities that are implicated in the recovery of Peary caribou, so—

The Chair: Thank you very much. I'm sorry, but we're at time.

Monsieur Blanchette-Joncas, go ahead for six minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to the witnesses.

Mr. Simon, I carefully examined Bill C-69, which would require your department to do a lot of work. The bill would ensure that indigenous experience or indigenous knowledge was taken into account under the Impact Assessment Act and the Canadian Energy Regulator Act.

You referred to two knowledge systems in your opening remarks, western science and indigenous science. The review process is different for the two systems. Could you explain the difference between knowledge that is acquired by a non-indigenous person and knowledge that is acquired by an indigenous person?

Mr. Patrice Simon: Thank you for your question.

I think the two systems are complementary. As Ms. Henri mentioned, indigenous science is based primarily on observations that people have made over generations. The sharing of knowledge is primarily done orally. Western scientific knowledge is based on academic studies, statistics and probabilities. The research often focuses on the same issues and leads to findings that can be observed. When we compare learning derived from the two systems, we understand them better.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: I see.

I want to be sure I understand the review process. You said the two systems were completely different. That means the western scientific review process can't be applied to the indigenous knowledge system. From the western standpoint, knowledge is a statement that is true because it has been validated using generally accepted methods and is potentially available to any reasonable person, regardless of ethnic origin or nationality. There is no difference. That is the universal definition of knowledge.

What I'd like to understand is the indigenous standpoint. You said that doesn't apply to the indigenous system. How, then, do you validate indigenous knowledge?

In response to my fellow member's question, you said that indigenous people provide the evidence and that there is no consultation. If the existing scientific process doesn't apply, how do you go about validating the observations of indigenous people?

Mr. Patrice Simon: It can be done in different ways.

I'm going to ask my colleagues to answer that.

Ms. Johnson, can you provide any examples in relation to caribou?

• (1155)

Dr. Cheryl-Ann Johnson: I'm going to answer in English, if you don't mind.

[*English*]

It will be easier for me.

In one of the ways, we'll go through interviews and we'll have workshops. Through that process, a lot of information and knowledge are shared. One of the ways of making sure that our interpretations and representations of the knowledge that was shared with us are correct is by going back and having multiple interactions with people and doing a lot of work with indigenous groups and organizations.

It's all built on partnerships. You don't have just one meeting and then your job is done, right? You have this knowledge base, and then you go back and you make sure your interpretation is correct and that you're applying it correctly. Then, if you're wrong, you have to change it, based on the feedback you get.

That would be one example of the process we would use. It's iterative. We don't go back just twice. Sometimes it's three or four times.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: I want to make sure I understand what you're saying.

Ms. Henri, you can provide some follow-up.

In the course of your experiments and observations, have you ever gone from thinking a hypothesis was plausible to realizing it was incorrect?

I'm referring to the verification process you mentioned. You consult and you ask questions. The aim of science is to establish whether a hypothesis is supported or not. It's completely different in this case. You say it's not possible to apply the existing verification process, so I'm trying to understand how you work out what's true and what's not. You say you consult people, but consulting people doesn't necessarily give you the ability to validate a hypothesis.

Dr. Dominique Henri: You're asking a very complex question, so I will try to answer. There are tremendous similarities between western and indigenous knowledge methods. For instance, as I mentioned, indigenous knowledge is based on observations. Repeated observations inform hypotheses. Only the methods are different. Hunters don't take notes when they go out hunting. They take notes up here. That is the basis for forming a hypothesis on the health of a specific animal population, say.

It's important to keep in mind that scientific thought is universal. It applies to all people, regardless of their ethnic origin. All science is based on observation, but the methods used can differ.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you. You're basically out of time.

Go ahead, Mr. Cannings, for six minutes.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Thank you.

Thank you for being here today to tell us about this important topic.

I'm going to turn to Dr. Johnson, just because I think you've been cut off a couple of times and I want to give you more time to explain what you've done.

I've read that you've been in this position for a number of years, for 15 years or so, and I was involved in ecosystem recovery plans and species recovery plans back in the late nineties and early 2000s. This concept of bringing in indigenous knowledge was in its infancy in policy terms. When I was on COSEWIC, there was some very slow progress in that regard.

I wonder if you could expand on what you do now and what you've seen over the years as you've been working in this space. What trajectory are we on? Is it a good one? What have we learned?

Dr. Cheryl-Ann Johnson: I would say that things have definitely changed over the years.

Going back to one of the earlier questions, when I first started working on Peary caribou, it was somewhat unique. In the published scientific literature, North America has been criticized with respect to some of its recovery objectives for species at risk, because the bar is set too low to allow for indigenous rights, etc. One thing we did with Peary caribou is set the recovery objective for the species in partnership with our Inuit partners. If you look at the Peary caribou recovery strategy and those recovery objectives, you'll see that there's a specific statement in there that speaks to allowing sustainable Inuit harvests. It's about maintaining populations not at the minimum to prevent them from going extinct but at a higher level to allow Inuit communities to harvest those populations. That's one example of where we set the bar a bit higher.

We've continued to build on that. For example, identification of critical habitat—the habitat you want to protect for species at risk—has partially been fulfilled for Peary caribou. Peary caribou have to move between islands, so sea ice is a very important part of their habitat. For some people, it's a little difficult to make that relationship between sea ice and habitat, but it is habitat for them. There is no western science to inform where these species move between islands. The protection and identification of that critical habitat in terms of sea ice is based solely on Inuit knowledge. That is their contribution.

● (1200)

Mr. Richard Cannings: To follow up on that, I remember hearing one anecdote about western science saying that Peary caribou had suffered a catastrophic decline, while indigenous knowledge said no, they just went to another island or crossed into another area. That sort of knowledge was indispensable in getting the real picture. Is my recollection accurate?

Dr. Cheryl-Ann Johnson: I would say that this is still debatable, but it goes back to a point Patrice made earlier: It's the complementarity of the two knowledge systems. The Arctic is very hard to monitor and survey for animals, and it's very expensive, so our information about Peary caribou numbers is sporadic at best. If you combine that with people who have been on the land, are intimately aware of this species and have a long-term knowledge of trends, you get a much better sense of how numbers have changed over time, and why.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Do you work on other caribou populations, such as the Porcupine herd or boreal caribou? Is it the same kind of situation?

Dr. Cheryl-Ann Johnson: I worked on boreal, and it was not the same. It was very different.

Mr. Richard Cannings: In what way was it different? Was it in terms of indigenous knowledge and uses?

Dr. Cheryl-Ann Johnson: When I originally started working with boreal caribou, probably about 10 years ago, there was some discussion about how we might weave indigenous knowledge into the process of developing the knowledge base for boreal caribou recovery. There was some discussion with indigenous partners, because the boreal herd is huge and involves a whole bunch of different indigenous people—Métis and Inuit. Not everyone agreed on how indigenous knowledge could be part of the recovery process, so it was different. With Peary caribou, it was very clear. Everybody agreed.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Okay. I'll leave it there. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cannings, for your in-depth questions.

Thanks, Dr. Johnson, for being able to provide your experience.

I'll thank Patrice Simon, as well as Dominique Henri for her expertise at this meeting, where we're discussing the integration of indigenous traditional knowledge with government policy development. If there's any further information, please submit it.

We will be suspending for our next panel of witnesses. We have three witnesses online, and two out of three sound checks have been done. We're going to try to do this turnaround quickly so we can get into our next panel.

For now, Mr. Lobb, hang on and we'll be with you shortly.

Witnesses, again, thank you for your contribution.

We'll suspend for a couple of minutes.

• (1200) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1210)

The Chair: We'll continue with this part of the meeting. We do have committee business after this session, which is scheduled for 30 minutes, so we may have to cut into that a little bit with the indulgence of the committee.

Welcome back.

I will remind those of you participating virtually to speak in the official language of your choice. Interpretation services are available. You can choose, at the bottom of your screen, either “floor”, “English” or “French”. If interpretation is lost, please let me know, and we will pause while we get that sorted out.

Two of our witnesses have successfully completed their sound checks. The technical staff will continue to work with the third one to get that sorted out.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(i) and the motion adopted by the committee on Monday, September 18, 2023, the committee resumes its study on the integration of indigenous traditional knowledge and science in government policy development.

It's my pleasure now to welcome, as an individual, Danika Littlechild, assistant professor at Carleton University.

We also welcome, from the Tlicho Government, Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault, who is the director of the department of culture and lands protection.

We also have, from the Government of the Northwest Territories, Heather Sayine-Crawford, director of the wildlife management division.

You will each have five minutes for your remarks, and then we'll go to our rounds of questions.

We'll start with Danika Littlechild.

Ms. Danika Littlechild (Assistant Professor, Carleton University, As an Individual): [*Witness spoke in Cree*]

My name is Danika Littlechild, and I'm a member of the Ermine-skin Cree Nation, the Neyaskweyahk of Maskwacis, in treaty 6 territory in Alberta. I'm an assistant professor at Carleton University in the department of law and legal studies.

I believe that the committee has already received a lot of testimony communicating the what and why of indigenous knowledge. My testimony will not attempt to define indigenous knowledge for the committee. I believe that indigenous peoples themselves ought to be able to define what indigenous knowledge means to them in a self-determined and autonomous way. Instead, my testimony will focus on making recommendations related to how we could integrate indigenous knowledge and science into government policy development.

My central recommendation is that the committee propose the development of a formalized mechanism or mechanisms, possibly legislated, that provide autonomy to indigenous peoples in design and substance.

I have participated in many standard-setting processes, including law and policy development in Canada and internationally. In my experience, the methodology that produces the most constructive and useful advice is one that is indigenous-led. For example, the indigenous circle of experts under the Pathway to Canada Target 1 had autonomy over the report and recommendations they produced, which has led to a proliferation of indigenous-protected and conserved areas in Canada, and I would say that it has influenced conservation policy significantly.

One of the exemplars of how to accomplish the inclusion of indigenous knowledge in government policy comes from Alberta. In 2016, the Government of Alberta legislated monitoring and reporting requirements that included establishing parallel advisory panels to advise the chief scientist and the Government of Alberta on Alberta's environmental science program. There is a science advisory panel and, in addition, a wisdom advisory panel that advises the chief scientist and the GOA regarding how to respectfully apply traditional ecological knowledge and indigenous wisdom to Alberta's environmental science program.

I provided support and facilitation for the indigenous wisdom advisory panel mandate and roles document that provided a framework to accomplish appropriate advice. I've attached that document to this presentation.

A long-standing international exemplar comes from the Convention on Biological Diversity, to which Canada is a party. It is the first and longest-standing formalized mechanism for the inclusion and integration of indigenous knowledge. The fact that this is a legal obligation has led to very rich standard-setting outcomes around indigenous knowledge that have shaped international policy on biodiversity as well as many other fields of work internationally.

I recommend that the committee utilize existing legislation such as the implementation framework around the right to a healthy environment under section 5.1 of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, which provides for ministerial advisory bodies. I would also recommend that the committee characterize this work as supporting the implementation of the Government of Canada's United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act action plan 2023 to 2028.

In conclusion, I would say that this process is not about mainstream science trying to master indigenous knowledge and indigenous science. We do not want to create onerous burdens on existing and future mainstream scientists to try to learn indigenous knowledge systems. I wouldn't ask a scientist to spend three days with me to teach me about a scientific concept, then walk away saying that I had mastered the science behind it. Just as mainstream scientists spend lifetimes mastering their fields of work, so indigenous knowledge holders similarly spend lifetimes learning and becoming knowledge keepers on their lands and waters. My recommendation is that the committee express their respect for the multiplicity of knowledge systems in play and avoid creating artificial binaries—us and them—or circumstances where we're asking one knowledge system to legitimize another when they have no understanding of it.

The idea here is to simply elevate indigenous knowledge systems to a position where they can influence and shape the development of government policy and review existing government policy.

Thank you.

• (1215)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Littlechild.

Before we go to our next witness, Ms. Steinwand-Deschambeault, the technical team is trying to get in touch with you. Please have your phone handy so they can try to sort out the technical issues.

We'll now go to Heather Sayine-Crawford for five minutes.

Ms. Heather Sayine-Crawford (Director, Wildlife Management Division, Government of the Northwest Territories): Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

I have the privilege of working in wildlife management in the Northwest Territories. I work in a field that brings out a lot of passion. I work side by side with a wide range of people who truly care about wildlife and the decisions we are making for conservation. I'm extremely happy to be working in a system that includes and

values indigenous knowledge and perspectives in wildlife management and conservation.

The GNWT—the Government of the Northwest Territories—exercises its responsibility for the stewardship and management of wildlife and wildlife habitat through a well-established co-management regime that provides direct involvement of indigenous governments and indigenous organizations. This co-management regime is implemented in conjunction with a broader GNWT traditional knowledge policy, which requires the GNWT to consider available traditional knowledge in all environmental management actions and decisions.

Here in the NWT we have co-management boards or renewable resources boards, which have already been talked about. They have been established as the main instruments of wildlife management in areas where land claims have been settled. There are four such wildlife co-management boards set up under four separate land claim and self-government agreements in the NWT.

Outside of those settled land claim areas, we work in the spirit of co-management to ensure the input and involvement of other indigenous governments and indigenous organizations in wildlife management.

The Government of the Northwest Territories has two pieces of legislation that provide tools to help conserve wildlife and its habitat: the Wildlife Act and the Species at Risk (NWT) Act. Both pieces of legislation were co-drafted over a number of years, using a collaborative working group process that included participation by indigenous governments with settled land claims and their established co-management boards, as well as indigenous governments and indigenous organizations that did not have finalized land, resources or self-government agreements.

This approach led to legislation that is based on collaboration and legislation that recognizes and respects aboriginal and treaty rights as well as the spirit and intent of land claim agreements. Both the Wildlife Act and the Species at Risk Act formally recognize and put traditional knowledge and science on an equal footing.

What this means in reality is that the processes we undertake recognize the value of having open, informed discussions about wildlife management approaches. That may mean being presented with concerns or divergent views on an issue such as harvest quotas. The co-management system allows for discussion based on the best available local, traditional and scientific knowledge, and open and frank discussions on what can be done to address an issue and the possible implications of those actions.

One unique approach we have taken in the NWT involves our species status reports and approach to assessing species under consideration for listing under the Species at Risk Act.

As part of the NWT's process, species status reports are produced by a species at risk committee. They include two parts: an indigenous knowledge component and a scientific knowledge component. Each section represents a consolidation of the best available information within the scope of each knowledge system. The preparation of each status report is guided by separate instructions tailored to each knowledge system. Trying to amalgamate the two knowledge systems tends to compromise the interpretation and accuracy of the information.

In the next step of the process to consider possible listing, side-by-side or dual species assessments are conducted, one based on indigenous knowledge and the other based on scientific knowledge. Each knowledge system's specific assessment is informed by the respective component of the status report. This structure helps ensure that each knowledge system's autonomy, uniqueness and validity are represented and respected.

Key highlights from this dual assessment process include knowledge-specific criteria that are considered one knowledge system at a time. All members of the committee, regardless of the knowledge system that best represents their expertise, participate throughout the process, thereby allowing experts in different fields to learn from one another. The final species assessment can be supported by criteria from either or both knowledge systems as appropriate. We can expect the knowledge-specific assessments to sometimes contain different results. For example, one could say "special concern" while the other says "threatened". There are no steps in the dual assessment process intended to prevent these differences. Rather, the process is designed to encourage respectful conversation among committee members who represent a diversity of world views and who are committed to working together for the species.

In addition to these examples, the NWT also uses a wide range of collaborative forums and processes in which the GNWT participates with other co-management partners as one voice at the table. Examples include a number of caribou management boards, such as the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board, the Bathurst Caribou Advisory Committee and the Porcupine Caribou Management Board. These boards bring together biologists and indigenous knowledge holders from indigenous governments, indigenous organizations and the GNWT, working together to share what they know, to determine herd status and to identify management actions to support herd management. Being equipped with both sets of knowledge and world views helps these boards to make better decisions that reflect the values and realities of the NWT.

Mahsi cho for your time today.

• (1220)

The Chair: That's great. Thank you. You're right on time as well.

We're still having trouble getting hold of Ms. Steinwand-Deschambeault. We haven't been able to resolve the technical issues, so we will go to our round of questioning as we continue to try to get in touch with Ms. Steinwand-Deschambeault.

For the first six minutes, it's over to Mr. Tochor. Go ahead, please.

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): I believe Mr. Lobb is first.

The Chair: Oh, I'm sorry. It's Mr. Lobb for six minutes, please.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank all our witnesses for being here today.

Ms. Littlechild, I did some reading on your work. The one topic I'd like you to expand on for the benefit of the committee and for the report is your writing on ethical space. Could you elaborate a bit on that for the committee?

• (1225)

Ms. Danika Littlechild: Certainly.

Ethical space is a concept that was coined by a mainstream philosopher, actually, in the sixties, which was then adapted by Cree scholar Willie Ermine, who published a few documents about it. It was further adapted and practised by elders Reg and Rose Crowshoe of Piikani in treaty 7 territory. It's from them that I learned the practice of ethical space, which is essentially a different methodological approach to understanding how to co-create new relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.

One of the things that ethical space asks us to do is to reassess our own positionality relative to various issues, and it tries to give an elevation to indigenous systems without being interfered with by the mainstream. In other words, ethical space is not about trying to adapt to mainstream systems to fit indigenous knowledge or indigenous systems, which are often oral or verbal systems, not written systems, and it also talks collaboratively about the different kinds of standards that will be reflected in the dialogue and interaction between the parties.

Ethical space also provides room for diversity of knowledge systems. In other words, it isn't about creating that binary idea that I was talking about earlier, the idea that all indigenous knowledge is one. There's a reason that there is an "s" at the end of "peoples" in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. That "s" took 11 years to negotiate, and the reason it's there is that we are not a homogeneous group—we have a high level of diversity, and ethical space really calls upon us to recognize that diversity.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Just to follow up on that, is there an area in society or in government policy where you feel that the concept of ethical space could really be a game-changer for Canada?

Ms. Danika Littlechild: I certainly think that there's an interest and a willingness on the part of many federal departments with which I have engaged over the past several years to work in a construct like ethical space to co-develop new policy.

Certainly, I have engaged with Parks Canada and with ECCC, and I believe that a lot of foundational work has already been done. I mentioned some of the legislation that I think is relevant to this conversation, but also, I think we have reached this critical juncture where we're talking about the implementation of a framework like the UN declaration, which has been described by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada as "the framework for reconciliation".

We have this existing set of standards that I think we can draw upon and on which the Canadian government has already legislated quite a bit. I believe there is a lot of infrastructure already in place that we can utilize to engage with this type of approach.

Mr. Ben Lobb: In my remaining time, I'll ask a question of Ms. Sayine-Crawford.

I can go back to years ago when I was first elected. Different things in government policy were burdensome, and there was red tape that just didn't make a lot of sense. Is there an approach in some of the indigenous practices and knowledge that we can relay back to government to say to them, "Okay, you have good intentions here, but actually, you're completely wasting your time, and this is a better approach to take for the natural environment and for society as a whole?"

Ms. Heather Sayine-Crawford: Thanks for that question.

I was happy, actually, in listening to the last session, that there were some questions about the species at risk process, because I'd planned on giving some evidence on what we've done here in the NWT and on taking a different approach in working with people and hearing the problems people had specifically around the species at risk assessment process.

We were finding that it was an overly technical assessment process that indigenous knowledge didn't fit into. Our processes have been heavily informed by the IUCN and COSEWIC processes. Once we started working through that and sitting at the table with traditional knowledge holders and experts, they started saying, "This doesn't work for us. How do we change it?"

Sitting and working together, understanding each other's point of view and working to change the system to make sure we all have an equal footing—those relationships, those discussions, are really important in changing the bar and moving things in the right direction.

• (1230)

The Chair: Thank you very much for the questions and answers.

We'll now go over to Mr. Turnbull for six minutes, please.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Thanks, Chair.

Thanks to all the witnesses who are here today.

This is our last panel on this topic. Your testimony today is a nice way for us to start to finish off this work, although it's kind of sad that we're coming to the completion of it. I've found it to be very informative and fascinating to hear all the testimony.

I'm trying to convert some of the things we've heard to the most practical kind of recommendations that we would like to see in the report coming up. I really appreciated the comments that were made by Ms. Littlechild about ethical space. We had some com-

ments from a previous witness, Carole Lévesque, who worked on Dialog, the Indigenous Peoples Research and Knowledge Network. She talked about spaces of interconnection and interaction. Some of her description of creating those types of spaces sounded quite similar to the concept of ethical space.

How do we convert that to a federal government policy-making process in real and practical terms? What can the federal government do to create more spaces of interconnection and interaction where we really do get the benefit from both knowledge systems without one subsuming the other or assimilating the other, and ensuring that it's done with mutual respect?

Ms. Littlechild, could you maybe remark on that? Then maybe I'll go to the other witness.

Ms. Danika Littlechild: Thank you for the question.

I think ethical space is a useful methodology, because it is not a prescriptive approach. It is co-created by the parties who have chosen to enter into an ethical space together, so it has been very useful in arriving at some very rich outcomes.

For example, we utilized ethical space in the province of Alberta in some of the work that I did there on health. We worked with the province and the federal government through the methodology of ethical space to arrive at some very significant outcomes of a trilateral nature in the context of policy-making and standard setting around indigenous health.

We also used it in the Joint Committee on Climate Action, which is a committee that was co-appointed by the Prime Minister and the Assembly of First Nations. It was used to talk about how to understand the integration of indigenous knowledge in the context of climate policy and climate action in Canada.

We have also seen it used in a number of research fields. It is formalized in the context of the tri-council guidelines on research with indigenous peoples. It's in the first part of the chapter on indigenous peoples. I think it actually used to form part of the CIHR guidelines that predated the tri-council guidelines as well.

Ethical space is not really a new concept in Canada by any means. It's been used quite broadly and widely. There are a lot of different iterations of what ethical space might look like, and I don't think that's something to be concerned about. In fact, ethical space is something that is intended to be co-created for a specific outcome or in a specific process, understanding that different parties come from different perspectives, and to help create institutional change to work toward reconciliation.

It is not about privileging one party over another. It is actually about trying to create a mechanism that prevents the problem we've seen—I think this forms part of your mandate—which is the possibility of systems clash.

The Alberta example that I raised, which has a parallel advisory panel approach, is also reflective of ethical space, because the same issue is presented to both panels, which will consider them in the context of their own chosen mandate and roles in accordance with their own expertise and practice. The outcomes of both panels are then presented to the chief scientist in the Government of Alberta as a way of informing policy development and implementation and, in ethical space, in a context of dialogue and cross-validation of those outcomes.

• (1235)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thank you for that very good and detailed answer. I really appreciate it, because I think it will enhance our report.

Ms. Sayine-Crawford, I want to go to you. You've suggested a number of things as examples based on the Government of Northwest Territories and your work.

What recommendations would you have for the federal government in adopting some of the practices that you mentioned in your opening remarks? It sounded like the dual assessment process was quite significant.

Can you relay any learnings to us quickly?

The Chair: Thank you for the question.

Could you give that to us in writing? We're over the time now. If we could get an answer in writing, that would be great.

We're now going to try to have Ms. Steinwand-Deschambeault provide her testimony for five minutes. We'll keep an eye on our interpreters to make sure that our technical solution is working.

Ms. Steinwand-Deschambeault, thank you for your patience. Five minutes go to you.

Ms. Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault (Director, Department of Culture and Lands Protection, Tlicho Government): I would like to begin by saying *mahsi* to the Standing Committee on Science and Research for inviting us to share our thoughts on traditional knowledge in science and government policy development.

Traditional knowledge, or *Tlicho nàowòò*, is a concept encompassing language, culture and way of life that includes traditional laws and ways of being that are used to understand and navigate through the world we live in. This knowledge helps us to live in harmony with all other forms of life. *Tlicho nàowòò* is rooted in our intimate connection with our land and animals.

Generations of experiencing through close observation and learning how elements, environment and wildlife interact with one another have helped our people learn and build traditional knowledge to better understand our changing world. *Tlicho nàowòò* is constantly expanding as the elders of each generation add their observations, experience, wisdom and insights to what is already known. *Tlicho nàowòò* has been, and continues to be, preserved and shared

with others through oral narratives and more recently through documentation.

The Tlicho Government has taken a leading role in researching, integrating and utilizing traditional knowledge in the co-management of caribou populations here in our part of the world. Caribou have been our way of life since time immemorial. Therefore, they are very important to our people.

In 2016, the Tlicho Government's Boots on the Ground caribou research program was created. We, the Tlicho people, wanted to know for ourselves why the caribou population continued to decline. Since this was our research program, we set out our own research agenda and priorities using the methodology called “we watch everything”. The *Ekwò Nàxoèhdee K'e* program, as it is known now, is rooted in *Tlicho nàowòò*. Elders who have been born and raised out on the land are instrumental in all areas of this research. As a team out on the traditional lands of *Mowhi Gogha De Niitlee*, we begin our research work by acknowledging our higher power and His creation by making offerings to the land to give thanks for all that we have and to request a good season of research, safety on the land and protection from all elements.

By conducting research on our own, we have control and ownership of the process. To effectively integrate *Tlicho nàowòò* into government policy, we collaborate with universities and government agencies. In these collaborations, it's essential that the agenda and research objectives are driven by the community people.

In the Tlicho region, we have an established co-management system for managing the land and caribou. *Tlicho nàowòò* plays a crucial role in caribou management, particularly in our role as an advisory committee member for the Bathurst and Bluenose-East herds. Here, *Tlicho nàowòò* and science are integrated and complement each other in determining the status of caribou herds. The herd status level identified by *Tlicho nàowòò* and science suggest which management actions are to be recommended, which in turn guide government policies to be implemented.

The Tlicho Government works to incorporate *Tlicho nàowò* into decisions regarding resource extraction and projects for mines, roads and power lines. For these projects, we integrate *Tlicho nàowò* into the design of proposed resource development projects to minimize disturbance and mitigate impacts to caribou and the land. While *Tlicho nàowò* and science are different methods and produce different results, the results often complement each other by addressing gaps that the other cannot fill. Science flies planes over and counts caribou; *Tlicho nàowò* does not. However, *Tlicho nàowò* has a long-term, intimate knowledge of caribou and habitat, which science does not have. Thus, results can complement each other. When used side by side, both contribute to a more complete and comprehensive understanding of the caribou.

The Tlicho Government emphasizes including youth and *Tlicho nàowò* research as a long-term vision. This ensures the transfer of knowledge from elders to youth and helps maintain the crucial connection with our land.

Mahsi.

• (1240)

The Chair: That's great. Thank you. I'm very pleased that we were able to get your testimony. It's very helpful for our study.

Now we'll go over to Mr. Blanchette-Joncas for six minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to the witnesses joining us for our second hour.

My first question is for you, Ms. Littlechild.

I listened carefully to your opening statement, which was very detailed and informative. I noticed that you've done international work, including with UNESCO. That is to be commended.

I'd like your help understanding a few things.

First, is there a universal definition of indigenous knowledge?

[*English*]

Ms. Danika Littlechild: No, there is no universal definition.

I think part of that comes from the fact that, in reference to my earlier remarks, indigenous peoples are not a homogeneous group. There is high diversity among indigenous peoples and the different kinds of knowledge systems they hold. We see this with other knowledge holders, such as scientists. Different types of scientists have different types of knowledge. Different cultures around the world have different knowledge systems. Similarly, there's a high diversity of indigenous knowledge systems.

This is why my recommendation to the committee is that it specifically recognize, in the context of the study, the fact that this diversity is difficult to reflect in a brief study, and talk about the need for indigenous peoples to have self-determination to describe their own knowledge systems.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you for your answer.

Is it accurate to say that existing definitions of indigenous knowledge include the idea of spirituality and religious belief?

• (1245)

[*English*]

Ms. Danika Littlechild: I believe that some do. The resources that will be of the greatest utility in this line of questioning will be those standards to which Canada has already agreed.

For example, Canada is a party to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which has, I believe, some definitions around what is globally considered to be indigenous knowledge. We can also, perhaps, look to some of the existing legislation in Canada to look for those definitions.

However, I do not think it's a good use of time for the committee to try to come up with a definition, which, to be quite frank, has been challenging the global community for decades, for the simple reason that it's incredibly difficult to come up with a pithy definition for knowledge systems representing over 470 million people globally.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Very well.

You said that indigenous communities were not a monolithic or homogeneous group. You also said that beliefs and spirituality could inform indigenous knowledge. How do you separate what's true from what isn't?

Say a community has a certain tradition or belief. When it comes to making public policy decisions, there has to be some sort of basis or connection. What do we prioritize? How do we integrate indigenous experience into the existing system?

[*English*]

Ms. Danika Littlechild: Thank you for your question. I've heard you ask many witnesses this precise question, and you've had a lot of different kinds of responses.

For me, the crux of your question relates to the fact that you seek to create.... It sounds as though what you are trying to find is a way of legitimizing or confirming knowledge from different systems. I think this is fundamentally impossible, which is why you've received so many different responses.

As I said earlier, it's very difficult to say I can confirm something is true in a system about which I have no understanding. My example earlier was this: If I sit down with a scientist and ask them to explain a complex scientific concept to me over a period of three days, or even three workshops, I don't think I could walk away from that saying I had verified that this complex scientific concept was indeed true from my own indigenous perspective. Similarly, I think on the flip side that it's pretty well impossible for non-indigenous systems to try to somehow verify or confirm the veracity of indigenous knowledge systems.

We can see that the courts in Canada have also struggled with this. We have some sort of challenging test the courts have laid out—10-part tests around how you define something that is central to your indigenous identity, for example. All of these tests have, for the most part and for many years, relied upon social science evidence, for example, like finding some kind of non-indigenous study to confirm it.

The Chair: I'm sorry. I have to interrupt. Thank you for the answer. We're over time.

Mr. Cannings, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Thank you.

Thank you all for being here today.

I'd like to quickly go to Ms. Sayine-Crawford.

I'm very interested to hear your words on the Northwest Territories' Species at Risk Act. I've been involved with the federal Species at Risk Act for many years.

I'd like to give you more time to dive into that. First of all, how does it align legally with the federal act? How do they work together in the Northwest Territories?

Ms. Heather Sayine-Crawford: Thank you for that question.

Our Species at Risk (NWT) Act is applicable in the NWT. There are some fundamental differences between our act and the federal Species at Risk Act, but ultimately, I think that they do complement each other.

In the past we have used federal recovery strategies, management plans or species status reports to help inform our own processes here in NWT. For example, our latest management plan for northern mountain caribou relies heavily on the management plan that was developed federally and which included information from the Northwest Territories.

I think the main difference is that here we work in a collaborative system. I talked a lot about the co-management regime. I think it parallels the ethical space that has been spoken about today as well. It's looking to bring everyone to the table to meet and discuss, first, the status reports, then the assessment and, finally, listings.

A difference with the Species at Risk (NWT) Act is just that there are several management authorities, including those co-management boards under the settled land claim agreements as well as the GNWT, and there's also space for all other indigenous governments and indigenous organizations in those decisions.

• (1250)

Mr. Richard Cannings: Thanks.

You mentioned that you structure your assessment process and perhaps the recovery planning process differently from the federal process in that there are essentially two paths, the indigenous knowledge path and the scientific path, or whatever you want to call that. They kind of remain separate throughout the process, whereas in the federal process there's the indigenous knowledge committee on COSEWIC and an attempt to try to bring both of those knowledge pieces together to form a final assessment report and recovery plans. You seemed to intimate that this approach doesn't work as well as your method.

I'm wondering if you could expand on that. I'm very interested in hearing your thoughts.

Ms. Heather Sayine-Crawford: Yes. Thank you for that question.

I think it touches on some of the things that have been talked about today.

As I discussed, our process heavily relied on the IUCN and COSEWIC processes, which are based on scientific knowledge. When traditional knowledge holders came to the table, it didn't fit their world view and the way that they viewed the different species. Really, changing the system to a dual process to allow for each knowledge system to put forward their own information allowed us to communicate in a way that best fits that knowledge system.

One concrete example would be considering barren ground caribou. In a normal scientific status report, we talk about the systematic and taxonomic classification of barren ground caribou. They're a branch of *tarandus*.

What does that mean for indigenous peoples? To flip that, indigenous knowledge holders and experts in the field changed that to how they view the species as a whole and how they see the herds on the ground. Based on science, in the barren ground caribou status report, we relied heavily on definitions of herds, while the indigenous knowledge component looked at such things as where the barren ground caribou are travelling and what their range is, as well as their colour, body condition and even the taste of the meat. That resulted in a different identification of herds.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Thank you.

I'd like to turn quickly to Professor Littlechild.

You mentioned CEPA and the implementation framework around the right to live in a healthy environment. As I understand it, that applies only within the confines of CEPA. I put forward a private member's bill that would do the same thing, but for all federal pieces of legislation. I'm wondering if you could quickly comment on the utility of that process.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds, please.

Ms. Danika Littlechild: I think what you're proposing would be incredibly useful, and I think the reason is that creating formalized mechanisms has really shown to provide the richest and most useful outcomes for the inclusion of indigenous peoples. If there are no formalized mechanisms and if we can't point to some high specificity in the context of legislation or policy, I think there's less utility to those types of mechanisms. I think expanding that beyond CEPA, which is one example, would be very useful.

• (1255)

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you for the questions.

In the next round, we're going to be abbreviated, doing three minutes, three minutes, one minute and one minute. That will cut into our committee business time a little bit, but with the committee's indulgence, let's go ahead with three minutes to Mr. Tochor, please.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Thank you very much.

Thank you to our witnesses.

Ms. Sayine-Crawford, I've heard some of the stories about permafrost and the challenges with global warming. In knowledge transfer from elders, is what the elders have been saying about global warming affecting some of the caribou herds in the north pretty universal?

Ms. Heather Sayine-Crawford: I think we see lots of similar testimonies coming from different communities, but there are differences across the NWT, as the Northwest Territories are quite vast. We have a huge area and five different ecotypes, actually, of caribou that exist here and that people rely on. We do see some differences, but there are some main points that continue to come out from everyone.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Going forward, you hear stories from elders talking about the challenges of dealing with warmer climates. Are there stories from elders who talk about when the climate was colder? I'm going way back to stories about the last time everything was in an ice age. Have they shared stories about the changing climates over the years?

Ms. Heather Sayine-Crawford: For this question, I actually think Tammy would be best suited to speak to—

Mr. Corey Tochor: Be really quick. We're short on time.

Ms. Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault: Our elders have stories that talk about how in the past with the caribou, during very cold temperatures, there was both a decline and an improvement you could see in the populations.

The climate, we know, is really affecting the caribou. There are also other factors that we're seeing. We're finding with our research in the Contwoyto Lake area that there are other predators coming

in, such as the bald eagle; so there are lots of different factors that we feel are affecting caribou populations in that area.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Thank you kindly.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to Dr. Jaczek for three minutes, please.

Hon. Helena Jaczek (Markham—Stouffville, Lib.): Thank you so much, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for their testimony today.

Ms. Littlechild, thank you again for the practical recommendations you've made. The discussion today has very much focused on environment, on wildlife, and those particular study areas. I didn't know that in fact the Environment and Climate Change Canada department had a wildlife and landscape sciences directorate, and we heard about their efforts to incorporate indigenous knowledge.

Are you aware of other departments of the federal government that have such science directorates that might also benefit from more collaboration and integration with indigenous knowledge? I'm of course thinking of health, social services—that kind of area.

Ms. Danika Littlechild: Yes, I think there are probably quite a few. Not having a deep knowledge of the various departments within the Canadian ministries, it's difficult for me to pinpoint any precise examples.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I appreciate that.

In terms of granting research dollars, obviously the federal government is involved in that. Are you at all familiar with CIHR and NSERC, etc.? Are you thinking along any lines that might provide for opportunities for more indigenous-led research through those federal granting agencies?

• (1300)

Ms. Danika Littlechild: I have the privilege of being a co-principal investigator with a project called the Arramat project, which you heard about in previous testimony from Dr. Brenda Parlee, who was one of my co-principal investigators in that project. The project is funded through the new frontiers and research transformations grant. It is a global, multi-year, multi-million-dollar project that looks at indigenous health and well-being in the context of biodiversity and conservation.

I think that funding projects such as this, which are indeed indigenous-led and place-based, is one of the best ways to start to elevate the knowledge systems of indigenous peoples, not only in Canada but globally.

I think the fact that Canada is funding these types of projects, and hopefully continues to do so, will in fact influence not just Canadian policy but also global and international policy through institutions like the United Nations and others that are looking at how to understand the place of indigenous systems vis-à-vis other systems of knowledge and science on various environmental issues.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We go now to Mr. Blanchette-Joncas for a minute.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Littlechild, you said in your opening remarks that indigenous knowledge should be defined by indigenous people themselves, by the knowledge holders or knowledge keepers.

You said the two knowledge systems were completely different. Does that mean that western knowledge, evidenced-based information and such, should not encroach on or interfere with indigenous knowledge?

[*English*]

Ms. Danika Littlechild: I think there has been really wonderful evidence presented about ways to find commonalities between knowledge systems, so I won't speak to that.

I will speak to a point that I was trying to get to earlier in your line of questioning. I could maybe use the example of the Alberta indigenous wisdom advisory panel, which advises the chief scientist in the Government of Alberta. One challenge is that the chief scientist will of course have their own bias and limitations in how they understand the advice provided by the indigenous wisdom advisory panel, and then that advice and contribution becomes constrained and limited by the limited understanding and cultural values held by the chief scientist or government representatives.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Cannings, go ahead for the final minute, please.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Thank you.

I'm going to go back to Professor Littlechild and talk about species at risk.

When I've worked with indigenous peoples on species at risk issues, they point out pretty much immediately that the Species at Risk Act is largely applicable only on federal lands. In Canada, that means right away the Indian reserves and everything north of 60, where we have substantial indigenous populations, who then point out that they have indigenous knowledge that they would like to use.

You used the word "autonomy". Could you talk briefly about that clash of systems?

Ms. Danika Littlechild: Sure.

I think one challenge has always been how to understand system clash. Many indigenous scholars who are far more established and knowledgeable than I am, such as Leroy Little Bear, have talked extensively about this in their publications and in their work.

From my perspective, part of the challenge is that it's only been somewhat recently that we've seen space being made for indigenous systems. For many years, indigenous systems were seen—

The Chair: Thank you.

I think we'll cut it there. We did trap part of your thought. Unfortunately, we are over time. That's what we have been fighting all through this whole study. If there is more you can provide in a written response, it would be good to get things like the study you just mentioned over to us for the clerk and the analysts.

Thank you, Danika Littlechild, Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault and Heather Sayine-Crawford, for your testimony and for your contribution today. Thank you for your patience with the technology. I'm really glad you were able to interact with us.

For now, we're going to take a pause. You're free to leave. We're going to go into committee business now, so you can sign off Zoom, and then we will go right into committee business.

• (1305)

We've scheduled until 1:30 for committee business, so we've extended our time briefly today to talk about the travel budget. We have until 1:30. The proposal includes provisions for 12 travellers—including seven MPs, a clerk, two analysts and two interpreters—to visit the Canadian Nuclear Laboratories in Chalk River, SNOLAB in Sudbury, the Canadian Light Source in Saskatoon, the Dominion Radio Astrophysical Observatory in Kaleden, B.C. and TRIUMF in Vancouver, B.C.

Travel would take place May 13 to May 17. I remind you that the submission has to be sent to the Liaison Committee's subcommittee on budgets by this Friday, February 16.

Do we have any comments on the budget we have before us?

Go ahead, Mr. Cannings.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Kaleden, Penticton and Kelowna are mentioned here as if they are three separate destinations. They're all the same place, basically. We would travel to Kelowna, probably stay in Penticton, and see the centre in Kaleden. It's not like we're going all over the map.

The Chair: Thank you for giving us the regional knowledge. I know one out of three of those centres.

Go ahead, Dr. Jaczek.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Being relatively new to this committee, I just wondered how this list of interesting places came about.

The Chair: The original travel was a motion in the committee back in Kirsty Duncan's time. We just duplicated what was approved by the committee at that time to see whether the current committee would approve this travel.

Go ahead, Ms. Bradford.

Ms. Valerie Bradford (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): I'm happy to speak to that, because it was my original motion. I think Lena and I are the only ones on the government side who have been here from the beginning.

This came about after, I think, probably our very initial study, which was on big science. That was pretty much the initial study at this committee. We had witnesses from many of these very interesting facilities, which, because of their size and uniqueness, I have a feeling you really need to see to believe. That's why we suggested this. We keep putting it forward in hope.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there any other comments around the table?

Go ahead, Monsieur Blanchette-Joncas.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: I just want to point out, Mr. Chair, that the trip does not include any destinations in Quebec. I hope that, going forward, proposals will include destinations in Quebec. We, too, have a significant presence in the science community and incredible infrastructure.

I want to understand something. We are back to the original motion from two years ago. Can we amend the motion, or do we have to adopt it as is? What's the procedure?

[*English*]

The Chair: Unfortunately, because of the deadline, we've had to draft a budget. The clerk drafted a budget based on these locations, so that's what we have before us.

You're right that there's a lot of great science in Quebec, for sure, but we'd have to redo the budget, which we don't have time to do at this point. It's kind of all or nothing.

Should we vote on the budget, then? Can I call on the clerk to help us? Should we do it on division?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: It's unanimous. That's fantastic. I love it when a plan comes together. Thank you, committee. Thank you to the clerk for doing that.

Go ahead, Mr. Tochor.

Mr. Corey Tochor: I have a motion. I move that the committee invite the Minister of Industry, along with department officials, to appear for two hours to explain why Huawei is absent from Science and Economic Development Canada's list of named research organizations that are identified as posing a high risk to Canada's national security, and that the committee report this back to the House.

That is the motion I'd like us to vote on. It would be a quick, one-committee meeting to explore why and how they can defend not having Huawei on that list that excludes entities from China operating in Canada. I make that motion and I hope we have a vote on it today. We have committee business for the next 20 minutes.

• (1310)

The Chair: We'll open that up for discussion.

Go ahead, Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Because we haven't had a chance to see it and Mr. Tochor read it fairly quickly, could we have that sent in both official languages to our email so that we can actually read it? I'm someone who needs to—

Mr. Corey Tochor: I'll do you one better: I'll distribute a copy in both French and English.

This is a study that we've been wanting to do for a while and that we've discussed already. I'd like to vote on it today.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: I don't remember ever discussing this, Mr. Tochor, but that's fine.

Maybe you can float those around. I would appreciate a copy by email so that I can actually look at it. If we want to potentially propose an amendment, that should be available, right?

The Chair: Yes. It's up to the—

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Maybe we can pause, wait until we get that, and then return to the discussion, if that's fair. I think in most committees that's been the standard.

The Chair: Yes, we can pause for a couple of minutes while it comes around.

Mr. Corey Tochor: As we wait—

The Chair: No. We're just pausing for a moment....

All right. Go ahead.

Mr. Corey Tochor: On a point of clarification, because we're in committee business, we don't need to officially have a translation. What I've read out is what I'd like the vote to be on. It's not a procedural requirement that we need to have a translation.

The Chair: No, but if a member wants it in writing in front of him—it's a longer motion and we haven't seen it yet—I think it's a fair request for a member to look at it.

Mr. Corey Tochor: You might think it's fair—

The Chair: Yes, I do.

Mr. Corey Tochor: —but by the book, we're in committee business, and we need to vote on this today.

The Chair: We don't need to vote today. It's up to the committee when that vote happens.

Mr. Corey Tochor: I don't know why you're hiding.

The Chair: I'm not hiding.

Mr. Corey Tochor: This is an attempt to, once again, stall. We've asked why Huawei has not been on this list, and there's been no explanation.

We are the science committee. We should be tasked with looking at why our post-secondary institutions are still partnering with Huawei. It's been years now that we've known the problems with that company and the ties to the Beijing government. We know the questions that have been raised about some of the research that has been done as early as late last year with that entity.

We are asking for just a two-hour study. I do not understand what the government is trying to hide. These answers are going to come out. It would be best to come out in a proper committee such as this one, a committee that is looking at our post-secondary institutions and the corruption that's been promulgated by actors from Beijing.

The Chair: Is there more discussion on this, or do you want to go to a vote?

Go ahead, Ms. Kayabaga.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): I would like to move to adjourn debate.

Mr. Corey Tochor: She can't do that in committee business.

The Chair: Yes, you can adjourn.

There's a non-debatable motion to adjourn debate. Let's test the committee on that.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Just for clarification, Lloyd, we are not voting on this. We are hiding again. The cover-up continues.

The Chair: No, no, we're voting on adjourning debate. It's a non-debatable motion.

Mr. Corey Tochor: No, this is a cover-up. We have 20 more minutes of committee time. Why you guys are hiding from Huawei is beyond me.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes, Ms. Kayabaga.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: I believe a motion to adjourn debate is non-debatable.

The Chair: That's correct.

Let's go to the vote on adjourning debate.

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Chair: The debate continues.

• (1315)

Mr. Corey Tochor: Call the vote on the question.

The Chair: The debate continues.

Go ahead, Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: As I'm reading this, I'm trying to understand what the intention is here. My understanding is that this motion is asking for an explanation of why a private company is not on a list. I believe the list that is being referred to is for research organizations. It's not actually to include private companies, so I'm struggling to understand what the intention is.

I think the other thing is that there is already a ban on federal funding from Huawei. I guess, just in terms of the intention of the motion, I'm a little bit confused as to why this study would be necessary and how the motion even makes sense.

Maybe members from the Conservative Party, who are clearly looking to grandstand on this, can potentially give us a rationale.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Rempel Garner.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: That's if they want to. Otherwise, I can keep talking.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: When I looked at the named research organizations list that came out.... First of all, I'll note that the government took a long time to put that list out. It was much longer than it said it was going to take. What ended up happening was that another season of research granting went through.

We've heard in testimony here that there have been partnerships that have happened, ostensibly with organizations that are now on the list. We've not had the minister in front of the committee to testify how this list was developed or what criteria were used.

The other thing, to Mr. Turnbull's comment, is when we think about companies in the Canadian context, under Canadian law, they don't necessarily neatly overlie state-owned enterprises that have direct links with, let's say, a Communist government. That's not what the term "company" means. When we talk about research entities, countries, government organizations and other governmental systems, a company can be a state-run enterprise.

I think it behooves this committee, given that this was a topic of much discussion in many witnesses' testimony over the last year, to understand what the government's rationale was in allowing certain companies to participate—again, "companies" is in air quotes—or not in research funding in Canada.

I think this would provide clarity for Canada's universities. It seems a little vague to me, and I'd love the opportunity to question officials on this matter.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Tochor is next.

Mr. Corey Tochor: We have 12 minutes left to have this vote today, unless we want to cover this up again. This is what I think the Liberals are attempting to do with any inquiry into why Huawei is going to get special access or why we would be partnering with an entity like that, because it's proven to be questionable for our safety and security.

This is pretty straightforward. It's one meeting of two hours with officials to find out why this Beijing-linked organization was not on the list. If we don't vote on this, I think it's pretty clear that this is a Liberal cover-up again. Now it's on science.

I'll end it there.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

We have Ms. Bradford and then Ms. Jaczek on the speaking list.

Ms. Valerie Bradford: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

With all due respect, I think the reason we don't want to take two hours to bring the minister back is that he dealt with this issue the last time he was here and we have mechanisms in place to make sure that there aren't partnerships with Huawei.

If it's a university partnership, the new regulation list will capture it and prevent it from happening. If it's an industry partnership, the alliance regulations will capture it, so it's basically a moot point.

We haven't approved anything with Huawei since the fall of 2022, so I really don't see the need to take up more committee time, two hours, by bringing the minister back to deal with something that's already been dealt with by other means.

The Chair: Okay.

Go ahead, Dr. Jaczek.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: In a similar vein, as I understand it, this isn't the only mechanism that we have. As my colleague has said, the minister made it very clear that any decision on Huawei would be made through the alliance program research security regulation. Again, we're trying to wrestle with some of the legislation that is available.

This was flagged back in 2022, so we already have tools to use to ensure that our security is intact.

• (1320)

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: The other thing that is important to keep in mind is that the list we're talking about was created by Public Safety Canada. When Public Safety does the work behind the scenes to come up with a list of research organizations, they certainly do their due diligence on that. A ban on Huawei funding research in Canada was already in place, since the government had already made a decision on that. We have a research security framework that I know members are well aware of.

What's interesting to me is that we'd be calling a minister back who wasn't the minister doing the work on creating the list of research organizations. It's kind of interesting that this only focuses on the Minister of Industry, rather than the Minister of Public Safety or both. I think it's a missed opportunity for the Conservatives.

I agree with my colleagues that this seems to be a moot point, because we've been so clear about not allowing research funding from Huawei. Their research organizations seem to include a list of post-secondary institutions, for the most part.

If Mr. Tochor wants to provide some additional clarification, that's fine. If not, I can keep going.

The Chair: Mr. Tochor is on the speaking list, so we'll go to him next.

Mr. Corey Tochor: It's telling that you would go this far to protect Huawei. It's very telling that the Liberal Party of Canada will not have a meeting to understand one of the biggest risks we have to our security and communications. You're shutting down that de-

bate. You're shutting down a committee investigating a company that one would have to assume must have the dirt on some Liberals. That's the only reason every Liberal is defending Huawei and refusing to study this question.

This is very telling, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I was going to say that we've run out our speaking list, but we have Ms. Metlege Diab.

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab: Thank you.

With respect, I can't believe I'm hearing Mr. Tochor say what he just said. No member on this side, and I'm sure on the other side, has any intention of protecting the company.

At least three of my colleagues have tried to convey the reasoning for not taking up committee time doing something that is not in its mandate. It is not this minister's mandate. He was not the one who created that list, nor was that department.

We get precious little time to meet in this committee to truly work on, understand, get in witnesses for and do studies on science and research. I find it very.... Whatever the word is, I'm not happy with it. They're trying to waste time with things that are not related to the committee we decided to join in the first place.

As my colleague Ms. Bradford said, we were here from the beginning, as were some of you on the other side. The reason we put our hand up and wanted to be on this historic, original committee was that we truly valued science and research in Canada, in English and French, and felt there was something we could do to contribute to it.

[*Translation*]

We really don't have a lot of time. The committee doesn't have enough time to plan its work and bring in witnesses who really want to talk about science and research in Canada. I'd like to propose a lot of studies, but the committee has a very limited amount of time.

• (1325)

[*English*]

Political parties have from the beginning taken turns, so when it comes to our side here, there's really no time for us to even put any studies forward. That's where I would like to see our energies and our time spent. We can truly use this time here beneficially and do things on this committee that, frankly, cannot be done in other committees.

There are over 30 standing committees at the House of Commons. Surely there are committees better suited to study some of these other things that keep popping up at this committee that are not within the mandate of the science and research committee and were not part of its mandate when it was created.

Mr. Turnbull, I think you had your hand up.

Oh, you did, Dr. Jaczek? I'm sorry.

I don't want to say a lot more, but once in a while, every x number of months, I really do get passionate about this topic, because I was one of the people who initially, when I got elected, said to my whip that this was the committee I'd like to be on. The reason was to do things that I believe are valuable in the science and research community and that I have not seen done before. This is what I would like us to use our valuable, precious time on here.

The Chair: Dr. Jaczek, go ahead.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Chair.

I certainly echo what I heard from my colleague Ms. Diab. I'm extremely anxious to get on with the study proposed by Monsieur Blanchette-Joncas, for example. I think it would be an appropriate use of the time of this particular committee.

Furthermore, as we have said, the Government of Canada has made a very firm statement when it comes to Huawei. In fact, I'll quote from a statement made by the Honourable François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, on May 19, 2022. That statement reads as follows:

Today, the Government of Canada is ensuring the long term safety of our telecommunications infrastructure. As part of that, the government intends to prohibit the inclusion of Huawei and ZTE products and services in Canada's telecommunications systems.

This follows a thorough review by our independent security agencies and in consultation with our closest allies.

As a result, telecommunications companies that operate in Canada would no longer be permitted to make use of designated equipment or services provided by Huawei and ZTE. As well, companies that already use this equipment installed in their networks would be required to cease its use and remove it. The government intends to implement these measures as part of a broader agenda to promote the security of Canada's telecommunications networks and in consultation with industry.

That's a firm commitment.

To further quote Minister Champagne:

Our government will always protect the safety and security of Canadians and will take any actions necessary to safeguard our critical telecommunications infrastructure.

I think this is crystal clear and I think it's a misuse of the time of this particular committee to proceed in the way that this motion suggests.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Turnbull, go ahead, but very briefly, because I have a few comments I'd like to make before we adjourn.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thanks, Chair, and thanks to my colleagues for those comments.

I think next in the rotation we have a Bloc study on the U15 and perhaps more equitably distributing funding for research in Canada, which I think will be a great study.

I think that next in our rotation the committee has agreed to have the proposed Arctic research study, which I think is a testament to how this committee functions in a very collaborative, open, thoughtful way.

In terms of this particular motion, perhaps the Conservatives want to have one meeting on this topic as their study in the rotation, but my feeling is that we will have numerous studies before there will be time for an additional Conservative motion.

From my perspective, Chair, this is sort of jumping the gun in terms of wanting to insert a motion in the agenda that's already been agreed upon, with study after study, which I think will account for much of our time for a number of weeks to come.

● (1330)

The Chair: Okay. We are—

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Maybe I'll leave it there, because I notice that you want to jump in, but I do have more to say on this.

The Chair: Okay. We have reached our time.

We're meeting on Thursday to provide our analysts with drafting instructions for the study report on indigenous traditional knowledge and science and we'll also be setting a deadline for written briefs on that. We also want to look at the draft report on the pay impacts on Canadian universities. The clerk has circulated a draft report on that.

Also, with regard to the chief science advisor's appearance on Thursday the 27th, I'd like to know from the committee—and maybe on Thursday we can address this—whether we'd like her to be here for one hour or two hours. We can pick up the conversation on that on Thursday.

Mr. Corey Tochor: That's in camera. We have to be meeting in public for discussion on this motion, though; other than that, it's a cover-up.

The Chair: Okay.

Thank you, committee. We're adjourned.

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