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# Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs

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Chair: Terry Sheehan





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• (1100)

[English]

**The Chair (Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie—Algoma, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 31 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs. We recognize that we meet on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe peoples.

Pursuant to the order of the House, the committee is continuing its study of Bill S-2, an act to amend the Indian Act with regard to new registration entitlements.

Is the interpretation not working?

[Translation]

**Marilène Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan, BQ):** Mr. Chair, we started the meeting two minutes early, so of course I wasn't ready. There aren't any interpreters, unless they're outside.

[English]

**The Chair:** I'll suspend for a moment so that we can make sure the interpretation is working.

• (1055)

(Pause)

• (1100)

**The Chair:** We're reconvening.

With regard to interpretation, for those people who are here, keep your earpiece on. We'll be switching between English and French, and that's the best to make sure you don't miss anything. We want to keep this flowing as much as possible.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference—welcome, Sonia—raise your hand and the clerk or I will see you.

Before I introduce our witnesses, today is the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ People, Red Dress Day, so I would like us to take a moment of silence, please. Remain in your seat and please reflect.

[A moment of silence observed]

*Chi-meegwetch.*

For those who are here, I will remind you that when the gavel is struck and we're in committee, there can be no pictures or videos. When we are done, you can take pictures.

Thank you to everyone here.

As witnesses today, we have the Honourable Mary Jane McCallum, a senator from Manitoba. We have Patty Fraser as an individual. We have Joshua Wesley Havill, an operations supervisor. From the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke, we have Chief Jeremiah Johnson, by video conference. From the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, we have Marilyn Slett, secretary-treasurer, elected chief of the Heiltsuk Tribal Council.

Welcome to everyone. You will each have five minutes. When you have 30 seconds left, I will let you know so that you can please wrap up. Then we'll have a dialogue with the members, when you'll have a lot more opportunity to say more.

Let's start with the senator, please.

Welcome.

• (1105)

**Hon. Mary Jane McCallum (Senator, Manitoba, C):** Thank you, Chair. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to appear before the INAN committee in the House of Commons to provide evidence on Bill S-2.

Bill S-2 was studied at APPA as a prestudy at the request of the federal government, and the sponsor was Senator Marc Gold, government representative in the Senate at the time.

Historian J.R. Miller stated in his book entitled *Lethal Legacy*:

study of the past can help Canadians to understand how issues evolved to where they are today. In such understanding lies at least the beginning of working out solutions to difficult issues.

*Lethal Legacy* deals with native identity, self-government, treaties, land and ownership, and assimilation. Miller exposes attempts by governments at all levels to evade their legal obligation by a variety of means: by limiting the definition of what constitutes aboriginal identity; by reshaping native ways of being through residential schools; by imposing legislation without consultation; and by assimilating native peoples socially, economically and politically.

Pre-contact first nations were self-governing people who determined who they were and determined who lived within their tribes. Gradually over time, the first nations became an administered people through unilateral federal legislation that slowly narrowed and removed their inherent right to self-determination and self-government. Words like membership, status, non-status and citizenship are colonial words that were introduced through legislation. These words do not exist in our languages, languages that existed pre-contact. J.R. Miller states, “if race defines aboriginality, it is because non-Native governments imposed it on Aboriginal groups.” In our language, we speak about being human in defining ourselves. For example, *mihko iyiniwak*, that is Cree.

All the amendments to Bill S-2 were done respecting the Constitution's protection of aboriginal rights for a 21st century Canada. Aboriginal rights include self-determination, cultural practices, self-government, historical social structures and legal systems of first nations people, and all these have identity in them. They are entrenched in section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, and protected under section 25 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which protects the collective first nations right that is a unique, distinct right that includes the right for first nations to determine who they and their descendants are including the right not to be extinguished as a collective as well as an individual. Extinguishing status of individuals will lead to extinguishment of the collective within four generations.

Senators hold the duty to promote core principles and values of our democratic system, especially given the Senate's traditional role of acting on behalf of groups under-represented in the House of Commons whereby the Supreme Court of Canada has noted in regard to Senate reform 2014:

Over time, the Senate also came to represent various groups that were under-represented in the House of Commons. It served as a forum for ethnic, gender, religious, linguistic, and Aboriginal groups that did not always have a meaningful opportunity to present their views through the popular democratic process

The Senate has not gone beyond the scope of Bill S-2. The Senate has done due diligence to ensure that the rights and freedoms of first nations are respected and that Bill S-2 is charter-compliant including equality, safety, security and freedom from discrimination including extinguishment for the individual and the collective.

How much more time do I have?

• (1110)

**The Chair:** You have 40 seconds.

**Hon. Mary Jane McCallum:** In addition, I wanted to say the Senate was uniquely designed to be less partisan, less subject to external political pressures and more representative of the voices so often excluded in government decision-making. In APPA, despite our collective knowledge, expertise or experiences, it was critical that our decision in relation to Bill S-2 had to be led by the first nations people who are directly impacted. It's important that INAN understand that the Indian Act was never meant to benefit Indians.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Senator.

Next we have Patty Fraser.

**Patty Fraser (As an Individual):** Good day.

My name is Patty Fraser. I'm a granddaughter of Ruby Starlight-Fraser. Ruby was a Sarcee woman, born and raised near Calgary, Alberta, among the people now known as the Tsuu T'ina nation.

To understand our story, I ask you to consider this as your own family. Ruby spoke Tsuu T'ina effortlessly. Census records show her among the last names on the band list in 1911, when only 165 people remained. Her parents, Jim Starlight and Annie One Spot-Starlight, were among the first sent to residential school. Jim became everything the government expected—a successful farmer and rancher, even recognized as one of the southern Alberta pioneers in 1921—but he could not purchase or own his own land, and he had to ask for permission to leave the reserve.

In 1932, Ruby married my grandfather, Sam Fraser. Because he was Métis, she lost her status under the Indian Act, while her brother's wife, who was not indigenous, gained hers. Ruby and Sam had 10 children, born on the reserve, and they lived there for 20 years.

Ruby was enfranchised in 1952. She was 43 years old, with half of her life spent on one side of the fence and the other half trying to get back. While enfranchisement suggested something gained, what it meant for our family was loss: loss of home, loss of community and loss of identity. Ruby told a standing Senate committee in 1983 that an Indian agent gave her 24 hours to leave. He said she could return in 10 years. That did not happen. What followed was not just a legal gap; it was a human one.

My grandparents were forced to leave behind their way of life. My grandfather had a trapline to provide for his family, but once they moved to the city, that livelihood was gone. He died 11 years later. Imagine having no home, no income and 10 children to care for. Ruby's youngest child, Monty, died at around three years of age. That loss impacted our family immensely.

Outside the community, they faced another reality. Because of how indigenous people were treated, they often hid who they were, telling others they were French or Italian, just to be accepted. That loss of identity carries forward. This is intergenerational trauma, but it wasn't spoken of, as they held it inside. They wanted their children to live happy and successful lives, but it still carried through.

In grade 6, I learned we were Indians. I felt ashamed, and I didn't tell anyone for years. I also felt ashamed that I would disrespect my grandmother and father in that way. This is the kind of impact these policies have.

When Bill C-31 was introduced, our family believed the harm would finally be corrected, and that we would reconnect and restore our place as Tsuu T'ina people, but that did not happen.

Today, I understand that Bill S-2 aims to address inequities in registration, but eligibility for status does not restore what was lost. It does not restore identity. It does not restore belonging. It does not undo generations of disconnection. This is Canada's legacy, but you have an opportunity to correct that, or not. Your decision will be part of Canada's history.

I want to make this real. My niece Tasha is here with me today. She has siblings who have status and others who do not. Tasha does not. They share the same family, the same history and the same grandmother, but on paper they are treated differently. This is what this system continues to do: It divides families. In our family, only four out of 45 of Ruby's grandchildren were born with status. Every generation after Ruby has been affected.

This is not just about status on paper. It affects how we see ourselves; our mental health and well-being; our connection to land, culture and community; and whether we are accepted or not.

While this bill attempts to correct legal discrimination, it does not address lived consequences. Meaningful justice goes beyond registration. I carry my grandmother's story—

• (1115)

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds, please.

**Patty Fraser:** —but I also carry what she lost. I think about what we pass on to the next generation: not just status but identity, belonging and truth.

I asked you at the beginning to consider this as your own family. Now I leave it with you as to how you choose to respond and what this will mean to Canada's future generations.

*Sīyísgáàs.* Thank you for hearing me.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Patty.

Next we have Joshua for five minutes.

**Joshua Wesley Havill (Operations Supervisor, As an Individual):** Thank you for having me here today. My name is Joshua Havill. I'm Anishinabe with ancestral ties to the Garden River and Batchewana First Nations. I'm here because my grandmother could not be.

In 1939, my great-grandfather, Edward Nolan, was forced to make an impossible choice. The Indian Act prohibited him from owning land or building a home on reserve. To put a roof over the heads of his wife and three young daughters, he had to surrender his status and theirs with it. My grandmother, Mary Freda Rosamond Nolan, was five years old. She didn't sign anything. She didn't understand what was happening. A five-year-old girl lost her identity because her father wanted to build a house.

Six months later, Edward volunteered for overseas service in the Second World War. According to our family, he served as a blacksmith and a mechanic. He earned three campaign medals, which I've brought with me today. I'd like the committee to sit with that for a moment. In 1939, Canada told Edward Nolan that his family had to give up who they were so that he could build them a home. Six months later, he volunteered to fight for that same country overseas. His great-grandchildren are still paying the price for that forced enfranchisement today.

The TRC called what happened to families like mine "cultural genocide". A Supreme Court justice called it "statutory excommunication". Duncan Campbell Scott told Parliament that his objective was "to continue until there was not a single Indian in Canada [who] has not been absorbed into the body politic". That was what was done to my grandmother, and I'm asking you to finally act as though you agree it was wrong.

In 1985, Bill C-31 gave my grandmother her status back, but the government didn't restore her fully, which has limited how status passes to descendants. My father holds status under subsection 6(2), which cannot be transmitted to the next generation when the other parent is not indigenous. That is how a decision forced upon a five-year-old in 1939 is still determining the legal identity of her great-grandchildren today. Eighty-seven years: That's how long this has been cascading through my family.

I have applied for Indian status multiple times and have been denied each time, despite my grandmother being full Ojibwa and my father holding status. The only reason I don't have status is the second-generation cut-off. I'm not a difficult case. I'm a predictable result of a broken system.

I'm not alone. My father, nine cousins, aunts and uncles all trace back to the same grandmother, and we were all caught in the same trap. My son Maverick is eight years old. My daughter Matilda is four, nearly the same age my grandmother was when this started.

Maverick has Duchenne muscular dystrophy. He needs a Chromebook just to get through a school day without muscle fatigue. Maverick lights up when he tells people that his grandfather is indigenous. He's so proud. He deserves the right to say with the same pride that he is indigenous, too, not as a story about someone else, but as his own identity and his own belonging.

If Bill S-2 passes with the one-parent rule, Maverick can qualify for Jordan's principle and the non-insured health benefits program, which will help cover equipment, therapy, home modifications and medical transportation to specialists. Right now, the cut-off traps him in jurisdictional disputes instead.

Status is not a benefit program. It's a legal identity stolen from my grandmother and administratively withheld from her descendants ever since. The minister has chosen to discuss this as a matter of fiscal impacts. That framing itself is the problem. My children are not a line item. The government is balancing a budget by denying Maverick and Matilda the right to belong to their own people. We do not have the luxury of another decade of studies. Every delay lands on him.

My grandmother passed recently. She was one of the most remarkable people I've ever known. She helped to raise me. She helped make me the caring, proud person I am today. She never got to fight for herself. She was five when they took her identity, and by the time it was partially restored, the damage had already been passed down to us. I'm fighting for her now. I'm fighting for my father. I'm fighting for Maverick and Matilda, and I'm fighting for every family across this country caught in the same 87-year trap.

Eighty-seven years is long enough. Please pass this bill.

*Meegwetch.*

• (1120)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Josh. I really appreciate that.

Next, we have Chief Marilyn.

Go ahead, Chief. Thank you.

**Marilyn Slett (Secretary-Treasurer, Elected Chief of the Heiltsuk Tribal Council, Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs):** *Ĝiáxsíxa*. Good morning.

My name is Marilyn Slett. My ancestral name is *Káwáził*. I am the elected chief counsellor of the Heiltsuk and the secretary-treasurer of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs. The UBCIC represents more than two-thirds of all first nations in B.C. and has been advocating for the removal of the second-generation cut-off since Canada introduced it in 1985, working alongside first nations women and leading plaintiffs.

I travelled here today to urge the committee to pass Bill S-2 as amended by the Senate without further delays, and to remind you that I am not alone in my call to action. Eliminating the second-generation cut-off is supported by UN human rights bodies, parliamentary committees and numerous witnesses who have come before you. Most importantly, it is explicitly and publicly called for by first nations across the country via numerous resolutions.

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the Indian Act and today is Red Dress Day. Numerous UN mechanisms and the national inquiry have identified sex discrimination in the Indian Act as a root cause of violence against first nations women, girls and gender-diverse people. This discrimination has forcibly dislocated us from our lands, communities and families, disrupting our culture, identity and governance. It has stripped first nations women of our right to marry non-status partners, caused intergenerational harm and increased our vulnerability to violence and the MMIWG crisis.

Today, it continues in two ways.

The second-generation cut-off impacts the maternal line sooner than the paternal line, reflecting a sex-based hierarchy rooted in the loss of status for women who married out. Women with section 6(2) status who have children as a result of sexual violence or incest must name the father on the birth certificate for their child to obtain status, placing them at risk. This paternalistic legislation still dictates whom we can parent with if we wish to pass status on to our children. My own grandchildren are Heiltsuk, but they are discriminated against.

You have heard arguments that this bill must be delayed in order to respect self-determination and the duty to consult. Let me be

clear. First nations across the country know that we hold the ultimate authority to decide who our citizens are. However, Indian status still defines our rights, our entitlements and the Crown's obligations. First nations are under-resourced and disincentivized from supporting new members, and there is tremendous strain to support our children who are not entitled. First nations are not responsible for state discrimination.

As long as Canada is determining Indian registration, it has an obligation to fix the mess it has made. The UBCIC and many others have consulted for decades, and our position is clear. Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, the UBCIC president, stated 10 years ago, "Further consultation on this issue is neither necessary nor appropriate."

Canada cannot weaponize consultation or hide behind it while shirking its duties under the charter. It is not appropriate to consult when human rights are being violated. I want my grandchildren to be safe, to marry who they choose and to have their children legally recognized.

After 150 years of forced assimilation and the denial of rights, we are facing a mathematical genocide before our eyes. Now is the time to act.

*Ĝiáxsíxa* to the committee.

• (1125)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Now we're going online to Chief Johnson. You have five minutes.

**Jeremiah Johnson (Representative, Mohawk Council of Kahnawake):** Thank you.

*[Witness spoke in Mohawk]*

*[English]*

My name is Ratsénhaienhs Jeremiah Nien:taraken Johnson, and I appear before you once again as an elected representative of the Mohawk Council and the people of Kahnawà:ke.

I'm here to reaffirm clearly and unequivocally that Kahnawà:ke must continue to oppose Bill S-2. While this bill is recognized as a corrective measure responding to past injustices under the Indian Act, it remains rooted in the same colonial frame that created those harms in the first place. It does nothing to dismantle federal control over indigenous identity. Instead, it reinforces it by continuing to assert that Canada has the authority to define who we are as first nations.

For generations, the Indian Act has imposed foreign definitions of identity that have fractured families, erased our histories and undermined and dismantled our systems of governance. Bill S-2, though it addresses issues such as involuntary enfranchisement and outdated terminology, still fails to confront the core problem—Canada's continued interference in matters that are fundamentally indigenous jurisdiction.

Bill S-2 proposes to add thousands of individuals to the Indian registrar. With the removal of the second generation cut-off, it's potentially tens of thousands, some of whom may seek recognition or residency within communities such as Kahnawà:ke. Once again, there has been no meaningful consultation with our community and no discussion of the impacts on housing, infrastructure, services, governance, our laws or our lands.

We are again placed in a position where federal decisions are made first, and indigenous communities are expected to absorb the consequences and the costs.

While Bill S-2 expands federal recognition, granting status to thousands of people, it does so without guaranteed increases in funding for first nations communities, governments or federal programs. Most federal funding is based on outdated capped formulas that do not automatically adjust when registration numbers grow.

If the second-generation cut-off is removed, population growth will continue long term, further increasing pressure on housing, education, health and governance. In short, Canada is expanding rights without ensuring the resources needed to uphold them, shifting the financial burden onto first nations.

Kahnawà:ke has never surrendered and will never surrender its authority over our own citizenship. We have the Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke Law, first enacted in 1981, and most recently amended in 2019. This law was developed through a consensus-based community decision-making process and is grounded in our customs, our responsibilities and the collective will of our people.

We also maintain the Kahnawà:ke Kanien'kehá:ka Registry, which is lineage-based and reflects our understanding of belonging, responsibility and continuity as a nation. We will never recognize the Indian Act as a legitimate authority to determine who our people are. Accordingly, Kahnawà:ke has consistently maintained that Canada must stop adding individuals to the Kahnawà:ke band list upon granting of Indian status.

At the very minimum, Canada must maintain a separate general registry of status Indians while fully respecting Kahnawà:ke's jurisdiction over its own members and citizenship. This position has been consistently articulated at the Kahnawà:ke-Canada relations table for several years. It's not new. It's not unreasonable, and it's a direct expression of our right to self-determination.

While we understand that Bill S-2 is in part a response to litigation and charter obligations, legal compliance should not come at the expense of indigenous jurisdiction. The solution to discrimination embedded in the Indian Act is not to continuously amend a fundamentally flawed law. The solution is for Canada to respect and make space for indigenous laws, indigenous governance and indigenous decision-making authority.

If reconciliation is truly the objective of Parliament, then you must do more than adjust eligibility clauses. Reconciliation requires Canada to stop legislating indigenous identity.

In closing, I'll ask this committee to please recognize that identity is not a bureaucratic category. It is not simply a box you check on a form. It is a sacred cultural bond between a person, their community and their nation. This bond cannot be legislated by Ottawa. It must be recognized, respected and protected by those claiming to walk the path of reconciliation.

Thank you for your time.

*Niawen'kó:wa.*

• (1130)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Chief Johnson.

Now, we will go to our rounds of questions. First, for the Conservatives, we have MP Morin.

**Billy Morin (Edmonton Northwest, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

I want to go to Chief Slett.

You mentioned how long it has taken to consider Bill S-2. In 1985, Bill C-31 passed. You quoted one of the grand chiefs who said 10 years ago that consultation was done. Right now, I'm looking at the government's own documents. According to the latest documents on their website, they started this latest consultation round in 2023.

Now, they say that in the fall of 2026 and winter of 2027, a memorandum to cabinet with proposed solutions could be introduced. Do you feel that the government is weaponizing and choosing when to consult and when not to do so, and that there's hypocrisy on when to consult?

**Marilyn Slett:** Yes, we believe that there has been ample consultation over the past 40 years. There have been studies. There have been committees. There have been UN bodies that have also spoken out in support of these types of changes that we've seen put forward by the Senate. We cannot cherry-pick how we do consultation. The discrimination and the violation of human rights are not topics that we should be consulting on. They're something that we should be moving on and acting on, and this is why we're here today.

**Billy Morin:** I want to go to Chief Jeremiah Johnson from Kahnawà:ke.

Chief, you were mentioning your own membership law. Is your membership law recognized by Canada, whether it's through section 10 or through another mechanism?

**Jeremiah Johnson:** No. To some extent it is, but we're not a section 10 band.

**Billy Morin:** Section 10 aside, you still uphold your law, and that's what the nation does.

**Jeremiah Johnson:** Yes, sir.

**Billy Morin:** There is a general list. My understanding is that each province or general area does keep a general list, and there is some conflict between the general list, people claiming to be from Kahnawà:ke.... There's a discrepancy between your law, which is grey in terms of recognition, and Canada recognizing it as well. Is there a discrepancy there in how things are administered?

**Jeremiah Johnson:** Yes, that discrepancy is what we're referring to when we suggest that Canada have a list of generally registered first nations people. When it's registering them to 0700-Kahnawake, it's imposing that on our people. As I said before, they don't come with additional funding. They don't come with any assistance or consultation. This is an issue that we have to deal with on a daily basis.

**Billy Morin:** Thank you, Chief.

I do agree that there's a larger self-determining question here. Ultimately, membership should be up to the nations themselves. I've heard all governments across all parties say that, so thank you for your answers.

I want to go to Joshua Wesley Havill.

You were mentioning that your son, Maverick, is in a gap. Jordan's principle addressed gaps between provincial and federal jurisdictions for kids from first nations on reserve, where they couldn't get services for disabilities or special things that they do in terms of their health. Your son is stuck in another gap you were mentioning. Could you expand upon that?

• (1135)

**Joshua Wesley Havill:** His disability is going to cost a lot. There's only provincial and federal...that can help him right now. At the moment, it's a battle to get through the system. Jordan's principle will relieve that and help him live as ordinary a life as possible.

I'm not sure if that answers your question appropriately. I'm sorry.

**Billy Morin:** It does.

He's currently not recognized as a status Indian, which would qualify him for Jordan's principle.

**Joshua Wesley Havill:** That's correct.

**Billy Morin:** This would help alleviate the burdens of some of his ailments when it comes to medical....

**Joshua Wesley Havill:** Absolutely. He is my main reason for being here today. I'm sure there are a lot of other families like mine that have a similar story, so I'm here for them as well.

**Billy Morin:** My last question is for the senator.

Today is Red Dress Day. We went through a bill about forced coercion when it comes to the sterilization of women. We hear about denialism, and now we're talking about sex discrimination in the In-

dian Act. Why is it that first nations people always have to fight against extinction by government forces?

**Hon. Mary Jane McCallum:** It was always about the land. When you look at some of the bills that were brought forward for the better protection of land, you see that it was always about the land. It was not about taking care of people. There's a lot of documentation on that.

**The Chair:** You have 25 seconds left, MP Morin.

**Billy Morin:** I'm fine, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Next up for the Liberals, we have Lori.

You have six minutes.

**Lori Idlout (Nunavut, Lib.):** *Qujannamiik, Iksivautaq.*

Thank you to the witnesses for appearing on Red Dress Day. I know that, for some, it's a heavy day. It's wonderful to have you here sharing your stories with us.

My first question will be for Senator McCallum.

The government handed you Bill S-2 to study. Its main scope is to address inequities caused by enfranchisement.

Could you explain why, in your study process, you went beyond that scope and decided to include other pieces, like the second-generation cut-off? What prompted you to do that?

**Hon. Mary Jane McCallum:** We did not go beyond the scope of Bill S-2. It is explicit that the Indian Act be charter-compliant, and any form of discrimination is unacceptable. Bill S-2 has been one of the most prolific.

When Bill C-31 came about, it introduced a new form of discrimination that was race-based. The judge in Descheneaux was highly critical of Canada for refusing to make any changes to the Indian Act, unless it was forced to do so by litigation. Everything that's been done up to now has forced the House of Commons. It moves slowly on correcting what is there.

When Senator Prosper asked whether potential Indian Act provisions could be further challenged under section 15, the lawyer who was there for the plaintiffs in Nicholas, Ryan Beaton, responded affirmatively. He explained that if parents were not married before April 17, 1985, children born before that date have subsection 6(1) status. He said that children born afterwards have subsection 6(2) status and that "If the parents were married before that date, all the children have [status]."

As a result, many siblings born or married on different sides of the 1985 cut-off may not have the same ability to pass on status to their children. Beaton described that situation as one that is "ripe for a [charter] challenge based on marital status. You are discriminating against the family where the parents were not married by reducing the category of the children born after 1985." One of the judges said not to do incremental change but to correct all discrimination. The second-generation cut-off, in our deliberations.... That was the number one problem all people had.

• (1140)

**Lori Idlout:** Thank you so much for that.

I've heard, for example, Minister Gull-Masty publicly share that one issue with the amendment is proposing the single-parent rule as a one-size-fits-all solution.

I wonder if you could address that at this time.

**Hon. Mary Jane McCallum:** If we look at the one-parent rule, there is discrimination there. The Métis can self-identify. They can pick an eighth grandmother and say, "I'm Métis." When you have the Inuit.... You have the one-parent rule. That's what we were told in the Senate. Already, that exists for the Métis and the Inuit. It's the first nations members who are deliberately being extinguished. I went through this with ethics, that my grandchildren will lose status. They have not been granted it, yet Métis can say, "Well, I have a grandmother." That has been discussed widely.

Look at the white females who married first nations members. Their children became status. Those children still have those rights. If a female marries a white male, those children are impacted. It's still the one-parent rule, but it's discriminatory and being used against us.

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds.

**Lori Idlout:** I had asked if there's a concern with it being a one-size-fits-all solution. I didn't really hear the answer to that.

**Hon. Mary Jane McCallum:** Could you explain that a bit more?

**The Chair:** We have 10 seconds left.

**Hon. Mary Jane McCallum:** I'll put it in writing. I will send it to the committee.

When does it have to be in?

**The Chair:** We haven't set that date yet, but please just send it in when you can.

**Hon. Mary Jane McCallum:** Yes, I will send it in, because we did address that.

**The Chair:** Okay.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Gill, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Marilène Gill:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I thank all the witnesses for joining us today.

I'd like to ask Senator McCallum a question.

I've read the remarks you made in the Senate. I've read the Hansard, and if I'm not mistaken, you mentioned that the government had already said it wasn't in favour of the amendments and that no amendments should be made to Bill S-2, because they would be rejected.

I have the testimony in English, but, in short, you were troubled that it was suggested from the outset that the bill should not be improved or amended according to the wishes of the first nations.

Do you still fear that the government will maintain this stance regarding the bill we're considering here and with respect to the amendments? Are you concerned that it might be rejected?

[*English*]

**Hon. Mary Jane McCallum:** When Minister Gull-Masty came, she said explicitly that the Prime Minister does not want amendments.

We listened to the witnesses. We listened to the people with lived experience. Why would Parliament Hill continue to actively practise discrimination, which will end in extinguishment?

Why would you allow yourself to sit with that, just because someone says they do not want amendments, and that the bill would not be improved?

Of course, we have to improve it. That's our job as senators. I said that. First nations don't have a voice. They don't have the numbers to be represented here. Yes, we do have that responsibility, and I would do it again. If it's removed, we will add it back on.

• (1145)

[*Translation*]

**Marilène Gill:** Thank you, Senator.

I must admit that I'm also troubled by those words. I didn't know the Prime Minister had said he didn't want amendments. Obviously, as you said, that's your job—and it's ours as well. I find it troubling because, to me, this is a totally colonialist stance. As an elected official, I'm here deciding another nation's identity, yet I wouldn't want anyone telling me or my children what our identity is. That's already what we're doing.

On top of that, we're effectively creating a ban. We're directing the government, ministers, and likely the committee as well, to reject amendments. There have been consultations, as you also mentioned. We're discussing this now, but they've been going on for a long time. Everyone agrees. We have concerns regarding funding. That's the case for Chief Johnson, for example. That's normal. If there are more people, there will be needs as well.

I'd like to hear from Ms. Fraser, Ms. Slett, Mr. Havill and Mr. Johnson on this subject.

Do you think we're ready to vote on the amendments, which reflect first nations' demands regarding their own identity, culture, language and survival? Everyone is aware that, if we don't pass the bill as amended, we're maintaining genocide.

The floor is yours. Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Someone raised their hand and would like to go first.

Chief, please, we have two minutes and 12 seconds to share your time.

**Marilyn Slett:** With respect to resources and finances, costs and administrative barriers are not a reason to deny charter rights. ISC numbers show 300,000 newly entitled status Indians over 40 years. If we divide that up per year, that's 7,500 per year divided by 630 nations across Canada. That's roughly 12 members per nation.

We certainly agree that more resources are required for communities, for nations. This is something that we support. It's not a reason to continue the discrimination. We're at a point right now where we can fix this wrong. This is why we're here, to advocate and to lobby so that this happens.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Ms. Gill.

[*Translation*]

**Marilène Gill:** Mr. Chair, I know I have about a minute left, but I'd like to know if we agree that the Prime Minister shouldn't interfere in the work of parliamentary committees or the will of first nations regarding their own identity and that of their children.

Ms. Fraser, you didn't get a chance to speak, I don't know if you'd like to jump in. Thank you.

[*English*]

**Patty Fraser:** I'm sorry, but I didn't get the interpretation. I can submit my answer.

[*Translation*]

**Marilène Gill:** Mr. Chair, I'd like to ask my question in French. Can we give Ms. Fraser enough time to answer my question? I think it's important.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Let us know if you can hear that, please, Ms. Fraser.

[*Translation*]

**Marilène Gill:** Has anyone shown Ms. Fraser how to use the earpiece?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We're suspending briefly.

• (1145) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1150)

**The Chair:** I suspended the time. The question will not count for the time. There will be 30 seconds for an answer.

Go ahead, Ms. Gill.

[*Translation*]

**Marilène Gill:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Of course, if you don't have time to answer the question, you can submit your responses in writing. That's always a possibility.

I was saying that I was troubled and that I found it inappropriate. That's my opinion. You asked us to put ourselves in first nations' shoes, which I'm doing. The Prime Minister told his minister to ask the Senate not to propose amendments and to say that the bill would be passed if no amendments were made. I'd like to hear your thoughts on that. I was saying that we're already in a colonialist

structure, and the prime minister says it will not be passed and is deciding how the bill should be.

Do you agree with this way of doing things? What should the Prime Minister do? It seems we're being told not to do our jobs as MPs and not to listen to first nations. What should we do?

Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Give a brief answer in 30 seconds.

**Patty Fraser:** I think I may have to submit my answer because I don't really know how long....

**The Chair:** That's fine. The response in writing is equal to spoken testimony. We'll accept that.

**Patty Fraser:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Fraser.

We'll move to our next person. I believe it's MP Schmale for five minutes.

**Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes, CPC):** Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses.

Senator, I think I caught it correctly, but maybe you could clarify it. Did you say that, at the Senate committee, Minister Gull-Masty mentioned on record that the Prime Minister did not want amendments to Bill S-2? Can you expand on that, please?

**Hon. Mary Jane McCallum:** I have to tell you that there was a lot of pressure on the AAPA committee not to do any amendments. I met individually with the minister.

I don't know how to explain this. When we introduced the amendment for the second-generation cut-off, she said that it was a racist thing to do. This is in the minutes of the committee meeting, so it's not confidential. There was really nothing we could do about it because the government representative attended all of our meetings.

**Jamie Schmale:** You're saying there was pressure. Where did this pressure not to include the amendments come from?

**Hon. Mary Jane McCallum:** It came from the government representative in the Senate.

**Jamie Schmale:** The government representative in the Senate was pushing senators not to amend the original version of Bill S-2 to include the second-generation cut-off.

We'll look through the Hansard a little closer now.

**Hon. Mary Jane McCallum:** Look at it and see.

**Jamie Schmale:** That's what we're looking at right now. It's what you just mentioned.

**Hon. Mary Jane McCallum:** Yes. That is why I ended up going to the Ethics Commissioner. I asked if I could speak and be involved in this bill. I said I was brought here to look at first nations issues and their impacts because I worked in the community for many years. I asked if that meant I couldn't speak to women's issues or if disabled people couldn't speak to disability issues. At the end, the Ethics Commissioner said, "No, you're okay."

**Jamie Schmale:** How did you feel when you first received that information through the minister, that the Prime Minister wasn't interested in going any further with this piece of legislation? What was your reaction?

**Hon. Mary Jane McCallum:** The House of Commons is one, and the Senate is the other. The Prime Minister cannot interfere with the sacred responsibilities that we have been given to do the work we need to do because they're not represented in the House of Commons. That's why we have a lot of PMBs, because they don't originate in the House.

When that happened, I felt the ongoing colonialism. When I came into the Senate, I was warned, "You're going into the most colonial system in Canada." I was very excited initially, and it brought me up short. I have been looking at how we are put under pressure to quickly pass laws. We are not a rubber stamp for the House of Commons. We're not, and we have not acted like that.

• (1155)

**Jamie Schmale:** It must have shocked you, too. This government has claimed that it was going to strike a new relationship with indigenous peoples, all that stuff that we've heard for the last 10 years, and now this.

**Hon. Mary Jane McCallum:** Yes. When you look at the terms that are used, "nation to nation"—

**Jamie Schmale:** Yes.

**Hon. Mary Jane McCallum:** —and you look at self-government, you look at all the reports that have been done for self-determination, that's an identity issue. Now I've heard that the premiers and the Prime Minister are meeting on first nations issues for the first time. I thought, why would the Prime Minister want to meet with a group of people that he's extinguishing right now?

**Jamie Schmale:** Senator, I don't have much time, but I—

**The Chair:** You only have 20 seconds.

**Jamie Schmale:** Maybe you could quickly, in that 20 seconds... You wanted to submit something on the one-size-fits-all, the membership issue and that each band has the ability to adjust their own. Do you want to quickly opine on that?

**The Chair:** That will have to be in writing, Senator, because we are over time now.

**Hon. Mary Jane McCallum:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Next, we have the Liberals.

Go ahead, MP Lavack.

[*Translation*]

**Ginette Lavack (St. Boniface—St. Vital, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair

I want to thank all the witnesses here today for their remarks. We sincerely appreciate their openness and honesty. Their words are important.

However, I would also like to say this. When Bill S-2 was introduced in the Senate, it had a clear objective and timetable. At that time, a consultation process was already under way to address the issue of the second-generation cut-off. The former minister started this process in 2023. A project had been launched to address this part of the Indian Act. The act is highly discriminatory and it contains a number of problem areas. The government and the minister have made repeated commitments to address this discrimination and to solve these problems. I can see why this is the case.

I read a bit of the minister's testimony before the Senate. She said that she accepted and fully supported the witnesses' comments on the second-generation cut-off, but that the process already under way had to be completed.

Under other circumstances, we've seen that a bill developed in collaboration with the first nations becomes even stronger. We want to ensure that self-determination lies at the heart of our reconciliation work.

I would like to ask Chief Johnson a question.

The government believes that the second-generation cut-off issue must be properly addressed. As part of the collaborative process, the government is working with the first nations rights holders to determine the best way to address this issue. We need to move forward, but we need to do so collaboratively and to work together to create the legislation.

The evidence heard here today and other evidence points to the fact that many advocates, both in this committee and in the Senate, have urged the House of Commons to implement a rule for single-parent families without first completing or carrying out this engagement and these consultations with rights holders.

Chief Johnson, could you tell us whether, in your opinion, these types of measures truly comply with the principle of self-determination for the first nations?

[*English*]

**Jeremiah Johnson:** I'm sorry. I didn't quite understand the last part of your question.

[*Translation*]

**Ginette Lavack:** Do you believe that the process of self-determination is truly respected if we aren't able to complete this process of collaboration and consultation in order to work together to create legislation that will actually address discrimination with respect to the second-generation cut-off rule?

• (1200)

[English]

**Jeremiah Johnson:** The way I see it, the issue lies in the differences between communities and nations. Not all first nations are the same. We don't all view the world the same. We also have slight differences in how we view citizenship and membership.

For our community, for example, as mentioned before, we have a discrepancy of population based on registry. The federal registry has about 10,000 people registered to 0700-Kahnawake. On our internal list, the Kahnawà:ke Kanien'kehá:ka Registry, we have a little over 6,000.

I was mentioning before the differences between first nations. I can understand how this can be good for others, like those that have a per capita funding agreement. They get money based on how many members they have. This can be very beneficial to some communities, especially those that are living below the poverty line and have a lot of needs.

However, communities like ours have a block funding agreement. Communities that have a larger administrative capacity can negotiate those kinds of agreements. They allow us to have better flexibility in how we use our funding dollars in the community. Unfortunately, though, these increases in registration and the increases in numbers don't increase the funding sent to our community. They don't increase the funding sent to general first nations for federally funded first nations programs.

The addition of potentially 300,000 more first nations people is quite a large burden to put on a system that's currently underfunded and is not meeting the needs of first nations people currently.

That's my view on that, sir.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

That brings us to the end of your questioning, MP Lavack.

Now we have MP Gill for two and a half minutes. This will be the last question and answer.

[Translation]

**Marilène Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Chair

I would like to hear what Ms. Slett and Mr. Havill have to say in response to my question.

I also just heard a question answered to the effect that we needed to wait and hold consultations, and more consultations. Some amendments may address issues not covered in the previous study.

That said, you spoke of genocide and of a fateful day. Is the government saying that it will vote against this? We're hearing that they will vote against this and that the order has already been given. Do you think that this type of order should be given to the sovereign Senate or House of Commons committees?

[English]

**Marilyn Slett:** You cannot have self-determination if you have forced assimilation. You can't cherry-pick the articles of the declaration. They are designed to be taken as a whole. There are mandates and resolutions. There is broad public support across the

country from first nations, advocates, UN human rights mechanisms and human rights experts.

Bands can still add qualification around membership even if the legislation changes to a one-parent rule, but bands currently cannot make a one-parent rule so long as the legislation has a two-parent rule.

We believe that the charter must be compliant. The government must provide redress for assimilation. It is a requirement of UN-DRIP.

**The Chair:** You have 40 seconds.

[Translation]

**Marilène Gill:** I have the same question for Mr. Havill if he would like to answer it.

Does the Prime Minister get to decide whether these children should be granted status based on his preferences, and does he get to say, through his minister, that we shouldn't amend or change the bill? I want to know whether the House and Senate get to make the decision, rather than the Prime Minister, who shouldn't interfere with the work of the House and Senate.

[English]

**The Chair:** You have only four seconds left, Joshua. Could you please provide that in writing to the clerk? We'll make sure it's on the record.

**Joshua Wesley Havill:** Not a problem; can do.

**The Chair:** Thank you. I appreciate it.

We will now suspend.

• (1200)

(Pause)

• (1215)

**The Chair:** Welcome back, everyone.

For our next panel, we have Jo-Anne Green, private investigator, and Lynda Price, independent consultant, Ulkatcho First Nation, and, I believe, the former chief.

We also have with us Carey Price, professional hockey player, whom many of us are familiar with. Full disclosure: I am a Habs fan, but I will still remain an impartial chair.

We have with us Lorrie Stedel, member, Tsilhqot'in Nation, and she has Carol with her as well.

You will have five minutes between the two of you, Lorrie.

Last, from the Metis Settlements General Council, we have Dave Lamouche, president.

Welcome, everyone.

Again, there's no picture-taking or videos now that we're in session. Afterwards, go ahead.

Please proceed, Jo-Anne. You have five minutes.

**Jo-Anne Green (Private Investigator, As an Individual):** Thank you, Chair.

Kwey and good afternoon.

Thank you for the invitation to appear before this committee and contribute to the discussion of Bill S-2. I want to begin by acknowledging that we are gathered on unceded Algonquin territory, which is my own as well.

For a bit of background, I am of Algonquin and Nipissing descent, with an unbroken line stemming back to three grand chiefs. My ancestors travelled from Lake of Two Mountains, Quebec, and rooted themselves at Baptiste Lake, Ontario. That's another name for us: Baptiste.

This connection to my family and history has helped shaped my path. I advocate for fairness and justice, with a strong commitment to addressing the complexities of defining citizenship among first nations, Métis and Inuit people.

The realities of the Indian Act registration system, including the second-generation cut-off, are not abstract issues for my family. My mother, who is now 90 years old, applied for status over 40 years ago. I applied over 25 years ago. We were denied multiple times. It was only in 2023 that we were both finally granted status cards.

That process involved years of frustration and reflects how difficult it has been to be formally recognized and connected within our own first nation of Pikwakanagan.

Through my work experience, I began to see how the second-generation cut-off continued to affect our people. In my role as the employment development officer with an indigenous organization, I worked directly with first nations individuals seeking funding for training, employment and education. One of my primary responsibilities was to verify the individual's Indian status. I consider this to be the first barrier our people encounter, because many individuals were denied, not because they lacked the connection, but because they did not meet the requirements under the second-generation cut-off rule.

This leads to the second barrier. Many of our people are not familiar with the application process outside the first nations system. The funding is often allocated within the first few months, and due to the high volume of applicants, they don't get the chance to get the funding that they would have under the first nations system.

While collaborating with urban aboriginal organizations, I learned that access is often based on connection to community, without the same generational restrictions. In contrast, the rigid restriction under the Indian Act continues to exclude individuals, based on lineage rules rooted in past sex-based discrimination.

In my opinion, the second-generation cut-off is not just a policy. It is an obstacle that continues to exclude individuals who have clear connections to their communities, limiting their access to opportunities and creating inequities that extend across generations.

In closing, after what many first nations families have gone through to be recognized under the Indian Act, the second-generation cut-off results in the exclusion of future generations, diminishing the progress that has been achieved throughout decades of effort. Further, the denial of access to first nations programs and services because of these restrictions creates layered barriers that impact the ability of first nations individuals to support themselves and their families.

I respectfully ask that Bill S-2 be passed and amended as is.

Thank you.

• (1220)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Jo-Anne.

Now we go online to Lynda Price.

You have five minutes, Lynda.

**Lynda Price (Independent Consultant, Ulkatcho First Nation Member, As an Individual):** Good morning, respected members of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs. Thank you for hearing our submissions as you deliberate proposed amendments to the Indian Act under Bill S-2.

My name is Lynda Price. I am the great-granddaughter of late chief Domas Squinas from Ulkatcho First Nation, whose ancestral lands are located in the interior of B.C. I'm a former elected chief of my community, located in Anahim Lake as well, and a former elected member of the executive of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs. I'm also a former board member of the BC Assembly of First Nations. These are all positions I would not have been able to attain but for the amendments to the Indian Act under Bill C-31 in 1985.

The issue I will address is the unequal provisions under the Indian Act, in particular paragraphs 6(1)(a.3)(i) and (ii), the second-generation cut-off, which was referred to in the letter from Mr. John Gordon, the Indian registrar, to my son, Carey, who's with me today. This legislation does not permit the Indian registrar to equitably issue certificates of Indian status to siblings and their grandchildren within the same family unit, even when they have identical genealogy.

I hope you all have in front of you a copy of the chart entitled "Price Family Grandchildren". I did a comparator group analysis. The chart demonstrates that the Indian Act legislation discriminated against my grandchildren, Liv, Millie and Lincoln, when they applied for their certificates of Indian status. Although my grandchildren have the identical family genealogy, they were not treated the same as their cousins, Zoe and Abigail. This breach of my grandchildren's section 15 charter rights was triggered when Mr. Gordon, the Indian registrar, wrote his letter and denied my grandchildren their status.

I will walk you through the Price family grandchildren chart to explain how this happened. You can see for yourselves how this discrimination and breach took place.

On the left side you will see, under “grandparents”, the name Theresa. Theresa was enfranchised when she married her non-status husband. She was reinstated under Bill C-31 in 1985. Theresa, who is my mother and Carey’s grandmother, will be 99 this year. She was without her status card for about four decades.

Under “first generation”, you will see that Theresa had two children, Mike and Lynda. Mike was born in 1949 and I was born in 1959. Both children were reinstated under Bill C-31 in 1985. Both children married non-status spouses. Mike married before 1985 and I married after April 17, 1985.

Under “second generation”, you will see that Mike had a daughter, Rebecca, who was born before April 17, 1985. I had a son, Carey, born after April 17, 1985. They both received their certificates of Indian status under Bill C-31 in 2011. The dates are significant, because that is when Bill C-31 was enacted.

Under “third generation”, you will see that Mike’s grandchildren, Zoe and Abigail, received their certificates of Indian status and were registered subsection 6(2). However, for my grandchildren, Liv, Millie and Lincoln, their certificates of Indian status applications were denied. The letter from Mr. John Gordon, the Indian registrar, stated that it was due to the “second-generation cut-off rule”.

We’re here today to respectfully ask the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs to support the correction of this inequality. The staff at the Indian registrar’s office told me that if I had married my husband prior to 1985 instead of 1986, my grandchildren would have their status. That is not acceptable. Certainly, the courts would find no justification for the infringement of my grandchildren’s rights in that reply when they compare my brother’s grandchildren’s genealogy and mine, which are identical in every respect.

• (1225)

I’d also like to bring to your attention the B.C. Assembly of First Nations resolution 26/2025. It states that “The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly call on Canada to end all legislative and sex-based discrimination, reinstate all women and descendants affected by enfranchisement...eliminate 6(2) status and the second generation cut-off...”.

Thank you so much for hearing my submission.

*Chanalya.*

**The Chair:** *Meegwetch.*

Next we have Carey Price.

You have five minutes, Carey.

**Carey Price (Professional Hockey Player, Ulkatcho First Nation Member, As an Individual):** Good morning, everyone. I just wanted to thank you all for hearing my submission as you review the Bill S-2 proposed amendments to the Indian Act.

My name is Carey Price. I’m a member of Ulkatcho First Nation. I’m here today to address the inequality and discrimination that my family faced under the Indian Act legislation. This happened when I attended the Indigenous Services office in Gatineau, Quebec, with my mom, to obtain my children’s certificates of Indian status.

I thought it would be a straightforward process, because my cousin Rebecca obtained her children’s status cards, and she has an identical family genealogy, as you can see in the chart that my mom showed you.

However, when I got home, I received letters on behalf of my children from John Gordon, Indian registrar, who stated in his letter, the following:

You are subject to the second-generation cut-off rule as you have one parent entitled under 6(2) and your other parent is not entitled to be registered under the provisions of the Indian Act. I regret to inform you that I am not able to determine that you are entitled to registration under the provisions of the Indian Act.

I agree with my mom. I think this is definitely a case of inequality and discrimination. I thought it should be pretty straightforward, being that my cousin’s children are of the exact same heritage and bloodline as my own. I think this should be a pretty straightforward process.

I request that the respected members of the standing committee please review this matter and address the inequality and discrimination in this legislation. It must be corrected within the laws of Canada.

*Chanalya.*

**The Chair:** Thank you so much for sharing your family with us today. *Chi-meegwetch.*

Now we’re going to go to Carol and Lorrie. I think Lorrie is doing the whole five minutes.

Go ahead, Lorrie.

**Lorrie Stedel (Member, Tsilhqot’in Nation (Esdilagh), As an Individual):** I’m going to do the whole five minutes.

I’m super nervous. I’m not a speaker.

My name is Lorrie Stedel. I’m here to speak about my family’s experience with losing status and the 80-year struggle to get that recognition.

Under Bill C-31, my family—my mother and my siblings—was reinstated to Esdilagh, which is part of the Tsilhqot’in Nation in B.C. My family descends from John Baptiste, who resided in Williams Lake and the Alexandria area in B.C. Our heritage was never in question. However, despite this connection, our legal recognition under the Indian Act has been shaped by these government policies of our ancestral legacy.

My grandfather and great-grandfather, Jimmy and John Baptiste, were enfranchised in 1945. Records from Library and Archives clearly show the Indian agent stated we were no doubt indigenous, but they still recommended enfranchisement. This proves it was never about our identity, but a government assimilation policy. Sadly, this ignores our culture, our heritage, our language and our customs.

My family was also devastated by the Indian residential schools. This led to my grandfather Jimmy's decision to enfranchise. It was not a choice. It was a desperate act of love at the time. He watched his daughter, Hilda, my aunt, who we never got to know, get sent home from the St. Joseph's Mission. She died in a tent outside their house.

My mother, who was born in 1929, lost her status when she was 16. However, this restoration was only half justice. She and my siblings were classified under section 6(2), even though both of her parents were indigenous. Because she didn't have status when she married in 1958, Bill C-31 didn't fully recognize our indigenous bloodline or restore our true family lineage. My siblings and I were also classified under section 6(2) as the second-generation cut-off, which meant that no future generations were eligible under my mom's line. The government handed her back with an expiration date. Our family has been in this grey area for 80 years because of the enfranchisement when she was a child, before she was even married. None of the bills have fixed it.

The classification has also created a revolving door of erasure. My mother's brothers, like some of the others have said, are my first cousins. Because they were the male line, they got status. My sister here, Carol, has been fighting for the status of her children and grandchildren since the nineties. My nieces and nephews are all directly impacted by how it created two classes of people in the same family.

I respectfully urge the committee to support the Senate and the amendments to Bill S-2 as is, and eliminate the second-generation cut-off for all. The changes are necessary to stop this ongoing impact of forced enfranchisement that other bills didn't fix to ensure that families like mine are fully recognized.

My family has lived with these impacts for over 80 years. We are not asking for something new. We're asking government to stop the erasure of our families and others like ours.

Thank you.

• (1230)

**The Chair:** Thank you so much, Lorrie, for sharing that.

Now we have Dave, the president of the Metis Settlements General Council.

You will have five minutes, Dave.

**Dave Lamouche (President, Metis Settlements General Council):** Thank you, Chair and honourable members around the table.

*[Witness spoke in Cree]*

*[English]*

I'd just like to thank God for being here today, seeing another good day and being alive.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today on behalf of the Métis settlements in Alberta to support Bill S-2, particularly the deregistration provision, which directly affects the thousands of settlement members across our 1.25 million acres of constitutionally protected land in our eight settlements and communities.

I'd like to acknowledge being here on the unceded territory of the Algonquin nation.

Right now, there is a fundamental problem in the Indian Act that impacts our people. Many Métis individuals are registered as status Indians without their informed choice. Sometimes, this happens at birth without parental involvement.

Under the Alberta Metis Settlements Act—the MSA, our governing legislation—status Indians are generally not eligible for Métis settlement membership. The result is deeply problematic. People with strong, lifelong ties to the settlements are legally excluded from their own communities all because of the status they themselves did not choose.

This issue is not theoretical. It is happening in our communities today. Individuals with first nations status must rely on a bylaw vote process at the settlement level to try to gain membership. This process is onerous, inconsistent and often divisive. In short, it creates community tension, family division and barriers to belonging.

At a broader level, government funding programs result in friction between indigenous peoples, pitting people against one another in fighting for funding, diminishing one another's rights and creating further divisions, membership imbalances and false rationale for choosing membership that is rooted in benefits rather than belonging.

Although MSGC and the eight Alberta Métis settlements take no position as to the broadening of Indian status contemplated by Bill S-2, each time Parliament broadens eligibility for Indian status, it in turn directly affects the Métis settlements by causing more Métis settlement members to be eligible for Indian status. Ultimately, we recognize that personal choice is paramount, and in that regard, we believe strongly in the deregistration provision in Bill S-2.

Critically, there is currently no mechanism to opt out of Indian status, and this leaves people trapped in a decision they didn't make and that punishes them unfairly. Therefore, the proposed subsection 5(8) deregistration provision is a practical and necessary solution. It would allow individuals to choose their identity, align their legal status with their lived reality, remove a long-standing structural barrier, bring clarity to membership rules, reduce conflict, strengthen governance and, most importantly, support individual choice.

Again, why is this so critical to us? The courts in Canada have been clear. The Supreme Court confirmed in the Cunningham case that the MSA is a unique legislative scheme designed “to enhance Métis identity, culture, and self-governance by creating a land base for Métis.” Any allowance for individuals to hold two statuses in any government undermines that objective. It warned that this risks diluting the unique and constitutionally recognized Métis identity, which has historically emphasized distinctions from Indian identity.

Furthermore, UNDRIP affirms the right of indigenous peoples to determine their own identity and membership.

• (1235)

This amendment supports both individual autonomy and collective self-government. MSGC supports the inclusion of the deregistration provision in Bill S-2. This is not about limiting rights; it's about enabling choice. MSGC is of the view that the addition of proposed subsection 5(8) to the Indian Act under Bill S-2 and its consequential effect on subsection 75(3) of the MSA would assist in drawing the necessary lines as set out by the Supreme Court of Canada in Cunningham.

We look forward to continuing to work with Canada and this committee. I welcome questions.

*Kinanaskomitinawaw.*

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Now we'll go to questions with six minutes for the Conservatives.

MP Zimmer, please go ahead.

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

My questions will be for Carey Price.

Good day, Carey. As a fellow British Columbian, let me say we're proud of your achievements and what you've done over your lifetime already. It's good to talk to you today.

The Minister of Indigenous Services, appearing before the Senate committee on Bill S-2, said, “I am committed to finding proper solutions for First Nations, but it must be done in collaboration to address the second-generation cut-off”.

The second-generation cut off refers to First Nations who were never given legal status, because two generations – their parents and grandparents – intermarried with people without legal status.

It ends legal status — the official recognition of a person as a First Nation rights holder, who has access to community rights and treaty rights such as hunting [and] fishing....

Carey, do you still hunt?

**Carey Price:** Absolutely. It's a big part of my life, especially now that I'm free in the fall.

**Bob Zimmer:** What does hunting mean to you, your family and your heritage?

**Carey Price:** It's definitely a generational activity. My grandfather was a guide in our area growing up, and sustenance hunting has been a part of our community for generations.

It's a big part of my life and what I look forward to every fall. It's something that I definitely wish to pass on to my children—the understanding of the seasonal round and the connection to nature and the outdoors that I love so much.

• (1240)

**Bob Zimmer:** You've been very outspoken against the government's gun confiscation program. As it potentially infringes on indigenous rights as well, could you comment on your feelings about the current government's and Mark Carney's gun confiscation program?

**Carey Price:** I don't think it's fair to a lot of people. I'm a law-abiding citizen. I care for my country. I care for my neighbours and I think that we should all have the ability and the right to be able to protect our families, our homes and our loved ones and not have that taken away from us.

**Bob Zimmer:** This is the last question from me.

If targeting gun crime and criminals and dealing with the violence on the streets is the goal like the government is saying, what can the government do better to target criminals who are getting their hands on illegal guns instead of targeting law-abiding firearms owners like yourself?

**Will Greaves (Victoria, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

Sorry, but I wanted to clarify the relevance of the questioning to the committee's topic of discussion today. We're talking about Bill S-2—

**Bob Zimmer:** It's about indigenous rights, and that's what's—

**Will Greaves:** It's about the gun buyback program, Mr. Zimmer.

**The Chair:** Yes, let's get back on track and ask the questions.

**Bob Zimmer:** I just asked the question.

Carey, if you don't mind answering the question, that'd be great.

**The Chair:** Carey, keep it related to the study and the children. I think that will make it relevant.

**Carey Price:** Like I said, the outdoors is definitely a big part of our history. My children have faced discrimination, and as we were talking about, it seems pretty straightforward. I have the same genealogy as my cousins and my children's cousins have the exact same genealogy, so it should be pretty cut and dried.

I want to leave it at that for now. There's a lot of political debate about a lot of different things that can be covered at the appropriate times, but that's not right now, because this is about my children.

**Bob Zimmer:** Thanks, Carey.

I'll pass on the rest of my time to my colleague Billy Morin.

**The Chair:** You have two minutes.

**Billy Morin:** Thank you, Chair.

I want to go to President Lamouche.

Of course, this bill is heavily themed around the second-generation cut-off, but you talked about a piece of this legislation that should be talked about a little bit more, in my opinion. That's the clarity it brings to who is a Métis citizen and who's an Indian Act status person, and you said the clarity is a good thing.

Is that correct?

**Dave Lamouche:** I'm sorry; could you clarify that, please?

**Billy Morin:** You spoke to how this bill has a provision in it that would bring more clarity and draw lines between personal choice and whether one wants to be a Métis person or a status Indian and how that grey area often causes division.

You see this as a good thing when it brings that clarity. Is that correct?

**Dave Lamouche:** Exactly. On the deregistration, the way we're set up, the criteria to become a member of the Métis settlement is that you have to have a certain ancestry—you have to have Métis ancestry. However, if you have a parent who is a member of the settlement and you have status—you were born with status when one parent had status—when you turn 18, you have the ability to apply for membership in the Métis settlement providing there's a process, which is called a bylaw process, which is comprehensive on its own.

However, there's also a provision in the act that has been there since 1990 and was contemplated: The ability to deregister from the Indian register would also be a way to get membership in the community by saying, "This is who I am. My identity is Métis, not first nations," but they get caught or trapped on that status island.

**The Chair:** You have 10 seconds.

**Billy Morin:** Do the Métis' own laws have a one-parent rule?

● (1245)

**Dave Lamouche:** Yes. If both parents have Métis status, our members get automatic membership. If one parent is a member and a Métis and one is status—

**The Chair:** Would you be able to submit that in writing? We're over time now.

Thank you.

Now we go to Jaime, please, for six minutes.

**Jaime Battiste (Cape Breton—Canso—Antigonish, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to start off by asking Carey Price a question.

Carey, you've had a long, distinguished and successful career. You've made very public your pride in being a first nations person. You've accepted awards and inspired first nations youth to be proud of who they are. Within your community, you're recognized as a first nations person and a part of that community.

We've heard a lot of testimony at this committee. People have talked about wanting status for their children, whether it's for the

ability to pass on their house or their ability to access Jordan's principle funding, but none of that is really a factor for you, considering your success.

Can you tell me what having the ability to pass on status means to you?

**Carey Price:** For me, it's the recognition that my children are my *'atsoo's* grandchildren. It's very unfair that my cousin's kids can say they have their status cards but mine can't.

**Jaime Battiste:** Lynda, I'll turn to you next.

As part of this, we're talking about status, and there's been testimony here that membership and being a part of a nation are entirely different things. You said that, with membership, each community has the ability to set its own membership codes.

As a former chief of your community, was there ever the contemplation of developing a membership code that would recognize your son's grandchildren? I couldn't see a world where someone with his genes who won an Olympic gold medal in 2014 would not be accepted by his own home community. I would see that all of his offspring would be celebrated with pride, as their father is.

Was there never a thought for you to move forward with a membership code?

**Lynda Price:** I think it's really important for us to distinguish between Indian status, citizenship and membership. I know that many communities have their own membership codes. However, when they create their codes, they're based on whether the person has their status card.

I know that our own community has gone through the process of developing a membership code. That was the first thing that was brought up by our membership—that if we were going to have our own membership code, our members would have to begin by having their status card. It is a really big issue in our community, and I have to say that I'm really disappointed with that outlook.

Just recently, our community entered into impact and benefit agreements with the province and with industry. As a result, we receive benefits from those joint ventures, etc., and I have to say that it breaks my heart when my grandchildren are not treated the same as my older brother's grandchildren. They have identical genealogy.

As Carey indicated, it's about feeling part of the community. I didn't have my status card until I was in my early twenties, when Bill C-31 was introduced. I lived all those years with discrimination because I didn't have my status card. You're treated differently. Even after I got my status card, I was referred to as "Bill C-31".

Even as we go along on life's journey, as I said earlier, my mom lost four decades when she was enfranchised after she married my father, and I lost two decades because I didn't get my status card until I was in my early twenties. Then, of course, my children, Carey and Kayla, also lost two decades until Bill C-3 was introduced in 2011, when they were both in their twenties, and now my grandchildren, Liv, Millie and Lincoln and Daisy James....

I want to say that my oldest granddaughter, Liv, has her birthday tomorrow. She'll be 10 years old—

• (1250)

**Jaime Battiste:** I have limited time. I appreciate those answers—

**Lynda Price:** —and she doesn't have her status card—

**Jaime Battiste:** Thank you, Mrs. Price. I have limited time.

I want to read something into the record that I think would be interesting, because there's been a lot of talk about what the minister said in the previous panel at the committee. I want to read into the record the two times that the Prime Minister was mentioned at the Senate committee.

The first one says,

I understand the unfairness of second generation. In my own family, I have members who face this. I want you to know that this is very personal to me. This is something very important to me. This is something that I push within government, to ensure that my colleagues—the ministers who work with me and the Prime Minister—understand the importance of removing the racist, systemic, unfair and unequal treatment of First Nations in this country. The fact that the Prime Minister has chosen me to do this work is a testament to the direction that he wants to see the change for Indigenous People in this country.

The only other mention of the Prime Minister was “My name is Mandy Gull-Masty, appointed by Prime Minister Mark Carney to support and work for Indigenous Services Canada.”

I want to read that into the record for my colleagues, because these are the only two mentions. Perhaps the senator misspoke or misheard, because these are the only mentions of the Prime Minister, and I want that read into the record for this committee.

**The Chair:** That has been done, so let's move on. Your time is up.

[Translation]

Mrs. Gill, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Marilène Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

For the benefit of the witnesses currently in attendance who weren't here for the first part—

I don't think that the interpretation is working, Mr. Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** Are you getting your interpretation?

[Translation]

**Marilène Gill:** Do the witnesses online also have access to the interpretation?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Marilène Gill:** During the first part of the meeting, you may not have heard Senator McCallum's testimony. She stated that the

Prime Minister, specifically through Minister Gull-Masty, said that there wasn't any room for amendments to Bill S-2.

I would hope, in light of the comments made by my colleague, Mr. Battiste, that the government will support the bill as amended. We wouldn't want the Prime Minister or anyone else to intervene in the legislative process and to decide from the start that it's over and that the first nations won't get what they want. Three words are often used in their requests. There's the issue of the law and the issue of discrimination, specifically against women, which relates to the law. There's also the issue of genocide foretold. For the first nations, that's what it means. I'm thinking of communities in my constituency. In a few decades, for all the people registered under subsection 6(2), there won't be any new generations. We're telling communities that they will disappear.

I know that a number of witnesses are here. Ms. Price, Mr. Price, Ms. Green, Mr. Lamouche, Ms. Barrett and Ms. Stedel, are we ready to pass Bill S-2, as it stands, with the Senate amendments? Do you agree?

Obviously, you're all welcome to comment. However, to give everyone time to speak, I would like to ask you to take turns answering. We can start with Ms. Green and continue to the right until we reach the Price family, who are participating by video conference.

[English]

**The Chair:** We have four minutes, so I'll—

**Jo-Anne Green:** Yes, I do agree to have it as amended. It's very important.

**The Chair:** Okay, who is next?

[Translation]

**Marilène Gill:** It's Mr. Lamouche's turn. As I said, we're moving from the left to my right.

[English]

**Dave Lamouche:** I do respect our first nations brothers and sisters in the advocacy that they've been doing regarding this bill. As the Métis settlements, we take no real position. We just take the position of supporting the first nations in their endeavour.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Lorrie.

**Lorrie Stedel:** Yes, I definitely agree. It should be passed with the amendments. In my own family, it's caused two different classes. We have our lineage, and we can't show it or get recognition.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Now we'll go online to the Prices.

• (1255)

**Lynda Price:** To be clear, the bill has two key amendments to the Indian Act to address the issue of the second-generation cut-off rule. These amendments would be that deemed individuals previously registered under subsection 6(2) are to be registered under the new paragraph 6(1)(f), effectively making all 6(2) individuals eligible for 6(1) Indian status, and establish a one-parent rule for Indian status transmission, thereby eliminating the second-generation cut-off rule.

Clearly, the Indian Act, in its present form, does breach the charter. Section 15 of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms says that we all have to be treated equitably. The way that is challenged in a court is by a comparator analysis. When you look at that Price family chart, you'll see clearly that the two comparator groups are my brother's grandchildren and my grandchildren. They have been treated inequitably. My brother's grandchildren are registered, and my grandchildren were rejected. If the court were to look at that, it would have to make sure that the Indian Act lines up with the charter. If not, it would be struck. If they were going to justify the infringement, then we might have to have—

[Translation]

**Marilène Gill:** Sorry, Ms. Price. I didn't want to interrupt you. It's always tricky to interrupt witnesses.

Can you simply tell us whether we're ready to pass Bill S-2 as currently amended? It seems that we're talking about discrimination, genocide and the law. The solution would be to pass the bill. I know that this may be a shortcut. However, do you agree that we're ready to pass the bill as it stands?

[English]

**Lynda Price:** Yes, I would agree that this standing committee should support the recommendations from the Senate committee.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Marilène Gill:** Mr. Price, to wrap up, do you also agree?

[English]

**Carey Price:** I agree.

[Translation]

**Marilène Gill:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[English]

Next, we have MP Morin for five minutes.

**Billy Morin:** Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Price, did you say “*atsoo*”?

**Carey Price:** Yes. That's “grandmother” in Carrier.

**Billy Morin:** It's Dene, then. I recognized the word.

You were mentioning your children are affected by the second-generation cut-off. Have you contemplated the difficult conversation you would have to have with them if the second-generation cut-off keeps going, on who their *'atsoo* really is?

**Carey Price:** Yes, they all call my mom *'Atsoo*. It's very cute.

They're all aware of what's going on this morning, so I'm hoping that I'll be able to be the bearer of good news shortly.

**Billy Morin:** Thank you.

I want to go to Ms. Jo-Anne Green.

You mentioned that your mother and you were fighting for decades for recognition. How old did you say your mother was?

**Jo-Anne Green:** She's 90. She's actually behind me. She came with me.

She looks awesome for her age. I hope I do at 90.

**Billy Morin:** That's awesome life experience.

How long did it take that battle to get recognition again?

**Jo-Anne Green:** Well, we received our status cards in 2003—a lot of our family did, immediate family and cousins. The last session was eight years of being denied for a reason that we didn't understand because we didn't live on reserve, and we didn't know much about the Indian Act and the processes. They denied us, and that took another four years to process that. The process is just.... I don't know what word I can use for the system, but it's very divisional.

Luckily, with our family, and due to my mom too.... She's a good person and says what she.... Without that status card, we still knew that we were indigenous, and we were still proud of it. But that indigenous status card, why we still went for it, me after 25 years and Mom after 40, is that it does give you the recognition, because we are treated differently as non-status people. Even in my work, people didn't accept me because they thought I was taking their money away from them and this and that.

I can say that timewise, it has been a long endeavour. This Bill S-2 is something that.... The one-parent rule has to come into effect to have the same playing field as everyone else.

• (1300)

**Billy Morin:** Thank you.

I want to go to Ms. Lorrie Stedel.

You kind of hinted at finding out later in life that you had linkages back to community. Often we've heard, through testimony, that it's hard to go back to community. There's an aspect of guilt. I heard recently from another person that they feel like they're an imposter even in their own community. They're trying to go back to it, and they feel like they're in the middle of this zone. Do you also empathize with the difficulty of being boxed in, or boxed out of a community, because of the racist Indian Act?

**Lorrie Stedel:** I think it was my mom's story, because she lost it as a child. Her father was told not to live in the Indian mode in the applications, so he said no native language in the house. When my mom left, she left the community. She didn't have status for 40 years.

When I got my card, I didn't even know I had a nation. I lost a lot of years, and I've had to build it back. I've had to go and sign up for meetings and meet my community. It's like a light bulb going off, that I had lost all this, and now I'm so happy to tell everyone I'm Tsilhqot'in, and the history.

**Billy Morin:** Thank you.

Mr. Lamouche, just for the Métis portion, less the Indian Act, just reiterate your point earlier. Do the Métis, under their own membership rules, have a one-parent rule?

**The Chair:** You have 20 seconds.

**Dave Lamouche:** In terms of status, yes, but there's two-parent and one-parent.

There's no cut-off. You can keep allowing people in, but for regular members, no. If you marry, say, a Caucasian, you can keep marrying Caucasians down the line and still be a Métis.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. That's all the time we have.

Next, we have MP Greaves for five minutes.

**Will Greaves:** Thank you very much, Chair.

Good afternoon, colleagues.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today. I really appreciate their testimony this afternoon and that of the previous witnesses. I think it really underscores the layers of complexity that surround questions of indigenous rights, status and identity in Canada. We have these layers of constitutional, political and judicial structures that seem fairly abstract in many ways. Then we hear personal stories about how these 50,000-foot concepts have affected people's lives in very fundamental ways.

One of our previous witnesses made reference to the Garden River First Nation in northern Ontario, which is a place my family has connections with. My grandmother, who was non-indigenous, had two sisters who both married first nations men. They gained status for themselves and their children as a result of that. We can see how, within a single family tree, you can have non-indigenous people, status Indians and non-status indigenous people. It's within all that complexity that we need to try to make good decisions in order to address the injustices and discrimination of the past.

This leads me to my question. I'll direct this first to Mrs. Price.

Thank you very much for joining us today.

In previous testimony to the Senate, you emphasized that "any amendments to the Indian Act [must be] consistent with the indigenous and human rights affirmed by the UN Declaration and meet the requirement of Free, Prior and Informed Consent."

I'm wondering if we could explore that a bit—the contradiction that enters in because of the fact that the Indian Act was not, of course, a piece of legislation indigenous peoples consented to. It

was imposed on them and affected their family structures and rights in such fundamental ways.

How can we reconcile this different set of principles—needing to address the discrimination that still exists in the Indian Act, and the gender-based discrimination against women from first nations families in particular, while meeting the UN declaration's standard of free, prior and informed consent for any changes to the act that would affect the rights of indigenous peoples?

• (1305)

**Lynda Price:** I was the chief when the Province of B.C. and the federal government introduced legislation. They called it the Declaration Act. Basically, it was a piece of legislation at the provincial and federal levels to address issues arising from...and also to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. I think government did its best to try to address some of those issues within that legal framework.

Our communities are also looking at ways and means as they move into.... In British Columbia, there have been a number of treaties signed. Across Canada, there are treaties that have been signed, but a lot of communities don't have those. I was elected to the executive of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, so I had to address many of the discrimination issues that arise by having legislation put in place, or consultation processes put in place, without even our consent. I think free, prior and informed consent is an important part of the UN declaration to ensure that, no matter what, we're all part of coming up with solutions. There's nothing worse than having something put in place over you, whether it be status legislation, gun legislation or any type of legislation...without consulting with the communities.

However, this amendment coming with Bill S-2 has been in the works for several decades. It's been an issue since Bill C-31 was introduced. It was almost as if the people accepted Bill C-31 under duress because it gave status back to some of us, at least—like my mom, who'd been without status for four decades, and like me, who'd been without status for two decades. That was good.

**Will Greaves:** If I could jump in on that on that point, Mrs. Price, please, just to narrow in—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, MP Greaves, we're right at the five-minute mark now.

Thank you very much.

MP Gill, you are the last spot for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Marilène Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I understand that people are trying to pit the issue of consultations with the first nations against their right to be themselves, to have their own identity and to be able to pass this identity on to their children. I would like to see the government hold consultations in other situations, such as for Bill C-5, which was passed last June, or for all current major projects. The consultation must always take place.

Ms. Price, as you said, the consultation was carried out. I'll simply give you the floor, since I had to interrupt you earlier. To wrap up our conversation with this panel of witnesses, could you tell us what we should keep in mind? We're talking about consultations, but you spoke about Bill C-31. I think that we should act now. A countdown has begun for a number of communities and grandchildren.

[English]

**Lynda Price:** Thank you for the opportunity to answer that very important question.

I believe that the Assembly of First Nations made it very clear in its resolution number 54/2025 that if we don't amend the Indian Act to address the second-generation cut-off, it's going to affect the future members of our communities.

My mother, for instance, is the granddaughter of Chief Domas Squinas. He is my great-grandfather. When your grandparents leave you land, it's passed down to the next generation. However, the Indian Act discriminates and basically all of our wills have to be approved by Indian Affairs. If our grandchildren don't have their status cards, we can't pass that down to our grandchildren.

It's very important for us to work together to resolve this issue because not only is it breaking the laws of Canada and breaching

the Charter of Rights for our grandchildren, but it's also creating division.

I always respect our elders and our leaders in our community for recognizing the fact that in order for us to be successful, we have to work together and we have to resolve this issue.

We've been consulted, consulted and consulted. This has been going on for decades. This has to be corrected. It can't be left undone.

I truly pray and hope that you would follow the lead of the Senate and accept those amendments moving forward. Honestly, we'll all be better for it. Our communities will be healthier and we, as members and status card holders, will be able to participate fully in leadership. Without that, I would never have been able to serve in my community as an elected leader.

Thank you.

• (1310)

**The Chair:** Thank so much for that answer.

On that, we will conclude the meeting. I would like to thank all the witnesses here today for sharing their story and their families' stories.

*Chi-meegwetch.* I wish everyone the best.

I'm asking the committee to adjourn.

Go, Habs, go!

The meeting is adjourned.

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