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**Standing Committee
on the Interior**

Murray Whetung
Community Service Award
Act, 2023

1st Session
43rd Parliament
Thursday 13 July 2023

**Comité permanent
des affaires intérieures**

Loi de 2023
sur les prix Murray Whetung
pour services à la collectivité

1^{re} session
43^e législature
Jeudi 13 juillet 2023

Chair: Aris Babikian
Clerk: Thushitha Kobikrishna

Président : Aris Babikian
Greffière : Thushitha Kobikrishna

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE
ON THE INTERIOR**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT
DES AFFAIRES INTÉRIEURES**

Thursday 13 July 2023

Jeudi 13 juillet 2023

The committee met at 1015 in the Peterborough Golf and Country Club, Peterborough.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Good morning, committee members and witnesses. Welcome to Peterborough.

I would like to thank Elder Lorenzo for performing a beautiful ceremony to teach us how to start our day in a pure and compassionate way, and also to teach us some of our elders' and native peoples' traditions. These are very important values that all of us should learn and should value. Thank you very much, Elder Lorenzo.

Mr. Lorenzo Whetung: Thank you very much. I must go now to another engagement. Thank you once again.

MURRAY WHETUNG
COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD
ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023
SUR LES PRIX MURRAY WHETUNG
POUR SERVICES À LA COLLECTIVITÉ

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act to provide for an award for exceptional cadets / Projet de loi 31, Loi prévoyant la remise d'un prix aux cadets exceptionnels.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): The Standing Committee on the Interior will now come to order—I already brought the gavel down. We are here today for public hearings on Bill 31, An Act to provide an award for exceptional cadets.

Are there any questions? MPP Smith.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thanks, Chair. I'm seeking unanimous consent to add a presenter in the 4 o'clock slot. Margaret Froh, the president of the Métis Nation of Ontario, has requested that she be able to present today in that time slot.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Smith is seeking unanimous consent to add another witness to our 4 o'clock schedule. Is there consent? Okay. You've got the consent, so we will add her name to the witness list.

I will now call on the member for Peterborough-Kawartha, MPP Dave Smith, as our first witness. You will have 20 minutes to make an opening statement, followed by 40 minutes of questions from the members of the committee. The questions will be divided into two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the government members, seven and a half minutes for the official opposition members and five minutes for the independent members. I will

give a reminder of the time remaining during the presentation and the questions.

MPP Smith, the floor is yours.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to respectfully acknowledge that we are on the traditional and treaty territory of the Michi Saagiig. I want to thank them for the seven sacred teachings of love, respect, courage, honesty, wisdom, humility and truth. All seven of these sacred teachings were part of the inspiration for this bill, and I ask that the committee respect those seven teachings as we go through this committee session today. Thank you.

This is the second time that this bill has been introduced. We started on this process back in 2019, just prior to Murray Whetung's 100th birthday. Murray was someone who was well-known in the greater Peterborough area. If you wanted something done, if there was something that the community needed, Murray was always there to help with it. Murray was one of the Curve Lake First Nation veterans who voluntarily joined the Armed Forces during the Second World War.

What most people don't know is that for the First and Second World Wars, anyone who was First Nation was not considered a Canadian citizen and was therefore exempt from conscription. During the First and Second World Wars combined, more than 7,000 First Nation individuals stepped forward and voluntarily joined the Canadian Armed Forces, or the Canadian Expeditionary Force at the time, to serve and protect our country. Many of them went overseas; a number of them did not return.

1020

For those who were overseas for more than four years fighting on behalf of Canada, one of the unfortunate parts about the way the Indian Act was written was that if you were off-reserve for more than four years, you had the potential of losing your status as an Indian. A number of the veterans, when they came back, lost their status as an Indian. When you think about that—that they voluntarily put their life on the line to defend this country and they were stripped of their status and their heritage when they came back—it was an injustice that was done to many.

Indigenous veterans—and I differentiate between First Nation veterans and Indigenous veterans. "Indigenous" is encompassing, so Métis, Inuit and First Nation are all part of "Indigenous" when we make that reference. When we're talking about First Nations in particular, it is just the First Nations. It is not the Métis and the Inuit. Indigenous veterans were not permitted to be members of the Legion after the First and Second World War. It wasn't until later

on in their lives—I believe it was actually in 1981 when they could become full members of the Legion. It was because—there were different stories on it, but one of the reasons was it was the Royal Canadian Legion and they were not considered Canadian citizens, so they couldn't therefore belong to the Legion. But this was, again, another injustice that was done to these veterans, not just the First Nation veterans but the Inuit and the Métis veterans.

There were other benefits that were provided to Canadian veterans that were not provided to Indigenous veterans. It wasn't until, again, later on in our history in the 1970s and 1980s when some of that was actually corrected.

But when you look at Indigenous culture—this was the reason I started off with the seven sacred teachings. They believe, in Indigenous culture, that in order to have a healthy community, you must observe those seven sacred teachings: respect, courage, honesty—humility, in particular. Many of those individuals who served overseas, many of those who stepped forward to protect Canada, did so out of a sense of obligation. We've talked about it in the Ontario Legislature. It has been talked about in the House of Commons a number of times about the nation-to-nation relationship between First Nations and Canada. In Indigenous culture, your ally is your friend. Your ally is someone that you stand with. Your ally is someone that you are prepared to give your life to protect—again, part of the seven sacred teachings.

They stepped up as our allies. When they came back, many of them continued to espouse those seven sacred teachings and continued to give back to not only their own First Nation community or their Inuit or Métis community but to the greater community. Murray is a perfect example of that.

Murray was a communications specialist. He was actually scheduled to be part of the D-Day invasion on Juno Beach. About three days prior to the invasion, the ship that he was on was torpedoed and the rudder was damaged. He didn't get to Juno Beach until three days after the invasion had started, so he wasn't part of the invasionary force per se. His job was to keep the communication lines open. They didn't have a great deal of wireless technology at the time. It was running cables so that a phone at the front of the action could be used to talk to the leadership back in safety. The Germans would specifically target these communication lines to break that communication so that it wasn't possible to give real-time updates.

Murray's job was to make sure that those communication lines were repaired. Of course, the Germans didn't want that, so they were sitting targets. What they ended up doing was they would repair these communication lines at night, under the cover of a tent, so that the lights that they were using couldn't be seen by the Germans. Make no mistake: Although he was not actively using a weapon to shoot the Germans, he was putting his life on the line every single day he was there, because his job was to go back out to the front—under the cover of a tent—and repair the

communication lines, where they were sitting targets for German snipers.

Murray did not lose his status. He came back partway through the war to Curve Lake and then returned back over to Europe. So he was not someone who was away from the reserve for more than four years at one time, but he did receive a lot of the disrespect as a First Nation veteran. He was not allowed in the Legion, at first. He was not allowed to wear his uniform after he retired on Remembrance Day. He was not to wear his medals publicly, because that was for the Canadian Armed Forces, and he was not a Canadian.

These are a number of the things that many Indigenous veterans faced, and yet they continued to give back to their community. They continued to see the value in volunteering, in trying to improve their community, trying to improve the lives of their neighbours and their friends. That is the impetus behind this bill.

I've become a bit of a grumpy old man, it seems, at times. I look at the fact that I'm 53, and I recall, as a kid growing up, the number of people who volunteered for things, the number of people who stepped forward and helped out, and things that I did as a young adult to volunteer in the community, to give back. We're seeing a significant decline in that volunteerism. We have an opportunity with cadets to promote that. One of the great things about cadets is that they promote citizenship, that they emphasize giving back, that they emphasize community service.

This bill would create an award that would reward a cadet in each corps or squadron, as well as the junior rangers, for the cadet who gives the most back to their community, who volunteers the most to do things. Most of the cadet awards are cumulative, so those awards go on a yearly basis to the senior cadets. This is one where the clock would start in September, at the beginning of their year, and it would end in June at their annual ceremony overview. So a first-year cadet has the opportunity to win this award, just the same way that a fifth-year cadet or a sixth-year cadet would have the opportunity to win this award.

We believe that it gives us two things. First, we can remind our youth of the injustice that was done to our Indigenous veterans, but celebrate the fact that they recognized that there is intrinsic value in giving back to their community, in the honour of serving, the honour of trying to improve the lives of your neighbours and friends. And we can take what was a negative and darker history in Canada and turn it into something that we remind people of, but do it in a very positive way. These are the things that Murray himself espoused.

Murray passed away in February of 2021. We weren't able to get the bill across the finish line. Murray lived a long life. He was in his 101st year. Ironically, he passed away on the same day as a young lady from Curve Lake who had been brutally assaulted by her domestic partner, who was out on bail for brutally assaulting his two previous girlfriends. The residents of Curve Lake believed that Murray waited until Cileana passed away so that he

could safely escort her to the next stage of her spirit's life, because that is something that Murray would have done.

1030

The award is something that I believe we should truly pass. It is something that will serve a number of purposes. It will help tell that story of the injustices that were done to Indigenous veterans. It will help promote volunteerism. It will help inspire some of our youth.

There are going to be some additional challenges with it; I will freely admit that. This is a provincial award that we would be giving to cadets. Cadets are administered by the Department of National Defence through Canada. So what we are proposing as a type of award in the beginning would be a scroll on behalf of the province, either from the Lieutenant Governor or from the minister of multiculturalism on it. There are some things that would still have to be worked out through regulation.

We, at this point, are not able to have a medal or medalion that is given to the cadets. We can't have a badge that's put on the cadet's uniform. We have to go through the Department of National Defence on it. The process on that would be that the legislation would have to first pass in Ontario. We would start the process then with the Department of National Defence. We've had numerous conversations with them, but there's a process that they have to go through.

We may have some difficulty getting it so that it can be a medallion or a badge or an award on the uniform because this is an award for Ontario cadets, and Cadets Canada tries to make sure that all cadets across the country are treated equally. So there are some other negotiations that we would have to have with other provinces or with the federal government to make it so that it could be something that is on the cadet's uniform that they could wear.

We've had a number of conversations with some First Nations and the Métis Nation as well on what this should look like. The Whetung family has suggested that in their culture, an eagle's feather is the highest honour that can be given, and could we incorporate an eagle's feather into the award itself? I think that would be an excellent idea. There are some ideas that will come out today on how we would go about doing that and how we would do it in the most respectful way.

There will be an amendment to this bill; I will give everyone the heads-up on that. We started this process because of Murray Whetung and the First Nation veterans, but as we have had conversations with the Métis Nation and with Inuit, we have decided that the preamble will change to also include references to veterans from the Métis and Inuit peoples. I think that it's a small gesture, but I think that it is one more step to keeping people apprised of what our history was.

I grew up in Prince Edward county. I lived near Deseronto, near the Tyendinaga First Nation. I have a number of childhood friends who are from the Tyendinaga First Nation, and these are stories that I didn't know. I would like to think that I have a little bit more knowledge of Indigenous history than just the average person because of where I grew up and the number of friends that I had

from Tyendinaga. If I didn't know about it, then first-generation Canadians, new Canadians and even, for lack of a better term, old-stock Canadians who live in urban areas would have no idea of these types of things. I think it's valuable to remind everyone of what did happen but celebrate the successes and the positive things that came as a result of those individuals who saw the value in giving back to their community.

Chair, how much time do I have left?

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Three minutes.

Mr. Dave Smith: I think I'm going to cut my comments off at this point. I greatly appreciate the opportunity to come. I want to thank everyone for coming to Peterborough today, and I want to especially thank Lorenzo Whetung for giving us the honour of a smudge ceremony this morning to cleanse our minds, to cleanse our eyes, our ears, our voice and especially our heart and spirit. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, MPP Smith, for your presentation.

Now we move to the question and answer period. We will start with the official opposition. You have seven and a half minutes. MPP Shaw, go ahead.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I want to begin by thanking the MPP for putting forward this bill. It's a really important and very interesting bill and I thank you for that. I also thank you for the opportunity to be in Anishinabek territory. I have a lot of Mohawk connections, so it's always nice to be here. I feel I'm welcomed here. Also, the smudge ceremony from Lorenzo Whetung—it was a privilege to participate in that. Thank you for all of that and for having us here.

I'm looking forward to hearing from all of the folks who have managed to come to depute before us today. I am sure that it's going to be a very interesting day in that we're all going to learn something with this bill, and I'm sure we will continue to learn a lot today and this afternoon from all the deputants that you have here. Thank you for that.

I just want to start by making clear I represent His Majesty's loyal opposition, but I want to be clear that our party and the loyal official opposition is in support of this bill. We have spoken in support of it at second reading and we will continue to support this bill. What we see as our job here today is to listen to the deputants and to make sure that this bill is in keeping with what the testimony is.

You had mentioned that you are going to move an amendment. I would like to think that, if during the course of the day we have deputants who come forward who suggest ways in which we could amend this bill to improve it, that that's something that you would be open to and that the government side will be open to. That is, again, the purpose of the committee: to improve legislation, to take good legislation and make it better, if that's the case. That's what my intention here today will be.

I wanted to say that in our caucus we have a number of First Nations—well, we have two. We have Sol Mamakwa, who is in fact the first Indigenous MPP, First Nations MPP, ever elected in Ontario, from Kiiwetinoong.

That's his riding. We have Guy Bourgouin, who is a Métis representative, and we also have Jennie Stevens. Guy Bourgouin is the MPP for Mushkegowuk—James Bay and Jennie Stevens is the MPP for St. Catharines. All three of those MPPs spoke at second reading to your bill. Jennie Stevens spoke from the perspective of a mom of someone who is on active duty. Her son is currently on active duty, so she spoke from her experience as being a military mom, if you will, and what this award would mean to her and her family. Guy Bourgouin spoke from his perspective of the Far North, and so did Sol Mamakwa. They spoke in favour of this bill.

One of the things that you talked a lot about this morning was that—we talked a lot about the injustices of the past. It's true, and I do agree with you that there are many parts of this that I would not have known had you not brought this bill forward. So right in that instance, this bill has already been a success, bringing that story forward. But we do need to acknowledge that we can't really right the wrongs of the past. We cannot do that. We can try and pay homage. But moving forward, we're trying to move in a time of truth and reconciliation now, and there are many things that come before us in the House that are brought forward by our MPPs, particularly by Sol Mamakwa, who stands up really every day to talk about the drinking water crisis that they face and to talk about the things that they could use in his Treaty 9 area, Treaty 3 area.

1040

I think this bill is a unique opportunity not only to recognize the contributions of the past, to right the injustices, but it's a unique opportunity to move forward, particularly in the Legislature, to say that we recognize these injustices that happened in the past and we see before us injustices that continue to be perpetuated when it comes to adequate housing, safe drinking water, access to resources. So my question to you is, do you see this bill as a first step in moving forward to a spirit of understanding that we have more work to do?

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm going to start with a quote from C.S. Lewis: I can't go back and rewrite the beginning, but starting today, I can write a new ending.

I think that this bill provides an opportunity for us to highlight one of the injustices and to focus, then, not necessarily on the negative of it but the positives that those individuals turned it to. It gives us an opportunity to continue that discussion, to educate some of our younger members of society on some of the challenges that were faced historically that we have been working toward eliminating.

I don't think that anyone would say that we have crossed the finish line. I think, to use a horse-racing analogy, we've passed the first post. But we are making strides in the right direction. The expression I've heard on these types of things is that you start a thousand-mile journey by taking the first step.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: That's Mao Zedong. That's a Communist leader. I'm happy to hear you quote that.

Mr. Dave Smith: There is also the thought that in a journey, you can travel half of the distance each day, but you never get to the end of the journey because you're only travelling half of the distance, and as we travel that distance, we make—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute.

Mr. Dave Smith:—the ending portion much closer. So I think that we are taking significant strides to move forward on those types of issues.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Can you just identify which issue?

Mr. Dave Smith: There's a whole host of things. Sometimes—and I'm sure all MPPs would recognize this—when people come to our offices and ask us about certain things, many people get confused about jurisdictional issues. Sometimes I have people coming to my office asking about recycling, which is a municipal challenge. I have people who come to me and ask about foreign affairs, which is federal. When we muddle some of those jurisdictional things, what we do is we provide an opportunity, then, for that group that is responsible for it to defer that responsibility. I think that what we should all be doing as MPPs is make sure their voice is being heard but recognize where the jurisdictional lines are drawn and advocate on behalf of our constituents and our residents—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, MPP Smith.

Now we move to the independent member. MPP Schreiner, you have four and a half minutes.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Thushitha Kobikrishna): It's five minutes.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Five minutes, sorry.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you to the member of Peterborough—Kawartha for bringing this bill forward. I'll be supportive of the bill and looking for opportunities today, if appropriate, to make adjustments to the bill. I appreciate you giving us a heads-up that at least one amendment will be coming forward. It gives us all an opportunity to get our heads around that.

In that regard, I'd like to thank Lorenzo Whetung for opening today with a smudge ceremony to clear our minds, our hearts, our ears, our eyes and our spirits. I think it's important, especially when we're dealing with the hurt and harms of the past, to clear our spirits and to talk about how we can heal relationships with each other. So I appreciate the opportunity to do that today, as you said, in a small step forward.

Obviously, you must have had an opportunity to work with Murray as you were putting together this bill before he passed away, and I'm looking forward to hearing from the members of his family. I recognize it's probably an emotional thing to think about and talk about. But I was wondering if you would have an opportunity to maybe just share some of the wishes that Murray had for this bill moving forward and what it would accomplish.

Mr. Dave Smith: Murray actually struggled a fair bit with the concept of a bill being named after him. The humility part of the sacred teachings is something that he lived; it wasn't just something that he talked about. It actually took a fair bit of convincing.

Lorenzo has a teepee on his property, and in one of our discussions I came over. Lorenzo was there, as well as two of his siblings. Lorenzo's daughter and some of Lorenzo's grandchildren were there, and Murray came into the teepee. We sat around the fire in the teepee to discuss this, and we talked about what could be accomplished by doing this.

Murray liked to tell stories, and he took that opportunity to tell the story of the Williams Treaty testimonies that he had given. Murray was one of the individuals who testified on behalf of Curve Lake First Nation at the court hearings for it. He was in his early eighties at that point. He had originally given a deposition about thirty years earlier. The crown had his written comments, and lawyers said to Murray, "Don't talk about specifics from what you had given to them in the deposition, because it was 30 years ago and your memory may not be the same as what it was."

So when he was there—and Murray was relaying this story with a massive grin on his face. He talked about how it didn't matter what the crown attorney asked him about; he went off on a tangent of one of his war stories, and he talked about how in particular in one battle, German tanks were advancing on an infantry group, and some of his other Indigenous friends took six- or seven-foot-long sticks, attached soup cans to them, and used those as lacrosse sticks to hurl grenades at the tracks, because some of their other colleagues had tried to throw grenades at the tracks of the tanks and when they got out in the open, close enough that they could reach the tank, they were shot by the Germans and they weren't able to do it. But some of his friends were able to throw the grenade accurately more than a hundred yards away. They could pop up, fire the grenade off with their lacrosse stick and drop back down before the Germans even saw that, and they were effective that way. He avoided all of the questions from the crown attorney by telling stories about what it was like for him as a veteran.

When he got off the stand, Curve Lake's attorney came to him and asked him why he did that, because everyone thought that he was senile. And he said, "I know, but I didn't have to answer anything, and I didn't say something that was against what I had given them in testimony 30 years earlier. They just think that I'm an insane old man." That was how he was able to do some of those things. I think that being able to tell those kinds of stories has value.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm probably almost out of time, right? Yes.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you very much.

We move to the government side. MPP Flack, go ahead; the floor is yours.

Mr. Rob Flack: I'm glad to be here. In a way, I feel like I'm somewhat home, because, as I think MPP Smith knows, my aunt and uncle lived here and raised their family here: my mom's sister and her husband, Judge Murphy, a well-known judge in this community. My wife, Denise, was born in this city and grew up in Lakefield just up the road, part of the Leahy family, well-known in these parts. I love coming here. In fact, I was telling some stories

with the boys coming up about being here as a kid, when my dad golfed once in a tournament as a young boy. So it's great to be home in a way.

As we've come to know each other, travelling throughout the world a little bit, and in the House and about, coming to know your history and your passions and your beliefs, your belief in Ontario cadets and the cadet program, of which I believe you were one as a young lad—having been an MPP now for a little more than a year, I can say that growing up, I was around the cadet program. I knew friends that were cadets. I never was part of it, but I went to my first annual ceremonial review and was taken aback by the commitment, the passion, the belief, the youth development, the leadership and the history.

1050

In tying that in, I like what you have done with this bill and, obviously, the government is going to support it. A couple of questions: Being a cadet, what legacy is passed on from the experiences of our youth cadets—how do we tell this story and how did that connection come to be to what you're doing today? How has it helped you, being an MPP?

Secondly, how do we do a better job of telling the story you told this morning—with great passion and compassion—to get people to hear that story? Because I've never heard that story and I'm surprised.

Mr. Dave Smith: I think it's one of the misses we have. I don't want to blame the education system for it because there are a lot of times where a curriculum gets developed for very different reasons. There are things that get dropped from a curriculum and there are things that get added to a curriculum because, at the end of the day, there are only so many hours that a student is in school.

When I look at the cadet program itself—yes, I was a Royal Canadian Sea Cadet. I rose to the rank of chief petty officer second class in cadets. We have a number of other MPPs: Sam Oosterhoff, for example, was an air cadet; I believe that Monte McNaughton was also a cadet. One of the things that the cadet program does—there are some misconceptions on it. It is not about the military, per se. What the cadet program does is it provides opportunities for leadership and leadership training—growth—for some of these very promising young adults. They go through that program. They're put in a position where they have an opportunity to enhance some of their leadership skills. They have an opportunity for a great deal of learning.

I firmly believe that if we have a lot more kids going through the cadet program we would have a lot less problems that the police have to deal with. Because it is about respect. It is about honour. It is about learning. It's about improving yourself. But more than anything, it is about giving back to your community. It is about serving your community.

When you look at events that happen throughout Ontario, when the cadets are involved it tends to be a better event. Locally here in Peterborough, we have three different cadet corps, or squadrons—we have an air cadet, an army cadet and a sea cadet. They help out with Remembrance Day ceremonies. They help out with Remembrance

Day ceremonies in schools. They help out with the Santa Claus parade. They help out with the Canada Day parade. They volunteer for different things.

The cadet leadership are also volunteers in different community things. We have those who are involved in cadets on the leadership side who are members of Rotary, members of Kinsmen, members of the Kiwanis Club. These are all people who espouse that virtue of giving back to the community.

I think that what this bill will do is reward those early-year cadets and keep them interested, because they've received recognition for something that they have done and then that adds to the value of giving back to the community. I think that the more often we can have that positive reinforcement for someone who sees the value in giving back to the community, the more likely they are to continue giving back to the community.

When you look at the things that the Lions Club does or the Kiwanis Club or Rotary or any of the service clubs, they are all about giving back to the community. But if you look at the average age of somebody in one of those service clubs, they're getting older. With the Kinsmen Club of Peterborough, which I was a member of prior to being elected, I was one of the youngest and I was in my late forties at the time. We need to find ways of reinvigorating that and having some of our youth step forward as part of their legacy from being in cadets to continue with that volunteerism as they move into adulthood.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Dixon, go ahead.

Ms. Jess Dixon: What's our time, Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Two minutes.

Ms. Jess Dixon: I remember when I first met MPP Smith I was late for a golf tournament. He was very cranky. It was an extremely hot, sunny day in Niagara and I asked him, in an attempt to get him distracted and less mad at me, why he had decided to run again. He said he had a few things that he still had to do and I said, "Like what?" I learned about this bill on that day. I will say he was just as passionate and just as angry at the injustice of it then on a golf course as he is now, and I think that is a good sign.

What I wanted to ask is, in Cambridge we have the air cadets and the army cadets. I noticed, as an MPP, they have almost no—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute.

Ms. Jess Dixon: —social media presence at all. They're young, but that's it. Do you think that this would create more of an incentive to get on social media and get this out there? Because they're not doing a great job right now.

Mr. Dave Smith: One of the challenges that cadets have on it is everything has to flow through the Department of National Defence. Local cadet corps and squadrons will have some great ideas on what they want to do—and going through the process of creating this bill, we've discovered a lot of the red tape that happens is because of the Department of National Defence. It's not that they don't want to be on social media; it's that there

is such a process to get an approval for any post on social media that by the time they get the approval of it, whatever the event was that they were talking about is very stale-dated—months stale-dated. So, they do have challenges that way.

Cadets, as an organization across Canada, are going through a process of updating and trying to become more—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you very much, MPP Smith.

Now we move to our second round of questioning and we will go to the official opposition. MPP Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: MPP Smith, can you just tell me a little bit more about the—when you talked about jurisdiction, that gets brought up a lot when we talk about First Nations and Indigenous issues, where it's jurisdictional Ping-Pong. They say it's the feds, it's the province, and a lot doesn't get done. And so, that's something that we think should be corrected. But you talked about how your bill may be caught in the same jurisdictional Ping-Pong because of the different levels of how the awards are presented. Can you explain that again to me?

Mr. Dave Smith: Sure. When we first put this together, when we first came up with the concept, we had thought that one of the things that would be great at the cadet level would be to have a badge that goes on the cadet's uniform so that year after year it would continue being there. I'll use sea cadets as an example, because that's where most of my experience is: If I started off as an ordinary cadet with no rank, no insignia on the side, and at the end of that year, I became an able cadet, I would end up with one chevron that gets added to the side of my uniform. If I had also won the Murray Whetung award, we had envisioned it as being one of the badges, then, that could be proudly worn on it. That can't happen unless the Department of National Defence agrees to it, and therein lies one of the challenges, because if you look at the awards that cadets get, the senior cadets may get something that is a medalion or a medal that can be worn on their uniform. But typically, they're in their final year or two of being a cadet. So, the younger cadets don't see that and don't aspire to winning that type of an award.

If we could have this award as something that's on the uniform, and it's given perhaps to an ordinary cadet or a leading cadet or an able cadet early on in their career, they may have that on their uniform for two, three, or even four years, which then means that, as new cadets come in, they're going to ask about it: "What's that? Why do you have that on your sleeve? Why do you get to wear that medal and no one else does?" And I think that opens up the opportunity, then, for us to have more of the dialogue around what the award is, why the award is there, and use that as an inspiration, then, for those younger cadets to want to volunteer and to give back.

There is one of the challenges that we have on jurisdiction. We can create an award at the provincial level and we can give something to the cadets as a result of that. But if we want something that is permanently attached on the cadet uniform that remains with the cadet and visible for

others, now we have to work through the federal government and the Department of National Defence and all of the red tape that's going to be involved in that. Even if we want to do it, we don't have the jurisdictional ability to do it without the feds.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for that explanation. Certainly, I can imagine the challenges when it comes to Indigenous issues, when it comes to looking at land claims, clean drinking water, the Ring of Fire. So if those jurisdictional issues are a problem for an award, I can imagine how difficult they are when they have those other issues that are significant for that community. Hopefully, we can work through those as well; that would be a wonderful thing for us to see here in Ontario and in Canada.

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This is a bit of insider baseball, but I want to talk a bit about private members' bills. It has been an extraordinary week. We have had a number of private members' bills all week long in the middle of the summer that have been brought to committee—good bills. We had a bill that made it law that kids needed to wear life jackets, which is surprising, because I didn't know that already wasn't a law in Ontario. We had a wonderful debate yesterday for MPP Coe's bill, which was about making sure that in the Legislature, we institute two minutes of silence in recognition to honour our veterans—a great bill. We're in support of those bills, so I'm hoping that this is the beginning of the government's interest in bringing private members' bills forward.

There are a number of private members' bills coming from the opposition. I know MPP Monique Taylor has a very important bill, the vulnerable persons alert. That's Bill 74. I personally have a bill called the Nancy Rose Act, which is about providing a strategy for pediatric palliative care in Ontario. That's at second reading and hasn't come to committee yet. I know that the MPP for Guelph, MPP Schreiner, has some great private member's bills, including bills that look at building much-needed sustainable housing.

My question is twofold: Does this give us some hope in the opposition and independent benches that our private members' bills will come to committee? Because I think there are some important bills there. And as far as the next step for your bill, it can pass at committee, but doesn't necessarily come back to third reading. What are your hopes that independent and opposition members will see their PMBs debated, and what do you think will happen with your bill? Will it go to third reading in the House?

Mr. Dave Smith: First off, I'm here as a private member. This is a private member's bill. You're asking me questions about government policy or House leader policy. Those are discussions that go on between the government House leader and the opposition House leader. I have no input in that. I can't give you any advice or direction on what's going to happen with—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You must have an opinion or a sense.

Mr. Dave Smith: My opinion doesn't matter. What matters is what can happen, what can't happen and who is

responsible for what. I'm not responsible for any of those. I don't have any input in that. That would be a question that you should be asking your opposition House leader: Have they had those discussions with the government House leader, and where are those things going?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You're able to say whether you think some of those bills have important concepts, like a strategy for pediatric palliative care in Ontario for kids with life-limiting and life-ending diseases. That must be—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Can you, in your personal opinion, think that some of those private members' bills have merit and would be important to debate as well?

Mr. Dave Smith: I've had a number of constituents who have come into my office and said to me, "You don't sound like the typical politician, because we come to you with something and you don't say 'I'll get this done' or 'I'll get that done.'" And my response to them is, "I never want to find myself in a position where I'm being accused of lying to you that I could do something that I didn't know I could do." I refrain from making comments on things that I don't know that I can have influence on or actually make happen.

With that in mind, I'm not going to put myself in a position where at some point in the future someone may say, "Well, you lied to us, because you said that this could happen." I don't know. I don't have control over those things, so I won't weigh in on any of those discussions.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Okay, thank you—spoken like a true politician.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you.

Now we move to the independent member. MPP Schreiner.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you, Chair. Through you to the member: I'm finding the conversation around jurisdiction to be interesting, because I'd say that when many Indigenous people come to my office, the jurisdictional Ping-Pong ball, to use MPP Shaw's term, is of great concern, frustration, aggravation, especially when it comes to things like clean drinking water, which is essential to life and a huge problem on First Nation reserves in particular.

I'm curious if you've learned anything in the process of doing this bill, given the challenges you've faced with jurisdictional issues. Have you learned things about how to navigate those challenges that could possibly be learnings to navigate other jurisdictional challenges?

Mr. Dave Smith: What I'll say on it is that in the process of being the MPP, not necessarily the process of this bill in particular, I have learned more of the art of positive influence to accommodate things and how sometimes you have to take a sidestep to actually find yourself in a position where you're moving forward.

I'll give specific kudos to one individual who will be presenting later on today; that is, former Chief Emily Whetung, the granddaughter of Murray Whetung. She tackled the clean drinking water issues head-on. She is, by trade, a real estate lawyer, and Curve Lake led the class-

action suit against the federal government for clean drinking water and won a settlement for 231 First Nations to receive clean drinking water and waste water treatment facilities. That has started at Curve Lake. They have started some of the construction.

The province joined in on the ICIP green stream program and nominated one of their proposals for ditch work on Mississauga Road that set the table to put them in a position where they would be able to put the pipes in for clean water and waste water. Those were all things that were done working collaboratively behind the scenes. Again, I will give kudos to Chief Whetung for the work that she did in not just improving the situation for Curve Lake but for 230 other First Nations who now have an opportunity, through the federal government, through a legal settlement, to get clean drinking water and waste water treatment. That's something that wouldn't have happened had it not been for the work of a number of people.

But what it demonstrates is that when you have some individuals at the provincial level who recognize that it is outside of their jurisdiction, they have the ability then to work with First Nation leadership to find ways to augment and forward some of the good projects. In particular, I'll refer to the ICIP project that put the ditches in on Mississauga Road. Had that not been done, then Curve Lake would not have been in a position where they could get the water and waste water. That was something that we were able to accomplish at the provincial level, because the first approval came from us, the recommendation from the province to the federal government. Then, the federal government basically rubber-stamped it at that point and set the table for Curve Lake to be able to move forward.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Great, thank you. In cases where the province is a signatory to a treaty, like Treaty 9—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: —we probably do have a more direct route. But I appreciate your story. It's a good example.

I wanted to ask you quickly about the regulatory process for determination of how the awards will be granted. Has any thought gone into that? Do you want to put anything on the record in that regard?

Mr. Dave Smith: Yes. What we've done with this is we've worked with Cadets Canada, the Ontario division of it. Retired Lieutenant Colonel O'Leary was the one who was involved very heavily with it. He retired the 1st of July so he's not coming today; he's enjoying his retirement now instead.

The way it will work is that each of the individual corps or squadrons will do the evaluation on the cadet in their corps or squadron who has volunteered or given back the most to their community. They will recommend a list of names to the province, and the province will then provide the awards back to Cadets Canada, the Ontario division, at Base Borden. That would be distributed then at the—we're envisioning it being given at the annual ceremonial review.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you.

We move to the government side. MPP Scott, go ahead.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you very much, MPP Smith, for your passion and dedication to this bill and the incredible legacy Murray Whetung has. It's just legendary what he has, and the whole Whetung family in Curve Lake—I know some are here today and some are coming a little later this afternoon—because it truly is a legacy, the positive influence he had on the communities. You had mentioned in your opening remarks very passionately how things had gone in the early years, which now are being rectified. But he persevered. He was an amazing, amazing individual. The legacy that he has left his family and the examples you've just given of his granddaughter are very moving.

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I've had the pleasure of meeting some of the family over the years. Coming from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock—your neighbour—I see them at many, many events in my riding, and I appreciate all that they give to our communities.

I'm a big passionate person about the cadet program. I love it. I'd like to say it should be mandatory—I know it's not feasible or you can do it; it is encouraged. But I try to go to every ceremony that I have in my riding. That connection, the engagement, with Murray Whetung, the cadet program and what he's done in the community, I just didn't know if you wanted to expand a little bit more on that and what he has done for our communities, really.

Mr. Dave Smith: Murray has been well-known throughout the greater Peterborough area for—well, he lived to be 101 years old, almost. Murray is someone who continuously gave back. He was someone who didn't stand up and say, "Give me credit for doing this." He was just the guy in the background doing those things.

If you want evidence of the influence that he would have had in his community, in the greater Peterborough community, I think you just have to look at the number of his family members who have served on band council. The fact that his granddaughter served as chief for Curve Lake, the fact that his granddaughter took on the federal government for clean drinking water and waste water and won, that doesn't happen by mistake. That doesn't happen by coincidence. It happens because of the influence that you have from your family members. The fact that Murray would have espoused that giving to your community, taking on more, doing more to improve the lives of the people you live with, the people who are your neighbours, and instilled those values in not only his children but his grandchildren, I think, is one of the greatest legacies that we have there.

As I said, I don't believe that there is any greater endorsement of Murray and his influence than to say his granddaughter took on the federal government and won, and the lives in 231 First Nations will improve as a result of that.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Incredible story—thank you.

I don't know if any other members want to comment, or I can keep going.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Are there any other members from the government side? MPP Scott, go ahead.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Anyway, you've said it so well, the legacy he has and his family have had in the area. I know that the cadets programs are very strong over here in Peterborough. I didn't know what the connection with Murray, the cadets—obviously, the veteran part and what he was able to do, and thank goodness that he—the Royal Canadian Legion, I think, is coming today, so they can tell that part of the story.

Just to fill in more what Murray did in the greater communities, I know that many times they've come over, especially to the Bobcaygeon area, as we have the same geographical Indigenous footprints—anyway, I didn't know if you wanted to expand a little bit more, either on the cadets and the awards or Murray's involvement in the communities in different aspects.

Mr. Dave Smith: There are two parts to it. The first is some of the things that Murray has been involved in. As we saw today with Lorenzo when he came and did the smudging ceremony and talked about some of their culture, obviously Murray was somebody who was very much proud of his heritage. And many people have said that the church has caused a lot of the problems in First Nation communities. Murray was also someone who was a very devout Christian. He was someone who regularly attended the United Church at Curve Lake and was at every community event that they had while he was still healthy enough to be a volunteer for those types of things, so you always saw him in the community that way.

With respect to the connection to cadets, Murray didn't have a direct connection to cadets per se, but we felt that this gave us an opportunity then to use the stories of veterans, take them to cadets and in particular to junior rangers. Now, the junior ranger program is part of the cadet program, but the majority of junior ranger cadets are actually Indigenous members in northern Ontario. This gives us an opportunity to tell the story of a First Nation veteran as well as reach out to the First Nations around each of those cadet corps and squadrons, get some of the stories of local veterans and what they had done to give back, and share those stories with each of the different cadet corps and squadrons. So not only would they be learning about what Murray did and how Murray gave back, but they have the potential of learning about some of the other veterans from their own communities and from their own areas—stories that may not have been told otherwise.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Excellent, thank you.

Mr. Rick Byers: Mr. Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Byers.

Mr. Rick Byers: Good morning. I just want to start off by commending you for this terrific bill. It really was inspiring. I could tell it meant a lot to you, which frankly makes it mean a lot to all of us. I really want to commend you for that.

You've commented a little bit about it, but I think you said you'd introduced it in 2019, as well. When did this first become something that you were inspired to bring forward? Was it right around then with the passing of

Murray? I've forgotten the date of his passing, but I'm just curious what triggered all this for you.

Mr. Dave Smith: It started shortly after I was elected. I recognized at that point that I had an opportunity to put forward some private member's bills on different things. I had made some commitments to some other people, other groups, as part of my first PMB. But we started down the path on the awards to recognize Indigenous veterans very early on in my term. Probably by October 2018, that's when we first started really talking about it, doing a little bit of research, and then in the spring of 2019 is when we started approaching Mr. Whetung—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, MPP Smith, for your presentation.

That concludes our first session of witnesses. Thank you, MPP Smith, for coming.

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION, BRANCH 77

CADETS AND JUNIOR CANADIAN RANGERS GROUP

CURVE LAKE FIRST NATION

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): I would like to invite the next set of presenters. From the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 77, we have Shelley Bertram Fallis, first vice-president and veterans service officer. She will be joining us virtually. We have, from the Cadets and Junior Canadian Rangers Group, David Wright, deputy commanding officer, Regional Cadet Support Unit (Central). And we have, from Curve Lake First Nation, Keith Knott, Chief.

I want to remind our witnesses that every time they speak, they should identify themselves and their names for the record.

Okay. Go ahead, Shelley. Identify yourself, please: your name and rank.

Ms. Shelley Bertram Fallis: Of course. My name is Shelley Bertram Fallis and I am the first vice-president and veterans service officer with Branch 77 of the Royal Canadian Legion in Lakefield, Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Please go ahead.

Ms. Shelley Bertram Fallis: Okay. Greetings to MPP Dave Smith and other parliamentary members and those in support of Bill 31 who are here today. Thank you, MPP Smith, for proposing the Murray Whetung Community Service Award. I personally am here with heartfelt gratitude to show my support of Bill 31.

Murray Whetung was an Indigenous veteran who was well-known far and wide, but today I would like to share a bit about myself and my personal relationship with Murray. He became a dear friend from about 2018 to 2020. Anyway, in 2015, I became a veterans service officer at the Lakefield Legion, which means I am there to assist, guide, provide resources, help with benefits and pensions, whatever, for veterans and family members. It's a job that I have taken very seriously and I have met a lot of amazing veterans that once were cadets years ago—veterans of all

ages that all deserve our respect and support for the jobs that they carry out.

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I am still in that position today, but back in 2018, I decided I would reach out to Murray. He wasn't a member of our branch for reasons of his own—basically, governmental stuff that happened after World War II and he didn't feel it was appropriate for him to be someone who had his personal feelings about what had happened, and didn't want to cause any problems, that's for sure. So he lived in his own little world and he did his own little thing. But I reached out to him to see if there was anything I could do to help, because Veterans Affairs was definitely on board with helping any veteran and he had been well taken care of by them.

We ended up being friends. I would go over and sit with him. He usually had his little black-and-white cat, Lizzie, sitting on his lap as he sat in his La-Z-Boy chair. By then, he was well into his mid-nineties, but he still had a really sharp mind. He had a sharp, inquisitive mind, but he was a bit mischievous, and he was funny and he just had the biggest smile that you could imagine. He was always laughing. I remember he once said to me, "It takes less muscles to smile than it does to frown. I just want to be able to save my muscles so I'm smiling all the time."

Anyway, in 2018, I did an interview with him because I really wanted to know him well. I went to his home on Murrayville Road in Curve Lake, on the traditional territory collectively known as the Williams Treaties First Nations, who are the stewards and caretakers of those lands and waters. He welcomed me into his home. He told me he had enlisted with the army in 1942. He served for three years, including being overseas. He, as well as all the able-bodied Curve Lake First Nations men and some women, enlisted or volunteered to serve their country during World War II. They weren't conscripted. They volunteered, and they went over there and they did a lot of work.

Murray served with the RCCS, which is the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals, and he was part of the first Canadian line of communication signals, which was the 21st army group, overseas. Anyway, he was a signaller and he was a lineman in "B" Company, so he was up there on the telephone poles, hanging off the telephone poles, installing communication lines throughout Europe. He had quite a few stories to tell, and I think the funniest one I heard from him was when they were all playing lacrosse one day and he said some German tanks were coming and somebody had a grenade and they shot it into the turret of a German tank. I don't know if that was true or not, but that's a story he told to a lot of people. Anyway, they retreated.

Upon return to Curve Lake, his people welcomed him back and welcomed all the troops back in a big way, so that was a good thing. The one regret that Murray did have was not being able to say goodbye to his comrades. He left because he was told he had to leave on a certain day, at a certain time and he didn't get back to the Netherlands to say goodbye to the others in his company. At the time when I was speaking with him, here he is in his nineties,

and he said, "I would really like to know if any of those people are still alive." He had a deep regret that he never got to say goodbye to his comrades. I put a notice in the Legion Magazine to see if anyone in his unit was still alive but, sadly, that wasn't the case.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute.

Ms. Shelley Bertram Fallis: One minute left? Oh, my God. Oh, Lord, how am I going to get through this?

Okay, so as far as remembrance goes, my father, John, was a World War II vet. They were somewhat related. Murray's father was Chief Dan Whetung. They used to live where the Whetung's gallery is, and they had a general store and trading post etc. Keith Knott was someone who was able to let our Legion come in and do a colour party in 2018. My father was part of that service in the sense of being a World War II veteran. So part of the reconciliation process was to be part of their service. In 2019, Murray was so pleased because the two local World War II veterans, my father and Arnold Graham, came out and sat with him, and they sat together with their sons behind them and they were all honoured—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you very much, Shelley. Unfortunately, your time is up.

Ms. Shelley Bertram Fallis: Anyway, one more thing: He was named—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Keep your thoughts for the question and answer period.

Ms. Shelley Bertram Fallis: Oh, God. Okay. Well, thank you very much for letting me speak. I thought I had seven minutes.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Now I call upon David Wright to make his presentation. Please state your name and rank and organization you represent.

Major David Wright: Certainly. Good morning. I'm Major David Wright. I'm the deputy commanding officer for the Regional Cadet Support Unit in Borden.

I welcome this opportunity to address the Standing Committee on the Interior in regard to Bill 31, the Murray Whetung Community Service Award Act. As I said, I'm the deputy commanding officer, so I'm the number two officer in the region responsible for coordinating and oversight of all of the cadet corps and squadrons within the province as they deliver the cadet program in those communities.

We did have a change of command on the 15th of June, so Lieutenant Colonel O'Leary is now enjoying retirement. Lieutenant Colonel Morrissette is in the process of moving from Ottawa, so he sends his regrets and me in his stead as his stunt double.

I'm not going to speak for or against the bill. As a serving uniformed member of the Canadian Forces, I don't believe that would be appropriate. I'm here to provide you with factual information and context related to the cadet program, and I'll answer any questions you have to the best of my abilities to help you best determine the outcome and the detail of the bill.

The cadet organizations are comprised of the Royal Canadian Sea Cadets, the Royal Canadian Army Cadets and the Royal Canadian Air Cadets. There is also a

separate youth program funded by the Department of National Defence and administered by the Canadian Armed Forces, the Junior Canadian Rangers, that the Canadian army runs. I'll get to that in a little bit.

Historically, the cadet organizations go back quite a way—army cadets formed in 1879, sea cadets in 1895 and the air cadets in 1941. In the early days, the focus was very much on fostering an interest in youth to join the Royal Canadian Navy or the Canadian army, and on providing youth that would be too young to enlist with skills and experiences that would benefit them upon enlistment.

Certainly, during the war years in the Second World War, it really became focused on providing a pool of ready-trained boys who would have the skills and the knowledge to be able to join the ranks of the sailors, the soldiers and ground crew. Basically, get the training up front, so as soon as they were of service age, they'd be able to join the fight.

After World War II, that changed considerably. Today's cadet program has shifted to developing in youth the attributes of leadership and citizenship, promoting physical fitness and stimulating an interest in the sea, land and air activities of the Canadian Forces, but we no longer have that impetus on recruiting youth to the forces.

In Ontario, we have about 16,000 cadets. The number was a little higher pre-COVID, dropped a bit, and we're well on our way to regaining our original strength. Those cadets are led by over 2,400 adult staff. We have nearly 300 cadet corps and squadrons in over 150 Ontario communities. It's comprised of about 53 sea cadet corps, 110 army cadet corps and 127 air cadet squadrons. Eight of those squadrons within the National Capital Region are actually operated by the eastern region headquarters. That's all part of that jurisdictional stuff you were talking about earlier.

So citizenship within the cadet program is promoted through a combination of lessons and activities that focus on our constitutional monarchy, identifying the roles of the different branches and levels of government, learning how to run a meeting, parliamentary procedure, and they even run mock Parliaments in the program. Cadets actively support local charitable and municipal events, things like Terry Fox, the Legion poppy drives, a lot of commemorations of significant events such as the 11th of November, Indigenous Veterans Day, the Battle of the Atlantic, D-Day, Vimy, the Somme, Passchendaele and the Battle of Britain, just to name a few. They also participate in dedication days, where they will clean veterans' graves in local cemeteries and put Canadian flags on them.

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They participate in civic parades such as Canada Day, fall fairs and local festivals, and they take on a lot of local service and environmental projects: park, beach and creek-side cleanups, trail maintenance, tree planting, supporting veterans in veterans' homes, sending cards and care packages to service personnel who are deployed abroad. Fundamentally, the cadet program strengthens Canadian communities by investing in youth and developing future community leaders.

Many of our cadets will go above and beyond what is done through the cadet program. They will use the leadership skills and the communication skills that they learn in cadets to then champion projects and community service initiatives within their schools, within their places of worship, in their neighbourhoods or their municipalities, so outside and independent of the cadet program itself. They learn to become active, responsible and engaged members of their communities and make valuable contributions to Canadian society daily through these citizenship and community service activities.

Youth leading youth is a core tenet of the leadership and community service aspects of the cadet program, so it's not the adults who run this. It is the cadets who decide what they want to do, how they're going to go about doing it, and the adults then provide them with the feedback, the guidance and the mentorship to ensure that they're successful in doing so. Cadets, through this, develop valuable life and work skills, including self-confidence, self-esteem, communication, leadership, teamwork and respect for others, while having fun building lifelong friendships.

The cadet program welcomes all—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): You have 30 seconds.

Major David Wright: —Canadian youth and gives them a safe space where they are free to be themselves, regardless of gender, race, culture, religion, education, socio-economic status or ability.

The one observation I would make is that in the actual wording of the bill, the Junior Canadian Rangers program was not included. There are 26 patrols and about 350 JCRs in Ontario. The JCR program is not an Indigenous program per se, but in Ontario it is only offered within Indigenous communities—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you. The time is up.

Now I would like to call on our third witness to make his deputation. Chief Keith Knott, please go ahead. Identify yourself and the organization you represent. You have seven minutes to make your presentation.

Chief Keith Knott: Meegwetch. Aanii. Boozhoo. *Remarks in Ojibway.* My name is Keith Knott. My clan is the bear and the eagle. I'm from Curve Lake, and I'm also the chief of Curve Lake First Nation.

I'd like to start off with acknowledging Dave and each and every one of you around the table here today. It's not too often a First Nation member, whether it's a veteran or not, is recognized in some form or another, so it's very important for me to be here this morning to acknowledge a veteran, a community member and a great friend, Murray Whetung.

Let's keep in mind also our young men and women of the day, of the First World War, of the Second World War, of the Korean conflict. They all volunteered their services. They were not enlisted, but they volunteered to fight a battle in which they need not have to fight. But they felt an obligation that they have to be engaged in peace, hope and comfort to many. When they came back from their

battles, as mentioned earlier, they all received a great welcome upon their return. There was a reception, a dance, by community as a whole as they returned back home again safe and sound.

We also acknowledge all of those who, with their wisdom and their effort, began the road of where Curve Lake is today. They became involved in community. They got involved in the political arena as chiefs and council members, as Murray was one of the council members. Their legacy and their way has brought Curve Lake—they were like an explorer who blazed a trail for us to come to where we are today. They began that process, and I'm really grateful that Murray and those veterans who returned home had the vision to bring us to this level now.

There are various leaders throughout the years that have carried their intent, to bring it to where it is today, and that is leadership. They are not symbols, but leadership of how their vision showed where our community was supposed to go and where it's going. As Dave spoke of earlier, of Murray's granddaughter, about the water and clean water, that is part of the whole process of where we are today. It is up to us to carry on their legacy.

Murray was a wonderful friend, a great friend, very knowledgeable. I used to accompany him on numerous invitations by the Legion and the many events that they have, and the jokes that he'd tell you would really make your hair curl sometimes. You'd wonder where he'd get all these jokes. And that's our way of life: It's humour. Of what the First People have gone through within this country, humour is the one that has made us survive—and one another, the closeness that we have with each other.

When the veterans came back home, they shared not their battles, but they shared their humour, their way of progress and how we could move forward. That's the sharing of the veterans when they came home. The battles that they fought were to protect others, to protect freedom and come back home and help bring us forward to where we are today, and give us that plateau where we have to go and give us that blueprint, so to speak, to continue drawing the lifestyle that we enjoy today.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute left.

Chief Keith Knott: Murray also was a minister who preached down in Alderville, and he also spoke a few times within our community, in our church. On Remembrance Day, he wouldn't miss one. We'd accompany him to Bridgenorth also for him to be part of the remembrance celebrations there. So the man who you are at this point in time under the private member's bill, or the act—it is a worthwhile bill to bring forward. You're recognizing not only a gentleman, a veteran, but you're also recognizing a community—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, Chief Knott. The time is up.

1140

We will move now to two rounds of questioning. We will start with the official opposition. You have seven and a half minutes. MPP Shaw, go ahead.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you to all of you for being here and for your deputations today.

I'm going to start my round of questioning with you, Chief Knott. Welcome and thank you for welcoming us here in this territory. I also want to say, I appreciated hearing the Ojibway language you were speaking here today. I think it's important that we recognize not just the land acknowledgments, but that we need to attune ourselves to hearing everyone speak in their language. I know I've mentioned before that we have an MPP, Sol Mamakwa, who is from Kiiwetinoong. He's Oji-Cree. He speaks very often in his language in the Legislature, and I think it helps ground us to understand that we have many deep, deep histories here.

Maybe I'm out of line here, but you said it's not very often that Indigenous people are acknowledged, and I agree. But, am I wrong, did you not receive the Order of Canada?

Chief Keith Knott: Yes, I received the Order of Canada.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I offer my congratulations to you. I imagine it's very, very well deserved. Thank you for your—

Chief Keith Knott: Just to add to that also, just this past week, another member of our community has received, or will receive, the Order of Canada.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Oh, who is that? I'm very interested.

Chief Keith Knott: Leona Irons-Cummings.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'll just share with you that my first husband, who is a Mohawk man, will be receiving the Order of Canada as well. His name is Tom Wilson. So we're all in good company.

Chief Keith Knott: There we go.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: There you go. It's about time.

Chief Keith Knott: Welcome to the family.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly, exactly.

We're talking about the injustices suffered by Indigenous veterans. Without going too far back—is the War of 1812 too far back to go? Because we're talking a lot today about injustices that were suffered in the past and that we're hoping that this bill is a unique opportunity to continue—we can't change the past, but to right some of those injustices. I know that, in my area, the Haldimand tract proclamation was something that came after the War of 1812. It was a proclamation for Mohawks in that area, and that's an issue that continues to create conflict in our community. So that's something that we need to acknowledge, when we're recognizing the injustices of the past, that some of those still continue to exist. The Land Back movement that's very active in my area is something that is a legacy of an injustice that goes back to the War of 1812 and beyond that.

If you want to add further to that, do you feel or do you think that maybe you agree that acknowledging these injustices could be a good opportunity to move forward to correct some of them that are continuing to exist, like clean drinking water, like access to adequate housing, like recognizing treaties in the province of Ontario?

Chief Keith Knott: The main thing I believe, in my view, is to acknowledge the past. There's not too much we

can do about the past. It's gone, like yesterday is gone. We have to see what we can develop or improve today.

Just to remind you, I know, speaking of the veterans, that after the First World War, when our veterans returned home, they wrote a letter to the department—I guess it was under a different name than “Indian affairs.” They wrote a letter to them, wanting to be Canadian citizens. They wanted to be like their wartime buddies, who they fought with side by side. They wanted to get the same opportunities as what they have and what they had. They sent a letter to that department. The letter came back. In a response, they said, “No, you cannot become a Canadian citizen.”

Keep in mind, I wasn't born a Canadian citizen. I was born a citizen of Turtle Island. It was not until 1960 that the department decided to have all Indigenous people—what they call Indigenous today—be Canadian citizens. So you see, I hadn't been through the process of being identified as a Canadian citizen; therefore, I'm not really a Canadian citizen. But do you see? These are some of the injustices that First People have endured all these years under an act that has discriminated against us, and injustices have been done.

This is why I'm rather delighted that a good thing is being recognized, identifying an individual who has served this country, who has served his community and has served humankind through a piece of legislation, an act or an identification that a man done well—what they call an Indigenous man. We've been under so many different names, it's hard to determine who we really are. We're called Aboriginals, Indigenous, Indians. Any time the department wants a new name for their department, they will change our name. So it's very difficult. That's why I say I'm Anishinaabe from Turtle Island.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute left for the opposition.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Okay, thanks.

Thank you for that, Chief. I want to be clear that I fully support this bill. I agree with you; it's about time and it's a remarkable accomplishment. For a man and his family—he is an Indigenous man, but this is a man who represented his community and is someone who served his community, so this is an important reward. I think it helps us, to remind us—which is particularly poignant in the First Nations Indigenous community—that freedom isn't free at all. He served well, and we need to recognize this with this—and we acknowledge that this is a first step and a first important step in acknowledging the contributions of men like Murray Whetung and other vets, and that we need to make sure that we're always moving forward.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, MPP Shaw. The time is up.

Now we move to the independent member. MPP Schreiner, you have four and a half minutes.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Chair, through you to our three presenters: Thank you so much for taking the time, for being here today.

Chief Knott, I just wanted to say thank you for providing first-hand testimonial that your friend Murray

Whetung is worthy of such an honour, to have a bill and an award named after him.

Commander Wright, I just want to say, if you could pass it along to the cadets, I absolutely appreciate the important work cadets do in my riding in Guelph and across our province, across the country. I can't tell you how many ceremonies, commemorative events, opportunities to serve the community that the cadets participate in, and I deeply appreciate that. I'm hoping that those cadets who—I'm a Rotarian—put service above self will be honoured if this bill would pass and this award is put in place.

Shelley, if you're still there, I just want to say I'm a proud member of the Colonel John McCrae Memorial Branch 234 in Guelph and very much appreciate the work that the Legion does and do whatever I can to support our veterans. Unfortunately, in the last five years, so many of our World War II veterans are passing away, and their stories and memories they provide at luncheons, at Remembrance Day ceremonies and other events, we're starting to lose. You started telling, I think, an important story about Murray that unfortunately you ran out of time to tell, so I'm hoping that my first question can be directed to you. If you would finish that story for us, I'd much appreciate it.

1150

Ms. Shelley Bertram Fallis: Oh, that's so kind. Yes, so in 2018, our sergeant-at-arms, James MacMillan, who was a master corporal—anyway, he decided that he was going to approach probably Chief Knott, or whoever was organizing the remembrance service at that time, to see if we could be part of the ceremony, because it had never been done. We had never shown our respect in that way with our own colour party.

So what happened was, we were welcomed and we followed their tradition. They had their—I'm sorry, I can't remember the name. It was like a stick that they carry in honour of the veterans. They parade over to a certain area, and we paraded behind him, very quietly. There were no commands. There was no drill type of thing. We just marched over.

My father, John Bannon, who just passed away last year—he was almost 99. He was related to Murray in sort of an offhand way. Murray's mother, Muriel, married Dan Whetung, and Muriel was my father's aunt. So Murray and dad knew each other, and dad decided he would come out to the service. So he sat there—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute left.

Ms. Shelley Bertram Fallis: —as a comrade. And then the following year we brought Arnold Graham, who is a World War II veteran, who was a bomber commander. He and my father and Murray sat on a bench, and it was very cold and it was snowing and so on. Three of their sons were behind them and they were covered in their coats and whatever, and all the little kids came over and even the adults and shook their hands. It was very honourable, and then CHEX interviewed them afterwards.

What I remember of Murray is he always wore that buckskin coat, and whenever he was at a service, he would

stand up from his walker with his hunchback and he would always salute. And everyone was saluting him, of course, as they were walking by.

Thank you, Chief Knott, for your share, as you filled in some of the blanks for me and you expressed it so well. He was quite an amazing man.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): The time is up. Before I move to the government side, I would like to remind the witnesses that every time they answer a question, they should state their name, please.

So I move to the government side. I see MPP Smith first.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thanks, Chair. I appreciate that.

My first question is to Major Wright. Most people don't understand the differences between the army, sea, air cadets and the junior rangers. For the official record, could you give us a description of what is the difference between the junior ranger program and the cadet program?

Major David Wright: I can try my best. The Junior Canadian Rangers program is—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Can you state your—

Major David Wright: Sorry. Major David Wright. Apologies, Chair.

The Junior Canadian Rangers program is run by the Canadian army, and it is run through Canadian Rangers patrol groups. So primarily in the north, the Canadian Rangers provide our forward presence for sovereignty. They are primarily Indigenous members, and in addition to army training, they use their traditional skills and knowledge of the land and traditional practices as they're doing their duties for the Canadian Forces in the north.

So the Junior Canadian Rangers program is really a youth program working within that construct. As I say, we are only responsible at my headquarters for delivering the cadet programs, and I don't want to speak too much on the junior ranger program because it's outside of my area of expertise. But again, there are 26 Junior Canadian Ranger patrol groups in Ontario, about 350 members, and all of those patrols are within Ontario Indigenous communities.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Smith?

Mr. Dave Smith: So when we developed the bill originally, it was originally just for the three levels of cadets, the three divisions of cadets. But as we were going through the process, most of this is going to be done through regulation, not through legislation, and it is possible through regulations to add the junior ranger program as part of it. We decided not to do an amendment to the bill for that reason, because it can be done through regulation once the bill is passed. But our expectation is that if it is passed and made into law, that the junior ranger program will also be honoured as part of it, and that will be done through the regulatory side, not necessarily the legislative side. Thank you very much for that.

Chief Knott, I greatly appreciate you agreeing to come today and speak on behalf of Curve Lake and what this means not only to the Whetung family, but to everyone in Curve Lake. One of the things that has been suggested to me is that we try and have the award designed around an eagle feather. I'm not of an Indigenous background. I've

been told that the eagle feather is the highest honour that can be awarded. Do you think that it would be appropriate that Murray be honoured that way and to have an eagle's feather as part of the award?

Chief Keith Knott: I think that would be a wonderful idea to have that included as part of the honour given to Murray. As mentioned, the eagle feather is the highest honour that we can get as Anishinaabe. It's just like getting the Order of Canada or something like that, one of the highest medals that you can receive. This is something like that. The highest you can give to Anishinaabe is an eagle feather.

Mr. Dave Smith: Because of some of the jurisdictional issues that I described during my testimony, we can't have an award that is on the cadet uniform at this stage. We'd have to go through the Department of National Defence and have federal approval for it. So the thought process is that initially, we will be giving a scroll on behalf of the province, and the suggestion has been that it be a watermark on the scroll of an eagle feather.

We want to make sure that we have proper consultation across all First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities in Ontario. And a suggestion has been put forward that, perhaps, at the Indigenous schools, each of the art programs in the schools would have their students create a drawing of the eagle feather and then submit that to either the Whetung family or to Curve Lake itself, for them to choose who would be honoured to be as part of the watermark.

Would that be an appropriate consultation—I hate to use the word “consultation,” because this is not an official consultation, but an involvement with First Nation schools and schoolchildren that way.

Chief Keith Knott: One of the things, Dave, is that we would like to get the family's idea and permission on some of these things. Also, if they review the design or whatever is included, it would be beneficial, and what they accept would be accepted by community and by leadership. So we would try to keep it within the family so they can have—it's their father who is being recognized. If they can get the design or whatever layer it's going to be, then it would be appropriate for us all.

Mr. Dave Smith: Absolutely, we would have the Whetung family very heavily involved in this. Obviously, we're honouring a member of their family.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute left.

Mr. Dave Smith: I've obviously had the privilege of spending a great deal of time talking to the Whetung family, and they have suggested that perhaps schools could submit this. I suspect, though, that with the number of Whetung grandchildren and great-grandchildren, it would likely be a Whetung family member whose design would be chosen, because they will have a lot of designs from their own family.

Chief Keith Knott: I believe you're correct.

Mr. Dave Smith: I have no other questions.

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The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): You have 24 seconds.

Mr. Rob Flack: I'll go.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Flack.

Mr. Rob Flack: To Shelley, please and thank you: Like the honourable member opposite, I am a member of the Dorchester Donnybrook branch in Dorchester, Ontario, Branch 513. With the aging out or passing away of all our—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, MPP Flack. You will continue in the next round.

We move to our second round of questioning, and we will start with the official opposition. MPP Shaw, you have seven and a half minutes.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I also would like to say that I'm a proud member of the Dundas branch, so it's Valley City, Dundas, Branch 36. And to you, I just want to say what an important role the Legion plays in our community, bringing community together, recognizing veterans. We just celebrated the 100th birthday of Leo Shaidle, who was a veteran in World War II—a huge celebration.

Also, it's an important place for some of the veterans who are not aware of the entitlements or the rights or, in fact, the supports that they can receive. It's a really, really important place for community members and for veterans and their families. We are very mindful that we need to continue to make sure that they have the supports and, in fact, the funding to keep those doors open. MPP Flack was probably going to allude to the fact that as people are getting older, they're losing membership, but it's an important thing for us all to work together to make sure that they can keep the doors open.

But I'm going to direct my question to you, Major Wright. I noticed on the agenda we've got someone who is representing the air cadets and we've got the army cadets, so we've got land and air, but we don't seem to have sea here today. But I think maybe that you're representing all of them in some regards.

What I wanted to talk about is how proud I am in Hamilton of our cadet programs. We've got the Argyll Cadets. We've got the Hamilton Tigers air cadets. We also have our HMCS sea cadets. The naval reserve in Hamilton has a deep and long history. In fact, they will tell you that even before they were incorporated, they have connections that go back to the War of 1812. They served during the Fenian raids in 1866—a unique piece of Canadian history—and the Upper Canada Rebellion in 1837, so they're one of the oldest on the Great Lakes.

My question to you is, how do you think that this award will make sure that the fine tradition that we have in Hamilton and across Ontario of our cadet program will be enhanced?

Major David Wright: Within the cadet program, there is a fairly well-developed system of honours and recognition that starts with our national honours and then goes down through our own cadet-specific honours and awards. To speak to what MPP Smith had said earlier on, where his vision for this award seems to be that it be presented to the younger cadets—for example, right now we have the Royal Canadian Legion medal of excellence, which includes a citizenship component to it, amongst other

award criteria. But typically, that's something that is presented to a cadet in their last two years. The reality is most of the medals are awarded at that time.

So to follow the suggestion from the proponent of the bill that this be something that be presented to a younger cadet and that they would be able to espouse and show for a longer period of time would certainly really complement the existing honours and recognition structure that we have within the program.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You explained it, but can you just explain for me one more time why the Junior Canadian Rangers are primarily Indigenous cadets?

Major David Wright: Simply, in Ontario, the JCR program is only offered within Indigenous communities. In other parts of the country, it's offered more broadly, in the north and along the coastal communities in BC and so on. So there is a greater likelihood where the population is more diverse that they will have non-Indigenous representation within the JCR ranks. In Ontario, that's not the case.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You had mentioned that you thought the bill maybe should be amended to include that reference. We heard from MPP Smith that they are going to do that in regulation rather than an amendment. But you think either way, it's very important that this gets acknowledged or gets included?

Major David Wright: I can't really have a position on that. Certainly, the JCR program shares common goals with cadets around leadership and community service. The program aims and objectives of the bill would be equally applicable to both. Given that the legacy and the namesake of this award is representing that Indigenous contribution to our history and culture, I would fundamentally think that it is completely in line.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you.

It's not even a question—it's a comment—but I just want to say that one of our MPPs—I think I've mentioned her—MPP Jennie Stevens from St. Catharines is a very proud mom of an active serviceman. She brought to Queen's Park—the official opposition had a reception for the Royal Canadian Naval Reserve to celebrate their 100th year. So I want to get on the record that I was able to meet with them, and I also was able to meet with Lieutenant Commander Michael Di Berardo, and he gave me this lovely commemorative medal. There you go. And I learned a lot. As MPP Smith has alluded to—it's quite true—there's so much that our civvies do not understand about the system that still exists in Ontario. So any opportunity for us to learn more—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute left.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: —I think is important.

I would also ask you maybe to comment on how this bill will allow those that don't have active service members or don't have a history or connection to service—how this will help raise awareness of the importance not only of veterans but of those currently serving.

Major David Wright: If I understand the question correctly, I think that fundamentally, through the presentation of the award and the recognition of the cadets and what they're doing within their communities, those would

normally be done at higher-profile events and so on. It would have that attraction within the community. I would expect that we'd see probably articles in hometown papers. We'd see social media presence. We'd see all of that kind of aspect there, which I think would highlight—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you. The time is up.

We move to the independent member. MPP Schreiner, you have four and a half minutes.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I think my first question in this round will go to you, Major Wright. If the bill passes, the award criteria process, all of that will be done through regulations. I'm just wondering, given your position within the cadets, if you have any thoughts that you'd like to put on the record to maybe guide the regulatory process in terms of criteria or process of how award recipients could be possibly determined. Then, I want to do a follow-up to your last answer.

Major David Wright: Okay. Just to speak really quickly to that: One aspect that I can't underscore enough in this is that the uniformed military officers who are part of the Cadet Instructors Cadre that deliver the program are compensated. They're only compensated for their mandatory training and the delivery of the required components of the program. Similar to schoolteachers, anything they do outside that's extracurricular is voluntary, which includes a lot of the civic engagement pieces, the community service and their own administration. So keeping it simple, keeping it short—because they're going to be doing the nominations and the recognition here basically on a voluntary basis. But it's certainly something they will believe in doing.

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The criteria needs to be flexible because every community, every corps and squadron does things a little bit differently when it comes to the civic engagement that's there. So, having it broad and focusing it more probably on the impact that it has on the community and the impact of whatever the youth is doing rather than on a set number of hours or some other criteria like that—and it's quite possible that out of all of the corps and squadrons that we have, it's not necessarily going to be awarded every year to a cadet simply because I don't think we should give away an award of this stature and standing if someone hasn't risen to that occasion.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yes, I appreciate that.

And you, in your answer to MPP Shaw's question, had talked a bit about how, when the awards are presented, it's an opportunity to honour and confront the painful truth, frankly, of the way in which Indigenous veterans were treated. Do you have any thoughts around the award ceremony and how that educational and commemorative piece could be handled through those award ceremonies?

Major David Wright: Certainly. With a number of our awards—we have, for example, the Lord Strathcona award; we have the Legion medal of excellence. Each of those awards, when they are presented, has a script that is read before the award is presented that speaks to, in the case of Lord Strathcona, who he was and what he

contributed and why the medal was created. I think that it would be incredibly pertinent and impactful if something was—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute left.

Major David Wright: —developed similar for this award to talk about the history of the namesake of the award and talk about a lot of the issues that are in the preamble.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: And Chief Knott, I'm sorry, there's probably 30 seconds left. But do you want to give us some quick reflections on what you just heard?

Chief Keith Knott: Well, I believe—is my time up?

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): You still have 25 seconds.

Chief Keith Knott: I believe that a description of some kind of the acknowledgement of the receiver—I mean, in recognition of the honour, a brief history or something like that is very important. You've got to know where you come from; you're received, you know where you're going. So it's just a matter of—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, Chief Knott. Your time is up.

Now we move to the government side and MPP Flack.

Mr. Rob Flack: Again, I'll go back to my question at the end of the last session in agreeing with MPP Shaw that being a member of a local Legion in my community is important—a lot of great service.

The first question I'll—there are three, really. The first is: Across Ontario, is the membership of the Royal Canadian Legion continuing to dwindle or is it levelled off? Do you know?

Ms. Shelley Bertram Fallis: Is that posed to me?

Mr. Rob Flack: Yes.

Ms. Shelley Bertram Fallis: Actually, I think, through COVID, some branches closed, some merged, whatever. But I know on a local level our membership has skyrocketed, and I think that's due to not only events that we have but also my recognition and our recognition as an executive and senior officers to our veterans, both local and, quite honestly, right across Canada.

Mr. Rob Flack: Is that true not just locally but throughout Ontario, do you know, or not?

Ms. Shelley Bertram Fallis: I don't have the stats. I couldn't speak to that.

Mr. Rob Flack: Again, maybe this question was already asked or answered, so maybe I'll ask Chief Knott if you know this: Are there any veterans today from the Second World War that are alive not able to join a Royal Canadian Legion branch in this province or this country?

Chief Keith Knott: Within our community, Murray Whetung was the last World War II veteran. We have no more veterans in our community, other than one who served during peacetime and none of the battles.

Mr. Rob Flack: Are they allowed to join?

Chief Keith Knott: They're allowed to join, yes. We've had some join the Legion in other years.

Mr. Rob Flack: Again, as a final follow-up, maybe both to Shelley and Chief Knott—both of you collectively: Can we be doing a better job? Can we as the Legislature,

the government of Ontario, do a better job of ensuring the message is there that Indigenous people from generations below—veterans—are welcome to join a Royal Canadian Legion branch?

Chief Keith Knott: I think any way or means to bring out the message on who is acceptable to be in the Legion—not only veterans, but are there civilians also allowed? Because I understand that the Legion is more or less for veterans for a place to gather, talk and enjoy each other's company. So if it's open to the general public, perhaps you will get more results and more enrolment, I would say, because our veterans are—not too many left.

Mr. Rob Flack: Shelley Bertram Fallis, do you have a comment on that, please?

Ms. Shelley Bertram Fallis: I absolutely do. Just recently, there was a briefing note dated July 2023. It's called the Burns Way; it's recognizing Indigenous veterans, and it would help with specific things like peer support, mental health, cultural safety, shame reduction, and they would facilitate and have peer support groups amongst themselves. That's all part of the Royal Canadian Legion. They've joined with the Saskatchewan First Nations Veterans Association and the Aboriginal Veterans Autochtones—I'm not sure how to say that. Anyway, it just came out July 2023.

I, as a veterans service officer, know that there are a lot more veterans than just World War I and World War II. There are a lot of veterans who are younger now, and we're moving and progressing in the direction of bringing in younger veterans with activities and things that they're interested in, and getting them on the executive and getting them to participate and feel part of the Legion just as much as the older ones, so out with the old and in with the new, gracefully and transitioning as well as we can and as quickly as we can.

Mr. Rob Flack: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Byers, go ahead.

Mr. Rick Byers: Maybe just continuing a little along the last line of questioning of MPP Flack: To you, Shelley, I'm a former member of the executive of Branch 333, Flesherton-Markdale. I was treasurer of the branch, and everyone knows that the treasurer is everyone's favourite member of the executive.

I just wanted to make sure, following along—each Legion, they're different; they have different cultures. How do you see this being broadly communicated among the Legion community in Ontario and ensure it's accepted by branches across the province? Is that a challenge, or do you think that there are important things that the Legion can do to ensure that happens?

Ms. Shelley Bertram Fallis: I am so pleased to answer this. You're from Flesherton-Markdale, and Sergeant Darren Reid, your president, is a comrade of mine. He's a friend of mine. He just took across the finish line a very important resolution to the Poppy Manual that I wrote but asked him to push it up the ladder for me—push it up the chain of command, to be more particular. Anyway, he was able to put through a resolution to get custom-made sports

equipment for disabled veterans, whether they're ill or injured, to participate in sporting activities, and it also included recreational gear. A lot of OSIs, which are occupational stress injuries, including PTSD, depression, anxiety—some of the self-care is through sport: that competition, the camaraderie, getting out of their houses.

But the custom-made sports equipment—wheelchairs and so on—are very expensive. We're able to pay for that now with Poppy Trust Funds for those who cannot afford it. Darren and I worked as a team to push that through, and it just went through in June. There are lots of things that can be done. Sergeant Darren Reid is an amazing advocate on so many levels, and I'm right there with him as much as I can be doing my thing. And there's many of us out there that are on the same page—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you very much. The time is up. That's the end of this session. I would like to thank all the witnesses for coming and sharing their opinions and their valuable input in this process.

The committee will take a recess until 1 o'clock. We will come back at 1 o'clock sharp. Thank you.

The committee recessed from 1221 to 1305.

MS. EMILY WHETUNG-MACINNES

MR. LORENZO WHETUNG

MR. MARK WHETUNG

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Welcome back, everyone. We will start our next session of deputations. We have with us Emily Whetung and Lorenzo Whetung. Mark Whetung will join us virtually.

We will start with Emily or Lorenzo, whoever wants to go first.

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: I'm just going to jump right in, okay?

Mr. Lorenzo Whetung: You go ahead.

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: I'll go first.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay, please state your name before you start your deputation. Go ahead; the floor is yours. You have seven and a half minutes.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Thushitha Kobikrishna): It's seven minutes.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Seven minutes, sorry.

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: Seven minutes? You're taking my time already.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Reclaim your time. Reclaim your time.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): No, no. We time it from the time you start introducing yourself.

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: Hello. I'm Emily Whetung-MacInnes. Aaniin. *Remarks in Ojibway.* I am the former chief of Curve Lake First Nation and the granddaughter of Murray Whetung, who we're here to discuss today.

I'd like to start by sharing a little bit about my grandfather. He really liked to tell stories, and he could tell stories from the time he was 10 or 12 years old until the end of his life, when he was 99. There were so many stories in there that you could listen to, that he would share

with us. They were always happy stories. I don't know if you could imagine living 100 years, starting in the 1920s, and how many different challenges there would have been in life. Every single one of them was a happy story when my grandfather told them, and he would laugh and he would tell you what a great time he had wherever he was. He would tell you what a great time he had in the war. He would tell you what a great time he had being in Germany with friends. He would tell you what a great time he had running wires to help with communications when he was in the military.

He showed up to the beach in Normandy two days after D-Day, and he would tell you a happy story about missing the action but still being able to help out. I spent a lot of time in my life thinking about what that beach would have looked like two days later in the 1940s, and I think that to be able to come home from that to raise a family with 13 children; to continue to contribute to community, to sit on council and help with our governance; to stand proud on every Remembrance Day under the Canadian flag, despite not being invited into Legions, despite being a second-class citizen for a significant amount of his life, is a really incredible story to tell with a laugh and a happy face.

I think celebrating any veteran who can do that is something we should be very, very proud of as Canadians. Indigenous people often struggle with their identity as Canadians, as Ontarians, and what it means to be a part of it. But my grandfather's perspective has helped me recognize that this is a country I do want to be a part of. It's a province that I do want to be a part of. I think recognizing his contributions is really very significant.

I also think in Canada and Ontario, we spend a great deal of time talking about reconciliation. We've had the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We look at the calls to action and we look at what reconciliation means, but we can't get to what reconciliation means if we don't understand the truth of the history of Canada, of Ontario, of Indigenous people and our contributions. I think that this award is a real opportunity to share with the youth in Canada the truth about our history, the truth about what happened in Canada and Ontario to Indigenous veterans when they came home in a happy way, in a way that honours that contribution and respects that contribution, in a way that my grandfather would have told those stories, in a way that celebrates unity and building a future that we enjoy.

So I really, really support this award and it means a significant amount to my family to recognize my grandfather's contributions in such a positive way. His contributions to our community in leadership. He spent a number of years on council. When I went to him and asked him about running for chief, he said, "It's a really hard job. Are you sure you want to do it?" And I said, "I want to do it." And he said, "Then you will be really good at it, and you have my support."

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I think that continued contribution after facing such adversity is exactly what this award is about. I think it's a true opportunity to educate youth in cadets about the true history of Canada, the true history of Ontario and

Indigenous veterans, and allow them to rebuild Canada into the shape that we want to see it. Meegwetich.

Was it seven and a half minutes?

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Well, less, but it's okay; we will take it.

Lorenzo, would you state your name, please, for the record?

Mr. Lorenzo Whetung: My name is Kchi Matigamis. My English name is Lorenzo Dow Whetung. I'm Murray Whetung's son. There were 13 of us born to my mother and father, and I was smack dab in the middle, so I got to watch a lot of things going on while others were busy being involved. My father was a busy man all his life. He didn't slow down very much, even at the end.

It was two weeks before he commenced his journey to the other side that he and I and another brother smoked the peace pipe together. He still had the wind and the lungs to do that with us. He talked about life. He talked about our life, his life and his parents' life. And then we did the same. We talked about our life, our spouses, wives, and our children, nieces and nephews. He was glad and proud to see that there were some people in the family taking the initiative to be a part of keeping the family together after he was gone. That was his concern. He always had concern for others.

When he would tell me stories of the war, even though he was on the front, I didn't hear any evil or wrenching stories from him about what he actually saw. He spoke kindly of his experience over there. He was humble. When he returned, even though he could have been a hero, he chose to be humble in that way.

Murray Whetung served his country in many ways. He served it spiritually, politically and physically. His whole life, he lived for this land and the people on it. Murray Whetung loved his family and those he encountered on the way his path took him. He didn't just go to a shop and buy boots; he went to the shop and found out who the bootmakers' kids were and created a relationship that could be felt and long-lasting with the people he met and he dealt with.

He came from a family of affluence when he was young. He went from affluence to poverty. He worked and lived in that poverty without any problem. He didn't long for that wealth that he had come from but no longer enjoyed, and he taught us to live the same way. "If we are meant to be wealthy," he says, "we will be wealthy, and if we're not, we're not." When the time came for him to begin his journey, he was a wealthy man. He was wealthy in friends, he was wealthy in love and he was wealthy in understanding, and he had a few bucks to boot.

My father told a story I'd like to share about coming home from the army when it was his time to complete his tour. He said he came home and he met all the young men leaving the reservation, and they told him they were going deer hunting, so he said, "Leave a canoe at the landing for me and I'll join you." He went home, met his family and then he went hunting.

He stayed there a little bit too long. He had to go back and deregister or something and he was late, so he told the

commanding officer that was in charge of him coming back, “I went deer hunting and the lake froze over, but it didn’t freeze hard enough to walk on and it was too thick for the canoes so I had to wait it out.” His commanding officer said, “Murray Whetung, that’s the best one I’ve heard so far and you will not be charged with AWOL or anything like that.” That was his story—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute.

Mr. Lorenzo Whetung: That was his story, and all of you are laughing on his behalf today. I want the rest of this province and this country to laugh on his behalf and the way he shared the love of life. Meegwetch.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you very much. We will go to Mark Whetung virtually.

Mr. Mark Whetung: Good afternoon. Are you able to hear me?

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Yes, we can hear you. Go ahead. Identify yourself for the record and deliver your deputation.

Mr. Mark Whetung: Okay. My name is Mark Whetung. I am the 10th child of Murray Whetung. I’d like to thank you people for giving us an opportunity to speak regarding the Murray Whetung Community Service Award Act today. Community service and humanitarianism was something that my father, Murray Whetung, valued greatly. His life was truly an example of one man’s efforts to serve his community both locally, nationally and globally. Volunteering to do his part in World War II to aid the global community was one of his first acts of service.

Several years of sitting on council and committees for our community was another way that my father was able to give of himself for the betterment of community and family. I can remember him sitting in the kitchen after a long hard day of working in the factory; he would be going over documents from the council and committees that he served on. I asked him why he was doing this after working so hard, and his reply was, “So that I know what is going on with these things. Anyone who is involved with something like this needs to know everything they can so they can make an informed decision for the best of the community.”

A few years later, he attended my high school graduation with my mother and younger brother, and I found it odd that my younger brother was there until after the ceremony. Following the ceremony, he brought me a bag and asked me to go get changed. I saw my work boots were in there and my coveralls and some work clothes.

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We left the school and went to the farm in Cavan, where we proceeded to harvest turnips and carrots. We had a four-wheel-drive pickup truck that had racks that were four feet high and eight feet long, and we filled that truck to the top with turnips and carrots. Then we took it to our home and we unloaded it and sorted it. My father went up and posted a notice in the post office telling the community to come and get whatever they could use at no charge. He just wanted to make sure that his community would be able to eat.

On other occasions, he’d have us go cut a load of wood, fill that truck up with wood and take it to a community member who was struggling and couldn’t afford to pay for wood. So we would deliver it to them at no charge and they’d be warm for the winter.

He was involved in the reconciliation process since the early 1980s, when he helped garner an apology from the United Church for its part in the treatment of Aboriginal people of Canada. He was also a member of the truth and reconciliation committee for residential school survivors. Listening to the testimony of the survivors took its toll on him. I could tell that something was bothering him and asked him if he wanted to talk about it. He told me that listening to the survivors having to relive their ordeal was very moving and very heartbreaking.

He was very dedicated to serving his people. He became a minister so that he could serve them spiritually, and in the end, when he had retired, there were very many people that he had touched their lives, from this continent to New Zealand. My father has travelled on spiritual journeys and he has helped bring knowledge of our communities to other communities and helped broaden the knowledge around the world of what our people are dealing with. He brought results of those travels back with him and he shared them.

Now, this award is meant for community service, I believe, and he was a very fine example of that.

I’d like to thank you for your time. That’s all I have to say.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, Mark. Thank you to our guests here.

We will move now to two rounds of questioning. We will start with the official opposition. MPP Shaw, the floor is yours.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much for being here today. Lorenzo, I want to thank you again for the ceremony this morning. I especially smudged around my mouth so that I could have my words be judicious, and you’ll see when I ask you these questions whether or not I needed to do some extra smudging this morning. I’m going to do my best.

Mr. Lorenzo Whetung: We’ll see if it worked on my ears.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Okay, all right.

Emily, I want to congratulate you on having been the chief of Curve Lake. That’s a remarkable accomplishment. And I’m curious—it’s maybe not any of my business, but is Mark or Lorenzo your father? Is that how you’re related?

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: Yes. Lorenzo is my father and Mark is my uncle.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: There you go. So it’s a true family—so thank you very much for sharing your family’s story. We all here today feel really privileged. It’s really been an honour to share these stories. I think we will leave here today, leave this Anishinabek Nation, a little wiser and a little, maybe, more cheerful, is the word that you used.

What I want to ask, though, is—yes, this is an important award, it’s an important bill, and we fully support it; fully

support it. I think you used these exact words, which I had been using this morning, that this is a unique opportunity not only to look at the hard truth of the injustices the Indigenous communities have faced—particularly First Nations communities in this area—but maybe it's an opportunity then to look at what we're still struggling to overcome.

We have one of our MPPs, Sol Mamakwa; he's a First Nations guy from Kiiwetinoong—far, far north—and he always says the biggest room is the room for improvement. He's also a pretty cheerful guy who gets up every day and has to talk about some really difficult subjects, like lack of access to clean drinking water, lack of progress on the truth and reconciliation recommendations, lack of respect for treaties—there are a lot of issues.

So I want to ask you then—you see how I did it? I was pretty good there, right? Pretty good. I want to ask you if you see this award not only honouring your father and your family and his service and the service of others, but as a gateway into a movement, an understanding that while we cannot undo the justice of the past, we have our work cut out for us to make change currently.

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: Sorry—so how do I see that being a part of it? How do I see this award being a part of that?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes. Or if you see it being a part of that, yes.

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: Absolutely. I think I spoke to that a little bit. We can't move past it if we don't understand the truth, and I'm often concerned about how much history I see being erased. I think that if we don't remember what happened then we're bound to repeat it. So I absolutely think that this award speaks to remembering the truth about the past, the past treatment of Indigenous people, past commitment of Indigenous people, and so it absolutely plays a part in remembering that truth and documenting it and sharing it with future generations.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, absolutely, and going forward—this is my hope, and I'm wondering if you might share that: I'm hoping that this award will give us an opportunity to have a space and a conversation and to set the bar that we have a lot of work to do when it comes to reconciliation, when it comes to what I would consider some of the injustices that are happening currently. I don't know if you wanted to add to that. I mean, I'm prodding a little bit—but the past, 100%.

I'll share with you that my mother-in-law is a Mohawk woman, a very cheerful woman also, but she went to residential day school and she didn't really like it, she shared with us, and she shared some of her stories. But she didn't realize it was residential school until we actually had to say, “No, that's what that was.” She herself didn't understand the history of what had occurred to her. And so, yes, the history, we need to be bringing it forward and redefining it and never forgetting, but it's my hope that this also is a springboard for change for the future.

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: I think, in my position, past and current and future, there's always work

to do. There's consistently work to do, but I'm not one to talk about it; I'm one to just get on with it and get it done.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes. I like it.

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: A number of the things that I've done in my career have really just been about, how do we move it forward?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thanks for that. In that spirit, if I have enough time, can you share with us the work or the progress of your community when it comes to water and waste water treatment facilities?

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: Absolutely—maybe? Am I allowed to do that?

Mr. Dave Smith: Yes.

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: Dave said I can, so it's okay.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Oh, okay. I see what's going on here, yes. Okay.

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: I've done a lot of work with Dave on this bill.

When I was elected as chief of my community, I had two goals. One was to figure out the financial issues relating to our settlement money, and the second goal was to try and find a way to access clean drinking water. For 33 years, at the time, my community had been working towards getting access to clean drinking water and had been unable to make progress beyond an identification from the federal government that we needed it.

We looked at options. We had a young lawyer in our community who was working on a family mediation with a retiring lawyer from Toronto who had spent his life in class actions, and the two of them came up with this idea of, how do we address this? What can we do differently? So we brought a class action on behalf of Curve Lake First Nation in October of 2019 for the paternalistic treatment of the First Nations in the provision of the necessities of life, like access to clean drinking water.

In March 2020, we turned it into a national class action and brought that claim against the federal government. In the span of two years, eight months of which was deciding who was going to be the representative plaintiff with another individual who had brought a similar claim, we were able to settle that claim for \$8 billion. I believe at the time it was the largest class action settlement in Canadian history—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute left.
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Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: Now I have to speak really fast.

It was the largest class action in Canadian history, and it has only been surpassed by the Canadian Human Rights Commission's finding on child welfare matters. So \$6 billion was a commitment to fix the infrastructure and \$2 billion to cover the past harms. There's a lot of legal jargon around who can participate and who doesn't, but it covers about 230 First Nations across Canada, and it's those long-term drinking water advisories that were in place that are included.

I'm getting looks now, so I'm done.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Now we move to the independent member. MPP Schreiner, the floor is yours.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I want to thank all three members of the Whetung family for joining us today and sharing some stories about your father or your grandfather. Lorenzo, thank you for the ceremony this morning, I'd like to think that not only my mouth has been appropriately cleansed, but maybe my heart, my soul, my head and my ears as well, so I appreciate that. Meegwetch.

Mr. Lorenzo Whetung: That's what we're aiming for.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Good.

It's one thing to read about your dad, your grandfather; it's another thing to hear people talk about him. That's what has been really valuable today, because I'd only had an opportunity to read about him. It's clear to me he was a very humble person and somebody who really put service above self, and I admire people like that. It would be interesting from your perspective: What would Murray say about having a bill before the Ontario Legislature with an award honouring him?

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: We had a chance to ask him, which was pretty incredible. Do you want to tell them about it?

Mr. Lorenzo Whetung: Sure. When we approached Murray Whetung about this bill, he was hesitant. He was hesitant because this bill would bring attention to him, but he thought about it right there and he said, "Yes, I'll do it. I'll agree to this. I'll agree to it because I believe people should be awarded for their work and their strides and their struggles."

I think he did that in a flavour that would encourage all members of provincial Parliament here to be a part of this bill, so that all could come together for one purpose at this one time. That's how the story goes.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: If you don't mind me asking, what do you think he would say to the recipients of this award?

Mr. Lorenzo Whetung: "Good job, boys."

Laughter.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: With a laugh and a smile, I'm assuming.

Mr. Lorenzo Whetung: Yes. Oh, he would tell them that it probably wasn't easy to earn that award, and that he appreciated their sacrifices that they made while achieving the award and the dedication that they're giving to the country.

Mr. Mark Whetung: I think he'd also tell them to not stop there, to carry on their good work.

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Go ahead, Emily. Were you going to start to say something?

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: And then he would have told them some more stories.

Mr. Mark Whetung: Yes.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: In my last minute: I'm assuming it would be a long award ceremony.

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: But entertaining.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yes, I think that's probably true, from what I've learned about Murray.

I don't think I have enough time to ask another question, so unless you want to add to what I've already asked, I'll pass my time along to the government.

Mr. Lorenzo Whetung: I think my father would have looked at this award as a step forward in relations with First Nations people and everyone else who is living here now. He was always taking steps forward and he would tell those young cadets that they were taking a step in progress, as well, by accepting the award.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you for that.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you. The time is up.

We move now to the government side. MPP Leardi.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Is there any written record of Mr. Whetung's stories or any video record of Mr. Whetung's stories?

Mr. Lorenzo Whetung: No, there isn't any record, and that—

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: There is a record.

Mr. Lorenzo Whetung: There's a what?

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: There is a record.

Mr. Lorenzo Whetung: Is there?

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: Yes.

Mr. Lorenzo Whetung: Correct me if I'm wrong.

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: I'm going to jump in here. He had—

Interjection.

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: Sorry, Mark?

Mr. Mark Whetung: No, go ahead. I'm just laughing at your dad.

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: Okay.

He had a biographer come out and work with him and record a number of his stories, so there's a small book—my husband has read it—about some of the stories that he liked to tell. It's just a compilation of short stories that he would share.

But there's also, in the Williams Treaty claim that Curve Lake was a part of—he was 80 or 85 when that started, and they interviewed him for that court case because they didn't know if he would survive at 80 or 85 to when it was actually being heard. And a number of years later, he testified in front of the federal court with a number of the stories that he likes to share. I think there's three or four hours of testimony there that go along with the documentary evidence, and the woman who had recorded his histories had predeceased him, so there's absolutely some record of some of the stories that he used to share.

There are a number of articles that are written about him, as well.

Mr. Lorenzo Whetung: I stand corrected.

Mr. Dave Smith: And Facebook videos.

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: And many Facebook videos.

Mr. Lorenzo Whetung: I think where I was going was our people live more by their stories than the written word and that's how he viewed it. So he did these little bits here

and there as an experiment in extending his story beyond here and now.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you.

MPP Smith.

Mr. Dave Smith: One of the things that we have talked about, and we've had multiple discussions about this, is what the award should look like. If I had the unlimited budget, everybody that would get it would get a buckskin jacket like Murray was always wearing.

What would you like to see as the award that's given to the cadets?

Mr. Lorenzo Whetung: I would like to see the eagle feather as part of the award. How you do that will be governed by your wallet.

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: It takes a lot of eagles.

Laughter.

Mr. Lorenzo Whetung: But yes, an eagle feather must be present in this award somewhere, somehow, and that's what I think.

Mr. Mark Whetung: When my father was given his spirit name, Gidigaak Binesi, the ceremony referred to a spotted eagle and how that pertained to my father getting his name. So, I second that on the eagle feather.

Mr. Dave Smith: How much time is left, Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Four minutes.

Mr. Dave Smith: One of the challenges that we have, and as First Nation individuals, I'm sure you can appreciate this: There are jurisdictional issues that we are dealing with on it. As a province, we can create an award to give to cadets, but it then falls back into the federal government's jurisdiction and the Department of National Defence on a permanent award that could be displayed on the cadet's uniform.

One of the things that we can do is give a scroll on behalf of the province until we finish that negotiation with the federal government. I know, again, it's kind of inside baseball here, because we've had these conversations. We have talked about having an eagle feather watermark on the scroll to represent the eagle's feather. Do you have any ideas on how we would come up with the drawing of the feather or the photo of the feather and what we could do to ensure that we have a proper representation of it when it's put on the scroll?

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Mr. Lorenzo Whetung: I think it has to be proportionate. It doesn't outweigh the medal, it doesn't outweigh the man that it is named after, but it works with it, in unison. However big your paper or, at some point, a medal, it has to be within proportion.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Dixon?

Ms. Jess Dixon: I can say that there certainly is a record, because when I knew I was coming here, I googled your granddad. The transcript of his stories from the biographer is online, so I read about all the wonderful things he says about your grandmother and the telephone pole and all those stories about his children. The way that he tells them is, frankly, wonderful. I wish somebody

loved me as much as he clearly loved your grandmother, frankly.

What I wanted to ask was, in that, at least, he definitely skips over the war stories. My granddad did that too. Did he ever have any opinions or say anything about the way that, in the increasingly modern world, kids viewed veterans? Because I feel like the further we get away from having a granddad that served, the less it hits.

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: Because he was a part of our family for such a long time, the children in our family absolutely respected and understood that he was a veteran and that he was a part of it. Our family always makes an effort to take our children to Remembrance Day ceremonies every year and to have those conversations. I don't know how, outside of our family, that experience would have been for him.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute left.

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: Mark? Lorenzo?

Mr. Mark Whetung: Yes, I could see that he was a little disappointed in how the Remembrance Day ceremonies were getting fewer and fewer. It didn't seem to be such a big deal after so many years. I don't understand, and he couldn't understand, why it was being diminished like that.

Mr. Lorenzo Whetung: I'd see my father answering the phone when I was teaching in Buckhorn Public School and other schools. I'd make sure my class phoned him on Remembrance Day. That was very uplifting for him. He really appreciated that. The children—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you. Time is up.

We move now to the second round of questioning. We will start with the official opposition. MPP Shaw, do you have any questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Sure. Thank you, Chair.

The question I'm going to ask you—I usually reserve these questions for people who are representing the cadets or active service. But I'm going to share with you some of the things that, in light of the conversation about veterans and respect that we have for veterans and the diminishing recognition of their contribution, one of the things that—we have an MPP; her name is MPP Stevens from St. Catharines. She works really hard. Her son is a petty officer and he's an active duty officer. She does what she can to support not only the servicemen and the veterans but also the families that are left at home.

One of the things that she did when she was a councillor—it's a small gesture, but she worked with the city council in St. Catharines to make sure that veterans had free parking in the municipality of St. Catharines. It seems like a small thing, but it's an important gesture to show almost—it's more than a gesture, I guess. It's an actual, concrete example of the respect and acknowledgement of veterans and their service.

The other thing that she moved in the House was that she wanted to make sure that veterans were not living in poverty. One of the things that she was fighting against was the clawback—at the provincial level, there's a clawback for the federal disability award. It's clawed back

if you're a veteran on OW and ODSP. So she fought, and she's trying to make sure that that doesn't happen, that they don't claw back from veterans their disability award when they're on Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program.

Those are two of the active things that we're trying to do and have been doing, among others, to make sure that veterans continue to be acknowledged and respected and supported.

Given your experience with your grandfather and your father and the supports that he could have used, can you share with us any ideas of things that we could do as a Legislature or at different levels of government to concretely help veterans in their lives?

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: I think what our family did was fully wrap our arms around him, and we were lucky to be in a position to do so. Two of my uncles have lived with him for a number of years, caring for him and supporting him. At big events, we would either bring him down to our place—we live sort of next door-ish to him—and include him in those meals and those opportunities. If he didn't feel like coming out that day, we would take the food to him. He had a constant stream of social interaction and visitors, not just from our family, but from our community as a whole, which he was such a significant part of.

So I don't know that there's any concrete actions in that, but the importance of respecting our elders, which is very, very culturally significant to us, the importance of including our elders and being aware of them and respectful of them, of taking care of our veterans, continues to be a big part of our community. I think it's those community wraparounds that are so significant and so important and need to be encouraged.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you.

Did you want to add to that, Lorenzo? Your light flashed. I don't know if that means you have something to say.

Mr. Lorenzo Whetung: I didn't mean to flash it.

I don't know if my father would be able to put into concrete—he believed the greatest reward was from within and from on high. So the material stuff that we hold each day isn't as important as the inner success you feel and the gratitude that you get from your maker.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you. Thank you very much for that, and thank you again for being here. It's been an honour to talk to you this afternoon.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you.

We move now to the independent member. MPP Schreiner.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I think this question is going to be for Emily but, Lorenzo, you can chime in if you want.

If I heard the timelines correctly, I think the outstanding court case that you provided such tremendous leadership for took place while your grandfather was still with us. I'm curious what he had to say to his granddaughter.

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: I don't remember any specific conversations that we had about it, but I do

remember growing up on-reserve as a child, where our well was not always usable. He had a water treatment system installed in his home. I think this just really goes to some of the parts of his character that you've heard today. Many of us in his family would go and be able to fill up water jugs in this treatment system that he had in his home. Those were really formative years and really great opportunities to visit with my grandfather. We would spend a little bit of time there when we filled up our water jugs. It was his way of taking care of us and giving back to everybody that was part of his life.

So he absolutely was part of my awareness of the water issues and part of my awareness of how you take care of family, how you take care of community and how you continue to give back to family and community. If you have something that everybody needs, then you should take the opportunity to share it. I think all of those hugely impacted my views on access to clean drinking water and community service, conduct and taking care of family.

I think I told him about it, and I think he was like, "Good job."

Laughter.

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: I don't think there was a whole lot more to say about it when I talked to him. You know, he was one of those people who was always sort of proud of what you were doing generally, whatever it was. If you were fulfilling any of your potential, he was proud of you.

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Mr. Mike Schreiner: And when we think about just the challenges we have around clean drinking water, adequate housing—the list goes on and on—is there a message that can be delivered through this award to the recipients, to the people at the award ceremonies that could help advance reconciliation?

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: I think I would focus on—this part of that conversation is truth. This part of that conversation is remembering the history and the truth. I think it's about community and how important community is.

My grandfather would tell you that he just got up every day and did what he did because it's what you should do. I think that's what this award celebrates: that you continue to get up and be part of your community and you give back. You do what you do every day to the best of your ability to fulfill your potential, and you just keep doing it. And in that way, you can have a significant impact.

Mr. Mark Whetung: Yes, I think that when people are joining the cadets, this award could be used as kind of an educational tool on how their service helps others and can spread from one to another just by being a little bit selfless and helping somebody else and spreading that feeling. I think that's how this award should be presented to people.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Did you want to add anything, Lorenzo, or are you good?

Mr. Lorenzo Whetung: I think—no, I know. I know that my father would really appreciate it if there was history that goes with the award. Like my brother Mark says, when the cadets come in new, introduce them to the

award at that time and let them know what they're striving for so that they have a goal.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you very much, Lorenzo. The time is up for the independent member.

We move to the government side. MPP Sarrazin, go ahead. The floor is yours.

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: I don't have a question. I just have to say, you must be really proud, both of you, of your father's, your grandfather's legacy. All I've been hearing today is—I wish I was there, spending an afternoon with him, hearing what he has to say. I have to say that, probably the best gift he gave you, Lorenzo—I don't know much about Emily—but it seems to be the sense of humour. It seems like something you got from your father. I think Dave really chose a good person to do this bill and to recognize. I hope that you had a chance to tell him while he was alive, and that you had to spend a good time with him and congratulate him for it.

Mr. Lorenzo Whetung: I would like to think I display, in a way, what you're talking about. And what I mean by display is, it was hard to get his attention. There were so many of us. But no one liked peeling potatoes or carrots or turnips or husking corn, so that's what I did to be with him. That's how he passed on his humour and his generosity and his love to me.

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: Absolutely.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Flack.

Mr. Rob Flack: I remember my grandfather on my mother's side. He's been gone a long, long time, and one of the great things I still cherish is when I can go through the photo albums, read his letters. Typically, we had, yes, an oral tradition in our family, but written as well.

I can't help but think—I know we've touched on this a little earlier, and maybe also to MPP Smith as we do this. Is there some way, somehow—I think of YouTube, as my colleague MPP Dixon has said. YouTube, social media, something that every cadet could get at the beginning of the year to understand and learn more than just—because with youth today, I find they're not the best listeners. They're great at this stuff and great at their laptops and iPads. I think we have to adapt to the times, not losing those oral traditions but coming up with a way to communicate the most magnificent story about your father and grandfather, to ensure that it is entrenched in their heads through modern ways of communication. Would you agree with that?

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: We need a TikTok.

Mr. Mark Whetung: Yes.

Laughter.

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: I absolutely agree. I think some kind of story, capturing that story—I think with media today we probably have a better ability to capture our oral traditions than we've ever had before, so if there could be a way to do it in the oral tradition, which is such an engaging storytelling opportunity, it would be really, really phenomenal. I agree.

Mr. Rob Flack: At the beginning.

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: At the beginning.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Scott.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I want to thank you for appearing here today—Lorenzo, a second time—so thank you very much.

I know that MPP Dave Smith has very much enjoyed working with all your family and takes great pride in moving the bill forward in recognition of your grandfather, Emily, and your dad, Mark and Lorenzo. We're all supportive here. We're very proud of Dave, and we're very proud of all of your family.

I said earlier, before you were in the room, that certainly the wonderful, wonderful legacy of your family that has occurred through all my lifetime—my dad had the privilege of representing, as a federal member, parts of Curve Lake, way back; early times for me. Just the wonderful stories and the wonderful connections that I have heard as a child growing up in the area, what you have spoken about today—how many grandchildren are there now? Probably great-grandchildren? There are a lot of storytellers, I think, coming out of your family. So really, I just want to praise you, Emily, specifically, for the great work you have done—your family is obviously very proud of you, and I am also—and the continuation that's going to go on in our area, through the Whetungs, through the legacy and now with a special award.

You're absolutely right, Lorenzo, when you say that the award should be presented with the story behind it. There are many family members who, in the day and age of videos and social media we have, can't be there in person. The family members—just an idea—should have an attachment for as long as you can, because it's a great partnership that's developing. I know that other presenters this afternoon are going to talk about it for the cadets and the junior rangers as it evolves through the many forms that we have to go through and proper channels.

I just wanted to say thank you, really, for being here, being supportive. And thank you, Dave, for all that you've done.

Chair, I don't know how much time is left, if anybody else wanted to—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): A minute and a half.

Interjections.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Oh, there's a competition.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Smith?

Mr. Dave Smith: Thanks, Chair.

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Oh. MPP Byers?

Mr. Rick Byers: No, no. Go ahead.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay. MPP Smith.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thanks, Chair. I appreciate that.

We have a very short period of time left on it. I just wanted to throw this out there: One of the things that our youth have today is that they look up to a lot of different sports personalities, a lot of different actors and so on as heroes, and those heroes often fail. They're human. They do things that they shouldn't have done, and they create then some misguidance, I'll say, for some of our youth when they realize that those people are human.

This is an opportunity, though, for us to recognize your father, Lorenzo and Mark—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute.

Mr. Dave Smith:—as someone who truly was a hero, someone that you could look up to, someone that you could aspire to. And I thank you for the opportunity to put his name forward that way, because we need more everyday heroes.

Mr. Lorenzo Whetung: Meegwetch.

Ms. Emily Whetung-MacInnes: Meegwetch.

Mr. Mark Whetung: Meegwetch, Dave.

Mr. Lorenzo Whetung: The award should be accompanied with some sort of spirituality, or allow room for it. Whatever is allowed in the military should be used to its greatest extent to reach the souls of those people who are receiving it.

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The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you. The time is up for this session.

Thank you very much, Lorenzo, Mark and Emily, for coming and sharing these wonderful stories about your father and grandfather and giving us your input on how to make this bill, when it's passed, stronger to honour the memory of a larger-than-life Canadian and human being. Thank you very much.

PETERBOROUGH POLICE SERVICE
AIR CADET LEAGUE OF CANADA,
ONTARIO PROVINCIAL COMMITTEE
CURVE LAKE AND WESLEY
UNITED CHURCHES

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): We will now move to the next session of hearings and deputants and witnesses.

I would like to call upon Stuart Betts, chief of police, Peterborough Police Service—

Mr. Dave Smith: He just pulled into the parking lot.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Oh, okay. I will read the names. By the time I read the names, he will be here—Daniel Hutt, executive director and chief operating officer, Air Cadet League of Canada, Ontario Provincial Committee; and Curve Lake and Wesley United Churches, Rev. Rodney Smith-Merkley.

Please take your seats. You can choose any chair you want.

We will give a few minutes to the committee members to stretch their legs.

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay. I guess we can come back to business of the day.

I will start with the chief of police, Mr. Stuart Betts. Please identify your name, your title and the organization you represent. You have seven minutes to deliver your remarks.

Mr. Stuart Betts: Thank you, Chair, and through you to the assembled committee here today, my name is Stuart Betts and I am the chief of police here in the Peterborough

Police Service. It's my pleasure to appear before you today to support this particular bill.

When I was asked by MPP Smith if I would be willing to speak on behalf of this, we were actually at the annual review for the army, sea and air cadets. At that time, I had the opportunity to impart to him that I am a former cadet of the 76 Uxbridge Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps. In fact, although I won't share it with you, I have a photo from 40 years ago—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Come on. It's a long day. Share with us.

Mr. Stuart Betts: Maybe after I will share that with you. I had hair—

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I was going to make that joke.

Interjections.

Mr. Stuart Betts: I had hair. Although it's hidden under a beret, I can assure you it is there; it's definitely there.

It was, for me, an absolute honour to be asked to appear here before you today and to support this.

Cadets as a program is probably one of the most accessible programs for all of our youth. It was free. That was important for me because I didn't grow up in a family that had the funds to allow me to join other programs, but it did allow me to join the cadets. I joined when I was in grade 8, a new resident to the Uxbridge area—that's what this picture is from, by the way—and it allowed me and provided me with an opportunity to have all the equipment I could possibly need provided to me. It was completely accessible. It would not have been accessible for me to participate otherwise, and it meant a great deal. It provided me with opportunities around leadership and teamwork and giving back, skills that I carry with me to this day, and I think I turned out okay. So I'm grateful for those opportunities—opportunities to go to camp—that I wouldn't have had otherwise. Greater yet, in my second year in the army cadets, were opportunities to get paid to go to camp and learn skills that I wouldn't have had the opportunity to do otherwise.

When I think about how I appear today, I trace it all the way back to my early days as a cadet. We're seeing, in my profession, a shortage of people who have this type of experience, and it's invaluable: service to something greater than themselves, a sense of belonging to something greater than themselves. We're losing that. So to recognize the value of volunteering and being part of something greater than yourself—to me, it just makes a lot of sense.

I heard some of the presentation before me, and hearing about the connection to the history is vital, because if we've lost the connection to our past, our future is bleak. Hearing about some of the comments about declining involvement in ceremonies such as Remembrance Day is sad. It struggles, and I struggle in my own profession to get a good turnout to events like that. I think if we can begin with some good citizenship and instill the importance of volunteering at the earliest ages—and the cadet corps can't be more accessible, as I said—then, to me, that sets a foundation for ongoing delivery back to the community, service to the community.

I look at some of the history that has brought us here today with the Murray Whetung award. It's a history I didn't have an awareness of, and I've taken a fair amount of educational courses since those days. There's a history here that, quite frankly, was lacking from my education, lacking through school, lacking through all my education since. To see why this award is being offered or suggested is poignant, and I think it matters. And to tie in why this award has been brought forward, why it's been brought forward in the name of Murray Whetung is important. I liked what I had to hear about that, because I think that that will instill some things in some of our youth today—our youth who may not have the access to what everybody else does.

I think that the army cadets, the sea cadets, the navy cadets, the junior rangers provide an equalization and an availability and accessibility to all. If we can encourage that volunteerism to all, even those who might think they don't have anything to give back—well, haven't we done a great deal to help set that young generation on a path to being something bigger and connected to something better? And that certainly ties into what I do, ties into my profession, and it's why I'm here today and happy to be able to support this from my perspective.

I will leave it at that. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): I call upon Mr. Daniel Hutt from Air Cadet League of Canada to deliver his remarks. Please state your name and the organization you represent. You have seven minutes.

Mr. Dan Hutt: Good afternoon. My name is Dan Hutt. I am a life member of the Air Cadet League, having started my volunteer service in 1997. I was the past president of the Pickering Kinsmen club. And with John Nolan and Colette Blight, representing the Canadian Armed Forces, we established the 856 Pickering Kinsmen squadron. I became the club representative on the squadron sponsoring committee. I served in that role for eight years. I have served on the board of governors since 2015. I am a past chair and now a life member.

Today, I am representing the board of governors of the Air Cadet League of Canada, Ontario Provincial Committee, whom I will refer to as the Air Cadet League, Ontario, or the ACLO, in my remarks.

This is emphasized on my paper: "The board of governors supports the proposed legislation," using the service of Murray Whetung as an example to recognize a cadet in every corps or squadron in Ontario for volunteerism in their community.

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The Air Cadet League is a volunteer organization created in April of 1941 to support the Canadian and Allied war effort, to bring civilian volunteers into a partnership that provided resources above and beyond the ability of the Canadian Armed Forces, to train future pilots and ground support crews to the war to defeat the Third Reich. More than 3,000 cadets graduated to the RCAF. We were an instrumental part of the successful defeat of the Reich.

Over the past 80 years, cadets has changed. Its focus is no longer on creating young men for service to their country, but rather it focuses on developing young women and men to be leaders in their communities and good citizens of this great land. The training program itself is funded by the Canadian Armed Forces. They develop the curriculum and provide the officers and volunteers who deliver the program.

The civilian volunteers, the members of the league, provide whatever the CAF do not provide to make the program happen: facilities like community centres and school rentals; meals and travel to events for exploration of Canada; recognition and awards, including scholarships and bursaries; aircraft, such as tow planes and gliders, for aviation training and experiences; instruments for marching bands and biathlons; effective speaking competitions; and much more. ACLO and the other leagues do this through the efforts of volunteers to raise millions of dollars across Ontario through 117 local squadron sponsoring committees. We strive to deliver a program that is free of charge to cadets, but I must say, it is becoming increasingly difficult with rising costs and restrictions since the pandemic.

One of the metrics by which success is measured in the program is through participation in their local community and by giving back to others. The province recognizes the value of volunteering in adults and requires that every student participate in volunteering to graduate.

In my research on volunteering, I have learned that there are several factors to consider when encouraging volunteerism in youth:

- (1) You have to show them the purpose behind volunteering.
- (2) You have to give them independence to choose; it's their time.
- (3) Lead by example: With cadets, the examples are always present in the form of the squadron sponsoring committees, who are the adult volunteers supporting the program.
- (4) It has to be social.
- (5) You have to speak to them through the language and media they understand and encourage them to share their experiences.
- (6) Be proud of their contribution to the community.
- (7) Last but not least, provide positive feedback. We all want to be appreciated when we give of ourselves. Giving affirmation, feedback and recognition encourages them to make volunteering a way of life for the future.

ACLO sees medals, plaques, certificates and other awards as a very positive and visible way to show appreciation for the efforts of cadets. Being part of a military-founded program, medals are the ultimate reward for service. A medal presented as part of the vice-regal system is the ultimate award, one that is recognized for a lifetime.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute.

Mr. Dan Hutt: I encourage the committee to support this bill, support cadets and junior rangers in the province of Ontario, and to work with the Canadian Armed Forces and the leagues to develop the regulations that determine

the process for selection of recipients in a fair and equitable way. Establishing the medal is only the first part. As we often hear, the devil is in the details. The volunteers of the ACLO are offering our assistance to develop the details.

Thank you for taking the time to hear from me today. I am pleased to answer any questions you may have.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, Mr. Hutt.

Now we move to Reverend Rodney Smith-Merkley. Please go ahead and state your name and the organization you represent. You have seven minutes to deliver your presentation.

Rev. Rodney Smith-Merkley: Good afternoon. My name is Rodney Smith-Merkley, and I am a United Church minister. I serve the Curve Lake United Church and the Wesley United Church in Buckhorn. I also serve as minister for respectful relationship and Indigenous justice for the East Central Ontario Regional Council. In addition to being a pastor, I'm a parent and a partner and consider myself fortunate to have been a friend of Murray Whetung's for about 17 years.

I served as his minister for the last five years, but I first heard about Murray when I was a student at Queen's Theological College 25 years ago. A classmate of mine who grew up in the inner city was studying with me at Queen's. She had learned about her Indigenous heritage through the early days of Trent's Indigenous studies program, and she had a great story of Murray Whetung being a part of that discovery and being out in a canoe with Murray—I think it was calling to the loons—and they both ended up in the lake. So that was the first I heard of Murray Whetung.

My first church was serving the Heiltsuk First Nation in Bella Bella, British Columbia, where I began to learn about that truth and felt a call to be committed to the work of reconciliation, which I think is Canada's work for the next generations. When I moved back to the Kingston area, I was on a working group with Murray Whetung, and one of the stories I heard early days was Murray talking about the Francis Sandy Theological Centre, a training centre for Indigenous ministers, where he was a board member. They were working on a partnership with Queen's Theological College, and it looked like it may not happen. There was a big meeting with the Queen's University board of directors, and the director of the Francis Sandy Centre asked Murray, "Can you come to Kingston with me?" And Murray said, "Well, I don't know why," but when Murray arrived, he knew—I think he served in the war with one of the board of directors, and they said, "Any program associated with Murray Whetung has my blessing," and so that happened.

Murray had a great way of getting things done with good humour. I served on committees with him for several years. I think his work with the United Church—when most people are retiring, Murray really got started, in his late sixties, working with the church. He was elected the first leading elder of the All Native Circle Conference, and he shared that with Gladys Taylor, a woman from Curve Lake. There were three elections, and they were tied each year, so Murray said, "I think the Creator wants a man and a woman to lead this important work"—that we're still

living into today around Indigenous justice and respectful relationship.

As mentioned by Mark, Murray was instrumental in the United Church delivering an apology to Indigenous congregations in 1986 and continued that wonderful service right to the end of his life. He was a respected, playful elder. I remember asking Murray when I was in Kingston and trying to do the work within the region, "Well, what does Curve Lake think about this?" Murray would look at me and say, "Well, I don't know." He was very humble, and he was a good teacher in terms of expressing the diversity of opinion within Indigenous peoples. Yet, through his storytelling and his good humour, he had a great ability to build consensus, and so a true servant-leader in that way.

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Murray served many years as minister for Alderville First Nation. I can only say good things about my relationship with Murray over the years, I remember some of his words were, "In all this work we're doing"—and it speaks to his humility—"I hope we can finally get to doing something that makes a difference." So I think this award is another opportunity to make a difference going forward. Thank you. Meegwetch.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Now we move to the first round of questioning, and we start with the official opposition. MPP Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I thank all three of you for being here and for sharing your history and your photos. We're going to hold you to that. I think we're going to hold you to that. We'll have to enter it into evidence.

So let me actually start with you, Chief Betts, and your experience in the cadets. In Hamilton, we have the HMCS Star sea cadets, and they happen to be located in a part of an area of Hamilton that has traditionally been a low-income neighbourhood. It's in the north end. It's on the harbour, on the lake—basically Hamilton Harbour, which is the westernmost part of Lake Ontario. It's providing exactly what you talked about for young people who didn't have a lot of opportunities in the community. It provided structure. It provided caring, supportive adults. It provided them opportunities, exactly that you've described. And it has history that goes back a long way. I actually just talked about the HMCS Star. The naval reserve goes back—they claim to go back, to have had connections to the War of 1812. So it's a long tradition in Hamilton when it comes to the cadets, but particularly when it comes to the sea cadets.

Maybe if you could—you've said it, but just a little bit further—explain why it may not be the choice for young people today that may not know that this is an option for them when they have limited choices in their communities. How is it we can make sure this is an accessible option for young men, young women and the diverse community—Black, Indigenous, people of colour—who may not see this as something that is for them?

Mr. Stuart Betts: Chair, through you: We have something in common. I was actually born in Hamilton.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: There you go.

Mr. Stuart Betts: So that might be why we have this—

Ms. Sandy Shaw:—little thing going here.

Mr. Stuart Betts: Absolutely.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Well, we should both try and keep our Hamilton down, because when you're from the Hammer, it comes out every once in a while, right?

Mr. Stuart Betts: I didn't stay there long. I was born there.

So, for me, participating in the army cadets was connected directly to my school. The Royal Canadian Army Cadets, 76 Uxbridge: We actually participated right out of the Uxbridge Secondary School, which made it immediately accessible as a focal point for the community. In fact—fun fact—our high school had a rifle range in the basement, and that's where we practised. It no longer—I don't think that that would be the case.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Oh, come on. Do you want to bring that back?

Mr. Stuart Betts: However, different times—as I said, it was 40 years ago. But it was immediately accessible as a focal point where most of us were attending school in that particular community. It was a natural connection and an opportunity to be exposed to the cadet program. Teachers who were cadet instructors were helpful and to help recruit.

I think you bring up a good point about how do we attract people to the cadets when there isn't maybe a natural connection, such as there is still in Uxbridge to the Uxbridge Secondary School. I think that's a great consideration: How do we reintroduce the cadet programs as accessible, affordable and a great opportunity to build leadership skills in an environment where our youth are already happening? We hear a lot about how we have to get to where people are, and don't expect them to come to us. But where are our youth? Most of them and many of them are in our schools. And how do we tap into that particular opportunity to provide this as a leadership opportunity, a leadership avenue?

For me, it provided me with a tremendous amount of skill, pride in what I was doing. It gave me a sense of purpose. All of which, really, are the intrinsic rewards that come from volunteering. And quite frankly, it was important to me—and as I say, I still rely on that today. I will owe all my marching skills to my early days as a cadet.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: And like you said, you turned out pretty good.

Mr. Stuart Betts: So far, so good. Thank you.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for that answer. Thank you very much.

Now I'm going to ask Mr. Hutt—it's been mentioned a number of times today about the junior rangers. Can you just explain how that fits into the cadet programming?

Mr. Dan Hutt: As Major Wright mentioned earlier this morning, they are similar programs that are not managed together. They're managed separately. The Junior Canadian Rangers are managed by the army and the cadet programs are managed by a section of the Canadian Armed Forces that is tri-elemental.

The goals of both programs are very much the same. Probably 60% to 80% of both programs are common. As we like to say on the cadet side, the difference is in our toys. Air cadets have aircraft, army cadets have tanks and

the navy cadets have the sea. That's basically the difference in the programs.

As you heard, the Junior Canadian Rangers are predominantly in northern communities with Indigenous populations. The Canadian Rangers are the part of the army responsible for our sovereignty in the arctic and the north.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you. That's fascinating. Also, I just wanted to let you know that I noticed we've got air and land, but we do not have sea represented here today. I don't know.

Mr. Dan Hutt: I'm aware of that, and I can tell you they're in the process of moving from Toronto to Ottawa and they are also in the process of hiring an executive director, so there may have been a shortage of someone to, in fact, address the committee.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: There's no sea around here, so maybe that was part of the problem.

I just want to share with you, just so you know—I mean cadets—that yesterday we had a bill that we debated at committee all day on honouring our veterans. We had a lot of people come to talk about currently active and veterans—and a lot of us shared our stories about our connection, different family members that served—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you. The time is up, MPP Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): We move now to the independent member. MPP Schreiner, the floor is yours.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you to all three presenters for coming today. I really appreciate it.

Mr. Hutt, I want to start my questions for you, if that's okay. You had referenced in your presentation around the importance of engaging the cadets and the development of the criteria for the presentation of the award, and I'm just wondering if you could elaborate on that a bit more in terms of what your vision for that would be.

Mr. Dan Hutt: The usual process when a medal is created or an award is created is that rules come with it to the organization, within either the army side or the CAF side or the league side, and it's administered there according to the criteria of the award. As Major Wright indicated earlier, most awards are given in the final years of service as a cadet.

I listened attentively to MPP Smith's desire to have it given in the early days. I believe that speaks to the fifth point that I made about recognition and encouraging volunteerism as they go through the ranks. The criteria doesn't have to be definitive. It can be written in such a way that it gives goals or desired outcomes and leaves it to the Canadian Armed Forces personnel who work with the cadets and know them best to select the one most deserving in this corps or squadron.

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But it's the details that are usually worked out after the bills are passed. We're pleased to join the other leagues in coming up with something that meets the needs of the award and meets the needs of the CAF.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Great, I appreciate that.

I think we're starting to recognize that there's some painful parts of our history and maybe some parts of our history that we're not as proud of as we'd like to be. There

seems to be a growing desire among many Canadians to confront that. I'm just wondering how important you think it is to have that message be a part of the experience of being a cadet.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute.

Mr. Dan Hutt: My personal gut feeling is that the more we honour the Indigenous persons who have served this country and bring that to the attention of the youth growing up, the further along the scale we'll go to finding some sort of reconciliation, maybe, for past indiscretions.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Chief Betts, I'm just going to ask you, because you were a cadet—and we probably have 20 seconds left: Do you have any thoughts on that as somebody who has served as a cadet?

Mr. Stuart Betts: Yes, I absolutely do, and thank you for that opportunity. We don't get enough history about our history. We don't get enough information. I think our opportunity to instill that in the cadet program and tie that into an award like this at the earliest stages will help to build that, will help to address some of—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you. The time is up.

Now we move to the government side. MPP Byers, the floor is yours.

Mr. Rick Byers: Thank you to all the presenters for your excellent comments this afternoon. I found they really emphasized the impact this award will have. I just want to pick up on that.

Reverend, you used the phrase “make a difference” in your comments. Each of you are involved in different communities. I wonder if you can comment on—and you were just touching on it briefly a little bit—how you see this award potentially having an impact on the communities that you're involved in. Each of you may want to have a comment in this respect, whoever wants to go first.

Rev. Rodney Smith-Merkley: I'll just say there's a great educational opportunity and I'm hearing—you know, early stages. I was kind of reflecting on being invited to be a witness here. The Murray Whetung Community Service Award is a way of sharing that history of Indigenous people and a great individual. This award is a witness to that service, that great love that Murray had in overcoming adversity, but in service to community and country.

Mr. Dan Hutt: I agree very strongly with my friend's comments. History isn't best taught in the classroom. It's best taught in the community. Many of our cadets don't have the opportunity to know anything about Indigenous people. They don't live in reserves; they don't have friends who are Indigenous. So it isn't a top-of-the-mind thing for them.

I think bringing an Indigenous hero into their lives through his service will move us along on that spectrum. I can't offer much more than that on it.

Rev. Rodney Smith-Merkley: And if I could just say, the Whetung family is a big family; Murray had 13 kids. I like that idea, because I think reconciliation is about relationship, and so to bring family members in that award in whatever way you can, I would encourage that.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay, next—

Mr. Rick Byers: Chief, I don't know whether—oh, okay. Good, done.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Sorry. MPP Flack?

Mr. Rob Flack: My question is to Mr. Smith-Merkley. Listening to MPP Smith's comments this morning, you learn a lot. You can read it but, again, from an oral tradition standpoint, some of us learn better listening, I think, at times. It truly is an amazing story, and I'm just fascinated by your story in terms of your journey through faith, through education, through family, throughout Canada. As you've landed here and are making this home right now, I'm wondering, specifically—we talked about reconciliation, and we need real reconciliation. How can this story, in a specific way—because that's kind of my background. Let's talk about it, but how can we meaningfully and tactically use this amazing example and story of this man, his family, his times, his legacy to promote and to bring about real healing and reconciliation in this country and in this community?

Rev. Rodney Smith-Merkley: It's a good question. I don't know if I have an answer for it. It's a question for all of us to wrestle with.

Mr. Rob Flack: Whoever wants to comment, I'm happy to hear what you have to say. We talk about it as Canadians. It's an important part of what we—and MPP Schreiner talked about it, our history. I didn't know until today, for instance, that somebody could not join the Legion after their service. I didn't know they were not considered Canadian. I'm appalled, saddened—the reality of the times. But how do we take this story that was so meaningful and good and reconcile that to that difficult history?

Rev. Rodney Smith-Merkley: It starts with truth and education, and maybe in the various cadet organizations, people can say, “Okay, so this was happening in Curve Lake and Lakefield. What was happening in our community? Who are the people? Can we enter into a relationship and dialogue and learning?” I think awareness is a big part of it, and what's happening today, like a lot of talk about the issue of water earlier.

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Go ahead, Chief.

Mr. Stuart Betts: Thank you. I will take a stab at that as well, actually. I think part of what we are doing here today, if nothing else, as you just spoke about, we've educated ourselves. I think that goes a long way towards understanding, and understanding is going to help us get to the point of reconciliation. That's us as adults, but how do we start it sooner? We heard about education and education in school. I certainly did not learn what I feel I should have learned in school growing up. This is an opportunity to build upon what I'm sure our schools are doing now, but to bring it into the community through community organizations, community service, into the cadet corps, into the junior rangers. I think that is part of building an overall foundation.

I had the opportunity to be at Curve Lake yesterday, meeting with Chief Knott, and looking at past chiefs—and I see the Whetung family represented in the past chiefs. Having researched what I'm doing here, I had a different appreciation for where I was and who I was speaking with and the lands upon which I was speaking.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute.

Mr. Stuart Betts: I think that's important. I think it all builds, and it builds on a foundation—a foundation that, we are learning now, we need to start younger, and we can layer that into the cadet program. By tying that award to the history, we make it meaningful that that volunteerism isn't just about logging hours in a book. It's about a connection to our past, because that's what's going to build our future.

Mr. Rob Flack: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay. You have 32 seconds. No? Okay.

We move to the second round of questioning, and we will go to the official opposition. MPP Shaw, do you have any questions?

1440

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, thank you, Chair.

I'm primarily going to direct my question to Reverend Smith-Merkley, talking about the idea of reconciliation. You talked a little bit about some of your experience there. In the spirit that this is a bill that cannot right the wrongs of the past but is an opportunity to use as a tool to move forward with real, meaningful actions when it comes to truth and reconciliation—if you will just indulge me, I'm going to read a little bit from a statement that MPP Sol Mamakwa made. He's the NDP MPP for Kiiwetinoong. On the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, he said the following:

“As the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is upon us, we must reflect deeply on why this day is important, and how it brings us together. We must acknowledge that our history together since contact has not always been good, and that its long shadow is felt in our present. And so, the present dictates that we must come together in a good way, in the spirit of truth and ‘reconciliation.’”

I think that those words are really important and helpful for us today as we come together in a collaborative spirit. Can you just speak on some of the injustices that we've been talking about: the clean drinking water crisis, the housing crisis, the fact that we're continuing to find children in unmarked graves across this country and, in Ontario, that there are communities that have no access to adequate housing or any kind of housing? There's so much work to be done, and this is a small step but a very important step. Do you see this being used as a tool for us to understand and move forward to right some of those injustices?

Rev. Rodney Smith-Merkley: I think so. I think in terms of sharing the story of Murray Whetung and his life and his service, and the hardship that he faced and other Indigenous people have faced, that Sol points us to what Canadians have been waking up to in the last 15 years and probably in the last two or three years. This is another opportunity. It's an opportunity to educate another community through the cadets and their families.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I appreciate this is a big subject and a heavy subject. Sol will also say that this is a very colonial structure that we operate in in the Legislature, and in many ways, we brought that here. It's not always the most

effective way for us to have those dialogues, so I appreciate your words here today. Thank you very much, and thanks to all three of you for your deputation here today.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): We move to the independent member. MPP Schreiner.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Chief Betts, your answer got cut off on my last question there. I'm just wondering if you could elaborate a bit more on why you think it's important for cadets to learn this particular part of Canadian history as part of their experience as a cadet.

Mr. Stuart Betts: Thank you. Through you, Chair: As I had a connection for Hamilton, and I see you're wearing a green tie, I was a member of the Army Cadets. Although I wear white today, I started wearing green.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Well, we love our field regiment in Guelph.

Mr. Stuart Betts: There we are. I think it's important here with the cadets, and the particular connection to Murray Whetung's family, because of his service. That makes it probably the most direct connection to why that's important, that it's connected toward the cadets and the junior ranger program, because I think there is an ability to be able to tie not just the Indigenous roots of Mr. Whetung, but also the connectivity to service, to something bigger, as I said, than himself; that he wasn't discouraged when he came back—although he perhaps may have been, but he didn't give up, so that resilience was there. He continued to be a leader.

As I continued to do some of my own research—I did not have the opportunity to meet the man in person. But when I read what I can about him, just reading what that resilience means and being able to recognize that in our youth and that giving back in that community—I think that, combined with education around the history of why that particular award would be connected to community service, why it would bear his name, all goes towards building that legacy and keeping the memory of the importance of that legacy alive.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Great. I appreciate that.

Reverend Smith-Merkley, I'm going to ask you a quick question—and I even hesitate to ask this question, to be honest. Murray's son, Lorenzo, talked about that there should be a spiritual component to this particular award. I know spirituality is defined in many, many different ways by many people and it can be very deeply personal as well, which is sort of why I hesitate to ask the question, but you had a special relationship with Murray, and I'm assuming a spiritual component to that relationship. I'm just wondering if maybe you could reflect on that aspect or potential aspect around this award.

Rev. Rodney Smith-Merkley: It is a challenging component to incorporate in a public award, and yet I think what Murray brought to the United Church was an Indigenous world view, and that's where Lorenzo comes from. It starts with gratitude and often it's shared in a circle. I appreciate that we're sitting in a circle even though we're not necessarily hearing from everyone, and so there's the challenge of the colonial system. But for people to have a chance to express gratitude and those heart feelings and emotions, perhaps that's an opportunity to look at the Seven Grandfather Teachings of the Anishinaabe. It might

be an opportunity to bring a spiritual component to this award, and it speaks to service, the components of—yes.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I know my time is almost up. I really deeply appreciate that you've led with gratitude, because I think it's one of the most important elements of Indigenous teachings and Indigenous relationships. It's very meaningful to me, and I think that is an important spiritual component and can be done in a public way. So I appreciate your answer.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you. We move to the government side. MPP Smith, the floor is yours.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm going to direct this one to Chief Betts. In the gallery right now, I see Dave Ronson. He's part of the leadership group for the 534 Air Cadets here in Peterborough. He has said to me a number of times that one of the greatest values of cadets is the responsibility and respect that the individuals learn as they're part of it, and he said that if more people were involved in cadets, if we had more kids in cadets, your job would be easier.

You've had the experience of being an army cadet, you've worked your way up through the ranks, and you're chief of police now. Do you think that's a fair statement that he has said?

Mr. Stuart Betts: I have a cheeky answer around air cadets and army cadets. I can't speak to the air cadets. I can speak to the army cadets. Actually, in all fairness and honesty, I do think that's a fair statement. I think it teaches core values at a very young age. Those are values that are instilled.

Quite frankly, we don't always come to the cadets with a really good grounding in those values, but as part of that organization, growing up within that organization, the mentorship that we receive, that team work, that camaraderie—all the values that go into a police career, quite frankly, translate directly to all the values I learned in my early days as a cadet, and I absolutely would agree that my job would be easier if we had more people who were grounded in some of those values. Here's an easy, accessible way, and I sure do wish that I would see more folks who would take more advantage of that opportunity.

1450

We sat there at the tri-service awards ceremony, and I know we commented on some of the groups being more represented than others. I hope next year when I'm sitting there, I will see a more robust group of people who are standing out there, because I do think that will translate not just into better and easier policing, but a better and healthier community.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you. I appreciate that.

Mr. Hutt, you had talked about engagement and keeping our youth engaged and that awards, certificates, medals—those are all things that can help do it. This type of award, because the clock resets at the beginning of each cadet season, provides an opportunity for any of the cadets to step forward and grasp the reins, so to speak, and be awarded that. It's not necessarily the cadets who are in their final year, but it can be a cadet who is in their first or second year. Do you think that an award like this then would help promote the idea of continuing as a cadet and give an opportunity for one of those cadets to stay engaged

where they may have lost some of that excitement at some point?

Mr. Dan Hutt: In my experience as a parent and as a grandfather, we strove to instill values at the earliest opportunity, and in cadets the program is weighted in a similar fashion. When you validate behaviour, it's more likely to be continued as part of life as it goes on. So yes, I think it would contribute to building volunteerism as part of the character of youth moving forward and into adulthood. We certainly welcome them back as part of the leagues to perpetuate the cadet programs.

The way it's kept free for communities is that the military pays a big portion of the program and the civilian side raises the money that covers the things that make it fun, the things that the government can't or doesn't provide. That's done by volunteers like me and like Dave Ronson, who I acknowledge as one of our governors as well on the provincial league. So we're there, and we want as many young people to join us as we can. We're getting a little long in the tooth.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you. I appreciate that.

Next, I want to move over to Reverend Smith-Merkley. I made the statement tonight, and I've made the statement numerous times since I first introduced this bill, that our youth have heroes they look up to. I've said before that sometimes it's sports personalities, sometimes it's actors, sometimes it's various other people. They're all human; they all make mistakes, and when one of those heroes fails, there's a sense of loss then with some of our youth. And a lot of times that can be what leads them to move in a different direction, perhaps one that's not quite as positive, because they want to emulate their hero.

One of the things that I think is great about Murray is that he lived a very humble life but gave back constantly. I've referred to him as one of our everyday heroes. You knew him better than anyone else sitting on the panel. You had a number of years of experience with him.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute.

Mr. Dave Smith: Is there something in particular that you would point to, to say that he makes a good hero for our youth to look up to and someone that they could emulate?

Rev. Rodney Smith-Merkley: Yes. I think the humility, the joy and good humour, the playfulness—just what I heard his family speak about that I see embodied in his family. All those characteristics speak to that great quality. I think Murray has made me a better person and would make anybody a better person who learned about him and his way of being.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Fourteen seconds.

Mr. Dave Smith: There's really nothing more that I can add other than to drag the puck for another 12 seconds or so and say thank you very much for coming in today. I greatly appreciate—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you very much.

That's it for our panel for this session. Thank you very much for coming and sharing your input and your personal experiences and stories with us. I'm sure they will be valuable for the committee.

We will take a five-minute break—

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Oh, I was going to ask for that, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): I always think about you guys. Five minutes.

The committee recessed from 1456 to 1508.

ARMY CADET LEAGUE
OF CANADA (ONTARIO)

LIEUTENANT COLONEL HENRY CLARKE

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Welcome back, everyone. We'll start our next panel. We have Rick Brown, president of Army Cadet League of Canada, with us, and Charlene Orrell, vice-president, will join us by virtual. We have Mr. Henry Clarke also joining us in person.

So we will start with Mr. Brown. Please state your name and identify the organization that you represent. You have seven minutes.

Mr. Rick Brown: Thank you for inviting me. My name is Captain Rick Brown. I represent the Army Cadet League of Canada, Ontario branch. At present, I am the president of the Army Cadet League, Ontario branch.

On the army side, we support the bill. In fact, we would support all bills that promote, educate and encourage cadets. To us, a cadet is a cadet is a cadet. It doesn't matter whether they're wearing an air uniform, a sea uniform or a navy league or the preferred army uniform. They all come out and do their work, and we promote them in every way we can. In Ontario, we have 111 corps that we use. So I think the educational part of this is great, and we support it 100%.

I don't know if Charlene is on or not. She had some comments. Charlene is my first vice-president.

Ms. Charlene Orrell: Hi. Charlene Orrell here. I totally reiterate everything that Mr. Brown has said. We are in full support of promoting any awards to any cadets, whether they're army, air or sea. Again, the bill has our full support, and unless there are any questions, that's good to go.

Mr. Rick Brown: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you.

Mr. Clarke, please state your full name for the record.

Lieutenant Colonel Henry Clarke: Good afternoon. I am Lieutenant Colonel Henry Clarke, retired from the Canadian Armed Forces. It's a great pleasure to be here, and I so appreciate Mr. Smith and his initiative in inviting me. I have just under seven minutes of remarks. I hope it won't be repetitive.

Ladies and gentlemen, most of you don't know me. I've been involved in one way or another with the Canadian Armed Forces my entire life. For 27 years, I wore the uniform, and upon retirement, I remain involved with many of the organizations that support and enhance the Armed Forces of Canada. My family has been in the Armed Forces going back seven generations to a great-great-grandfather who fought at the Battle of Waterloo.

That tradition of service is so rooted in our First Nations. For untold generations, the adult members of

those families stepped forward to protect their communities, to look after their families and their way of life, and nowhere has that been more evident than at Curve Lake, Hiawatha and Alderville. All you have to do is attend one of their Remembrance Day ceremonies, as I have many times, and you will realize the incredible effort that the First Nations put forward in the defence of our country and the terrible cost they suffered. Locally, almost 100% of those eligible to serve joined the Armed Forces for the Second World War, and not all of them came home.

Now, Murray Whetung was such a volunteer. He joined the Canadian Army Active Service Force and proceeded overseas for long years of separation. His medals, which I saw him wear many times, attested to his proud service on behalf of others. He demonstrated time and again the bravery that is customarily expected of a Canadian soldier.

During the Year of the Veteran, we hosted a gathering of almost a thousand of our local veterans, and Murray was chosen to give the prayer. He didn't flinch, and spoke truth to power when he called out the issues that First Nations had faced, to none other than Prince Edward, son of the Queen.

Murray continued to serve. He came to many events, anytime veterans would be gathering. He was prominent at the Remembrance Day services, and one that was hosted with Chief Knott of Curve Lake to speak of the military tradition of his people. It went all the way back to his great-great-great-grandfather, who had been summoned by a runner to appear on behalf of the British in the War of 1812. The man stood up without hesitation and left for the war.

Murray Whetung is a worthy representative of his community and the First Nations veterans everywhere. As such, it is fitting that a community service award be named in his memory. But I want to take a moment of your time to explain what that can mean.

The Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps is a national organization with roots that go back to 1861. It's found in every province and territory, and it's our longest-established national organization for youth between 12 and 18. The members wear uniforms, but they're not actually in the Canadian Armed Forces; the funding for them does come through that channel. But members learn marksmanship, citizenship, teamwork, first aid, navigation, parachuting and many other skills that they can use. In addition, and I think even more importantly, they make friends, friends that will be with them for the rest of their life. Virtually every one of my close friends is someone I served in the military with.

Part of what makes the army cadets, and of course, the navy and the air cadets, so appealing and important are the activities that good corps undertake that go far beyond what you will find in the service manuals. They help with community cleanups, Christmas hamper deliveries and Remembrance Day services, often in the small centres that are not able to put on something special themselves. In other words, our cadets are busy with public service and citizenship training.

All you have to do is take the time to attend a local annual inspection of any of the corps, and my regiment is proud to support seven of them—seven of that 100, sir.

If you were at the remarkable parade last month at the airport, you would have seen the pride, the self-discipline that those cadets display. They know they've worked hard, and they know they've accomplished things that their peers could not even imagine.

Now, one of the ways to encourage such hard work is visible at the annual inspections.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute.

Lieutenant Colonel Henry Clarke: This includes the Strathcona trust award, the Royal Canadian Legion, parents' groups and past corps associates. These are brought out and proclaimed loudly. Admiration from their peers, from their parents, from their friends is so evident. This is why the establishment of this award in memory of Mr. Whetung will be important. It will mean that a well-known veteran will be appropriately commemorated and a reminder to those who served and receive it. It also is an obvious commemoration of the sacrifice and the contribution of our local First Nations, and that, to me, is a way of moving us forward with the cause of truth and reconciliation.

So I fully support this bill, and I look forward to seeing the Murray Whetung Community Service Award. I do thank MPP Smith and all the others who have been involved in working to bring this forward. Thank you for your attention.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, Lieutenant Colonel Clarke, for your presentation.

Now we move to the first round of questioning. The official opposition: MPP Shaw, go ahead.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'm going to start with you, Lieutenant Colonel. My brother-in-law is a lieutenant colonel in the US Air Force, so when I say "lef-tenant" to him, I get in trouble, and when I say "loo-tenant" up here, I get in trouble. So, I'm working on making sure that I get it correct.

Did you say—was I not paying attention?—that Murray Whetung spoke truth to power directly to the prince?

Lieutenant Colonel Henry Clarke: Yes.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: That is a story you need to share with us.

Lieutenant Colonel Henry Clarke: He called out none other than Prince Edward. He happens to be our Colonel-in-Chief so he was present at the event, and Murray was speaking on behalf of all veterans to provide a prayer. But he went right into the issues of First Nations and laid it out in front of the royal prince.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: As he should. I mean, that's exactly the ear that he needs to be bending, if you ask me. And I think that's part of your deputation here and part of this committee. It's quite a visual, by the way.

I'm going to share a story with you. My father-in-law flew in a Lancaster bomber; he was a tail gunner. He was blinded. When they came back, they went to Parliament Hill. The Queen was coming there, and they were so disappointed with the treatment of them as the war blinded

at the time, they all turned their backs and faced the other way when the Queen came. When they were scolded for it, they went, "Well, we're blind. We didn't know we were facing the wrong way." It was a message to say that they expected to be treated better when they came back from overseas. In fact, what's now the CNIB started with the World War II war blinded as well, so their advocacy resulted in some programs that we count on to this day.

I wanted to maybe ask if you could just—and I've been asking this question a lot today, so my colleagues have been hearing me say this a lot: I think this is an important award. We, the official opposition, support this award wholeheartedly. We spoke in favour in the Legislature and we're speaking in favour now, so I think it's an important award.

1520

But I also see it as a unique and important opportunity to expand the conversation to what truth and reconciliation would look like. I've said this many times today. This award, in some measure, will atone for the injustices of the past. But can you see a way in which this award will help people to understand and move toward that reconciling or addressing some of the injustices that are currently happening in Indigenous communities across this province and across this country?

Lieutenant Colonel Henry Clarke: Absolutely. Every time we improve communication, we provide an opportunity to deal with the issues of the past and prevent them in the future. I would envision, from what I've seen done, that this award is most likely a plaque with the winner's name being put on it. The obvious presenter should be a representative of a local First Nation, whether that would be Chief Knott from Curve Lake or Chief Carr from Hiawatha or simply someone who's able to attend that understands. But that's an opportunity to be seen, to be understood and to be able to speak and interact. So it's another way of building bridges.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: That's great. I've never thought of this; my understanding of the bill—maybe I can ask MPP Smith a point of clarification. This is an award. It's important for this community. It's an award for all communities across Ontario. Is that correct, or is it just this community? I may have misunderstood. Is it cadets all across Ontario—through you, Chair?

Mr. Dave Smith: The idea of the award is that it would be given to a cadet in every single corps or squadron across the province.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes. So that's the magnitude of it. I wanted to make sure that you knew that this has such huge potential, because it will be awarded all across Ontario, including in my community of Hamilton. I have a second round. I have to do a lot of questions, so get ready, because we had a good conversation earlier.

I want to thank you for being here, and I want to thank you absolutely for your service. Having a lineage that goes back to the Duke of Wellington is unbelievable. So maybe, after this, I'll just bend your ear a little bit about some of those traditions you had. Because even before you went to Great Britain, even in Canada, we had the Seven Years'

War; we had the War of 1812; we've had the Fenian raids, which everyone seems to forget about. So there's a lot here in Canada as well.

Lieutenant Colonel Henry Clarke: I teach regimental history. Be careful of what you ask for.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: This is an aside. Sorry, Chair, but I am very interested in the fallout of the War of 1812 and how some of the settlement of that actually had a huge impact on Indigenous communities. We can talk about the Treaty of Ghent, when they settled the War of 1812, and how Indigenous people were not well represented there. I'm looking forward to picking your brain. It sounds like you have a lot of knowledge to share. Thank you for being here.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Now we move to the independent member. MPP Schreiner, go ahead.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you both for presenting. I now want to ask you questions about the history of the 11th Field Artillery Regiment in Guelph, but I know that's not why we're here today, Lieutenant Colonel Clarke. But I am curious, especially given your family's rich history and your obvious love of history, just some of the messages that you can imagine or envision being delivered to cadets when they're told about the opportunity to win this award and to the community when the awards are granted to the deserving cadet.

Lieutenant Colonel Henry Clarke: I would assume that the message that will be the most delivered is "service before self," to teach the cadets the importance of their community, the importance of doing for others and to really give back. Teamwork is so important. It's a fundamental essence of the military ethos. But all of those things come together as taught to the cadets and absorbed from them and giving back to the community years later. I would see those things as being very fundamental to it.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate that. I'm a big service-before-self kind of person, and so I deeply appreciate that.

Captain Brown, I was going to ask you the same question. What would you envision the message being delivered to cadets through this particular award?

Mr. Rick Brown: Number one would be the proper explanation and the proper story on him and why we're doing it. I think it would really speak volumes, and I'd certainly look forward to finding the end results.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: When you say "the story," I'm assuming the story of the experience of Indigenous people who served in the Canadian Armed Forces?

Mr. Rick Brown: All of it, but especially what the particular bill says about the individual and the whole history—not just part of it, but the whole thing, so they have a full understanding of what it's all about.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm going to do one final question on this round. I was actually talking to MPP Smith about this over lunch, that sometimes people say, "Why do you name an award after an individual?" Because there are many heroes out there, many individuals out there. I think today we've heard some pretty compelling reasons why this particular individual, Murray Whetung, would have an

award named after him. But I'm just curious, given what you just said, Captain Brown, about your thoughts on Murray Whetung and his life story and this award.

Mr. Rick Brown: Most definitely. That's what it's all about. They have to know the history and the reason or it doesn't make sense.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate that. Lieutenant Colonel, would you like to comment on that as well?

Lieutenant Colonel Henry Clarke: Sure. We do it all the time. In fact, some of them have been there so long we forget. The Stanley Cup—Lord Stanley—is a simple example. It's a way of ensuring the people are remembered and the tradition of their giving of themselves is passed on. The military teaches you by teaching regimental history, which I do all the time. You can endure things, you can do things that you think are unendurable when you know that the people who served before you did the same thing. If you teach someone citizenship, if you teach them teamwork, you teach them community service. They can realize and be inspired by those who went before them. So by putting Murray's name there—and I knew him personally—it's a way of personalizing that dedication, that effort, rather than a name that just does not bring anything forward—you know, "the community service award." But "Murray Whetung," that says something.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate that.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you very much. The time is up.

We move to the government side. MPP Flack, the floor is yours.

Mr. Rob Flack: Thank you, gentlemen, for coming today—very much appreciated. Like MPP Shaw, I'd love to sit down and listen and learn more. Perhaps you can let us know sometime you have a lecture going on or where you're teaching at. I'll come and take MPP Smith, and we'll sit down and listen and learn. I love listening about the history, the traditions and the stories that are being told.

And so, again, it comes to earlier questions I've asked: How do we take this tremendous history, this legacy—oral, visual, through social media, however, whatever—to go to our youth to understand that volunteerism matters, it's important, and that it can lead to a wonderful career in the armed services, the Armed Forces of this nation? To both.

Lieutenant Colonel Henry Clarke: Should I go first or you?

Mr. Rick Brown: I'll go. I believe that he mentioned it earlier. Had you been to the airport on June 4 where we did a tri-service ceremony—it was called the annual review. There were the air cadets, the sea cadets and the army cadets. If you'd have seen how they all—it was the first time they ever did it—marched together at the same time, it was remarkable. All the people watching—we had a lot of people come up afterwards and ask, "How do I get involved?" It was unbelievable.

Mr. Rob Flack: How many people were there?

Mr. Rick Brown: It was approximately 100 cadets on parade, and I'd say there were 300 to 400 spectators, an

which was mostly parents and guardians and people like that. But there were a lot of people, because it was such a big area, who just came along or happened to be there for another reason.

1530

Lieutenant Colonel Henry Clarke: You're talking about naming an award after a First Nations member. I personally don't think there's a community in this country that remembers its history better than the First Nations. I mentioned Chief Knott, who talked about his great-great-great-grandfather answering the call in the War of 1812, and he talked about him as if it was yesterday. The memory was right there. The First Nations people value oral tradition, oral history, and they will pass it on. By giving them the opportunity to—"Murray Whetung, here's what it's about, here it is"—they will ensure that people know, and they will take great pride in it and they will talk about it.

Mr. Rob Flack: But to my point earlier—and I understand, I'm learning more—I respectfully submit, I'm not so sure our youth of today are into the oral tradition. It is more this and the computers. So how do we make that oral tradition part of the modern-day communication? Because I think there's a real link there. Agree?

Mr. Rick Brown: During COVID, there was no training. We had to do it that way, and I'm telling you, it was amazing how well the cadets learned and educated each other through that system, through Zoom. Let's do it. That's what everybody else is doing. If we have to do it that way, we have to do it that way.

Lieutenant Colonel Henry Clarke: I understand exactly what you're talking about. I've got a son and daughter-in-law and now a granddaughter.

The military is different. They're not so hepped up on the phone and they're far more about their history and their traditions. So those who have chosen to join are already predisposed to want to learn and understand and, more than that, to remember. That's why we go out of our way to teach our history, to explain who our heroes were.

My regiment has First Nations heroes in it, men who won medals for heroism in Italy, as an example. Our badges reflect First Nations history, and those are the ways of tying it together. You can instill pride, you can teach discipline, and all of those things make them forget the phone and remember the stories.

Mr. Rob Flack: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you. Any further questions? Two minutes and 35 seconds. MPP Smith.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thanks, Chair. I appreciate that.

Interjection: Did you have a cookie?

Mr. Dave Smith: Yes, I had to have a cookie and a bit of water. I had a tickle in my throat.

Henry, we have known each other for a number of years, but I have a bit of trouble referring to you as lieutenant colonel because I've known you for as long as I have. You're wearing two medals today as you've come in. Most people don't know what each of those medals represent, so the first thing I'm going to ask is, could you

explain what the two medals are that you're wearing? And then could you talk about how when you're wearing that in public, people recognize it and what they say to you and how that leads to discussions?

Lieutenant Colonel Henry Clarke: There was a time when just about every person in this country recognized service medals. Now, very few do, but they will ask. I have two. My father had a row about like this.

The first one is for service. The slang in the Armed Forces is it's awarded for 12 years of undetected crime because you have to have a clean disciplinary record in order to receive it, and everybody does something, so you just simply didn't get caught. The bars to it are an additional 10 years of service. They say I had 27 altogether.

The next one is the Queen's Jubilee Medal, which I received for overall public service: the Armed Forces, my time at city council and other things that I volunteer with.

Mr. Dave Smith: So when you wear those out in public, people do approach you and ask you about it. You have an opportunity to talk about that. This award, if we're able to get it across the finish line with the federal government and have it as something that can be worn on a cadet's uniform, would then present an opportunity for that cadet to talk about the story and the history that we're also trying to convey on that. Is that something that you see as being beneficial to the general public and to others, to convey that story?

Lieutenant Colonel Henry Clarke: If it is more than just a plaque that is brought out of an office once a year, then yes, the opportunity is there. The Legion presents a special medal. I'm not an expert on cadets. I'm sorry.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you. The time is up. We'll move to the second round of questioning and MPP Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question will be to you, Captain Brown. We had a great conversation. We talked about Simcoe, and I happened to mention to you the current MPP, Bobbi Ann Brady, and how she's a very effective MPP. You shared and told me this great story, very appropriate for this, that you had worked with the previous MPP, Toby Barrett, and Bobbi Ann Brady on a bill that established the first week of October as cadets week. Do you want to share a little bit of that work and what that meant to you and your tradition of service?

Mr. Rick Brown: I'm the president of the Army Cadet League for Ontario. My first vice-president, Charlene Orrell, comes to me and says, "I want to make a cadet week. How do we go about it?" Well, your guess is as good as mine, but I've got a friend. My friend is Toby Barrett. Toby and I have been friends—we were in the regiment together. I called up Toby and that started it. Bobbi Ann Brady at that time was his secretary, and a year later we had the bill passed. As I showed you, the proclamation was a lot of work, but it was well worth it.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I agree. You shared—these are your materials here. I'm going to just read from, if that's okay?

Mr. Rick Brown: Yes, it is.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: One of the things it says is, the mission is to create “a long overdue Ontario annual recognition period (cadet week) to honour the leadership, support personnel and cadet learners, fully supported by government, major corporations and the citizens of Ontario.” It’s my understanding that the first cadets week was celebrated this past October; is that correct?

Mr. Rick Brown: Yes. It’s the first week of October every year now.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Was that a private member’s bill?

Mr. Rick Brown: Yes, it was. Bill 45 it was.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, okay—look at you, very good.

I think why I’m asking you this, and I’m glad that you shared this with me—what I want to say is that this bill that MPP Smith put forward is important. It’s important to recognize service of our veterans and also to encourage cadets. It’s also really important that we have named it after Murray Whetung in order to acknowledge the Indigenous contribution and some of the experiences they’ve had since contact.

Mr. Rick Brown: That’s correct.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: So it’s important here. We’re here to take this bill—and we’ve travelled it, which is unusual. We’ve come right here to Peterborough, all of us, and our work here is to listen to deputants and to make this bill better if we hear from deputants that there could potentially be improvements in this bill.

We’ve heard a number of times people say that Junior Canadian Rangers is a group that have been included or should potentially be included. If you look at cadets week, it identifies the cadets, but it doesn’t include, at this point, the Junior Canadian Rangers. Are you familiar with that organization, and do you think that maybe this bill could be used as an opportunity to acknowledge them as well?

Mr. Rick Brown: I do. They’re under our umbrella of a cadet, but they’re mostly in the—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Far North?

Mr. Rick Brown: —Far North, yes. It’s kind of a unique group. They’re very specialized in what they do.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Right. And do they have like corps the same way that—I know it’s not your expertise, but—

Mr. Rick Brown: I’m really not that familiar with them—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, okay. I appreciate that.

Deputants today have said that there’s primarily or there’s a majority of those participants who, because of where they are in the Far North Indigenous communities, are Indigenous youth who are participating in this program, and in the spirit of being represented—Indigenous people need to be seen and represented. It’s my feeling that we should make sure that we include them in this bill, and I don’t know how you feel about that.

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Mr. Rick Brown: I can’t believe that they’re left out. They should not be left out. They’re part and parcel. That’s my own personal opinion.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I appreciate that. I also want to congratulate you on—you’re retired now?

Mr. Rick Brown: Yes.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I’m sad to see you didn’t come back to Haldimand–Norfolk, Simcoe. You stayed up here.

Mr. Rick Brown: Well, I worked there for 30 years till I got transferred to Lindsay. I was with the OPP. I retired out of the Lindsay detachment, and I’m still there.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: There you go. Well, thank you very much for your work, and thank you for being here today. It was a pleasure talking to you.

Mr. Rick Brown: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Now we move to the independent member. MPP Schreiner.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Lieutenant Colonel Clarke, I’m going to ask you to follow up a little bit on the conversation you were having around the importance of the public recognition or connection to this award, whether it’s through a medal or some other way, if that could further advance the conversation around community service and honouring Indigenous veterans and furthering the education about our past.

Lieutenant Colonel Henry Clarke: I would think that any opportunity for conversation will do just that. It could really have an impact within the First Nations themselves. Not many join the army, navy or air. I don’t think it’s due to lack of interest, but partially because there’s distance involved, which means they’ve got to get a ride here and home. But just that opportunity to know that they have a hero, that they have people who are valued—because we all know for an awful lot of years there was a real stigma, and that was wrong, and thank God, we’re doing something about that. This is an important step, I think.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate that.

Captain Brown, I was going to ask you, just on the Junior Canadian Rangers—I’m assuming, but I shouldn’t assume. I’m more familiar with cadets because, in Guelph, we have the three cadet branches, but we don’t have the rangers. So, do they have some more award ceremonies and presentations within the rangers than you have in the cadets?

Mr. Rick Brown: I would say so, but I’m not familiar with it. They’re a unique unit that kind of sticks to themselves. They’re there, but they’re not. It’s a specially trained unit to live and survive in the cold weather, in the Arctic.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Right. Okay. But I’m assuming that a community service award for the rangers would be valuable and important as well.

Mr. Rick Brown: Oh, yes.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Okay. I appreciate that. Great.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): And now we move to the government side. Any questions from the government side? MPP Smith.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thanks, Chair. I appreciate that.

For Captain Brown or—and I apologize for not knowing Ms. Orrell’s rank.

Mr. Rick Brown: Charlene Orrell.

Mr. Dave Smith: Just Charlene? She’s not a—

Mr. Rick Brown: She’s first vice-president.

Mr. Dave Smith: Okay. We've repeatedly talked about today what this award should look like and how it should be handed out to cadets. This is coming up because of your work with our former colleague Toby Barrett. There was some conversation around: Should this be done during cadets week in October, should this be something that is a stand-alone award that is done on its own, or is this something that we should have as part of the annual ceremonial review?

It's my belief that the award—the clock is what I refer to it as—starts in September when the new season starts and then culminates in June. If we were to do it in the October cadets week, there is a possibility that a cadet would have graduated or aged out of the program and then not be able to be involved in it. Do you have a preference of what time of year, or do you have a preferred time that you think that this would make the most sense? Should it be during cadets week, should it be an award on its own, or should it be part of the annual ceremonial review at the end of the year?

Mr. Rick Brown: Personally, I think it should be at the annual review because that's when all the parents, that's when all the people are available to go—including yourself, if you go to them. I think that the annual review would be the best time. That's when the other awards are handed out too, so it would be part and parcel. That's my own opinion.

Mr. Dave Smith: Charlene, do you have anything you want to weigh in on that?

Ms. Charlene Orrell: I agree with Mr. Brown. I would definitely say at the annual review, because that's when there's pomp, the parents are there, the media is there. To give it the kind of recognition that they want—to do it during a cadets week would be a great idea. But again, as you said, the cadets are just starting up in September. Depending on the events that the communities are doing, some could be very low-key, some not so much.

So my recommendation would be at the annual review in June or at the end of the cadet training year.

Mr. Dave Smith: The way that the legislation is written, we haven't defined what the requirements are going to be for a cadet to get this. Part of the reason behind it is we recognize that the 330 or so cadet corps squadrons and the junior rangers all have some unique differences. Some of them have larger communities where there's a lot of opportunities for volunteerism. Others have smaller communities where they may not be volunteering as much, but they can have a bigger impact by getting other people to be involved in it.

Do you think that we should be defining very strictly what the criteria are for the award, or should we leave it loosely defined so that each individual corps and squadron can make the decision on which cadet best represents the values that Murray Whetung espoused?

Mr. Rick Brown: As far as defining what it's all about, I think that should be on the government side. As far as the corps go, they would be willing to hand it out with your presence—or whoever; it doesn't need to be the person. I don't think they should have any say in designing it or the criteria. You would know it best. After reading this, there's a lot.

Mr. Dave Smith: We've designed it in a specific way so that we're relaying global criteria. But when you get down to, "Is it the most hours that they have volunteered, or is it the most impact from their volunteerism," the plan is to leave it up to the individual corps or squadron to decide: Should it be who volunteered the most this year, or should it be who had the most impact by their volunteerism?

Sometimes what we see with volunteers, especially with young leaders, is that they're, for lack of a better term, able to rally the troops and bring out more of their colleagues. Should that be weighed greater than someone who just simply shows up to volunteer? That's why we're looking at possibly having the corps and squadrons make that decision on their own.

Mr. Rick Brown: We wouldn't want to say that just because they come now and then—it'd have to be almost 100% coming in.

Mr. Dave Smith: Okay. Thank you.

Chair, how much time do I have left?

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Two minutes and 25 seconds.

Mr. Dave Smith: If none of my other colleagues have things that they want to ask, I have a few others that I'll come up with.

For you, Henry: You're very much a local military historian. I've been to your house. I've seen all the stuff that you have hanging on the walls. I've heard a lot of the stories on things. One of the things that has been very prevalent for a number of my colleagues today is that this has been a learning experience about some of the injustices that were done to First Nations individuals: for example, not being able to be part of the Canadian Legion after the First and Second World Wars. It was later on that a First Nations veteran was permitted to be part of the Legion; it wasn't directly after the war. That was something that was new information to some of my colleagues, not aware that if they were off-reserve for more than four years serving in the Canadian Armed Forces, they had the potential to lose their status as an Indian.

You are a military historian. You would know far more about military history than any of us. Are those things that you were directly aware of, or do we have to do—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute.

Mr. Dave Smith: —a much better job with the education of the history?

Lieutenant Colonel Henry Clarke: Mr. Smith, we need to do a much better job of education—much better.

I can't say that I know any great detail of what went on, but I know that from the Second World War, the most decorated First Nations was a man by the name of Tommy Prince. After the war, when he came home—I'm not going to say here what he said, because it was pretty explicit. He refused to wear his medals because of how he was treated. That should never have happened, and it needs to never happen again.

Stand at a First Nations Remembrance Day—Alderville is a perfect one to go to, because the families gather—and hear the names called out of who served and who didn't come back—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you. The time is up.

Thank you to our panels, virtual and in person, for your presentations and for your services to our country. Thank you, gentlemen.

We will move to the next panel. Is Mr. Reg Niganobe present? He's available. We are waiting for our second witness, Margaret Froh from the Métis Nation of Ontario. We will take a short break until 4 o'clock so that we can give the time for our second witness to join us, because we're a little bit early.

The committee recessed from 1552 to 1601.

ANISHINABEK NATION
MÉTIS NATION OF ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Welcome back. We have Reg Niganobe, the Grand Council Chief of the Anishinabek Nation, in person, and we will have Margaret Froh, Métis Nation of Ontario president and chief executive officer, who will join us virtually.

We will start with Mr. Niganobe. I hope I am saying it properly. Please identify your—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): No, no, we control the mike. They will turn it on automatically.

Please identify yourself. State your name and the organization you're presenting, and you have seven minutes to deliver your presentation. Go ahead.

Grand Council Chief Reg Niganobe: *Remarks in Anishinaabemowin.*

Good afternoon. My name is Reg Niganobe, and I'm the Grand Council Chief of the Anishinabek Nation. Thank you for the invitation to be here today. It is an honour to be at this committee meeting to represent our First Nations and convey our full support of the Murray Whetung Community Service Award Act. This award embodies who Murray Whetung was and his honourable efforts in the military and in his committee of Curve Lake First Nation. From what the community has told us today, of course, as we have noted, it is not uncommon for him to be consistently helping others and going beyond his duties. Despite facing adversity and treatment of inequality during his service, Murray exemplified courage and humility and embodied the qualities of a true Anishinaabe warrior, or "ogichidaa," as we call them.

The First Nations of Anishinabek Nation have seen many of our citizens enter service, proudly representing their communities and committing to the service on behalf of the entire country. We must remember that the Canadian government imposed arbitrary and discriminatory policies on First Nations citizens who chose to provide service in the military—those same citizens who knew heading into it that they would be giving up everything by joining the service due to their understanding of and obligation to the Treaty of Niagara in 1764 or the Royal Proclamation in 1763, which was brought about due to the British seeking peace after one of our Odawa war chiefs had claimed several British forts, of course. Those who

fought in the world wars lost their First Nation status and had to become Canadian citizens in order to serve. Upon their return, their status was not returned and some weren't able to even live in their own communities because of it due to the discrimination of the Indian Act.

This unfortunate piece of history has gravely impacted many families over the course of generations. While colonial and assimilative practices such as this are no longer imposed, the damage that was caused by this is still being felt by communities all these years later. Repatriation is important to us. It is not just returning lost or stolen items; it is also about repatriating those who have been lost to our communities.

We often refer to military service as the ultimate sacrifice, but for First Nation citizens, it really was. Those who joined were sacrificing their lives. Even though many returned alive, our communities have been welcoming back those lost relatives for years, and we continue to support those who are searching for families and communities. This bill is a way for us to reconcile some of that legacy. Acknowledging Murray Whetung for his exemplary service is a step in the right direction towards true, meaningful reconciliation.

There needs to be a heightened effort to recognize how impactful the contributions of First Nation citizens have been in the military throughout our shared history. I say this noting that representation matters. It is important for Indigenous youth to see those like them represented and to know that people who look like them have made significant contributions to the service of Canada.

The Anishinabek Nation itself has a veterans committee which is chaired by northern superior region Deputy Grand Chief Mel Hardy, who also proudly served in the military. Our committee is represented by veterans from our communities and prioritizes advocacy for the recognition and support of veterans in First Nations. This award is very important to them too. They are pleased that this bill is being put forth and look forward to seeing more of this type of recognition efforts throughout our territories. It not only brings honour and a sense of pride, but something meaningful to celebrate amongst each other and with our communities.

It is also a way for Canadians to learn about First Nations' contributions to service efforts throughout the years. This act will not only acknowledge a cadet each year, but also Murray's dedication and service as well. The recognition and celebration of his contributions is incredibly meaningful to the community of Curve Lake and for the entire Anishinabek Nation, all 39 communities that we service.

I would like to thank MPP Dave Smith for championing this effort and advocating for this bill. We encourage the provincial government to implement this bill in honour of the memory of Murray Whetung by supporting this effort to recognize cadets who exemplify volunteerism in their service. Creating camaraderie and encouraging exemplary efforts is incredibly important. Choosing to serve already means that an individual has given up so much. Recognizing their leadership qualities and selfless endeavours is motivating and necessary to maintain morale and show appreciation for the extra effort.

Recognizing the sacrifices of those gone on before and those that choose to serve now creates a connection between the present and our shared history. It is not only an act of reconciliation; it is a true nation-to-nation accomplishment that will benefit many individuals into the future. Meegwetch to the community of Curve Lake and the Whetung family for sharing the legacy of Murray with us. We hope the province of Ontario will join us in solidifying his legacy in this incredibly meaningful way.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, Chief Niganobe.

Now we move to our virtual deputant. We have Margaret Froh, from Métis Nation of Ontario. Is she connected?

Ms. Margaret Froh: I am. I am here. Can you hear me?

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Hi. Can you identify yourself and the organization you represent? Then, you have seven minutes to make your deputation.

Ms. Margaret Froh: *Remarks in Michif.*

Good afternoon, everyone.

Remarks in Michif.

My name is Margaret Froh. I am the president of the Métis Nation of Ontario, the democratically elected government representing rights-bearing Métis citizens and communities here in Ontario. It is my pleasure to speak today in support of Bill 31, Murray Whetung Community Service Award Act. I wanted to also thank MPP Dave Smith for the sponsorship of this bill and the invitation to come and address all of you, members of the Standing Committee on the Interior. Maarsii. Thank you for this invitation.

I also have to pass on regrets from Métis veteran Brian Prairie, who is the president of the Métis Nation of Ontario's veterans' council and who was scheduled to appear today, but is dealing with a family emergency.

I want to speak briefly to the strength and dedication of veterans. The Métis Nation of Ontario is proud to recognize and support our veterans—indeed, all Indigenous veterans. I want to acknowledge them here and thank them for their service.

As the proposed updated preamble of the bill addresses, Indigenous people in Canada—First Nations, Métis, Inuit—turned out in great numbers to serve in the First and Second World Wars, only to return to Canada where they were treated poorly, where they weren't provided the same assistance as other returning soldiers, where they were denied the supports, resources and benefits that were routinely given to non-Indigenous veterans.

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Many were discriminated against by Veterans Affairs Canada and denied an economic foundation to rebuild their lives on returning home. Many struggled to reintegrate into civilian life following the war. In spite of all of that, many of those continued to give back through community service throughout their lives, and we just heard the Grand Council Chief speak to that.

For the Métis, this injustice was not addressed until September 2019 when the Honourable Lawrence

MacAulay, the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, issued a formal apology on behalf of the Canadian federal government, finally recognizing the contributions and sacrifices of Métis World War II veterans. Through a negotiated settlement with Canada, \$30 million was set aside for recognition of Métis World War II veterans and to commemorate Métis veterans' contributions, which are many.

To date, we have made presentations to 85 Métis World War II veterans or their surviving spouses across the Métis Nation and 23 of those have been right here in Ontario. It's been my absolute honour to participate in those presentations and ceremonies. Sadly, about half of the Métis World War II veterans that we have presented to here in Ontario in the past few years have since passed on, so we're continuing to do the work of honouring Métis veterans under the Métis Nation's Métis Veterans Legacy Program.

I speak to all of that to say our Métis veterans have, over the years, partnered with and developed very deep relationships with our Métis youth, including our MNO Youth Council. Through the work that they've been doing with our young people, they've been creating opportunities for veterans to spend time with young people, sharing stories and knowledge, and that includes with Métis youth who are involved with cadet and junior ranger programs. Métis youth have long been recognized for their leadership within the Métis Nation, not just historically by young leaders like Cuthbert Grant and Louis Riel, who you've probably heard about, but also for young leaders today. Our youth are not just leaders of the future, they are leaders today within our nation.

There are 304 cadet and junior ranger units within Ontario, and I understand that these are comprised of nearly 16,000 youth in this province. These young cadets do some outstanding work in the community. They're provided opportunities to develop leadership skills and organizational skills to better themselves and their communities, to help out in times of need and, indeed, many of those people who participate in cadets go on to serve within the Canadian Armed Forces. Still more go on to study in universities and colleges and many aspire to become leaders within their communities.

I can speak to this from my own personal experience, having been a member of a Royal Canadian Air Cadets squadron in rural Saskatchewan for six years in my youth. While I ultimately decided against pursuing a Canadian Forces Regular Officer Training Plan, I did go on to post-secondary education. I went on to graduate studies and I've carried with me throughout my career the skills, the experiences, the knowledge and the confidence that cadets helped give me in my youth. I've drawn on those often throughout my career, through my undergrad and my return to university to study law; through my community volunteer work locally, provincially and nationally; through roles like president of the Indigenous Bar Association in Canada. I've drawn on that in my work as an educator, both as adjunct faculty at my law school, but also at the Banff Centre, where I continue to teach Indigenous

leadership and management today. All of that has contributed to what I bring in my current role as an elected leader within my nation, the Métis Nation.

For me, cadets played a formative role in my life. It helped me build leadership skills. It helped me understand what it means to be a part of something bigger than myself—and I already had that, being one of eight children in my family. But it underscored lessons that I learned from my parents, understanding the importance of volunteerism, civic engagement, service to community. So creating awards at each cadet squadron to recognize young cadets for demonstrating exceptional citizenship and volunteerism within their community and their corps will help build up young, committed community leaders, and promoting and supporting committed young community leaders is something that benefits all of our communities, not just locally, but across the province and across the country.

I can't think of a more wonderful legacy for Signalman Murray MacKenzie Whetung and for all Indigenous veterans who have given so much to our country and to their communities. That is why, members of the committee, I am here to speak in support of this bill today. Thank you. Maarsii.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Now we move to the first round of questioning, and we will start with the opposition. MPP Shaw, do you have any questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Certainly. Thank you very much, Chair.

And thank you very much to both of you for deputing here today and especially, I would have to say, Grand Council Chief—you've been here all day. So congratulations; I think you get the prize for that. We're here because we have to be.

Something that you said in your deputation here today was “representation matters,” and I think that's what this award is about. I have said each time that we in the official opposition are fully in support of this award. We have been honoured to hear about Murray Whetung and his family and his contribution, and we certainly recognize the people who have served our country and come before us. We support this award, and it is a form of representation.

I just want to share with you, though—and I have said this before, but in our official opposition, we have two MPPs who represent Indigenous communities. Sol Mamakwa represents a far-north First Nations community, Kiiwetinoong—he always corrects my pronunciation, but I think it means “the north” in Oji-Cree. We have MPP Guy Bourgouin, who identifies as Métis, and previous former MPP Suze Morrison was an urban Indigenous woman. We've learned much from them in our caucus.

I wanted to share that I have learned also from our former Speaker, the Honourable Dave Levac, who is a proud Métis. They get official portraits, just like the Premier. In his official portrait unveiling, he was wearing, I think it's called, the ceinture fléchée—is that how you pronounce it?—proudly wearing it to identify himself with his Métis heritage.

So in the Legislature, we're coming along. We also have the Seven Grandfather Teachings carving that was just unveiled. And very recently Garden River First Nation came to Queen's Park. They had a smudging ceremony and a drumming ceremony. And at the same time, the Royal Ontario Museum came and repatriated a 200-year-old pipe that belonged to that community.

So representation matters, and we need to improve on that. But you also talked a little bit about repatriation. It's not just artifacts. I imagine that you're speaking about people and graves that we're finding across the province of Ontario. Somewhere in there between improving representation but also needing to right the wrongs through repatriation, can you speak to how this bill is a starting point, an important opportunity to move on all those pieces?

Grand Council Chief Reg Niganobe: This bill is a starting point in acknowledging the contributions of Indigenous people and acknowledging that they did have a different way of life and a certain way of living up to their obligations. Like I had mentioned, the Treaty of Niagara—that's the reason why they joined the War of 1812; that's probably the reason why these gentlemen or women joined the military at this time, to be able to serve in that way. “Ogichidaag” is what we call them. Ogichidaag don't seek out conflict. They don't go looking for conflict, but they do it as a sense of protection and a need to protect: protect your community, protect your values, protect your forms of government. That's what they were doing.

This is a start in that direction of acknowledging those sorts of things and hopefully moving on to further acknowledging and repatriating the governments of the First Nations that existed here previously and their chosen way of acknowledging their governments and their chosen governance systems, whether it be a clan system or any form of traditional governance that they prefer.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: That's right. You mentioned nation-to-nation relationships, and that's what we try—or I try to understand. We try as an NDP caucus, the official opposition caucus, to understand what that means and what those obligations are for us as well to respect.

I just want to say I've learned a lot about—through sitting as an MPP and through the challenges that First Nations communities face currently. A lot of times when our MPPs and others bring up the issue of the safe drinking water crisis and even things like Attawapiskat, those are communities where they have tragic fires where people die and they really simply don't have access to a fire truck, for example. These are things that we as legislators have an obligation, in my opinion, to correct. But I often find that what happens is we talk about—what comes up in the Legislature is jurisdiction: “It's not our responsibility. It's somebody else's responsibility.” In the meantime, generations of kids grow up and never, never turn on the tap and drink clean water.

Would you mind or are you interested in talking a little bit about respecting treaties? The province of Ontario is a signatory to Treaty 9. They're the crown, and they signed Treaty 9. In my neck of the woods, it's the Six Nations of

the Grand River, and they're still talking about the Haldimand tract proclamation, where those lands were proclaimed. If you go the Legislature, you can see Governor Haldimand's name carved in stone in the Legislature. Can you talk a little bit about how we can move respectfully as a Legislature to recognize our obligation as a province when it comes to treaties that we have undertaken?

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Grand Council Chief Reg Niganobe: I would say that as a province, there is an obligation to the treaties. Perhaps you don't see yourself as necessarily the signatories to some of the pre-Confederation treaties, but the responsibilities that were delegated to you at that time are still very much intact within those treaties and the spirit and intent of those treaties, because it comes all in relation to the land. A lot of it is in relation to the land and the land rights held by Indigenous people, and should still be held by Indigenous people and viewed in that manner, but the treaty was in the intent to share, to respect each other's forms of governance and the split in the governance. Hopefully, one day we'll return to that. I would really very much appreciate that.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you. I appreciate you being here today. Is there anything you wanted to add? I mean, I'm asking you the questions, but you had only seven minutes. Is there anything that we've been asking today—particularly myself—that you think we're on the right track, or whether there are things that we have omitted in our discussion today that are important for us to talk about?

Grand Council Chief Reg Niganobe: I think we have a long way to go, but we're on the right track. We always have to start somewhere, as was mentioned earlier, so we can keep going down this path. I hope for more engagement, more inclusion, more discussion in this matter.

Of course, there are plenty of Indigenous veterans that we don't talk about. We haven't even mentioned Francis Pegahmagabow today. We haven't mentioned Tecumseh, Pontiac; even within the Anishinabek Nation—he just recently passed—Joe Endanawas. We have several people that we would like to recognize, acknowledging this bill is a good start to that, because perhaps those names can start coming up for our First Nation youth to be able to see that there are important—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you very much. The time is up for the official opposition.

We move to the independent member now. MPP Schreiner, the floor is yours.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you, Chair. Through you to both of our presenters: Thank you very much for taking the time to be here today. Grand Council Chief Niganobe, you have been here all day today. I've been very impressed with the fact that—not very many folks who are the last presenter sit through the very first presenter, so I appreciate that.

You said something in your remarks that I've been thinking about all day, so I really appreciated it and I wanted to ask you to elaborate on it. I'm going to preface

it by saying over 7,000 Indigenous people fought for Canada in World War I and World War II, and they returned home and experienced a huge amount of discrimination really driven by racism, if we're going to be honest about it. The effect that had on families—you brought that up in your remarks—I'm going to assume those effects are still felt today. I'm just wondering if maybe you can elaborate a bit on that for us.

Grand Council Chief Reg Niganobe: I think a little bit of it is the impacts of, say, the loss of status. They may have regained status at some point, but for some families, that's still a division in the loss of status, loss of identity, loss of who they were, whether it be a disconnect for a short period of time or a longer period of time from their First Nation. I mentioned them not being able to return back to their First Nation due to the implications of the Indian Act. You must be an Indian to reside on the reserve, especially at that time. Those have negative impacts on them, so a family feels that. And should they move away from there or end up coming back or whatever the situation may be—it's not the ideal situation. There's a break in generation and there's a break in the problems there, and it manifests itself in many different ways.

It's not isolated to just this, of course. There are several systemic barriers that create this, the Indian Act being the biggest one, of course, and the stifling of economic development by it. Those are the impacts that it has over the long term.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: As you talk about that, I also want to—President Froh from the Métis Nation, I would ask you to respond to this as well, because it came up in your remarks.

I've talked to a number of families who talk about when their parent or grandparent returned from World War II, in particular, and the amount of support, particularly in housing and education, that the family received, and what a difference it made economically and for the wealth of their family. A number of Indigenous veterans didn't receive that kind of support. What have been the economic implications for those families not receiving that kind of support when they returned home? Maybe you can start, and then we'll go online.

Ms. Margaret Froh: I appreciate that, and I appreciate the question as well. I do want to also say that, unfortunately, I'm doubled-booked for this time slot, so I'm going to have to jump off in a moment. But thank you for the question.

I think this actually was the experience of all Indigenous folks that returned from the war: First Nations, Métis and for those Inuit who served as well. They did not have the support that they were promised, frankly, that all those who signed up were promised. That has had a significant impact on all of our communities, I would argue, so I think your point around the economic foundation that was promised that was never provided and the longstanding impacts of that is a very, very good one.

When I mentioned the settlement with regard to addressing that issue for Métis veterans, that only came four years ago. I recognize that the settlement that finally

gave recognition—rightly so—to First Nations veterans happened a bit longer ago. But in—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you. The time is up.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Sorry, I'll have a second—

Ms. Margaret Froh: Pardon me?

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): A second—

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'll have a second round. I can ask later.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): We move to the government side. MPP Smith, go ahead.

Mr. Dave Smith: Margaret, it's fantastic to see you. You look absolutely wonderful. I can't say that enough. I know it will be a little bit of an inside joke, but I love your hairdo.

Ms. Margaret Froh: Thank you. I have hair now.

Mr. Dave Smith: I know you have to leave, so I'm going to start with questions for you. When we first introduced this bill, it was specifically around First Nations. We wanted to make sure that we weren't doing something that was going to be disrespectful to anyone. Most people don't understand the difference between First Nations, Indigenous, Métis, Inuit and so on. Could you provide a little bit of background on that? When you're referring to "First Nations," when you're referring to "Indigenous," when you're referring to "Métis" or "Inuit," what are the subtle differences between them?

Ms. Margaret Froh: Well, they're not so subtle, really. We are distinct peoples. Our constitution in this country recognizes the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, and that includes First Nations, it includes Métis and it includes Inuit as distinct peoples within this country. The use of the term "Aboriginal" under the constitution is one thing. I think typically today people are using the term "Indigenous" as sometimes meaning "First Nations," sometimes encapsulating all Indigenous peoples. The language matters. I appreciate you asking the question.

I think it's fabulous that this bill is named in honour of Murray MacKenzie Whetung. I think that's fantastic. He is one of many Indigenous veterans. He's a First Nations veteran. There are also Métis veterans, and there are some Inuit veterans, as well, who returned home from the war and didn't have those supports that were referenced earlier, who weren't actually recognized for their contributions, hence the importance of just using that specific language in the work that you're doing, recognizing all of the Indigenous peoples who served.

Again, I think it's a wonderful legacy for Signalman Whetung and for all of those Indigenous veterans who served our country so well and, in fact, returned to so little.

Mr. Dave Smith: I greatly appreciate that. I'm going to come back to you for one more question. As we were going through the process of investigation on this bill, we discovered that there were a number of Métis veterans who had volunteered for the US Marines, yet they lived in Ontario, they lived in Manitoba, they lived in Quebec. We discovered that there were a number of First Nation individuals, specifically in the Niagara region, the Six Nations region, who also volunteered for the US army, the

US Marines and the US Air Force. We discovered that there were some Inuit veterans who joined the British Armed Forces—not anyone from North America.

1630

We've been trying to find a way to make sure that we encapsulate as many Indigenous communities as possible. But recognizing that we are in the Ontario jurisdiction, we are not necessarily able to recognize someone who has served in the US Armed Forces or in the British Armed Forces. I'm using that as a preface because I want to make sure that everyone who is involved with this process knows that we took a look at every possible opportunity. We wanted to make sure that we weren't putting ourselves in a position where we were inadvertently offending someone by not being able to include them.

I do have a proposed amendment that we will put forward. There is a possibility, though, that it could be ruled out of order because of our procedural things. I just wanted to give you the heads-up on that, that it's not that we wouldn't want to do something to make sure that we are recognizing as many Indigenous veterans as possible; it's that there is a possibility, through procedure, that we may not be able to do it. But I give you my word that we will find a way to recognize all Indigenous veterans as we move forward.

Ms. Margaret Froh: Yes, thank you. Maarsii.

There is a strong tradition of service within and among the Métis and, I know, with other Indigenous peoples as well, dating back even as far as the War of 1812. I think it would be wonderful if that respect can be shown for all Indigenous veterans. So, I appreciate those comments.

Mr. Dave Smith: How much time do we have left, Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Two minutes and 49 seconds.

Mr. Dave Smith: Over to you, to Chief Niganobe: The Anishinabek Nation has been very supportive of this from the very beginning. I've had numerous conversations with regional Deputy Grand Chief Hardy on this. One of the challenges that we will face—going back to the jurisdictional Ping-Pong, as some people refer to it—is Cadets Canada is the governing body and we are in Ontario. In order for this to be something that could be put on the cadet uniform, we'll have to work with all of the provinces to do it.

I know the answer to this, but I'm happy to have you weigh in on it: Will we be able to count on the support of the veterans' committee to work with the other veterans' committees in other provinces so that this could be something that is put on the cadet uniform across all cadets in Canada?

Grand Council Chief Reg Niganobe: I think you can count on the support of the Anishinabek Nation itself to be able to help do that and achieve that across the entire nation, in meeting with our friends, our relatives and the other First Nations—and helping them lobby too, with the rest of their provinces to be able to get this done. I would agree.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you. How much time is left, Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute and 20 seconds.

Mr. Dave Smith: One of the other things that has been emphasized to me is that in First Nation culture, the stories are passed down as oral stories. Traditionally, in non-Native and non-Indigenous communities, it is something that is written. Do you see value, then, in having us do video interviews with Indigenous veterans and having a YouTube channel where we would be able to post those videos and then share that information with the cadets who win the awards, so that they have someone from a First Nation near them that they could relate to?

Grand Council Chief Reg Niganobe: Absolutely. I would totally agree. It is the modern media that we use now, so yes, the more options, the better. As past-Chief Whetung had mentioned, TikTok is an excellent way to get the message across very quickly, in three minutes or less. But yes, those are definitely appreciated and definitely endorsed. We do that now; we do embrace storytelling in that way now, so more than likely, yes.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm going to defer the rest of the time, because we probably have about 30 seconds left, to the second round. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Six seconds—okay, thank you very much.

We move to the second round. MPP Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Grand Council Chief, without being too nerdy today, I would like to share with you that I've currently just finished reading a book by Pierre Berton. Do you remember Pierre Berton? He was a historian. He's like kind of the ultimate white-guy historian. I don't know how to describe it. It was about the War of 1812. Through his eyes, I learned that even in that instance, First Nations fought on both sides and they were both abandoned, if you will, at the Treaty of Ghent, which is when they promised to make the First Nations a nation at the end of the war. That didn't happen.

After you read the whole history of the War of 1812 and how brutal it was, to see at the end of it how abandoned the allies and the Indigenous nations that fought on either side were—just discarded, if you will—it made me think. I looked and I cannot find an Indigenous, First Nations perspective of that war. I'm still looking to see an analysis, because you know how you said representation matters; well, the interpretation of history also matters, and so I'm struggling to find something that will help me understand it from that perspective. There's my thing that I wanted to share with you.

You brought up the War of 1812, and you brought up treaties from very long ago that still continue to impact First Nations' lived experience today. But what I want to ask you is, you talked about how Tecumseh obviously played a key role as a peace broker, a negotiator and a statesperson in that time—a hero. You mentioned some other names. Can you just quickly share the history of those names? Because I had not heard of some of those other veterans that you talked about?

Grand Council Chief Reg Niganobe: As very quickly as I can, I would recommend Dr. Alan Corbiere to you, and learning more about his work and his studies. He might have been able to shed a bit more light for you for Tecumseh, his travels through Canada and rounding up the nations around the Great Lakes and those who contributed, such as Mookomaanish, who went down to fight in the War of 1812. You might get some more gleaned history from there, and you might actually learn names of several warriors who went to fight and collected medals from the British afterwards, and had those in their communities up until—I think they had one found, returned and repatriated not too long ago, so those sorts of things are still carried on to this day.

But in terms of the others, Joe Endanawas, as was mentioned over here where we have First Nations individuals who go over to the United States to join the military there—that's what Joe did. As a dual citizen, he was able to do that. I mentioned Pontiac, of course, and even mentioning Pontiac and Tecumseh, both of those individuals, although you might view them as American as divided by the line, did speak Anishinaabemowin and totally understood what was being spoken around the Great Lakes here. They had the interactions with us, and that's why we fought in the War of 1812, because they were willing to come here and gather up forces in that manner.

That's what we did historically, and those who wanted to go would go. They weren't forced to go. Even that's another layer of the history, to understand that Murray, in going, was being true to his roots and going because he wanted to go, not because he was forced to go, made to go or anything along those lines.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You did such an amazing job, putting 200 years of history in the context of why we're here today to support this important award. I want to thank you for that. Thank you very much. As an aside, you're going to write the name of that gentleman and I'm sure I'm going to see if they have it in the legislative library. If they don't have it in the legislative library, I'm going to order a copy so that we can all learn from that. Thank you very much.

Grand Council Chief Reg Niganobe: Meegwetch.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): We move now to the independent member. MPP Schreiner, the floor is yours.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Chief Niganobe, I'm going to ask you to maybe answer the question I asked previously. I think it's an important one, actually, when we think about this award. Particularly from a financial perspective, those Indigenous veterans who came back didn't receive the same benefits that non-Indigenous veterans received. What has been the lasting legacy of that? I can't tell you how many people I talk to who say, "Our family got our economic foundation, oftentimes, because of benefits coming after World War II especially." Anyway, just your thoughts on that?

1640

Grand Council Chief Reg Niganobe: Yes, I imagine they could have done really well, but I imagine if we went

back in time, we'd find there was a lot of bureaucratic red tape, and I would imagine that's what—we still experience it today; like you heard, the jurisdictional Ping-Pong ball in these sorts of things. Those are real things that still happen today, so hopefully we can leave that legacy behind sooner rather than later and communities can grow the way they should have, like was intended here if they had received all the benefits that they could have possibly received.

Another thing that we don't talk about, and it's sad enough to see: If they were forced from their communities and not able to go to their communities, historically, there is—like I had mentioned, “ogichidaag” is our warriors. But they go for protection. They go for that purpose. They're not seeking conflict in that way, to just look for a fight; they go looking to protect. When they come back to their communities, there is a way of welcoming, in a ceremony to welcome back, ogichidaag back to the community, where you bring them back into the community with love and reintegrate them back into society.

It sounds like that's what took place with Murray here. It sounds like he was a very upstanding citizen when he came back, and very much loved by his family, despite some of the stories we may have heard about his responses to Chief Whetung having a successful water lawsuit go through—he said, “Good job.” But obviously he was surrounded with love by his family, and that's what we would do with our warriors when they returned. They would be reintegrated back into society and they wouldn't face as much PTSD and all these other troubles that they may face now.

That may have been another offshoot of generational legacy that was missed by these individuals who returned. That's a little bit of history for you.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: And if we all decide we're going to pass this bill—I hope we do—do you think that's an opportunity to have those kinds of conversations, especially, I'm thinking, at the awards ceremonies and as cadets talk about the meaning of the award, for the recipients especially?

Grand Council Chief Reg Niganobe: I would hope so. I would welcome that. That would be excellent to hear. I'd love to hear that.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Great. Thank you for your time.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): We move to the government side. MPP Flack.

Mr. Rob Flack: Thank you, Grand Chief. It's great to see your smiling face all day, and again, thank you for sticking through this.

I wasn't sure what the experience was going to be when I woke up this morning and drove here. I was looking forward to it, but it has been a wonderful learning experience. One great thing about this job or this career change I've had—and I think my colleagues on both sides here would agree—is that we're in a constant learning and listening process, and that's the best way. I love the aural part of learning, as I have said today, so I have learned much.

I phoned my wife on one of the breaks. She's up at the lake. I said, “Denise, you lived in Lakefield, Curve Lake.” “Oh yeah, yeah.” “Do you know any of the Whetung family?” She goes, “Oh, yeah, I went to school with”—boom, boom, boom. So here I am today, and I didn't even explain to her—she knew a little bit of the history. Dave, you would appreciate that, and she wants to hear more when I get home.

While history is important, and I'm a great history buff and a great traditionist, parts of our history obviously dare never be repeated. Some of it's good—most of it's good—but some of it isn't.

That being said, I want to come back to youth. How do the collective we—“we” being not just the government, not just First Nations or Indigenous peoples—make sure that history, bad history, doesn't repeat itself? But most importantly, I say—I come back to youth. That's what I want to come back to. I think about what we've heard today and learned today, so I'll come back to a familiar question I've had: How do we make sure our youth, Indigenous youth, all youth in this province, understand the history, understand the sacrifices made by Murray Whetung and, in fact, all—whether it was Tecumseh, Pontiac, any great story, any great example we have—both from a military standpoint or just from a community leadership standpoint? How do we get that message across? How would you like to see Murray Whetung's message sold, promoted, communicated to youth to get action, to get success?

Grand Council Chief Reg Niganobe: I think understanding the story and understanding some of what was shared here today would be a good start. But I think extracting from those stories what Murray exemplified and passing those along, in perhaps some sort of leadership circle or something along those lines, or some sort of promotion of this to strive to achieve what Murray had done and what he exemplified for each individual trying to receive this award, would be great for everybody in general. Sharing this story, sharing all those stories, perhaps even sharing why our ogichidaag do what they do—your young people would be considered ogichidaag in that regard.

A warrior is just that, but a warrior is with kindness. They move with kindness. The idea, like I said, is to protect. When warriors first interact with each other—say if I'm Mississauga and I come across an Odawa and we're both warriors, or ogichidaag, the first thing we ask is, “How is the community?” It matters how your community is and how your community is thriving and reacting and how the children are and all these sorts of different things. It's kindness.

So I think if there's one thing that we can do, it's exemplifying that, and promote that kindness and that community. That's all of our people, the “we,” not just First Nations.

Mr. Rob Flack: On that vein, or in that thinking, what specifically, again, from a communications standpoint, and I come back to it because—okay, a quick question.

Maybe Dave or somebody knows: Did Murray Whetung receive the Order of Canada or Order of Ontario?

Interjection.

Mr. Rob Flack: He didn't, okay. I'm thinking of other vehicles he may have received in terms of recognition we could use to help exemplify the great work he did, but again I come back to, I think we have to communicate somewhat differently than we have in the past. Let's use the electronic vehicles we have to orally trans-late, communicate. How would you like to see that done? I've asked that question; otherwise, are there any other thoughts, ideas, suggestions you might have?

Grand Council Chief Reg Niganobe: The modern media methods are probably the best. With our communities separated the way they are and it being the easiest way to get those messages now and as we upgrade and facilitate better electronic communication and better Internet services around Ontario, that will be more accessible to our communities and our children as we go forward.

Mr. Rob Flack: Okay, thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): No further questions? Thank you.

Thank you, Grand Council Chief Niganobe and Margaret Froh from the Métis Nation of Ontario, for your presentations today. In addition to your presentations and your other leaders' presentations, elders' presentations today to us, it was eye-opening and it was very informative, and I am sure that we have learned so much. As many of my colleagues testified today, we have learned so much and all of us are eager to stretch our hand to you to work together so that we can address some of the wrongs that happened in the past and move forward. So, thank you very much for your presentations.

That concludes our public hearings session. We will take a five-minute recess so that the staff and the legislative counsel will set up for the next session, and that is the clause-by-clause examination. Thank you very much—a five-minute break.

The committee recessed from 1649 to 1702.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): The committee will now move on to the clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 31, An Act to provide for an award for exceptional cadets.

If a member indicates that they wish to move an amendment, we will take a short recess to allow the member to consult with the legislative counsel to draft a motion. Are there any questions before we begin? No?

So, Bill 31: Are there any questions or amendments to any section of Bill 31, and if so, to which section? MPP Shaw?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I just want to start by saying thank you for being the Chair today. You did an excellent job. It's been a long day, and I appreciate your work in that chair. It can't be easy; you can't get up and stretch when we all do. So thank you for that.

I also want to again reiterate how it was a long day but such a good day. I think we all feel that way, that we came here—I think it was MPP Flack who said, "not exactly knowing what to expect." And I think we've all come

away learning quite a bit, learning about Murray Whetung and hearing from his family. It was a very rich day for all of us, also hearing from people who represent the different sectors of our Armed Forces and hearing them talk not just about the veterans and not just about cadets but them themselves bringing up the issues of how the treatment of Indigenous folks in the service was unfair and that this is an injustice that needs to be righted, and even acknowledging that we still have much work to do. It was very interesting to hear that coming from all of the deputants today.

What I want to say is that we've all travelled here today, and we've heard some great deputants. Again, I know we know this, but we're here to listen to testimony in the hopes that we might need to improve a bill or to amend it or change it based on the testimony that we heard. That's what we're here to do. Otherwise, it's not an exercise in good legislation-making; we're just here to listen—which is good enough, but our job as legislators is to make this bill better.

In that regard, I'm going to bring up the concern that has been mentioned, the notion that the Junior Canadian Rangers has been identified as having been omitted or could have been included in this bill. We heard from the commanding officer, David Wright, who represents the cadets and Junior Canadian Rangers, who said right off the top, unprompted, that this needed to be included. That's partly why, for my questioning, I asked subsequent deputants how they felt about this.

We had commanding officer Daniel Hutt, who represented the Air Cadet League, saying, absolutely, he thought that this was an appropriate inclusion, particularly given the fact that this bill honours an Indigenous veteran and that many of the Junior Canadian Rangers are Indigenous—not because it's for Indigenous youth, but the fact is where they operate, which is the Far North and remote parts of Ontario, that's primarily Indigenous or First Nations kids who participate in that.

We also heard from the Army Cadet League captain, Rick Brown, whom I had a long conversation with about his work in making sure that we had cadet week acknowledged in Ontario. He said that absolutely the Junior Canadian Rangers should be included.

I know, MPP Smith, that this is your bill. I acknowledge and recognize and congratulate you for all the hard work you've done. You shared some of the stuff that you learned in the research. That's been really helpful to us and really enriched our understanding of this issue. The fact that Junior Canadian Rangers is not included in the text of this bill is something that you said would be changed at regulation-making.

But it's my understanding—and I stand to be corrected—that there needs to be authority in the bill itself for there to be regulations made after the passing of the bill. I could be wrong at that point. I really should be clear on the legislative procedure, whether the bill needs to be amended to include that authority or whether we're leaving it strictly to the body of the bill that adds an award for Junior Canadian Rangers.

We have an amendment drafted, thanks to leg. counsel; I appreciate your wise counsel. I'm prepared to move it, but in the spirit in which this is offered, I want to say to MPP Smith again, I acknowledge and respect that this is your bill. I don't mean to move this amendment if it is your intention to add the Junior Canadian Rangers. Through the Chair, do we know, as a committee body, whether this change to include an award, just like we have in the body for the adjudicating members, can be made at the time that regulations are made? Are you aware of that? Through the Chair, can we get a clarification on that?

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Smith, yes.

Mr. Dave Smith: We've been working on this bill for just over four years now. We've had numerous conversations with the Department of National Defence and with Cadets Canada on it. It adds a layer of complication, is how I'll describe it, if we were to put that in, because the Junior Canadian Rangers don't fall under the same jurisdiction as Cadets Canada does. It's a differentiation at the Department of National Defence, which would likely delay the process on the cadet side if we were to put that in this legislation right off the bat as part of it. So there would be ongoing conversations that happen with Cadets Canada on it. It is the intent to add the Junior Canadian Rangers at a point that is acceptable from the negotiations with the Department of National Defence and the army division that looks after the Junior Canadian Rangers.

1710

At this point, I'm not prepared to delay what we would be doing with this. It's my understanding from the ongoing conversations that we've had with Cadets Canada that it likely would not happen in this term of government for me. We originally introduced it to try to get it passed before Murray passed away. We were not successful with it. He passed away prior to this coming to committee the last time and then we prorogued. Because of what we have done with the Whetung family, because of the ongoing conversations with cadets—Lieutenant Colonel O'Leary is retired. That will add some of the delay to us, as well, as it is. I don't want to find ourselves in a position where we're not able to give the award out before I decide to retire from politics. I'd like to see it through, and I don't want to add something that is going to add a delay at the Department of National Defence layer.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Flack, go ahead.

Mr. Rob Flack: Just a clarification maybe, Mr. Smith: Could you maybe just communicate for everybody—because I know you've told me this. With respect to the Junior Canadian Rangers, again, for emphasis, you have talked to the organization, you've talked to the federal government—just again clarify the communication you've already had, because it's not like you forgot it in the bill. You've tried, but it just wasn't practical. So if you could just—the communication you've had.

Mr. Dave Smith: We first reached out to Cadets Canada—Base Borden—specifically on this in the fall of 2019, and we had conversations at that point about whether or not we should be including the Junior Canadian

Rangers as part of it. That's where the conversation started back in 2019, and that's when we discovered that they were actually two separate organizations and different approval processes that they have at the federal government level.

We know that we're going to have some challenges as it is on the federal side of it. Working with the Anishinabek Nation, this is something that we believe we can have added onto it at a later date and not delay the first implementation of it. Really, what it comes down to is a lot of the bureaucratic red tape when you have to deal with multiple government agencies to accomplish the same thing. So the approach that we decided to take, in consultation with Lieutenant Colonel O'Leary, was a multi-stepped approach, and we believe that we will be able to add the Junior Canadian Rangers through regulation at a later date.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Schreiner, go ahead.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: This is more of a question—and it may not even be a question for MPP Smith; it might be a question for leg. counsel. I totally respect and acknowledge the work you've done in the process and understand the complications. Do we need to add a mechanism for the Junior Canadian Rangers to be added later? I don't think we need to do it now. I think you've given a good explanation for that, but I want to make sure we at least do everything we need to do to make sure it can happen when the appropriate time for it to happen is.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Smith.

Mr. Dave Smith: Ultimately, the goal on this is that this is something that would be allowed on a cadet uniform and, at that point, it doesn't need to be something that is done through the province specifically on that. So, working through the process with the Department of National Defence, with Base Borden on that, that's all part of the negotiation that we would have at the federal level, not necessarily at the provincial level.

So when the award gets to the point where it is able to be added onto a cadet uniform and worn as part of that, that's where it can be added through Cadets Canada, through the Junior Canadian Rangers program. It doesn't need to be added at this point in our legislation. It is all part of that internal process with cadets. That's why I had asked regional Grand Chief Niganobe to ensure that they were going to support us with this moving forward for all cadets, not just in Ontario but across Canada.

There are conversations that are already happening at the Indigenous veterans level on this. Again, it comes back to, I don't want to find myself in a position where, by doing something like this that at a first-blush glance may appear to be something that we should do—I don't want to be in a position where we further delay and not have the opportunity to get it across the finish line while I am still actively involved in politics. I've made a commitment to the Whetung family to try to get this through as quickly as possible, and I don't want to go back on my word. I don't want to find ourselves in a position where I have another potential delay.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I get that, and honestly, I respect that. I hear that explanation. But legislatively, in terms of procedure, you are saying that we can do that at a later date, and as you have just alluded to, it takes forever, quite a long time to get these things through the leg. Even things that have passed at third reading and see royal assent still aren't enacted, and we still have to go back for third reading, and it still has to be passed and enacted, as you know. That's what you're talking about. We have the opportunity to get it right now so it doesn't have to come back and it doesn't have to go through these further delays.

I know you did tell commanding officer David Wright that you would change this at regulation-making. That's what you said, and that's how I knew that you were doing that.

But I'm asking now for a point of information, a point of clarification from leg. counsel. It may be a different bill that we move forward, but does this bill need to have in it a section that gives regulation-making authority so that at regulation-making time, this change can happen, if that's what MPP Smith is talking about? Maybe you could explain to us, if that's appropriate—through the Chair?

Mr. Dave Smith: Don't conflate provincial regulation with cadet regulations.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Right. That's the problem.

Mr. Dave Smith: This is where we're at. Regardless of anyone's individual thoughts on this, I will recommend to my colleagues that they vote down the amendment if you put the amendment forward.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, I get that.

Mr. Dave Smith: And no further explanation is going to be given on it. It simply is: I have made a commitment to the Whetung family, I have made a commitment to the Anishinabek Nation, and I'm not prepared to have any potential delays as a result of that.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Schreiner, go ahead.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: What I'm hearing, MPP Smith—and I want to make sure I understand correctly—is that when you refer to “regulations,” you're not referring to provincial regulations; you're referring to cadet regulations. In that case, anything we do around that really isn't going to have anything—it's a completely separate issue. I was initially conflating the two in this discussion, but I think that's why it's important to have these conversations in committee.

So really when you say “regulations,” it is cadet regulations you're talking about. Okay.

Mr. Dave Smith: It's a combination of cadet and junior rangers, because they are separate entities. They do have a separate governing body within the federal government on it. The Junior Canadian Rangers are a division of the army. The cadets are a division of the Department of National Defence. Although the army is part of national defence, there is a completely different process that they have to go through, and I don't want to muddle it at this point.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further comments? MPP Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Again, just so that we understand: When you told David Wright that this would be amended

or would be changed at regulation-making—you said actually “regulation-making”—you didn't mean the province. You meant through—

Interjection.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Okay.

Just so I understand the process, because we all learn, I did ask for a point of information that if that were the case—and I understand it's not—in order to amend or change at regulation an act, it has to have an authority in the bill. Is that correct? I'm asking for clarification.

Mr. Mark Spakowski: There are a few things going on, and I'm not sure I fully understand them, but I think definitely there are regulations at a federal level that I think the member has been talking about.

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For a provincial act, which is my area of expertise, and this particular act: For there to be regulations under this act, there would need to be a reg-making authority in this act. There isn't one, so there won't be any authority to make any regulations.

This bill, as it's introduced, provides for awards for three different cadet groups, and you're very familiar with that. It does not provide for awards for junior rangers. To change this act so it did provide for awards for junior rangers, it could be amended here, although I understand there are issues, or it could be amended by a future bill.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My final question to you, MPP Smith: Would you be amenable to putting the regulation-making authority into this bill? I mean, it might be something that would serve you down the road when you do your work with Anishinabek and when you do your work through the cadet system, that it's there, your ability, the tool that you would need to amend this.

Mr. Dave Smith: I appreciate that. As I said, this is something that we've been working on for years now. We've landed on what the wording is for the bill itself, to create the awards, to establish the awards. We feel very comfortable that this is what we should be moving forward with.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further comments? Okay.

The bill has five sections. Since there are no amendments for the five sections, I would recommend bundling all five sections together. Is the committee in agreement? Are there any further questions or comments on the five sections? If not, I'm going to put the question. All in favour of bundling the five sections, please raise your hand. Any opposition? I see none. So we've bundled all five sections.

All in favour of the five sections together, please raise your hand. Okay. Any opposition? Seeing none, sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are carried.

Now we go to the preamble. I understand there is an amendment to the preamble. MPP Smith, go ahead.

Mr. Dave Smith: I move that the preamble to the bill be amended by striking out the first paragraph and substituting the following:

“There is a long history of Indigenous communities voluntarily serving in the Canadian Armed Forces. During the First and Second World Wars, more than 7,000 First Nations people as well as a similar number of Métis and

Intuit people voluntarily enlisted to protect Canada. Many of the First Nations volunteers lost their Indian status upon returning from fighting overseas. Despite the mistreatment the Indigenous veterans received, many veterans continued to give back through volunteer service to their communities for their entire lives. Murray Whetung was one such Curve Lake First Nation veteran who continued to serve his community after returning from service overseas.”

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): The proposed amendment is out of order, because it seeks to amend the preamble of the bill after second reading. As Bosc and Gagnon note on page 774 of the third edition of the House of Commons Procedure and Practice, “In the case of a bill that has been referred to a committee after second reading, a substantive amendment to the preamble is admissible only if it is rendered necessary by amendments made to the bill.”

So this is out of order, unless the member seeks unanimous consent. Yes, MPP Smith?

Mr. Dave Smith: One of the things that we’re trying to do with this is to ensure that we don’t find ourselves in the position where we inadvertently offend a group when we’re trying to demonstrate that this is something that is inclusionary.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Sorry, we cannot discuss the amendment right now because it is ruled out of order. If you want to go a different route, you’re welcome to do it.

Mr. Dave Smith: I am seeking unanimous consent, then, to allow the change in the preamble.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay.

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Yes. Can we get the mike back to MPP Smith?

Mr. Dave Smith: Sorry. I am seeking unanimous consent to amend the preamble.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay. MPP Smith is seeking unanimous consent to amend the preamble. Is there unanimous consent from the committee? All in favour? Okay. We have unanimous consent, so the preamble will be amended—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Now we have to consider it. Okay.

Can you read the amendment again, please, MPP Smith?

Mr. Dave Smith: I move that the preamble to the bill be amended by striking out the first paragraph and substituting the following:

“There is a long history of Indigenous communities voluntarily serving in the Canadian Armed Forces. During the First and Second World Wars, more than 7,000 First Nations people as well as a similar number of Métis and Inuit people voluntarily enlisted to protect Canada. Many of the First Nations volunteers lost their Indian status upon returning from fighting overseas. Despite the mistreatment the Indigenous veterans received, many veterans continued to give back through volunteer service to their communities for their entire lives. Murray Whetung was one such Curve Lake First Nation veteran who continued to serve his community after returning from service overseas.”

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): All of us heard the amendment to the preamble by MPP Smith. Is there any further discussion or comments? MPP Smith.

Mr. Dave Smith: Just for some clarification on this: When the bill was first introduced in 2019, the Métis Nation was not being recognized by the Department of National Defence in some of their efforts for their veterans. That since has happened, and we wanted to ensure that the language of the preamble on the bill was inclusive of all Indigenous veterans, recognizing that there were differences and there are still differences between First Nations veterans from the First and Second World Wars than from Métis veterans. However, all Indigenous veterans did receive a number of misjustices and a number of mistreatments, and we wanted to make sure that we encapsulated that to recognize that First Nation, Métis and Inuit all voluntarily joined the Armed Forces.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further comments on the amendment? If not, I’m going to put the question. All in favour of the amendment to the preamble, please raise your hand. Any opposition? Seeing none, the amendment is carried.

Shall the preamble of the bill, as it is amended, carry? All in favour of the preamble, as it is amended, please raise your hand. Any opposition? Seeing none, carried.

Shall the title of the bill carry? Any discussion? If not, we will go to the vote. All in favour, please raise your hand. The title of the bill is carried.

Shall Bill 31, as amended, carry? The amendment was in the preamble, as you already approved. All in favour? Any opposition? Seeing none, carried.

Shall I report the bill to the House? All in favour? Any opposition? Seeing none, I will report the bill to the House.

Thank you very much for your hard work, patience and input. Our meeting is adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1731.

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