

Second Session – Forty-First Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Standing Committee
on
Private Bills

Chairperson
Mrs. Colleen Mayer
Constituency of St. Vital

Vol. LXX No. 4 - 11 a.m., Thursday, June 1, 2017

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
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KLASSEN, Judy	Kewatinook	Lib.
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Burrows	Lib.
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MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
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SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
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STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
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WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
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<i>Vacant</i>	Point Douglas	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON PRIVATE BILLS

Thursday, June 1, 2017

TIME – 11 a.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRPERSON – Mrs. Colleen Mayer (St. Vital)

VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin)

ATTENDANCE – 11 QUORUM – 6

Members of the Committee present:

Hon. Mr. Eichler

Mr. Curry, Ms. Fontaine, Messrs. Helwer, Kinew, Mses. Klassen, Lathlin, Mrs. Mayer, Mr. Michaleski, Ms. Morley-Lecomte, Mr. Nesbitt

APPEARING:

Mr. Matt Wiebe, MLA for Concordia

PUBLIC PRESENTERS:

*Ms. Lindsey Trudeau, Winnipeg School Division
Mr. Ted Fontaine, private citizen
Mr. James Bedford, Manitoba Teachers' Society
Ms. Stephanie Scott, National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation
Ms. Samantha Flett, private citizen*

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

Bill 223–The Orange Shirt Day Act

* * *

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Good morning. Will the Standing Committee on Private Bills please come to order.

Our first item of business in the election—is the election of a new Chairperson.

Are there any nominations for this position?

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): Colleen Mayer.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Mrs. Mayer has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, Mrs. Mayer, will you please take the Chair.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

Madam Chairperson: This meeting has been called to consider the following bills: Bill 223, The Orange Shirt Day Act.

We have some presenters who just registered to speak this morning: Lindsey Trudeau, James Bedford, Ted Fontaine and Stephanie Scott.

Before we proceed with presentations, we do have a number of other items and points of information to consider. First of all, if there is anyone in the audience who would like to make a presentation this morning, please register with the staff at the entrance of the room. Also, for the information of all presenters, while written versions of presentations are not required, if you are going to accompany your presentation with a written—with written material, we ask that you provide 20 copies. If you need help with photocopying, please speak with our staff.

As well, in accordance with our rules, a time limit of 10 minutes has been allotted for presentations, with another five minutes allowed for questions from the committee members. If a presenter is not in attendance when their name is called, they will be dropped to the bottom of the list. If the presenter is not in attendance when their name is called a second time, they will be removed from the presenters' list.

Prior to proceeding with public presentations, I would like to advise members of the public regarding the process for speaking in committee. The proceedings of our meetings are recorded in order to provide a verbatim transcript. Each time someone wishes to speak, whether it be an MLA or a presenter, I first have to say the person's name. This is the signal for the Hansard recorder to turn the mics on and off.

Thank you for your patience.

Bill 223–The Orange Shirt Day Act

Madam Chairperson: We will now proceed with public presentations.

I will now call on Lindsey Trudeau.

Thank you, Lindsey. Do you have any written material for distribution to the committee?

Ms. Lindsey Trudeau (Winnipeg School Division): No.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. Please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Trudeau: I just want to say I support the bill, and I thank Wab for bringing it forward.

I think recognizing Orange Shirt Day is extremely important for youth. Just to kind of quote Senator Murray Sinclair: Education holds the key to reconciliation; it is where society will heal itself.

And I believe by honouring this day, it's helping to educate everyone so that everyone knows and honours our residential school survivors, which is extremely important. And knowledge is power.

Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Trudeau.

Do the committees—do—sorry, thank you. Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): Not a question, I just want to thank you for coming here today and for all the work you do as an educator in our community.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): As well, I just want to acknowledge you and all of the students that are in the room today and just lift you up for bringing students here today to see what is really a historic day for Manitoba and for our people in general. So I just—I lift you up. Miigwech.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I also want to thank you for coming and speaking today and thank you for continued efforts that you do.

Thank you for bringing the youth here and I really appreciate your words. Thank you.

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): I also want to thank you for coming today and presenting and being here and being part of the education for the future generations of our children.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you very much.

I will now call Mr. James Bedford, from the Manitoba Teachers' Society. *[interjection]* Okay.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): So I can appreciate that the presenter was putting some words on the

record, but not actually on the record. So if I can just do that on his behalf.

I guess what the request was, and I'd ask for leave from the committee that Mr. Fontaine, who is on our presenters' list, be moved to the head of the presenters' list to be our next presenter here this morning. And I'd ask leave of the committee to do that.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Wiebe.

I will call on Mr. Fontaine.

* (11:20)

Thank you, Mr. Fontaine.

Do you have any written material for distribution to the committee, Mr. Fontaine?

Mr. Ted Fontaine (Private Citizen): No, I don't have. But I have my book with me. I can use that as my presentation.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you very much. I would ask you to proceed with your presentation, Mr. Fontaine.

Mr. Fontaine: First of all, thank you for having me here today. I want to thank the rest of society for allowing me to be here, as, according to Duncan Campbell Scott, I should have been dead by now.

I'm 75 years old. And I'm now—I survived the ordeal of being a victim. And I'm well on my way to being a victor. I entered residential schools at seven, if you can imagine you guys or your people, your represents of Manitoba, and leaving your family at seven. That was the intent of the policy: to destroy us, as Indian people.

And I'm very, very appreciative to the Creator as well as to the rest of society that I'm still here. I didn't think I'd ever come to this stage, that I would sit in front of lawmakers of this province. And I see our represents—our representatives from our community sitting here, and that, too, I never envisioned to see in my lifetime. And everything you've heard—everything you've heard—is so clear and true to the policy, in my mind, was the destruction of the First Nations of this country. And that has failed, thankfully.

I remember my first year in residential school; I was locked up—incarcerated for 10 months straight without ever seeing my home. Seven years old—I was not yet eight years old, and I went home for the first

holiday I experienced. And you know what happened that first 10—after my first 10 months, I hated my mom and dad. After coming in from my first stage of life—to a wonderful life of love and respect and—with my mom and dad and my kokum, my mushum and my extended family, I didn't like them. You know why? They were Indian. That's the tragedy of what they tried to do to us. And I have to apologize to my own children, and I've done this before, but I also apologize to the second and third and fourth generations from my communities—that's the biggest legacy we've left them, the reluctance, the deep reluctance to admit that we were Indian people. That's what it did to me, that first 10 months. And the cycle went on for another 12 years in—on my case. And you can imagine, from my time sitting on the shores of Great Slave Lake, contemplating walking through that sand, and there was pebbles, and not coming back from that walk.

I normally don't get emotional when I get—come to that stage, but I'm very emotional about what's happening here. And I want to thank Wab for doing what he did, and I want to thank the rest of the members of the House here—to show the leadership and the love that they've demonstrated by recognizing a segment of society, important segment of society, not only of this province but of Canada, to come to terms that, yes, the history of our country is not that pure.

I just did a presentation yesterday and—at university, and my presentation was more graphic than what it is here, but I didn't feel the emotion there as I do here. I've met a lot of you people that sit on the House and it's been a very, very—I can go back, as far back as Sam Uskiw. I don't—I think you guys are too young to remember Sam, but I worked in this building for less than a month after I left my chieftainship. Sam brought me in and I tried to realize his vision and his foresight in including First Nations people into the segment—this segment of society, the Province—the development of administrative and also highways, involvement for First Nations people. I was here. The steps—and those first steps, but I still bore the scars of residential schools. I'm not even sure if I trusted Sam. That's what it had done for me.

For some reason, the Creator has kept me around to do—to see this day and whatever you've heard of residential schools can be attested to by the children to second and third generation that sit among you in the House—very, very true. You can't say after you've

heard about residential schools, yes, I know about residential schools. You don't.

You don't. There's a few of us left.

We made some reconciliatory paths along the way, including the father of one of your prominent members here. Him and I reconciled at the end of his time here, and I feel still very, very much emotional about that meeting. We're both Indian people, but because of the influx of what had been poured into our minds by the churches and the government, we had some issues. And I think it was less than six months—our reconciliation path was so brief. I feel very, very—sometimes I feel like coming here and just saying hello to the individual, the son of this man and just giving him a hug. But men don't hug, right? We do.

We do.

And, Wab, I want to thank you very much for bringing this issue to the light. Your dad would have been very, very proud of you, as my parents would have been.

My daughter, right now, still struggles with our culture, and our traditions, and our language. Ojibwe was my first language. At seven years old I entered, and I can tell you things that happened to me—and to try and have the nuns, and the priests, and the supervisors, and the government try and curtail that from my memory. I never lost it. Boy, but I speak a broken Ojibwe, I tell you, but I'm learning from people like Wab. But my wife and I have now—are now in the process of taking some language sessions and it's fun. It's the best language in the world, I tell you. And I always had the realization if we lose that language here and our traditions, we have nowhere else to go. We can't go to Germany, we can't go to Russia, we can't go to Italy. We can't go back there to retrieve those basic identities that we have. If we lose it here, it's gone.

*(11:30)

And I want to say one more thing about the truth and reconciliation. The 94 recommendations that came, they weren't devised by government or a body selected to come up with recommendations. Those 94 recommendations came from people like me in our hearings. We sat for hours and hours talking about what was required for this country and that—it's not a document of guilt. It's a document of love and hope and justice.

Madam Chairperson: Excuse me, Mr. Fontaine. Is there leave to extend the presenter's time? *[Agreed]*

How long would the committee like to provide Mr. Fontaine to continue his presentation?

Mr. Wiebe: I recommend that we listen until Mr. Fontaine needs a—whatever amount of time he determines.

Madam Chairperson: Perfect. Thank you, Mr. Wiebe.

Mr. Fontaine, please continue.

Mr. Fontaine: I won't be that long.

Madam Chairperson: No, please take—

Mr. Fontaine: I want to offer you something. I want you to come and say hello to the remaining survivors of Assiniboia Residential School on June the 23rd and June the 24th at the grounds of the first residential—major residential school in a large urban area in Winnipeg.

And I want to say one more thing. I guess I have more stuff to say, but I want to say something about reconciliation. I came out of this institution incarcerated for as long as I was—I was in that school, and it took me years until that day I sat faithfully, not with great hope, but faith. I sat on the shores of Great Slave Lake with a case of beer on—beside my log because of what had started—not reinventing itself, but resurfacing in my mind. And I thought, how easy would it be to forget all this, and I had to use that case of beer for strength. And someone was there with the help of the Creator to get me out of that predicament.

From that day on—that's over 40 years ago—from that day on, I've lived this thing. It still happens. A month—two months ago, I had a revisitation from one of those memories which are not once in a lifetime; they're periodic. I'm laying in my bed—have you ever had a nightmare where you can't move, you're paralyzed? That happened to me so often in my lifetime, and the latest was two months ago, where I see this black shadow go across my bed and I can't move, and I end up getting angry and I curse; I sob; I have tears in my eyes, and I can't move.

I'm very lucky that the Creator has placed somebody there with great love for me. She brings me out of that. I can be very graphic but I won't. I think I'm more graphic when I'm presenting to grade 6s and grade 7s, but I still—I'm 75 years old;

I still encounter these memories, and the person that wakes me is my greatest reconciliation action in my lifetime.

When I came out of residential schools, I hated church, priests, nuns, governments, French people. I hated white people, and my greatest reconciliation is that I ended up marrying a white woman. We've been together close to 35 years now, and I look at her and I wonder, oh, my goodness. This is one of my worst nightmares, to be in the presence of white people, and I hid that so well.

It was fortunate that I met my wife at the time of my second incarceration at Assiniboia. We didn't know it at the time, but the Creator took it upon himself to present this lady 20 years later. And there was no colour barrier then, I tell you.

So that's—we all go through that, and there's unique stories from each survivor that's out there of what we've had to live through. And every one of them would tell you we never expected to live this long as to appreciate what our fellow Manitobans are doing, fellow Canadians are doing. To each and every one of you, I want to thank you very much. I know you're going to pass this, and I'll still be alive.

Anyway I want you to read my book. It's only a portion—it's only about three quarters of an inch. The story could be a foot high. But go and read this and read between the lines.

Anyway, I want to thank you very much. Chi-miigwech.

Madam Chairperson: I want to deeply thank you, Mr. Fontaine, for your presentation.

I will ask members if there are questions of the presenter.

Mr. Kinew: I would just like to say to you directly, Ted, you know, one of the biggest moments for me in understanding my father's residential school experience was listening to Chief Robert Joseph at a dinner saying, as a residential school survivor speaking to my kids, we always loved you; we just didn't know how to share that love with you.

And it was eye-opening for me because up until then, I thought my dad hated me, you know, and then to hear that he always loved me, he just didn't have the equipment emotionally to share it with me, was liberating for me.

So if I might, you know, recognizing some of what you shared here today, speaking from the

descendant's perspective to a residential school survivor, I would like to say, I know that you loved us, and we love you too.

So: Ojibwe spoken. Translation unavailable.

Thank you very much for sharing your words with us today.

And I would also like to say that your words will now be preserved in Hansard, so they will be preserved forever here in the Manitoba Legislature. And through this Orange Shirt Day Act, we might empower all these young people and thousands more like them across our province to carry your story forward for many, many years to come.

Miigwech.

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Fontaine. Oh, sorry. I thought you wanted to respond.

Mr. Fontaine: *Ojibwe spoken. Translation unavailable.*

Ms. Fontaine: Well Ted, my relative, I just want to say miigwech for your words. And I just want to acknowledge, as I—as we spoke in the back there, that—and I often try to say this when we're in the House and we're talking about different things that—again, where we are today in respect of, you know, what we know about residential schools, comes from the strength and the courage of yourself, of Phil Fontaine, who were some of the first survivors to speak out in a time when nobody spoke out.

As you know, my grandfather, Henry Charles Fontaine, went to residential school. We still don't know what happened. He never spoke about that, so our family doesn't know. And so, you know, I just want to acknowledge that and say miigwech for that.

But I also want to say that for those of us, you know—and most of us, you know, our grandparents and our parents who went to residential school, who survived residential school—like, the member—you know, Wab wouldn't be here. I wouldn't be here.

Mr. Fontaine: Like Wab alluded to, you—our children didn't realize this, but you can't imagine the love that emanates from our families. And we didn't lose that love when we were incarcerated. We were just scared to use those words.

* (11:40)

I feel so appreciative now that I can hug you guys. I—there's some hesitation sometimes, there's still—that comes from my side or your side. Because

you're not sure if that's proper. But it is. I tell you, it is. Chi-miigwech for those words.

And I remember your family well, and your great-great grandfather was a brother to my grandfather—great grandfather. So we're still—we're close. We're still at that tie. And Manitoba's very small. A lot of the members sitting here don't realize, but if you dig deep enough, you want to find a little ribbon that ties you to me and to your indigenous members here.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Thank you, Mr. Fontaine, for continuing to educate us.

I grew up in Brandon and there, of course, was a residential school there. The building is no longer. The site remains, and I know there is very powerful memories, emotions and stories that are attached to it. Some of those stories, of course, cannot be told.

We grew up with some of those residents. We'd see them in school sometimes, in the other schools in Brandon, and then they'd disappear for a year or two and then they'd come back. So, as we grew up, we did not know all the stories, but thank you for continuing to educate us.

Mr. Fontaine: I want to leave you with something, and I—as a—I tend to go back to my seven-year-old body as a little boy, and the reluctance I had to express my feelings, which got worse later on because I was deemed to be a savage. I wasn't a real person. Can you imagine what that did to me through my life?

I graduated, finally, in 1973 from civil engineering. I was an old guy sitting around with these young guys. But that is another reconciliatory action that I used to prove to myself that I was not a savage. I could be there with you.

And I want to leave one thing with you if I may be so bold—I was never this bold as—growing up, but I want to be bold today. I want to offer you not an opportunity, but a reconciliatory act where I can go speak with you and talk about my four phases of what I've gone through. And I promise I will be very graphic. So if you can't stand graphic depictions of life, you might not want to be there. But I offer you that with your individual caucuses.

And there's more to that book than—in any survivor, more to any book that comes out describing residential schools that is not written. And I'll tell you about my time here with Sam Uskiw. I wasn't even an NDP, for Pete's sake. I still don't know who I

am, but I promise to be—one thing I do have in telling this story is the honest truth, and it might be difficult sometimes, but that's my life now. So I offer—I give you that offer. I think some of you have been to many mini-discussions that I had. Not many, but 'mini'. But I promise to sit with you and tell you exactly what happened, not only to me but to some of my colleagues. So—and I think, forever, I formed a lifetime friendship with Wab and my brothers and sisters that are sitting here. And to you, too. So—

Madam Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Fontaine.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): It's an honour to be in your presence once again. I—we crossed paths again, talking about this very subject.

But what I wanted to share with you when you were sharing with us about when you went home after your first 10 months, about how you hated your parents. I thought you were going to say: because they let you go, you were angry with them. Instead, you said, because they were Indian. And that took my breath away, and it just reminded me what I want to share here about reconciliation is that my mother was a survivor, and it took me years maybe—to forgive her, because of her drinking and her depression. And I'm just glad to say that just months before she died, I forgave her and understood. And my late dad helped me understand where she was coming from.

So, without your perseverance, my mom's, we wouldn't be here today—Wab, Nahanni and I and Judy. So I just want to say thank you for sharing this story—your story. Thank you.

Mr. Fontaine: I have to clear the name of my parents here, and I have to tell you this. I usually—I talk about this in my presentations. But I want to tell you about my mom and dad. My mom and dad, people perceived they did that action to have been a letting go of myself and our—my siblings from my parents. It was not without reluctance.

You know, we lived in a house that had no running water, no lights, no power, no heat. We didn't have a proper toilet or a washroom, whatever they call it in the English language. We call it—*Ojibwe spoken. Translation unavailable.*—you know, and it's a description of where we go to go to the bathroom. But it was this very purpose, along with the high level of spirituality that my mom and dad had, the representatives that were picked, 'chosen,' by government, to enact this policy of residential schools, were, supposedly, in the

minds, representatives of the Creator. That's why my mom, very reluctantly, allowed me to be incarcerated for that long, because the people that wanted me there were representatives of the Creator. And because of the spirituality that they held, there's no way that they're going to go against the word of the spirit—the Creator.

And then the second reason is that my mom was a cleaning lady. You've seen the movie, help—the situation of my mom, along with Nahanni's relatives in our community—I'm sure other communities went through the same thing—they worked in the surrounding town of Pine Falls, cleaning homes that had all the amenities that we didn't have. And they used to hear the words, my boy or my girl's going to graduate this year. My mom didn't—couldn't put her finger on what graduate mean—meant. But she knew that the individual, by finishing school, would go on to attain all those amenities on their own—of which we didn't have. So she wanted that. I graduated almost 1,000 miles from here. I graduated in Edmonton.

On my graduation day, and that's when money was scarce and you couldn't travel very much—who was sitting in the audience? As I came down and picked up my little prize, my graduation, I looked against the wall. There was hundreds of people sitting there. There's my poor mom sitting against the wall, like so. Her dream had been realized that my education was going to allow me to live. I'm sorry—my mom, I know she's beside me right now, but it elicits—I'm not saying we didn't reconcile before she—she had Alzheimer's. We came very close to coming to the realization of what it was we were trying to talk about.

* (11:50)

But she was right there, you know—65 or 66 years old, attending my graduation without my knowledge. So her dream had come true. First of all, her beliefs—her spiritual beliefs—but also her belief that we could be part of this society with all the amenities without having to go outside to go to—*Ojibwe spoken. Translation unavailable.*—you know. I—it's unbelievable when I think about that, you know.

And I think the Aboriginal members here, the indigenous members, or the Indian members, if—I used to talk to your dad about what we went through. He was a real good friend of mine and it's unbelievable to be able to stand here before—like I

say—the lawmakers of this province, the leaders of this province.

Anyway, I want to tell you my life story if I keep it up here.

Madam Chairperson: And I would listen all night if I could.

Ms. Klassen.

Ms. Klassen: Thank you for coming here today. I really appreciate you bringing here a voice to the Legislative Assembly today.

You know, I speak from personal experience as well. My—the residential schools I went to are still unrecognized, the day school I went to, still unrecognized.

But that mentality was always there, and I was fortunate enough that by the time I entered that system in the North, that it was largely run by our own people, and so my—I haven't been damaged the way a lot of my older relations are. And the abuse stopped with me. My mom, after going to residential school, that's what she learned—the beatings that I went through—because she never got that help. And I did forgive her in my adult years, but I never understood why until the truth and reconciliation came.

And my dad who went to Guy Hill and Assiniboia, their experiences were not as long as yours. But my dad learned Latin. His language was taken away, and he learned Latin of all things. And so when he came back to the community, he was shunned because he was just a foreigner now. But luckily my grandfather made—welcomed him in our home—in his home. And so we never lost that connection to the Anishineo [*phonetic*] people—the Ojibwe Cree.

And that's the community I come from, the Island Lake communities. And I think our language is so beautiful and so unique, and I'm trying to learn my language today. I can understand it very well. I just can't speak it.

But it's thanks to your generation that has fought for the recognition and has done all the work, and it's the generations that have paid the ultimate price—the deaths of so many of our young people. And that's why I'm sitting here today—for our young people—so that way I can—they can use me to be their voice, because it has not stopped, it has not ended.

We still go through so much racism. I'm debating deleting my Facebook. That's why I don't try and comment in the newspapers, because the racism—the hate speech that comes out of it, it's too overwhelming for somebody like me. I have never been part of that group where I've allowed myself to be in those kinds of situations, and I'm now at the forefront of it and so that's why I struggle a lot.

But I want to say thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Fontaine? Thank you, thank you very much, Mr. Fontaine, for your presentation.

I will now call on James Bedford with the Manitoba Teachers' Society.

Mr. Bedford, do you have any material to distribute to the committee?

Mr. James Bedford (Manitoba Teachers' Society): No, I do not.

Madam Chairperson: Please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Bedford: Thank you, Madam Chair. Very good to see you again.

I am the vice-president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, and I'm here this morning in that capacity. I'm also very privileged to be joined by two of our great advocates, Jeff Cieszecki and Catherine Hart. I'm also wearing, as you can see, one of the beautiful orange shirts that the Manitoba Teachers' Society distributes on—or before September 30th of every year.

I'll begin by thanking Mr. Kinew for his leadership on this matter, but also I want to thank all parties of the Legislature for their leadership. As you are well aware, our public school classrooms across the province are becoming increasingly diverse. There are more indigenous faces in those classrooms; there are more newcomer faces in those classrooms; and, as they learn and they stand beside the youth that come from families who have been here for generations, or families like my own who have been here from when this country wasn't a country but it was a colony, it is an opportunity for all of these youth to learn together.

One of the great things about being a Canadian is not that we don't make mistakes, but that we acknowledge the mistakes that we make. We acknowledge that things could have been done better. And then we move forward in the spirit of

reconciliation, trying to not only correct the wrongs of the past, but also, as Mr. Helwer said earlier, trying to educate everybody about how we can move forward and do things much, much better.

Education also isn't something that exists within a classroom. It's not something that's just found within a curriculum or just found within a lesson plan. It's not something that just happens, because a teacher happens to be present or because students happen to be present. It's not something that just happens in a school. Education is much broader than that. Education occurs within communities, within societies. And the work that you're doing here today is about education on that level. I'd be proud if it was in my capacity to nominate all of you as honorary teachers because of the work that you're doing, because that is what will happen as we move forward. As leaders within the province, the youth within this province are going to see the spirit of dedication that you have to reconciliation, to correcting the wrongs of the past, but, most importantly, to ensuring that as we move forward together, we are going to do things much, much better.

So, if this bill passes, and I think it shall, I certainly invite all of you to join with public educators across the province, join with students across the province, in dressing in orange. And I will certainly extend to all of you the opportunity to wear a shirt of orange from the Manitoba Teachers' Society. But, as you can see here today, orange comes in many, many different shades.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Kinew: I'd just like to thank, you know, our presenter here, and Manitoba Teachers' Society, for their work in spreading the word about Orange Shirt Day. And may you continue to have many years of success in educating young people in our province towards the good societal goals that you spoke of. And thank you for presenting today.

Mr. Helwer: Thank you for your presentation today. Obviously, you do things with the youth that we're not able to do every day, and we do appreciate that. Thank you.

Mr. Nic Curry (Kildonan): Thank you for your presentation.

I do have kind of a question. So, in my riding in Kildonan, the Seven Oaks School Division has an Ojibwe bilingual program.

How can Manitoba Teachers' Society help work with school divisions to educate teachers on how they can encourage young people to learn as many languages as possible, especially as many indigenous languages that are from our great province and great country?

Madam Chairperson: Sorry—Mr. Bedford.

* (12:00)

Mr. Bedford: Thank you for that question. One of the things that you will see on our orange shirts going into the fall, and this is driven by our membership coming from our annual general meeting, is the T-shirts are now going to reflect indigenous languages, incorporating indigenous languages into the learning—and, I think Mr. Fontaine touched on this, is absolutely critical to moving forward and for reconciliation.

But across the province, more and more school divisions are actively involved in professional development days focusing specifically around indigenous issues. I had the great opportunity to be invited and to attend one in Gladstone, Manitoba with the Pine Creek School Division and the Pine Creek Teachers' Association last year. The local MLA, Eileen Clarke, was represented there as well, and that level of representation and support is just what we need. Teachers need to learn, right alongside students, and teachers do that every day of the year, but to focus on these great issues is of critical importance and we look forward to the government's support in terms of that learning.

Ms. Klassen: I just want to thank you, as well, from—on behalf of the Liberal caucus for coming in, making your presentation here today. I appreciate all the work that you guys do for our youth and we can really see it in the Leg. here with all our brilliant pages, what teachers have done for our people.

So thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Bedford.

I will now call on Stephanie Scott.

Ms. Stephanie Scott (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation): Good afternoon, thank you for having me.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Scott. Do you—sorry. To follow procedure, do you have any written material to present to the committee?

Ms. Scott: I do not.

Madam Chairperson: No. Thank you. Please proceed with your presentation, Ms. Scott.

Ms. Scott: My name is Stephanie Scott and I'm the director of operations at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.

I would like to thank you all for having me here today and as well as acknowledge the survivors and the youth in the room, and especially our women who are sharing—shedding many tears.

I'm also speaking to you as a '60s scoop survivor. I was an infant stolen away from my mother at birth. I had to find my way home to my community and I was fortunate enough to find some very strong women who took me in, nurtured me, taught me about my teachings, my traditions. I'm forever on that path and I still know very little because I've never had that opportunity, probably for the most of my life.

I ended up working in the community and I ended up working at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in statement gathering. I've been fortunate enough to been—travelled across this country, hearing from elders, survivors, women, youth on the legacy that still exists today. I've heard many tears. I disagree with Beyak, and nowhere that I've been has there been a celebration of the Indian residential school system.

I would like to say that on behalf of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, we—centre—we are in full support of moving this bill forward and I can't imagine it not being passed, both personally and professionally, because I'm still working with our survivors today, our youth, people like Ted, that encourage me to speak and share my voice. I'm not accustomed to this and I've always been in the background, so I really appreciate the time and consideration to hear from me.

And I just really hope that this moves forward because I think it's very important that there is a day to acknowledge the survivors, intergenerational survivors, and that everybody is—continues to learn and be educated about the legacy of Indian residential schools. Their tears are still real today.

Miigwech.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you very much.

Mr. Kinew: I just want to say miigwech to you, Stephanie, for coming here and sharing part of your story and also to thank the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation for the work that you do to educate people about the residential schools and the intergenerational impacts. You are our country's memory of the residential-school era, and in so doing you will form an important part of our country's conscience going forward.

So thank you for that work.

Ms. Fontaine: Stephanie, I just want to say miigwech for being here today.

We've known each other for many, many years in a variety of different capacities and I just want to lift up and just say for the record how impressed I've always been with your quiet strength and I just want to honour all of the work that you've done over the years and certainly the work that you're doing right now. As my—our brother, colleague, is saying, it's really important work, historical work, critical work, not only for us but more importantly for the youth. And so I just want to honour you as one indigenous woman to another just for your quiet strength and your resolve. And I just lift you up today.

Ms. Klassen: I also want to thank you for your speech today. It was wonderful.

We're still looking for our family members that were taken into the States as part of the '60s scoop on my mom's side. And the ones that we have found absolutely do not want anything to do with our family because we're Indians. And so that fight is still ongoing today. And so I appreciate you sharing that information. It has to be spoken about, and I appreciate your telling us your story and how you're able to survive. And so, I'm hope—I always get hope when I hear people want to forgive and want to come back. And it just provides me with hope.

So, thank you for coming today.

Mr. Helwer: Thank you for coming today and presenting. I don't think that many of us realize how intimidating this building is, so you showed a great amount of confidence in your presentation.

Thank you for sharing with us today.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation, Ms. Scott.

I will now call on Samantha Flett. Thank you, Ms. Flett.

Do you have any written material to distribute to the committee? No. Thank you very much.

Please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Samantha Flett (Private Citizen): I support this bill.

This is my first time doing this, so—

Madam Chairperson: Ms. Flett, please proceed.

Ms. Flett: I'd like to say that I would love to have this day for my grandparents and all the families who were in residential school.

My grandpas—my grandparents are still alive, but I know that everyone who was in residential schools still have those memories. All those children that were in residential schools has lost their innocence, their culture, their childhood, even their lives. I don't want that to happen again—or to any culture. I don't want history to repeat.

Thank you for listening to my voice.

* (12:10)

Madam Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Flett, for your presentation.

Do committee members have any questions?

Mr. Kinew: I just want to say, Ms. Flett, that you're very strong for standing in front of us and sharing your words, but also sharing your emotions and your feelings. So I want to thank you very much.

Ms. Klassen: I also want to say thank you for sharing your tears. It only makes us stronger and we will definitely listen to the voices of our youth to speak on behalf of all of Manitoba youth here today.

Thank you for that courage. Miigwech.

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: I, too, would also like to thank you for sharing and for coming here on behalf of your grandparents. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation.

That concludes the list of presenters I have before me. Are there any other persons in attendance who wish to make a presentation?

Seeing none, that concludes public presentations.

* * *

Madam Chairperson: We will now proceed with clause by clause consideration of Bill 223.

Does the bill sponsor, the honourable member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), have an opening statement?

Mr. Kinew: Just briefly, I want to thank Ms. Flett, Mr. Fontaine, all the presenters that we had here today representing young people, residential school survivors, educators, and the public here in Manitoba for weighing in. It is a powerful day I will not soon forget, and I think probably everyone sitting on the committee here today would say the same.

I want to also extend a sincere thanks to all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and from every party for, you know, going along with this procedure that we're following today, which is unique, to say the least, but I do very much appreciate it and I think the emotion in the room speaks to the importance of doing so.

So I just want to express my gratitude.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the member.

Do any other members wish to make an opening statement on Bill 223?

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; preamble—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

The hour being 12:13, what is the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Committee rise.

Madam Chairperson: Committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 12:13 p.m.

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