

**Stakeholder Consultation  
Session**

**Séance de Consultation des  
Parties Prenantes**

**Commissioners / Commissaires**

The Honourable / L'honorable J. Michael MacDonald,  
Chair / Président

Leanne J. Fitch (Ret. Police Chief, M.O.M)

Dr. Kim Stanton

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## II **Appearances / Comparutions**

Serwaah Frimpong	Policy Advisor (Facilitator)
Megan Harris	Engagement Coordinator (Co-facilitator)
Shawna Wright	Community Outreach Coordinator, Inspiring Communities (Between the Bridges)
Leland Maerz	Counsellor, Bridges Institute

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--- Upon commencing on Thursday, September 15, 2022 at 1:00 p.m.

**MS. SERWAAH FRIMPONG:** Great, thank you.

So welcome, everyone, and thank you for being here today. I'll ask you to please introduce yourself and tell us about your organization briefly, things such as what is the mission and vision of your organization and what populations do your organizations serve?

I'll start with you, Shawna.

**MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Oh, okay. I'm new to -- I'm with -- my name is Shawna Wright. I'm the Outreach and Engagement Coordinator for Inspiring Communities. I'm absolutely new to the organization. I saw the email. That's why I'm here.

Inspiring Communities, but I'm with Between the Bridges, and we serve the Dartmouth North Community. And our job, myself and Anne -- Anne's on vacation -- we -- like I say, we work with the Dartmouth North Communications in -- Community, sorry, Dartmouth North Community, and we are looking to help the community create programs. Like I say, we're new, so there's 10 million things that we can be doing. There's things that there should be in the community that are not that we're trying to create.

This is -- I don't even think I've been here for three months, so I thought -- like I said, Charlene sent the email out, thought it looked interesting, so I thought I wanted to be a part of it.

**MS. SERWAAH FRIMPONG:** Thank you so much, Shawna.

I'll move over to you, is it Leland?

**MR. LELAND MAERZ:** Leland, yes. Thank you.

**MS. SERWAAH FRIMPONG:** Leland.

**MR. LELAND MAERZ:** Yeah, Leland Maerz. I'm representing Bridges Institute today, which is a counselling agency in Truro serving the

1 Colchester/East Hants community, more or less a partner institution to New Start in  
2 Dartmouth, for those that are familiar with New Start.

3 I've been here 10 years. It's been running much longer than me.  
4 The director, Tod Augusta-Scott was even here in the nineties, so 10 years is still a blip.  
5 But it's been a while since I've been here. I'm only one day a week, but this is kind of  
6 where my specialty lies, is working with men, women, children, and the queer  
7 community, addressing domestic violence and intimate partner violence and gender-  
8 based violence.

9 I've been involved in running groups for men and doing individual  
10 counselling for men from the community, self-referred or mandated through the courts,  
11 through the probation system, and/or child protection under Policy 75. So a lot of my  
12 work actually is with child protection, working with families, particularly with men, but  
13 often with women as well, and with people who've been harmed and people who have  
14 engaged in harming others. So I kind of do all, like, both.

15 It's given a bit of a -- it's given me a perspective for sure to work  
16 kind of on both sides of that.

17 I also work at Dalhousie University, and was hired there about three  
18 years ago now. I was working there part time and then I got hired on full time, so I'm a  
19 student counsellor there.

20 And I do a little bit of private work as well, specifically, in this  
21 particular field of family violence and gender-based violence.

22 What could I say? Bridges has served this community a long time,  
23 and it's constantly evolving, and it's still evolving in how we perceive and conceive of  
24 our role in addressing these issues. So I'm really glad to be a part of this meeting  
25 today, develop and maybe speak into some of the issues, and also to listen to what  
26 other people have to say. I have to say I'm glad to be here.

27 I have to apologize in advance that I have to leave at two o'clock,  
28 which is not something I would have preferred to have to do, but unfortunately, the

1 nature of me last minute coming on here like this meant that I had to cut away at two  
2 o'clock for another client, so I'm apologizing in advance for that. Thanks.

3 **MS. SERWAAH FRIMPONG:** Thank you for making us aware of  
4 that and for all of your great work.

5 I did have the pleasure of interviewing Tod Augusta-Scott for --- so  
6 I'm familiar with Bridges.

7 **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** Oh, great. Yeah, nice. Okay.

8 **MS. SERWAAH FRIMPONG:** Yeah.

9 Okay. So I will mention on the record that we are recording this  
10 audio for our session today just so that it can just be transcribed into English and  
11 French to be posted as a public document.

12 Although we are on Zoom right now, the video of our session today  
13 will not be saved or posted.

14 And by way of introduction to our session, I'll also mention that one  
15 of the important outcomes from this Commission is to make meaningful and effective  
16 recommendations that will help make Canadian communities safer in the future, and so  
17 both of your inputs is critical to shaping the Commission's final recommendations.

18 And my role as the facilitator today is to support each of you in this  
19 conversation. This means that I'll help with the flow, keep track of time, and explore  
20 related topics where it might be helpful. And as much as she is able, my co-facilitator is  
21 also here to help, and we have Hannah available here to help with any technical issues.

22 I should have said my co-facilitator, Megan, is here to help.

23 And so during this meeting, we'll be discussing gender-based and  
24 intimate partner violence, specifically, by asking you a series of open-ended questions,  
25 and we're aiming to spend roughly 10 minutes per question. If we need more or less  
26 time, there's some flexibility but I am taking note of your having to leave early, Leland.

27 So we've shared the questions in advance, and so you're free to  
28 decide how much or how little you wish to share with us.

1                   And lastly, when you're talking, we make a point to note that  
2 everyone should be listened to respectfully and without interruption.

3                   So I'll ask the first question that was sent to you in advance for both  
4 you, Leland, and Shawna.

5                   How can men and boys be encouraged to cultivate healthy  
6 relationships and to avoid using violence?

7                   Leland, I'll start with you.

8                   **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** Thanks. This is the one I think put the  
9 most thought into, because it fits most with the role that I have here at Bridges.

10                  So I made three points here, and I'll elaborate a little on each one. I  
11 wasn't sure how big of a group this was going to be, so I'll try to elaborate a little bit to fill  
12 in the space.

13                  So I put down, first and foremost, opportunities to connect and  
14 speak with one another in a safe, facilitated, and confidential environment. I think men  
15 don't see that as something they need, and then when they have that experience, they  
16 can't imagine having not had it.

17                  So I know how successful some of our programs have been and  
18 outreach in the schools with boys, and I know how powerful our group work can be here  
19 when we are able to get men in the room together to discuss their emotions and  
20 understand themselves and connect their past with their present, with both the harm  
21 that's been done to them and the harm that they've done to others.

22                  And I think, first and foremost, those opportunities to talk about  
23 these issues are -- that's the first thing to support, I think, men and boys with.

24                  The second one is encouraging men to identify and attend to their  
25 own shame, but doing that in a way that's non-shaming, which is tricky, especially  
26 where you might be speaking with someone who is not even treating you with very  
27 much respect because they may not want to be there or feel that it's unjust or unfair that  
28 they're having to talk to you. But I think -- well, what I see, this is a simple point, but it

1 has a lot of context, that if someone -- and I don't think it's just men, I think if anyone  
2 can sort of be -- get in touch with their own shame, and if it can -- instead of taking them  
3 in the direction of anger and violence and compensation and projection, and more take  
4 them in the direction of connecting with their values and what's important to them, even  
5 if they've contradicted their own values, I think it's very, very important to try and  
6 promote men to get into that space.

7                   It's not easy to do, and -- but I think so much of what we see in this  
8 violent behaviour, really, if you follow the breadcrumbs back, it goes back to shame, and  
9 it often goes back to experiences where men themselves have been victimized and they  
10 haven't actually attended to that or addressed it in any way.

11                   So really, specifically using that word shame here, that it's  
12 important that people are in touch with how their experiences have left them feeling  
13 about themselves and then connecting that with their behaviour.

14                   Then last, I put educated on the effects of trauma and how to  
15 address and heal from those effects. So sometimes it's a new idea to people where  
16 they're not to blame for the harm that's been done to them, but they're, in some ways,  
17 their own resource. They're the one that has to recognize how they've been impacted  
18 and then make choices and move towards the repair and healing in that. And I like to  
19 see myself as a facilitator and playing a role in helping men and women and others do  
20 that.

21                   I think it might be helpful to say that oftentimes, particularly --  
22 sometimes particularly with men, the effects of trauma can be seen as or coded as  
23 aspects of masculinity. So for example, you know, if you think of people being triggered  
24 into a state of fight/flight or hyper arousal, that some men might think that that's just  
25 them being protective, like, you know, have someone tell me that, "I can walk into  
26 Canadian Tire and size everyone up and know who I can take and who I can't, who I  
27 can handle, and where it's --" you know? And they're promoting that as an aspect of  
28 strength when actually, it's an injury. It's a nervous system injury. They're going into



1 fight/flight when they don't need to, so it's trauma.

2 And that can be really striking when someone realizes, oh my  
3 goodness, like, that's been happening to me? That's an injury? That's a -- it's an injury  
4 to my body and to my mind?

5 Yeah. And then likewise too, you know, drinking, checking out,  
6 becoming disassociated and away from one's own emotions, you know, you'll have  
7 someone say, "Oh, I don't care. I don't care what they think. I don't care what anyone  
8 does to me."

9 It's sort of like, that's being promoted as a kind of strength or kind of  
10 an aspect of masculinity to sort of celebrate, when actually, it really doesn't have  
11 anything to do with masculinity at all. Again, it's a traumatic injury. It's an effect of  
12 trauma. It's hypo arousal. It's a person going into a state where they can't actually feel  
13 themselves and access all their faculties. They're in a state of preserved preservation.

14 So I think like, educating men and boys in particular on trauma is  
15 really important, and it often opens up conversations where they realize they  
16 themselves have been victimized, and then that actually helps them take responsibility  
17 for some of the harms that they've created in their relationships.

18 I hope that's helpful. I mean, if there's any clarifying questions on  
19 anything I've said there, I'd be happy to elaborate more, but I'll stop there.

20 **MS. SERWAAH FRIMPONG:** Thank you. I do have some  
21 questions to follow up on, but perhaps I'll turn to Shawna first and then you two can  
22 engage in a conversation as well.

23 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** How can men and boys be encouraged?  
24 Interesting question.

25 I also work in HRCE as well, so I work with a lot of youth where I  
26 see a lot of violence. And actually, the school was trying to figure out, like, how to deal  
27 with this situation as well, and it's hard, because a lot -- from what I see, as you know, I  
28 mean, and I feel like it's generational, and it's like, you know, the violence is a learned

1 behaviour; they learn in growing up. You know, in a lot of cases, it's a vicious cycle, and  
2 I think it's important to create -- like was said before, create safe spaces that people can  
3 talk about this.

4                   There is a program called "The Brotherhood". I don't know if you  
5 heard about that? And they have barbershop talks, which I think is excellent and well  
6 needed. But I think that stuff needs to start at a young age. Like, they're trying to -- we  
7 are just trying to get kids to be kind and take responsibility for their actions, because  
8 that -- I mean, if you -- if that behaviour continues at young age and that violence is here  
9 now, I mean, we're only -- and at the school age level, we are basically managing  
10 behaviours at this level.

11                   So putting something in place at this level that is going to impact  
12 them, because their home life, you know, is what impacts them the most, but they're  
13 here for the majority of the day, so we're trying to put things in place to make them be  
14 responsible for their actions, because we've seen too much violence in the school.

15                   And from what I'm seeing, there's way too much violence in school.  
16 A lot of it is with, unfortunately, the male population, and I find that when you speak to  
17 home, you could tell that it comes from home.

18                   So my question is, how do you reach the people at home to help  
19 them see which way this is going? Like, it's not -- when I'm talking, I'm thinking of a  
20 couple of students in my head, you know what I mean? How do we change that  
21 behaviour? And it's not -- you can't just by talking. They have to trust; they have to  
22 have a safe place. And a lot of times, the safe place is not home, so how do we reach  
23 those kids, because that's where it starts. It starts when they're young, and I think it's  
24 so important to get to them while they're young.

25                   And I know that The Brotherhood program starts when they're 18. I  
26 feel that's too late, you know, and I'm going to have further conversations with them  
27 about that. But there need to be more programs out there specifically for young men,  
28 not when they're 18, because sometimes those behaviours are already ingrained by that

1 age. So it needs to start really young. I'm talking Grade 6, you know, because we've  
2 dealt with a lot of bad behaviour in our young men, unfortunately.

3 So I think there needs to be safe places in the schools that, you  
4 know, kids can go and talk to young men, you know? That's my take on that.

5 And yeah, definitely. And you know, I worked a lot in -- like, Adsum  
6 House and worked with people from Bryony House, you know, Stepping Stone. I don't -  
7 - I'm sure you're familiar with all those places, so -- and, you know, a lot of homeless  
8 situations.

9 So that's just kind of what I see out there, that it needs to start at a  
10 younger age because it is a learned behaviour. Kids are a product of their environment.

11 **MS. SERWAAH FRIMPONG:** Thank you, both, Shawna and  
12 Leland.

13 As you were both speaking, actually, I was thinking back to that  
14 comment around establishing safe spaces, and I'm wondering what you see as the  
15 barriers to establishing those spaces. It sounds like it's something that's being put  
16 forward, so perhaps there's not enough of them. So I'm wondering if you could please  
17 elaborate on the barriers on them.

18 And I'm also interested -- in discussing this question, it seems that  
19 a lot of people might think of healthy relationships as being how can you address men  
20 and boys' relationships with women, for instance, or children? And a lot of these  
21 answers seem to focus in on themselves or connecting with each other. So I'm  
22 interested in exploring why you think that is.

23 **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** Go ahead, Shawna, if you'd like.

24 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Oh no, you go ahead. I'll wait.

25 **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** Okay. Well, barriers, I think, have more to  
26 do -- I don't see a lot of barriers, apart from particularly men and boys' hesitance to seek  
27 help, and I think that's where Shawna's point about starting early matters.

28 We have someone running groups for junior high school boys,

1 Morris Green, and he's starting very early, in junior high school, and I think that that's  
2 absolutely correct about what Shawna is saying, is to getting men and boys familiar with  
3 talking about their feelings and about their relationships at an early enough stage that it  
4 becomes normalized. I think the barrier now is that that just hasn't been the cultural  
5 precedent, and so it becomes difficult to recruit men into the conversations that they  
6 quickly realize, once they're in them, how rewarding and good they feel when they're  
7 able to be honest with themselves and with other men.

8                   So yeah, the barrier really is the culture. It's not even the resource.  
9 Yeah, we could have as many groups as you want. I mean, as many -- as much  
10 funding as you could throw at getting boys in rooms to talk about relationships and  
11 feelings better, but it's not an insurmountable barrier at all, I don't think.

12                   Your next question, can you just clarify that second part of that for  
13 me?

14                   **MS. SERWAAH FRIMPONG:** Yeah. So my next question was --  
15 well, the original question was how can men and boys be encouraged to cultivate  
16 healthy relationships and to avoid using violence?

17                   And I notice that your answers tended to focus on, you know, how  
18 boys and men deal with shame, so things that are quite internal or personal, and also  
19 how they can connect with each other in safe spaces.

20                   And I'm wondering about if you can explain more about the focus  
21 on that as opposed to interpersonally with, for instance, women and children?

22                   **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** Right, I see. Yeah, thank you.

23                   Well, I think unless men are able to understand themselves and  
24 their own emotions and their own historical -- their own experience in life, and connect it  
25 with their present behaviour, there's no way they're going to be able to do it with  
26 anybody else, particularly their partners and their kids.

27                   So that's where it starts, and then you're right, there has to be  
28 rigorous conversation about how do you communicate with your partner? What is

1 discipline and how do you want to define it? And what do you think's healthy? And how  
2 was your experience being disciplined as a kid? And how would you like to do it  
3 differently with your kids? And what are your values around that?

4                   So yes, but I think it has to start with that intra-personal dimension  
5 first and then move to the inter.

6                   It's tricky because you can get kind of stuck there, you know? A lot  
7 of men and boys come with a lot of trauma, a lot of problems, and sometimes it's hard to  
8 pull away into talking about their behaviour, but that's sort of the art of being a good  
9 group facilitator or a therapist or a teacher or para-facilitator of some sort, right? That's  
10 the art.

11                   I think that's why. I'm definitely not saying they don't need the  
12 latter, it's just that they're not going to be able to do that unless they can first connect  
13 with themselves, and that shows the extent of the problem, literally, the core ability to  
14 connect and be empathetic and acknowledge mistakes without -- in an honest way. It's  
15 just not there. They just never learned it.

16                   So that's kind of why I think that intrapersonal dimension comes  
17 first. If they can respond to themselves, then they're going to be able to be able to  
18 respond -- be response able to others, and give proper care.

19                   And I've seen that happen. I've seen men many times go through  
20 that transformation, and it keeps -- it's a rewarding thing to participate in as a male,  
21 seeing other men go through that. I find it inspiring, yeah.

22                   **MS. SERWAAH FRIMPONG:** Thank you, Leland.

23                   Shawna do you have anything to add?

24                   **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Yeah, well, I agree with everything you  
25 said, and it's -- and I agree with -- there's absolutely no barriers to having these  
26 programs. They're just not out there. There's just not enough out there. We haven't  
27 started them. I could start it here at the school, but I would prefer that's started by  
28 somebody with a little more -- that's connected with, like, counselling or something,

1 within the school systems. Like SchoolsPlus should start something like that.  
2 Everything is for girls, and guys don't generally go to groups that talk.

3 And there's a lot of pressure on men in our society to be tough, to  
4 be strong, not allowed to cry, you know that kind of stuff. So that's been years and  
5 years and years of that. So they're not going to be drawn to those type of things.

6 And as a mother of three boys, I try to make -- if they cry, it's okay  
7 to cry, right? And so they can -- so they will talk about their feelings.

8 And mothers need to be a part of that. It's okay. Like, don't tell  
9 your son, "Stop crying," because you wouldn't tell it to your daughter, so like, it's all  
10 kinds of variables here. I mean, we could talk about this all day, but there's more  
11 pressure, as we all know, on men not to show their feelings for generations.

12 So now we want them to talk so they can be healthier. Women are  
13 healthier because they -- women are more in touch with their feeling, because from  
14 kids, that was nurtured into us; boys, not so much, right?

15 So it's just changing that whole dynamic and taking the pressure off  
16 of young men, the young men, and telling them it's okay to cry, it's okay to have feeling.

17 And you have -- when you do that, you have stronger, healthier,  
18 mature young men. I've seen it with my own eyes, so I know it can be done. I know it is  
19 done, but on a larger scale, it is not. All young men don't have access to that. So if it's  
20 accessible in our schools, man, you could reach a lot of young men that way.

21 **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** Could I say something in additional there?  
22 Another thought comes to mind about taking a non-shaming approach. Sometimes that  
23 means being very careful how we use terms like "toxic masculinity" for example. I think  
24 we need to be careful. I mean, I use that term ubiquitously in my work; however, I'm  
25 mindful that even I can fall into essentializing men as just being, by default, toxically  
26 masculine, right?

27 And so I'm aware of the statistics, and they're pretty clear about  
28 men's use of violence, for example, in relationships. However, when I'm sitting across

1 from a man or a boy or a teenage male, I'm careful not to -- I have to work actively not  
2 to essentialize them as having all of these stereotypical traits. And I find when I  
3 withhold that, when I backburner that whole stereotype -- which in other circumstances,  
4 might actually be a helpful stereotype to wield -- but when I'm doing that work, I  
5 backburner it, because I want to -- I don't want to assume that I know what that man or  
6 that boy's experience actually is. You know, they actually may not be as cut off from  
7 their emotions as I might think.

8                   And so, like, what Shawna's saying is so true about how men are  
9 socialized, and yet, if I get lazy in my assumptions about men, I miss opportunities to  
10 actually connect and help them connect with themselves correctly.

11                   So what I'm communicating there is that this work's careful. It's  
12 careful work. It's not -- you can't be sloppy when you get a bunch of men in a room and  
13 just talk about whatever and there has to be a very clear objective to the conversation,  
14 and a good -- and a qualified facilitator to understand how to create connection with  
15 folks that aren't accustomed to having it in that particular way.

16                   And I think with more of that happening, we'll see the culture shift  
17 quite a bit, actually. And I think there's indications of that happening, actually, already in  
18 schools a little bit. Yeah.

19                   **MS. SERWAAH FRIMPONG:** Thank you. Yeah, thank you both  
20 for those answers.

21                   I'll move on to the second question now which is, what resources  
22 and supports do women and children need to be safe and protected from violence?

23                   And Shawna, I'll start with you.

24                   I believe you're still muted.

25                   **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Like I mentioned before, I worked with  
26 women who -- and children who were victims of violence. We have places like Adsum  
27 House and Bryony House and things like that.

28                   Once women come to a place like that for safety, it's -- I don't know

1 if we -- like, I don't want to say a cheesy answer, like, we need more places like that.

2 We do. We do need more places like that for sure, but it's like,  
3 okay, after they -- it's almost like -- like, those are transition places, and it's like, after  
4 that, once they -- they're leaving, they're fleeing to these shelters from a violent  
5 situation, and then they're transitioning, helping them get into their own place. Like,  
6 what happens after they leave? That's the most important thing. Is that violence still  
7 there? You know what I mean? They're still unsafe. They're unsafe when they're with  
8 us because the individual will come to the shelter, right?

9 So I don't know if I can actually answer this question. I mean, you  
10 can educate. We've educated, for instance, women who have went back to that  
11 situation, but didn't end -- unfortunately, those situations didn't end well. So I don't  
12 know if putting more places like Bryony House and Adsum House there, it's not going to  
13 stop the violence 100 percent at all. I think educating the victim, I don't know, like, I'm  
14 scared of this question because it's not -- building more shelters for women is going to  
15 help that. Educating and -- what's the word I'm looking for -- we've -- I don't know,  
16 reforming your -- the violator. Like, how many programs are out there for that?

17 Once they're fled obviously, the police are called because a lot of  
18 times they're brought there by police or community services. What is done for the  
19 person who has committed the crime against them? What is done to re-educate -- like,  
20 to educate them, right? I think that will stop -- I don't even know if that will stop the  
21 violence because that person who violated them may be coming from a violent  
22 background. You know, a conversation is not going to help that.

23 That's a hard question to answer, you know? I don't know how  
24 many shelters you can put out there. That's not going to stop violence. It will keep  
25 them safe for the moment, but it's not going to keep them safe indefinitely if that  
26 person's still there and still wants to get to them. Like, I -- you know?

27 **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** Yeah, I think ---

28 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** They even know it's the place and --



1 yeah, go ahead.

2 **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** No, I'm just resonating a little bit with what  
3 you're saying. I think I appreciate kind of how you're approaching this question. I feel  
4 the same intuition, which is to kind of say -- like, I don't want to say we don't need more  
5 resources, like, we always do. Bring as many resources as you want.

6 However, I feel the focus on this question should be more whether  
7 those resources are made known to women and children, and how easy it is for them to  
8 access them, whether it's a shelter, a transition house, a child protection, whether it's  
9 actually, you know, presenting to the police.

10 Of course, all those resources need to be trauma informed. I think  
11 that's pretty well understood now, and we need more of that, a trauma informed  
12 understanding amongst those resources.

13 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** The police officers always know about  
14 those places and they'll bring them, and a lot of -- I mean, I've reported -- like, when kids  
15 confided in me about -- they said there was violence at home and I report -- it's my duty  
16 to report that to Community Services, and I've been in situations where they've done  
17 nothing for that child. They did not even go into the home, right? I've reported it to the -  
18 --

19 **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** I think ---

20 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** --- police.

21 **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** Yeah. I mean, helping, supporting women  
22 and children to access the resources is one of the resources that's required, I think, and  
23 also understanding the limitations of that resource. I speak with many women and  
24 children in my work as well who are frustrated with the resource, sometimes justifiably,  
25 and other times, it's like, that expectation is only going to create more suffering for you,  
26 you know?

27 And so another thing I -- I think another thing I wanted to say there  
28 about resources is women and children can also be their own resources. Sometimes in

1 this discourse, we actually rob women of the agency that they -- and children of the  
2 agency they already have because of how we gender the conversation as men being so  
3 dangerous and powerful and women being so -- and children being so weak and  
4 vulnerable, so like again, being careful about essentializing women based on their  
5 gender only, right, and being careful when we're offering resources within those  
6 resources when we're rolling them out to ensure that women and children get connected  
7 with their own agency, their own agency to make better choices.

8                   And I think that's what Shawna's saying about what happens after.  
9 Like, are they -- is that resource helping them connect with their sense of agency,  
10 connect with their own values, connect with their own goals in life so that when that  
11 resource isn't there any more, they feel as though they have the strength and the  
12 support to carry on on their own.

13                   And so I think my conversations with women, that's what stands out  
14 the most to me is the -- how the culture can inadvertently assume they don't have any  
15 agency or any ideas about how to do what's important to them, and treat them only kind  
16 of as a victim. I suppose that's why we talk about -- we use the word "survivor" in that  
17 sense, right? There's that negative connotation sometimes to that word.

18                   I mean, that's some thoughts I have, and in some ways, I'm kind of  
19 scared of the question too because I feel a little less, I guess, qualified to weigh in on  
20 that one, although I mean, I do work with women and children, but you know?

21                   **MS. SERWAAH FRIMPONG:** Thank you. I think what comes to  
22 mind with your answers to that question is whether there are different ideas about what  
23 safety might look like, and it's interesting what you say that the resources and supports  
24 and how we might think about institutional supports versus personal ones, and that  
25 those are really interesting answers.

26                   **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** So Serwaah, can I speak to that, just for a  
27 sec?

28                   **MS. SERWAAH FRIMPONG:** Sure.

1                   **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** That exact point?

2                   Yeah, I think sometimes that, you know, no contact orders, for  
3 example, right, issued by the police and the court, they can be really important in terms  
4 of keeping women and children safe, even if the woman in this case isn't necessarily  
5 initially enthusiastic about the no contact.

6                   But I think, like, it's those kinds of things that need to be assessed  
7 in context, because in one context, that's a life saver, literally; in another context, it  
8 actually puts the women and children at greater risk. So that sensitivity to context has  
9 to be there. That requires greater resource. It means qualified people on the scene  
10 assessing all the dimensions of the context of the situation.

11                   **MS. SERWAAH FRIMPONG:** Thank you. I'll move on now to the  
12 third question, which is, what resources, supports, and consequences do abusers need  
13 to break their cycle of violence?

14                   **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** Big question.

15                   **MS. SERWAAH FRIMPONG:** This is also another big question.

16                   **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** I'll just give the answer to that and we can  
17 all move on. Whoa, that is such a giant question.

18                   Shawna, how do you feel? Do you want to have a crack at it first?

19                   Sorry, you're muted again, I think.

20                   **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** I keep muting myself because there's  
21 noise in the background, so I apologize.

22                   What resources and supports? No, that's the other one. I mean,  
23 there's -- oh my gosh, did we kind of answer this question before? As far as resources,  
24 we kind of touched on it in the first question, but I feel like the consequences are always  
25 going to jail, but I don't know if that's the best consequence. There needs to be some  
26 rehabilitation, obviously.

27                   And yeah, the cycle needs to be broken, but how long -- is it like, a  
28 when people go to like rehab, should it be something like that? But how do we know

1 how long it -- is there actual studies on how long it takes to break someone's cycle?

2           You know, I know like they say if a child is traumatized, say, up until  
3 the age of 18 and they never went to counselling, when they turn 18, they say however  
4 long you were traumatized, double that, and that's how long it takes to, you know,  
5 recover. You know what I'm saying? So how -- like, are we putting a number on this?

6           But definitely, there are definitely some -- we always say  
7 counselling. Just seems so -- like we throw it out there, "yeah, they need counselling",  
8 but not to give away too much, like, unless you do the work, it's almost like if you're not  
9 admitting that you have a problem, you're never going to be helped. Like even if a  
10 person gets arrested for abusive -- their abusive behaviour, they go to jail, whatever, but  
11 if they're always saying, "I didn't do it, I didn't touch" -- like, if they're not admitting and  
12 they feel it was justified, how is counselling and whatnot going to help this person?

13           So the rehabilitation always depends on the human being who's  
14 willing to receive it. You could put all the resources and whatever you want out there,  
15 but if the person's not willing to receive it because they don't feel that they did anything  
16 wrong, even if they get caught, that's just falling on dead ears, you know?

17           So there is tons of resources, and you can have groups, you can  
18 send them to counselling which is definitely needed to break the cycle, and there's  
19 always repercussions for their actions, but unless the person is willing to receive it, I  
20 don't feel it's going to make any impact.

21           But like I say, we talked about before, people who are grown and  
22 do these things, there is resources, there's programs, and there's repercussions out  
23 there that they should be a part of, but if we break the cycle as a society and start when  
24 they're young so that men will talk about their feelings, young boys will talk about their  
25 feelings, so that doesn't happen in their future, that's a big undertaking. But that's like --  
26 that's something that -- a trend that needs to start and I've heard that you've said it has  
27 started and that's a good thing, but I think that's a serious thing. That's something that's  
28 bigger than what we're saying right now that needs to happen.

1                   **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** Yeah. I'm just looking a little carefully at  
2 this question too, and I actually kind of think that order is interesting, that consequences  
3 -- I'll reverse it -- the consequences, supports, and resources, so I think whether you're  
4 a male, a female, or you're not binary, I think if you've harmed, then you're in a process  
5 now, you're on a bit of a journey. It's not about one intervention. It's got to be several. I  
6 mean, this is -- I'm really passionate about this.

7                   I think initially, the way the system is set up to separate the abuser  
8 and keep the public safe is still important. I've actually grown in my appreciation for  
9 police and court intervention to separate people.

10                  I've seen that do harm too, harm to kids, harm to the abuser, harm  
11 to the victim, but there's no other -- you've got to intervene and separate, even if there's  
12 negative consequences of that separation.

13                  So one of the consequences of -- in harming someone else or  
14 being engaged in this abuse is you can expect to be either put in jail or removed from  
15 your kids and your partner. That has to happen, even without the full Kent context  
16 being understood yet.

17                  So I think consequences, they need to be pretty quick and they  
18 need to be firm. But if we stop there -- this is Shawna's point, right -- just put someone  
19 in jail or follow through with the charge and sentence them, that's awful. Now you --  
20 someone -- like, I had a fellow tell me, "I learned more from you in one hour than I did in  
21 prison for an entire six months," you know, in our conversations.

22                  So that was a sad thing to hear, because there's six months where  
23 that person could have been doing some good work, and they were up for it, had it been  
24 available to them.

25                  So that brings to support. How do we -- so once that consequence  
26 of separation and maybe jail time is there, then how do we support the abuser to take  
27 responsibility for the harm that they've done? That requires therapy because it requires  
28 a person to take stock of their entire life and try and understand exactly how they got to

1 this place where they were capable of harming someone in this way, violating their own  
2 values often in the process. So they have to be supported to do that. So you can't stop  
3 at just the consequence of charges, separation. It has to go to being supported to see  
4 why the harm took place and understand how the act -- and understand the harm itself,  
5 like, what is the harm? What did I actually do? A lot of men don't understand the  
6 impact of their behaviour on their kids and on their partners.

7                   And then resources, at the end, and the third one is being  
8 resourced to understand what healthy relationships are; being resourced to be able to  
9 move forward to be a better father, a better mother, a better partner; and become a new  
10 version of themselves. And I don't think you can just do that in isolation. You're  
11 certainly not doing it in a jail cell, I don't think, although you do hear people coming out  
12 of prison with a different mindset for sure.

13                   I hope that's helpful. That's how I got that.

14                   **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** I just kind of feel like people -- like, not to  
15 give away too much, but I grew up around people who behaved in this manner, right?  
16 Like, I've seen it, growing up. And I felt like the abusers in certain situations, they only  
17 stop. Like, they had different relationships and they abused, and then I watched their  
18 kids, their son, their sons abused, right? And it's a learned behaviour because their  
19 father abused them. Like, it's just a trickle-down effect. And the only reason it stopped,  
20 in some cases, because they got too old. You know what I mean? Like, there was no  
21 consequences, nothing.

22                   Well, the consequence was eventually the woman left, the woman  
23 left the situation. Then they just got somebody else they had, but then when you look at  
24 that person's sons, unfortunately, the sons then abused their partners, right?

25                   And then the daughters got into abusive relationships. So it was all  
26 like, products of their environment.

27                   Sitting back watching that, that blew my mind, you know what I  
28 mean? And at some point, right, somebody has to -- okay, like, nobody stepped up and

1 stopped it, and I thought, okay. And I'm watching like my cousins. Like they're, you  
2 know, they're a product of that violence, and they -- and their mother decided, I'm going  
3 to stop this. This cycle stops here, and it actually stopped. They don't do that to their  
4 partners. They have a good relationship with their kids. That's the only way that  
5 stopped, in that one line.

6 **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** That's -- we appreciate you sharing that,  
7 Shawna, because I can kind of -- I feel like I can partner with you and say more, based  
8 on what you said.

9 I mean, you're really describing the cycle of violence. I mean, that's  
10 what this question's talking about, the cycle is generational. You're stating it so  
11 beautifully, in my opinion, and it's very tragic and sad to -- must be, to just watch that  
12 play out right in front of your eyes ---

13 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Hundred percent.

14 **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** --- in your own family.

15 I guess I'm thinking that the consequences, the supports, and the  
16 resources have to make sure that they are, in fact, breaking that cycle and not just  
17 actually perpetuating it.

18 So for example, if you separate a couple and then you don't offer  
19 the support to take responsibility and you just put someone in jail or they just get  
20 sentenced, you know, to probation or whatever, you're actually not doing anything to  
21 break the cycle of violence, and you have to follow through. The whole journey has to  
22 be, the person -- that needs to be tracked as much as possible all the way through.

23 I think -- or if you, for example, don't -- there's no intervention to  
24 separate and you try and then engage that person to take responsibility, that won't work.  
25 I mean, that person needs to be removed from the situation often in order to be able to  
26 see clearly what's going on.

27 And so it's a -- I think it's the process that needs to be researched  
28 and studied a bit more, and theorized a bit more, not necessarily in just a detached

1 academic way, but in a very practical way.

2 Sometimes there's not the coordination required to break that cycle.  
3 You can interrupt it, but then it just goes right back. How do you see it through to  
4 actually ---

5 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Especially if the partner goes back. The  
6 partner, like, a lot of times will go back until – and it's a low self-esteem, it's all kinds of  
7 issues, there's so many layers. Like, it's -- I mean, there's so much to dig through with  
8 that one issue.

9 **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** Very true. And then still respecting  
10 people's right to make -- you know, to have their own agency and to determine their  
11 futures and not impose on them into such a way that you take away, actually, the very  
12 abilities that they need to actually understand and figure out for themselves what their  
13 next steps are, so it's delicate.

14 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Yeah, very much so.

15 **MS. SERWAAH FRIMPONG:** Thank you both for that discussion.

16 I'm noting the time, that it's -- we're almost at the hour. So Leland if  
17 there's anything you wanted to state on the record, either on the questions to come or  
18 something we've already stated? I'll give you the time now before you have to leave.

19 **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** Sure, thanks.

20 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** I have to leave too, at two o'clock, just  
21 saying.

22 **MS. SERWAAH FRIMPONG:** Oh, okay. I wasn't aware.

23 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** I apologize.

24 **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** I would be really interested in what  
25 Shawna has to say about considering the needs of vulnerable and marginalized  
26 individuals and communities. I have worked with marginalized communities.

27 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Yeah, I was marginalized.

28 **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** Yeah, and I just have one thing to say



1 about that, and that is that often I hear from -- in this area -- from marginalized --  
2 members of marginalized communities that -- because I'm, you know, often having a  
3 conversation about the difference between us in terms of race, culture, everything,  
4 sexuality, just pointing that out and making it known that I want to be sensitive to  
5 difference, but also not -- but also see it as kind of a resource.

6 I often hear, for example, from clients from Millbrook or  
7 Sipekne'katik that they appreciate being able to talk to someone who's outside of the  
8 community because they appreciate the confidentiality and they appreciate the outside  
9 perspective.

10 So though there's big limitations to what I can offer in terms of my  
11 life experience and understanding, there is a way in which the difference between  
12 myself and another person might be also seen as a resource at times. That's just an  
13 idea that I've had recently because sometimes I have just found that I've had some  
14 really good conversations with men who would themselves agree that they were from a  
15 marginalized community. So I like to be hopeful around that, at the same time, careful  
16 in terms of how I'm wielding perspective, yeah. Sorry, go ahead.

17 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** No, it's okay. I appreciate what you say  
18 when you want to talk to somebody from outside of the community, and I feel like in the  
19 Black community, it's the same way. Like, they want to speak to somebody that nobody  
20 knows about. They want to know about the resources, but we don't -- it's not -- we're  
21 very private.

22 So that's why when things happen in -- I can only speak on our  
23 communities -- when things would happen in our community with somebody down your  
24 street, your cousin or your family member might know about it, but nobody else knows  
25 about it outside that community.

26 And we don't talk about it. Like, it's only now that people are now  
27 going to get counselling and stuff like that. And we didn't talk about mental illness or  
28 anything, any -- like, dyslexia or anxiety or, like, abuse. We don't talk about that stuff.

1 That's a cultural thing.

2 I don't know how much of an impact you're going to make in those -  
3 - I mean, it's different now, right? Before, everything was hush-hush. Everything is so  
4 kind of out there on social media now, right? Everything has changed, but I still find that  
5 -- and people are more apt to call the police now than they were before. You never --  
6 you're not supposed to call the police.

7 But I still feel that the hush-hush is still there. Like, they -- if the  
8 person is from the community and they're a counsellor and they're Black, they're not  
9 going to go to that person, right?

10 So I understand what you were saying from different communities.  
11 They expect that the privacy of that, right, because they're not -- they know that  
12 nobody's going to know that I'm getting abused and I'm getting help and -- but I feel like  
13 there needs to be -- the resources need to be there. People need to know that they're  
14 there, but they also want the privacy about that as well.

15 **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** So diversity in our institutions is important  
16 too?

17 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Yeah, yeah.

18 **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** There's representation in our institutions to  
19 accommodate all that?

20 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Yeah, 100 percent. But -- can you guys  
21 hear that? There's a lot of noise.

22 **MS. SERWAAH FRIMPONG:** Sorry we have some background  
23 noise happening for the transcript, but no problem.

24 Thank you so much for those comments.

25 Because we have to go, then I will go to the closing remarks,  
26 Megan, if that's okay? Yeah, okay.

27 So on closing, we appreciate you both being here today, and on

1 behalf of the Commission team, we thank you for sharing your perspectives.

2 If you have more you would like to share with us, please don't  
3 hesitate to reach out to the Commission. We've developed a discussion guide  
4 summarizing the kinds of issues that we are exploring and asking questions to help you  
5 think about recommendations. It's available on our website, so if you could please use  
6 the discussion guide, share it with others who you think might also have ideas or  
7 recommendations to bring forward, we'd greatly appreciate that. And you can always  
8 call, email, or mail us.

9 And thank you again for participating.

10 Hannah, I know, has some information about the discussion guide  
11 and the website and all of that information, so that's it for me. Thank you.

12 **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** Thank you for the opportunity ---

13 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Well, thank you so much. Yeah. Nice  
14 meeting you.

15 **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** Nice meeting you, Shawna.

16 **MS. SHAWNA WRIGHT:** Take care.

17 **MR. LELAND MAERZ:** Bye for now.

18 --- Session concludes

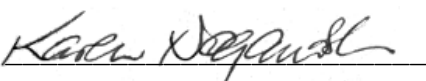
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## 20 C E R T I F I C A T I O N

21

22 I, KAREN NOGANOSH, hereby certify the foregoing pages to be an accurate  
23 transcription of the audio recording provided to the best of my skill and ability, and I so  
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