

physical, emotional, social, economic, gender, or age position.”<sup>32</sup> The Committee heard that “the cause of abuse is an imbalance of power.” According to this thesis, “the person abuses basically in order to exercise some power that individual feels they themselves are lacking. That exercising of power is a gradual thing, not an overnight thing. They gradually isolate the victim, and they gradually reduce the victim’s self-confidence.”<sup>33</sup>

Related to this was the discussion about the cyclical nature of abuse, so that “...a child who is abused has a greater likelihood of becoming an abused wife, and a wife who is abused has a greater likelihood of becoming a senior who is abused maybe by her son, who grew up watching his father abuse his mother.”<sup>34</sup> In addition, the age of an abused individual was relevant. Thus, “...as the individual becomes older, they become more isolated, frailer, and more vulnerable. They are less likely to ask for help.”<sup>35</sup>

Witnesses also talked about “aggravating” factors that included unemployment, economic deprivation, the abuse of alcohol, care-giver stress, and social isolation.<sup>36</sup> Winnie Giesbrecht of the Native Women’s Association of Canada told the Committee of the chronic poverty experienced in native communities across Canada and of the immeasurable impact on the aboriginal family: “The absence of a sound economic base and the extremely high levels of unemployment result in overcrowded and substandard housing, which contributes to poor health, but it is the daily stress, the financial hardships, and the chronic despair that poverty inflicts upon its victims that contributes to this widespread abuse of the elderly.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Health Services Directorate, Health Services and Promotion Branch, Health and Welfare Canada, *Guidelines for Establishing Standards: Health Care Related to Abuse, Assault, Neglect and Family Violence*, Report of the Sub-committee on Institutional Program Guidelines, Ottawa: 1989, p. 6.

<sup>33</sup> Scott, 1:18.

<sup>34</sup> Scott, 1:19.

<sup>35</sup> Scott, 1:20.

<sup>36</sup> Scott, Presentation to Sub-Committee, Feb. 2, 1993 and Podnieks, 3:8.

<sup>37</sup> Giesbrecht, 9:17.