

**CHAMPIONING NATIVE CHILDREN FROM CANADA****CINDY BLACKSTOCK****27 MARCH 9.30 am**

>>RINGA HĀPAI: (Te reo Māori). (Karakia Whakataka Te Hau). Kia ora and welcome once, twice, thrice to each and every one of you that has taken the time to tune into Te Tiriti-based Futures today. Personally I've been really loving the opportunity to listen and engage with such a diverse range of whakapapa and ideas over the past ten days. My name is Toni Shepherd and I come from Te Waipounamu, the southern island of Aotearoa and the centre of my universe. I consider myself to be a Māori activist, a wahine, a grandmother, a mother, a healer, and I'm currently working as the Māori Health director at Starship Children's Hospital. And contextually in the midst of the global health pandemic, revolutionary health reforms, I have the immense privilege of chairing this session as a passionate advocate, voice and champion for mokopuna and tamariki.

And today we welcome our rangatira from the First Nations people of Gitksan in Canada. These territories are located in the Skeena Watershed of British Columbia. So ngā mihi mahana ki a koe, Cindy. Cindy Blackstock has spent her career as an activist for indigenous children's rights in Canada. An influential voice within indigenous, social work and child rights communities, Cindy has been described as Canada's relentless moral voice for First Nations equity. Cindy has been instrumental in challenging systemic inequities and human rights discriminations for First Nations children, young people and their whānau. She's earned a multitude of degrees and honours, and I believe has the satisfaction of knowing her work as a First Nations activist makes a difference in the lives of children.

In just a moment I'm going to hand over to you, Cindy, but I just firstly wanted to encourage the whānau to be active in the chat, let Cindy know your thoughts, how you're finding the talk, and ask any pātai or any questions in the Q&A tab you'll see on the bottom of your screen, so we can really explore the care of indigenous children throughout Aotearoa and the globe. So ka huri te whare, over to you, Cindy.

>>PROF BLACKSTOCK: Thank you Toni, what a great honour to join you from unseated and unsundered Algonquin territory here in Ottawa, Ontario. I also want to pay my respects to your ancestors and to all of the children, the young people and the families in your nations around the world. You know, the funny thing about history is that we're all actually living it. We are the echoes of someone else's lived reality. And as indigenous peoples, we

always are mindful that others did well for us, so that we can live the lives we have today. And we have that obligation to fall in love with the generations we will never know.

To stand in the winds of discrimination, and to do it with dignity and to do it as a blessing and an honour, an opportunity to build on that legacy of non-discrimination that was passed down to us. I also think the funny thing about discrimination is that it's most dangerous when we normalise it. And so I want to take you through a little bit of a history of some litigation that we've been involved with, and that's what those children from Carrier Sekani were singing about. They wrote and composed that song. And the litigation was necessary because the government of Canada provides less funding for public services to First Nations than to all other people. It is an apartheid public service system that dates back to Canada's confederation, and for far too long it has been allowed to get in the ways of the hopes and the dreams of too many generations of children.

And this type of -- I think my screen sharing's disabled so we'll have to enable my screen sharing here in just a minute. This type of discrimination, the normalisation of it, happened because of propaganda to the non-indigenous population, but also propaganda I think that shaped the way that we advocated, the way that we saw what was possible for ourselves. And so I'll take you through this for a little bit here, you'll see my messy desktop. The one thing about the virtual world, you can't hide the mess on your computer.

And I really started to think of myself when I entered into this work 30 years ago, I really was thinking that this was something that could be solved by research. We were going to document the inequalities for First Nations people, we were going to do that with the government, we were going to create solutions and they were going to fix it.

And then on the other side I would see people negotiating treaties, and I would see other people doing road blocks, but none of this really seemed to do very much in terms of substantive change. So the question then began is why is this menu of resources about how to address change so limited?

And I started to think about Canada's history, and of course this came into stark relief after the affirmation of the survivors truths from residential schools this past summer, and now still continuing, of the children in unmarked graves in Canada's residential schools. These residential schools operated for over 100 years in this country, and they were forced assimilation camps, really better thought of as re-education camps for indigenous children, where they were forcefully removed and then relocated, but they were

also, in many ways, death camps. You were more likely to die in one of these schools as a child than as a Canadian soldier was in the Second World War.

And this was happening and Canadians were shocked and they couldn't believe that this actually had gone on. And therein lies the problem. Why were they shocked? Because the survivors had been telling their truths for decades.

Another thing that was happening is our political leadership were saying "oh yeah, those residential schools were bad, but they're a dark chapter in Canadian history. Don't worry Canadians, everything is okay today."

The next week the Canadian government was taking First Nations children to court to try and deny them a legal victory that had been awarded by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ordering Canada to remedy its discrimination against First Nations children and children's services. So we have Canada fighting this generation of children at the same time when they're lamenting what they've done to the previous generations.

And so why is this, like how does this happen? You know, I think about the definition of colonialism, there's many out there, but this one for me really has something. It's by Eduardo Galeano, he's a Uruguayan journalist. And he talks about the different forms of colonialism, the blatant colonialism that we saw with the dispossession of lands, the dispossession of resources. But then there's this thing called invisible colonialism that has the effect of convincing you that serfdom is your destiny and impotence is your nature. It convinces you it's not possible to speak, not possible to act and not possible to exist. And this potion of invisible colonialism is embedded in propaganda that is not only -- that not only subjugates indigenous peoples in Canada, it also disables the Canadian population from being able to see clearly the ongoing injustices and be able to press the government for kind of change.

And I'm just going to show you a couple of ways it manifests. One is, of course, we're still in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic, although you wouldn't know it here in Ontario where they lifted the mask mandate, but nonetheless there was a lot of talk about the Spanish Flu as this thing was rolling out. But no-one was talking about the great dying, and the great dying followed the 100 years since 1492 when the Europeans first settled in North America. Over 90% of the indigenous peoples in the America died in the 100 years following.

That was the opening introduction of colonialism in the Americas. Imagine how disrupted society would be when you're losing that level of knowledge, of relationship, and

you're set in profound grief for the other 10%. And then from there we had the dispossession of land, dispossession of resources and the residential schools that dispossessed First Nations Metis and Inuit peoples and their children. No-one even talks about the great dying, that's kind of an invisible colonialism.

This other piece in residential schools is a tendency for Canadians to say "people back then didn't know any better, and even if they did know better they had different values". Well, that's easy to think unless you actually put people in conversation back then unless you look at the historical records.

This is Canada's Chief Medical Health Officer in 1907. He was President of the American Public Health Association, Dr Bryce, and he was sent out to look at the health of the children in residential schools. And he found that the children were dying at a rate of 25% a year, or 50% over three years. In one school for which there were complete death records, for every three children that walked in, only one would walk out alive and the cause was that unequal healthcare funding and terrible health practises in the schools.

He came back to Ottawa and to our Prime Minister and said "fix this, you could save a lot of children's lives." And here's another thing about invisible colonialism; the Canadian government would say it failed to act. It didn't fail to act, it thought about Dr Bryce's report, it did not disagree with his findings, it chose not to do any differently. And it in fact just retaliated against Dr Bryce to try and keep him quiet. But he wasn't and he kept on speaking out, and newspapers would cover this.

And the same pattern echoes forward in Canada's treatment of First Nations Metis and Inuit children. It's not that they don't know better, it's not that they don't have the solution, it's that they're choosing not to implement them.

But we are consistently writing reports and thinking that the reason that they're not doing it is they don't know any better, and in some ways that historical amnesia of all the reports that have gone before us is part of the problem. And I was an academic so I was part of the problem, you know, I was out there researching the solution instead of implementing the solution, and that's what was required. And when we get caught up in this pattern, it's the children who are suffering.

So our residential schools closed in 1996, but the inequalities in basic services, things like water, housing, child welfare services, everything like this was significantly under-funded for First Nations, it was about 30 to 50% less than everybody else. But there was so much propaganda in the Canadian public that these kids would be judged as if they

got more, right? The problem, according to the Canadian public, wasn't that we were getting less, it was because we weren't grateful for what they were giving us and somebody was taking advantage of the money, right, the old myth of indigenous people not managing their money well.

Well, the combination, similar to in Bryce's time, of the unequal funding and the trauma was meaning that we were having First Nations kids going into child welfare care at 17 times the rate of non-indigenous kids. And the key drivers are poverty, poor housing, addictions linked to the trauma, and domestic violence. And they use the word "overrepresentation", that's another way of, in my view, invisible colonialism, because it's too easy to say. So when I thought about this overrepresentation and we thought about what it would mean for children, we thought children count, "like how many days until I see my mum", right?

So when we looked at the amount of time we had sat at that table with Canada drumming up these solutions that they would then take and review and then not implement, during that time 78 million nights these children spent in foster care. That's over 213,000 years of childhood. That's the price of getting caught up in this cycle of not actually addressing the issue.

So that's why we filed finally a human rights complaint along with the Assembly of First Nations, which is our national organisation of political leadership in 2007, against Canada alleging that its inequitable funding was racial discrimination.

Now Canada took immediate action, just like it did against Bryce, it retaliated, it cut all of our funding, it cut all of the Assembly of First Nations funding for children and families and then it fought it tooth and nail on jurisdictional grounds. But thankfully it did not win. It took nine years to get that decision, but the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, having seen the evidence, was convinced that Canada was indeed racially discriminating against these children, basally telling them that these children were not worth the money, and they were ordered to stop. Canada did the typical, paraded out ministers, "we like this decision, this is a good thing", and then they didn't implement it.

So we've had now 21 non-compliance and procedural orders. But that, along with nesting this case in a social movement where we posted all of Canada's legal documents online, all of our documents online and invited the public to watch, and children were filling the courtroom, that's why you saw that animation, it was actually telling the true story of how children of all diversities filled the courtroom over this long history of

litigation. That public pressure, along with Canada's terribly losing legal record, resulted in the Canadian government now being forced to pay over \$42 billion more in supports for First Nations children that they otherwise would have not paid.

But so much of this I wish that I would have learned earlier. I wish the penny would have dropped for me earlier about how to do some of these strategies. And one of the things I just want to talk about for a minute is what is social justice, and what is social injustice? The children have taught me and reminded me that social justice is built on a foundation of love and light. And by light I mean the truth.

When we're doing social justice, we have to be committed to doing right, not being right. Because when you're willing to -- when your object is to be right, you're driven by ideology, and that's how can you go down the rabbit hole of like what happened on the capital building, or we had the nut case convoy here in Ottawa just recently where you get people who vehemently see the world in one way, they actually think they're morally justified in their actions. But they're unlinked to any evidence that what they're doing is in the public good. And they don't even listen to critique, they often will just rebut, do what Annie Leibovets says, the opposite of listening is not talking, the opposite of listening is waiting to talk. They're just waiting to push back one of their speaking points. And we get into the us/them dynamic, and there's a use of violence and discrimination. You know, unfortunately sometimes even in our own communities we see people are discriminating. Well, we're in this mess because of discrimination, it's not going to get us out of it, right?

So this is important to kind of demarcate because we're seeing the word "protest" really warped in meaning and used in dishonourable ways that bring harm. So we have to think clearly about what social justice is and what social justice is not.

And throughout our work at the Caring Society and with the Assembly of First Nations and others, we developed an advocacy strategy we call mosquito advocacy. Because like many of you we learn a lot from animals and I grew up in northern BC and there's beautiful rivers and huge beautiful trees and mountains but tonnes of mosquitos. And so our little organisation, the Caring Society, who partnered with AFN to bring this human rights case, we only have six staff, right, so we were taking on the largest legal firm in the country, the Department of Justice. We had already had our funding cut, how do you win against something that big, right?

So we looked at the mosquito as an inspiration for us, a teacher, if you will, because they're very small but they have huge impact with human beings anywhere around the

world. And it starts with being clear about what the problem is. Some people tell me child welfare is broken. I actually don't agree with that. I think what happens is we need to step back and see why children are over-represented in child welfare. It's because of the poverty, because of the trauma, because of the unaddressed addictions issues linked to that trauma. Those are the things that are broken. There's no way we can deal with those problems adequately by just fixing up the child welfare system, we have to get at the actual fire.

Then we need to have a solution that's evidence-based and consistent with our cultural teachings. So this is important is to advocate for the solution, not just to get bogged down in criticising a problem; making sure the government actually has the resources to implement it. And then when they choose not to do it, don't spend a lot of time with them anymore. Then your conversation has to be with the public. And with the courts, not with the government anymore. You've got to create the conditions for change and that's really what mosquito advocacy is all about.

So it starts off with having that evidence-based, what I call the first domino solution. And that's not the problem that -- it's a solution that will make solving the problem possible. And I'm going to try to convince you during this talk that culturally-based equity is the key thing that we should all be pressing for in our work, and I'll get to that in a minute. But it actually provides the opportunity for different nations of different diversity to be successful in their community-based solutions.

The second is having a good message. Sometimes we use language that actually the Canadian public doesn't understand. And if our object is to put pressure on the Canadian government, then we need them involved. There's a great book called "Don't Think of an Elephant" by George Lakoff. And when I started out doing advocacy I fell into this trap all the time. I would argue against the government using their own language. And what Lakoff says is that's completely wrong. He said when you argue against something and you use their language, you actually reinforce it. And he says that's the way our brains work.

So, for example, if I asked all of you to think of an animal, but gosh do not think of an elephant, you can't help it, can you, right? So he actually helps us be able to understand how to frame our message. So with the Caring Society we say that we are working with First Nations communities to ensure First Nations children have a fair chance to grow up safely in their homes, get a good education, be healthy and proud of who they are. A properly framed message is easy for 4-year-olds to understand and know is important. It's

also very hard to argue against. So check out George Lakoff's "Don't Think of an Elephant" book.

Another is we have to build a swarm. Sometimes we stay in our own cliques. Thankfully when we had all of our funding cut the elders on our board said "you have to stop going to social work things because if social workers could solve this it would be solved by now. We want you to go to rooms where you know nobody and we want you to go there and tell them what is happening to the children, but invite them to do something specific that they can help."

And so I often would go to conferences and just sit at the back table, and in my backpack I would have bookmarks with the "I am a witness" website of our case. And by the end of the morning I wanted to make sure everybody at my table had signed up and that I would have given them extras to have their family sign up.

The buzz; days of action are good but not sufficient. We need to be really looking at the target of the advocacy and using multiple approaches all year around and involving different actors in being able to express that. So in our case it was about children, we invited children of all diversities to come to the hearings and then to write to the government and say "what's going on, I don't want to grow up in a society where other kids get last, that's not right", right? That kind of stuff, using social media etc

And then the good old swarm, mosquitos do not just show up and think "oh well, I tried for a couple of hours, I think I'll go home", they're persistent and that's what we need to be, right? Persistent but not ideological. We need to be open to new evidence that might show that what we're doing is wrong or needs to be shifted.

And then finally, and I think this is where we (inaudible) the bite, right? Now I found out from biologists only the female mosquitos bite, so that aligns with our very, you know, we have very matriarchal cultures why where I'm from. But it's a peaceful action that you can take that forces them into change. That can be things like, for example, in a corporation going after their funders as the March For Our Lives youth did with the National Rifle Association in the US, they went after all their corporate sponsors, or as we're seeing in Ukraine the big corporations pulling out of Russia. But it also can be litigation nested in a public movement. So that's the strategy, so let's look at some of the tools you'll need.

The first is the moral courage question. We talk about advocacy but we don't talk about what the sacrifice is required in order to do it, and how to be courageous. There's a

guy, you know, when we think about moral courage, what it is is it's having the courage to speak and act when you personally or professionally will take a hit, or at least you think you're going to. And when we're standing in the winds of systemic discrimination it's often against powerful corporate or government actors. So it is very likely that you will take a hit. And the question is, how do you make sure that you're ready for that moment, that you're willing to stand there with others in this morally courageous activity?

And for social workers, we have to do it for people that will never know to be thankful to us. Because a lot of people will be morally courageous for their family or for their friends, but as social justice advocates, we have a higher duty than that. It's to that seven generations, a generation we'll never you know, right?

So what gets in the way of moral courage? Well, I don't know about you, I always tell my students we actually think it's easier to be morally cowardice. You know, just think of yourself on public transportation; somebody says something that's discriminatory to another passenger you don't know. You know you should do something, you can feel it in your gut, but then this narrative starts, "oh I don't want to make a big deal out of this, I don't want to make this person who's heard these bad things feel worse", or "maybe if I just ignore it it will stop." And what all of that really boils down to, though, is that you're too afraid to intervene in that moment.

And I have been there, all of us I think have been moral cowardice in a while and then two week down the stream you find you're replaying this in your mind and thinking about what you should have done, right? That's the price of moral cowardice, is we actually find ourselves acting in ways that are not coherent with our values.

Moral courage is, in that moment, despite all those narratives, you're still scared but you do something, right, you say something. Even if you fail, you have shown that person that you love them enough to care and do something. And you know what, in those situations I don't kick myself two weeks down the line, right?

So these are some of the things that get in the way of moral courage. Kind of loyalty to organisations, right, where we replace our own ethics with loyalty to organisations. We ignore or minimise dissenting opinions. We wring our hands too much, right? We are a bystander, we just don't think we're getting involved. But choosing not to get involved is getting involved and that's on the side of injustice.

And we also punish moral courage too often. We call people whistleblowers or everything else like this. And that's problematic but this is something that we need to develop in everyday life.

So I still, there are moments when I'm a moral coward, but I notice that I'm doing it, I make it a conscious choice and I try to practise being more morally courageous. Because when the chips are down and you're in front of a big issue with like, for example, for us losing all of our funding, you're actually going to be more apt to do the right thing when you practice.

And an elder gave us a great piece of advice with that, he said, you know, "never fall in love with the Caring Society, never fall in love with your business card, only fall in love with the children, because there may come a time when you have to sacrifice both those things for them." And I think that that's really important, is we keep our eye on the ball.

So here's this first domino problem I was talking about, that we need to. So we've got our courage taken away and now we're thinking about the problem. I want to talk to you about equity. This is a report we did with a pan-American health organisation and it focuses on equity from a perspective of indigenous peoples in the Americas and persons of afro descent.

And what we did is took the determinants of health but we realise they're western located and we restructured them and we, for example, introduce the land as a determinant of health, and we put land separately from climate change. But the bottom line is, if I was Prime Minister of Canada I would focus on one thing domestically. And that would be reducing the inequalities in our own society. If I do that I reduce youth suicide, I reduce incarceration, I improve the economy, I reduce the number of kids in care, I improve educational levels, everything is hooked to that. It is the closest thing in social justice that we have to a social bullet.

So everybody should know about the equity research and try to tie your work to that. And here's a great website free of charge where you actually compare your country versus other countries on different health metrics taken broadly. It's called gap minder and it's out of the UK. You can do all kind of simulations and learn more about equity.

I promised you the framing. Remember George Lakoff? You don't have to feel like you need to do it alone, go check out Frameworks Institute which will help you do that framing piece. So remember that you want it to be something that's embedded in deep

human values, but it has to reflect where you -- the world you want to get to, which is for us, First Nations children going safely in their homes, getting a good education, being healthy and proud of who you are.

A key mistake many people make is they will ask for an inquiry, for example, or an agreement. And you will get those things, but then there will be no change. It was the same thing with me and my reports, right?

So you need to make -- when you go to the public you want to sell a vision and then use a variety of tools in order to get to that vision. Frameworks has all kinds of pre-existing frames on different social justice issues for you. So if you're working, for example, with persons who are incarcerated, or if you're working with low income families or persons with mental health, you can go on here and actually see some of the frames and get inspired.

We've been thinking a lot about the interface between propaganda, also known as mind control, and colonialism. So we've been working with Dr Hassan out of the United States. He wrote the book *The Cult of Trump*. As we all know in the age of social media we're getting these algorithms that are curating realities, false realities for us; just feed us information that reinforces a belief. And that's why things like QAnon are really just taking off like wild fire, especially because people have been so isolated during the pandemic.

But I just wanted to kind of highlight here a few things that we're looking at in terms of the interface between the same process that's used for destructive cults or QAnon and colonialism. The first is on freezing your identity. This can be at individual or collective level. It's to disorient and introduce confusion. That can be through things like the great dying, it can be through things like removing children, dispossession of land, it just is to really pull the rug out from underneath you to get you to start to question and feel vulnerable.

And then they slowly introduce a new type of identity, some security for you, it has the false sense of security, but it also can just be an imposition of authoritarianism. "If I do X I am going to be punished or others will be punished on my behalf", even worse.

So and then you get to the refreezing, which is where your old identity is surrendered, where you're embarrassed that your parents were First Nations, for example, that that doesn't get shared in your family, and that you try to, as much as you can, associate with the new kind of regime.

I come from the West Coast, we have salmon, so I just played it out as a salmon here. And you can see, I am a salmon and always will be a salmon. Then that authoritarianism or colonialism gets in there, you start to think "why am I not like the other fish, right? What's wrong with me? I'm hurt when people call me a salmon. I'm not a salmon, I'm just a fish." And then "I've never heard of salmon." This is how it happens, right? But I think we need to really understand this stuff to be able to disrupt it. Because it's affecting both the First Nations population but the non-indigenous one as well. And we need to be able to unpack it at these different levels, of how thought control actually works.

So we are working on some videos, we have a podcast which I can put in the chat, and we're also going to be doing some written material, so wait for our thinking on that.

The other is the UN, a lot of people go there. I used to go there quite a bit; I don't go there as much anymore. Because I think people go because they think they'll actually do something. But in our countries, even though there are theoretically binding international human rights conventions, they really theoretically binding, there isn't really an enforcement mechanism for these. So these are useful to get recommendations on the country to then be able to implement in your domestic social movement, or in your own litigation, and that's what we did. But people going there and looking for remedies that will be enforced on States, particularly when you have a reluctant State, you probably should be thinking about something else.

We've been working a lot with young people in our work, and this is a fabulous group out of Ottawa, they're called the Assembly of Seven Generations and they wrote this report on what is accountability. You know, we talk about self-government and we don't always talk about the responsibility and accountability that has to be at the root of self-government in order for it to be effective. And that's what happened traditionally, there was all these accountabilities, right?

So this is a great report they just did as young people about that accountability. How are First Nations governments accountable to me? How should the government of Canada be accountable? How am I as an indigenous young person accountable? And one of the things they consistently come up with is implement the reports that are already on the books. Right?

And don't assume that sitting at a negotiating table for 10 or 15 years is actually going to create change. Like sometimes, you know, the best teaching is governments don't

create change, they respond to change. So that means we have to change the social environment and force them to the table.

Here is a group, you know, gets to moral courage, I personally experienced retaliation from Canada. I would love to see this declaration more widely known in our various countries. It's the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and in my view it should be encoded in domestic law in every country. And it provides protections for peaceful human rights defenders against whistleblowing, particularly against when the retaliation comes in the form of governments or corporations, but also, in some cases, cartels.

And for those of you who have experienced that type of retaliation, here's a great organisation out of Dublin, Frontline Defenders. They have all kinds of supports to help you deal with the retaliation. And what I say is -- first of all, don't be surprised when it happens. It will happen if they -- when they think you actually might win, right? That whole saying, first they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win, that's really true. And so prepare for it, right, that's part of that moral courage.

But when it happens, you have to use that in a manner that brings attention to your cause. And one of the biggest mistakes, I think, is people make themselves the victim. And when you do that, you've taken attention away from the cause. It's not that you're not a victim, you are, but what we want to do is use that as an opportunity to show just how egregious this injustice is. I mean all we're looking for is equality and culturally-based services for kids and the government of Canada is literally deploying 189 people around to follow me, right? That makes it even worse.

So this group has free resources but they're also willing to provide for people in life and death situations, you know, moving them out of the country, supporting their families, all kinds of great resources. So you're not going to be alone standing in the winds, Frontline Defenders is there for you.

Here is some of -- oh my gosh, look at all this text I have on here for some reason. We have been taught a lot about advocacy for children and we teach children about learning from the past and being able to address the contemporary injustices. This is used in schools, in universities etc, and all of these resources are free of charge. Even though we still get no government funding, we believe strongly that every child should have an opportunity to make a difference.

And when I talk about the strategies that you may have, you know, where you're inviting the public into your movement, you should not lead with "make a donation", in fact we never do in our work. But we're completely financially sustainable through donations that people choose to give us. But we have on our website seven free ways that anyone of any income level can make a difference in under 2 minutes. And it's a meaningful difference in communicating to the decision-maker who could choose to treat First Nations children as if they're worth the money.

This is a picture some of the children in the actual courtroom when we were arguing the case, and it had a big psychological effect on Canada too, because you can imagine turning around and having to argue in favour of continuing discrimination in front of beautiful children like this, right? So it's not using the children, though, that's important too.

What we did is we said to the children, come with your parents, come with your teachers, treat this like being a newspaper reporter where you listen to all sides of the story and then you make up your mind. And then if you think that there is unfairness and you want to do something about it, here's the name of the Prime Minister, this is the person who can make a difference. And literally the government of Canada has never received so many letters on any cause than they did on this particular case.

So you can find out more about us and you can, in fact, do those seven free ways to make a difference. This is an ongoing experimentation for the Caring Society. We are always looking at new ways and some of our ways don't work, but we wanted to kind of give this back to you because I've been to your nations many times and have been inspired by the collective work, so this is a bit of sharing that I hope that you find valuable and you can follow spirit bear there. And by the way, when the kids were singing the song and you heard suszul(?), suszul is the way of saying spirit bear in their language. So thank you for that.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: Wow Cindy, I don't know whether you've seen because you've been doing your presentation, but the chat has been absolutely humming. Yeah, there's been lots of appreciation and acknowledgment of you as a tuakana, or an older brother or sister, in terms of your kōrero today. And I think -- I feel moved because I think that the kōrero in Canada certainly resonates with us in Aotearoa. You know, when you talk about historic amnesia, that's exactly what happens in this nation. We have Wai 2575 which has literally decades of injustices for our people, but still the same rhetoric goes around and around.

When you said that you were more likely to die in a residential school than war, we'd be perpetuating this on our tamariki, our children, 78 million nights, I think it's just astonishing that kind of data in the kōrero. And this is the systemic violence and the suffering of our children because of this invisible colonialism.

But what I really valued about the kōrero was the poutama or the steps to changing the discourse, challenging the system, and what you've found has worked and not worked. The mosquito advocacy, what an amazing framework of indigenous wisdom, I think, and connecting the taiao, or the natural world, to what's happening within these systems.

There's been a few questions come in, so I'll just put those to you if that's okay.

>>PROF BLACKSTOCK: Yeah.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: And the first one is around how do we -- this is from Morgan -- "how do we push past these systems and structures past historical amnesia, what are our steps to do that?"

>>PROF BLACKSTOCK: That's an excellent question. One of the things that I did is actually I stumbled into kind of this historical kind of learning by kind of asking a question well, people say that Duncan Campbell Scott, who's a notorious bureaucrat who headed up the residential school file when the children were dying, they would excuse him by saying people didn't know any better.

So what I did is I partnered with historians to find out if that was true. And then we got the documents and newspaper articles and everything else and unfolded it, and we then dealt with the monument. So Dr Bryce is buried in Beechwood Cemetery, not far from where I live. And there was historical plaques all over the place of many colonisers but he had nothing. So we worked and we put a plaque there.

But then Duncan Campbell Scott was actually over the hill, the guy who was a cheap bureaucrat, and they had a beautiful plaque about him, loyal public servant, poetic. And in -- one of the things we did, we reworded his plaque, because of course we conditioned change his burial site, he's buried there, but his historical plaque now says "cultural genocide" and "confederate poet" on the same plaque. And we used all the research that went into that to actually create school curriculum with a group of teachers called Project of Heart. And now the school curriculum is used all over the country. And we've set up more historical plaques.

And our idea right now is actually inspired by Berlin about treating Ottawa as a headquarters of colonialism and residential school. So we're going to begin this September

by actually marking out different historical plaques, so anyone walking into Ottawa, the capital of Canada, will be confronted with that colonial truth.

And I think by showing people, like when I show people the headlines back in 1907 of Dr Bryce's report, "absolute inattention to bare necessities are held", "unpleasant nearness with manslaughter", it helps people realise that people did know back then. And then my question is, "you know better right now, so how is your behaviour changing because you now know that?"

>>RINGA HĀPAI: Beautiful, beautiful kōrero. Just some of the comments, Heather Came said "a whaea on fire", so a mother on fire about your kōrero, "nuggets of gold". I have a question about your own moral courage, and you said that there's many perils to moral courage. How do you prepare yourself for those moments, of which you've had many over the past 30 years? How do you prepare yourself, who are your greatest influencers and role models to strengthen your resolve?

>>PROF BLACKSTOCK: Well, actually this Thursday I'm heading to Berlin and to see one of those greatest role models. Her name is Alanis Obomsawin and she's going to be turning 90 this year. She has made 54 documentary films and she's an artist but a social justice advocate, and her extraordinary body of work. She really believes in that affirmation that you have to fall in love with the children. That has to be your guiding light, because when you fall in love with them, and you saw some of our children at the beginning, then all of a sudden you're a lot more courageous than you thought you ever could be.

You know, and the other thing is that really helped me is when Canada was retaliating against me, they could have taken my job for sure. The organisation, yes. They made me feel a bit afraid in my own home, because I had a 17 year old nephew that was living with me at the time and I was worried about him. But then I finally realised, what is it that really is important to me? Like get rid of all the fluff, what is really important, and it's my values. It's having integrity to those values. And I realised that they could never take my values away from me. Only I could give them away by being too afraid to stand up for them when the moment was right. Because courage is not a value, it's an activator of values.

And once I came to understand that, then I didn't feel as afraid anymore. You know, I think that's why Nelson Mandela was never in prison really. They put bars around him for sure, but he was always free. And I think that's a key to moral courage at the end of the day. And I think when we act with that integrity, then we're not going to be -- it's not

that we won't be afraid and it's not that we won't feel -- it's hard some days, it will be, but we will feel whole, we will feel like we are living a life of meaning and doing our best to be a model for others.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: Yeah, I mean that's just such a beautiful reminder, isn't it, and I think one of the other things that strikes me in terms of you going to see one of your mentors in Dublin, is that around the world as indigenous women we're in the same struggles actually and drawing strength upon the network of indigenous women within the world creates a whāriki or a mat which allows us to have that moral courage, so yeah, really tautoko that.

We've probably just got room for one more question. So I guess as a kind of a closing, Cindy, can you talk to us about what your aspirations are for indigenous children in Canada and around the world?

>>PROF BLACKSTOCK: Well, we're not done yet. I believe that First Nations children are worth the money. And I want full equity across the board. We still have First Nations children, 1 in 6 First Nations children do not have clean drinking water; we have -- there are only 35% of First Nations homes have broadband access. So I want to -- we have something called the spear bear plan, which is to cost out all of the inequalities and then do something like the Marshall Plan after the Second World War and deal with these things, like let's just deal with it.

And the other thing I want to do is I'm teasing apart kind of the colonial mindset of advocacy. Why is it that we have found ourselves just going to the go-to strategies of negotiation, roadblocks and sometimes litigation, but mostly on lands and resources. I think we have an opportunity to kind of think about why that is.

So every time I just think oh well, this is what we should do, I actually ask myself deeper questions to find out if that is that colonial mindset that is limiting the possibilities, and often that's what it is. And it's invited me to be much more creative than I used to and reach out in friendship to people around the globe, and certainly in the community, to leverage their specific gifts; song, art, animation, writing, politics, you name it, to really force that change.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: Beautiful. He haerenga whakamīharo, Cindy. What an incredible journey you've taken us on in such a short space of time. And I know I'm committed to doing right rather than being right for our indigenous children. I've got lots of synapses happening in my brain about mosquito advocacy, elephants, all sorts of things. But I think mostly that your passion, your dedication for uplifting indigenous children's rights and challenging the

systems that perpetuate racism and discrimination is just inspiring. And I'm sure that I talk for everyone that's tuned in this morning, or may tune in in the future, that while this kōrero is over, the sparks, the ahi, the fire of the parallel struggles we endure together as indigenous peoples across the globe will live along inside of us.

And I wanted to share a whakatauki from one of my teachers, which really summarises for me the sacred nature of our shared kaupapa, our shared endeavour of uplifting the divine spark that is every child. And Papa Hōhepa Delaware says "while our hands move with eternity our feet are entrenched in infinity and still we remain in our integrity".

So ngā mihi maioha Cindy, let's finish our session with a prayer or a karakia to close these powerful discussions.

(Closing karakia). Ngā mihi Cindy, we're going to go offline whānau. If you want to write some more things in the chat I think there might be some beautiful music. Ngā mihi. (Song).