Reflections on Reconciliation after 150 years since Confederation — An Interview with Dr. Cindy Blackstock

A MEMBER OF THE Gitksan First Nation, Dr. Cindy Blackstock has 25 years of social work experience in child protection and Indigenous children's rights. She is the Executive Director of First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and a Professor at the School of Social Work at McGill University. Her promotion of culturally based equity for First Nations children and families and engaging children in reconciliation has been recognized by the Nobel Women's Initiative, the Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, Frontline Defenders, and many others.

The *Ottawa Law Review*'s Kirsten Marsh and Mina Karabit interviewed Dr. Cindy Blackstock in the Fall of 2017. Dr. Blackstock shared with the *Ottawa Law Review* her reflections on reconciliation with Indigenous peoples after 150 years since Confederation.

MEMBRE DE LA PREMIÈRE Nation Gitksan, Dr Cindy Blackstock a 25 ans d'expérience en aide sociale dans la protection des enfants et les droits des enfants autochtones. Elle est directrice générale à la Société de soutien à l'enfance et à la famille des premières nations du Canada, et professeure à la Faculté de service social à l'Université McGill. Sa promotion de l'équité culturelle pour les enfants et familles de Premières nations et ses efforts dans l'engagement des jeunes dans la réconciliation est reconnu par le Nobel Women's Initiative, Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, Frontline Defenders, et beaucoup d'autres.

Kirsten Marsh et Mina Karabit de la *Revue de droit d'Ottawa* ont tenu un entretien avec Dr Cindy Blackstock en automne 2017. Dr Blackstock a partagé ses réflexions sur la réconciliation avec les peuples autochtones après 150 années depuis confédération.

CONTENTS

Reflections on Reconciliation after 150 years since Confederation — An Interview with Dr. Cindy Blackstock

Ottawa Law Review: *Dr. Blackstock, can you please tell us about yourself?*

***Cindy Blackstock*:** I grew up in the huckleberry fields of Northern British Columbia in the 1960s and 1970s. I was raised in the bush (in rural communities), so I had a lot of cultural interactions with the land even though I would not have known it back then. One of my starkest memories is watching the civil rights movement on *CBC News* as a young child. I remember the scary images of the Klu Klux Klan (KKK) burning crosses in front of the homes of African Americans. As a five-year-old, I thought they were ghosts dressing up for Halloween. When I realized that they were really people, I could not figure out why these KKK members were so angry with African Americans. As young children often do, I believed that you had to have done something bad to make people that angry at you. I went and asked my mom, "why were the ghost people so angry?" She told me that the KKK did not like the other people because they were black, and that the black people had done nothing wrong. It was my first exposure to named discrimination; but I had seen and felt discrimination all around me as a First Nations girl growing up in a society where "Indians," as they called us, did not count for much. I did not like hearing that, and I was certainly not comfortable growing up to "not count for much."

Something puzzled me. When I asked people in our small town about the KKK, people were almost unified in their horror at this type of discrimination, but these were the same people who I repeatedly heard making disparaging comments about Indians. I could not reconcile how these people, who could be caring and compassionate about (what I would later know was) the civil rights struggle in the United States, were the same

ones who, without any kind of consciousness, were able to pass these very discriminatory judgments about First Nations peoples. The hypocrisy was hard to untangle for a little girl who believed in the goodness of people. How could adults be horrified by racism against one group while perpetrating it against another? That question launched me on a life-long effort to see if education could help caring people unveil the disconnect in their own beliefs about race and culture in ways that ended discrimination for all.

Ottawa Law Review: *You have diverse academic and professional experiences in arts, business, social work, and law. How has your interdisciplinary background contributed to your research and work with Indigenous communities?*[1]

Cindy Blackstock: As a First Nations person, my worldview is endemically holistic. I really reject the idea of carving off one particular piece of human experience in isolation from the interconnections that exist in a complex society. And I think that explains how I have four different degrees, from four different universities, in four different provinces and states, and in four different disciplines. These different pieces within the Western academic system are so specialized that you can get pieces of the puzzle, but not the full puzzle. And that is why I found it so helpful to move around in these disciplines. I recognize my knowledge maybe is not as deep as someone who went right from their BA to their PhD in one specialized area, but I developed relationships with those people; so, if I need that level of depth, I can ask. What I was really after was a kind of conceptual vision about how colonization has enveloped otherwise caring people in a structurally racist society, and what we can do to unravel that, allowing people to become conscious of the realities facing First Nations children and become co-actors in reconciliation. So, I think for me the interdisciplinary background was simply culturally coherent with my worldview and is essential to do the type of work I do in the company of many others.

Ottawa Law Review: *As a successful First Nations scholar and activist, what does reconciliation mean to you?*

Cindy Blackstock: Not saying sorry twice. It is that simple.

Canada, as a society, has come some distance in saying, "we are sorry for what we did in Residential schools," and more recently, "we are sorry

1 See McGill University, "Cindy Blackstock, Professor", online: School of Social Work <www.mcgill.ca>.

for what we did during the sixties scoop."[2] What Canada as a state has not done is demonstrate that it has learned from its philosophies, practices, and policies that enabled it to be a part of what the Truth and Reconciliation Commission termed, "cultural genocide."[3] That lack of institutional learning means governments repeatedly say sorry and pay out settlements, but fundamentally repeat the same colonial patterns of thinking and acting that it did in the past.[4]

This profound government failure to learn and reform contributed to the landmark 2016 Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (Tribunal) decision that found Canada racially discriminating against at least 165,000 First Nations children by providing inequitable services that are not responsive to the children's needs.[5] Canada welcomed the decision and did little to implement it, resulting in three non-compliance orders, with another pending.[6] Canada's contemporary failure to observe rulings of its own courts to stop discriminating against First Nations children today puts a red-hot poker stick into the mythology that bad things happened in the past because people, in that period, did not know any better. Well, we are the people of this period, and this is the government of this period, and I think we can all agree there is a general societal understanding that government racial discrimination against children is abhorrent. It is no

2 See the Right Honourable Stephen Harper on behalf of the Government of Canada, *Statement of Apology to Former Students of Indian Residential Schools* (11 June 2008), online: Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada <www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca>; Manitoba, Legislative Assembly, *Debates and Proceedings*, 40th Leg, 4th Sess, Vol LXVII, No 49B (18 June 2015) at 1992–93 (Hon Greg Selinger) (Manitoba Premier, at the time, apologized to Indigenous survivors of the sixties scoop).

3 Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015) at 1.

4 John Paul Tasker, "Ottawa Announces $800M Settlement with Indigenous Survivors of Sixties Scoop", *CBC News* (5 October 2017), online: <www.cbc.ca>.

5 *First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada et al v Attorney General of Canada (Representing the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada)*, 2016 CHRT 2, [2016] 2 CNLR 270 [*Caring Society* cited to CHRT] (the Tribunal concluded Canada discriminated against First Nations children, contrary to the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, RSC 1985, c H-6).

6 *First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada et al v Attorney General of Canada (Representing the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada)*, 2016 CHRT 10, 83 CHRR D/266; *First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada et al v Attorney General of Canada (Representing the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada)*, 2016 CHRT 16, 84 CHRR D/111; *First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada et al v Attorney General of Canada (Representing the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada)*, 2017 CHRT 14, 2017 CarswellNat 3245.

defense for the government or the people of this period to say, "we did not know." The inequalities in child welfare echo across other services for First Nations children such as education, health, water, and early childhood programs. They create a perfect storm of disadvantage. Canada knows the impact of these compound inequalities, and yet, continues to offer more excuses than action to fix to the problem.[7]

***Ottawa Law Review*:** *In January 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal concluded the Canadian government's inequitable provision of public services racially discriminated against First Nations children. The Caring Society was a party to the case. Can you please tell us more about the extensive litigation?*

***Cindy Blackstock*:** What many Canadians do not know is that the federal government funds services for First Nations people on reserves and in the Yukon, whereas the provinces and territories fund services for everyone else.[8] Dating back to Confederation, Canada has provided lower levels of public service funding to First Nations than to other people in Canada. The inequities are particularly profound for children—they get less money for education; less money for basics like water; less money for child and family services, which allow families to recover from the challenges of residential schools and keep their kids safe at home. In some communities, there are no basics like sanitation and electrical power. The compound nature of the discriminatory service provision creates a situation where children are more at risk for harm and there are fewer services to respond to it. These inequalities have largely gone unchallenged by Canadians because many believe First Nations receive more, not less, than everyone else. The result is generations of children growing up, getting less, but being judged by Canadians, who do not know any better, as if they get more. And that is really the fundamental problem this case is about.

First Nations child and family service experts, the Caring Society, and the Assembly of First Nations worked with Canada for over ten years

7 See generally Marlyn Bennett, Cindy Blackstock & Richard De La Ronde, *A Literature Review and Annotated Bibliography on Aspects of Aboriginal Child Welfare in Canada*, 2nd ed (Ottawa: First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, 2005); First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, *Wen:de We Are Coming to the Light of Day*, (Ottawa: First Nations Family and Caring Society of Canada, 2005) [*Wen:de*]; J Loxley et al, *Wen:de The Journey Continues*, 1st ed (Ottawa: First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, 2005).

8 See Marlyn Bennett, "First Nations Fact Sheet: A General Profile on First Nations Child Welfare in Canada", online: FNCFCS <fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/FirstNationsFS1.pdf>.

to document the inequalities in child welfare, beginning in 1997. In the reports, we found that in 2000, First Nations children received 78 cents on the dollar compared to non-Indigenous children in child welfare.[9] By 2005 the inequality increased to 70 cents on the dollar.[10] Canada agreed with the reports and said it would review the reports, but Canada did not implement the recommendations. The data showed that when we were sitting at the table, the number of First Nations children entering foster care was increasing at a staggering rate of 71.5 percent.[11] The question then becomes: if research and collaboration with government fail to achieve positive change, then what do you do next? Canada invited us to be a part of another study, but we started to feel that Canada was using these studies to mask taking action that would really help the kids. So, as a last resort, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society (Caring Society), of which I am the Executive Director, along with the Assembly of First Nations, filed a complaint pursuant to the *Canadian Human Rights Act* against Canada, alleging that its flawed and inequitable provision of child and family services was discriminatory contrary to section 5 of the *Act*.[12]

The lack of family support services to keep kids out of care was an area of key concern that was driving record numbers of First Nations children into foster care, at rates higher than Residential schools. The second part of the complaint was that Canada failed to properly implement Jordan's Principle.[13] Jordan's Principle is intended to ensure that First Nations children are not denied or delayed receipt of public services they need because

---

9 *Caring Society*, *supra* note 5 at para 153 citing Dr Rose-Alma J McDonald et al, *First Nations Child and Family Services: Joint National Policy Review Final Report*, (Ottawa: Assembly of First Nations and Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Development, 2000) at 14 (the report examines the federal government's funding formula—Directive 20-1—for First Nations child and family services on reserve).

10 Loxley et al, *supra* note 7 at 18–19 (on the failure of the operations formula to adjust for inflation) and 133, 189 (on estimating additional revenue needs to approximately 109 million dollars); Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, "First Nations Child and Family Services", online: <www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca> (calculating FNCFCS expenditures for 2013–2014 to 365 million dollars).

11 *Wen:de*, *supra* note 7 at 115.

12 *Canadian Human Rights Act*, RSC 1985, c H-6, s 5. See also Lawrence Joseph & Cindy Blackstock, *Human Rights Commission Complaint Form*, online: FNCFCS <fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/fnwitness/HumanRightsComplaintForm-2007.pdf>. See also First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada, "Tribunal Timeline and Documents", online: <www.fncaringsociety.com>.

13 See Cindy Blackstock, "Jordan's Principle: Canada's Broken Promise to First Nations Children?" (2012) Paediatrics & Child Health 368.

of jurisdictional disputes within government or across governments.[14] When we wrote the 2005 report, we were finding literally hundreds of kids with all matters of needs, ranging from needing eye glasses to see the blackboard, to kids who needed devices so they would not suffocate when they were at home in hospice. They were being denied these services simply because federal and provincial and territorial governments would argue about payment because the child was a First Nations child.

On December 12, 2007, Parliament unanimously passed a Private Members Motion requiring Canada to implement Jordan's Principle so children received the services first and the federal and provincial and territorial governments could argue about payment later. But Canada never implemented Jordan's Principle; Canada's failure to ensure that First Nations kids could access services when they needed them was the second part of our complaint.

By the time the final arguments were heard in 2014, Canada tried at least eight different attempts to have the complaint dismissed on jurisdictional grounds.[15] Canada also controverted the law on three occasions: once through the obstruction of justice by consciously withholding records highly prejudicial to their case, and twice through a surveillance program that they launched on me personally, trying to find, what they call in their records, 'frivolous and vexatious grounds' to have the case dismissed.[16] It was a highly contested case. Canada used not only legal and illegal litigation strategies, but also tried to get rid of the case by limiting our ability to fight. Within thirty days of filing the complaint, the Assembly of First Nations lost all of its funding for child and family services, and the Caring Society was completely cut from our core funding from the Federal Government.

---

14 *Caring Society*, *supra* note 5 at paras 351–53.

15 See e.g. *First Nations Family and Child Caring Society of Canada et al v Attorney General of Canada* (*Representing the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada*), 2012 CHRT 17, 2012 CarswellNat 9060 (the Tribunal dismissed the government's motion to have the jurisdiction motion re-heard and ruled to have the complaint heard on its merits).

16 *Canada* (*Human Rights Commission*) *v Canada* (*Attorney General*), 2012 FC 445 at paras 167–91, [2013] 4 FCR 545, aff'd 2013 FCA 75, 76 CHRR D/353; *First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada v Attorney General of Canada* (*Representing the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada*), 2013 CHRT 16 at paras 53–58, 2013 CarswellNat 11436; *First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada v Attorney General of Canada* (*Representing the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada*), 2015 CHRT 14, 81 CHRR D/274 (the Tribunal concludes the Federal Government retaliated against Cindy Blackstock); Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, "Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada Wrongly Collects Information from First Nations Activist's Personal Facebook Page" (29 October 2013), online: <www.priv.gc.ca>.

So, in many cases, I had to bring myself up to speed legally and perform much of the legal work myself, and only hire counsel when we could afford it. Eventually we received pro bono counsel in 2013, which has been a real gift. In January 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal handed down the decision. The Tribunal substantiated our complaint and ordered Canada to immediately cease its discriminatory conduct.[17] Canada has failed to comply with those orders, and so to date, the Tribunal has issued three non-compliance orders against Canada, and another is pending.[18]

***Ottawa Law Review*:** *You have written extensively on Indigenous children's rights, including reconciliation in the child welfare system. In your view, what is one thing Canadians should learn from reconciliation?*

***Cindy Blackstock*:** I think one thing Canadians should learn is that they have to stand up to stop this apartheid service delivery by the federal government. We have Jim Crow laws in Canada;[19] in the United States Jim Crow meant separate, and allegedly, equal services for African-Americans, whereas First Nations children in Canada have separate and unequal. Racial discrimination in Canada has been used as fiscal policy to save money to fund other types of government programs. And that is why we get this argument from the government, that "we cannot fix this overnight." Well, yes you can! Unless you accept that any level of racial discrimination against kids in the provision of public services is okay, then the "we cannot fix it overnight" argument is a non-starter. Canada should be rectifying these inequalities immediately because it knows what the inequalities are, and it has the resources to deal with them.

Too often, governments do not act morally or ethically on their own, governments do not create change on their own, governments only respond to change in society when a caring public demands it. It has been uplifting for me to see so many Canadians come forward once they become aware of the inequalities that First Nations children experience. Canadians are, quite frankly, horrified that this is going on. But many more people need to join the chorus. It is not enough to learn about it, it is not enough to care. You have to get onto your Twitter feed, your email, and send your MP a note saying, "this 150th year must be the last one where First Nations kids have to recover from their childhoods because we have

17 *Caring Society*, *supra* note 5.

18 See *supra* note 6. For more details about the litigation, see Cindy Blackstock, "The Complainant: The Canadian Human Rights Case on First Nations Child Welfare" (2016) 62:2 MLJ 285.

19 See generally Leslie V Tischauser, *Jim Crow Laws* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2012).

not found a way to provide them with equitably and culturally-based services that everyone else takes for granted."

***Ottawa Law Review*:** *Canada 150 has been praised by some and criticized by others. It has been viewed as an opportunity for celebration and sober reflection. Could you please explain some of the controversies?*

***Cindy Blackstock*:** Canada is a First Nations word—it is actually *Kanata*—and it means village. But, for far too long, there have been two villages in Canada: the one for the original peoples that have experienced unbelievable oppression and flat out discrimination by the government of Canada, and one for everyone else. The reality of non-Indigenous Canadians is very different from that of most Indigenous peoples. Non-Indigenous Canadians do not have to spend their childhoods fighting for equal services or trying to get a clean glass of water. When non-Indigenous Canadians look at the Canadian Government, they look at it with a largely benevolent eye. But if you are a First Nations child who has experienced the racial discrimination by the Canadian Government that the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal found, and you see the Government accept the decision and then fail to implement it, then what do you have to celebrate on Canada's 150th?

***Ottawa Law Review*:** *Can you please describe some of Canada's challenges in reconciling its history with Indigenous peoples?*

***Cindy Blackstock*:** I do not think the Canadian Government has learned from its egregious treatment of Indigenous children during residential schools and later during the 60's scoop. It's not enough to lament the past wrongs while perpetuating them in the present.

***Ottawa Law Review*:** *Reflecting on the past 150 years, how has Canada progressed (or not) in reconciling its relationship with Indigenous peoples, and why?*

***Cindy Blackstock*:** The Canadian government has taken modest steps, but it is certainly nowhere near where it needs to be. As the United Nations Committee on Racial Discrimination said while reviewing Canada this summer, it is "alarming" that Canada has not provided equitable services to First Nations kids despite prior recommendations of the Committee and repeated legally binding orders of the Tribunal.[20] The government has not undertaken a serious effort to learn from the contemporary discrimination

20 CERD, C/CAN/CO/21-23, 93rd Sess (2017) at paras 27–28.

and prepare itself to engage in a new relationship with Indigenous peoples. It is not enough to change symbolism without changing realities on the ground.

But where I have seen a lot of progress is amongst the Canadian public, and, in many ways, I think the Canadian public is at a higher state of readiness for reconciliation than the government. When Canadians, of all political diversities, see the really incontrovertible evidence of the racial discrimination that First Nations kids are bearing down under, they are saddened by it and are willing to take action. Public support has been the area of growth. When we launched this case back in 2007, it was a landmark human rights case affecting 165,000 kids, but hardly anybody was there. In fact, if we counted the non-Indigenous people, there must have been fewer than five non-Indigenous people at the launch of the case, excluding the reporters. And that is astounding when you think about the other types of more frivolous protests that people show up to. It was really tragic. But now, many more people know about the problem, and it is covered by mainstream media in a much more frequent and accurate way. So, we are moving in the right direction, but we need greater awareness and people need to stand up and speak out.

***Ottawa Law Review*:** *You have significant experience in international human rights law, international Indigenous law, especially as it relates to Indigenous children and youth. In your view, what role does the law play in reconciliation? And how could the law better reconcile Canada's history with Indigenous peoples?*

***Cindy Blackstock*:** I would actually rephrase that, and I would ask: what role do children play with the law? One of the most wonderful things that happened during the whole case is that we launched an educational program called "I am a Witness,"[21] where we uploaded all of Canada's documents and uploaded all of our documents and simply asked Canadians of all ages to watch the case. We were convinced that the evidence was overwhelming. So, if people taught themselves about what was happening in the courtroom and the Tribunal room, they would likely come to understand how egregious the discrimination was and would take action. It was really based on an assumption that silence is discrimination's best friend,

21 First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada, "I Am a Witness", online: <www.fncaringsociety.com> (the website provides the public with access to all legal submissions, evidence and decisions related to the *Caring Society* litigation).

and if you are going to take on a litigant like Canada, you have to bring that discrimination out into the light.

And so, that is what we did. But most people did not show up for the hearings until 2009, when a group of high school students showed up. The students stayed for the full two days. The hearings were on procedural matters where Canada was trying to get the case kicked out on jurisdiction—not the most exciting testimony. But the kids came back for the next set of hearings in greater numbers, accompanied by their friends and families, and they all wore "I am a Witness" tee-shirts. By 2012, there were so many children attending the court and Tribunal hearings that we had to relocate to the Supreme Court of Canada and have an overflow room, in which we booked the kids in shifts. The children themselves must have thought, "there has got to be more that we can do than just watch the hearing," because they organized what we call "Have a Heart Day"[22] (one of the Federal Court hearings happened to fall on Valentine's Day). During "Have a Heart Day" only children speak. They read their letters to the Government about why it was so important that First Nations children have an equal chance to grow up safely in their families, get a good education, be healthy and proud of who they are. About 800 kids attended the first "Have a Heart Day" standing in front of Parliament with their hand-made signs. And still the courtroom was full. The kids would rotate in and out; some of them would leave and go to "Have a Heart Day," and then they would come back, reading the letters they wrote to the Government. Throughout the entire court and Tribunal proceedings children were present, in far greater numbers than adults. And I think it is because children may not be experts in the law or in politics, but they are experts in love and fairness; they have not absorbed the stereotypical thinking and misinformation that creates a white noise barrier for non-Indigenous adults about this egregious discrimination. For example, discrimination is not excused with comments like, "The Chiefs are using all the money for inappropriate things;" kids say, "Some people might be acting inappropriately, but not everybody is, and why would we not just deal with those wrongdoers, instead." Kids deserve to have a good school, right? Kids just see this stuff so clearly, and it was amazing to me to see how well they understood the law and that they were engaged participants.

22 First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada, "Have a Heart Day", online: <www.fncaringsociety.com>.

Children wanted to do more than watch; they wanted to participate. So, they sang opening songs, and they were part of the closing ceremonies; children really brought a different feel into the court and Tribunal rooms. Children brought accountability to the law, which may have not happened if this case was argued in a typical way. I said recently at a lecture at Osgoode law school, "The law is only the law, it can be used for evil and it can be used for good." The *Indian Act* was used to remove Indigenous children from their families, ban ceremonies, ban Indigenous peoples from being able to access legal counsel and gather in groups.[23] The law itself is not benevolent, the law only becomes just when it is partnered with love and compassion, and children bring that into the courtroom. That is why it was so essential that children were there. And they continue to be with us; those kids who started out as young elementary students are now into high school and university, and they continue to come to watch the Tribunal hearings.

***Ottawa Law Review*:** *As we enter the next 150 years in Canada's history, how can we, as individuals, support the reconciliation process?*

Cindy Blackstock: We have on our website seven free ways for persons of any age to go and make a difference to support the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's major Calls to Action on children and families in under 2 minutes.[24] We really wanted to have resources and initiatives that were easily accessible that anyone could get involved in. One of the seven ways is to sign up to be a witness in this case, via the "I am a Witness" campaign, it is completely free. Along with the kids in the hearings, we have also had a teddy bear witness the entire case. Carrier Sekani Family Services gave me the bear as a gift, after we filed the complaint. And he has been at every single hearing, every important legal case conference, and anything to do with the TRC. His name is Spirit Bear. The kids fell in love with him; they would see Spirit Bear sitting on the lawyer's table—he would disappear for the day and come back with a new outfit—and they would tell him what they learned during the story. Spirit Bear actually received an honourary degree from Osgoode law school this past year; he is a "Bearrister." And just last week, he was admitted to the "Bear" by

23 RSC 1985, c I-5.

24 First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada, "7 Free Ways to Make a Difference", online: <www.fncaringsociety.com>; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* (Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015) at 1.

the Indigenous Bar Association. Spirit Bear has become an ambassador of reconciliation, demonstrating how children themselves can get engaged in reconciliation. We actually have a Spirit Bear calendar that guides children, and people of any age, through a whole year of activities that you can do free of charge, either as a person, a school, a family, or a university class, to promote the TRC's Calls to Action. Spirit Bear also has a book, "Spirit Bear and Children Make History." I was honoured to write the book along with Eddie Robinson, and it was beautifully illustrated by Amanda Strong. It features Spirit Bear telling the story of how First Nations children and other children stood together at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal hearings to stand for justice. It is available through the Caring Society at info@fncaringsociety.com and all proceeds go to supporting children's engagement in reconciliation.

***Ottawa Law Review*:** *What do you think reconciliation will look like 150 years from now?*

***Cindy Blackstock*:** We will have a generation of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children that do not have to recover from their childhood; who can be proud of who they are; that have all of their rights recognized; and a generation of non-Indigenous kids who never have to say they are sorry.