



**Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Our governments have failed Indigenous children, Canadian First Nations advocate tells SNAICC conference**

Canadian children's rights advocate Cindy Blackstock has told the largest-ever conference on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children that children are powerful advocates for their own rights - and governments in Canada and Australia have failed their most vulnerable children.

Professor Blackstock, Director of The Caring Society of Canada and Associate Professor at the University of Alberta, told delegates at the fifth SNAICC National Conference that the key to progress was greater engagement and participation by children themselves in programs and services that affected them.

"We work for children - so we need to work with children to ensure we are doing right by them and their families," Cindy said.

"Similar to Aboriginal children in Australia, First Nations children in Canada are overrepresented in child welfare care due to neglect driven by poverty, poor housing and substance misuse."

"Governments are simply not doing all they can."

"These are all solvable problems but equitable, flexible and culturally-based funding is required to empower community solutions."

Cindy added: "Equality is not an aspiration, it is a right."

A member of the Gitksan Nation, Professor Blackstock has spent more than 25 years working with child and family services, and has authored over 50 publications on the welfare and rights of First Nations children.

In 2007, the Assembly of First Nations together with the Caring Society filed a human rights complaint alleging that the Canadian Government's provision of First Nations child welfare was discriminatory.

In February 2013, the Canadian Government appeared before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal to answer the allegations, in a case that continues. Beginning with only 20 supporters, the case now has over 12,000 people and

**SNAICC: The national peak body for Aboriginal and  
Torres Strait Islander children**

organisations followers worldwide, making it the most watched human rights case in Canadian history.

Cindy attributes this astonishing success to the unique power of what she calls 'mosquito advocacy'.

"Inspired by the mosquito, we used multiple public education and engagement strategies to invite caring Canadians and people of the world to watch the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on First Nations child welfare," Cindy said.

"It proves that one person and small groups can change the world."

"We have to remember that just because we're small, doesn't mean that we can't stand tall."

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