



Why We Need Truth for Reconciliation

Bright Future Podcast: Episode 25

A Conversation with the Hon. Murray Sinclair

Description

Reconciliation is a long journey, but there are some critical things that need to be the first steps. One important ingredient is the truth. And the truth when it comes to Indigenous peoples in Canada is pretty shameful. When the Honourable Murray Sinclair was putting out the final report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, he believed his challenge was to make Canadians feel that disruption in family life indigenous people experienced from residential schools. Otherwise, the report would only ever live on a shelf. Five years later, no one has forgotten the report. He talks about Canada's reconciliation journey, residential schools and the discovery of remains in BC. We talk about why understanding this horrible part of Canada's history is needed to move forward. If you're a survivor and find yourself affected by discussions of this topic please take care of yourself.

We also talked about new laws in Canada that recognize indigenous rights the next phase in his storied career and why he's optimistic that things can be different than how they were. If you're someone affected by residential schools and you need help, the number for the National Indian Residential School Crisis Line is 1-866-925-4419. Additional mental health supports can be found at Crisis Services Canada.

Learn more about reconciliation at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (nctr.ca).

Podcast Transcript

BASSETT: My guest this episode is a former senator, lawyer, judge. He's had an extraordinary career and carved a path for Indigenous peoples across the country. He's been awarded at least 17 honorary degrees, won the Mahatma Gandhi Prize for Peace the Adrian Clarkson World Citizenship award, the Mandela Award a Lifetime Achievement Inspire Award and numerous others. With all these accomplishments, it's his role as chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada that has positioned the Honourable Murray Sinclair at the centre of a national reckoning for the horrors of the residential school system. Having retired from the Senate at the beginning of 2021, he's about to embark on the next stage of his career as Chancellor of Queens University.



This month we had another stark reminder of the horrific truth of the residential school system. Despite the work of the Commission, it seems that as a country we still don't understand the depths of the depravity or appreciate the pain that was caused. We seem stuck at the truth phase which will likely be a barrier to moving forward with reconciliation. Over the course of the commission's work you had asked for a fuller investigation and were turned down. How do you think things would be different today if your request had been approved?

SINCLAIR: One of the things that we said at the time of the release of the final report was that there were still some unfinished business. We highlighted those in the course of the presentation of the final report. But the issue of the children who died in the schools: How they died. Where they died. Who they were. Whether their families had been notified. Where they were buried. How they were buried. Whether ceremonies have been done for them. Whether they had been buried in a respectful manner or simply tossed into holes in the ground. Were all things that had been told to us by survivors in the residential schools. So the issue of the missing burial sites and children who died in the schools was a significant issue.

In addition to that of course, we had the evidence of the Bryce Report from about 1910 which identified that the death rates in the schools were between 24 and 49%, which is a very significant death rate. Our own statistical analysis showed that the children in residential schools were dying at a higher rate than our soldiers who went to the Second World War were dying. We said this is a significant problem very early in our work at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

We noted that it was not included in our mandate. We reviewed that question with all of the parties the settlement agreement and ask them if this was a significant enough issue. They all agreed - well for the most part they agreed - I shouldn't say they all agreed. But for the most part, parties thought that this was something that was going to come up so we may as well do some research on it and get some more information. We did a budget because it wasn't included in part of our original financial setup. So we did a budget saying that this is additional work and therefore it's going to cost us additional resources and these are the resources we need. We submitted that to the parties and to the federal government. Under the settlement agreement, all financial contributions were the obligation of Canada. Canada refused to fund any resources for doing that additional work.

We couldn't do as complete a job as we wanted to do. But we did what we could with what we had. We commissioned a research project to identify potential burial sites. We didn't actually go on the ground and do any further investigation about that. But the information was complete enough for us to be able to say that we're confident in saying that larger numbers of children died there. We were able to identify just through the records that there



are: records that are missing, records that appear to have been destroyed, people who may still be alive who may be responsible for the deaths of children.

Based on all of that, we called for the government and the parties of the settlement agreement to support a further investigation into the children who died in the schools. In particular: Where they were buried; How they died; When they died; Who they were; What happened to their bodies; Where the burial sites might still be; Whether the burial sites were still being respected or not; and, Whether there could be more effort made to inform the families and give the families an option as to what to do.

We identified a number of issues that we felt that such an investigation would be able to address if that had been undertaken from the beginning. If that had been accepted by the government, which again was responsible for the financial costs of carrying out some of the calls to action, the work of determining where the burial sites were would probably be pretty well known by now. The work of determining how many children might be in those sites could have been determined by finding and disclosing what was in the records. We would have been a lot further along.

I think we could have alleviated the shock of the disclosure that came from Kamloops. Where it would appear to many people in the public that suddenly and surprisingly there was a number of bodies that were found in the ground. When in reality, we had already said that there were a number of children.

We identified 3,200 names. We anticipated that there would be probably at least twice that but perhaps as high as 15 to 20,000 children buried near residential school sites that could be located. People who read the report and were aware of that part of our report shouldn't have been surprised. But the general public was because at the time of the release of the report that was not a major topic in the media.

BASSETT: It has been said that the victims shouldn't be investigating their own genocide. At the same time, it is so important that the investigations are trusted. You put that trust at the very heart of the work that you were doing. How do you see Canadian and Indigenous governments and churches working together as we go forward to discover the truth about the residential schools?

SINCLAIR: Yeah I don't think I ever said that victims shouldn't be investigating their own genocide. I certainly don't believe that. The reason is because I think in order to appreciate whether or not and to what extent genocide may have occurred, the victims need to have the ability to build the case to convince whatever authority might be out there that will make the final determination that in fact the genocide had occurred. The right of the victims to conduct their own investigations, to marshal their own evidence and to bring together all of



the information that is needed in order that they themselves know what their case is and how their rights were infringed is an important part of developing this issue.

The question that we have to ask ourselves is: even if it is possible to be said that a genocide had occurred at that particular point in time is there any legal repercussions as a result of that?

We had at least two legal opinions that we saw during the course of the TRC. And since then, a number of others have provided some legal research. We came to the conclusion that for a variety of legal reasons, holding Canada to account for anything like that in a legal court in the World Criminal Court or in the International Criminal Court or at the United Nations court would be difficult. Certainly holding Canada liable in its own court could be difficult because there was nothing in the Criminal Code of Canada that covered it for most of this time. Therefore prosecution was probably going to be problematic.

More importantly though, prosecution was not going to be able to help us identify with any significant clarity the culprits. The ones who were largely responsible for this happening. The decision-making process. The decision makers we identified in the report and those who supported what the schools were all about and contributed to the climate within the schools that may have led to these deaths are relatively well known because of our report and because of other factors that are available to the Government of Canada through its own records.

I would say that the real question is whether politically the issue of genocide is going to be a significant issue. I don't think there's any doubt that it is. I think it will always be an issue.

We identified the genocide as a cultural genocide and one of the reasons for that is because under the mandate of the TRC we were legally prohibited from issuing any legal culpability finding or making any legal culpability determination. We carefully identified it as an attack upon the culture of indigenous people for the purpose of eliminating their racial identity. That is a form of genocide in accordance with the political definition of genocide in the Convention on Genocide passed in 1949 by the precursor to the United Nations.

Whether or not one believes or one can prove that large numbers of murders took place really becomes a bit of a distraction when the real question is why are Indigenous people so culturally lost. There are people out there who know their Indigenous identity, but do not know their language, do not know their culture, do not know their own history. I think that's a great if not a greater tragedy because they are living in a world where they're lost.

BASSETT: Is there anything that you're hearing that you think either the media isn't giving enough attention to or that non-Indigenous Canadians need to hear?



SINCLAIR: Many of the presentations that I do, and I have done several hundred since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, one of the things that I find that is most impactful is to have non-indigenous people think about this as affecting children. In many ways it's because people think of this as an institutional issue as opposed to a child issue. The distinction between those two based upon the context of this might be difficult to discern, but it's like talking about the car that ran over a bunch of people as opposed to talking about the driver. What the driver's intent was and what the impact was on the lives of the people who were run over. We spent a lot of time talking about the car.

We spent a lot of time talking about the government. We spent a lot of time talking about the churches. When in reality, we should spend a lot of time talking about children.

So what I do in my presentations is I ask all of the people who are present – sometimes there are two or three thousand people in the room – to take out their cell phones and to bring up a picture of the baby in their lives that are important to them. They usually have a grandchild or a little baby that is in their family or young niece or nephew or sometimes just a little boy who lives next door. So I say, “Show me that picture. Hold it up and show me the picture.” You can see these thousands of pictures being aimed at me and then I say now I want you to take 5 minutes and tell the person beside you all about that little boy or that little girl. Tell them why they're important to you. Then I say, “Now I want you to erase that picture from your phone,” and they can't. Nobody has ever erased picture like that from their phone. That's what it's like for the parents who have lost a child. Think of how you feel just by losing that picture off your phone. How you would feel and think of how they must have felt when they lost their children. Even if their children came home physically whole, their children sometimes couldn't speak to them because they didn't know the language. They couldn't join them in hunting and fishing and trapping because they lost those skills. They didn't know how to take care of babies they didn't know how to take care of each other. They were sometimes at odds with them as parents because many of the children came home angry at their parents were sending them to that place. This totally disrupted family life in a way that we just can't imagine.

My belief was that our challenge at the TRC was to make people in Canada feel what this was all about. To make them feel the importance of this. Otherwise, it would have just become another report that sat on the shelf somewhere and everybody would forget about it.

But I have to tell you, in the years since the TRC report was issued nobody has forgotten the report. Nobody has forgotten what was said or what was heard by them at the TRC hearings. But, major institutions like some of the churches in particular the Catholic Church and the Government of Canada have done a great deal to try to minimize their responsibility to do something about the impact of those schools on the current lives of indigenous people.



BASSETT: We've had discussions on this show about the impact of systemic racism. One of the things that often comes out is that there is this need, you gave that example of where people need to put themselves into the picture to seem to get a understanding of what the impact of systemic racism is. That puts a lot of burden on the people who are the victims of this racism or these policies. To have to explain that to someone else to help them put themselves in their shoes. It's a real challenge, a real burden. On the one hand, it's incredibly important to have that Indigenous input and to empower communities to tell their own stories. But on the other hand, it means reliving and continuing to live and needing to explain this and to try to tell people how to put themselves into it when there's so many other resources out there. You talk about the Commission report and how it shouldn't be a surprise and yet it was.

What guidance would you give to a well-intentioned, but ultimately naïve, person who's starting to make sense of the realities of the residential school system and broader systemic racism in Canada against indigenous peoples?

SINCLAIR: When you grow up in a system, when you grow up in a nation which constantly reinforces that you are a negative type of person. That your people are inferior. That your people are violent. That your people are socially inadequate. That they are mentally and intellectually inferior. That they had no history, no governance, no laws. That they were basically just wandering from berry bush to berry bush to feed themselves. And that they were darn lucky that the European came here and save them from extinction, and that we as Indigenous people should be thankful for having been saved in that way. That message is constantly being imposed upon Indigenous people and has been almost since Confederation.

Then on the other hand, the message for children of non-Indigenous identity, the children of European settlers, is that our people came here and established this beautiful place that we have this wonderful country called Canada. That we came here and we saved these poor inferior people from extinction. That they were inadequate, they're lucky that we were able to do that for them. But, that they're not as good as we are because they're not the doctors, they're not the lawyers, they're not the leaders of this country. Our people are because look.

Our prime ministers are always white. Our members of cabinet are always white. Our leaders of churches or leaders of institutions or leaders of corporation or leaders in the business world or leaders in society are all white. European Anglo-Saxon Protestants are people of that sort therefore that means that we are a superior civilization and they are an inferior civilization.

That message sounds a little trite but it's actually been the way that public schools have approached this whole issue of talking about Indigenous children in this country. Our public



schools have been largely at fault in teaching a white supremacist view of Canada's evolution as a nation.

Our public schools do not teach anything about Indigenous governments before the arrival of Europeans. Even though Indigenous people have been here at least 25,000 years before the arrival of the white man. We had functioning governments prior to their arrival. In fact, our governments were a pattern upon which the American Constitution was formed and they fit quite nicely with the pattern of governance that English government used with a body of selected leaders and an overseeing body of elders and ultimately an independent process of adjudicating disputes.

That messaging is all part of what everybody in this country has grown up believing. And not just believing, but it's actually part of your genealogy it's part of your genetic makeup so much so that you don't even think about it.

You don't even realize that that's the way it is. When people want to talk about systemic racism, they don't believe that there is such a thing as systemic racism. They're saying to us what you mean by systemic racism instead of doing the self-examination necessary. They place the onus on those who are the proponents of the idea that there is systemic racism. I've taught lawyers, I've taught law students, I've taught judges and even to a certain extent I taught senators on a number of important ideas such as the issue of what systemic racism is.

I said: "Here's how it basically works - if you have a system such as a justice system and you can go through it and magically identify all of those people who are racists and get rid of them you will still have a system that is racist. You will still have a system that will force the newcomers into those positions to do things that will have a racist impact upon society and upon those who come into the system.

Because our Criminal Code is essentially a racist code. It started out that way. Their police enforcement techniques are founded upon racist principles and interpretation of our laws was founded upon racist principles. So all of the precedents that that criminal law follows and that the legal system follows are based on that racist foundation.

Indian bands cannot be recognized as a legal entity, yet we have these legal entities called corporations. What's the difference between a corporation and a First Nation? Well, there's such a thing as the Corporations Act which says that corporations have legal status. But there's no law that says First Nations have legal status and so we don't recognize them as having legal status.

The onus is often placed upon Indigenous people to justify their existence. The real reason for that is because there is a presumption of validity on the part of Europeans. The doctrine of discovery that we use to justify the arrival and takeover of these



lands by Europeans as valid and as legally correct is that because we're a superior culture. As superior entity, we European colonizers have the right to determine what their rights are and what your rights are as Indigenous people.

Those presumptions are so much part of what it is that we use everyday to function that we don't even know how racist we are and we think that therefore we're not racist. If you don't know how racist you are you think you're not racist. It's that simple. That's not to say that all racism is based upon evil intent.

If you get rid of all of the people with evil intent, you're still gonna have people who are racist but unconsciously so - that's what systemic racism is. Where you don't even know it's unconscious racism. You don't even know that you're racist. You don't even know the extent to which you have been influenced by this upbringing that not only you, but your parents, your grandparents and their parents have had to go through throughout their lives. It takes a long time for people to get their heads around this.

When people invite me up and say we'd like you to come and tell us how we can be better Canadians, how we can develop a proper reconciliation approach, my answer to them is: "Why don't you try this first? Just reverse the situation. If this had happened to you what would you want the other people to do? It's almost poetic.

BASSETT: You said reconciliation is in multi-generational process. What do you say to people who feel that change needs to happen faster? That there's an urgency. There are two sides of that. There's the "Can't we just get this done?" side. But then there's also the side that says: "Well, we have to act and we have to move this forward."

SINCLAIR: First of all I say, I absolutely understand that willingness and that desire to move faster. That's necessary. You have to keep saying that because it's the only way that pressure is going to be maintained to continue to push us to have this dialogue and reconciliation. There are some urgent things that require immediate attention that cannot be allowed to continue much longer. We address those in the TRC report. The first 24 Calls to Action where we address the social conditions, the medical conditions, the situation of children and who are being brought into care and taken away from their families, the situation of young people in particular, but adults as well, who are being incarcerated and overly high rates on different principles than those that apply to non-Indigenous people who are brought into the justice system.

What we said is that these areas need immediate fixing because these are continuing the chaos that was started by the residential school system. If we can stop these things from happening. If we can stop children from being taken into care, we can ensure that people and indigenous communities can grow up in a healthy environment. If we can ensure that they have proper housing and they have plenty of food to eat. If we can ensure that their



leadership is properly educated and allowed to do things in accordance with their own laws and their own traditions and the direction and wisdom of their elders instead of always being micromanaged by the Government of Canada. Indigenous people will be much better off in the long term.

Plus, we need to change the way that we educate everybody in this country about this history so that we stop teaching people in this country the benefits of white supremacy. We need to teach people a more balanced view in our education system. That requires curriculum changes.

All of those immediate things are identified in our report. We say that you cannot get anywhere on the road to reconciliation unless these are addressed first. Then you can start talking about things like major changes to the law the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the issue of self-government, the issue of the constitution and how indigenous rights fit into the constitution, etcetera.

The major issues that everybody wants to see immediately recognized are things that we have to keep talking about and we have to keep pushing on. But in the meantime, we have to work on these immediate problems so that we can fix the way that we live every day. Right now the way that we live every day is causing more and more harm. Our children are still growing up in inadequate environments. The suicide rates for young people are still incredibly high - they're the highest rates among young people in the world.

The poverty rates among Indigenous people are high because their economies have been deliberately annihilated by the Government of Canada. The traditional lands that Indigenous people occupied and the environment around them have been exploited to the extent that they can no longer conduct themselves in a way that is consistent with their traditions and their teachings, which is actually very harmful to them.

We need to fix those things immediately. Otherwise these long term discussions and these long term ambitions have will be negatively impacted by the very fact that we don't have the leaders properly educated and healthy enough to be able to carry out those major activities that the other parts of our calls to action identified.

BASSETT: You talk about the 94 Calls to Action. As a research organization, we constantly struggle with finding ways to make our research digestible and by being digestible, actionable. Often what that means is compromises on the number of calls to action that we can have, or the number of key findings that we can put in our work. Did you have any thought on how 94 calls of action might be digestible or easy for people to grasp? Was that part of the discussion?



SINCLAIR: Yes. I said we cannot have more than 100. Every report that has large number of recommendations generally fails. Most of the other reports also call upon the federal government to have the main responsibility to carry them out. That's part of the problem. The federal government is incapable of governing Indigenous people because they're so systemically biased because of their own precedents and their own way of doing business. They can't see beyond the Indian Act.

Even if our first Call to Action was to get rid of the Indian Act and establish the proper relationship. Even if we said that, they would still be saying well we can't do that because the Indian Act prevents us from doing that. It's the circular discussion that we get into after a while.

But the other thing is that when you have a large number of recommendations, you try to micromanage each of the problems. The emphasis that we wanted to have in looking at the number of Calls to Action was we wanted to put the onus where it belonged – on the churches and the parties to the settlement agreement – but also to call for more recognition and empowerment of Indigenous people.

We also deliberately refrained from using the word recommendations because recommendations is too soft a word. We felt that Call to Action was a much stronger word. It was picked up by the Inquiry into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls report. It's an important idea to say: we're not asking you to micromanage the lives of Indigenous people anymore. We are saying is learn to get out of the way. That's what many of our Calls to Action are all about.

BASSETT: I want to tap into your legal mind a little bit as well. What impact do you think the passage of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People's Act will have on advancing reconciliation in Canada?

SINCLAIR: As a document, it has almost no legal implications to laws in Canada. Other than perhaps as a potential tool of interpretation by the courts when it comes to determining how laws are to be determined or to be interpreted and determining how mandates are to be authorized or worked out within the justice system. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People is a relatively small document. It's only got 46 clauses or so and it's really about identifying those areas that moved Indigenous people from a life of independence and self-sufficiency to a life of total dependency, and what needs to be done to undo that and at the same time to force governments to recognize that indigenous people have that right to self-sufficiency within the parameters of domestic law.

The UN declaration does not call upon governments to create independent sovereign nations. It calls upon the government to recognize that they were independent sovereign



nations before the Canadian government was formed and that there were certain rights that flowed from that and need to be recognized as continuing today.

The UN declaration itself is an important document for more than symbolic purposes. It has the implication of putting Canada in its place when it comes to its relationship with Indigenous Nations.

BASSETT: You've recently taken on the next stage in your path through life becoming a Chancellor at Queens University. What led you to take on this new role now?

SINCLAIR: Queens University has been a major institution in Canadian history. Many of our senior bureaucrats and senior government officials have a Queen's connection. Of course Sir John A MacDonal was associated with Kingston where Queens University is located. I received an honorary degree from Queens University back in 2019. At that time, I remarked upon the fact that the law school at Queens is Sir John A MacDonal School of Law. We really have to question the extent to which we utilize our institutions as ways of honoring individuals who maybe we might not be so willing to honor if we know the truth about them.

In Kingston and in other parts of Canada there are many ways in which the name of Sir John A MacDonal has been memorialized and honored without any recognition of the terrible beliefs that he had about not just indigenous people but people of color generally. I'm not one advocating for destruction of statues. I just say that one of the things we might want to do is take a closer look at how we can put this into a kind of a context. Maybe we should have a proper plaque, for example, around statues which not only talk about kind of the good side of the work of this person but also talk about the bad side. Then on balance, would you really want to be associated with that person?

If the balance is so far against honoring him or her in this way even though some have argued for example that he was just reflecting the beliefs of the time. That fails to recognize that he was the leader of his time. He led those beliefs into prominence he also advocated for them to a much larger extent than most of the Canadian population was prepared to go. Even at the time that he gave his Aryan speech in the 1880s there were those who criticized him for saying that.

When I was asked to consider becoming Chancellor, initially I turned it down. My departure from the Senate was so that I could have an easy transition into a life of retirement. I wanted to write my memoirs and I wanted to work with young lawyers as a mentor to help them become better young lawyers. Young indigenous lawyers in particular was my primary focus.



So when I was first asked I actually declined. There was some perseverance on the part of those who were advocating the idea who came back to me not with a stronger pitch so much as it was an expression of a desire to change. A desire to do the right thing and a desire to have me involved in helping them find the right path forward. Who could resist an offer like that?

BASSETT: Many times people like yourself are asked to give advice. I'm curious to know what kind of questions you're going to be asking this generation of students when you start in that role. What do you want to know about them?

SINCLAIR: What do I want to know about them or what do I want them to know about themselves? I think that's an important distinction. The challenge for students who are attending and departing upon graduation from a University is: be sure you know yourself. Be sure you keep your focus in front of you. Be sure you know your history. Be sure you know where you come from and you have a deep and abiding respect for that. Know about your ancestors. Know about their contribution to this world and believe that those contributions were intended to put you in this place in this position where you are now graduating. Understand where you're gonna go with that what you're gonna do with it what you're gonna become and what you're gonna want to say at the end of your time here on this earth when you look back at your life.

What do you want to be able to say about it? Because here's what I'm trying to say about my life and then I give them an example.

You also have to try to figure out why you're here. What's your purpose in being here? Everybody's here for a reason. Maybe your reason is as simple as to raise a generation of children who are better than we are.

Whatever you sense your purpose to be, then live in accordance with that. Believe in it and also be sure you know who you are. Understand that knowing who you are is a constant question. The answer to it is constantly changing. Who you are today will not necessarily be the same as who you are tomorrow.

Tomorrow, I will be a day older filled with a days full of additional knowledge. Some of which will be good for me. Some of which will hurt me or pain me or perhaps make me angry. That tells me a little bit about who I am. I need to know that because at the end of the day who I am goes back to the very question of why was I put here.

I am most excited by the fact that we have an opportunity to change the world by changing the way we educate our children to talk to and about each other. We now have a generation of children who are challenging some of the very basic beliefs of their own parents and that's



good. That's always good. They have to learn to do it in a respectful way of course and in a way that helps them determine things for themselves.

I'm really excited about the fact that educators have gotten on board with the idea of changing the way we educate children. Changing how we recognize their role into the future and their role into the generations yet to come.

When I was younger I always thought that things would never change. I was one of those who believe that it was always going to be like this. We had to figure out how to just live with what we had.

Now I don't believe that. I learned not to believe that quite a number of years ago. I spent most of my life trying to facilitate the circumstances of life in this country to the extent that others can also see that things don't have to be the way they have always been in their lifetime. That's what I see and that's what excites me. People see that things will not always be the way that they were in their lifetime but that they can see that things will be better.

BASSETT: Chancellor Sinclair, the work that you and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada have done is a chance for Canadians to confront our roles in systemic racism against Indigenous peoples in Canada. We've seen an outpouring of grief, of support and hopefully understanding. What makes you optimistic that we're walking toward a better connection and relationship with Indigenous Peoples in Canada?

SINCLAIR: The fact that we're talking about it. Years ago we wouldn't have talked about it at this level and this format to this extent. I often remind people, the abuse of Indigenous people was going on for many generations and probably in more significant ways than we are seeing today. We know that children were being abused in the schools were being mishandled by the schools. We know that both the public school and the residential schools are failing Indigenous children on a massive scale the justice system was failing Indigenous people on a massive scale. We knew all of that and yet we kind of let it slide. Now we're not letting it slide. Now we're trying to grab onto it before it gets away on us so that we can get it under control. That's a pretty significant difference between now and when I wrote the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry report in Manitoba in 1991. I said many of the same things then that I said in the TRC report. People at that time were prepared to just let things slide.

One of my colleagues in the judiciary said to me towards the end of his career, he said: "You know I always believe that somebody was in charge and that somebody was going to fix this. That there was one person somewhere that was gonna fix all of this and that I just had to wait for it to happen. and then I would just do what I was told in the future." He said, "Now I begin to realize that the only one who's gonna be able to fix this is Us."



That really speaks to the fact that people are now coming to the realization that we are the authors of our own fortune. We can do something about this. When you look at our Calls to Action and what I said about them at the time that their final report was released is that we described everything that we saw and explained it all to them. We pointed out what we thought was the way forward but it really is for Canadians to walk that way forward. It's not for the Government of Canada to walk it forward on our behalf and drag us along. It's not for the churches to do all of the changing.

It's for the Canadian public to themselves say this is what it means to me to be a Canadian. If we do that, then we will be a better nation. We will all be better people and we will have better relationship with each other than we've ever had in the past.