

## A DAY TO LISTEN - CLAUDETTE COMMANDA

My name is Claudette Commanda, and I am an Algonquin woman from Kitigan Zibi Anishinaabe Algonquin First Nation. My community is situated about 100 miles north of Ottawa, but on the Quebec side. I'm not a residential school Survivor and I do not speak on behalf of the residential school Survivors. They have their stories, they have their lived experiences, and they can speak about that. But I do support them. I do love them. I do walk with them.

It is said, when one falls, we all fall. When one cries, we all cry. When one grieves, we all grieve. When one succeeds, we all succeed. And that was the foundation that I was raised on. And that when one of our people suffer, we all suffer. And now, at this time, families, communities, nations from coast to coast to coast, we are all grieving together for the families of those children. And in our prayers, we ask creator to honor, to honor those children, as he so does with his love and kindness. And we honor and we remember the children and all those children who never made it home. I say to creator, you know those children by their original names, you know all those children who never made it, you know them by their original names. And thus creator, take our prayers and tell each and every one of those children that we love them, that we remember them, and that we honor them. The children's voices are so powerful and strong and we must listen to them. And Canada, Canadians, their social consciousness has to be awoken. It has to. If the discovery of this 215 new human remains of children doesn't impact one's heart and mind, I don't know what it's going to take, but I do see that many Canadians are questioning.

They are rising now to say what's going on here, what has been going on? No we have to talk about this. It's emotional. And indeed, it has to be emotional. It has to because it has to go to the core of Canadian society, because this is your history. I don't care if Canadian people have come here 500 years ago or if they've come here five days ago. This now becomes each and every person who's come here to live in Canada as their country; this is your history, but this is the history that my people have had to live with. And we continue to have to live with it because it's trauma. And you know what trauma is? It's like grief. It never goes away. You learn how to live with it every day.

Now, I'm not a Survivor, but can you only imagine how the Survivors are feeling? We need to provide that safe space for Survivors stories to be told. And we need to use this as an education. And I've been told I'm an angry, hostile Indian. Well, you know, if the deaths of 215 children and many more, and the abuse in these residential schools, these horrific abuses that children endured. If that doesn't make you angry, then there's something wrong with you. There's something wrong with people that don't have a heart and soul when it comes to hurting and killing children. And it doesn't matter to message what you have killed the children. The fact that you did not allow them to speak the language, you did not allow them for siblings to even be with one another in these schools. The fact that you did not allow the children to exercise your culture, the very fact that you took you took children away from their parents and our communities and our families. That's wrong. And that needs to make you angry.