

Boozhoo aniin, thank you, Madame Chair. Congratulations on your appointment, and thank you to all the members, delegates and relatives here today from across the globe. Zongwe ah shiik kwe ndishnikaz, maiingun dodam. My name is Katherine Strongwind. I am from the Wolf Clan. I am the founder and director of the 60s Scoop Legacy of Canada, and I come here today as a grantee of the UN Voluntary Fund, and as a mother and grandmother.

I speak to Item #10 - Future work of the Expert Mechanism, including follow-up to thematic studies and advice.

In Canada, more than 90% of children in state care in the province of Manitoba are Indigenous. Federally, Indigenous children represent more than 50% of children in care, despite Indigenous Peoples making up only about 5% of the total population.

Since the time of Contact, the colonial governments have been taking our children—first into residential schools and Day Schools, then later in the 60s Scoop and the Millennial Scoop. Indigenous children and families continue to be disproportionately overrepresented in child welfare due to Canada's systemic racism and discriminatory policies and regulations.

It is genocide and it must end now.

Indigenous children in care suffer from significantly higher rates of suicide and incarceration. They are also at much greater risk of experiencing human trafficking and of becoming one of the missing or murdered, among many other harmful consequences.

Indigenous Adoptees such as myself continue to struggle to know who we are, where we come from, and to re-establish our identities as Indigenous Peoples.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 3, outlines the best interests of the child.

Article 7.2 of UNDRIP states that “Indigenous Peoples have the collective right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples and shall not be subjected to

any act of genocide or any other act of violence, including forcibly removing children of the group to another group.” It is our inherent right to grow up with our parents, with our siblings, with our aunties, our grandmothers and our lands.

It is no coincidence that the TRC's 94 Calls to Action lead with Child Welfare in items 1-5, but it did not go far enough into permanent child removal in Canada.

I implore the Expert Mechanism and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to consider a study on the '60s Scoop and the forced removal of Indigenous children, as well as on Canada's ongoing human rights violations.

I invite all of the members of the Expert Mechanism to speak with Indigenous Survivors, families, and advocates to determine the full extent of Canada's assimilationist policies and regulations.

I also invite all of the members to consider a proposal to the Human Rights Council for their consideration as there are many other Indigenous Peoples and families around the globe who have been targeted by their colonial governments.

Chii miigwetch, thank you for the consideration and the opportunity to speak with you today. I wish you all safe travels home.