

Stewart Sutherland is a Wiradjuri man from Mumbil NSW Australia. The Wiradjuri Nation is the largest in NSW. This is amazing considering that there was the State, under martial law tried to exterminate the Nation.

He has only just started decorating traditional instruments, as he believes that there should be a significant reason to done so. I am pleased to give you these sticks, as a token solidarity and in friendship.

Stewart Sutherland





Australians for Truth, Justice and Healing.

Good Morning,

Survivors, Chiefs, Elders, Commissioners, other honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen. I do not mean any disrespect in the order of my acknowledgement, but to my way of thinking Reconciliation between Aboriginal Peoples and non-Aboriginal people begins from an equal footing and it is the Survivors, who we honour heard today.

My name is Stewart Sutherland; I am Wiradjuri an Aboriginal man from the middle of N.S.W, Australia.

Today I am speaking on behalf of the National Stolen Generations Alliance, and the people gathered behind me, represent five our Aboriginal Nations, and non-indigenous Australians. Before I start to offer our words of condolences and respect to the survivor and our support for Reconciliation. I would like to pay my respects to the four great nations of the lands that we meet on today and to their Chiefs and Elders both past and present. And to the survivors we say thank you for the lessons that you have passed on, not only to the ones that follow you, but to your country and the world. You have all suffered and yet you keep on smiling and laughing.

Australia and Canada have many similarities, we are both large Counties, we were invaded, our parliaments operate under the same systems, and we both have First Nations People who were hear before Colonisation with strong unwavering Cultures, and we have both been through pain.

The group here represents the National Stolen Generations Alliance; many of you may have seen films like the Rabbit Proof Fence or The Sapphires. These are our Stolen Generations, this is where Aboriginal children were taken from their mothers and families by the Government and Churches without having to establish that they were in any way neglected or mistreated and place into Institutions, Foster Care or Adopted. Many never saw the families again.

We almost lost out Language, we almost lost our Cultural Ways, we almost never made it through. But we to Survivor! While I can never say we full understand the way you may feel or your trauma. It is through some of our similarities and through surviving similar events that I can say to First Nations of Canada that we understand your pain and the way in which you hurt, and your hopes and dreams to see a united Canada. A Canada that has learnt from past mistakes and treats it First Nations People with respect and dignity, where governments seek advice before action, and listening to the wisdom of the Elders and Chiefs, before undertaking any plans for the future, and to have First Nations as true and equal partners.



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To Canada we would like to say:

Without understanding the old ways of your First Nations Peoples, their customs of how to manage Mother Earth in this part of the world, you will never be truly whole; Without understanding and acknowledging how past and present policies have to and continue inflicted pain and trauma to your fellow citizens the First Nations you will never be able to move forward.

The fact that you are here today testifies to your wish to move in these directions, and this is a great and joyful thing.

As for lessons to be learnt from the survivors I will name but a few, Forgiveness while many were abused, for the most part, they were able to forgive. Resilience, The fact that you the Survivors are here, is testimony to this and to your resilience Strength.

Strength, many turned to Drugs and Alcohol to numb the pain of their experiences', yet they have managed to find their way home. This is true Strength.

For Reconciliation to occur everyone needs to look just a little closer to see that most people want to show support, they just don't know how. They have not yet considered the fact that outside their individual world there is pain. That the way they think today still impacts First Nations, it simply does not register. So show them, shake their hand say hi, howdy, or G'day. We are all children of the creator. Let's welcome a hand extended in Reconciliation. Reconciliation is a one person at a time, movement and it can be hard, but wow the rewards will truly be great.

We NSGA extend our hand in Friendship, and Reconciliation and offer whatever support we can provide to the reconciliation process.

Before closing I would like to thank Dawnda and James Joseph who are not here as they are on Sorry Business, for welcoming us onto Country, when we entered your beautiful city of Vancouver. For in our traditions this is an important custom, it allows us enter onto another Nations Lands in friendship or trade, to feel comfortable without fear and gives permission to use what we need to survive whilst on that land. I also give big thank you to Mr Joe Norris for his invitation to come to this event.

In Closing we thank you all for your wisdom and strength, and we would like to present to the commission, a only a copy of today's statement and a set of decorated Clapsticks. These sticks are used to set the beat to our Song-lines and to call people together. It is for this reason that we thought these the most appropriate item to present to the Commission. For when they start to sing people will always gather and unit.

Thank You



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Generations**

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