

## **The Dr. E.H. Johnson Memorial Fund Committee News Release October 2016**

### **Dr. Cindy Blackstock is the recipient of the 2017 Dr. E. H. Johnson Memorial Fund Award**

The Dr. E. H. Johnson Memorial Fund Committee is pleased to announce Dr. Cindy Blackstock as the recipient of the 2017 Dr. E. H. Johnson Memorial Fund Award.

Dr. Blackstock is Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and Professor at McGill University School of Social Work. A member of the Gitksan First Nation, Blackstock has 25 years social work experience in child protection and Indigenous children's rights. She received a PhD in Social Work from the University of Toronto in 2009. Her doctoral thesis was on the inequality in Canada's child welfare system.

In January 2016, at great personal cost, Blackstock, along with the Assembly of First Nations, won a landmark victory on behalf of Indigenous children. The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruled that successive governments have racially discriminated against First Nations children by providing less funding for child welfare services on reserves than was provided for other children living in Canada.

Blackstock has addressed contemporary inequalities experienced by First Nations children and youth by engaging children and young people and other members of the public to implement evidence-informed solutions. This reconciliation-based approach has been recognized by the Nobel Women's Initiative, the Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, the Indigenous Bar Association, Frontline Defenders and many others.

An author of numerous articles and a widely sought after public speaker, Blackstock has collaborated with other Indigenous leaders to assist the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in the development and adoption of a General Comment on the Rights of Indigenous Children. She currently serves as a Commissioner for the Pan American Health Organization's study on Health Equity and Inequity.

It is the mandate of the Dr. E. H. Johnson Memorial Fund Committee to recognize work on "the cutting edge of mission." In naming Blackstock as the 2017 recipient, the Committee recognizes her tireless, visionary and risk-taking work on behalf of First Nations children and families, and her ongoing advocacy on behalf of First Nations peoples.

The Dr. E. H. Johnson Award was established in honour of the leadership of Dr. E. H. (Ted) Johnson who worked with governments, organizations and partners in Manchuria, and then in Nigeria during the Biafran War, influencing church policy in the position of Secretary for World Mission for The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Over the past three decades both individuals and organizations, in Canada and in other countries, have been recognized.

In offering this Award to Blackstock, the Committee is mindful of the church's complicity in the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada, and particularly in the legacy of residential schools. The Presbyterian church's 1994 Confession to God and Indigenous peoples says, in part, "With God's guidance our Church will seek opportunities to walk with Aboriginal peoples to find healing and wholeness." The presentation of this Award affirms the church's desire to honour this commitment. Blackstock will accept the Award in Kingston, Ontario, on Monday June 5, 2017 when she will address the 2017 annual General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.