



TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH CR AND CZ

CR About 15 years ago we actually had five children that came to our house in a police car and they told us that them children had to stay with us until someone from FACSIA was going to get in touch with us but we had to give the police our number, our mobile number to give them. Then we ended up getting the phone call about the next day, the day after, to say that these children were taken away from their parents related to alcohol and domestic violence. Then the welfare or FACSIA came to us and we sat down and had a meeting with them to see if we wanted to keep the children but then I ended up telling him to talk to their family members from my husband's side, his sister's. So they ended up going there and having a meeting with them and then the kids ended up staying with the older sister for a year and a half. But then it was a bit too much for her so she ended up giving them back and then he had to give up his job to look after five children and we had them since 2007. Now it's 2017. We had them for that long. Now we're in 2013 I asked to – step away from the welfare. Permanent care. But we're still waiting and we're waiting since 2013. And still no response.

I'd like to see more Aboriginal people involved and more Aboriginal people working under FACSIA. Our elders being involved, telling them ...

CZ Not, like she said, bring somebody down from Darwin that don't have a no help in hell of knowing what the community is like, they don't know who the people are, they don't know them personally. I mean, you get the local ones like the case manager that she's got now, she's a great woman. She comes in, she knows ...

CR Yeah, they'll split the kids up. They'll put one child over here with one family and another child over there, that family not thinking that they want to be together. And it's not just for family being together, there's the cultural aspect because how're they going to continue their traditional culture if they're not put in a family where they still either practise or they're more cultural than normal. Because I know that a lot of kids will go into white fella families – white families, sorry – and that whole culture is lost. They don't have really nothing to do with any type of culture whatsoever.

Well, it's the thing – it's a different thing with the boys because the boys go through to a certain age and they then become initiated as men at certain ages, so if you keep that tradition away, our culture is never going to stay alive if they don't keep

that going. They bring kids up and they don't keep kids with families that still follow those practices, it dies. So, it's said but it happens. It has happened quite a bit actually. And I'd like to see that those kids get kept together wherever possible.

CZ And not just with the traditional culture stuff, young boys and womens, girls they get taught stories, the songlines, storylines. Those songlines and storylines, if they're not carried on then they die out, the whole culture's gone for sure. Because there's dances, songs for everything on the land. That gets lost if they're not put in traditional - with family members, which will carry on then everything is lost. Then what we got? We've got black kids being grown up with white men and lost identity. Gone.

They're traumatised.

CR The youngest one. It took him three years – two and a half years to trust me so he can be around me. But now he holds me and trusts what ... you know, and even with the second youngest, it took her a very long time to trust me. To get her to trust me because I had to show her that they can trust me and doing things for them

CZ Just the trauma of being ripped away from your family member, put into the system and then shoved where they think it's good for you. They always think they know what's best for that child without asking properly. No consultation or they'll consult with somebody that's not really closely associated with the family member, so that's a big gap there.

Interviewer Especially that long way, Those kids just straight to Darwin.

CZ Yeah.

CR Yeah.

CZ Who wants that? If a child has grown up here and is a 7, 8 year old child, , up to Darwin – displace them. How are they going to feel? Do they see what that child feels?

CR A lot of our kids when they get into the welfare system, that's what they miss out on, you know. If that welfare system there should be a way where these kids should always go back to their communities ...

CZ It's a stable culture. Traditional culture.

CR ... and be in contact with the culture. There's a strong feeling in Aboriginal culture within that the Aboriginal way.

Interviewer And what's the impact, like, you know, talking about young people and identity. What's the impact if they miss out on that business.

CR They lost their culture. That's the main thing. It's their culture. And the respect. In Aboriginal culture, the main key word is respect and that's always been like that for years and years and years.

CZ And because they've got kinships. How are they going to know who their, where their kinship goes?

CR Who's their clan? What's their totem?

CZ And their skin names.

CR Skin names.

CZ They lose that.

Interviewer And even earlier, you were speaking about a system that could be in place like a medium or a difference between the families and the welfare system, a difference that set up. Talk to us about those ideas.

CZ Meaning like, a go-between between the families and the welfare system. Yeah, like that. It does because it's either the police and that's the first place – I think that's the first place of contact I think, is the police and you get the police going and ripping these kids from underneath their mother's or their grandparents' noses, taking 'em to either a family member or they take 'em to the welfare or else it's in conjunction with the police. Welfare, police, pick these kids up, take them somewhere unfamiliar. The kids are wondering what's going on, especially if they're younger. Even when they're older. I've seen and heard of kids being really traumatised at an older age being done like that. Minor kids. But, yes, that idea of

that go-between. A different group, specialist group that would involve elders of the community or people with standing in the community.

Interviewer Well, if you could put a suggestion as to how that go-between group would look like, what would you suggest?

CZ A couple of older members from the community, but you'd have to have one from each clan group or what they call themselves. You'd have to consult with each one of them because they're so diverse all these children. They don't all come from one – like we're talking about skin names and skin groups and all that. They'd have to come from each one, each group. You can't just have one or two, just say you can have a couple of town members because they don't know them people, probably. You need people from the community. Grass roots people.

Interviewer And strong people.

CR Strong.

CZ Strong.

CR We've got a lot of strong people within this community.

CR They're a strong community. Welfare system needs to change but it needs to get more Indigenous people involved. And they should – the Indigenous people should be the ones that they look at if they want to take a child away from their family.

Interviewer I was going to ask what, you know, what your key message would be for the Commissioners and maybe you've summed it up there.

CZ With what I just said? Get your shit together. Come and talk to us grassroots people, we'll tell you how it is. Come and listen to our stories. Come and see how sad it is. Come and talk to a real blackfella.