

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT | PICNIC AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE

Lindsay Katsitsakatste Delanronde (Kanienkehaka):

Chapter 11: Being a Self-Determining Human. “To live up to the concept of self-determining human beings articulated in the Declaration is our responsibility as Indigenous peoples. The vision behind the Declaration was to create a means to reform and empower our traditions and humanities, to create a teaching that would make us greater, individually and collectively.”

Chrystal Phan: On my 28th birthday, I was celebrating with a small gathering of acquaintances. I was overseas at the time in Vietnam on an internship. The group of other interns, from all sorts of organizations, universities, or NGOs, were sitting on the floor in my room around a small dinner. . . . And one kid, I don’t even remember his name. He was maybe 20 years old. . . . And he made a speech in honour of that day. “Wow, Crystal!” he said, “I can’t believe you’re 28. When I think of someone who’s 28 years old, I imagine someone with a family, a job, a car, a house — you know, all of that. But you don’t have any of those things, it’s incredible! Happy birthday!” Rude.

Christian Yves Jones: I was born in Cebu, Philippines. At 3 years and 8 months old, I moved to New Zealand with my mother and stepdad. I grew up in the small town of Napier. It’s where I lost my mother tongue. I used to speak Tagalog when I was little; my mum even said I was a chatterbox. Not knowing Tagalog, I’m often left out of conversations with my family. I’m just an observer.

LKD(K): “The negotiations, endless and often humiliating, ultimately served our vision of lifting the burden of imposed poverty — the drudgery, infirmity, incapacity, weakness, and indignity that have resulted from the consistent denial of our human rights.”

CYJ: On paper, I’m white. At face value, I’m Filipino. One time, a substitute teacher thought I was pretending to be someone else, because he didn’t believe that my name was Christian Yves Jones.

CP: When I was very young, someone, possibly an adult, told me that I shouldn’t eat grass because there were worm eggs in them — warm eggs, worm, worm eggs — anyways, so I stopped eating grass. I’m pretty sure it was all a lie.

LKD(K): “We must radiate these ideas and believe in our human rights in our lives. We must learn to place our human rights and responsibilities ahead of our politics, morality, and economics. Our human rights are a guide for these behaviors, not a consequence of them.”

CP: I was in a really important interview. It was important

because I didn’t have a job at the time, and it was a good one, and I was, well old enough that I probably should have had, like, a career kind of job, you know. One of the questions they asked me in the interview was about my biggest challenge that I had to face. They probably wanted to assess my problem-solving skills, organization skills, communication skills, ability to manage stress. And all I said was that my biggest challenge was breaking up with my boyfriend because it was, like, sad and stuff. I didn’t get the job. This is a true story.

LKD(K): “With the passage of the Declaration, we cannot continue to hide our distaste for political engagement under an alleged need for independence, sovereignty, self-determination. We must understand that the genuine core of empowerment is human responsibility and reconciliation.”

CYJ: I had a white stepdad. Although I had grown up in New Zealand and my mum and I were New Zealand citizens, my stepdad would often differentiate himself. Whenever we did something he didn’t like, he would say, “you people always do this,” implying that our behaviour was bad or foreign — which was bizarre because I had grown up in New Zealand.

LKD(K): “We must improve our people, our selves, and our consciences. We must re-imagine and remake our traditional institutions and reconcile them with our vision of human rights.”

CYJ: Why have so many Filipinos moved abroad? We’re too busy just trying to survive and make a better life for ourselves, we don’t really talk about it. Do we even have the right to complain? We’re supposed to be the privileged ones who made it out. Those early years were very isolating.

CP: When I was 8 or 9, my mother took us out to the mall in our city, and on the way out we got Red Robin’s ice cream at the food court. This was the only occasion in my life I remember getting an ice cream as a kid at a proper ice cream parlor. And I imagine it was probably, at that moment in time, the highlight of my life, as I knew it. The lady put a scoop on top of the cone and handed it to me. And when we walked out, in the parking lot, I licked my ice cream cone and the scoop fell off right onto the ground. And that was it, it was over. Even today, if ever I get a scoop in a cone — if I ever dare take that risk — I spend most of my time pushing the ice cream into the cone, securing it with my tongue. Ice cream trauma lasts forever.

LKD(K): “Nothing will change for the better because of ink on paper — regardless of the authority of the paper, or of the ink. Nothing will change without a transformation in the sphere of human consciousness. Nothing will change unless Indigenous peoples become the spiritual crossroads of new postcolonial sensibilities about the environment, false power, and humanity. This is our contribution to the international families of nations: to understand that the colonial ideologies are still destroying the planet that was entrusted to us and are still destroying. . .

. . . the mass of humanity for merely personal interests.”

CYJ: My mother still laments about missing out on Christmas festivities back home, where the whole street would come out to celebrate. I still haven't experienced a Christmas in the Philippines.

LKD(K): “Indigenous peoples must create and sustain a political will in order for their program of action to counteract their lack of resources, the indifferences of governments, and the vested interests of the rich and powerful. This is the art of transformative politics that we now have to teach and learn.”

CYJ: When I came out to my mother, she cried — not because she was angry, but she felt bad unloading her struggles on me while being completely unaware of what I was dealing with. Growing up, dating apps used to say “no fats, fems, or Asians,” meaning if you were any one of these you were undesirable.

CP: Walking home from school one day, while I was in elementary school, I was walking home with my neighbour. Neighbour kid — also the same grade — told me that I said the word “worm” wrong — warm, worm, warm, worm. I still don't know why it was wrong or which worm, warm, worm word he was talking about or how I was supposed to say it. Some mysteries you take to the grave.

LKD(K): “This is not a new situation. We have used it in both national and international diplomacy, but, as self-determining peoples, we must create the commitment of nation-states to our human rights. This will require collective learning and institutional innovation. We should accept no proposals that fail to respect our self-determining personalities as distinct peoples.”

CP: In 2017, I moved to Canada. My mother remained in New Zealand. I came to Vancouver for adventure and better work opportunities. I thought I would find work easily. I've talked to other immigrants; I remember one of them despairingly say that Canada is where careers go to die.

LKD(K): “By making the Declaration a living document, a teaching, we can create a shared future with the nation-states, in dignity and respect. More political inspiration and effort will have to be implemented if the Declaration is to end the effects of colonization, the human rights violations, and the deplorable conditions in which we live. It will require more than the familiar politics of short-term fixes and deals; it will require political mobilization and institutional reform.”

CYJ: I applied for over 100 jobs when I got here. I worked half a dozen temp roles. And I finally landed a decent job, and it was obvious I was hired because I was Asian. Now, most of the friends that I've made here are from work, so most are Asian-Canadians. I haven't made as many white friends in Canada as I had in New Zealand.

CP: When I first got my period at the age of 12, no one told me anything about it. My mother didn't say anything. She just showed me a pad and how to put it in. So, I never realized that you could change a pad when you needed to. So, I wasn't particularly prone to questioning, so I just had a horrible pants disaster once a month, every month for most of my life. Period trauma lasts forever.

CYJ: Before coming to Vancouver, I learned a few French phrases, thinking that I'd date French-Canadian guy. My partner of over 7 years turned out to be Vietnamese-Canadian. He's never been to Asia. He was quiet and shy when we first met. He became a drag artist and joined the House of Rice, an all Asian drag family in Vancouver. Over the years, he became more confident. For us, it was empowering to see so many queer and unapologetically Asian performers showcase their identities.

LKD(K): “To awaken the inner spirit of decent politics, a need for an inclusive, vibrant democracy based on human rights is our responsibility. Everything now will depend on how we carry out our belief.” . . . From the words of James (Sa'ke'j) Henderson Youngblood in the book of *Indigenous Diplomacy and the Rights of Peoples Achieving UN Recognition* (2008).

CP: This is my CV of context. Do I qualify yet?

CYJ: Will I ever be Filipino enough? Will I ever be Kiwi enough? Will I ever become Canadian enough? Will I always just be seen as some other?

Picnic at Government House | Christian Yves Jones, Chrystal Phan, Lindsay Katsitsakatste Delaronde (Kanienehaka) | 2025