

newsletter

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Have a Heart Day 2024

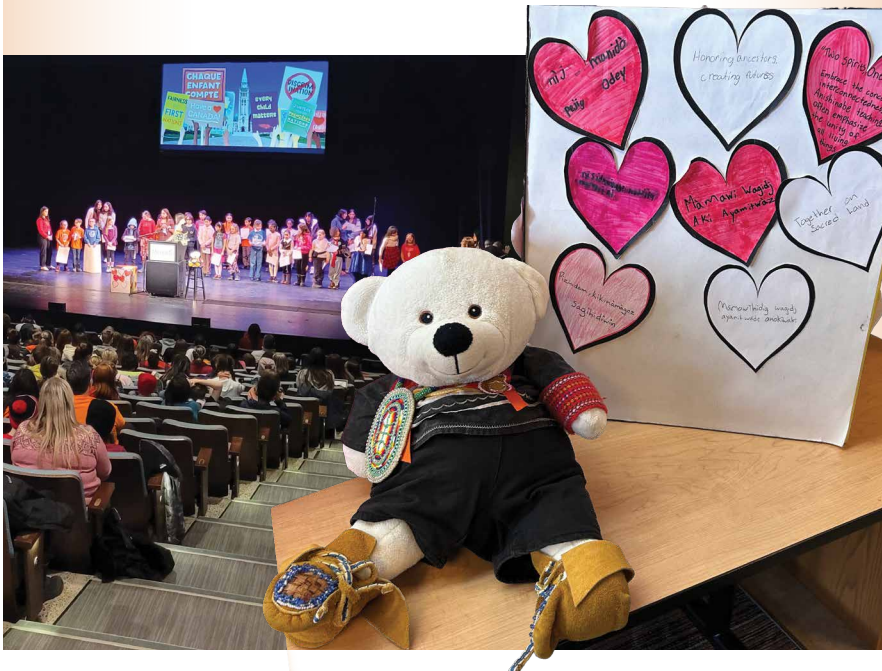
The Caring Society is always so thrilled to witness young people across the country gathering together on Have a Heart Day! Celebrated each year on February 14, Have a Heart Day calls on caring individuals to stand together for love and fairness for First Nations kids. Since 2012, children and youth from across the country have written thousands of letters to their elected officials, urging them to stop the discrimination and ensure that First Nations kids can grow up safely at home, be healthy, get a good education, and be proud of who they are.

This year was no different; we are so proud to share that over 40 schools and organizations across the country held their own Have a Heart Day event for a grand total of just under 4,000 letters mailed to the Prime Minister's Office.

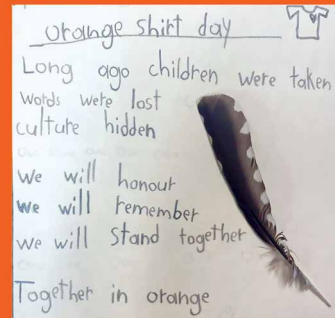
The Caring Society held its annual local Have a Heart Day event on unceded Algonquin territory. More than 800 children and youth from 19 different schools and community organizations returned to the Meridian @ CentrepoinTE Theatre to share their letters and speeches. Special thanks to Odeskhun Thusky from Kitigan Zibi School who did a fantastic job as our master of ceremonies!

We are also grateful to Senators Francis and Senior who attended the event on February 14 and made sure that the children's letters made it to the Prime Minister's Office. Here's to another year of advocating for loving justice for First Nations children!

(left) Students sharing their speeches at the 12th annual Have a Heart Day gathering; (right) Spirit Bear posing next to the mailbox made by students from Kitigan Zibi School



Final Issue of FPCFR



"Orange Shirt Day" by Hazel CK, age 8, featured in Vol. 19 issue 1 of the First Peoples Child & Family Review

Twenty years after publishing its first issue, it is with deep gratitude to all the authors, editors, contributors, and readers that we announce the publication of the final *First Peoples Child & Family Review* (FPCFR) issue.

In the very first FPCFR issue published in 2004, Dr. Cindy Blackstock wrote in the foreword:

There can be no more important knowledge than that which guides the care of our children. Precious always, perhaps even more precious now because together, as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, we have before us the responsibility to create a relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children based on respectful coexistence as distinct and valued peoples.

This precious knowledge graciously shared with the FPCFR formed the journal's mission: to centre Indigenous knowledges, perspectives and voices that promoted innovation in matters affecting First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children, families, and communities. This work may have been unexpected in other academic journals, but it ultimately created space in the academic world for the knowledge, perspectives, and voices of Indigenous peoples.

This final issue represents the best of FPCFR's work over the past 20 years, with articles and videos offering critical perspectives on the wellbeing of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children and young people.

To read this issue and past issues, please visit fpcfr.ca.



The Caring Society Files a Non-compliance Motion AT THE CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS TRIBUNAL

Nearly eight years after the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (Tribunal) found that Canada is discriminating against First Nations children in its provision of the First Nations Child and Family Services program and failure to fully implement Jordan's Principle, on December 12, 2023, the Caring Society filed a non-compliance motion to the Tribunal regarding Canada's wilful and chronic failure to adhere to the Tribunal's orders on Jordan's Principle.

The human rights case before the Tribunal is to ensure that the

Canadian government's discrimination against First Nations children and young people stops and there are safeguards in place to ensure the discrimination does not happen again. In its motion, the Caring Society raises specific concerns regarding Canada's:

- 1 wilful narrowing of the Tribunal's orders by imposing additional eligibility and request processing criteria;
- 2 ineffective methods for receiving, and processing Jordan's Principle requests by telephone or other formats;
- 3 chronic failure to adhere to the Tribunal's timelines for determining requests including in urgent cases;

- 4 failure to adhere to reasonable timeframes to fund approved requests;
- 5 failure to adopt sufficient accountability measures to ensure that the Tribunal's orders are upheld; and
- 6 attempt to shield itself from non-compliance by relying on the *Financial Administration Act* and administrative rationales.

The Caring Society submitted affidavits on January 12, 2024 and expects a full in-person hearing in June 2024. The Tribunal released its schedule for the motion outlining when the other Parties will be submitting affidavits and when cross examinations will take place. The non-compliance motion, affidavits and schedule can be found at fnwitness.ca.



SAVE THE DATE Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams

Each May and June, Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams invites people of all ages to plant heart gardens in memory of children lost to the residential school system, to honour residential school survivors and their families, and to support the legacy of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Planting a heart garden is a way of symbolizing your commitment to reconciliation. You can write messages on paper hearts or plant real flowers in your heart garden. To learn more about Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams, visit honouringmemoriesplantingdreams.ca.

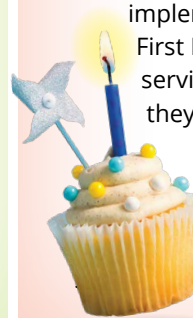
We are once again selling wildflower seeds through our online shop to help you get started with Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams! Visit fncaringociety.com/shop to purchase a packet of perennial wildflower seeds and grasses.

Each packet contains Black-Eyed Susan, Butterfly Milkweed, Flat Topped Aster, Foxglove Beardtongue, Fowl Bluegrass, Yellow Prairie Grass, Little Bluestem, New England Aster, and Wild Bergamot.



Save the Date

Mark your calendars! May 10 is not only an important date in the history of Jordan's Principle at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, but also Spirit Bear's *bear*thday. Celebrated annually, Bear Witness Day invites people across the country to call upon the government to respect the legacy of Jordan River Anderson and to fully implement Jordan's Principle to ensure First Nations children and youth have the services and supports they need, when they need them.



To learn more about how you can honour Jordan River Anderson and "bear witness," visit fncaringociety.com/bear-witness-day.

School is a Time for Dreams

Every child in Canada has a right to quality education, but inequities in funding continue to get in the way of First Nations children's ability to fully enjoy this right. Celebrated annually in March and April, School is a Time for Dreams invites people from across the country to support equitable education for First Nations young people, which includes safe and comfy schools and education that honours their cultures and languages.

Named in loving memory of Shannen Koostachin, Shannen's Dream is a movement to ensure First Nations children and youth have culturally appropriate, equitable education opportunities so that they, too, can achieve their dreams. In honour of Shannen, School is a Time for Dreams celebrates Shannen's Dream for safe and comfy schools for all kids. Visit shannensdream.ca to learn more about Shannen and Shannen's Dream.

From hosting a Shannen's Dream gathering to writing letters, there are many ways you can celebrate School is a Time for Dreams. You can even host a Shannen's Dream gathering on Shannen's Dream Day of Action, which takes place on April 27! Visit fncaringsociety.com/school-time-dreams to explore all the different ways you can celebrate throughout March and April.



Update on An Act Respecting First Nations, Métis and Inuit Children, Youth, and Families

On February 9, 2024, the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) unanimously affirmed that *An Act respecting First Nations, Métis and Inuit children youth and families* (the Act) is constitutionally valid as a whole and overturned an earlier decision by the Quebec Court of Appeal that found sections of the Act to be unconstitutional. You can read the decision at scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/20264/index.do.

The SCC decision is a strong endorsement of the purpose of the Act, namely by:

- affirming that Indigenous peoples have jurisdiction in relation to child and family services through their inherent right to self-government;
- establishing national standards for providing child and family services to Indigenous children; and
- contributing to the implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) in Canadian law.

The SCC found that, by passing the Act, Parliament recognized that Indigenous people's inherent right of self-government in relation to child and family services has constitutional status. Now, the Crown is bound to this. This means that governments will have obligations even if another government's mandate ends; they

are honour-bound. Further, the SCC recognized that the transition to self-government may take time and Indigenous peoples have the right to set the pace. Communities have the right to go at their own speed, take the appropriate steps, and do the necessary capacity-building before exercising jurisdiction. Funding, however, remains an issue. An evidence-informed funding structure is necessary to ensure that Canada's discrimination with respect to the First Nations Child & Family Services Program is not replicated in C-92 agreements. While the SCC's ruling does not address funding, it may provide a framework for resolving this concern. Importantly, 2024 SCC 5 at para 99 also highlights Jordan's Principle, affirming that, "intergovernmental disputes may not interfere with the right of Indigenous children to access the same services as other children in Canada."

Lastly, readers should know that provincial and territorial governments **cannot** use the notwithstanding clause to override the Act. The notwithstanding clause is part of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and can only override certain Charter-protected rights for a limited period of time in certain cases. It does **not** apply to Aboriginal rights under s. 35(1) of the constitution, which is outside the Charter.

For more information, see our [Information Sheet on the SCC decision](#).¹



¹ <http://fncaringsociety.com/publications/supreme-court-canada-decision-act-respecting-first-nations-metis-and-inuit-children>

Financial Literacy Series Reminder

With many eligible individuals and families awaiting human rights compensation after the approval of the Revised Final Settlement Agreement on compensation in October 2023, there has never been a better time to think about financial literacy. In the spring of 2022, the Caring Society partnered with Youth in Care Canada to produce three introductory videos about topics related to finances that former youth in care identified as important. All three videos are available in English and French and can be found at fncaringsociety.com/i-am-witness/resources.





First Nations Children's Action Research and Education Service

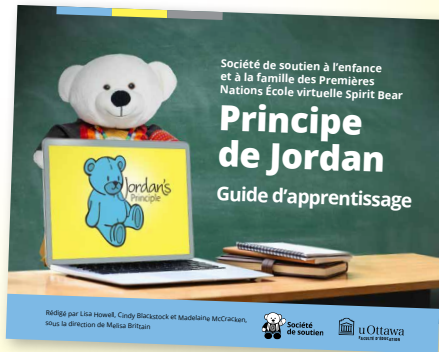
FNCARES

The *Jordan's Principle Learning Guide* is a key resource within the Spirit Bear Virtual School, and it is now available in both English and French.

This learning guide is part of a series of educational resources developed by the Caring Society and researchers at the University of Ottawa. It uses social justice and reconciliation-based approaches to learning about child welfare and the discrimination that continues in government practices and public services in Canada. And it provides opportunities to learn about how everyone can contribute to ending discrimination against First Nations children and youth.

The learning guide was developed for elementary-level students based on research conducted with teachers about the impacts of the Caring Society's campaigns on elementary students. However, it can be adapted for older learners and accessed by anyone. The guide offers context, lesson plans, curriculum links, assessment suggestions, numerous resources, and many ways to become involved in the Jordan's Principle campaign and other Caring Society initiatives. You can access it at fncaringsociety.com/publications/jordans-principle-learning-guide.

Learn more and find more great resources by visiting the Spirit Bear Virtual School: fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear/spirit-bear-virtual-school.



Spirit Bear and Children Make History Don't Miss the Exhibit!

Save the date! We're so thrilled to partner with Carrier Sekani Family Services for the upcoming Spirit Bear and Children Make History exhibit at The Exploration Place in Prince George! This June, visitors will get to take a closer look at the sets from Spirit Bear's first film in a first-ever, behind-the-scenes look at *Spirit Bear and Children Make History*. Stay tuned for more details.



First Nations Child & Family Caring Society

Membership Information

Join the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society as a Member under one of the following categories:

- Individual Membership: \$75
- Student Membership with ID or Elder: \$5
- Small FNCFCs Agency Membership (1-50 employees): \$500
- Large FNCFCs Agency Membership (50+ employees): \$1,000
- Small Associate Membership (Organizations with 1-50 employees): \$500
- Large Associate Membership (Organizations with 50+ employees): \$1,000

2024 Scholarships Cycle

The Caring Society is delighted to be able to continue offering the following scholarships to eligible individuals and groups. Here's what the 2024 scholarship cycle looks like:



Jordan's Principle Scholarship

There is still time to apply for the 2024 Jordan's Principle Scholarship. This scholarship closes on April 30, 2024.

The Jordan's Principle Scholarship is open to First Nations students who are studying children's holistic health and wellbeing at a Canadian post-secondary institution.



Spirit Bear Award

Applications for the Spirit Bear Award are still open, until April 30, 2024. This award is given to groups of children and youth who demonstrate their commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action.



Peter Henderson Bryce Award

The Peter Henderson Bryce Award is awarded every two years and alternates between honouring children and youth and honouring adult health professionals. This year's Peter Henderson Bryce Award will be awarded to a health professional who courageously stands up for the safety, health and/or wellbeing of First Nations, Métis, or Inuit children. Applications are still open.



Shannen's Dream Scholarship

Applications for the 2024 Shannen's Dream Scholarship closed on March 31.

Look out for the announcement of the winners in the coming months.

Visit fncaringsociety.com/awards-scholarships to learn more about and apply for the scholarships.

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