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FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP VOTE FOR A NEW PROCESS TO END Canada's Discrimination Against First Nations Children

On October 16–18, 2024, on Treaty No. 7 Territory, First Nations from across the country voted to ensure all First Nations children are forever protected from Canada's discrimination in child and family services and set forward a plan to do so.

Nearly nine years ago, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (Tribunal) confirmed what many had known for decades: Canada's delivery of child and family services to First Nations children and families was and continues to be racially discriminatory. Significant gains have been made thanks to enforceable legal orders from the Tribunal, and services are starting to get out to children and families to address the multi-generational harms from residential schools that make First Nations children nearly 20 times more likely to be placed outside their families.

The draft agreement put to the First Nations-in-Assembly did not provide sufficient protections for all First Nations children now and in the future. While the draft agreement broadcast a \$47.8 billion 10-year funding plan, closer scrutiny showed that the draft agreement would expire in nine years, those funds were not secure, and that First Nations leadership and experts would be left out of future decision-making and implementation. There was also no protection for children from Canada's discrimination after year 10. Generations of First Nations children would once again be at risk of losing their childhoods and their lives to Canada's discrimination.

The Caring Society hosted two webinars to discuss improving on the draft FSA on long-term reform, as well as a discussion on what's next following the direction provided by First Nations-in-Assembly. Both webinars can be viewed on the Caring Society's webpage dedicated to First Nations Child and Family Services reform at fncaringsociety.com/fncfs-resources.



THE TRIBUNAL ISSUES Summary Ruling Regarding the Non-Compliance Motion on Jordan's Principle

On November 21, 2024, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (Tribunal or CHRT) issued a summary ruling in response to the Caring Society's non-compliance motion filed in December 2023 regarding the Government of Canada's chronic and wilful failure to adhere to the Tribunal's orders on Jordan's Principle. The ruling also responds to Canada's cross-motion filed in March 2024. The Tribunal ruled that the relief sought in the Caring Society's non-compliance motion and Canada's cross-motion are both granted in part.

The Tribunal has mandated Canada to tackle the backlog of requests immediately, prioritizing urgent cases and reporting back with a detailed plan by December 10, 2024. For families stuck in the backlog, the Tribunal ruled that Canada must communicate with those with undetermined urgent requests and take interim measures to prevent foreseeable harm to children by December 5, 2024.

The Tribunal has ordered the Parties to return with consent orders, or with alternative positions on additional matters in January and February 2025. In all, the Tribunal has made orders, or provided guidance, regarding the backlogs, urgent requests, the Back-to-Basics approach, the 24-hour Jordan's Principle call centre and other contact mechanisms, referrals to other services, including to First Nations and First Nations-authorized organizations, determination and reimbursement timelines, Canada's coordination with federal programs, the *Financial Administration Act*, and a complaints mechanism.

Importantly, the Tribunal's ruling reinforces the principle of substantive equality, affirming it as a right owed to First Nations children to address and prevent Canada's discriminatory practices.

The Tribunal encourages collective solutions, and the Caring Society is ready to do its part. To read the full ruling and other information sheets, please go to fnwitness.ca.





SAVE THE DATE Have a Heart Day

Mark your calendars! Our annual Have a Heart Day event is quickly approaching.

Celebrated annually on February 14, Have a Heart Day is a child- and youth-led reconciliation event that brings together caring Canadians to help ensure First Nations children have the opportunity to grow up safely at home, get a good education, and be healthy and proud of who they are.

Visit haveaheartday.ca for all the latest updates and tips on how to honour the day with your community, school, or workplace! Don't forget to register your Have a Heart Day celebration to be showcased on our interactive map!

Spirit Bear's Pumpkin Carving Contest

Spirit Bear was *pawsitively* thrilled to receive many submissions from children and youth for his annual pumpkin carving contest!



As a way to demonstrate our appreciation to participants, each individual/group received a gift card to spend at goodminds.com, a First Nations family-owned business that hosts First Nations, Métis, and Inuit educational books, products, and resources. On behalf of Spirit Bear and our team, thank you to all those who participated and made this year's pumpkin carving contest another one for the books!

Spirit Bear Receives Key to the City of Prince George!

The *Spirit Bear and Children Make History* exhibit opened June 21, National Indigenous Peoples Day, at The Exploration Place Museum and Science Centre in Prince George, British Columbia. On that day, Mayor Simon Yu met Spirit Bear for the first time. He was impressed with the exhibit and the gentle way that Spirit Bear spreads his important message to children. There and then, he vowed to give Spirit Bear a Key to the City. On September 6, Mayor Yu kept his promise, and in a ceremony at The Exploration Place, he proclaimed September 6 Spirit Bear Day in Prince George, handing Spirit Bear his very own Key to the City.

Spirit Bear's exhibit, which tells true stories of how children of all diversities stand with First Nations children to achieve equity in children's services, showcases puppets and sets from Spirit Bear's four stop-motion animated films and archival material from the landmark human rights case that addressed longstanding discrimination in federally funded First Nations child and family services and the failure to fully implement Jordan's Principle.

The exhibit ran until November 11 at The Exploration Place in Prince George. Our next steps include working with exhibit partners to transform *Spirit Bear and Children Make History* into a first-class touring exhibit that celebrates the inspiring reconciliation actions of children and affirms the responsibility of all of us to end inequities in First Nations children's services and implement the TRC Calls to Action.

To find out more about the exhibit and read the Spirit Bear Day Proclamation, visit the exhibit webpage at fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear/spirit-bear-and-children-make-history-exhibit.

(Right) Mayor Yu handing Spirit Bear the Key to the City.



OPENING SOON! 2025 Scholarships and Awards Applications

In the new year, we will be opening applications for the 2025 Shannen's Dream Scholarship, Jordan's Principle Scholarship, and Spirit Bear Award!

- **Shannen's Dream Scholarship** – a “pay-it-forward” scholarship to assist First Nations youth with post-secondary education costs
- **Jordan's Principle Scholarship** – for First Nations students studying children's holistic health and wellbeing
- **Spirit Bear Award** – for demonstrated commitment by a group of young people to reconciliation and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action

You can find out more about our awards and scholarships on our website fncaringsociety.com/awards-scholarships and watch our social media for more updates!



NEW DATE! Caring Society Gala moved to January 2025



The 14th annual Caring Society Gala has moved to January 17, 2025. We thank the Kinosaosipi Minisowin Agency (KSMA) for helping us find a new date. Our initial date in October 2024 overlapped with a critical national meeting on First Nations child welfare happening at the same time. We moved the Caring Society Gala because we felt it was essential that First Nations in Manitoba could participate in the child welfare gathering without conflict.

We look forward to seeing friends old and new at the Gala in the new year. It will be a wonderful way to break up the month of January!

If you would like to support but cannot be there in person, tickets and tables can be purchased and donated back to Elders and youth. Sponsorship and advertising opportunities are also available, and KSMA is seeking donations of artwork and prizes for the silent auction.

For more information, visit fncaringsociety.com/events/annual-caring-society-gala or contact Tracy at KSMA at 204-784-8220 or ttompson@minisowin.org.

Date: January 17, 2025
Time: 5:00 p.m.
Location: Victoria Inn & Convention Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba
Tickets: \$200/person or \$2,000/table

Orange Shirt Day 2024

The Caring Society was privileged to partner once more with the Assembly of Seven Generations (A7G) and Beechwood Cemetery to host our fourth annual public education event in honour of Orange Shirt Day and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. This year's agenda included the following activities:

- **Reconciling History walking tours at Beechwood Cemetery and throughout Downtown Ottawa.** Young people from A7G led the tours, which were an opportunity to learn about the key figures involved in the residential school system, the role the federal government and bureaucracy played, and how we can learn from history to address contemporary injustices experienced by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.
- **Showings of the fourth Spirit Bear film, *Spirit Bear: Echoes of the Past*.** Attendees of all ages learned more about reconciliation by watching Spirit Bear's fourth big-screen adventure.
- **Art and letter-writing at the Action Tables.** Back again for another year, the Action Tables provided a space where people of all ages could demonstrate their commitment to reconciliation through art and letter-writing to elected officials, calling on them to fully implement the TRC Calls to Action.
- **Special honouring at 2:15 pm.** Participants gathered at the Children's Sacred Forest to honour the children who passed away at residential schools and their families. The Children's Sacred Forest and accompanying plaque was unveiled in 2023 with the guidance of Claudette Commanda and Marie Wilson, and is meant to serve as one of many places of honouring and remembrance.

We were thrilled to also host a special education event at Beechwood Cemetery on the morning of September 30 for students from Ottawa-based schools. Students watched *Spirit Bear: Echoes of the Past*, had a Q+A with some of the film's voice actors and Dr. PH Bryce's family members, went on a special edition of the tour, and painted rocks to demonstrate their commitment to reconciliation. You can watch the film at vimeo.com/952062915.

Every day of the year, we invite people to learn about Canada's past in the spirit of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its Calls to Action through our campaign, Reconciling History, available at fncaringsociety.com/reconciling-history.

(Below) The Children's Sacred Forest honouring children who never returned from residential schools with tour participants in the background listening to A7G tour guides.





REMINDER Spirit Bear Calendar

Great news! Just in time for the holiday season, *Spirit Bear's Guide to Reconciliation 2025 Calendar* is now available to order.

Guiding supporters through 12 months of fun and meaningful reconciliation activities in support of equity for First Nations children, the calendar serves as a reminder for people of all ages to incorporate acts of reconciliation into their everyday activities. The 2025 edition features images from Spirit Bear's fourth animated film, *Spirit Bear: Echoes of the Past*. All proceeds go toward supporting the work of the Caring Society to advance equity for First Nations kids and families.

Available in French and English, order yours by visiting fncaringsociety.com/shop. And don't forget to download the free activity book to accompany the calendar at fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear/calendar.

SEASON'S GREETINGS from Spirit Bear and Sunny

Please note, our office will be closed from December 23 to 27.



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 FNCFC Agency Membership (1-50 employees): \$500

Large FNCFC Agency Membership (50+ employees): \$1,000

Small Associate Membership (Organizations with 1-50 employees): \$500

Large Associate Membership (Organizations with 50+ employees): \$1,000

FNCARES Update



First Nations Children's Action Research and Education Service

On August 29, FNCARES hosted an information webinar on Jordan's Principle and Canada's non-compliance to provide background information on Jordan's Principle and the most

recent non-compliance motion, and to discuss what to watch for during the September 10-12 Tribunal Hearing.

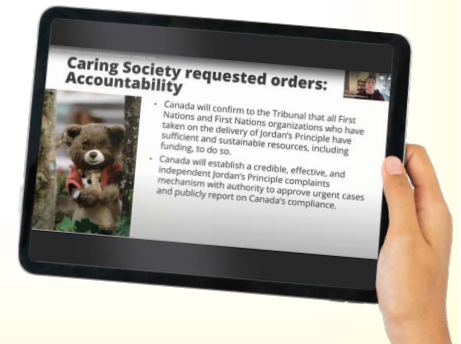
The September hearing was set in response to the December 2023 non-compliance motion filed with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (Tribunal) by the Caring Society regarding Canada's chronic and wilful failure to adhere to the Tribunal's orders on Jordan's Principle (see article on page 1 for more information on the hearing).

During the webinar, Brittany Mathews (of the Caring Society) and David Taylor (pro bono counsel for the Caring Society at the Tribunal) provided a history of Jordan's Principle, including previous non-compliance orders, explained what non-compliance motions and orders are, and reviewed the Agreement in Principle and multiple efforts to get compliance from Canada. They also discussed what relief the Caring Society is requesting, the positions of the other Parties, and the implications for long-term reform (regarding both the Child and Family Services Final Settlement Agreement [FSA] and the forthcoming Jordan's Principle FSA).

You can watch the "Jordan's Principle and Canada's Non-Compliance" webinar on YouTube at bit.ly/3Z6pqRP, where you will also find a list of resources posted during the webinar.

Readers may also be interested in watching the October 2023 webinar "Jordan's Principle: Back to Basics" at bit.ly/BacktoBasicsWebinar

where presenters discuss the issues First Nations children face when trying to access services and supports through Jordan's Principle, who is eligible, how to apply, and much more.



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