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Caring Society Files a Motion Regarding the Tribunal's Consultation Orders

The Caring Society filed a motion with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (Tribunal) regarding Canada's breach of the Tribunal's consultation orders on January 14, 2025. This motion was in response to Canada's refusal to negotiate a national path to ending its discrimination in First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) after First Nations-in-Assembly rejected the draft agreement put forth in the October 2024 Special Chiefs Assembly.



First Nations-in-Assembly made it clear that the draft agreement did not provide sufficient protections for all First Nations children now or in the future. In the draft agreement, there was no protection for children from Canada's discrimination after year ten. Generations of First Nations children would once again be at risk of losing their childhoods and their lives to Canada's discrimination. After rejecting the draft agreement, First Nations-in-Assembly overwhelmingly passed resolutions to set forward a plan to end Canada's discrimination in FNCFS and Jordan's Principle for all First Nations children.

On January 7, 2025, the Government of Canada, along with the Chiefs of Ontario and Nishnawbe Aski Nation, announced that they intend to reach a FNCFS long-term reform final settlement agreement that is only for Ontario First Nations. On January 10, 2025, Canada informed the Caring Society that their mandate does not permit further national-level negotiations for FNCFS long-term reform.

Canada's decision to only negotiate with First Nations organizations that agreed with its flawed settlement agreement is contrary to good faith negotiations and Honour of the Crown, and it smacks of retaliatory conduct. Canada's colonial divide-and-conquer approach cannot continue.

Canada must follow the direction provided by Rights Holders and end its retaliation towards First Nations that found the draft agreement to be insufficient to stopping the discrimination against First Nations children. Canada's conduct raises serious concerns that must be addressed legally unless Canada returns to the table and negotiates in good faith.

Read the motion at fncaringsociety.com/publications/caring-societys-notice-motion-regarding-canadas-breach-tribunals-consultation-orders.

Bear Shares II

SPIRIT BEAR IS GETTING READY FOR HIS NEXT ADVENTURE

Bear Shares is getting an upgrade! Launched in June 2024 as part of the Spirit Bear Museum exhibit at The Exploration Place in Prince George, BC, Bear Shares is a 3D digital experience that teaches about culturally based equity and reconciliation through Q&A with Spirit Bear. With support from the Canada Council for the Arts, we are thrilled to be working with our friends at Spotted Fawn Productions and SteamLabs to make Bear Shares even better, with new characters and environments, challenges for players to complete, ideas for taking action in the real world, and the addition of subtitles in French and an Indigenous language.

With so many possibilities for Bear Shares II, we knew we needed some expert advice. Throughout February and March, the Caring Society sought feedback through a short kid-friendly survey to determine new characters and storylines and identify general improvements we can make to Bear Shares. We were thrilled to receive over 100 responses, mostly from kids aged nine to eleven.

We invite learners of all ages to join in the fun by exploring Bear Shares in its current form. It is available through the Caring Society website!

Play Bear Shares today at fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear/bear-shares.



Latest News on Jordan's Principle and Canada's Non-Compliance

The Tribunal Issues Full Ruling With Reasons: Parties Begin Mediation

On January 29, 2025, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (Tribunal) issued its full ruling with reasons in response to the Caring Society's non-compliance motion filed in December 2023 regarding the Government of Canada's failure to follow the Tribunal's orders on Jordan's Principle.

The Tribunal ordered Canada to immediately tackle the backlog of Jordan's Principle requests and report back on additional matters, including Canada's plan to address the backlog, and to confirm that First Nations and First Nations organizations who have taken on Jordan's Principle have sufficient funding to meet the needs of children.

The Tribunal also ordered the Parties to return with consent orders (positions mutually agreed upon by the Parties) or alternative positions on additional matters, including solutions to eliminate the backlog, criteria and guidelines for identifying urgent requests, and options for non-urgent determination timelines. In January 2025, the Parties began Tribunal-assisted mediation.

ISC Issues Jordan's Principle Operational Bulletin

On February 10, 2025, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) issued a Jordan's Principle bulletin on changes to operating procedures without consulting the Caring Society or the other Parties involved in active mediation on directly related matters. The Caring Society views the bulletin as a significant deviation from the Tribunal's orders on Jordan's Principle and has asked ISC to withdraw the bulletin immediately.

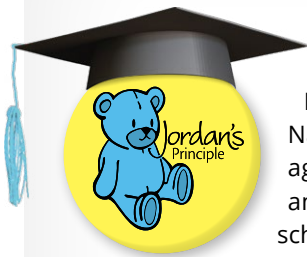
The Caring Society has raised concerns with ISC about their unilateral application of the bulletin to the backlog of requests; we view this as procedurally unfair to the children waiting several months or longer to receive a determination on their request. The Caring Society has also raised concerns with ISC's requirement that each request must demonstrate how the child has experienced gaps, delays, or denials in government services before ISC considers the request for support. These changes are a recycling of ISC's discriminatory conduct by presuming that the needs of First Nations children can be satisfied by existing services, and then foisting the responsibility of identifying and coordinating such services onto First Nations service providers and families, even though the Tribunal found no evidence that ISC has evaluated its own programs to respond to children's needs.

Ultimately, Jordan's Principle is not a government program; it is a legal obligation with no end date. Canada has been ordered to properly implement Jordan's Principle to ensure that First Nations children can access the services, supports and products they need when they need them without experiencing jurisdictional disputes.

For the latest updates and additional information, please visit jordansprinciple.ca.



Awards and Scholarships



Jordan's Principle Scholarship

Closing on April 10, the Jordan's Principle Scholarship is open to First Nations post-secondary students of all ages studying children's holistic health and wellbeing. There are two \$5,000 scholarships and two \$2,500 scholarships available this year, thanks to contributions by HANSAmEd and Caring Society donors!

Shannen's Dream Scholarship

Closing on April 30, the Shannen's Dream Scholarship is open to First Nations youth (30 years of age and under) enrolled in post-secondary education. It is a pay-it-forward scholarship, which means that recipients must use their skills to contribute positively



to their community in the spirit of Shannen's Dream. There are two \$10,000 scholarships and two \$5,500 scholarships available this year, thanks to the contributions of TopHat and Caring Society donors!

Spirit Bear Award

Closing on April 30, nominations for the Spirit Bear Award are open to groups of children and youth (18 years of age and under) of all backgrounds who demonstrate a commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions Calls to Action. This year, three awards of \$500 are available, thanks to the contribution of the Olive Tree Foundation!



Find out more about all our awards and scholarships at fncaringociety.com/awards-scholarships.

National Children's Chiefs Commission Holds Inaugural In-Person Meeting, Reaffirming Commitment to First Nations Children and Families

Our Children Our Way Society

On January 24, 2025, the National Children's Chiefs Commission convened for its first-ever in-person meeting, hosted by the Squamish Nation in North Vancouver.

The Commission was created through AFN Resolutions 60/2024 and 61/2024 passed by First Nations-in-Assembly at the Special Chiefs Assembly in October 2025 after they rejected the draft Final Settlement Agreement on Long-Term Reform of the First Nations Child and Family Services Program (FNCFS). The resolutions called for renewed negotiations, with oversight and strategic direction provided by the newly formed Commission, to ensure that all First Nations voices are included in reforming FNCFS and Jordan's Principle in alignment with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent.

The Commission is committed to ensuring that the rights of First Nations children and families are respected and that policies and practices reflect the values, traditions, and priorities of First Nations communities.



As part of the inaugural meeting, the Commission appointed Chief Pauline Frost (Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation) as Chair and Debra Foxcroft (Tseshah First Nation) as Co-Chair. The Commission also approved its terms of reference, subject to the approval of the First Nations-in-Assembly and approved, in principle, the terms of reference for a negotiation team.

Representatives from the following regions have been appointed to the Commission: Newfoundland, Quebec and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Northwest Territories, British Columbia, and Yukon.

The representatives are mandated to work openly and transparently, regularly reporting on their work to the First Nations-in-Assembly, ensuring that their efforts align with the needs and aspirations of their Nations.

The National Children's Chiefs Commission is hosted by the Our Children Our Way Society.

Visit ourchildrenourway.ca to sign up for updates.

Have a Heart Day 2025

We were thrilled to host another successful Have a Heart Day event – this time virtually!

This year's Have a Heart Day may have looked different, but it was just as powerful as those in the past. Instead of our usual in-person gathering, we hosted a virtual screening of *My Voice Matters: Changing the World Through Child & Youth Activism*, and a panel discussion featuring inspiring young people who participated in the Caring Society's social justice-based reconciliation campaigns in elementary and secondary school. Their stories, insights, and passion for advocacy made for an unforgettable experience. In case you missed it, you can watch the full screening and panel discussion at www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjvZz3iFxF0.

Nationally, we saw participation in the form of community events, letter-writing campaigns, baking, and social media contributions from schools and organizations across the country. You can see what took place in your community by checking out the hashtags **#HaveaHeartDay**/**#JourneeAyezUnCoeur** or via our interactive map at fncaringsociety.com/have-heart-day-map.

Thank you to everyone who joined us from across the country, engaged in meaningful conversations, and had a heart to help ensure First Nations children have the opportunity to grow up safely at home, get a good education, be healthy, and be proud of who they are.



Annual Caring Society Gala

The Caring Society extends heartfelt thanks to everyone who faced the winter storm to join us for the 14th Annual Caring Society Gala in Winnipeg on January 17. It was humbling to see a full house of more than 600 friends and supporters despite the weather. A special thank you goes to the Kinosao Sipi Minisowin Agency for hosting the Gala for the third year. We at the Caring Society know organizing the Gala is a huge undertaking. Thank you to the many volunteers who helped make the evening so much fun and such a success.

The Caring Society Gala is an annual fundraiser hosted by the First Nations child welfare agencies of Manitoba to support equity for First Nations children.

Save the Date for the 15th Annual Caring Society Gala on October 17, 2025. Watch for more information at fncaringsociety.com/events/annual-caring-society-gala.

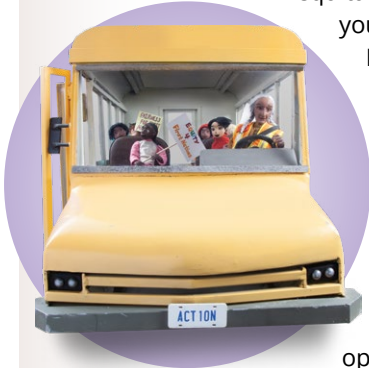


Upcoming Events

Mark your calendars! Spring is in the air, and so are plenty of exciting events. With a variety of reconciliation-based events taking place from March to June, there are plenty of opportunities to learn, connect, and, most importantly, take action.

School Is a Time for Dreams

Celebrated every March and April, **School is a Time for Dreams** invites people from across the country to support equitable education for First Nations young people. In honour of Shannen Kooostachin, founder of Shannen's Dream, a movement for safe and comfy schools, School is a Time for Dreams celebrates Shannen and her dream for all First Nations to have culturally appropriate, equitable education opportunities so that they, too, can achieve their dreams.



Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams

Each May and June, people of all ages are encouraged to participate in **Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams**, an opportunity to

plant heart gardens in memory of the children lost to the residential school system, honour residential school survivors and their families, and support the legacy of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We can't wait to see your heart gardens in full bloom! Don't forget to include a message about your commitment to reconciliation somewhere on your heart before you plant it.



Bear Witness Day

This year, we are celebrating the 20th anniversary Jordan's Principle. Join us on May 10 in celebrating **Bear Witness Day** and call upon governments to respect the legacy of Jordan River Anderson and to fully implement Jordan's Principle to ensure First Nations children have the services and supports they need, when they need them. From teddy bear tea parties to community parades and letter writing, there are so many ways to get involved.

To learn more about upcoming events and how you can get involved, check out our events page at fncaringsociety.com/events.



Spirit Bear Podcast Wins Canadian Podcast Award for Outstanding Indigenous Series

It was truly an honour to win this award for Spirit Bear's *Paw'd-cast*, especially given the amazing work of our fellow nominees: MEDIA INDIGENA, Nation to Nation, The ʔasqanaki Podcast by Smokii Sumac, and Warrior Life by Pam Palmater.

Thanks to all of the community members, advocates, and leading experts on justice and equity for First Nations children and families for sharing your knowledge and wisdom on the show. And thank you to The Canadian Podcast Awards for this recognition! Find the Spirit Bear Podcast on your favourite listening app or online at jkingfncfcs.podbean.com.



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

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