

# newsletter

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## Canadian Human Rights Tribunal Update

On April 15 and 16, 2025, ten motions and two joint motions were filed with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal seeking interested party status in response to the Ontario Motion filed by Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN), Chiefs of Ontario (COO), and the Government of Canada on March 7, 2025, seeking approval of the Ontario Final Agreement (OFA) on reform of First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) in Ontario. The Ontario Motion seeks an order to end the Tribunal's jurisdiction in Ontario regarding the FNCFS Program.

immediately impacted by the outcome of the Ontario Motion, while the remaining parties will be directly impacted by the proceedings and any orders the Tribunal makes in relation to the OFA.

Interested Party Submissions were made by the following First Nations and First Nations organizations:

- Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations
- Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta
- Mi'gmaq Child and Family Services of New Brunswick Inc.
- Ugi'ganjig (Eel River Bar) First Nation
- The Indigenous Child & Family Services Directors Our Children Our Way Society
- Neqotkuk (Tobique) First Nation of the Wolastoqey Nation
- Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations
- Council of Yukon First Nations
- The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
- Taykwa Tagamou Nation and the Chippewas of Georgina Island
- First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission and Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador

the participatory rights of COO and NAN as interested parties. On **January 14, 2025, the Caring Society filed a motion** with the Tribunal regarding Canada's breach of their legal obligation to consult with the parties regarding the long-term reform of FNCFS and Jordan's Principle. Progress to address Canada's non-compliance regarding Jordan's Principle is ongoing (see **January 29, 2025 Tribunal decision, 2025 CHRT 6**), and the Caring Society continues to call on Canada to urgently and immediately comply with the Tribunal's orders regarding Jordan's Principle.

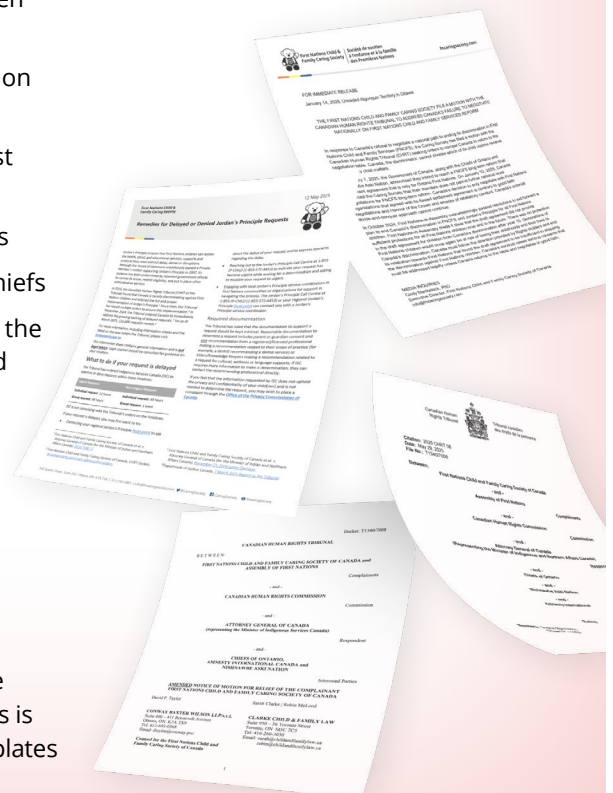
Visit [fnwitness.ca](https://fnwitness.ca) to access the Interested Party Submissions and documents in **bold** in this article.



Canada, in its **March 17, 2025, letter to the Tribunal**, indicated that the outcome of the Ontario Motion will likely set the path forward for long-term reform of FNCFS. Canada's intent is clear in wanting to apply the OFA to First Nations outside of Ontario, resulting in First Nations, First Nations regional organizations, and First Nations Agencies from six different provinces and the Yukon bringing motions before the Tribunal to provide their unique and important perspectives. The Chippewas of Georgina Island and Taykwa Tagamou Nation stand to be directly and

### Next Steps

On **May 23, 2025, the Tribunal indicated** that the schedule for the OFA and deciding interested parties is paused while the Tribunal contemplates



## Know Your Rights Under Jordan's Principle

The Caring Society hosted a webinar on May 27 on the rights of children and families under Jordan's Principle, remedies for denied or delayed requests, and how to hold Canada accountable.

Host Brittany Mathews from the Caring Society welcomed attendees and introduced the speakers, beginning with Dr. Cindy Blackstock, who opened the presentations by honouring Jordan River Anderson and his family. Dr. Blackstock reminded us that Jordan's Principle is not a program, option, or recommendation, but rather a legal obligation for Canada to provide the health, education, and social supports First Nations children need, when they need them. Despite this, she says, we are currently seeing broad-based non-compliance of Jordan's Principle by Canada at an unprecedented level.

Jessica Raby from the Caring Society provided details on the rights of First Nations children and families under Jordan's Principle. She summarized key issues families are experiencing when making Jordan's Principle requests, outlined the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's legal orders regarding Canada's non-compliance, and clarified what services are eligible under Jordan's Principle based on the Tribunal's orders. She also debunked Canada's allegations of misuse of Jordan's Principle by families.

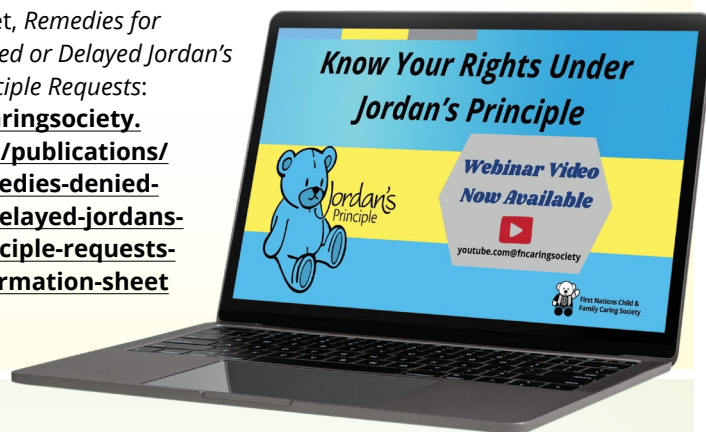
David Taylor, an Ottawa-based lawyer who has served as pro bono counsel for the Caring Society in the Tribunal complaint since 2014, discussed existing measures for challenging

Canada's decision making regarding Jordan's Principle applications, including Indigenous Services Canada's internal appeal system and mechanisms available through the Federal Court.

Naiomi Metallic, from the Listuguj Mi'gmaq First Nation, is a lawyer and Associate Professor of Law at Dalhousie. She concluded the panel presentations with a discussion of a report she co-authored on how to hold Canada accountable through Ombuds-like functions titled, *Doing Better for Indigenous Children and Families: Jordan's Principle Accountability Report* ([fncaringociety.com/publications/doing-better-indigenous-children-and-families-jordans-principle-accountability-report](https://fncaringociety.com/publications/doing-better-indigenous-children-and-families-jordans-principle-accountability-report)). A lively Q&A session hosted by Brittany Mathews capped off the webinar.

Watch the webinar: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eabsi8GuGyM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eabsi8GuGyM)

Read the information sheet, *Remedies for Denied or Delayed Jordan's Principle Requests*: [fncaringociety.com/publications/remedies-denied-or-delayed-jordans-principle-requests-information-sheet](https://fncaringociety.com/publications/remedies-denied-or-delayed-jordans-principle-requests-information-sheet)



## Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams

May marks the beginning of 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're thrilled to see some heart gardens beginning to bloom! Heart gardens can include wildflowers, paper hearts, and native species that help support friendly pollinators like bees. Whether you're planting your heart garden outdoors or in a potted plant inside, don't forget to write a message about your commitment to reconciliation somewhere on your paper heart before you plant it.

Remember, heart gardens come in many different shapes and sizes. Why not create your own version and share photos on social media using the hashtags **#HonouringMemoriesPlantingDreams** and **#CVRJardinDeCoeurs**? We look forward to seeing how Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams will be taken up in communities across the country. You can also register your heart garden on our map!

For more information about planting your very own heart garden, and to register it on our map, check out [honouringmemoriesplantingdreams.ca](https://honouringmemoriesplantingdreams.ca).





## Bear Witness Day at the Senate

Leading up to May 10, over 300 students, adults, and teddy bears in the Ottawa-Gatineau area came together at the Senate to “Bear Witness” and celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jordan’s Principle. Students came dressed to the nines, rocking their bear crowns, blue t-shirts, and friendship bracelets. We were especially honoured to have students from Kitigan Zibi elementary school travel over two hours to join the celebration!

After opening remarks from Kokum Shirley, we were overjoyed to hear from several students who shared their heartfelt letters and collages that highlighted the importance of the full implementation of Jordan’s Principle and what it means to “Bear Witness.” Nimkeehns Wemigwans and youth drummers from Kitigan Zibi shared several songs while guests took part in the biggest round dance to ever take place at the Senate.

We were thrilled to host this Bear Witness Day gathering in partnership with Senator Francis, Senator White, Senator Audette, Senator Harder, and the Assembly of Seven Generations. Many thanks to all the students who shared their thoughtful letters, to our amazing emcees Raiyah and Cece, and to Kokum Shirley and the youth drummers.

*Below: Students and teddy bears joined in a round dance at the Senate.*



## 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Jordan’s Principle Celebrated in Winnipeg

The Caring Society was honoured to attend a Bear Witness Day event in Winnipeg honouring the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jordan’s Principle, hosted by Sagkeeng Child and Family Services and Kinosao Sipi Minisowin Agency. The family of Jordan River Anderson collaborated on the day’s events and were honoured guests.

Led by Parade Marshals Angel, a youth leader, and Cindy Blackstock, children, families, and supporters walked from The Forks to Memorial Park, which is across from the Manitoba Legislature. At the park, young people and leaders spoke to the crowd, and we all enjoyed lunch and an afternoon full of fun activities, including bouncy castles, face painting, and magic shows!

The Caring Society extends our warmest thanks to the incredible people at Sagkeeng Child and Family Services and Kinosao Sipi Minisowin Agency for hosting the event.

On May 8, Premier Wab Kinew also delivered a statement in the Manitoba Legislature in Cree honouring Jordan River Anderson, Jordan’s family, and Jordan’s Principle. The statement also reflected on *The Spirit Bear Day Act*, which was passed by the Manitoba legislative assembly in 2018 to honour Jordan’s memory and annually recognize the importance of Jordan’s Principle on May 10. Read the Spirit Bear Day Act: [web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/41-4/b230e.php](http://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/41-4/b230e.php).



*Above: The Spirit Bear Mascot saying hi to a young participant; Left: The Anderson family and Jordan’s Principle supporters; below: Children helping to open the Bear Witness Day celebration.*



# Soaring Together

## Tools for Life for First Nations Youth

### Background

In January 2024, Thunderbird Partnership Foundation and partners began having regular talks about how to best support First Nations youth in today's world. While each had created resources that support First Nations youth in various aspects of their lives, they noted a gap, and together they decided a new tool was needed: one grounded in First Nations worldview that supported youth in finding their way to what they need, when they need it.

The partners formed a working group, and in September 2024, members began working together on a website to help youth get the information they may need or want in a given moment. The goal of the website is to be relevant for First Nations youth wherever they live.

### The Website

Soaring Together – Tools for Life was launched in February 2025. It is designed to help First Nation youth find their way, make good choices, and find useful resources to guide their journeys through life. It's rooted in Thunderbird's Indigenous Wellness Framework, which comes from Indigenous Knowledge and ways of being. The website takes us on a journey through Hope, Belonging, Meaning, and Purpose and features a digital toolkit, journal, stories from Elders, youth, and other knowledge holders, a life promotion toolkit by Indigenous youth, and a transition planner. These tools provide hands-on ways for First Nations youth to navigate their own unique journey.

### Why Soaring Together?

"Soaring" as a verb is uplifting and strength based. The word "together" reminds us that we don't live our lives alone, and that we are all part of creation. "Tools for life" refers to the

teachings of the Indigenous Wellness Framework, including ways to connect with ourselves, each other, the land, and the world we live in.

The feather in the logo is spiritually meaningful. It may bring to mind eagles, what's possible, being responsible, and our ancestors. Birds have nests that they build their own way, depending on where they live and what they have learned from those who came before them. Their nests may be on the ground, hidden in foliage, or perched on top of a towering tree. Their nests are where they care for themselves and their families, and where they were once cared for and taught by their caregivers. Nests are also where they will nurture the next generations.

You can find out more about the Thunderbird Partnership Foundation by visiting their website, [thunderbirdpf.org](https://thunderbirdpf.org). Find the Soaring Together website here: [soaringtogether.ca](https://soaringtogether.ca).



### 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

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