

newsletter

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The Tribunal Issues Ruling on Long-Term Reform of FNCFS

On August 20, 2025, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (Tribunal) issued 2025 CHRT 80, ordering Canada, along with the co-complainants to the case (the Caring Society and the Assembly of First Nations), to move forward on national First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) long-term reform without further delay. The orders contain general direction on the long-term reform of FNCFS, while emphasizing that Canada must stop its discrimination and ensure it never happens again.

A standout order in the ruling set out by the Tribunal clarifies that the legal proceedings for the Ontario Final Agreement (OFA) motion will run separately to the proceedings on the long-term reform of FNCFS; one legal process will not have an impact on the other. The Tribunal also provided orders for the Caring Society, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), the National Children's Chief Commission (NCCC), First Nations Chiefs, experts, and those who have files for interested party motions to develop an evidence-based, comprehensive national FNCFS long-term reform plan and requested remedies outside of Ontario. The Tribunal encouraged Canada to return to the negotiation table and listen to the NCCC and co-complainants. However, if Canada decides against this, the Tribunal will hear Canada's plan separately and choose between the two long-term reform order requests. The plan(s) must be filed to the Tribunal by December 20, 2025.

The Tribunal also set out a non-exhaustive list of parameters that will guide its decision-making while reviewing the proposed national plans. Remedies shall include regional and local First Nations perspectives, respect the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, leave room for flexibility, and improve upon the Tribunal's previous orders, amongst other crucial considerations.



Find information sheets on 2025 CHRT 80, *Powless v. Canada*, and *Cully v. Canada* here: fncaringsociety.com/knowledge-portal/information-sheets



Spirit Bear Podcast

Check out Season 3, Episode 3 of the Spirit Bear Podcast. In this episode, Dr. Cindy Blackstock is joined by Gabrielle Fayant and Alyssa Carpenter to discuss the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Call to Action 66 and their important work to call upon the federal government to establish multiyear funding for community-based youth organizations to deliver programs on reconciliation. Find the episode here: fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear-podcast.

Canada Takes Kids Back to Court

In recent months, the Federal Court has issued precedent-setting decisions on several cases related to Jordan's Principle requests that were denied by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC). On June 23, 2025, the Federal Court released its decision in *Cully v. Canada (Attorney General)*. The decision is an important step forward in affirming that Jordan's Principle must be applied broadly and in a manner that respects substantive equality, cultural appropriateness, and the best interests of First Nations children.

The Federal Court also granted a judicial review in *Powless v. Canada (Attorney General)*. The Court found that Canada's denial of a grandmother's request to Jordan's Principle for mould remediation for her two grandchildren was unreasonable.

While Canada filed a notice to appeal the court's decision on August 11, the decision remains an important precedent, affirming that Jordan's Principle requests must be assessed through a substantive equality lens and consider the best interests and health of the child. The Appeal will be heard on October 6, and the Caring Society has been granted interested party status in the case.

Families whose Jordan's Principle requests have been denied for reasons similar to those in the *Powless* and *Cully* cases may have grounds to challenge the decision.

New Heart Garden at Rideau Hall

On June 3, 2015, hundreds of children and youth gathered on the lawns of Rideau Hall to plant paper and wooden hearts as part of the closing ceremonies of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). Over 1,000 hearts made by children and youth from across Canada were planted on the grounds of Rideau Hall by children, residential school Survivors, and TRC dignitaries. Rideau Hall is the official residence of the governor general of Canada, currently Mary Simon. She is the first Indigenous governor general of Canada.

Ten years after the closing ceremonies of the TRC, we are thrilled to share that Rideau Hall and the Caring Society have collaborated to plant a Heart Garden of indigenous plants (plants local to Algonquin Territory) on the grounds of Rideau Hall. The Heart Garden remembers the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children who died in the Canadian residential school system and honours those who survived. Located next to the Visitor Centre, the Garden includes butterfly

milkweed with cheerful orange summer blooms, golden alexander, which blooms yellow in the spring, and New England aster, which is a vibrant purple in the fall. In total, 16 species were planted, all of which are native to the region and will support local wildlife.

Visitors to Rideau Hall have the opportunity to make paper hearts to add to the Heart Garden seasonally from June 21 to September 30 as a public demonstration of their commitment to reconciliation and the TRC Calls to Action. Rideau Hall has also commissioned heart sculptures by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit artists to be added to the Garden at a later date.

Follow the Caring Society on social media for updates on this installation honouring the children lost to the residential school system, residential school Survivors, their families, and the legacy of the TRC.

Below: First hearts planted by children from Toronto who visited Rideau Hall Heart Garden on National Indigenous Peoples Day 2024.



Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams

Throughout May and June, Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams invites people from across the country to honour residential school Survivors and their families, learn about the residential school system and its legacy, and commit to meaningfully advancing reconciliation. Each year, individuals and groups are encouraged to plant heart gardens as physical representations of their commitment to reconciliation.

Heart gardens come in all different shapes and sizes! Some groups create visual gardens on a board in their classroom or plant wildflowers and grass seeds native to their region, while others affix paper hearts to sticks and write down their commitments to reconciliation directly on them. We've even seen heart gardens in the form of potted flowers! The act of planting a heart garden is similar to reconciliation in that it requires ongoing attention and care to prosper.

We saw many heart gardens planted across the country this year, and people also shared photos of their gardens with us on social media using the hashtags **#HeartGarden** and **#HonouringMemoriesPlantingDreams**.



BlueSky Social Media

The Caring Society is pleased to announce our move from X (formerly Twitter) to BlueSky. You can find us on BlueSky at bsky.app/profile/caringociety.bsky.social. Follow us for updates about the case for kids at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, Jordan's Principal information sheets, educational resources, and ways to participate in our social justice and reconciliation events.



Pumpkin Carving Competition

Save the date for Spirit Bear's 2025 Pumpkin Carving Competition!

Children and young people are invited to share photos of their bear-themed pumpkin carvings or decorations via email or social media between October 1 and 31. Don't forget to tag the Caring Society on Bluesky, Instagram, or Facebook. You can also email your submission to info@fncaringsociety.com. We're *beary* excited to see your creative carvings!



Award Recipients

Spirit Bear Award

The Spirit Bear Award recognizes groups of young people who demonstrate a commitment to reconciliation and the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action. We awarded three prizes of \$500 to children and youth, which they can apply to their continued work toward reconciliation as they see fit. Thank you to the Olive Tree Foundation (Mohamed and Opheera Nasir Endowment Fund) for generously contributing to the award.

This year's Spirit Bear Award recipients are the Kindergarten Care Bears, St. Monica's Grade 1-2 Class, and Oak Bay High School Campus Cousins. We would also like to give honourable mentions to Ava Bendick, Sorrow Donkin, and Mya White from Fort Saskatchewan High School and to CP Blakely Elementary School. Spirit Bear appreciates everyone's continued commitment to reconciliation.

Shannen's Dream Scholarship

The Shannen's Dream Scholarship is named in loving memory of Shannen Koostachin from Attawapiskat First Nation who sparked a national movement for safe and comfy schools for First Nations students. The fourth annual Shannen's Dream Scholarship was awarded to Mercedes Stemm, Zoe Quill, Syndel Thomas Kozar, Ruby O'tennadzahe, Shem Mattinas, and Kalianna Goforth. The scholarship committee was really impressed with the quality of applications received this year. We can't wait to see how these amazing First Nations youth pay it forward in their own ways and further Shannen's Dream! The Shannen's Dream Scholarship is made possible by Top Hat and Caring Society donors.



Save the Date: Orange Shirt Day

To mark our fifth annual Orange Shirt Day event on unceded Algonquin Territory, the Caring Society is once again collaborating with our wonderful partners, the Assembly of Seven Generations and Beechwood Cemetery, to host a public event to commemorate the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Originally created by Phyllis Webstad, who courageously shared her experience attending residential school as a child, Orange Shirt Day is acknowledged each year to honour residential school Survivors, their families, and the children who never made it home. It is also an opportunity to learn about the past and commit to meaningful reconciliation.

This year, classes and school groups in the Ottawa and Gatineau area will embark on dedicated tours the morning of September 30. Tours will be open to the public later in the afternoon and evening. Activities this year will include:

- A visual art display showcasing emerging and established artists' work that engages with the TRC

Calls to Action, reconciliation, and truth-telling, hosted in the Sacred Space at Beechwood Cemetery;

- Youth-led Reconciling History walking tours at Beechwood Cemetery and Downtown Ottawa to learn more about prominent historical figures and their relationship to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities historically and today;
- Action tables with opportunities to write letters, paint tiles, and creatively express your commitment to reconciliation in other ways.

If you cannot attend the Caring Society's event in person, there are still many ways to participate in Orange Shirt Day from wherever you are. This could include:

- Taking a virtual Reconciling History walking tour;
- Tuning into the premier of *The Good Canadian* featuring

Dr. Cindy Blackstock on APTN on September 30;

- Writing a letter to your elected officials urging them to help fully implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action;
- Watching Spirit Bear's films and reading his books, all available for free on our website.

Find links to sign up for tours and learn more about how to participate in Orange Shirt Day, no matter where you live, by visiting fncaringsociety.com/orange-shirt-day.



15th Annual Caring Society Gala

Get your
Tickets Today!

Join us on October 16, 2025, in Winnipeg at the Victoria Inn & Convention Centre for an evening of delicious food and enchanting entertainment in support of equity for First Nations children and families. The Caring Society Gala is an annual fundraiser hosted by the First Nations child welfare agencies of Manitoba.

The Caring Society extends its gratitude to this year's host, Kinosa Sipi Minisowin Agency (KSMA), for planning a masquerade with the theme, Behind Every Mask is a Story! KSMA is seeking artist donations for the silent auction and live art auction. Art may include visual media (paintings, sculpture, etc.) and Indigenous fashion (clothing and accessories). Artists who donate will be acknowledged and thanked during the Gala.

There is an option to donate tickets and tables for Youth and Elders to attend free of charge. For more information about the Gala, including how to donate or purchase tickets, visit fncaringsociety.com/events/annual-caring-society-gala or call Tracy at (204) 784-8220 or (204) 951-1774.

Date: October 16, 2025

Time: 5:00 pm

Location: Victoria Inn
& Convention Centre,
Winnipeg, MB

Tickets: \$200/person or \$2,000/table

2026 Spirit Bear Calendar

We're thrilled to share that the ninth edition of *Spirit Bear's Guide to Reconciliation* Calendar is here! The calendar offers free and engaging ways for children, youth, and families to take up meaningful actions in the spirit of reconciliation from January through to December. Spirit Bear's calendar serves as an important reminder for people of all ages to incorporate acts of reconciliation into every day.

With thanks to photographer James Doyle, the images in the 2026 edition feature photos of the sets and puppets from the *Spirit Bear and Children Make History* exhibition, which premiered at The Exploration Place in Prince George between June 21 and November 11, 2024. You can pre-order your copy of the calendar in both English and French at fncaringsociety.com/shop. As with past years, there is also a free activity book you can download at fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear/calendar.



Watch The Good Canadian

The Good Canadian is a new film that exposes the truth behind the idea of a True North strong and free. In this unflinching and eye-opening documentary, directors Leena Minifie and David Paperny move us through the corridors of systemic inequity, from the Indian Act, to residential schools, to modern-day family separation. The film challenges national myth-making while offering Canadians the chance to forge a new identity from the truth. Watch Cindy Blackstock in *The Good Canadian* when it makes its debut on September 30 on CBC, CBC GEM (8 p.m. ET), and APTN (9 p.m.) This film is Rated 14+.



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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