

# newsletter

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## Tribunal's letter-decision on Ontario Final Agreement

In March 2026, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (Tribunal) issued a letter-decision with full reasons to follow approving the Ontario Final Agreement for the long-term reform of the First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) Program in Ontario (OFA). The letter-decision retains the Tribunal's injunctive order forbidding Canada's discriminatory conduct in FNCFS. The Tribunal granted the OFA motion based on the Tribunal's understanding and interpretation of the OFA, which incorporates "the fundamental safeguards intended to permanently end the systemic racial discrimination found, prevent it from reoccurring, and protect First Nations children in Ontario for generations to come" (pp. 5-6).

Interested Parties Georgina Island First Nations (GIFN) and Taykwa Tagamou Nation (TTN) opposed the approval of the OFA for numerous reasons. In its letter-decision, the Tribunal ruled that the OFA will not apply to either First Nation. The Tribunal ordered Canada to consult with GIFN within 90 days and implement an interim solution.



Similar interim solutions are ordered for TTN if a coordination agreement regarding the FNCFS Program has not been implemented upon the date that the OFA comes into effect. On April 29, 2026, Canada submitted a letter of application for Judicial Review of the Tribunal's letter-decision.

FNCFS long-term reform outside of Ontario remains before the Tribunal. Canada has submitted their plan, *Building a Better Future for First Nations Families, Together*, while the Caring Society, alongside the Assembly of First Nations and the National Children's Chiefs Commission, submitted the First Nations created plan, *The Loving Justice Plan*.

Visit [fncaringsociety.com/fncfs-resources](https://fncaringsociety.com/fncfs-resources) to read both long-term reform plans. Visit [fncaringsociety.com/publications/canadian-human-rights-tribunal-letter-decision-joint-motion-ontario-final-agreement](https://fncaringsociety.com/publications/canadian-human-rights-tribunal-letter-decision-joint-motion-ontario-final-agreement) to read the information sheet on the letter-decision.

## Caring Society Gala 2026

Mark your calendars for the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Caring Society Gala, which will take place on October 16, 2026, in Winnipeg, at the Centennial Ballroom, Victoria Inn & Convention Centre. This year's theme is *The Secret Garden*.

The gala is an annual fundraiser hosted by First Nations child welfare agencies in Manitoba in support of the Caring Society. The Caring Society extends its warmest thanks to Opaskwayak Child and Family Services Agency for hosting this year's event. All proceeds go the Caring Society to support equity for First Nations children.

To read more and keep up to date, visit [fncaringsociety.com/events/annual-caring-society-gala](https://fncaringsociety.com/events/annual-caring-society-gala). You can contact the organizers by emailing [ocncfsgala@ocncfs.ca](mailto:ocncfsgala@ocncfs.ca) or calling 1-204-627-7240.





## Updates on Jordan’s Principle Caring Society Seeks Next Steps on Jordan’s Principle Implementation

In March 2026, the Caring Society wrote to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal seeking next steps on the full implementation of the Tribunal’s orders in 2025 CHRT 6 regarding Jordan’s Principle. The Caring Society raised ongoing concerns that First Nations children were still experiencing delays, denials, and unnecessary barriers when accessing the services they need.

A key concern was the growing backlog of Jordan’s Principle requests within Indigenous Services Canada (ISC). As of December 2025, approximately 130,000 requests remained outstanding, up significantly from 80,000 in March 2024. The Caring Society called for the immediate resolution of this backlog.

The Caring Society also raised concerns about ISC’s unilateral decision-making in the implementation of Jordan’s Principle, including the significant adverse impacts of the February 10, 2025 Operational Bulletin on First Nations children, families, and communities. The Operational Bulletin, along with

Canada’s removal of previously public information on substantive equality, reversed the presumption of substantive equality ordered by the Tribunal. These actions reintroduced jurisdictional disputes and resulted in service delays, denials, and disruptions for First Nations children: harms that Jordan’s Principle was expressly intended to eliminate.

In its March 23, 2026 response, Canada stated that delivering Jordan’s Principle through incremental Tribunal orders, without clear operational rules, had contributed to an unsustainable system. Canada expressed the view that longer-term solutions would require broader policy reform outside the Tribunal process, and that additional operational orders alone would not resolve the backlog or underlying systemic issues.

The Tribunal indicated it would write to the Parties with next steps to address outstanding matters related to Jordan’s Principle.

For more details and the latest updates on Jordan’s Principle, please visit [jordansprinciple.ca](http://jordansprinciple.ca).

## Bear Witness Day at the Senate

In honour of Bear Witness Day, which falls on May 10, nearly 300 students and educators, along with their stuffed animals, came together on May 8 at the Canadian Senate to “Bear Witness,” honour Jordan River Anderson and his family, and call for the full implementation of Jordan’s Principle. Hosted in collaboration with Senators Francis, Boyer, Harder, Karetak-Lindell, Klyne, MacCallum, and Senior, the event was also an opportunity to celebrate the recent Senate motion recognizing May 10 as Bear Witness Day each year.

We were honoured to welcome students from Kitigan Zibi elementary and high schools, who travelled more than two hours to take part in the celebration. To open the event in a good way, Kokum Shirely and a youth from Kitigan Zibi shared an opening prayer in English and Algonquin, followed by an honour song performed by youth drummers from Mokasige.

Youth emcees Koby and Hayda from École Élémentaire publique Louise-Arbour introduced four students from Kitigan Zibi who shared letters they had written to elected officials. Each student recalled powerful stories about

the impacts Jordan’s Principle has had on their lives, while also calling on decision-makers to ensure it is implemented in a way that truly meets the needs of First Nations children and youth.

Guests then enjoyed additional performances from Mokasige dancers and drummers before enjoying tea and sweet treats. After that, students had the opportunity to speak directly with Senators and Members of Parliament, share their letters, ask questions, and discuss the importance of Jordan’s Principle. They also created friendship

bracelets for their teddy bears and signed a banner that we hope to have displayed in the Senate.

The Caring Society extends heartfelt thanks to Senator Francis and his team for helping to make this special day possible. We also thank Kokum Shirley, the Mokasige drummers and dancers, the student speakers, volunteers, and everyone who shared their knowledge, stories, and support

*Below: Mokasige dancers and drummers, helpers, student speakers, Kokum Shirley, and Senators (Photo: Neil Valois Photography)*



## Save the Dates

We invite you to take part in two meaningful initiatives that honour residential school Survivors, remember the children who were lost, and support ongoing reconciliation across Canada.

### Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams

Celebrated in May and June, Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams invites people of all ages to plant heart gardens as living memorials in honour of children lost to the residential school system and in recognition of Survivors and their families. First held at Rideau Hall in 2015 during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's closing ceremonies, this initiative continues to grow through the care and commitment of communities across the nation. Throughout the campaign, we will be sharing resources and ways to participate in this initiative through our website and on our social media, offering ideas and inspiration for creating your own heart garden.



### Orange Shirt Day

On September 30, in honour of Orange Shirt Day and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, the Caring Society invites people of all ages to reflect on the legacy of the residential school system and take action. We look forward to sharing more details about Orange Shirt Day events and ways to participate as the day approaches.

To find out more, go to [fncaringsociety.com/events](https://fncaringsociety.com/events)



## New Spirit Bear Resources Coming Soon!

### Bear Shares 2.0

Bear Shares, a 3D digital educational experience that lets players interact with Spirit Bear, was first released in June 2024 as part of the Spirit Bear Exhibition.

This past year, Spirit Bear has been hard at work with his friends at Spotted Fawn Productions and Steamlabs to create a new and improved experience for kids of all ages! Bear Shares 2.0 is the original Bear Shares upgraded with a new character (can you guess who?), new environments, interactive activities, French captions, and more.

Funded by the Canada Council for the Arts, the new version of Bear Shares incorporates feedback from elementary school-aged children and is sure to be a hit with educators and Spirit Bear fans of all ages. Follow us on social media and the Bear Shares webpage for updates on the release of Bear Shares 2.0:

[fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear/bear-shares](https://fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear/bear-shares)

Above: Mock up of Bear Shares 2.0 Map page with new character and new Paw Portals.



### Spirit Bear's ABCs

We are *unbearably* excited to announce that Spirit Bear has a new book for his youngest friends! Written by Cindy Blackstock and illustrated by Spotted Fawn Productions, *Spirit Bear's ABCs* will be available through major and independent bookstores this fall. Stock is limited, so communities, agencies, and organizations interested in making bulk orders are asked to email us at [info@fncaringsociety.com](mailto:info@fncaringsociety.com) for more information.

*Spirit Bear's ABCs* invites preschoolers to learn the alphabet alongside Spirit Bear. From A to Z, each letter introduces words and concepts from Spirit Bear's award-winning series for older children in engaging and age-appropriate ways, while supporting the development of foundational literacy skills and strengthening letter recognition.

Spirit Bear is loved worldwide as a symbol of reconciliation and the power of children to make a difference. This delightful book welcomes young children into Spirit Bear's world, where they can learn, grow, and join kids everywhere in discovering that just because they're small doesn't mean they can't stand tall!



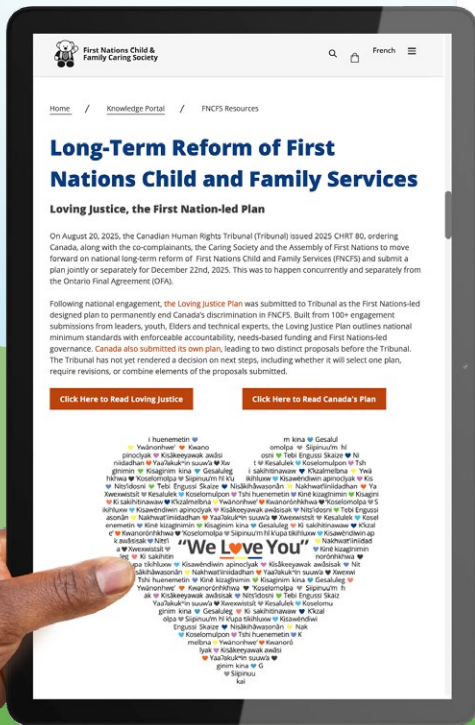
# New Resources

## Updated FNCFS Resources Webpage

We have refreshed our First Nations Child and Family Services Resources webpage to bring together key information, documents, and learning tools related to long-term reform. The updated webpage highlights the *Loving Justice Plan*, a First Nations-led approach to long-term reform of FNCFS, submitted to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal in December 2025.

The webpage also includes a comparative funding analysis of the *Loving Justice Plan* and Canada's long-term reform proposal, along with links to supporting documents, background information, and additional resources. This resource aims to help readers better understand what the parties are proposing, and why these decisions matter for First Nations children, families, and communities.

Visit the updated webpage at [fncaringsociety.com/fncfs-resources](https://fncaringsociety.com/fncfs-resources).



## Child-Friendly Substantive Equality Resources

Substantive equality means making sure kids have what they actually need, so they have the same chance as other kids to grow up safely with their families at home, get a good education, and be healthy and proud of who they are.

Our new child-friendly infographic and information sheet on substantive equality explain fairness in simple, age-appropriate ways. They help show why First Nations children may need different supports to have access to equal opportunities. We invite you to explore and share these new resources to support learning, conversation, and awareness.

Visit [fncaringsociety.com/publications/substantive-equality-youth-friendly-information-sheet-and-infographic](https://fncaringsociety.com/publications/substantive-equality-youth-friendly-information-sheet-and-infographic) to download the infographic and information sheet.



## 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 FNCFS Agency Membership (1-50 employees): \$500
- Large FNCFS 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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