

Annual Report

2025 | 2026

First Nations Child & Family Caring Society

The front cover showcases artwork from *The Loving Justice Plan*, which includes 20 First Nations translations of “we love you” to reflect a teaching from Elders that blessed the plan in a solstice ceremony at T’kemlúps te Secwépemc.

Some of the artwork featured in this report was created by children and youth who participate in our events and campaigns.

Please note that this annual report reflects activities from September 2025 to August 2026.

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Honouring David Gordon Bryce

Every Orange Shirt Day at Beechwood Cemetery, David Bryce stood among children who were reading messages of reconciliation left in a bright orange mailbox beside the resting place of his great-grandfather, residential school whistleblower Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce. In that small act of witnessing, the past met the present, and children's words carried hope across generations.

Dr. Bryce paid the price for speaking out in 1907 and again in 1922, when federal politicians and officials refused to implement the practical health measures that would have saved the lives of countless children languishing in residential schools – places he described as "hotbeds for disease," where child death rates reached as high as 50% over three years. His booklet, *A National Crime*, made the haunting truth clear: the federal government knew children were dying, had the solutions to stop it, and chose not to act. Instead, federal officials debased Dr. Bryce and wiped his legacy from public memory while exalting Duncan Campbell Scott, the chief official on the residential school file.

For years, Dr. Bryce was forgotten. David, together with his sister Margaret and late brother Gregory, generously brought him back into public consciousness to teach this generation about reconciliation, moral courage, and social duty. David was himself a prime example: a man who loved his family, a lawyer who fought for the poor, an ESL teacher and, in his final days, someone who brought such joy into my life with his humour, grit, and firm commitment to reconciliation. Through him, memory became more than remembrance; it became a responsibility carried forward with love.

September 30 is also my birthday, and it was always a special treat to know that, on that day, I would see David, his sister Margaret, and his niece Sarah at Beechwood. I, and the entire Caring Society team, will miss him this year and in the years that follow. May the spirits of PH and David, reunited at last, open the mail together, read each child's message with care, and then settle in for a good game of bridge.

Cindy Blackstock

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Honouring

Alanis Obomsawin

Alexandra Champagne

Amanda Strong and Spotted Fawn Productions

Anderson Family, Norway House Cree Nation

Atkinson Foundation

Anne Levesque, University of Ottawa

Assembly of Seven Generations

Barbara McIsaac, McIsaac Law

Beechwood Cemetery

Birchwood Historical Research

BMO

The Bryce Family

Canada Council for the Arts

Canadian Paediatric Society

Carters Professional Corporations

Catherine Donnelly Foundation

City of Ottawa

Claudette Commanda

Collie Historical Research

Colas

David Stern, Dickinson Wright LLP

David Taylor, Conway Baxter LLP

David Wilson, Conway Baxter LLP

Donate a Car

Family of Neebin Armstrong

HANSAmed

Henna Mohan, Conway Baxter LLP

Institute of Fiscal Studies & Democracy (IFSD)

Jays Care Foundation

J. Dench

J.W. McConnell Foundation

Kinaxis

Kinosao Sipi Minisowin Agency

Klara Redford

Koostachin Family, Attawapiskat First Nation

Leah Gryfe Designs

Lisa Howell, University of Ottawa

McGill University

Matthew Cardinal

Mélanie Vincent

Michelle McKay

National Film Board

National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA)

Nēhiyawak Language Experience

Nicholas Ng-A-Fook, University of Ottawa

The Olive Tree Foundation (Mohamed and Opheera Nasir Endowment Fund)

Ontario Children's Advancement Coalition

Ottawa Community Foundation (Anonymous Fund)

Ouseley Hanvey Clipsham Deep LLP

Paul Markowski

Pokoloko

The Printing House

Project of Heart

Rideau Hall

Robin Mcleod, Clarke Child and Family Law

Sagkeeng Child and Family Services

Sandy Tunwell, Accountrain Inc.

Sarah Clarke, Clarke Child and Family Law

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

Steam Labs

TEK systems

TopHat

University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education

Wahkotowin Law and Governance Lodge

Key Accomplishments

Reconciliation in Action

In honour of Orange Shirt Day and the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, the Caring Society partnered with Assembly of Seven Generations (A7G) and Beechwood Cemetery to host an event on September 30 that was **attended by over 1,250 students, educators, and members of the public** who gathered at Beechwood Cemetery and in downtown Ottawa.

We hosted our annual Have a Heart Day gathering on February 12, 2026, which **brought together over 700 students on unceded Algonquin territory**. Over 15 schools and community organizations from the Ottawa and Gatineau area gathered to share the letters they penned to Prime Minister Mark Carney and other elected officials.

On February 5, 2026, the Canadian Senate passed a motion recognizing May 10 each year as Bear Witness Day, a National Day of Action. To celebrate this important milestone, **the Caring Society hosted nearly 300 students, educators, teddy bears, and community members** at the Senate of Canada on May 8, 2026, to honour Jordan River Anderson and call for the full implementation of Jordan's Principle.

Every May and June, Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams invites people to honour residential school survivors and support the legacy of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This year, **over 950 hearts were planted** in heart gardens across the country by schools, organizations, community centers and workplaces.

Making New Friends

The Caring Society completed over 97 Virtual and in-person events in **7 provinces, 2 territories and 2 countries**!

We have **more than 78,500 social media friends** across Facebook, Instagram, and Bluesky platforms.

We participated in over **65 TV, radio, and podcast interviews**, appearing in both Canadian and International media.

We published **4 newsletters** featuring over **35 articles**. We distributed **newsletters to over 250** First Nations Child and Family Service Agencies, Caring Society members and educators.

Spirit Bear and Friends

We released Season 3 of the Spirit Bear Pawdcast, Courageous Conversations, and **planning for Season 4 is underway**.

Over 1,000 copies of Spirit Bear's 2026 Guide to Reconciliation calendar were distributed to individuals, child and family service agencies, school boards and educators across Canada.

Spirit Bear's four children's books continue to be made available for free online in English, French and some First Nations languages. **Over 2,000 copies of Spirit Bear's books were distributed to children, youth, families, supporters, Elders, and community mem*bears***. Spirit Bear's brand new board book, *Spirit Bear's ABCs*, was published to support preschoolers as they learn the alphabet.

Bear Shares got an upgrade! The 3D digital educational experience was updated with a new character, Mary the Bear, and new interactive Paw Portals, including Mary's Classroom and Parliament Hill. Bear Shares 2.0 also contains French captions and activities informed by feedback from elementary school-aged children.

12 Reconciliation Am*bear*risters found new homes in schools and community centers across Canada! Each hosted bear accompanies groups as they learn about and promote the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action.

Big Win for the Kids

The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (Tribunal) has issued over 35 non-compliance and procedural orders since the 2016 landmark ruling, seven of which were issued this past year.

Following orders from the Tribunal to move forward on national First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) long-term reform without further delay, the Caring Society, National Children's Chiefs Commission (NCCC), and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) filed *The Loving Justice National Plan* with the Tribunal. Canada also filed its own plan.

The Tribunal reaffirmed that First Nations children must remain at the centre of Jordan's Principle implementation and that unnecessary delays must be avoided, reinforcing the rights of First Nations children to receive the services and supports they need, when they need them.

The Federal Court of Appeal upheld a major win for First Nations children by dismissing Canada's attempt to overturn the precedent-setting Federal Court decision in *Powless v. Canada*.

About Us



History, Today, Mission

The Caring Society was developed by delegates at a national meeting at the Squamish First Nation in 1998 to build on the interest of First Nations Child and Family Services leaders to create a national networking organization. Meeting delegates agreed that a national non-profit organization was required to provide research, policy, professional development, and networking to support First Nations child and family service agencies in caring for First Nations children, youth, and families. An interim board was elected, and the plan was approved at a second national meeting at Kingsclear First Nation in 1999.

The Caring Society works to ensure the safety and wellbeing of First Nations youth and their families through education initiatives, public policy campaigns, and providing quality resources to support communities. Using a reconciliation framework that addresses contemporary hardships for First Nations families in ways that uplift all Canadians, the Caring Society champions culturally based equity for First Nations children and their families so that they can grow up safely at home, be healthy, achieve their dreams, celebrate their languages and culture, and be proud of who they are. The Caring Society proudly works with our partners in Canada and around the world to promote the rights of Indigenous children.

The Caring Society Board of Directors

Raymond Shingoose, President

Kenn Richard, Vice-President

Judy Levi, Treasurer of the Board

André Bear

Elsie Flette

Koren Lightning-Earle

Kelly Provost

Jessica Saunders

Mary Teegee

The Caring Society Staff

Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director

Laurence Allard,
Reconciliation and Policy Associate

Melisa Brittain,
Policy and Research Coordinator

Harmony Eshkawkogan,
Administrative Assistant

Jennifer King, Special Advisor

Brittany Mathews,
Director of Reconciliation and Strategic Policy

Sunny Mathews,
Reconciliation Dog

Tammy Morgan,
Finance and Human Resources Manager

Jessica Raby,
Education and Public Engagement Coordinator

Daxton Rhead, Administrative Support

Stephanie Wellman,
Director of External Affairs, Programs and Operations

Spirit Bear and Friends!

This year, Spirit Bear was busier than ever, collaborating with friends and partners across the country to create new reconciliation education resources for children, youth, and families. From his stop-motion animation films, podcast, brand new ABC's book, and immersive 3D experience, Bear Shares, Spirit Bear continues to inspire action-based learning. Available free on the Caring Society's website and social media platforms, these resources are reaching thousands of people who follow Spirit Bear's journey and learn alongside him about reconciliation, equity, and fairness for First Nations children, youth, and families.

Spirit Bear

Spirit Bear, a member of Carrier Sekani Tribal Council, represents the 165,000 First Nations children impacted by the First Nations child welfare case, as well as the thousands of children and youth who have learned about the case and taken action to support reconciliation and equity.



In recognition of this commitment to justice, Spirit Bear was awarded an honorary "*Bear*rister" degree from Osgoode Hall Law School and was formally admitted to the "Bear" by the Indigenous Bar Association in 2017. As an official *Bear*rister, Spirit Bear believes that when something is wrong, it is important to learn about it and take action to help make things right.

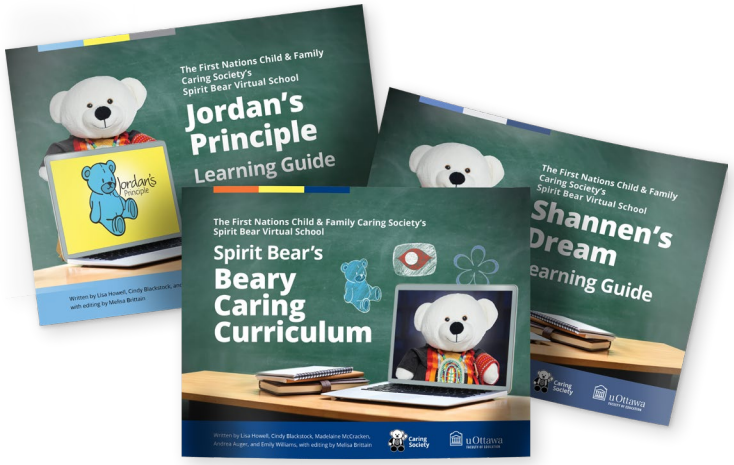
From his humble beginnings in a huckleberry patch in Carrier Sekani territory, Spirit Bear continues to inspire children, youth, and adults to stand up for the fair treatment of First Nations children. He knows that young people can change the world, because he's already seen them do it!

Spirit Bear Virtual School

fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear/spirit-bear-virtual-school

The Spirit Bear Virtual School (SBVS) is an online portal that supports educators across Canada in their learning and teaching about the Caring Society's social justice-based reconciliation campaigns. This free resource is a result of research on the impacts of the Caring Society's campaigns on elementary students carried out by education scholars at the University of Ottawa. Teachers reported seeing many positive impacts on their students, including feelings of empathy, compassion, respect, and a commitment to stand in solidarity with First Nations children and youth. Teachers also shared how the campaigns provided them and their students with opportunities to engage in meaningful social justice actions in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action and expressed a desire for enhanced learning materials about the Caring Society's campaigns.

So, along with our collaborators at the University of Ottawa, and with feedback from elementary teachers involved in the study, we created the SBVS, which is grounded in *Spirit Bear's Beary Caring Curriculum*: a guide based on the Touchstones of Hope for Reconciliation approach that supports teachers in facilitating reconciliation-based education about past, current, and ongoing discrimination and injustices that impact First Nations children, youth, and families.





In addition, the learning guides for the campaigns provide teachers with a pedagogical framework and contextual guidance that can be adapted to reflect distinct First Nations cultures, contexts, and realities. The *Shannen's Dream Learning Guide* will be published in the Fall of 2026

The SBVS also provides additional learning opportunities and resources in the form of webinar recordings, workshops, and inspirational videos from other educators, community members, and Caring Society staff members. The film *My Voice Matters* offers educators and students alike the opportunity to hear from young people who participated in the Caring Society's campaigns in elementary and secondary school as they look back on how their experiences of standing up for equity for First Nations children impacted them in life-changing ways. In addition, the SBVS links educators to all of Spirit Bears resources, including the Spirit Bear books and films and their learning guides, as well as all of the Caring Society's campaigns and events.

Although these resources were developed specifically for elementary-level educators and students, they can be adapted for all age groups and accessed by anyone.

Visit the Spirit Bear Virtual School to learn more: fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear/spirit-bear-virtual-school

Spirit Bear's *Paw*blishing Services

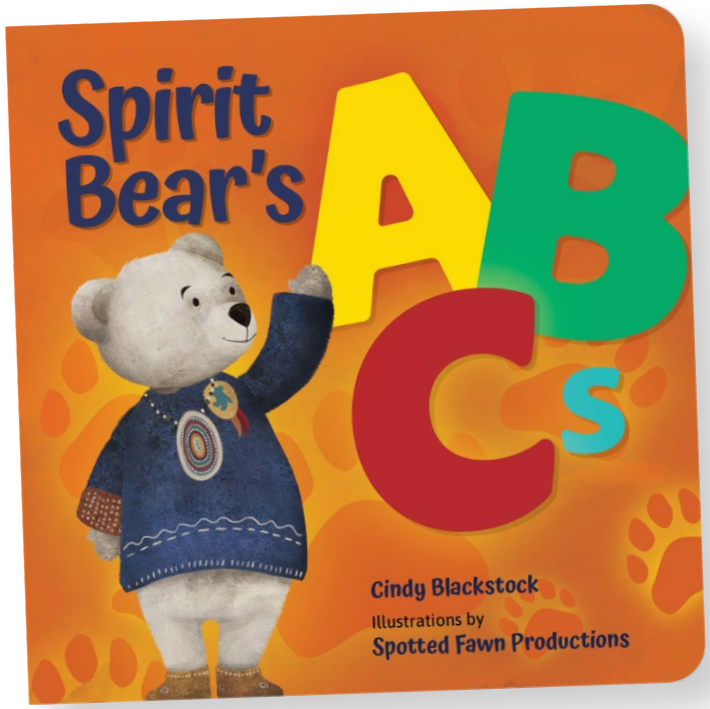
fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear/books-learning-guides

Spirit Bear's books continue to inspire children, educators, families and communities to learn, reflect, and take meaningful action toward reconciliation, one story at a time. Most importantly, Spirit Bear's children's books help to address a persistent gap in Canadian literature for young children by connecting reconciliation with social justice in the spirit of the TRC Calls to Action. This past year, more than 2,000 copies of Spirit Bear's four children's books found homes in libraries, schools, and households across the country.

Spirit Bear's first book, *Spirit Bear and Children Make History*, is now available as an audiobook. The story is read by Mary Teegee and synchronized with images of each page. The story comes to life with beautiful illustrations by Amanda Strong and background music by Matthew Cardinal. Listeners can find the audiobook available for free on the Caring Society website.

We are also unbearably excited to announce that Spirit Bear has a new book just for his youngest friends! Written by Caring Society Executive Director Cindy Blackstock and illustrated by Spotted Fawn Productions, *Spirit Bear's ABCs* was released in August 2026 and is available now through independent bookstores and major retailers.

Publishing a Spirit Bear board book has been a long-time dream for us at the Caring Society, and we could not be more thrilled with how it turned out. *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's ABCs*** is an amazing way to introduce important concepts related to truth and reconciliation to our early learners and begin the necessary learning early. A must-have resource for educators to support them in this work."

—**Michelle McKay and Klara Redford**, Early Years Educators and co-authors of the award-winning book and professional resource, *A Walking Curriculum for the Early Years*.

★★★★★

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! Special thanks to BMO for their generous support of this project.

Stock is limited, so communities, agencies, and organizations interested in making bulk orders are asked to email us at info@fncaringsociety.com for more information. Discounts for bulk orders may apply.

Spirit Bear's Guide to Reconciliation Calendar

fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear/calendar

This year's rendition of *Spirit Bear's Guide to Reconciliation* calendar featured images taken by James Doyle at the *Spirit Bear and Children Make History* exhibition that made its debut at The Exploration Place in Prince George, British Columbia, on June 21, 2024. Thank you again to James for the beautiful photos. Gifted to the Caring Society by Carrier Sekani Family Services in 2008, Spirit Bear has been bearing witness to the human rights case ever since, serving as a powerful reminder that the case is ultimately centred around our most sacred gift: children.



Spirit Bear Animation

fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear/films

On November 1, the Caring Society celebrated two years of Spirit Bear TV! Spirit Bear TV is home to all of Spirit Bear's films, animations, and other short videos, available for free on Spirit Bear TV. It has now been two years since the release of *Spirit Bear: Echoes of the Past,* and our focus has shifted from festival submissions to promoting the films through catalogue screenings, curatorial requests, broadcast opportunities, and DVD sales. Distribution opportunities are available through our colleagues at the Winnipeg Film Group and McIntyre Media.

Find all of Spirit Bear's films on Spirit Bear TV at vimeo.com/spiritbeartv.

- *Spirit Bear and Children Make History* (2020)
- *Fishing for Knowledge, Catching Dreams* (2022)
- *Honouring Memories, Catching Dreams* (2023)
- *Echoes of the Past* (2024)



We continue to find new ways to bring the films to life and celebrate the artistry of our friends at Spotted Fawn Productions who made the films, most recently by using photos of the puppets and sets for the 2026 Spirit Bear calendar! You can learn more about *Spirit Bear's 2026 Guide to Reconciliation Calendar* on page 11.

Spirit Bear and Children Make History Exhibition

fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear/spirit-bear-and-children-make-history-exhibition

The *Spirit Bear and Children Make History* exhibition tells the true story of how children of all diversities stand with First Nations to achieve what Elder Elmer Courchene called "loving justice" for First Nations children. It is a child-friendly, multi-media exhibition featuring hand-made puppets and sets from Spirit Bear's four stop-motion animation films by award-winning Indigenous studio Spotted Fawn Productions.



The exhibition also showcases archival material from the landmark human rights case for First Nations child welfare and Jordan's Principle, the Shannen's Dream campaign, and the broader movement for culturally based equity for First Nations kids. With interactive elements for young audiences, *Spirit Bear and Children Make History* engages children in learning about human rights and celebrates children in reconciliation, as changemakers in their own right.

The exhibition had an amazing first run at The Exploration Place Museum & Science Centre in Prince George, B.C., and a smaller version of the exhibition will be opening at the Goulbourn Museum in Stittsville, Ontario, in late fall 2026.

Museums and other organizations interested in hosting the *Spirit Bear and Children Make History* exhibition, or a smaller version of it, can check out our fact sheet and contact us with questions.

Spirit Bear in 3D: The new version of Bear Shares is LIVE!

fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear/bear-shares

It's been a busy year for Spirit Bear. Not only did he publish his first book for preschoolers (see above), but he also released Bear Shares 2.0! Bear Shares is a free interactive online game and educational resource that lets players interact with Spirit Bear like never before. Followers may remember that the first version of Bear Shares was launched in June 2024 as part of the *Spirit Bear and Children Make History* exhibition. Thanks to funding from the Canada Council of the Arts, and to our incredible project partners at Spotted Fawn Productions and Steamlabs, Bear Shares was relaunched in 2026 with multiple upgrades, including two new "paw portals," a new character, interactive quizzes, a music soundtrack, and French translation. Visit fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear/bear-shares today to play!



Bear Shares is a game for all ages, but it is best suited for children aged 6 to 12. Players travel through four "paw portals," where they learn from Spirit Bear, complete quizzes, and earn stamps for their *Paw*sport. Players then head over to Mary the Bear's Classroom for more interactive learning and to download their completed *Paw*sports.

Bear Shares was developed to support a variety of learning scenarios, such as family, community, and classroom settings. Educators can use Bear Shares as an introductory lesson to prepare students for deeper learning, a culminating activity that helps students reinforce and apply their learning, or as a stand-alone activity.

Special thanks to the children who gave feedback on the first version of the game and helped make Bear Shares even better!

Spirit Bear Podcast

fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear-podcast

The Spirit Bear Podcast is back for a new season and is hard at work recording an exciting Season 4, bringing listeners important conversations on the issues affecting First Nations children, youth and families.



The newest season will focus on ***The Loving Justice Plan***, a First Nations-led plan for the long-term reform of Child and Family Services. We'll be joined by some of the experts involved in its development to talk about how it came to life, the vision behind it, and the different elements that support children, youth, families, and communities.

Season 4 will also explore the Loving Our Children research and the many factors that affect child and family wellbeing and creating better outcomes for First Nations children and families. We will also discuss updates on Jordan's Principle, including the ongoing proceedings at the Tribunal and what it means for First Nations children.

We're also excited to have special guests join us, including our friends at A7G, bringing youth voices, perspectives, and conversations to the forefront.

We look forward to sharing these conversations with you! Keep an eye on our social media channels and website for more information, episode announcements, guest highlights, and release dates as Season 4 approaches.

Stay tuned for another season of stories, learning, and conversations that help advance justice for First Nations children, youth, and families.

Reconciliation Am*bear*rister Initiative

fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear/reconciliation-ambearristers



This year, Reconciliation Am*bear*risters from across the country took part in Orange Shirt Day events, Bear Witness Day picnics and parades, and Have a Heart Day gatherings, in addition to many other community-led reconciliation activities.

We were thrilled to add another 10 Am*bear*risters to the growing community of people, families, schools, and bears working together to advance fairness for First Nations children and families. We were especially excited to be in the company of many of these new Am*bear*risters at our local events throughout the year.

The dedication and enthusiasm from these school and community groups demonstrate the growing commitment to meaningful reconciliation among children and youth.

Above: Illustration of Leo the Am*bear*rister from Arklan Community Public School

Spirit Bear Mascot

The Spirit Bear mascot was custom designed and fabricated for the Caring Society by professional puppet maker and wrangler Dusty Hagerud, under the direction of Spotted Fawn Productions, the Indigenous studio who made all four of Spirit Bear's stop-motion animated films.

The Spirit Bear mascot debuted at the opening of the *Spirit Bear and Children Make History* exhibition at The Exploration Place Museum & Science Centre in Prince George, BC, on June 21, 2024. Since that first engagement, the Spirit Bear mascot has made appearances at Bear Witness Day 2025 in Winnipeg, the 2025 and 2026 Caring Society Galas in Winnipeg, and the Carrier Sekani Family Services "We are fierce warriors" youth conference in March 2026.

If you're interested in having the Spirit Bear mascot join you for your special event, the ideal height for the mascot performer is between 5'-5" and 6' tall, and the mascot comes with a detailed instruction manual for cleaning, grooming, wearing, and packing for storage and shipping. It also has a built-in fan to extract hot air from the suit to keep the performer cool!





Mary Teegee, Cindy Blackstock, Jennifer King and Jessica Raby and with Spirit Bear, who is being held by the mascot at the exhibition opening in Prince George.

Child- and Youth-Led Campaigns

First Nations children have a right to grow up safely with their families, go to good schools, and be healthy and proud of who they are. These rights are enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The Canadian government has ratified the UNCRC and, in 2021, passed the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, which requires the Government of Canada to take all measures necessary to ensure the laws of Canada are consistent with UNDRIP.

The Caring Society works to ensure the realization of the rights of First Nations children and youth and their families. As a child- and youth-focused organization, the Caring Society believes strongly in the power of children and young people to bring about positive change. Our campaigns invite children and youth from across the country to use their voices and participate in social justice movements for the rights of First Nations children and young people.

Here is a snapshot of some of the latest accomplishments and activities to come out of our child- and youth-led campaigns this year.

Jordan's Principle

jordansprinciple.ca

Jordan's Principle is a child-first principle and, as of 2016, a legal rule that ensures First Nations children can access the supports they need, when they need them. It is named in loving memory of Jordan River Anderson, a young boy from Norway House Cree Nation who was born with multiple complex medical needs and spent most of his life in the hospital while the federal and provincial governments fought over who would pay for his at-home care. In 2005, Jordan passed away at the age of five, never having spent a day in a family home. His family gifted his name for a child-first principle to ensure that what happened to Jordan would not happen to other First Nations kids.

In its landmark ruling on the matter (2016 CHRT 2), the Tribunal found Canada's implementation of Jordan's Principle to be discriminatory and ordered Canada to take immediate measures to implement the full and proper scope of Jordan's Principle. Since then, the Tribunal has issued 35 procedural and non-compliance orders against Canada.

Non-Compliance Proceedings

In December 2023, the Caring Society filed a non-compliance motion on Jordan's Principle alleging that Canada is failing to comply with the Tribunal's orders on Jordan's Principle, and that this is resulting in increasing harms to First Nations children. Following this motion, the Tribunal issued 2025 CHRT 6, and the Parties participated in Tribunal-assisted mediation and additional discussions. While significant time and resources were devoted to mediation, the process was unsuccessful.

In March 2026, the Caring Society wrote to the Tribunal seeking next steps on unresolved matters from 2025 CHRT 6. The Caring Society raised ongoing concerns that First Nations children were still experiencing delays, denials, and unnecessary barriers to accessing the services they need. A key concern was the growing backlog of Jordan's Principle requests within Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), despite the Tribunal ordering Canada to immediately resolve the backlog in 2025 CHRT 6. The Caring Society submitted that approximately 130,000 requests



remained outstanding as of December 2025, compared to approximately 80,000 reported in March 2024, and called for immediate action to address the 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 2026 response to the Tribunal, Canada stated that delivering Jordan's Principle through multiple Tribunal orders, without clear operational rules, had contributed to an increasingly unsustainable system. Canada submitted that broader policy reform outside the Tribunal process would be required to address the underlying challenges and that additional operational orders alone would not resolve the backlog or systemic issues. Canada also advised that it continued to work on implementing 2025 CHRT 6, viewed the Jordan's Principle Operational Bulletin as part of that work, and reported that nearly 120,000 requests remained in the backlog.

Following a June 2026 Case Management Conference Call to discuss unresolved issues arising from 2025 CHRT 6, the Caring Society proposed that Canada disclose its operational definition of substantive equality and the decision-making framework used to process Jordan's Principle requests. The Tribunal subsequently directed Canada to provide this information. In response, Canada advised that it has neither an operational definition of substantive equality nor a decision-making framework for Jordan's Principle requests.

Canada's lack of a definition and decision-making framework for Jordan's Principle is a key issue, since Canada is required to rely on substantive equality as a guiding principle to determine requests. Families and service coordinators are asked to meet a standard Canada has not publicly operationalized, creating a risk of inconsistent and non-transparent decisions.

They further directed Parties to provide submissions on a process to resolve issues from 2025 CHRT 6. In July 2026, the Caring Society, AFN, Chiefs of Ontario (COO), and Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) jointly proposed a process involving disclosure of operational materials, written submissions, cross-examinations and, if necessary, an oral hearing.

In August 2026, Canada advised that it did not consent to the joint proposal, which it characterized as extending beyond the scope of 2025 CHRT 6, and objected to the disclosure of operational materials. Instead, Canada proposed a formal process and



argued that further Tribunal orders would not resolve the backlog, could undermine existing backlog-reduction efforts, and may lead to unintended consequences.

In late August, the Tribunal ordered an expedited fall 2026 process and hearing on Jordan's Principle interim issues. Throughout the proceedings, the Tribunal has emphasized that First Nations children must remain at the centre of the process and that lengthy delays should be avoided wherever possible.

Canada v. Powless

In December 2025, the Federal Court of Appeal (FCA) upheld a major win for First Nations children by dismissing Canada's attempt to overturn the precedent-setting Federal Court decision in *Powless v. Canada*. Ms. Powless had requested Jordan's Principle support for medically necessary mould remediation in her home, where she cares for two grandchildren. After Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) denied the request, she sought judicial review at the Federal Court, which ruled in her favour in July 2025.



Canada appealed the Federal Court's decision, and the appeal was heard by the FCA on October 6, 2025. The Caring Society and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs participated in the proceedings as interested parties. The FCA concluded that ISC's denial of the remediation request was unreasonable, finding that ISC's decision lacked clarity, transparency, and justification, and did not align with the Tribunal's orders on Jordan's Principle.

Importantly, the FCA reaffirmed that ISC must demonstrate how it applies the Tribunal's orders when assessing Jordan's Principle requests. This includes showing consideration of a child's unique needs, right to culturally appropriate services, substantive equality, and the best interests of the child. The FCA also confirmed that ISC must show that it considered the real impacts its determination has on the child, including the child's health and safety.

Families whose Jordan's Principle requests have been denied for reasons similar to those considered in the *Canada v. Powless* case may have grounds to challenge those decisions. The Caring Society extends its heartfelt gratitude to the Powless family, and to the many First Nations families who have courageously brought forward similar cases. Their perseverance helped establish an important precedent that will strengthen human rights protections for First Nations children and help ensure that Jordan's Principle is implemented in a manner consistent with their rights, dignity, and wellbeing.

Shannen's Dream

fncaringsociety.com/shannens-dream

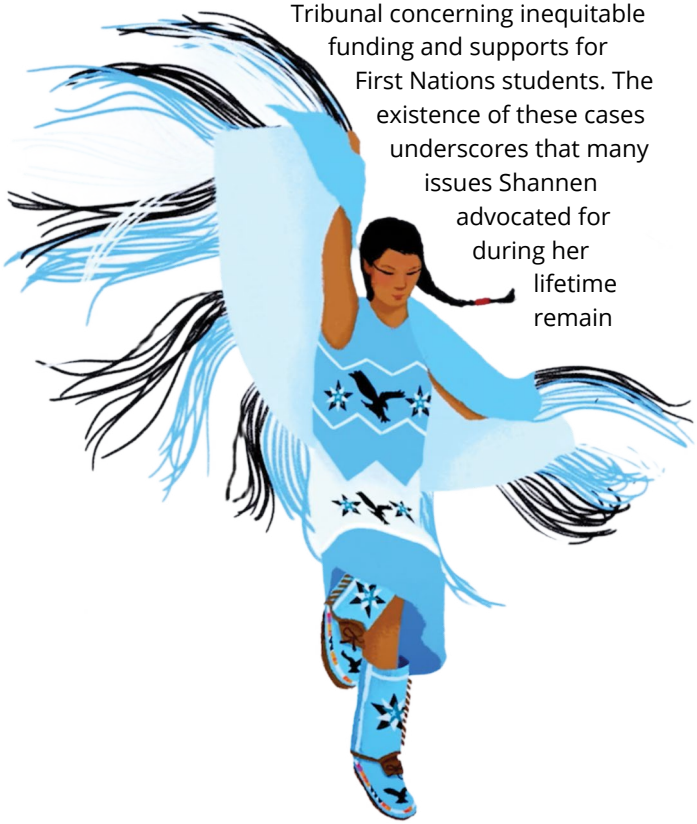
Shannen Koostachin, a young education advocate from Attawapiskat First Nation, dreamed of a future where all First Nations children could attend safe, well-resourced schools and receive a quality, culturally grounded education after a diesel spill contaminated the school in her community. Shannen and her peers courageously campaigned for a new school and equal educational opportunities for First Nations students.

Although Shannen tragically passed away in a car accident in 2010 at the age of 15, her vision continues to inspire people across Canada. With the support of her family, friends and community, Shannen's Dream was established in her honour. The campaign calls for equitable education funding, safe and welcoming learning environments, and



culturally based education that supports First Nations children and youth in being proud of who they are.

Despite important progress towards greater equity in education, First Nations students continue to experience the effects of historic and ongoing shortfalls. Current research estimates that funding remains between 2.5 and 5 times below demonstrated need. These ongoing disparities have also led to human rights litigation with at least two complaints currently before the Tribunal concerning inequitable funding and supports for First Nations students. The existence of these cases underscores that many issues Shannen advocated for during her lifetime remain unresolved. As a result, *Shannen's Dream* continues to serve as a powerful call to action to ensure that all First Nations children have access to safe and comfy schools and quality, culturally grounded education.



The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has called on governments (Call to Action 62) to provide culturally appropriate education for First Nations children and on all Canadians to learn about Indigenous Peoples as an important step towards reconciliation. In support of these Calls to Action, the Caring Society continues to develop educational resources and learning opportunities that encourage reconciliation, equity, and respect for First Nations children and youth.

Each year, the Caring Society honours Shannen's legacy through *School is a Time for Dreams*, a national campaign that encourages children, youth, educators and communities to stand up for equitable education and carry forward *Shannen's Dream* of safe and comfy schools for all.

I am a Witness: Canadian Human Rights Tribunal

fnwitness.ca

In January 2016, the Tribunal ruled in a landmark human rights case that the Canadian government is racially discriminating against 165,000 First Nations children by providing flawed and inequitable child welfare services to First Nations children and their families and failing to implement Jordan's Principle to ensure equitable access to services.

It has been ten years since the Merits Decision (2016 CHRT 2), and much has been accomplished. Since September 2025, the following developments have taken place:

National long-term reform of FNCFS: In 2025 CHRT 80, the Tribunal ordered Canada, the Caring Society, and the AFN to submit plans and remedies for long-term national reforms to FNCFS, with the goal of permanently ending discriminatory practices. Canada, the Caring Society, and AFN were directed to file their submissions with the Tribunal by December 22, 2025, either jointly or separately. The Caring Society and AFN were further ordered to collaborate with the National Children's Chiefs Commission and ensure the voices of young people were included. As Canada refused to collaborate, two distinct plans were submitted to the Tribunal, the First Nations–led *The Loving Justice Plan* and Canada's National Plan.

The Loving Justice Plan is a generational, First Nations–led framework designed to permanently end discrimination in FNCFS and prevent its recurrence. It is grounded in over two decades of First Nations resolutions, Tribunal findings, evidence, expert reports, and the recent national engagement with First



Nations, youth, Elders, and technical experts. The goal of *Loving Justice* is to help Canada avoid repeating past mistakes.

On May 25, 2026, the Tribunal issued 2026 CHRT 50, granting limited Interested Party status to the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission and the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador. The Tribunal also directed that proceedings involving these parties be conducted in both official languages and established a streamlined process for translating key documents. On June 4, 2026, the Tribunal released 2026 CHRT 56, providing reasons granting, in part, Interested Party status to the National Children's Chiefs Commission. The Tribunal found the NCCC's expertise, mandate from the First Nations-in-Assembly, and role in developing *The Loving Justice Plan* would assist the Tribunal in determining FNCFS long-term reform.

On July 7, 2026, Panel Member Edward Lustig resigned from the proceedings at the Tribunal and subsequently indicated he will not have further involvement in the detailed reasons concerning the Ontario Final Agreement (OFA). On July 28, 2026, Canada wrote to the Tribunal Chairperson, requesting two members be added to reconstitute a three-member panel. Member Marchildon has dedicated over 14 years of her life to this case to ensure the systemic discrimination is eliminated, and she affirmed her commitment to finalizing the remedial phase of FNCFS reform. The AFN, Caring Society, COO, and NAN expressed their support for Member Marchildon to release the full OFA written decision on her own and further submitted that reconstitution of the Panel is neither required by law nor appropriate at this advanced stage of the proceedings. The First Nations parties affirmed that appointing new members would create unnecessary delays, disrupt the established timeline, and undermine the continuity and expertise needed to adjudicate the remaining long-term reform issues affecting First Nations children and families. On August 18, 2026, the Chairperson of the Tribunal dismissed Canada's request to appoint additional members to the panel, with reasons to follow. The Caring Society wishes to acknowledge and thank Member Lustig for his dedication and commitment to upholding human rights for all persons in Canada including First Peoples.

Over the coming months, the Tribunal is expected to receive reply evidence from the parties and written submissions regarding the proposed approaches to FNCFS long-term reform and their consistency with the Tribunal's orders. This process will culminate in hearings and final submissions in January 2027, before the Tribunal begins further considerations of what long-term framework should ultimately guide implementation outside Ontario.

Ontario-specific Agreement on long-term reform of FNCFS: On March 30, 2026, the Tribunal released a letter-decision approving the OFA. The letter-decision stated that the Tribunal will retain its injunctive orders forbidding Canada's discriminatory conduct and that its reasons will guide the interpretation of the OFA. The Tribunal made clear that its approval flows from binding clarifications, safeguards, and interpretations secured through the OFA hearing process to protect First Nations children from the continuation and recurrence of discrimination by Canada. Critically, the Tribunal confirmed that Canada remains bound by the permanent cease and desist order issued in the landmark decision (2016 CHRT 2), and that this injunction-like order is permanent and non-negotiable. This finding preserves the Tribunal's core remedial protection directing Canada to cease its discriminatory conduct and explicitly rejects Canada's position in its filing documents, which sought to have the OFA supersede and replace all the Tribunal's orders. The Tribunal reaffirmed that Canada's obligation to cease discrimination against First Nations children is not optional, negotiable, or time-limited.



The Caring Society's participation in these proceedings was grounded in its mandate to promote the rights of all First Nations children to live free from discrimination by Canada. Through the litigation before the Tribunal, the Caring Society raised serious concerns about Canada's request that the Tribunal end its jurisdiction and allow the OFA to override existing orders – including the permanent cease and desist order specifically designed to prevent Canada from repeating discriminatory practices that harm children.

A central issue before the Tribunal was whether Canada could use the OFA to lawfully extinguish or replace the Tribunal's order to permanently cease its discriminatory conduct. The Tribunal rejected this approach, finding that the OFA cannot be interpreted to displace the permanent injunction prohibiting discrimination and that Canada remains legally obligated to cease and refrain from discriminatory conduct on an ongoing basis, regardless of the OFA's term or Canada's administrative preferences.

Interested Parties Georgina Island First Nation and Taykwa Tagamou Nation 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.

On April 29, 2026, Canada applied for judicial review of the OFA on the grounds that the Tribunal's March 30, 2026, letter-decision, which approved the OFA, exempted Georgina Island First Nation and Taykwa Tagamou Nation from the agreement. The Tribunal's letter-decision said that Canada must negotiate custom remedies for those communities pending longer-term agreements. Despite Canada's application for judicial review, implementation of the OFA began on May 29, 2026.



Reconciling History

fncaringsociety.com/reconciling-history

The Reconciling History initiative invites people to learn from the past in the spirit of the TRC and its Calls to Action by learning about Canada's treatment of Indigenous children and families in ways that link lessons of history to contemporary injustices. By learning about the complete and accurate story of the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada, we can all have a better



understanding of how we can contribute to reconciliation in meaningful ways.

The Caring Society was honoured to partner once more with A7G and Beechwood Cemetery to host our fifth public education event in honour of Orange Shirt Day and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30. Read more about this year's activities on page "Orange Shirt Day" on page 26!

Touchstones of Hope

fncaringsociety.com/touchstones-hope

Touchstones of Hope continues to be an important philosophy for communities, organizations, and anyone wanting to learn about and commit to reconciliation. The Caring Society uses the Touchstones of Hope philosophy to guide our work and provides Touchstones of Hope sessions to organizations by request.

Developed in 2008 to support reconciliation in child welfare, today the Touchstones of Hope philosophy is used in many diverse settings and contexts. For example, in past years, the Caring Society worked with Rideau Hall to deliver training on reconciliation to student guides, helping prepare them to educate visitors about the Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams Heart Garden, which was permanently installed on the grounds in 2025. Rideau Hall is the official residence of the Governor General of Canada. With a large contingent of previously trained student guides returning for the 2025-2026 season, the Touchstones philosophy continues to inform how guides at Rideau Hall educate visitors about the Heart Garden.

With conversations about Indigenous jurisdiction over children's services ongoing nationally, Touchstones of Hope can support First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Nations, communities, and agencies in the development of culturally specific visions to inform the development and implementation of various jurisdictional models. With its holistic approach to thinking about child wellbeing, Touchstones of Hope can be used to inform frameworks for legislation through a process of community visioning. For Nations, communities and agencies that are in the beginning stages of exerting control over legislation for children's services, it is essential to start with a vision: a starting point and an end goal. What does child wellbeing mean to your community/Nation? What does it look like when children are healthy, happy, and living with dignity and respect? The Caring Society welcomes First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Nations, communities, and agencies to contact us to learn more about Touchstones of Hope resources to assist in the visioning process.



Resources and Public Engagement

The Caring Society's commitment to public education extends beyond advocacy and into everyday opportunities for learning and engagement. Through resources, campaigns, presentations, and outreach activities, the Caring Society helps people of all ages better understand First Nations children's rights and their role in advancing reconciliation. The following section highlights these efforts and their impact over the past year.

FNCARES

fncaringsociety.com/fncares

The Caring Society's Knowledge Portal, the First Nations Children's Action and Research Service (FNCARES) was established in 2012 by Dr. Cindy Blackstock to draw on well-established research on the structural drivers of disadvantage for First Nations children, youth, and families to develop community-based solutions to ongoing discrimination and inequities.

FNCARES works with community partners to organize and host public events, including lectures, workshops, panel discussions, film screenings, book launches, and other educational events that are free and open to the public. We also develop resources to educate about the structural drivers of disadvantage and encourage discussion and actions that promote culturally based equity and justice for First Nations children and youth.

Key resources include *Displaced: Indigenous Youth and the Child Welfare System* (film), teaching and learning guides for the film for Grades 9–12 and for professionals working with children and youth, and *First Nations Child Poverty: A Literature Review and Analysis*. FNCARES partnered with the Freedom of Mind Resource Centre to create resources on escaping undue influence in public service and recognizing and resisting colonial mind control methods. FNCARES webinars include presentations on Jordan's Principle and Canada's non-compliance, First Nations and Class Actions, and *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*, and are available to watch free online.



New Resources

Throughout the year, the Caring Society continued to develop resources to help children, families, First Nations leadership, technicians, advocates, and the public better understand the developments related to First Nations Child and Family Services, Jordan's Principle, and ongoing work to end discrimination against First Nations children. New and updated information sheets, reports, infographics, briefing materials, and web resources were created to make complex legal, policy, and funding issues more accessible and actionable.

As discussions on the long-term reform of First Nations Child and Family Services continued, the Caring Society refreshed its FNCFS Resources webpage, creating a dedicated hub for information on *The Loving Justice Plan* and Canada's Plan for long-term reform of FNCFS. The webpage also brings together a variety of resources designed to support understanding and analysis of these proposals, including:

- An outline of the priority concerns, compliance gaps, and remedies to safegaurd First Nations children accessing supports through Jordan's Principle.
- Resources supporting engagement and the development of a National Plan by First Nations to end discrimination against First Nations children in FNCFS.
- A Comparative Funding Analysis of *The Loving Justice Plan* and Canada's Plan, comparing funding approaches for long-term reform.

- A leadership brief comparing *The Loving Justice Plan* and Canada's reform plan.
- An information sheet outlining the proposed amendments to *The Loving Justice Plan* following a second engagement process with First Nations.
- Resources examining reports produced by the IFSD related to the long-term reform of FNCFS and Jordan's Principle.

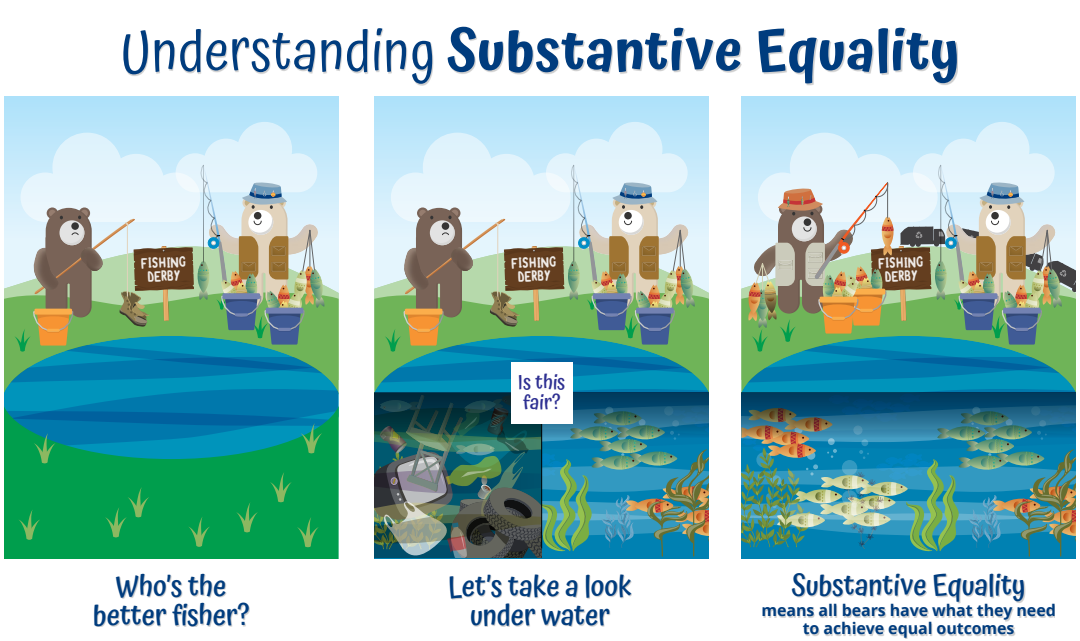
In addition, several resources were created and updated to help readers understand important developments related to Jordan's Principle:

- A Bear Witness Day information sheet highlighting the history and significance of Bear Witness Day and ways to take action in support of First Nations children.
- A youth-friendly information sheet and infographic on substantive equality, explaining this important legal principle in accessible language.
- Information sheets on *Powless* v. *Canada* and the Federal Court of Appeal's decision in *Canada* v. *Powless*, outlining the implications of these decisions for Jordan's Principle.
- A *What is Happening with Jordan's Principle at the Tribunal?* Information sheet providing an overview of current proceedings following the Tribunal's orders in 2025 CHRT 6 and the key issues currently before the Tribunal.

The Caring Society also developed and updated a number of resources that provide broader context on the case and its ongoing impact, including:

- An information sheet on the Tribunal's letter-decision regarding the OFA.
- A child-friendly timeline commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's landmark 2016 decision (2016 CHRT 2), highlighting key milestones, progress achieved over the past decade, and the work that remains to end discrimination against First Nations children in FNCFS and Jordan's Principle.
- An updated Legal Actions resource outlining the different proceedings before the Tribunal and the courts related to the FNCFS and Jordan's Principle case.
- An updated Caring Society information sheet providing an overview of the organization's history, mandate, and ongoing work.

Caring Society resources help ensure that First Nations, advocates, decision-makers, and members of the public have access to timely, accurate, and accessible information as efforts continue to advance substantive equality for First Nations children, youth, and families.



Above: The Caring Society's new substantive equality infographic

Events

The Caring Society's annual events create opportunities for people of all ages to learn, reflect, and take action in support of reconciliation and justice for First Nations children and youth. Through initiatives such as *Have a Heart Day*, *Bear Witness Day*, and *Orange Shirt Day*, these events honour the strength of First Nations children, families, and Indian Residential School Survivors while promoting awareness, education, and action. Through accessible resources and community participation, people across Canada are empowered to make a difference in their schools, workplaces, communities, and homes.

Have a Heart Day

fncaringsociety.com/events/have-heart-day

The Caring Society was thrilled to once again bring children, youth, and caring Canadians together for an in-person Have a Heart Day gathering on February 12, 2026. Held at the Meridian Theatre on unceded Algonquin territory, this child and youth-led reconciliation event welcomed more than 700 students from the Ottawa and Gatineau region who gathered to stand up for fairness and equity for First Nations children and youth.



Throughout the event, students shared heartfelt letters addressed to their elected officials, including Prime Minister Mark Carney, calling on leaders to have a heart for First Nations children and ensure they have the opportunity to grow up safely at home, receive a quality education, be healthy, and be proud of who they are. We were honoured to welcome MP Lori Idlout, who attended the gathering and witnessed the students' powerful messages and commitment to reconciliation.

The following day, MP Idlout amplified the students' voices during the Question Period in the House of Commons, highlighting the students' calls for fairness and equity and ensuring their message reached Parliament. We are grateful to all the students, educators, families, and leaders who helped make this year's event such a meaningful demonstration of advocacy and loving justice for First Nations children.

Left: Spirit Bear at the Have a Heart Day gathering at Meridian Theatre



Elder*beary* Day

fncaringsociety.com/elderbeary-day

March 20, 2026, marked the 8th annual Elder*beary* Day! Elder*beary* Day invites people of all ages to honour and celebrate the contributions of our Elders, who do so much to help teach and raise our children and youth. Thanking Elders can take many different forms, whether that be through acts of service, spending quality time together, or expressing gratitude through letters or drawings. We were so thrilled to see so many classes, organizations, and individuals across the country sharing how they chose to honour and appreciate the contributions of their Elders by using the hashtags #ElderbearyDay and #JournéeOursonAîné on social media platforms.

Bear Witness Day

fncaringsociety.com/bear-witness-day

On February 5, the Senate passed a motion recognizing May 10 as Bear Witness Day, a national day of action honouring Jordan River Anderson and his family while renewing the call for the full and proper implementation of Jordan's Principle. Introduced by Senator Francis, supported by Senator Kim Pate, and seconded by Senator Amina Gerba,

the motion encourages Canadians to "bear witness" to the inequities First Nations children continue to face when seeking essential services and supports.

The Senate's recognition comes nearly a decade after the Tribunal ordered Canada to fully implement Jordan's Principle. Despite that landmark decision, significant barriers for First Nations children remain. In his remarks, Senator Francis emphasized that many First Nations children are still waiting for decisions for critical services and supports. Recognizing Bear Witness Day reinforces the ongoing call for Canada to uphold its legal obligations and ensure First Nations children receive the services they need, when they need them, without discrimination.

To mark this important milestone, nearly 300 students and educators, along with their stuffed animals, gathered at the Senate of Canada in May to celebrate Bear Witness Day and honour Jordan River Anderson and his family. The event was in collaboration with Senators Audette, Francis, Boyer, Harder, Karetak-Lindell, Klyne, MacCallum, and Senior.

We were honoured to welcome students from Kitigan Zibi elementary and high school, who travelled more than two hours to join us. Kokum Shirley and a youth from Kitigan Zibi opened the event in a good way by sharing a prayer in English and Algonquin, followed by an honour song performed by youth drummers from Mokasige. Youth emcees Koby and Hayda from École Élementaire publique Louise-Arbour then introduced four students from Kitigan Zibi who shared letters they had written to elected officials. Through powerful personal stories, the students described the impact Jordan's Principle has had on their lives and called on decision-makers to ensure its implemented in ways that truly meet the needs of First Nations children and youth.

The celebration continued with performances by Mokasige dancers and drummers, tea and sweet treats, and opportunities for students to speak directly with Senators and Members of Parliament. Students shared their letters, asked insightful questions, discussed the importance of Jordan's Principle, created friendship bracelets for their teddy bears, and signed a banner that will be displayed in the Senate.

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

Alongside the many inspiring events held across the country, we were delighted to see another wave of incredible engagement on social media this year. To honour Jordan River Anderson and his family, children and youth wrote letters to decision-makers urging them to fully implement Jordan's Principle.

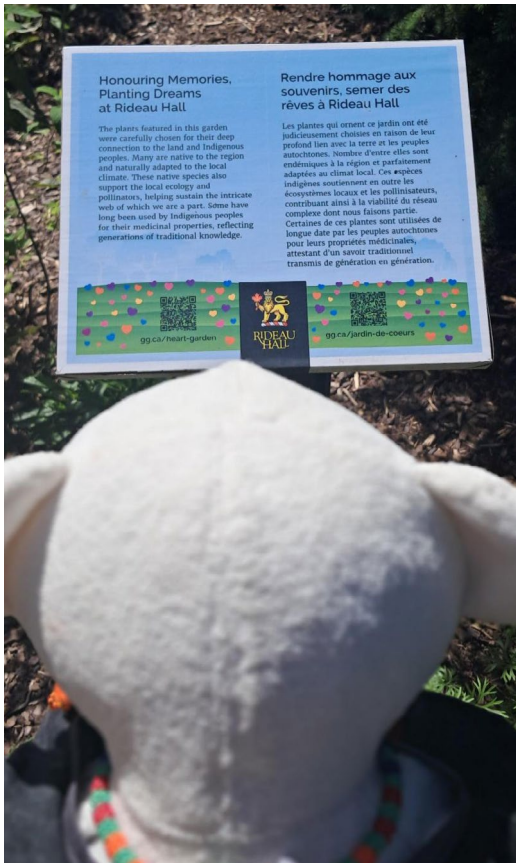


Senator Michèle Audette and students at the Caring Society's Bear Witness event at the Senate of Canada

Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams

fncaringsociety.com/honouring-memories-planting-dreams

Throughout May and June, the Caring Society's *Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams* campaign invited people across the country to honour Residential School Survivors and their families, learn about the history and ongoing legacy of residential schools, and take meaningful action toward reconciliation.



This year, the Caring Society marked the campaign through a dedicated social media initiative, sharing educational resources, films, activities, and actions that individuals, families, schools, and organizations could undertake to deepen their understanding and support reconciliation. Throughout the campaign, people were encouraged to explore learning opportunities, reflect on the truths of residential schools, and consider how they could contribute to lasting change in their own communities.

A central part of the campaign continues to be the planting of Heart Gardens, the living symbols of remembrance, hope, and reconciliation. Heart Gardens take many forms, from native plant gardens and potted flowers to creative classroom displays featuring hearts inscribed with commitments to reconciliation. Like reconciliation itself, Heart Gardens require ongoing care, learning, and attention to grow and flourish.

By sharing resources and highlighting actions that people can take throughout May and June, the campaign continues to honour the memories of children who attended residential schools while planting dreams for a future grounded in truth, respect, and reconciliation.

Left: Spirit Bear overlooking the permanent Heart Garden at Rideau Hall

Orange Shirt Day

fncaringsociety.com/orange-shirt-day

On September 30, more than 1,250 students, educators, Elders, and members of the public gathered at Beechwood Cemetery and throughout downtown Ottawa to honour Orange Shirt Day and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. The Caring Society was privileged to once again partner with the A7G and Beechwood Cemetery to host its fifth annual public education event in support of truth, learning, and meaningful reconciliation.

This year's agenda included the following activities:

- **School Reconciling History tours.** Led by young people from A7G, the day began with over 300 students and educators embarking on walking tours at Beechwood Cemetery, where they learned about several key figures involved in the residential school system, the role of the federal government, and how we can learn from history to address contemporary injustices experienced by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.
- **Art and letter writing at Action Tables.** Led by students from St. Monica Elementary School, participants had the opportunity



to visit four different action tables at Beechwood to write letters, paint tiles, blow bubbles, and creatively express their commitment to reconciliation.



- **Special honouring.** To honour the children who passed away at residential schools and their families, members of the public gathered at the Children's Sacred Forest at Beechwood Cemetery. Elder Barbara Dumont-Hill opened the honouring, and Brittany Mathews (Caring Society) and Josh Lewis (A7G) introduced former Commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Marie Wilson, and former Northwest Territories Premier, Stephen Kawkfi, to share a few words. We were also honoured to have jingle dress dancer Dara Wawatie-Chabot and drummer Nimkeehns Wemigwans share a song.
- **Public Reconciling History tours at Beechwood.** In the afternoon, A7G members and Beechwood staff led public tours at Beechwood Cemetery. in English and French. We were also excited to partner with Arran Mills to offer a tour with American Sign Language interpretation.
- **Public downtown Reconciling History tours.** Members of A7G also led Reconciling History Walking Tours in downtown Ottawa, stopping at 15 sites along Sparks Street and throughout the Byward Market to provide participants with opportunities to learn more about the role of the federal government and bureaucracy in the residential school system. We were honoured to have Anishinàbe Odjìbikan and Buffalo Cultural Collective provide cultural exhibits and teachings as part of the walking tour this year.
- **Art exhibit.** With thanks to Beechwood, an exhibit displaying artwork that engaged with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action, reconciliation, and truth telling was featured inside the Beechwood National Memorial Centre.

Every day of the year, we invite people to learn about Canada's past in the spirit of the TRC and its Calls to Action through our Reconciling History campaign.

School is a Time for Dreams

fncaringsociety.com/school-time-dreams

Every child in Canada has a right to quality education, but for First Nations children, this right is not always upheld. Many young First Nations children and youth do not get the same opportunities to learn or to achieve their dreams as others do because of the inequities in education for First Nations.

Celebrated every November, 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 Koostachin, 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.

Each year we continue to see hundreds of children across the country honour Shannen's Dream. Children take time to learn about Shannen by reading and watching *Spirit Bear: Fishing for Knowledge, Catching Dreams*, hosting a gathering, and writing a letter to elected officials calling for safe and comfy schools for all kids.



Annual Caring Society Gala

fncaringsociety.com/events/annual-caring-society-gala

The Caring Society extends heartfelt thanks to everyone who joined us for the 15th Annual Caring Society Gala in Winnipeg on October 17, 2025. It was truly humbling to see a room full of friends and supporters. A special thank you goes to the Kinosao Sipi Minisowin Agency for hosting the Gala for the fourth year and for going above and beyond with this year's masquerade theme.

We recognize that organizing the Gala is a significant undertaking, and we sincerely appreciate all the effort that goes into planning the event. Thank you to the many volunteers and performers who made the evening such a success, and thank you to all the artists who contributed to the auction. We also extend our gratitude to Genevieve Dumas and Dreyden Flett-Roulette for the designs featured in the fashion show, and to Crystal Robertson and Rose Scribe for creating Cindy's gift.



Thank you again to everyone who attended and donated to the event. The Caring Society Gala is an annual fundraiser hosted by First Nations child welfare agencies in Manitoba to support equity for First Nations children. We look forward to the 16th Annual Caring Society Gala in October 2026, hosted by Opaskwayak Child and Family Services.



Cindy Blackstock, Spirit Bear, and representatives of Kinosao Sipi Minisowin Agency.

Awards and Scholarships



Jordan's Principle Scholarship

fncaringsociety.com/awards-scholarships/jordans-principle-scholarship

Named in loving memory of Jordan River Anderson, the 2026 Jordan's Principle Scholarship will announce recipients in fall 2026. This year is the ninth annual Jordan's Principle Scholarship and will award two scholarships of $5,000 and one scholarship of $2,500 to First Nations students studying in fields related to children's holistic health and wellbeing. We are grateful for contributions from HANSAmed, TEKsystems, Colas, and Caring Society donors; their support makes this scholarship possible. One of the $5,000 scholarships is awarded in memory of Joan Glode, who was a fierce advocate for First Nations children.

Spirit Bear Award



fncaringsociety.com/awards-scholarships/spirit-bear-award

Spirit Bear was proud to present the 8th annual Spirit Bear Award this year. 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. Three prizes of $500 were given to children and youth, and the prizes can be used for their continued work toward reconciliation, or as the group of young people sees fit. We are grateful to the Olive Tree Foundation (Mohamed and Opheera Nasir Endowment Fund) for their generous annual contribution to the Spirit Bear Award! Three groups were awarded the Spirit Bear Award in recognition of their hard work:

- Charging Thunder Singerz
- Youth Advisory Council
- Arklan Community Public School, Room 115

Two additional groups were recognized as honourable mentions:

- Appleby College's Reconcili-ACTION Club
- Gathering Strength Community Services Society

Congratulations to these young people and all who were nominated for the Spirit Bear Award. Spirit Bear appreciates everyone's continued dedication and commitment to reconciliation!



Shannen's Dream Scholarship

fncaringsociety.com/awards-scholarships/shannens-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. Natasha Big, Smoke Woitte, April Quill, and Drea Sinclair were all awarded scholarships under the fifth annual Shannen's Dream Scholarship. We were also thrilled to recognize two honourable mentions, Cheyenne Lafferty and Lincoln Fineblanket. As a pay-it-forward scholarship, recipients make a fair and measurable contribution to the Shannen's Dream campaign or related First Nations initiative. The Shannen's Dream Scholarship is made possible with the support of Canadian EdTech company TopHat and generous Caring Society donors.

Raymond Shingoose Leadership Award

fncaringsociety.com/what-you-can-do/awards-scholarships/raymond-shingoose-leadership-award

This year, the Caring Society was honoured to present the inaugural Raymond Shingoose Leadership Award. The award recognizes a technical expert and leader whose work reflects the honour, wisdom, and steadfast commitment demonstrated by Mr. Raymond Shingoose throughout more than 40 years of leadership in First Nations Child and Family Services.

Raymond Shingoose from the Cote First Nation has dedicated his life to advancing the wellbeing of First Nations children and families. Through decades of leadership, advocacy, and innovation in child welfare, he helped build and strengthen First Nations-controlled child and family service organizations, championed the exercise of First Nations jurisdiction in child welfare, and played a foundational role in establishing organizations that continue to support First Nations children, families, and communities across the country.

This award honours his legacy and celebrates excellence, innovation, and advocacy that advance the wellbeing of First Nations children, youth, and families across Canada.

Through this recognition, the Caring Society honours individuals whose leadership has similarly helped strengthened First Nations Child and Family Services and supported positive change in communities. This award includes a $2,000 prize to support and acknowledge the recipient's continued contributions to First Nations Child and Family Services.

The 2026 Raymond Shingoose Leadership Award was presented to Phyllis Sock in recognition of her outstanding leadership and dedication to First Nations children, youth, and families throughout her career.

Mr. Arnold Wapass and Mrs. Michelle Sacobie Claybourn were also recognized with honourable mentions.

Congratulations to Phyllis Sock, Arnold Wapass, and Michelle Sacobie Claybourn, and all those whose work continues to advance the rights, wellbeing, and futures of First Nations children and families. Their leadership embodies the values that this award was created to honour.

Mary Teegee Caring Award



fncaringsociety.com/what-you-can-do/awards-scholarships/mary-teegee-caring-award

Officially announced at the 2025 Our Children Our Way Conference in Vancouver, the Mary Teegee Caring Award is the Caring Society's newest award and recognizes social workers and frontline workers who embody love, courage, respect, and dedication in support of children and youth in care. Named in honour of Mary Teegee, Hereditary Chief and Chief Administration Officer of Carrier Sekani Family Services, planning is underway to open nominations. We look forward to announcing the recipient at the upcoming Our Children Our Way Conference in late 2026.



Future Directions

Our vision of Canada is one where all First Nations children are loved, respected, and honoured. We know just what to do to make that vision a reality, and it will require the education and active engagement of caring Canadians and organizations to make it happen. Over the next year, we look forward to making the following visions a reality:



- Continue working with the Tribunal, Parties, and the Government of Canada to achieve non-discrimination for First Nations children, now and forever, in Canada's provision of FNCFS and implementation of Jordan's Principle.
- Support First Nations in developing, implementing, and advancing child and family services programs and upholding Jordan's Principle by providing independent, evidence-based policy guidance, technical advice, and free resources.
- Continue working with partners to further develop the Spirit Bear exhibition.
- Expand awareness of and engagement with *Spirit Bear's ABCs* and Bear Shares, introducing these educational resources to new audiences.
- Further promote Spirit Bear's stop motion animated films and children's books to new audiences and engage educational distributors.
- Continue expanding the Reconciling History project to truthfully portray Canada's collective past in order to honour reconciliation.
- Support First Nations child and family service agencies, governments, and stakeholders' engagement in the Touchstones of Hope movement.
- Expand the Touchstones of Hope Reconciliation in Canada and Children and Youth + Reconciliation platforms to include more of the Caring Society's initiatives.
- Expand the tools we use to share information and resources, including videos, webinars, and our podcast.
- Develop more educational resources for Shannen's Dream, Jordan's Principle, and the promotion of children's engagement in research and positive social change.
- Expand the available educator resources and make these resources more accessible.
- Host School is a Time for Dreams, Have a Heart Day, Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams, Elder*bear*y Day, Bear Witness Day, and Orange Shirt Day for another year!

A warm thank you to our members, volunteers, and the many thousands of caring people of all ages who have joined the effort to ensure culturally based equity for First Nations children, youth, and their families.



Want to Make a Difference for First Nations Kids?

Go online to fncaringsociety.com to learn more and join the movement for culturally based equity for First Nations children, young people, and families. You will find seven ways you can make a difference for Indigenous children and youth, as well as information and resources to make it easier for you to participate in these campaigns in your community, school, workplace, or home! Think about supporting the Caring Society by becoming a member at fncaringsociety.com/ what-you-can-do/become-member or making an online donation at fncaringsociety.com/donate.





First Nations Child & Family Caring Society

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