First Nations Child & Family Caring Society

newsletter

Winter 2026

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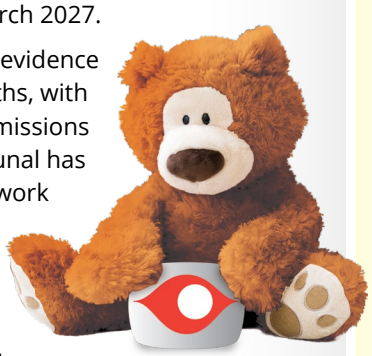
Updates on First Nations Child and Family Services Reform

The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (Tribunal) continues to consider matters that will shape the future of First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) reform outside Ontario and the implementation of Jordan's Principle.

Long-Term Reform Proceedings Continue

In December 2025, two proposals for long-term reform of FNCFS outside Ontario were submitted to the Tribunal. In October 2026, Canada filed supplemental affidavits and evidence providing information updating its proposed National Framework, regional agreements, governance structures, implementation mechanisms, program assessment, dispute resolution, data collection, and Indigenous Services Canada internal reform. In its affidavit, Canada continues to seek approval of its proposed framework and asked the Tribunal to replace existing FNCFS remedial orders with the National Framework and related regional agreements. Canada has requested to extend the period for regional agreement submissions to March 2027.



The Tribunal is expected to receive additional written evidence and submissions from the parties in the coming months, with hearings scheduled for January 2027 and further submissions in February 2027. It is important to note that the Tribunal has not approved any proposal, and any proposed framework or regional agreements remain subject to the Tribunal's review and approval.

Tribunal Panel Composition Challenge

Following the resignation of Tribunal Member Edward Lustig, Canada requested that the Tribunal be reconstituted as a three-member panel. The request was denied, and Canada subsequently filed an application for judicial review in Federal Court. Proceedings details and schedule have yet to be established.

School is a Time for Dreams

School is a Time for Dreams is beginning a new chapter this November. The annual campaign invites people from across the country to support equitable education for First Nations children and youth. 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.



Jordan's Principle

The Tribunal has ordered a process to address the outstanding issues identified in 2025 CHRT 6 and will also be examining whether its previous orders are being fully implemented in a manner that achieves substantive equality and eliminates Canada's discrimination against First Nations children.

Several key issues identified in 2025 CHRT 6 remain unresolved, including ensuring that backlog reduction efforts lead to timely and substantively equal services for First Nations children, improving reimbursement and payment processes, responding appropriately to urgent requests, establishing an independent and accessible complaints mechanism, and strengthening coordination among federal programs to prevent delays, service gaps, and jurisdictional disputes. The outcome of this process may have significant impacts on how First Nations children, families, and communities access Jordan's Principle in the future.

The Tribunal scheduled virtual hearings throughout November in order to examine the Witnesses from each Party. Next, the Parties will file written arguments for the Tribunal's consideration before it issues its determination.



For more information about recent and upcoming proceedings, please visit **jordansprinciple.ca**.



Spirit Bear Arrives at the Goulbourn Museum!

Spirit Bear is on the road again! We are thrilled to announce a special mini exhibition of *Spirit Bear and Children Make History*, open NOW at the Goulbourn Museum in Stittsville, Ontario.

Built in 1872, the museum building is the size of a one-room schoolhouse and was once the Town Hall for the former Township of Goulbourn. The size of the museum building presented a fun challenge: how to bring the best of the *Spirit Bear and Children Make History* exhibition to a small space. With the help of the wonderful Goulbourn Museum team, we made it happen. The first-ever mini adaptation of *Spirit Bear and Children Makes History* has all of the interpretive material from the full exhibition, along with a collection of archival material from the human rights case for First Nations children, the Shannen's Dream campaign, and more – including some newly added objects! Guests will also have the chance to watch Spirit Bear's stop-motion films and visit an action table with activities for all ages.

Admission to the Goulbourn Museum is free, and related education programming starts in December. The museum team will be adding further interactive elements to the exhibition over the next few months, including a tablet for playing Bear Shares 2.0 on site! For more information about the Goulbourn Museum, visit **goulbournmuseum.ca**.

The Caring Society is grateful to the Goulbourn Museum for contacting us about hosting Spirit Bear at their museum. With a little *bear*genuity, the Spirit Bear exhibition can be adapted to fit spaces big and small. If you're a museum or other organization interested in hosting *Spirit Bear and Children Make History*, please contact us at **info@fncaringsociety.com**.

Awards and Scholarships

Jordan's Principle Scholarship

We were honoured to receive so many strong applications for the 2026 Jordan's Principle Scholarship from all across the country. Two $5,000 and two $2,500 scholarships were awarded; the second $5,000 scholarship was made possible in memory of Joan Glode. It is truly a testament to Jordan River Anderson's legacy that so many students pursuing careers in children's health and wellbeing know his story and the importance of Jordan's Principle in supporting First Nations children and youth.

Congratulations to **Lisa Paul**, **Aaron Bouchard**, **Marisa Smallboy**, and **Jeanetta Vaneltsi-Prodromidis**! We are so impressed by the work they are already doing and will continue to do for kids. You can read their bios at **fncaringsociety.com/awards-scholarships/jordans-principle-scholarship**.

Save the Date: Awards and Scholarships



In the new year we will be opening the 2027 round of awards and scholarships. Find out more about our awards and scholarships on our website (**fncaringsociety.com/awards-scholarships**) and keep an eye on the Caring Society's social media feeds for updates.

New Resources

The Caring Society was honoured to participate in the National Children's Chiefs Commission webinar, hosted by Our Children Our Way, *Decision Making Within Fences: A review of Canada's Approach to Jordan's Principle, FNCFS and Jurisdiction Funding* on October 22.

This webinar recording is now available in both English and French on our website, along with a link to the presentation slides. We encourage anyone interested in these important conversations to watch, share, and make use of the resources on our FNCFS page. Visit **fncaringsociety.com/fncfs-resources**.

Save the Date

Have a Heart Day



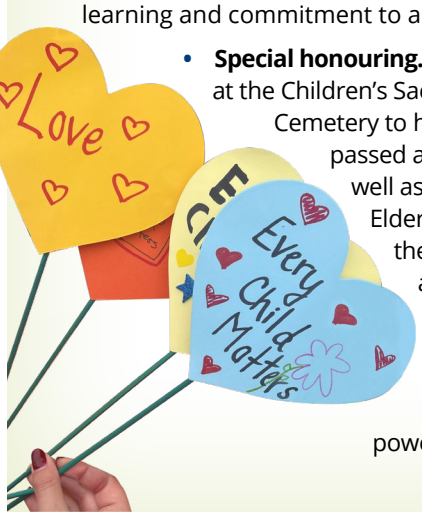
On February 14, 2027, as they have since 2012, communities across Canada will come together to honour Have a Heart Day, a youth-led event that inspires action and conversation around reconciliation and support for First Nations children, families, and communities. Have a Heart Day encourages people of all ages and backgrounds to stand with children and youth who are raising their voices for change. We want to ensure that First Nations children grow up safely within their homes while receiving a good education and being proud of their culture.

Visit **haveaheartday.ca** for resources, stories, and ideas about how to host your own event at school, work, or in your community, and register your Have a Heart Day celebration to appear on the national event map! Together, let's take another step forward on the path of reconciliation, one heart at a time.

Orange Shirt Day 2026

On September 30, over 1,000 students, educators, and members of the public gathered at both Beechwood Cemetery and in downtown Ottawa to honour Orange Shirt Day and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. We were thrilled to once again partner with the Assembly of Seven Generations (A7G) and Beechwood Cemetery to host a day of learning, reflection, and meaningful action.

- **School tours.** The day began with more than 250 students and educators gathering in Beechwood's Sacred Space to watch Spirit Bear's third film, *Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams*. Guided by young people from A7G, classes then joined walking tours to learn about several key historical figures buried on the grounds who were involved in the residential school system.
- **Heart garden activity.** Following the tours, classes were invited to participate in a heart garden activity. Participants wrote messages on paper hearts, reflecting on what they learned throughout the day. The hearts were attached to wooden pegs and placed in the Children's Sacred Forest, creating a collective heart garden that symbolizes their learning and commitment to action.
- **Special honouring.** A special gathering was held at the Children's Sacred Forest at Beechwood Cemetery to honour the children who passed away at residential schools, as well as Survivors and their families. Elder Barbara Dumont-Hill opened the honouring in a good way, and Cindy Blackstock led participants in a moment of silence. We were also privileged to welcome Mariah Miigwans, who shared a powerful hoop dance.



- **Public tours at Beechwood.** Throughout the afternoon, members of the public attended screenings of *The Story of a National Crime*, learning more about Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce and his courageous efforts to document and expose the horrific conditions at residential schools in the early 1900s. Following the screening, A7G youth and Beechwood staff led public tours in both English and French, highlighting key historical figures who were involved in the residential school system. Participants were also invited to add handmade hearts to the Children's Sacred Forest.
- **Public walking tours downtown.** Throughout the day, members of A7G also led Reconciling History tours in downtown Ottawa, stopping at various 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 especially honoured to welcome members of the Bryce family on the first downtown tour of the day.

Throughout the year, we invite people to learn about history in the spirit of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and its Calls to Action through our campaign, Reconciling History. To learn more about how you can participate, visit **fncaringsociety.com/reconciling-history**.



Left: *Hearts for the Children's Sacred Forest made by students.* Right: *Students and teachers on walking tour at Beechwood Cemetery*

16th Annual Caring Society Gala a great success

The Caring Society extends heartfelt thanks to everyone who joined us for the 16th Annual Caring Society Gala in Winnipeg on October 16. It was wonderful to bring together friends and supporters for an evening of celebration and community.

A special thank you goes to Opaskwayak Cree Nation for hosting this year's Gala and going above and beyond to bring the Secret Garden theme to life. We recognize that organizing the Gala is a significant undertaking and sincerely appreciate all the effort that went into planning such a memorable evening.

Thank you to the many volunteers and performers who helped make the evening such a success, as well as the artists who generously contributed their work to the auction. We are grateful to everyone who attended, contributed, and helped make this special evening possible.

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 17th Annual Caring Society Gala in 2027!



(Left to right): *Cindy Blackstock, Spirit Bear mascot, Joanne Meade, and Harmony Eshkawkogan holding Spirit Bear.*

2027 Spirit Bear Calendar

We are pleased to announce that the 11th edition of *Spirit Bear's Guide to Reconciliation* calendar is available for pre-order!



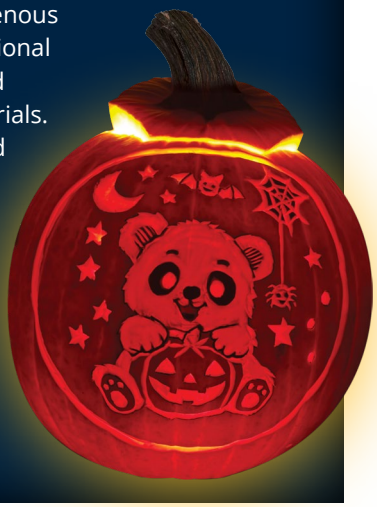
The 2027 calendar is a special edition featuring Reconciliation Am*bear*risters and their *paw*sitive impact! Each month features a different Am*bear*rister and fun facts about them, including information about who is hosting them, the adventures they've been on, and how they are helping work towards reconciliation.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all the organizations and schools that took the time to submit photos of their Am*bear*risters and stories about the work they've done. Together, you are helping inspire reconciliation in *bear*y caring and respectful ways year round.

You can now order your calendar in French or English by visiting the Caring Society shop at **fncaringsociety.com/shop**.

Pumpkin Carving Contest

The pumpkins may not last forever, but the creativity they inspired certainly will! This year's Pumpkin Carving Contest showcased an incredible collection of carved pumpkins by people across the country. To thank everyone who participated, each individual or group received a gift card to **GoodMinds.com**, a First Nations family-owned business offering Indigenous books, educational resources, and learning materials. Spirit Bear and our team are grateful to everyone who helped make this year's contest so special!



Holiday greeting and office closing dates

The First Nations Child & Family Caring Society will be closed for the holidays on December 24–28. We wish everyone a safe and happy holiday!



First Nations Child & Family Caring Society

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Membership Information

Join the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society as a Member under one of the following categories:

Individual Membership: $75
Student Membership with ID or Elder: $5
Small FNCFCS Agency Membership (1–50 employees): $500
Large FNCFCS Agency Membership (50+ employees): $1,000
Small Associate Membership (Organizations with 1–50 employees): $500
Large Associate Membership (Organizations with 50+ employees): $1,000

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