

# Annual Report 2017 | 2018



First Nations Child & Family  
Caring Society of Canada

Please note that this annual report reflects activities from September 2017 to August 2018.

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# Honouring

The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada (the Caring Society) expresses our sincere appreciation to First Nations child and family service agencies, our members, funding organizations and partners who have made outstanding contributions to the wellbeing of Indigenous children, youth and families in 2017/2018. Special thanks to children and youth throughout Canada who are standing with First Nations children and families and to:

Alberta Child and Youth Advocate	Sébastien Grammond	Ontario Public Services Employees Union
Amnesty International Canada	Robert Grant, Gall, Legge, Grant and Munroe, LLP	Osgoode Hall Law School
Anderson Family, Norway	Indigenous Bar Association	Ottawa Muslim Women's Organization
House Cree Nation	Indigenous Physicians Association	Ousley, Hanvey and Deep, LLP
APTN	KAIROS Canada	Power Law
Assembly of First Nations	Andrew Koostachin, Jenny Nakogee and Family	The Printing House
Maurina Beadle and Philippa Pictou	Law Society of Upper Canada	Project of Heart
Beechwood Cemetery	Lawson Foundation	Public Service Alliance of Canada
Bentall Corporation	Leah Gryfe Designs	Rotary Clubs of Canada
Books with no Bounds	Lemay Media and Consulting	SSHRC
British Columbia Representative for Children and Youth	Anne Levesque, University of Ottawa	Sandy Tunwell Accounting
Andrew Bryce	Manitoba First Nations CFS Gala Committee	Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth
The Bryce Family	Manitoba Nurses Union	Liam Sharp, Liam Sharp Photography
Canada Council for the Arts	Many Hands One Dream Coalition	Stacey Shiner
Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions	J.W. McConnell Family Foundation	Sisters of Service
Canadian Labour Congress	McGill University	SNAICC (Australia)
Canadian National Railway Company	McIntyre Media	The Stevens Family
Canadian Paediatric Society	Lillian Meighen	Symposium Cafe
Canadian Teachers' Federation	Michelle Nahanee	Harold Tarbell
Cheekbone Beauty	National Centre for Truth & Reconciliation	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
City of Ottawa	National Collaborating Centre on Aboriginal Health	UFCW
Clarke Child and Family Law	National Film Board	UNICEF
Community Foundations of Canada	National Indian Child Welfare Association	UNIFOR
Conway Baxter Wilson LLP	Alanis Obomsawin	University of Alberta
CUPE	Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, Ontario	University of Ottawa
The Edith and Bernard Ennis Foundation		Melanie Vincent
Factor Inwentash, Faculty of Social Work		Web Kitchen
Gabrielle Fayant-Lewis		Winnipeg Foundation
Feathers of Hope		Don Wright Foundation

# Key Accomplishments

## Spirit Bear and Friends



Spirit Bear opened **Twitter and Instagram accounts**. In less than a year, he has gained **over 1,500 new followers!**



Spirit Bear published **Spirit Bear and Children Make History**, his first illustrated children's book. In less than a year, we sold or donated **more than 13,000 copies** to communities, schools, and hospitals!



We sold over **1,000 copies of Spirit Bear's 2018 calendar** and guide to reconciliation. All proceeds supported child and youth lead reconciliation initiatives!



We launched the **Reconciliation Ambassadors program**, communities around the world can host a teddy bear ambassador to learn about reconciliation and support the legacy of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission!



The **Spirit Bear Plan to End Inequalities in Public Services for First Nations Children, Youth, and Families** was unanimously endorsed by the Assembly of First Nations, the Chiefs of Ontario, and supported by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people around the world!



Spirit Bear received an **honorary Bearister degree** from Osgoode Hall Law School and was entered into **the Bear** by the Indigenous Bar Association!

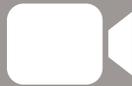


We published a **free learning guide for Spirit Bear and Children Make History** to teach about equity, reconciliation, and how kids can make a difference!

## In the Spotlight



We published **four newsletters** featuring **43 articles** (including three guest contributions)!



We released a documentary entitled **It Takes All of Us to Enforce the Law**. This film explores the history and significance of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal case through interviews with the Caring Society's pro bono legal team!



We published **two issues of the First Peoples Child & Family Review**. Including a bearyspecial child and youth edition, featuring submissions by young leaders in love and kindness!



We appeared in the news **over 330 times**, including in at least **130 Canadian** and **16 international** publications!

# Key Accomplishments (continued)

## Reconciliation in Action



At least **1,000 children, youth, and adults** came to Parliament Hill on February 15 to celebrate **Have a Heart Day!**



We announced **Reconciling History**, an upcoming self-guided walking tour through downtown Ottawa, telling the true story of **Dr. P.H. Bryce and Duncan Campbell Scott!**



To support community participation in **Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams**, we distributed hundreds of wildflower seed packs across the country!



We introduced the **Touchstones of Hope** to more than **300 enthusiastic students**, including comprehensive training for at least **50 participants!**

## Big Win for the Kids



The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal issued a **Fifth legal order on First Nations child welfare**. The Tribunal ordered Canada to provide equitable funding for the actual cost of providing services to First Nations children and families!



We visited **9 different provinces and territories** in Canada and **5 other countries** including: Columbia, Ireland, Mexico, Switzerland, and the United States of America!



We completed **120 public education events** attended by thousands of people of all ages and backgrounds!



Since May 2017, **over 60,000 Jordan's Principle cases were approved**. Our infographic relating how to access services through Jordan's Principle was viewed by over **75,000** people and counting!



The **inaugural Jordan's Principle scholarship** was awarded to three outstanding First Nations students for their commitment to Indigenous children's health and community service!



We gained over **1,800 new followers** on the @CaringSociety Twitter account and **1,500 new page likes** on Facebook. Our online audience includes more than **27,345 followers!**



We gained over **450 new campaign supporters** with a total of more than **71,000** declarations of support for I am a Witness, Jordan's Principle, Shannen's Dream, and more!

# About Us

Building on the interest of First Nations child and family services leaders to create a national networking organization, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada (the Caring Society) was developed at the Squamish First Nation in 1998 at a national meeting of First Nations child and family service agencies. 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 well-being 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 Indigenous 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,  
Yorkton Tribal Council Child and Family  
Services Inc., Saskatchewan

**Kenn Richard**, Vice-President, Native Child  
and Family Services Toronto, Ontario

**Judy Levi**, Treasurer of the Board,  
New Brunswick

**Elise Flette**, Board Member, Manitoba

**Marilyn LeFrank**, Board Member,  
Mi'kmaq Confederacy of  
Prince Edward Island, PEI

**Koren Lightning-Earle**, Board Member,  
Kasohkowew Child Wellness Society, Alberta

**Landon Pearson**, Board Member,  
Carleton University, Ontario

**Teresa Steinhauer**, Mamowe  
Opikihawasowin Tribal Chief Child and  
Family Services West Society, Alberta

**Theresa Stevens**, Board Member,  
Anishinaabe Abinoojii Family Services,  
Ontario

**Mary Teegee**, Board Member, Carrier  
Sekani Family Services, British Columbia

**Kyra Wilson**, Board Member,  
Long Plain First Nation, Manitoba

## The Caring Society Staff

**Cindy Blackstock**, Executive Director

**Andrea Auger**,  
Reconciliation and Research Manager

**Jennifer King**,  
Reconciliation and Policy Coordinator

**Brittany Mathews**,  
Reconciliation and Research Coordinator

**Robin McLeod**,  
Youth and Reconciliation Coordinator

**Daxton Rhead**,  
Child and Youth Engagement Assistant

**Marc St. Dennis**, Editor,  
First Peoples Child & Family Review

The Caring Society also acknowledges the contributions of **Tammy Morgan** and **Brandi-Lee Fisher** for their dedication and service to the Caring Society and First Nations children, youth and families.



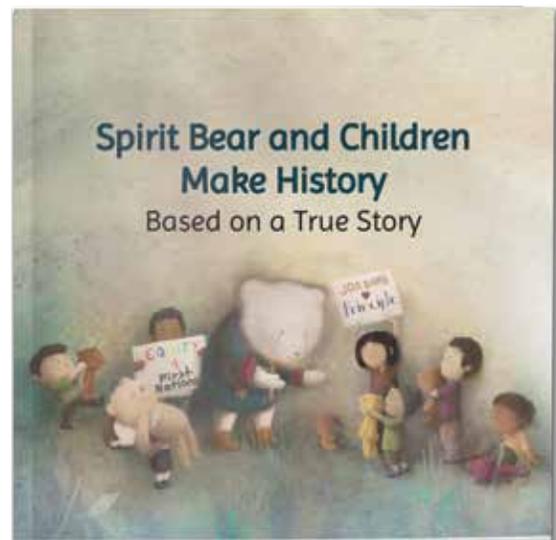
## Bears



## Spirit Bear and Children Make History

[fncaringsociety.com/SpiritBear/children-make-history](http://fncaringsociety.com/SpiritBear/children-make-history)

Spirit Bear is now a published author! After months of hard work and a little help from his friends Cindy Blackstock, Eddy Robinson and Amanda Strong, Spirit Bear's first book was released in December 2017. *Spirit Bear and Children Make History* tells the story of the case for First Nations children at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ([fnwitness.ca](http://fnwitness.ca)). Aimed broadly at children in Grades 2 to 6, *Spirit Bear and Children Make History* engages





Celebrating Spirit Bear's first book at the Teddy Bear Tea Party.



book is also underway, to be released in Fall 2018. We look forward to partnering with students, schools and communities to translate Spirit Bear's book into other Indigenous languages in the coming year.

Spirit Bear celebrated the release of his first book with (what else?) a Teddy Bear Tea Party! Ninety children from four schools gathered at

a younger audience in learning about the case, and affirms the important role of children in the reconciliation movement. Inspired by the voices of children, the story highlights the power of people of all ages and backgrounds to make a difference for First Nations children and families. A French translation, *Spirit Bear et les enfants passent à l'histoire* was published in May 2018, just in time for Bear Witness Day on May 10 ([fncaringsociety.com/BearWitness](http://fncaringsociety.com/BearWitness)).

Responses to *Spirit Bear and Children Make History* has been paw-nomenal! Senator Murray Sinclair, UNICEF Canada and the Canadian Pediatric Society are just a few of the individuals and groups who have expressed support. The book has also received significant media interest, with coverage by CBC, CTV and APTN News. In April 2018, *Spirit Bear and Children Make History* was endorsed by Indspire, a national Indigenous-led charity that invests in the education of Indigenous people, as a Successful Practice in K-12 education!

More than 13,000 copies of *Spirit Bear and Children Make History* have been sold since its release in December 2017. In addition to books sold, the Caring Society has donated over 400 books to low income schools, teachers, universities, and children's hospitals and rehabilitation centers. Spirit Bear's book is available for purchase online, in English and French, through book distributor Fitzhenry & Whiteside Limited at [fitzhenry.ca](http://fitzhenry.ca). Given that Spirit Bear is a member of the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council, a Carrier translation of the

the University of Ottawa last December for a bear-themed book reading, complete with bear hats, bear cupcakes, and sheep popcorn bags. A second Teddy Bear Tea Party and book launch was held in Edmonton, Alberta, in February 2018, with over 150 elementary students and special guest Don Iveson (Mayor of Edmonton and TRC honorary witness).

The Caring Society is proud to offer a free learning guide to support families, educators, and communities in using Spirit Bear's book to teach about equity, reconciliation, and how kids can make a difference. *Spirit Bear and Children Make History* addresses a significant gap in reconciliation education resources. While there are some excellent early learning books available on cultural teachings, *Spirit Bear and Children Make History* is the only book we know of that links reconciliation to social justice and demonstrates how children, including young children, have taken action to implement the TRC Calls to Action. Spirit Bear's learning guide was released in May 2018 and is available in French and English on the Caring Society website.



## Spirit Bear on the Big Screen

Get your popcorn ready...Spirit Bear is about to make his movie debut! The Caring Society is thrilled to be working with award-winning Michif filmmaker and artist Amanda Strong, of Spotted Fawn Productions, to produce a 20-minute stop-motion animation based on *Spirit Bear and Children Make History*. The film will be available in English and French, with an expected release date of Fall 2019. The Caring Society extends warm thanks to the Unifor Canadian Community Fund and the Canadian National Railway Company for their generous support of this and other Spirit Bear reconciliation initiatives.

## Coming Soon...

We are excited to announce that Spirit Bear is working on a second book! The new story will follow Spirit Bear as he learns from his Elders about residential schools, Shannen's Dream for safe and comfy schools and equitable education ([shannensdream.ca](http://shannensdream.ca)), and children's engagement with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action. As with Spirit Bear's first book, the Caring Society will work with educators to develop a free Learning Guide, in English and French, to accompany the story. Spirit Bear plans to release his new book, via the Caring Society's PAWS Publishing Den, in Winter 2018.

## Spirit Bear Plan

[fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear-plan](http://fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear-plan)

The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (the Tribunal) February 2018 non-compliance order (2018 CHRT 4) calls on Canada to cost out the extent of the underfunding of public services for First Nations children and families, and identify

actual needs. This finding by the Tribunal is consistent with the *Spirit Bear Plan to End Inequities in Federally funded Public Services for First Nations Children, Youth and Families* (the Spirit Bear Plan). Proposed by the Caring Society, the Spirit Bear Plan calls on Parliament to ask the Parliamentary Budget Officer to cost out the shortfalls in all federally funded public services provided to First Nations children and propose solutions to fix it.

## Reconciliation Ambearssadors Program

[fncaringsociety.com/Reconciliation-Ambearssadors](http://fncaringsociety.com/Reconciliation-Ambearssadors)

The Reconciliation Ambearssadors Program invites groups to host one of the Caring Society's Reconciliation Ambearssadors (ambassadors) who will guide the group through a year of free ways to make a difference for First Nations

children and promote the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. Hosting groups are urged to "teach" the bear Indigenous languages and stories, and make sure the bear joins in cultural activities so it becomes a well-known Reconciliation Ambearssador in the community!

The Caring Society asks that groups and their bears work alongside Elders and update the Caring Society on what they have been learning. After their time with their bear, groups write

a letter or prepare a video explaining all they have learned and their Ambearssador's story. Reconciliation Ambearssadors are working with groups across Canada and even as far away as Australia!



**Spirit Bear Plan**  
End Inequalities in Public Services for First Nations Children, Youth and Families

First Nations children and families living on reserve and in the Territories receive public services funded by the federal government. Since Confederation, these services have fallen significantly short of what other Canadians receive. This injustice needs to end and Spirit Bear's Plan will do just that.

**Spirit Bear calls on:**

- CANADA** to immediately comply with all rulings by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ordering it to immediately cease its discriminatory funding of First Nations child and family services. The orders further require Canada to fully and properly implement Jordant's Principle ([www.jordansprinciple.ca](http://www.jordansprinciple.ca)).
- PARLIAMENT** to ask the Parliamentary Budget Officer to publicly cost out of the shortfalls in all federally funded public services provided to First Nations children, youth and families (education, health, water, child welfare, etc.) and propose solutions to fix it.
- GOVERNMENT** to consult with first nations to co-create a holistic Spirit Bear Plan to end all of the inequalities (with dates and confirmed investments) in a short period of time sensitive to children's best interests, development and distinct community needs.
- GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS** providing services to First Nations children and families to undergo a thorough and independent '360°' evaluation to identify any ongoing discriminatory ideologies, policies or practices and address them. These evaluations must be publicly available.
- ALL PUBLIC SERVANTS**, including those at a senior level, to receive mandatory training to identify and address government ideology, policies and practices that fetter the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

**SHOW YOUR SUPPORT!**

- SPREAD THE WORD ON TWITTER** using #SpiritBearPlan and copy @CaringSociety
- CONTACT YOUR MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT** and ask them to support the Spirit Bear Plan
- CONTACT US** to learn more at [info@fncaringsociety.com](mailto:info@fncaringsociety.com)

 [fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear-plan](http://fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear-plan)

# Child and Youth Led Campaigns

The Caring Society believes all children, including 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 Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The Canadian Government has ratified the UNCRC and has expressed support for UNDRIP and thus we work actively to ensure the realization of these rights for First Nations children, youth and their families.

The Caring Society believes that meaningful reconciliation engages young people in learning about our collective past and thinking creatively about the future. Children and young people have a clear sense between right and wrong, and engaging them in reconciliation and social justice nurtures compassion, moral courage and bolsters self-confidence.

We believe that each of us can take peaceful and respectful actions to help make a better Canada for Indigenous children and their families. The Caring Society provides opportunities for educators and young people to take part in activities and events where they can feel empowered to make a difference.



## Jordan's Principle

[jordansprinciple.ca](http://jordansprinciple.ca)

Jordan's Principle is a child-first principle named in memory of Jordan River Anderson, a First Nations child from Norway

House Cree Nation in Manitoba. Born with complex medical needs, Jordan spent more than two years unnecessarily in hospital while the Province of Manitoba and the Canadian federal government argued over who should pay for his in-home care. Jordan died in the hospital at the age of five years old, never having spent a day in his family home. Jordan's Principle ensures that First Nations children can access all public services when they need them.

Services need to be reflective of First Nations distinct cultural needs, take full account of the historical disadvantage linked to decolonization, and without any service denials, delays or disruptions related to First Nations status.

In January 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (the Tribunal) ordered the government to properly implement Jordan's Principle. The Tribunal issued a series of legally binding orders that the Canadian federal government has an obligation to fulfill that include:

- applying Jordan's Principle to all First Nations children living on and off reserve;
- applying Jordan's Principle based on the needs of the child (not just limited to the normative standard of care);
- ensuring that administrative procedures do not delay service provision; and
- responding to most cases within 48 hours.



## Shannen's Dream

[shannensdream.ca](http://shannensdream.ca)

Shannen Koostachin, a youth education advocate from of the Attawapiskat First Nation in Ontario, had a dream: safe and comfy schools and culturally based education for First Nations children and youth. Many First Nations schools receive less funding per student than provincial and territorial schools, many also do not provide a safe and appropriate learning environment. Shannen worked tirelessly to try to convince the federal government to give First Nations children a proper education. Unfortunately, she passed away in a car accident at the age of 15 before her dream could come true. Shannen remains an important role model for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and young people who continue to carry her dream for safe and comfy schools for all First Nations children in Canada.

In celebration of Shannen's Dream, an annual walk and letter writing event has been held since 2011. Our Dreams Matter Too invites supporters

to write letters to elected officials in support of culturally based equity for First Nations children and youth. Since 2011, Our Dreams Matter Too has been supported by over 14,000 walkers throughout Canada.



## I Am a Witness: Canadian Human Rights Tribunal

**fnwitness.ca**

In January 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (the Tribunal) ruled in a landmark human rights case that the Canadian federal government is responsible for racially discriminating against 165,000 First Nations children by providing inequitable child welfare services to First Nations children and their families, and failing to implement Jordan's Principle.

Since that time, the Tribunal has issued four non-compliance orders against the Government of Canada (2016 CHRT 10; 2016 CHRT 16; 2017 CHRT 14; 2018 CHRT 4). The Tribunal issued the latest non-compliance order on February 1, 2018, admonishing the Canadian

federal government for its continued reliance on the incremental approach to equality that fostered the discrimination and spurred the initial complaint. The order finds that the Canadian government's focus has been on internal financial considerations and not the best interests of children. The Tribunal notes that the Canadian government admits to lacking the data to address some of the immediate

relief orders and has unilaterally decided to address the immediate relief orders in the mid-term or long-term without seeking leave from the Tribunal. The non-compliance order calls on the Canadian federal government to cost out the extent of the underfunding and to identify actual needs. This finding by the Tribunal is consistent with the *Spirit Bear Plan to End Inequities in Federally Funded*

*Public Services for First Nations Children, Youth and Families* (the Spirit Bear Plan).

The Caring Society expresses our deep appreciation to our legal team, comprised of Sarah Clarke, Anne Levesque and David Taylor.



Spirit Bear and friends after the fourth non-compliance order was issued (the fifth order in total).

# The Caring Society at Work: Services, Events, Projects

## Caring Society Services

### First Peoples Child & Family Review

[fncaringsociety.com/first-peoples-child-family-review](http://fncaringsociety.com/first-peoples-child-family-review)

*The First Peoples Child & Family Review* is an interdisciplinary journal that honours the voices, perspectives, and knowledges of First Peoples through research, critical analyses, community stories, and artistic expression. Submissions are accepted in written and audiovisual formats, and in English, French or Indigenous languages. The Caring Society welcomes submissions by Elders, academics, community knowledge holders, and children and youth.

*The First Peoples Child & Family Review* is available free of charge online so persons of all ages and incomes can access the journal.

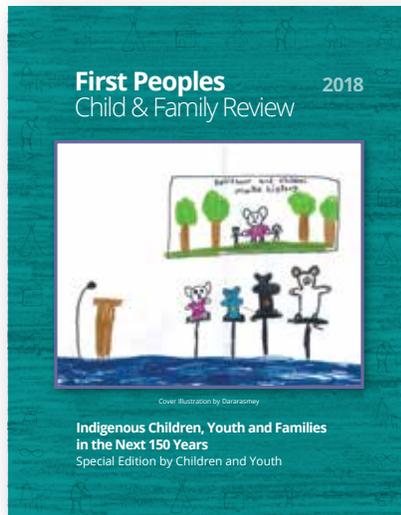
*The First Peoples Child & Family Review* has been in publication for nearly 15 years and is well known for creating new opportunities within the world of peer reviewed journals. Our legacy of innovation continued in early 2018 with the publication of issue 12(2). This edition contained written and audiovisual submissions authored entirely by children and youth, and reviewed by a panel of their peers. Young people are experts in love and fairness, and it is important that every possible opportunity is provided to hear and learn from these young leaders.

Issue 13(1) was published in the summer of 2018 and featured an inspiring mix of academic articles, poetry, drawings, speeches, and

community narratives. Thank you to all of the peer reviewers who provided thoughtful feedback and to the authors for sharing their knowledge, experience and stories.

Once again pushing the envelope of what entails an academic and peer reviewed journal, the Caring Society is excited to announce that issue 13(2), which is scheduled for publication

in late 2018, will be our first audiovisual edition. This includes, but is certainly not limited to: films, audio recordings, music, podcasts, interviews, drawings and any other format that is *not* written. By publishing an audiovisual edition of the *First Peoples Child & Family Review* the Caring Society is providing a platform to recognize the importance of visual and audio expressions of Indigenous knowledge.



Issue 12(2) of the First Peoples Child & Family Review: Special issue by children and youth. Cover art by Dararasmey.

## Online Research Database

[fncaringsociety.com/publications/search](http://fncaringsociety.com/publications/search)

The Caring Society hosts one of the largest free resource databases on Indigenous children, youth and families in Canada. The database is a great resource for students, teachers, researchers and the general public. Resources in the database are accompanied by annotated descriptions and can be searched by topic, title or author. The database resources consist of literature reviews, reports, guides, films, studies, journal articles and much more. The Caring Society is excited to announce that the database will see some improvements made in the coming months along with the website improvements.



## Touchstones of Hope

[fncaringsociety.com/  
touchstones-hope](http://fncaringsociety.com/touchstones-hope)

The Caring Society uses the Touchstones of Hope as our reconciliation framework.

The principles (culture and language, holistic approach, structural interventions, self-determination and non-discrimination) and process (truth-telling, acknowledging, restoring and relating) can be usefully applied in a variety of contexts and organizations.

For a number of years, the Caring Society has worked with and guided the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Canada to include the Touchstones of Hope for their work with and for Indigenous peoples. In June 2018, representatives from the UFCW participated in a one-day Touchstones of Hope: Reconciliation in Canada workshop as part of their second annual Indigenous Day of Celebration.

Following three successful Touchstones of Hope engagement sessions in 2010, Kids Help Phone reached out to the Caring Society again in 2017. After developing more content for Indigenous young people, the organization wanted to continue with their Touchstones of Hope journey. In June 2018, the Caring Society facilitated a two-day Touchstones of Hope train-the-trainer session.

Organizations like the UFCW Canada and Kids Help Phone show us that the Touchstones principles, while interpreted in unique contexts, can serve as a foundation for respectful relationship building with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities.

Just as the Touchstones can be interpreted differently by organizations, they can also be interpreted in various ways by young people. For example, this past year a youth volunteer at the Caring Society developed a bilingual Touchstones of Hope youth poster based on the process of reconciliation. It describes what reconciliation is and how young people can participate.

The Touchstones of Hope website has undergone some changes! We have been working hard to include updated information and to ensure access is user-friendly.



## First Nations Children's Action Research and Education Service

[fncaringsociety.com/fncares](http://fncaringsociety.com/fncares)

The First Nations Children's Action Research and Education Service (FNCARES) is a partnership between the Caring Society and the University of Alberta's Faculty of Education. FNCARES focuses on translating research on structural disadvantage for First Nations children into practical, community-based solutions, creating resources and holding numerous educational events throughout the year.

### Research Award

In 2017-2018, FNCARES applied for and received a three-year research grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada (SSHRC) for *Just because we're small doesn't mean we can't stand tall: Reconciliation education in the elementary classroom*. Led by Dr. Cindy Blackstock (McGill University) and co-investigators Dr. Nicholas Ng-A-Fook (University of Ottawa) and Dr. Susan Bennett (Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario), a team of dedicated reconciliation educators from across the country will study the impacts of the Caring Society's social justice-based reconciliation campaigns on students and teachers at the elementary level. This research will inform the creation of professional development workshops, sample lesson plans, and age-appropriate resources to enable educators to effectively address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action in regards to transforming the educational system in Canada.

### Events

In September 2017, FNCARES hosted a public lecture by Dr. Alika Lafontaine and Dr. Cindy Blackstock entitled *Incremental Equality = Discrimination: First Nations and Public Services*. Attendees included faculty and students from Medicine & Dentistry and Public Health, as well as health care practitioners and other members of the community. All joined in a lively

and informative discussion after the talk. A special thank you to the sponsors for this event, including the University of Alberta's Division of Community Engagement, Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry, and the Office of Safe Disclosure and Human Rights.

In October 2017, FNCARES screened the film *(Dis)placed: Indigenous Youth and the Child Welfare System* at the Centre for Global Citizenship Education & Research 2017 Conference at the University of Alberta. The conference attracts scholars from around the world, and attendees were fully engaged. Donovan Waskahat, one of the youths featured in the film, performed a spoken word piece after the film and, as panelists, Donovan



Dr. Alike Lafontaine, Dr. Cindy Blackstock and a bear-y special bear guest at the *Incremental Equality = Discrimination: First Nations and Public Services* public lecture.

*Top:* Charlene Bearhead introduces Mayor Iveson at the Teddy Bear Tea Party and Book Launch; *Middle:* Cindy Blackstock doing a reading at the Book Launch with the help of Spirit Bear and Edbear-ton; *Bottom:* Students and Charlene Bearhead at the Book Launch.

Waskahat and Jesse Downing reflected on their experiences as youth within the system. Derek Chewka, Indigenous educator and former social worker, spoke about trying to make changes for Indigenous children and youth from within the system. Thanks to emcee Angela Wolfe, Associate Director of the Aboriginal Teacher Education Program at the University of Alberta, and to collaborators at CGCER for inviting FNCARES and for co-sponsoring this event.

On February 5, 2018, Spirit Bear landed in Edmonton to attend FNCARES' Teddy Bear Tea Party and Book Launch for the Western Canadian debut of his book, *Spirit Bear and Children Make History*. One hundred and fifty students from Grades 2 to 5 held their own stuffed bears as they listened attentively to Cindy Blackstock, Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson, and six other special guests reading about Spirit Bear standing up for First Nations kids at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. Thanks to the wonderful hosts Charlene and Wilson Bearhead; to the co-sponsors at the Faculty of Law, University of Alberta; to Dr. Hadley Friedland and her Indigenous Peoples and the Law class; and to all of the wonderful volunteers for this event.

It is possible to resist colonialism from within contemporary institutions and systems, and audience members shared their own experiences and insights.

## Caring Society Events

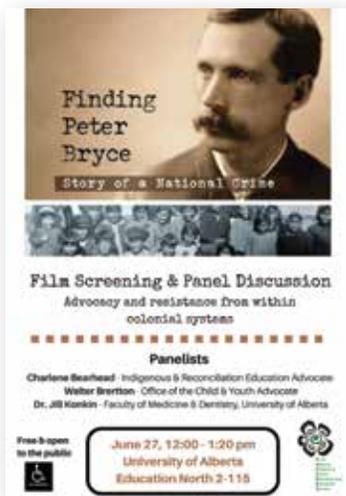


### Have a Heart Day

[fncaringsociety.com/have-a-heart](http://fncaringsociety.com/have-a-heart)

Have a Heart Day, celebrated annually since 2012, is one of the Caring Society's main events. It is a child- and youth-led reconciliation event that brings together caring Canadians to help ensure First Nations children have the services they need to grow up safely at home, get a good education,

In June 2018, FNCARES partnered with Charlene Bearhead for a film screening of *Finding Peter Bryce: Story of a National Crime* (Dir. Peter Campbell, 2018) and panel discussion on advocacy and resistance from within colonial systems. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce spoke truth to power from within the Department of Indian Affairs, the colonial government



*Finding Peter Bryce* Film Screening poster.

department that created and oversaw Indian Residential Schools. Following the short film, panellists Walter Brereton, Dr. Jill Konkin, and Charlene Bearhead discussed if and how



Celebrating Have a Heart Day 2018 on Parliament Hill.

be healthy, and be proud of who they are. Thousands of supporters across Canada celebrate Have a Heart day by hosting their own events in their communities or attending the Parliament Hill event in Ottawa. Have a Heart Day also invites Canadians of all ages to send Valentine letters to the Prime Minister or their Member of Parliament asking for love, fairness and equity for First Nations children.

Have a Heart Day has grown bigger with every passing year. Supporters registered their Have a Heart Day event on the Caring Society website and details were displayed on a Canada-wide map. In 2018, there were more than 1,000

students and participants from 21 different schools and community groups gathered on Parliament Hill to celebrate Have a Heart Day. There were over 50 events across Canada and approximately 10,900 letters were sent to elected officials in support of Have a Heart Day.

Have a Heart Day can be celebrated many different ways, including:

- sending a Valentine's Day card or letter supporting Have a Heart Day to the Prime Minister or Member of Parliament;
- hosting a Valentine's Day party to raise awareness in your school or community;
- spreading the word through social media and use the hashtag #HaveaHeartDay.

### Bear Witness Day

[fncaringsociety.com/BearWitness](http://fncaringsociety.com/BearWitness)

Celebrated on May 10, supporters of all ages bring their teddy bears to work, school or even daycare to "bear witness" and support the full and proper implementation of Jordan's Principle in honour of Jordan River Anderson.



Celebrating Bear Witness Day with the Caring Society staff and their bears.

In its landmark 2016 ruling, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (the Tribunal) ordered the Canadian federal government to fully implement Jordan's Principle by May 10, 2016. However, First Nations children and their families continue to face discrimination in accessing government services due to the

federal government's failure to comply with the Tribunal's orders. In May 2017, the Tribunal issued a third non-compliance order finding Canada's approach to Jordan's Principle to be unlawful and discriminatory (2017 CHRT 14). In total, the Tribunal has released four non-compliance orders with the latest order being released in February 2018 (2016 CHRT 10; 2016 CHRT 16; 2017 CHRT 14; 2018 CHRT 4).

This year, Bear Witness Day was celebrated by hundreds of young people and adults across Canada. There was a Bear Witness Day party and a *bear*-thday party for Spirit Bear hosted by the Senate of Canada on May 10, 2018. Students, Senators, Members of Parliament and their teddy bears were in attendance as Spirit Bear and his friends celebrated by having lots of cake and goodies!



Spirit Bear celebrating Bear Witness Day and his *bear*-thday at the Senate of Canada!

Caring Canadians can also celebrate Bear Witness Day by posting photos of their teddy bears on social media using the hashtags **#JordansPrinciple** and **#BearWitnessDay**. Bear Witness Day has seen tremendous support online since 2017 with the number of participants increasing every year. In both 2017 and 2018, **#JordansPrinciple** was trending on Twitter for the duration of May 10, making it one of the day's most popular hashtags.



## Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams

[fncaringsociety.com/honouring-memories-planting-dreams](http://fncaringsociety.com/honouring-memories-planting-dreams)

Celebrated in the Spring of each year, Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams is an annual garden event that invites caring Canadians of all ages to plant Heart Gardens in honour of the residential school survivors and their families, as well as the legacy of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Each heart planted represents the memory of a child lost to the residential school system, and the act of planting represents that individual’s commitment to Reconciliation.

In 2018, Heart Garden events were hosted in seven different provinces across the Canada and over 400 of the Caring Society’s new Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams Wildflower seed packets were distributed. Heart Gardens were registered on our website and displayed on a Canada-wide map.

## Other Caring Society Projects

### Website

In 2012, the Caring Society completed its last major website overhaul so we decided that it was time for some “spring cleaning.” In May 2018, we began work with WebKitchen and Leah Gryfe Designs to overhaul our website content and re-develop some of the layout and design to be more user-friendly.

We underwent reviews in order to make our website better. Our co-operative education student made a list of our most popular pages so that we could better highlight these pages (school resources and events are among the most visited). Our web team at WebKitchen did a complete site audit which guided us in archiving and deleting outdated content, re-organizing the site to be more user-friendly, identifying sections or pages needing French translation, and providing layouts that would be mobile compatible. Leah Gryfe Designs provided a cleaner look for the site, while also

making sure our friend Spirit Bear became a more central part of our site.

With the launch of the site in September of 2018, website users can expect to find:

- centralized reconciliation and educator/school resources – they will be available on the home page and educator resources will be available in one location as opposed to several;
- less written text on individual pages;
- updated content throughout;
- a fully responsive layout that will be compatible with both desktop and mobile devices;
- a wider variety of French resources; and
- a video in ASL!

As we progress with our updated website, we are looking forward to continuing to provide French resources, creating Indigenous language resources (like Spirit Bear’s book), and providing more updated reconciliation/school and educator resources, including information sheets.

## Jordan’s Principle Scholarship

In partnership with Norway House Cree Nation, the Caring Society announced the inaugural Jordan’s Principle Scholarship for First Nations students in January 2018. Christopher Severight, Kelsey Kerr and Kennan Andrew were presented with the scholarship in honour of their commitment to Indigenous children’s health and community service. May they always hold

Jordan River Anderson in their hearts and minds, and remain champions for Jordan’s Principle as well as equity for all Indigenous children.



# 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 to work with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal and the Canadian federal government on First Nations child welfare and implementation of Jordan's Principle.
- Write, illustrate and publish Spirit Bear's second book with accompanying education resources.
- Expand the Reconciliation Ambassadors program and promote reconciliation initiatives for the Caring Society's ever-growing bear pack.
- Expand 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.
- Update the Touchstones of Hope toolkit.
- Publish two editions of the *First Peoples Child & Family Review* and continue updating the online database.
- Develop more educational resources for Shannen's Dream, Jordan's Principle and the promotion of children's engagement in research and positive social change.
- Host School Is a Time for Dreams, Have a Heart Day, Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams and Bear Witness Day for another year!

A warm thank you to our members, volunteers and the many thousands of caring citizens 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 Indigenous Children?

Go on line to [fncaringsociety.com](http://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 in under 15 minutes and think about supporting the Caring Society by becoming a member or making an on-line donation at [fncaringsociety.com/donate](http://fncaringsociety.com/donate).









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