

Spirit Bear and Children Make History

Learning Guide

By Ottawa Teachers for Social Justice and the
First Nations Child & Family Caring Society



First Nations Child & Family
Caring Society of Canada

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About the Book

Spirit Bear and Children Make History is written by Cindy Blackstock and Eddy Robinson, Illustrated and Art Directed by [Amanda Strong](#),¹ with additional illustration by Dora Cepic, Erin Banda and Natty Boonmasiri. Editors are Jennifer King and Sarah Howden. Design and layout are by [Leah Gryfe](#).²

For more information about *Spirit Bear and Children Make History*, please visit fncaringsociety.com/SpiritBear or email info@fncaringsociety.com.



@SpiritBear

1 <https://www.spottedfawnproductions.com>

2 <http://www.leahgryfedesigns.com>

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With special thanks to Unifor (unifor.org) and the Canadian National Railway Company (cn.ca) for their generous support of this project.

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Introduction

April 2018

Spirit Bear and Children Make History tells the story of a landmark human rights case for First Nations children at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (fnwitness.ca). In January 2016, nine years after the case was filed, the Tribunal ruled that the government of Canada was racially discriminating against 165,000 First Nations children by underfunding child welfare and failing to provide equitable public services.

Told through the eyes of Spirit Bear (fncaringsociety.com/SpiritBear), the story recounts how children and youth across Canada stood up for the health, safety and well-being of First Nations kids by learning about the case, speaking from the heart and taking respectful action for change.

Spirit Bear and Children Make History was written to engage a younger audience in learning about the human rights case, and to demonstrate and affirm the powerful role of young people in the reconciliation movement. The final report of the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#)¹ (TRC) in 2015 called on Canada to remedy its treatment of and respect the diversity of First Nations, Métis and Inuit. First Nations children are uniquely impacted by federal inequities in services on reserve. The matters brought before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal are specific to First Nations children, with the exception of Jordan's Principle, which also applies to Inuit children. It is important to respect the differences among and between First Nations, Métis and Inuit, including the different ways they experience and respond to human rights violations.

If your community is in a territory where Inuit and Métis children live, use the book as inspiration to talk about the different human rights issues experienced by these distinct groups and reach out to Inuit and Métis organizations in your area to find out how children can help. As part of its final report, the TRC issued 94 Calls to Action to help us learn from the past and make changes to honour rights, cultures, and languages of First Nations, Metis and Inuit. You can find this important resource online at nctr.ca/assets/reports/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf



1 <http://nctr.ca/reports2.php>



As a result of federal inequities, many First Nations children still lack access to proper education and health care, safe drinking water, and other public services. This injustice needs to end and Spirit Bear has come up with a plan to do just that! *Spirit Bear's Plan: End Inequities in Public Services for First Nations Children, Youth and Families* has been endorsed by many First Nations leaders, including the Assembly of First Nations and Chiefs of Ontario, and can be found in full at the end of this guide (see Appendix).

Outcomes

After reading Spirit Bear's book children will

- have a greater understanding of inequities facing First Nations children, which compromise their health, safety, and well-being,
- develop empathy and critical thinking,
- develop citizenship and life skills such as problem-solving, decision-making, understanding of personal and social responsibility, ethics, courage, self-confidence, creativity, collaboration, and communication skills (be able to express themselves and articulate their ideas),
- be able to describe how children can help implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action,
- recognize that their voices and ideas matter and that children have the power to influence the world around them, and
- recognize that true heroes are those who are courageous enough to stand up for what is right and not give up, even when it is hard to be brave.

Words and Concepts to Think About

- Bear Witness Day
- Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT)
- Discrimination
- Fair treatment
- First Nations
- Government
- Have a Heart Day
- Human Rights
- Indigenous (First Nations, Métis and Inuit)
- Indigenous languages
- Jordan's Principle
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)
- TRC Calls to Action
- Reconciliation
- Residential schools
- Spirit Bear and what he represents
- Supporter



Comprehension and Reflection Questions

Comprehension

1. Who is Spirit Bear? (What First Nation does he come from? What First Nations language is he learning from his mom? Does he have any brothers or sisters? How old is he? What is his job? What are his favourite foods?)
2. Who are the other characters in the book? Name as many as you can.
3. What did these characters teach Spirit Bear?
4. What are governments supposed to do for kids?
5. What is happening to First Nations children that Spirit Bear thinks is unfair?
6. What does the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal do?
7. Why did Spirit Bear go to Ottawa to witness the case?
8. What is the case about?
9. What does Spirit Bear believe children can do?
10. How did children and youth help Spirit Bear stand up for the fair treatment of First Nations kids?

Reflection

1. What are Spirit Bear's feelings throughout the hearings?
2. What did Spirit Bear learn about the impact that discrimination has on children and families?
3. Why do you think this case went on for so long?
4. Which moment(s) in the story mean the most to you and why?
5. What did you learn about Spirit Bear?
6. What questions do you have for Spirit Bear?
7. Do you think the case is important for people in Canada to learn about and why?
8. What can you do to help make sure every First Nations child is treated fairly?

Caring Society Child- and Youth-Led Reconciliation Campaigns, Events and Multimedia Resources

At the end of the book, Spirit Bear explains that although things are starting to get better, many First Nations children still don't get things that other kids have, like safe and comfy schools and clean drinking water.

Here are some fun and meaningful ways to learn more and make a difference!

Reconciliation Campaigns

Shannen's Dream (shannensdream.ca) for safe and comfy schools and quality education.

I am a witness (fnwitness.ca) for culturally based equity.

Jordan's Principle (jordansprinciple.ca) to make sure First Nations children get the services they need when they need them.

Reconciliation Events

Reconciliation Ambearssadors

fncaringociety.com/Reconciliation-Ambearssadors

The Reconciliation Ambearssadors Program invites groups to host one of our Reconciliation Ambearssadors (ambassadors) who will guide you 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 it joins in cultural activities so it becomes a well known Reconciliation Ambearssador in the community! Bears are already out visiting young people as far away as Australia!



Bear Witness Day

fncaringsociety.com/BearWitness

Show your support and “Bear Witness” to Jordan’s Principle by bringing your bears to daycare, school or work on May 10. Host a Jordan’s Principle “bear birthday party,” parade or other fun event to raise awareness about Jordan’s Principle and to honour Jordan River Anderson!

Have a Heart Day

haveaheartday.ca

Celebrated on or around Valentine’s Day, Have a Heart Day is a child- and youth-led reconciliation campaign (event) to help make sure First Nations children have a fair chance to grow up safely with their families, get a good education, be healthy, and feel proud of who they are. Take part by sending a Valentine’s Card or letter supporting Have a Heart Day to the Prime Minister or your Member of Parliament, or by hosting a party to raise awareness in your school or community!

Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams

honouringmemoriesplantingdreams.ca

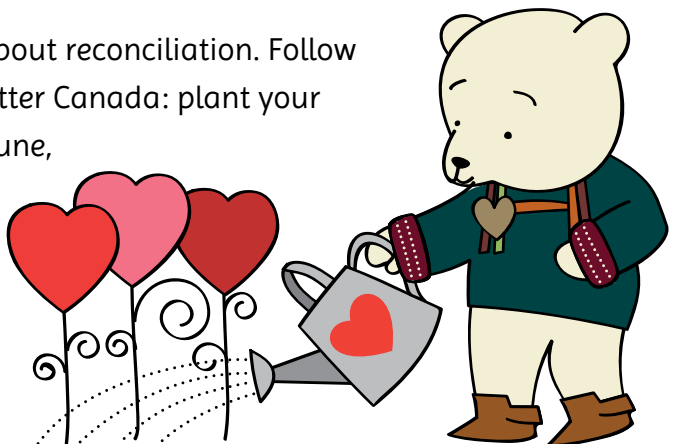
Celebrated in May and June, Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams is an annual commemoration initiative honouring residential school Survivors, the children who didn’t make it home, their families and the legacy of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Multimedia Resources

Honouring Memories Planting Dreams Public Service Announcement – made by youth! (2017)

youtube.com/watch?v=uO7KE66Rq1Q

Young people have a lot to teach the world about reconciliation. Follow their lead and do your part to make this a better Canada: plant your heart garden today! Celebrated in May and June, Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams is an annual commemoration initiative honouring residential school Survivors, the children who didn’t make it home, their families and the legacy of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.



Jordan's Principle Public Service Announcement – made by youth! (2018)

youtube.com/watch?v=RatzhHmFd-M

Jordan's Principle is a legal rule named in memory of a very special little boy named Jordan River Anderson. Jordan's Principle makes sure that when a First Nations child needs services they get them right away. This applies to all services—including health care, education, and child welfare—to all First Nations children, on and off reserve. If your child, or someone you know needs services, there is help! Call 1-855-JP-CHILD (1-855-572-4453) or visit canada.ca/jordans-principle

The 7th Generation Our Ancestors Prayed For (2016)

youtube.com/watch?v=WuqtXdgKrKY

A short (19 minutes) short documentary featuring the voices and perspectives of children and youth on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's top Calls to Action (child welfare, access to services and education).

Reconciliation Begins with You and Me (2016)

youtube.com/watch?v=LpYcczGu1ls&t=11s

Young people need to have an active role in reconciliation. In this compelling film (14 minutes), Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth discuss contemporary inequities in relation to what reconciliation means to them and how everyone can play a role.

Best Suited for Older Learners

National Film Board documentary: *Hi-Ho Mistahey!* by Alanis Obomsawin (2013)

Available through the National Film Board of Canada:

nfb.ca/film/hi-ho_mistahey_en

National Film Board Synopsis: In this feature-length documentary, Alanis Obomsawin tells the story of Shannen's Dream, a national campaign to provide equitable access to education in safe and suitable schools for First Nations children. Strong participation in this initiative eventually brings Shannen's Dream all the way to the United Nations in Geneva.

A 60-minute version of the film suitable for younger audiences is also available.

National Film Board documentary: *We Can't Make the Same Mistake Twice* by Alanis Obomsawin (2016)

Available through the National Film Board of Canada:

nfb.ca/film/we_can_t_make_the_same_mistake_twice

National Film Board Synopsis: In this documentary, distinguished filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin focuses her lens on the landmark discrimination case filed by the Assembly of First Nations and the Child and Family Caring Society of Canada against Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada in 2007. Obomsawin exposes injustices to the community by showing how the child and welfare services provided to them are vastly inferior to the services available to other Canadian children, while giving voice to the childcare workers at the heart of the battle.

It Takes All of Us to Enforce the Law (2017)

youtube.com/watch?v=7sZkB5p4e6c

January 26, 2016, was an historic day. Nine years after the Caring Society and Assembly of First Nations filed the case, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal issued a landmark ruling that found Canada guilty of racial discrimination against First Nations children. Featuring interviews with the Caring Society's pro bono legal team, this short film (26 minutes) explores the history and significance of the case through a legal lens. Thoughtful and engaging, the film is a must-watch for legal professionals, educators, activists, and young people alike.



School-Based Activities

1. Discuss the Comprehension and Reflection Questions on page 5 in a variety of ways that work best for your learning group (e.g., think pair/share, circle discussions, jigsaw activity, elbow partners).
2. Write a letter to Spirit Bear. Use prompts such as: “You inspire me because...”, “During the story you taught me...”, “Now, I understand that...”, “A message I’d like you to give the children is...” “I am going to stand up for fairness by...”).

Letters can be sent to Spirit Bear via email at info@fncaringsociety.com, or by post to:

Spirit Bear
c/o The Caring Society
309 Cooper Street, Suite 401
Ottawa, ON K2P 0G5

3. Research the case (visit fnwitness.ca) and present/share findings with peers.
4. Share the book with a younger learning group (e.g., reading buddies) and teach/pass on Spirit Bear’s teachings. Some teachers have also partnered their students with seniors in their community. Students can share their learnings with a Senior Buddy.
5. Participate in discussions around character development (ethics). Find historical examples of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who courageously resisted mistreatment and stood up for First Nations kids. [Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce](#)¹ is one

example. Next, find contemporary examples of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people—especially young people!—who are standing up for First Nations children. (Note: consider similarities between historical injustices and contemporary realities with respect to government inaction.)



1 <https://fncaringsociety.com/peter-bryce>

Additional Reconciliation Actions

1. Connect with Indigenous peoples in your territory. Find and form relationships with the nearest First Nation, Métis, or Inuit community or reach out to urban Indigenous groups. (You might be able to work with your First Nations, Métis, Inuit School Board Liaison to make connections.) Students can research and learn about the history of the Indigenous peoples in the territory, including contributions, languages, human rights issues, etc.
2. Host a “Spirit Bear Night.” Students can read the book, share Spirit Bear’s lessons with their families and peers. This could also include learning about Jordan River Anderson and writing letters/postcards to the Prime Minister or your Member of Parliament.
3. Learn more about colonization and residential schools. [Project of Heart](http://projectofheart.ca),² the [KAIROS Blanket Exercise](https://www.kairosblanketexercise.org),³ and [100 Years of Loss \(Legacy of Hope\)](http://100yearsofloss.ca/en/)⁴ are all interactive projects in which teachers and students can learn about the history that is often not taught.

Assessment and Evaluation

After reading Spirit Bear’s book, children are

- eager to ask questions about the inequities facing First Nations children in Canada,
- able to express their opinions and feelings (in discussion, in writing, or through art) about what Spirit Bear witnessed,
- ready to engage in classroom discussion about their responsibility to help ensure that all kids are treated fairly,
- interested in doing further reconciliation activities (e.g., letter writing or school-wide events), and
- able to provide their own ideas about actions they would like to take for reconciliation.

2 <http://projectofheart.ca>

3 <https://www.kairosblanketexercise.org>

4 <http://100yearsofloss.ca/en/>

Holistic Learning Rubric

Spirit

- "It's really important that we..."
- "I know that I can..."
- "No one should be able to..."
- "Everyone has a right to..."

Mind

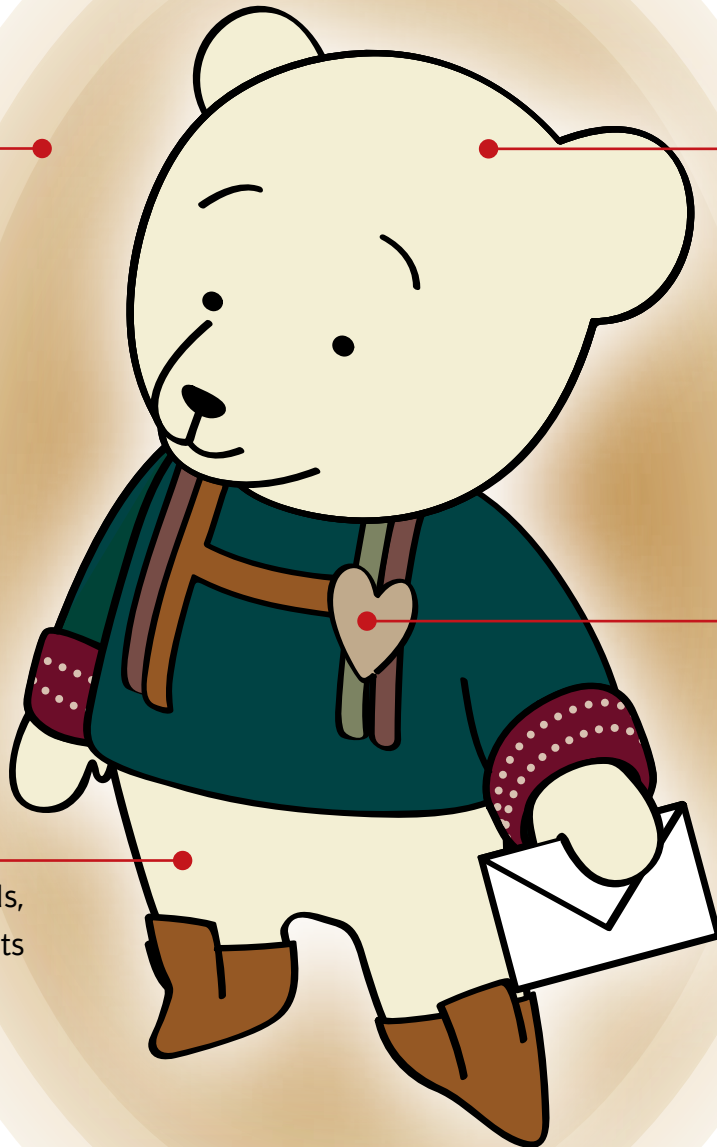
- Facts (CHRT, Canada's history of discrimination, etc.)
- Learning about Spirit Bear and Spirit Bear's supporters

Heart

- Personal Responses (How did it feel when..., my heart hurts when..., I wish..., etc.)

Body

- Writing letters/postcards,
- Gatherings, walks, events
- Talking with parents, families, friends



Appendices

Spirit Bear and Children Make History – Handouts and Activities

Spirit Bear Plan

Spirit Bear's Family Tree

Spirit Bear and Children Make History

Word Search #1: Beginner

S	I	C	M	B	V	F	R	J	E
E	P	H	G	A	G	L	O	V	E
R	O	I	X	N	R	P	N	H	M
A	Y	L	R	U	T	Y	I	E	G
F	Y	D	U	I	H	Z	M	A	L
P	Y	R	N	M	T	E	Q	R	Q
E	F	E	G	I	N	B	I	M	X
E	P	N	X	G	C	A	E	K	Q
H	Y	O	W	O	F	Y	X	A	C
S	A	E	R	A	D	E	C	W	R

CEDAR

CHILDREN

CINDY

ERA

FAIR

LOVE

MARY

★ **MEMENGWE** (bonus question)

SHEEP

SPIRITBEAR

Spirit Bear and Children Make History

Word Search #2: Intermediate

N	D	M	O	D	N	Q	M	M	C	B	P	O	N	N
A	O	R	S	J	U	E	K	O	Y	E	Z	W	T	A
C	V	I	B	H	M	I	P	O	T	A	D	M	X	D
X	H	Y	T	E	T	A	E	E	E	R	D	A	E	R
G	M	E	N	A	W	Y	Z	Q	I	T	S	R	R	O
E	T	G	A	A	I	E	Y	D	C	H	A	B	Z	J
P	W	F	T	L	B	L	S	P	O	D	D	U	G	Y
E	M	T	W	Y	T	L	I	J	S	A	G	W	T	K
N	O	J	R	U	E	H	X	C	G	Y	O	M	Z	L
D	E	L	D	V	I	T	C	I	N	D	Y	A	J	Q
L	A	N	U	B	I	R	T	A	I	O	T	R	D	Q
D	R	H	K	Z	G	K	G	H	R	L	C	Y	O	Z
Z	W	Q	Q	O	S	W	Y	D	A	E	T	E	I	R
Z	V	X	A	B	K	U	X	A	C	E	T	V	R	H
C	A	R	R	I	E	R	S	E	K	A	N	I	K	H

BEARTHDAY
CARINGSOCIETY
CARRIERSEKANI
CEDAR
CINDY

ERA
HEALTHCARE
JORDAN
MARY
MEMENGWE

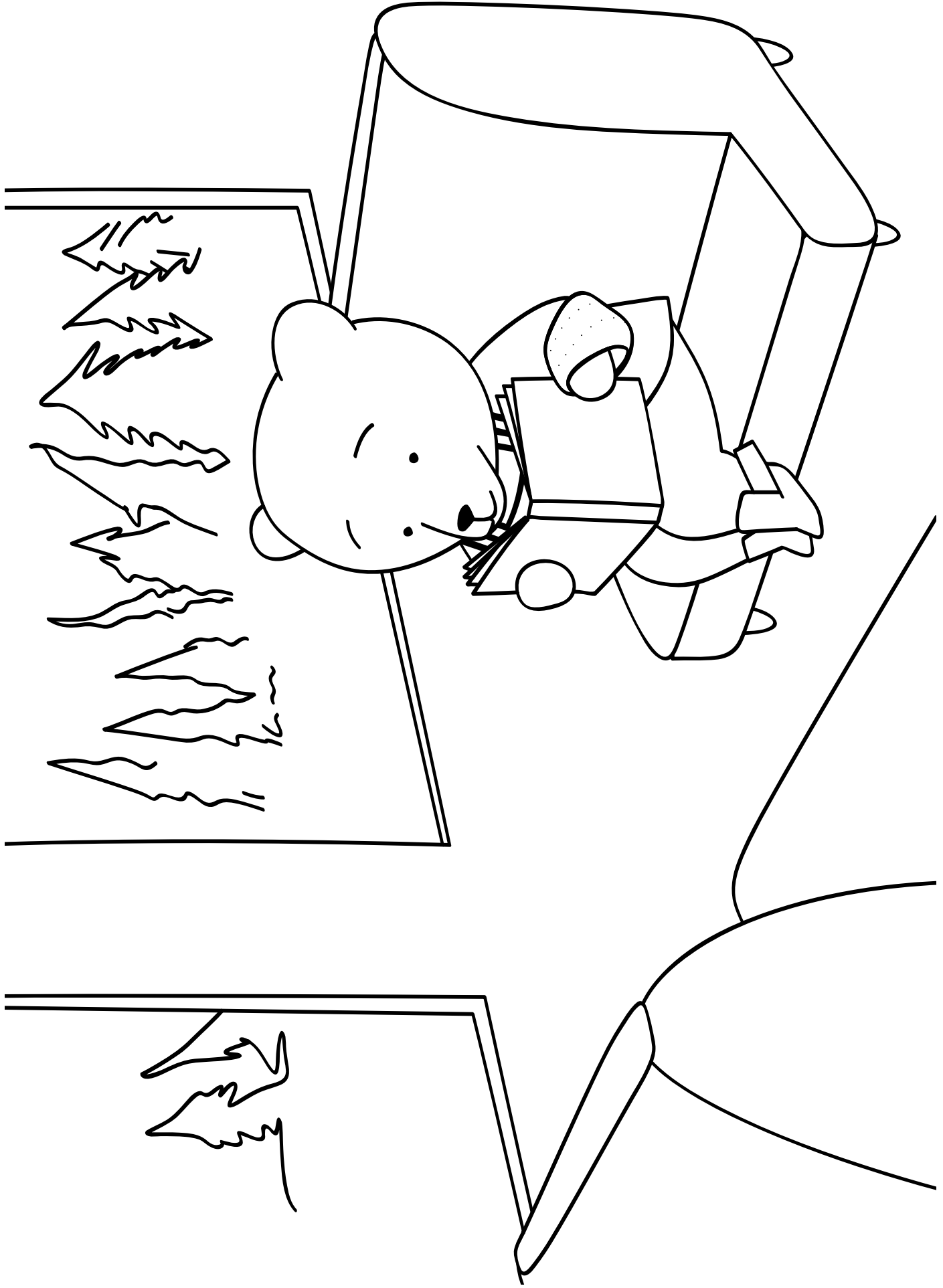
OTTAWA
RECONCILIATION
SUSZUL
TRIBUNAL

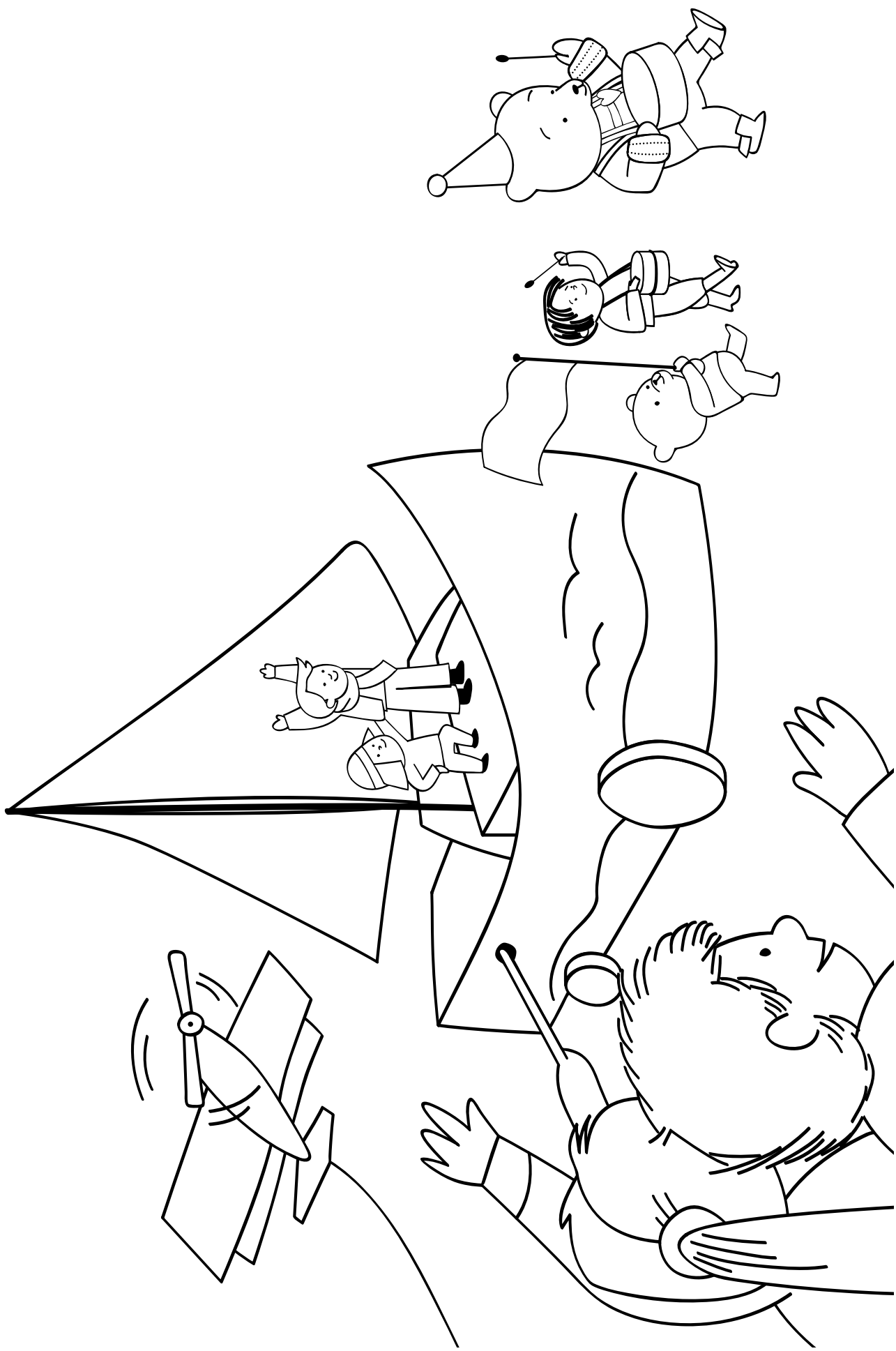
Spirit Bear and Children Make History

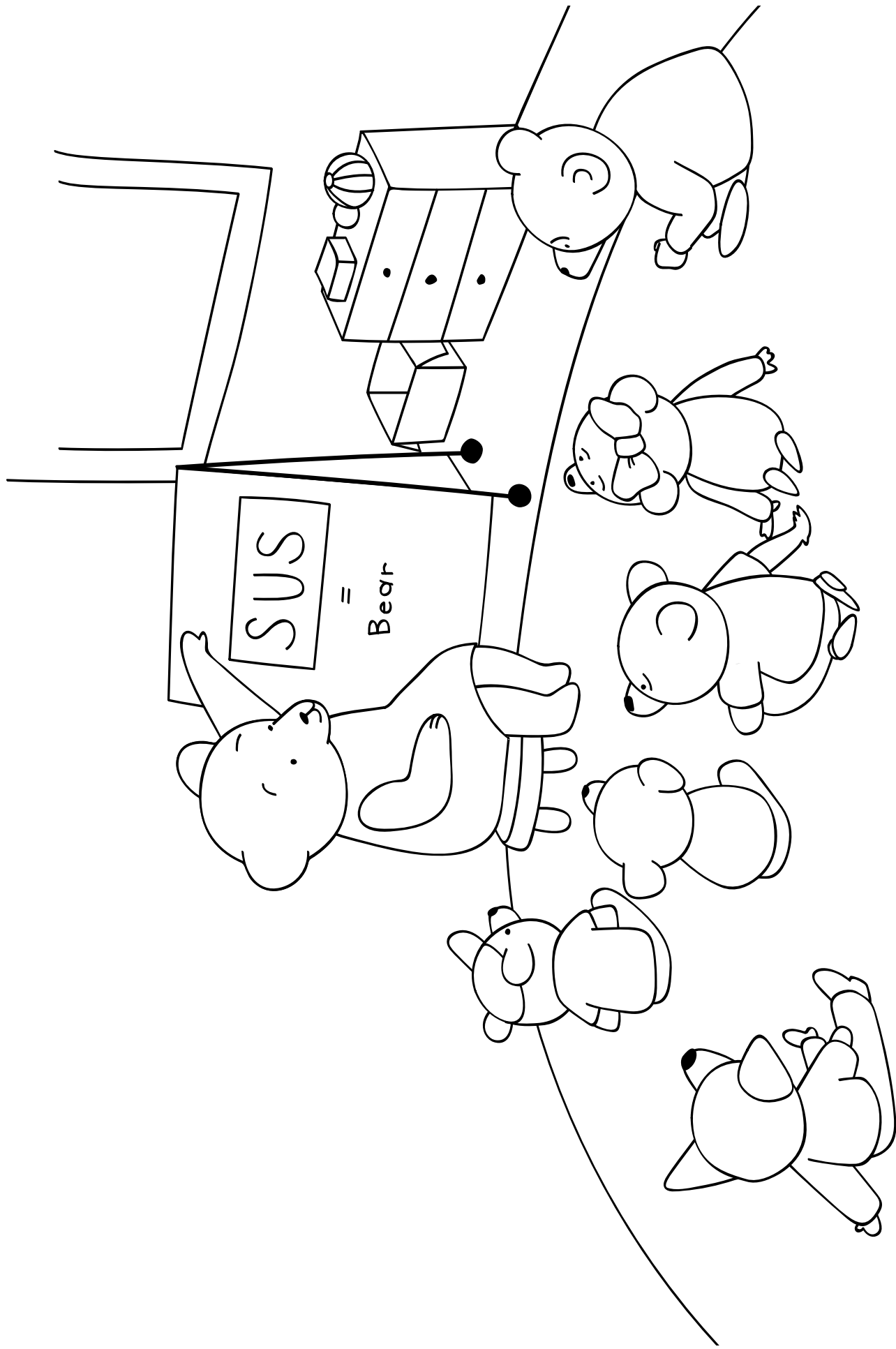
Word Search #3: Expert

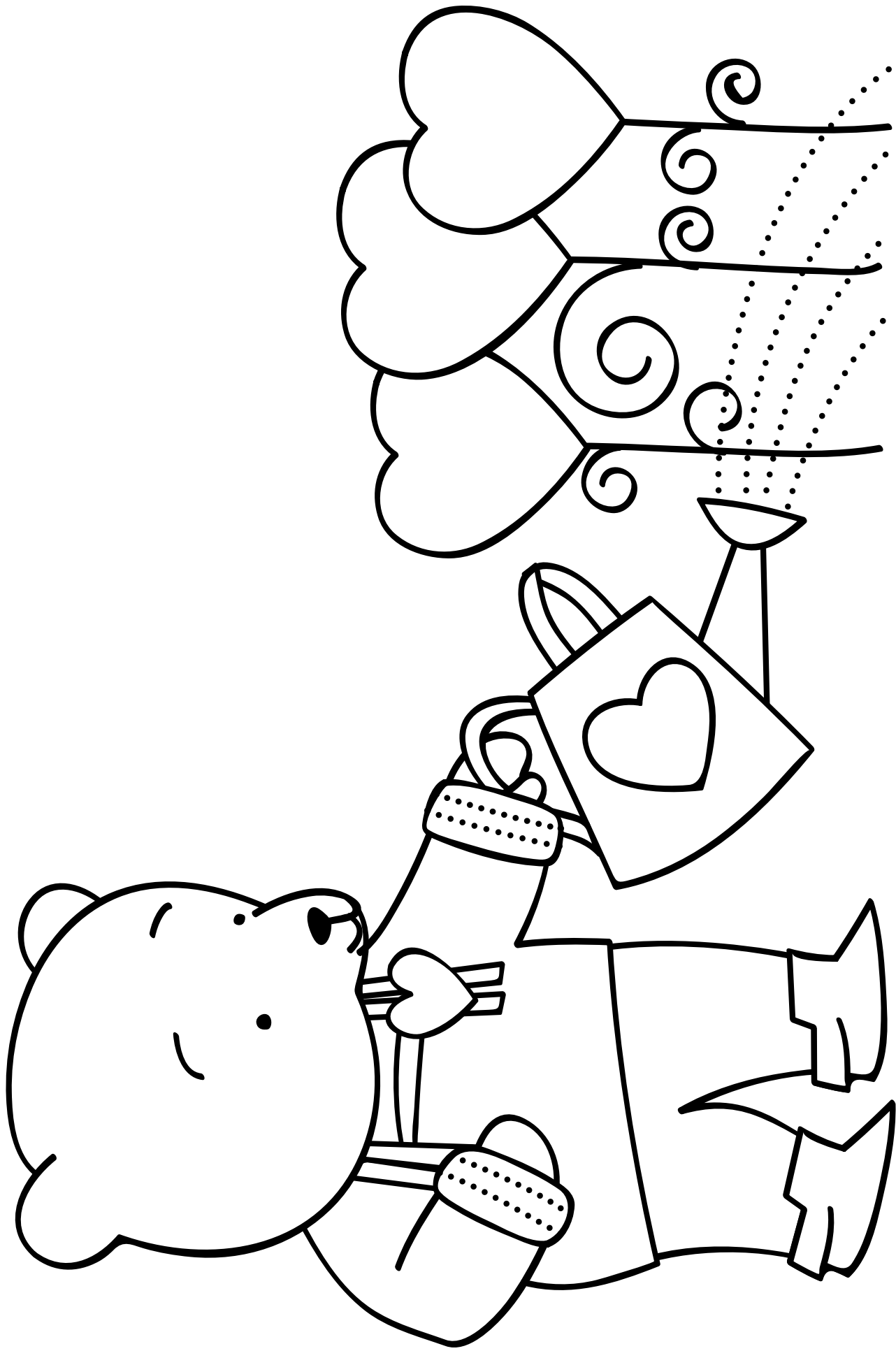
N	D	M	O	D	N	Q	M	M	C	B	P	O	N	N
A	O	R	S	J	U	E	K	O	Y	E	Z	W	T	A
C	V	I	B	H	M	I	P	O	T	A	D	M	X	D
X	H	Y	T	E	T	A	E	E	E	R	D	A	E	R
G	M	E	N	A	W	Y	Z	Q	I	T	S	R	R	O
E	T	G	A	A	I	E	Y	D	C	H	A	B	Z	J
P	W	F	T	L	B	L	S	P	O	D	D	U	G	Y
E	M	T	W	Y	T	L	I	J	S	A	G	W	T	K
N	O	J	R	U	E	H	X	C	G	Y	O	M	Z	L
D	E	L	D	V	I	T	C	I	N	D	Y	A	J	Q
L	A	N	U	B	I	R	T	A	I	O	T	R	D	Q
D	R	H	K	Z	G	K	G	H	R	L	C	Y	O	Z
Z	W	Q	Q	O	S	W	Y	D	A	E	T	E	I	R
Z	V	X	A	B	K	U	X	A	C	E	T	V	R	H
C	A	R	R	I	E	R	S	E	K	A	N	I	K	H

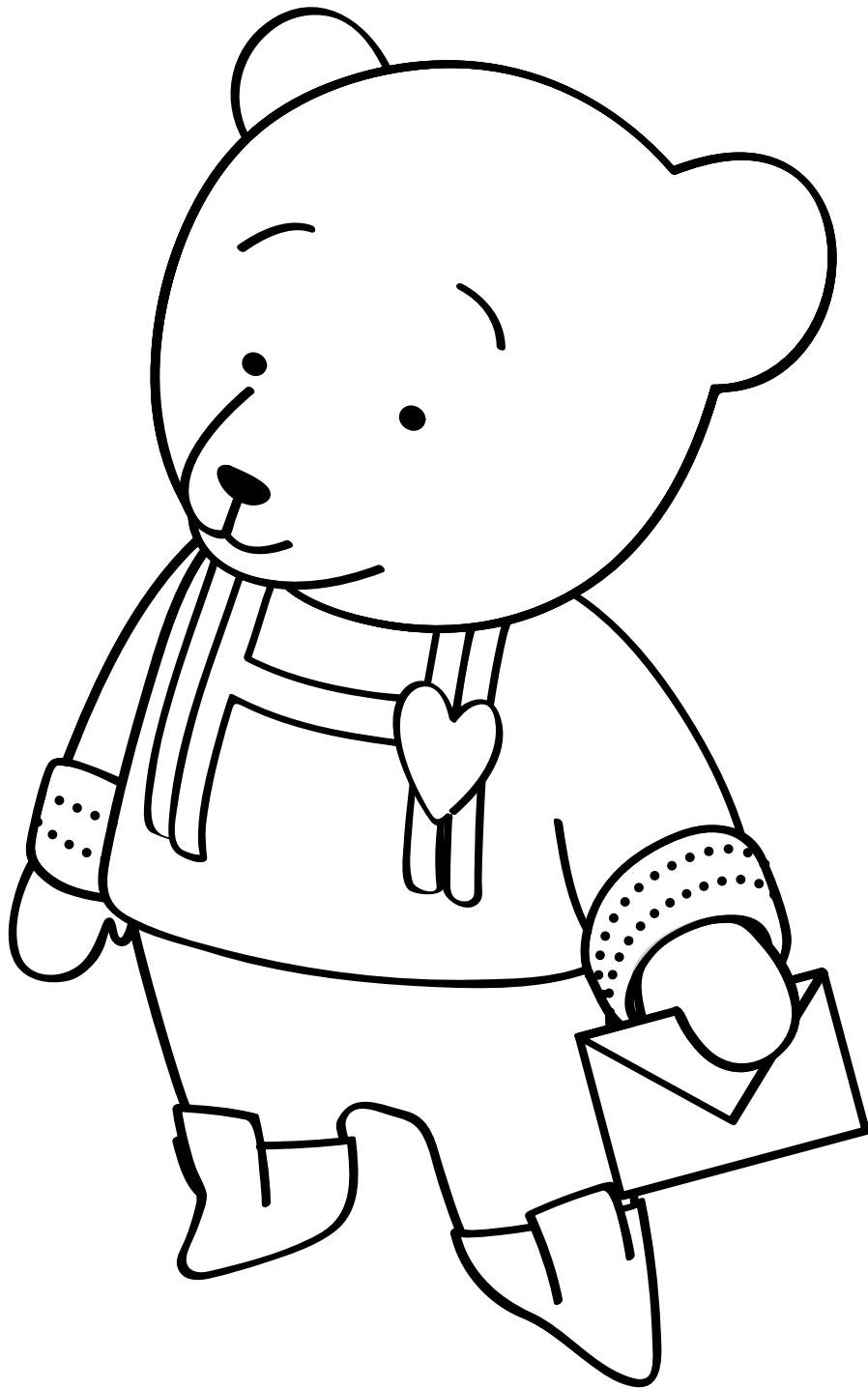
1. What do teddy bears call a birthday?
2. What is the name of the group who brought the case to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal and published this book? (short form, two words)
3. Where is Spirit Bear from?
4. Spirit Bear has three sisters. What are their names? (Find all three)
5. What is the name of the sheep who is friends with Spirit Bear?
6. Fill in the blanks: H _ _ L _ H C _ _ E
7. _ _ _ _ _'s Principle
8. What is Spirit Bear's mom's name?
9. In what city did the Tribunal take place?
10. What is learning about the unfair ways Indigenous peoples have been treated and helping to fix it called?
11. What is Spirit Bear's name in the Carrier language?
12. A _ _ _ _ _ _ _ is like a court where groups can go to try to solve a problem.











Spirit Bear and Children Make History

What is Equity? Paper Ball Toss (5 minutes)

1. Ask for six volunteers and divide the volunteers into three groups.

2. Position each group

Group 1: Stand far away from the bucket

Group 2: Stand between Groups 1 and 3

Group 3: Sit on the floor next to the bucket

Ask the volunteers to try to throw their paper ball into the bucket. Have each member of each group try, and make sure they are throwing underhand.

3. Discuss

- Who had the best chance of getting the ball in?
- Was this fair?
- What would make the game fairer?

Note that the best way to make the game fairer would be for Group 1 and Group 2 to start at the same place as Group 3. However, sometimes in the real world, this is not possible. If that is the case, then another way to make the game fairer would be for Group 1 and Group 3 to start at the same place as Group 2—therefore, the way that Group 3 gives up its privileges balances out how Group 1 is no longer as disadvantaged.

4. What is equity?

- If people have unequal opportunities it makes it harder for some of them to achieve their dreams and to be successful.
- Do you think that people around the world all start off from the same position(s)?
- Why does it matter if people are born into unequal circumstances?

All of the volunteers received the same instructions (to throw the ball from where they stood). Everyone was treated the same. Yet, the game was not fair.

This relates to the difference between **equality** and **equity (or justice)**. It is only fair to treat everyone the same if they start from the same place, and have the same opportunities.

Adapted from: Jr. Peacemakers Curriculum – Students' Society of McGill University



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:

- 1 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 Jordan's Principle (www.jordansprinciple.ca).
- 2 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.
- 3 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.
- 4 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.
- 5 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**



First Nations Child & Family
Caring Society of Canada

fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear-plan

Spirit Bear Family Tree



Dino
Ancient Ancestor



Grandma Blueberry
1952



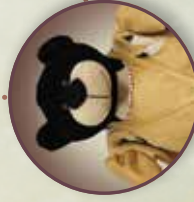
Grandpa Bearbline
1951



Aunt Raspberry
1978



Uncle Huckleberry
1976



Mary the Bear
1982



Sus Zul Sr.
1981



Kenkekmem Bear
2013



Wawate Mukwa
(NAN youth bear)
2017



Messenger Bear
2017



Ourson Puamum
(Innu Nation)
2018



Spirit Bear
2008



Era Bear
2012



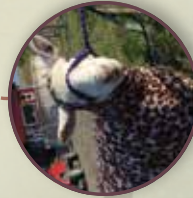
Memengwe Bear
2016



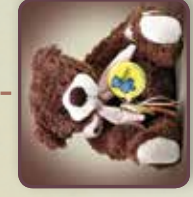
Cedar Bear
2016



Ckenmim'elt
2018



Cindy the Sheep



Barnie Bear

Friends are family, too!



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fncaringociety.com/SpiritBear