

The First Nations Child & Family Caring Society's
Spirit Bear Virtual School

Spirit Bear's Beary Caring Curriculum



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This work was created on the unsundered and unceded ancestral and traditional territories of the Algonquin Anishinaabeg Nations. Since time immemorial, Algonquin peoples have, and to this day, care for this land.

We recognize that Algonquin Anishinaabeg Nations hold inherent rights to these lands. It is our responsibility to stand with them as they exercise their calls for fairness, equity, and self-determination.

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Preface

How This Work Started

Founded in 1999, the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society (Caring Society) is a national non-profit organization providing reconciliation-based public education, research, and support to promote the safety and well-being of First Nations children, young people, families, and Nations. Ongoing discrimination against First Nations communities has resulted in concurrent inequities in various public services that hamper the ability of First Nations children and youth to receive the access to services they need, when they need them.

The Caring Society believes that First Nations children and youth are entitled to culturally based and equitable services immediately, as they request them. Guided by the Caring Society's *Bearrister*, **Spirit Bear**,¹ we also believe that all children and young people have a right to be meaningfully engaged in matters about them, including reconciliation. The Caring Society has created reconciliation-based initiatives, resources, and public education and engagement campaigns for all people living in Canada to address systemic discrimination in Canadian law, policy, conduct, and education affecting First Nations children, youth, and families. These opportunities call upon everyone to stand alongside First Nations children, youth, and families to end discrimination and to always do the right thing.

Over the years, many educators and students have engaged in the Caring Society's **events**² and **campaigns**.³ Due to this significant participation, the Caring Society wanted to understand the experiences of educators and their elementary learners in reconciliation and social justice-based campaigns. To study this, the Caring Society partnered with educational researchers from the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa. In the fall and winter of 2019, the research team interviewed teachers from unsundered and unceded Algonquin territory in Ottawa, Ontario, and Kitigan Zibi, Quebec, to hear about their perceptions of the classroom impacts of student engagement in three of the Caring Society's campaigns: **I Am a Witness**,⁴ **Jordan's Principle**,⁵ and **Shannen's Dream**.⁶ There were many significant findings from the research, including teachers' desires for enhanced learning guides for each campaign.

1 <https://fncaringsociety.com/SpiritBear>

2 <https://fncaringsociety.com/events>

3 <https://fncaringsociety.com/what-you-can-do/ways-make-difference>

4 <https://fncaringsociety.com/i-am-witness>

5 <https://fncaringsociety.com/jordans-principle>

6 <https://fncaringsociety.com/shannens-dream>

Spirit Bear's Beary Caring Curriculum, the accompanying learning guides, and the broader vision of the Spirit Bear Virtual School (discussed below), aim to meet educational needs identified by educators in the research. The research and development of these enhanced learning materials is funded, in part, by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The learning guides for each campaign provide teachers with a pedagogical framework and contextual guidance that can be adapted to reflect distinct First Nations cultures, contexts, and realities. *Spirit Bear's Beary Caring Curriculum* supports teachers in facilitating reconciliation-based education about past, current, and ongoing discrimination and injustices that impact First Nations children, youth, and families to this day.



Who Is Spirit Bear?

Spirit Bear⁷ is a *Bearrister*. He was gifted to the Caring Society by Carrier Sekani Family Services in 2007 and immediately took up the role of attending all the legal proceedings in a landmark human rights case at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (Tribunal), whereby the Caring Society and Assembly of First Nations alleged that the Canadian Government's inequitable provision of child welfare and other public services to First Nations children and youth was discriminatory. Spirit Bear is considered sacred, as he represents First Nations children, youth, and all other young people who stood with them for justice. He is also protected by a trademark held by the Caring Society.

The Tribunal substantiated the human rights complaint in a **landmark ruling in 2016**,⁸ finding that Canada discriminated against First Nations children, youth, and their families. Spirit Bear's role at the Tribunal was to remind all adults that the case was about children. Over the years, First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and non-Indigenous children and young people who attended the hearings gave Spirit Bear an identity, and he came to represent all First Nations children, as well as all other children and youth who stand with them to achieve justice and to end discrimination.

Spirit Bear is featured in several children's books and a series of stop motion animation films. We appreciate all he does to support children, youth, and adults in their work toward reconciliation.

⁷ <https://fncaringsociety.com/SpiritBear>

⁸ <https://fncaringsociety.com/publications/2016-chrt-2-2016-tcdp-2>

About the Spirit Bear Virtual School

At the [Spirit Bear Virtual School](https://fncaringsociety.com/SpiritBearVirtualSchool),⁹ teachers have access to [Spirit Bear's Beary Caring Curriculum](https://fncaringsociety.com/publications/spirit-bears-beary-caring-curriculum)¹⁰ and learning guides for the Caring Society's campaigns. Recordings of webinars, workshops, and inspirational videos from other educators, community members and Caring Society staff members, are also available.

In addition, all the Caring Society's resources are available to educators. These include the [Spirit Bear Books and their learning guides](https://fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear/books-learning-guides),¹¹ as well as information and resources about the [Spirit Bear films](https://fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear/films)¹² and resources for all of the Caring Society's campaigns and events.

We look forward to seeing you at school.



Important Considerations Regarding Language and Context

Throughout these documents, we honour the distinct and diverse cultures, languages, histories, contributions, and realities among and between First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Nations and Peoples in what is now known as Canada. The term “Indigenous” is derived from Latin and was not created by First Nations, Inuit, or Métis peoples themselves (Peters & Mika, 2017). “Indigenous” is often used to refer to *all* First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples in Canada, and should not be used in situations where only one group or one Nation is spoken about. For example, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal case described in Spirit Bear’s books only affects First Nations children and youth, so using the term “Indigenous” when discussing that case and the children and youth affected by it is not appropriate.

⁹ <https://fncaringsociety.com/SpiritBearVirtualSchool>

¹⁰ <https://fncaringsociety.com/publications/spirit-bears-beary-caring-curriculum>

¹¹ <https://fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear/books-learning-guides>

¹² <https://fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear/films>

We are as specific as possible when speaking about an individual or smaller group (i.e., we use the name of a specific First Nation or Tribal Council or Métis Settlement). You will also note that we use the plural form of “Nations” and “Peoples” to honour diversity, and we avoid the possessive tense to describe relationships between non-Indigenous peoples/governments and institutions and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. For example, we use Métis Peoples in Canada versus “Canada’s Métis Peoples.”

Did you know that the term “Aboriginal” is used in the *Canadian Constitution Act* of 1982 and is associated with legal rights and titles? The three groups who are considered Aboriginal are First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Please do not use the term “Aboriginal” unless you are discussing specific rights and titles of First Nations, Inuit, or Métis peoples.

Because First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples are culturally and legally distinct peoples, each of these groups requires different reconciliation-based approaches. Different approaches are needed due to policies and laws that were created by the Government of Canada affecting First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples differently. For example, the *Indian Act*, which created reserves, band councils, and status cards, only affects First Nations. Here is how the *Indian Act* is described in the book *Spirit Bear: Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams*:¹³

When Canada became a country in 1867, the government passed a law called the *Indian Act*. It pushed First Nations peoples off their lands and onto smaller places called reserves. The *Indian Act* is still around today, and First Nations are still working hard to get their territories back! (p. 23)

It is also important to avoid “pan-Indigenous” understandings of culture and language. Respecting differences between and among First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples is sometimes called the “distinctions based approach.” For example, powwows are an expression of culture for some First Nations, but not all. This diversity is to be embraced, and educators are encouraged to work with community-authorized First Nations, Métis, and Inuit knowledge holders in their area to learn about local cultures, practices, and protocols.

13 <https://fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear/books-learning-guides>

The Caring Society's campaigns specifically concern First Nations children, youth, families, and communities. [Jordan's Principle](#),¹⁴ [Shannen's Dream](#),¹⁵ and the case at the [Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on Jordan's Principle and child welfare](#)¹⁶ address systemic discrimination that specifically affects First Nations children, youth, families, and communities. Further, it is the Caring Society's mission to specifically support First Nations children, youth, and families. Although the Caring Society's campaigns directly address discrimination experienced by First Nations children, youth, and families, the Caring Society encourages everyone to work respectfully with Inuit and Métis peoples on reconciliation initiatives they have developed as well.

The Indian Residential School System

The Indian Residential School System (IRSS) was established by the Canadian government and operated by Christian churches beginning in the 1870s to assimilate First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children under the guise of education. Their primary purpose was to take First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children from their home communities; they were removed from their families, using police if necessary, and placed in the schools. They were not able to practice their cultures, speak their languages, or wear the clothing they brought with them.¹⁷ The schools were neither safe nor sanitary places for the children, and they were abused and/or neglected. Children did not feel that they mattered, and many of them died at the schools. The last residential school closed in 1996 in Saskatchewan.

Throughout the history of residential schools, people from all walks of life, including people within the government itself, raised the alarm about the inhumane treatment of the children. For example whistleblower [Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce](#),¹⁸ who was a physician specializing in public health and Medical Inspector to the Government of Canada's Department of the Interior and Indian Affairs, tried to share what was going on at these schools with members of parliament, church officials, and the Canadian public. In 1907, he released a report detailing the unsanitary conditions at the residential schools and the harms that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children were experiencing. In 1922, after he was ousted from his role by the Canadian Government, he adapted his report and published it as a book titled *The Story of a National Crime*,¹⁹ so that all Canadians would know the truth. The Caring Society appreciates his dedication to doing the right thing more than 100 years ago and encourages everyone to do the right thing today.

14 <https://fncaringsociety.com/jordans-principle>

15 <https://fncaringsociety.com/shannens-dream>

16 <https://www.fncaringsociety.com/i-am-witness>

17 Phyllis Webstad, who is a survivor, authored *The Orange Shirt Story*, which is an important book to read with children so that they can learn more about residential schools and what survivors experienced.

18 <https://fncaringsociety.com/people-history>

19 <https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/National-Crime.pdf>

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 94 Calls to Action

Education got us into this mess and education will get us out of it.

—Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair

IRSS Survivors courageously brought multiple legal challenges against Canada and the churches that operated the residential schools to get justice for the harms they and others experienced as a result of the IRSS. The Indian Residential School Settlement arose from that litigation and gave rise to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC).

The TRC's mandate is spelled out in schedule "N" of the Indian Residential School Settlement as:

- 1 Acknowledge Residential School experiences, impacts and consequences;
- 2 Provide a holistic, culturally appropriate and safe space for former students, their families and communities as they come forward to the Commission;
- 3 Witness, support, promote and facilitate truth and reconciliation at both the national and community levels;
- 4 Promote awareness and public education of Canadians about the IRS system and impacts;
- 5 Identify sources and create as complete an historical record as possible of the IRS system and legacy. The record shall be preserved and made accessible to the public for future study and use;
- 6 Produce and submit to the Parties of the Agreement a report including recommendations to the Government of Canada concerning the IRS system and experience including: the history, purpose, operation and supervision of the IRS system, the effect and consequences of the IRS (including systemic harms, intergenerational consequences and the impact on human dignity) and the ongoing legacy of the residential schools;
- 7 Support commemoration of former Indian Residential School students and their families in accordance with the Commemoration Policy Directive (Schedule "X" of the Agreement).²⁰

²⁰ Mandate for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Schedule N, *Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement*, https://www.residentialschoolsettlement.ca/SCHEDULE_N.pdf

Starting in 2007, Murray Sinclair, Wilton Littlechild, and Marie Wilson were appointed as the three Commissioners for the TRC, and they oversaw the testimony of approximately 7,000 witnesses and hosted seven gatherings to receive testimonies and evidence. They also oversaw the review of residential school records.

In 2015, the TRC released its **multi-volume final report**²¹ and held its closing ceremony at Rideau Hall in Ottawa, Ontario. The TRC report included **94 Calls to Action**²² for governments, businesses, civil society, and individuals to implement in order to honour the IRSS Survivors and the children who died at the schools and their families, and to address the ongoing impacts of residential schools and the systemic racism that gave rise thereto.

The Spirit Bear Virtual School and accompanying resources directly respond to the TRC's Calls to Action. All 94 Calls to Action must be implemented to honour the Survivors, their families, and the sacred lives of children and youth who did not come home.



Calls to Action

- #62 We call on all governments in Canada to work with residential school Survivors and other Aboriginal people to give teachers the tools they need so that every student in Canada can learn about Aboriginal people and cultures, including residential schools. Teachers should also learn to use Aboriginal teaching styles.
- #63 We call on the leaders in charge of education in Canada to always work on improving education about Aboriginal people and cultures.

Spirit Bear's Guide to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action²³ is a response to Calls to Action in education #62 and #63.²⁴

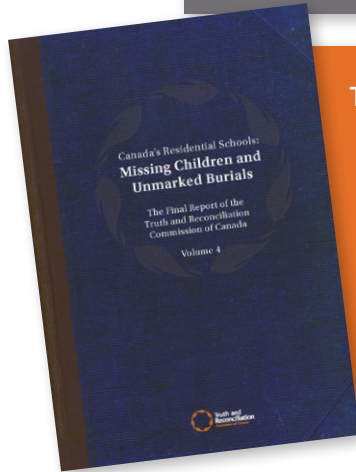
21 <https://nctr.ca/records/reports>

22 https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

23 <https://fncaringociety.com/publications/spirit-bears-guide-truth-and-reconciliation-commission-canada-calls-action>

24 To see all the Calls to Action in education, see calls 6–24 and 62–65 in *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*, 2015 at <https://nctr.ca/records/reports>

While individual IRSS Survivor experiences vary, the TRC concluded that the IRSS amounted to “cultural genocide.” Many people argue that residential schools meet the definition of “genocide” as set out in the **United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide**.²⁵ During his official visit to apologize for the Catholic Church’s role in residential schools in 2021, Pope Francis characterized the residential schools as “genocide.”

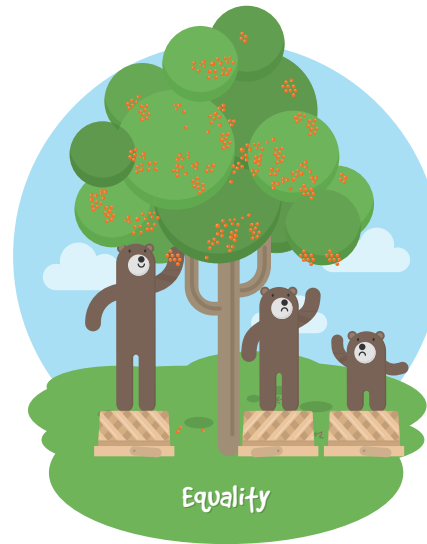


The TRC Final Report included the volume *Canada's Residential Schools: Missing Children and Unmarked Burials* about the children who never made it home from residential school. In May 2021, we learned that the unmarked graves of 215 children were found at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia. Since then, unmarked graves and the remains of many more children have been found on the grounds of former residential schools across Canada. Survivors and their families have long spoken about the children who died at residential schools.

25 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-prevention-and-punishment-crime-genocide>

Did You Know?

Did you know that substantive equality is different than equality? Equality is when everyone is treated the same, despite where they are starting from. Substantive equality recognizes that not all people start from the same place with the same opportunities or privileges. Substantive equality ensures that everyone has the opportunity to succeed by providing some people with extra supports and/or different supports to make up for the disadvantage(s) they experience.



Berries for All! Some bears need more supports or different supports to reach the same berries. Substantive equality means making sure that the bears who can't reach the berries from the ground will get as many baskets as they need to stand on, or whatever different supports they need to reach the berries.

Did you know that the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)**²⁶ recognizes the importance for communities to have their self-determining rights respected? There is a youth-friendly version of UNDRIP called *Know Your Rights!*²⁷

Did you know that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child^{28,29} (Article 30) was the first international law to specifically recognize the importance of Indigenous children growing up with members of their group so they can practice their culture and speak their language free from discrimination?

²⁶ <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/indigenous-peoples/united-nations-declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples>

²⁷ <https://fncaringsociety.com/publications/know-your-rights-united-nations-declaration-rights-indigenous-peoples-indigenous>

²⁸ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

²⁹ <https://fncaringsociety.com/publications/child-friendly-convention-rights-child>

Spirit Bear's Virtual School Glossary: A Living Document

[Spirit Bear's Virtual School Glossary](#)³⁰ aims to support teachers and anyone who finds this resource valuable in making sense of reconciliation, justice, fairness, substantive equality, and ending discrimination against First Nations children, youth, and families. It is helpful to think of this list of words as starting points to your work toward reconciliation and to remember that the meanings of words change over time, and that words may hold different meanings for different people. In recognition of this, the Glossary is updated sporadically. The [link to the Glossary](#) is also available on the Spirit Bear Virtual School website.



30 <https://fncaringsociety.com/publications/spirit-bears-virtual-school-glossary>

Introduction

First Nations Worldview: An Approach to Understanding and Using *Spirit Bear's Beary Caring Curriculum*

Time is timeless and knowledge priceless if you believe you are the breath of life versus the embodiment of life.

—Cindy Blackstock

Dr. Cindy Blackstock is the Executive Director of the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society and a professor at McGill University in the Faculty of Social Work. In Blackstock's (2007, 2011) academic work, she explores the over-representation of First Nations children in care from a First Nations based ontological perspective that she calls the Breath of Life Theory. Overall, the theory recognizes that First Nations hold expansive and interconnected views of time and space that situate the human experience as part of a living and spiritual ecosystem.

Key values, beliefs, and practices governing an understanding of this interconnected reality are embedded in First Nations traditional laws, ceremonies, spiritual traditions, and intergenerational learning that are passed on to future generations using highly structured and formal oral history (Blackstock, 2007, 2011). According to Blackstock (2007, 2011), each of us is an echo in someone else's future reality, and therefore, the way we communicate, relate, and act will have impacts well beyond our lifetimes and beyond the circle of people and landscapes we interact with. This means we must act kindly and with good intentions so that we create positive legacies.

The IRSS and other colonial actions intentionally disrupted the transmission of oral history and knowledge from one generation to another. Despite this, much of this sacred knowledge, passed down through generations, has survived, and First Nations communities are actively building on it to reclaim what was lost. These efforts include ensuring that children grow up safely in their families and communities so they can learn their cultures, languages, and oral histories. For most communities, this involves teaching and learning through the land, their culture, and oral tradition, and learning from and with multiple community members. In this way, First Nations children learn about their own unique place in it all.

Ways to Learn with Spirit Bear!

1ST WAY WITH MY MIND

- I think a lot and learn things so it's important for me to get long sleeps and eat healthy food like honey and berries to make me feel the best I can!
- Learning about Canada's history and why reconciliation matters *beary* much!
- When I voice my thoughts, it can help my friends think, too! I won't be afraid to share my thoughts and I will be kind and respectful when others share theirs!
- Learning about the world around me helps me become a more caring, loving, and kind person. It also keeps my mind open to learn about new things!

2ND WAY WITH MY SPIRIT

- I can help my friends, family, and community reach their goals.
- I honour my culture and I think it is important to honour the cultures of other people, too. I know we can celebrate our different cultures and traditions in ways that make us feel proud, respected, and listened to.
- I am proud to be who I am because I am strong, hardworking, and kind to everyone around me.
- I believe every person living in Canada can end discrimination against First Nations kids.

3RD WAY WITH MY HEART

- I treat everyone I know with kindness, fairness, and respect.
- My love for my family, friends, community, and the land keeps me strong.
- I usually feel happy, but sometimes I feel sad because of what I learn or because of something I have gone through. I will take care of myself and talk about how I feel with a friend, or a trusted adult. I can also call the Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868 or text the Kids Help Phone 686868 with the word CONNECT.
- When I learn about Jordan River Anderson and Shannen Koostachin, I want to make sure no other First Nations child is treated the way they have been because that makes me feel sad. I will share their stories with my friends, family, and community.

4TH WAY WITH MY BODY

- I will write letters and postcards to decision-makers in Canada and ask them to commit to the *Spirit Bear Plan* and the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action*.
- I can create posters with my class, friends, family, and community, and stand up for First Nations kids at Have a Heart Day and Bear Witness Day.
- I love playing outside and learning from the land.
- By planting Heart Gardens, I can honour residential school survivors and the children who didn't come home.



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When applied to child wellbeing in the context of education, First Nations worldviews or “relational worldview models” speak to the emotional, mental, physical, and cognitive aspects of the learner, the educator, and the materials (Cross 1997, 2007; Blackstock 2011, p. 8). This holism is personified by Spirit Bear through his body, mind, spirit, and heart in the Caring Society’s “Ways to Learn with Spirit Bear”³¹ resource (left, Figure 1).

31 <https://fncaringsociety.com/publications/ways-learn-spirit-bear>

Figure 1. Ways to Learn with Spirit Bear

Citizenship Education: Our Shared Responsibilities to Each Other

*I really believe in the goodness of Canadians.
The idea that everyone should be given an equal opportunity
to succeed in this country and particularly for children.*

—Cindy Blackstock

All provinces and territories in Canada engage or centre civic, citizenship, or character education in social studies and history curricula. In Canadian curricula, the focus is mostly on promoting the democratic ideals of being active and participatory citizens in communities, in the country, and in the world. The Ontario curriculum, for example, calls on students to be “good citizens” within the values of Canadian democracy and “Canadian” values of inclusivity, multiculturalism, rights, and responsibilities, conflict resolution, and critical thinking.

Spirit Bear's Beary Caring Curriculum views citizenship as a respectful, relational process that promotes social justice and the human rights of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. This reimagining challenges the “reductive Canadian national narrative [that] weighs heavily on the consciousness of Aboriginal peoples and Canadians, and continues to influence the ways in which we speak to each other about history, identity, citizenship and the future” (Donald, 2009, p. 3). *Spirit Bear's Beary Caring Curriculum* provides opportunities for teachers and students to critically appraise national understandings of Canada's historical and contemporary relationship with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples to engage children and youth in implementing the TRC Calls to Action. The curriculum provides pedagogical opportunities to learn about Canada's history and teaches us different ways of knowing and living as responsible and respectful citizens.

To support children and youth in participating in social justice initiatives and substantive equality movements, we must allow the space for students to meaningfully engage and lead actions for change. McCrossin (2012) writes that while “examples of children engaging in inherently political social justice campaigns span the globe, and date back over 100 years,” children and youth are not seen as ambassadors of social change (p. 42). Through the Caring Society's ongoing work, and through the findings of the *Just Because We're Small Doesn't Mean We Can't Stand Tall: Reconciliation Education in the*



A sign made by students for a Caring Society event.

Elementary Classroom research (Blackstock et al., 2022), we know that children and young people are confident and feel proud of who they are when they learn alongside Spirit Bear.

As Dr. Cindy Blackstock says, children and youth are “ambassadors of love and fairness” (as cited in Auger, 2016, p. 3). It is the children who are leading us to enact change, and we must listen to them and ensure their voices are heard. This is also about raising a compassionate and informed generation that is equipped to promote human rights and justice and pass that knowledge on to future generations of children and young people. Indeed, one of the key objectives of Spirit Bear’s books and films is to document the good work of children and youth to promote reconciliation so they can inspire and teach other children.

Spirit Bear's Beary Caring Educational Framework

The Touchstones of Hope for Reconciliation

Spirit Bear's Beary Caring Curriculum was developed using a reconciliation movement approach called the **Touchstones of Hope**.³² The Touchstones of Hope were created in 2005 based on conversations among First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Alaskan Native, Native American peoples, and non-Indigenous allies working with children, youth, and families held on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe First Nations in Niagara Falls, Canada. The event was called, *Reconciliation: Looking Back, Reaching Forward – Indigenous Peoples and Child Welfare*. Participants were invited to share their truths, skills, knowledge, and experiences to distill reconciliation principles and a process to reform child and family services delivered to Indigenous children, youth, and families in Canada and the United States.

The TRC recognized the Touchstones of Hope as a “best practice” (2015b, pp. 56–57), and it has been applauded by First Nations, provincial governments, and the United Nations (Quinn & Saini, 2012; Auger, 2012).

Many of the insights from this gathering, and the key values arising from the conversations of participants, are documented in the report *Reconciliation in Child Welfare: Touchstones of Hope for Indigenous Children, Youth, and Families*.³³ In a 2015 article, the author's write:

[W]e found that it was vital that people thought of [the Touchstones of Hope] as a social movement and guiding philosophy. The Touchstones of Hope are most valuable when applied to all aspects of the field (education, administration, services, etc.) versus being implemented as an event or restricting the approach only within services to Indigenous peoples. (Cross et al., 2015, p. 10)

Throughout the years, the Caring Society has worked with caring individuals across Canada, and friends across the world, to implement the Touchstones of Hope in meaningful ways, including working with First Nations community members to document their collective vision for healthy and happy children, youth,



Above is an image representing the Touchstones of Hope. This image is part of a mural depicting the river of the experiences of Indigenous peoples in North America with child welfare systems from pre-colonization to colonization and beyond, completed on October 28, 2005 by Joey Mallett and Michelle Nahanee, with contributions by Paisley Nahanee and Chelsea Marie Musqua.

³² <https://fncaringsociety.com/touchstones-hope>

³³ <https://fncaringsociety.com/publications/reconciliation-child-welfare-touchstones-hope-indigenous-children-youth-and-families>

and families. The Touchstones of Hope facilitates the development of a plan to implement that vision. *Spirit Bear's Beary Caring Curriculum* applies the Touchstones of Hope to education, as outlined in the following section.

Applying the Touchstones of Hope to Education

The Touchstones of Hope are a set of core principles on which we base and frame this curriculum. They include Self-Determination, Culture and Language, Holistic Approach, Structural Interventions, and Non-Discrimination. *Spirit Bear's Beary Caring Curriculum* conceptualizes the Touchstones of Hope principles, values, and reconciliation process into a framework for education called the **Touchstones for Learning**. The Touchstones for Learning are based on the Touchstones of Hope principles, which are as follows:

Self-Determination: This Touchstone respectfully affirms First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples' distinct, inherent, and collective rights to self-determination. It asserts that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples know what is best for their communities. Educational communities have a responsibility to acknowledge their role in learning how educators can stand with and alongside First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

Culture and Language: Culture and language are ways of life for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and have kept generations connected to each other and to the land. Educators are encouraged to work in respectful collaboration with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities to support language and culture revitalization. The Culture and Language Touchstone calls on educators at all levels to thoughtfully consider how collective and individual worldviews impact what is being taught and how it is being taught.

Holistic Approach: The Holistic Approach Touchstone invites us to see and learn about the world in interconnected and multi-dimensional ways and in ways that support expansive concepts of time and space (Blackstock, 2011). This means learning from the past and passing along teachings to future generations that respect First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples while fostering respectful relationships with others and the land. The Holistic Approach Touchstone can identify short-term and long-term goals that authentically capture the importance of planning and making decisions for generations to come (Blackstock et al., 2006). Educators have responsibilities to ensure that the histories and contemporary realities of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities are taught across this country.

Structural Interventions: The Structural Interventions Touchstone offers the opportunity for educators to learn about and reflect on systemic inequities for First Nations communities that

contribute to poorer lived realities. For example, the *Canadian Incidence Study on Reported Child Abuse and Neglect* found that First Nations children are 17.2 times more likely to be in foster care than other children in Canada (Fallon et al., 2019, p. 47). This is driven by the structural factors of poverty, poor housing, and mental health and addictions issues flowing from colonial trauma (including residential schools). Simply put, serious evidence-based efforts to address the over-representation of First Nations children must address the structural factors driving the problem. Similar structural problems underly other areas of disadvantage, such as poorer health and educational outcomes.

Non-Discrimination: All First Nations children and families are entitled to equitable access to services, resources, and opportunities (Blackstock et al., 2006). The evidence on the importance of culturally based equity is well documented. To learn more, consult the report by the Pan American Health Organization, *Just Societies: Health Equity and Dignified Lives* (2019).³⁴ Led by Sir Michael Marmot, the report focuses on Indigenous peoples and persons of Afro-descent in the Americas. It is essential for educators to provide safe and non-discriminatory experiences for students at every level and to ensure that students are supported if the Non-Discrimination Touchstone is not upheld.

Reconciliation Process

The Touchstones for Learning are intended to help us learn about our collective past and present, to develop ways we can reconcile history together, and to engage in reconciliation. We recognize that these processes are not linear, but rather tidal, respecting the need for natural processes of thought and paces for change to flow forward and backward (Blackstock et al., 2006). The Touchstones of Hope for Learning offer four processes of reconciliation to help us work toward this collectively:

- **Truth Telling:** Listening and sharing all sides of Canada's past and present, and how injustices and inequalities continue to impact First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities. Truth Telling includes sharing authentic stories of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis ongoing resistance and brilliance.
- **Acknowledging:** Affirming and learning from the past, seeing one another with new understanding, recognizing the need to move forward on a new path, and embracing new possibilities for the future.

34 <https://www.paho.org/en/documents/just-societies-health-equity-and-dignified-lives-report-commission-pan-american-health>



- **Restoring:** Doing what we can as students, teachers, and school communities to redress the harm, relocate power, and make changes to ensure we do not repeat the mistakes and perpetuate colonialism.
- **Relating:** Building relationships between First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities, and all peoples living in Canada, that affirm, rather than undermine, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples' rights to self-determination. This is an essential aspect of reconciliation. In recognizing this, we move forward together in a respectful way to end discrimination against First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities.

The Touchstones of Hope for Learning

Spirit Bear's Beary Caring Curriculum uses the five guiding principles as "Touchstones for Learning." All of the learning goals are connected to the reconciliation process outlined above. Most importantly, this curriculum provides key concepts for teaching and learning.

Although we present the Touchstones as distinct from one another in this curriculum, it is important to remember that each Touchstone works in relation to the others; you cannot use one without using them all. Finally, these learning goals are developed into comprehensive learning activities in the Caring Society's learning guides.



Touchstone of Hope for Learning: Self-Determination

This Touchstone for Learning considers how educational community members can affirm distinct and inherent collective rights of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples to self-determination. It calls on all teachers and learners to consider how systems of education continue to undermine First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples' self-determination. It calls on us to shift mindsets to develop ways we can reconcile history together. This involves standing alongside First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities as they assert their own visions of education, governance, health, kinship, and guardianship of lands and waters on their territories.

Learning and Citizenship Goals

- Identify the First Nations, Inuit, or Métis territory where your school is located and build respectful relationships with community authorized Elders, knowledge keepers, and educators.
(PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **RELATING, RESTORING**)



Raiya, a youth volunteer for the Caring Society, helped to create this Touchstones of Hope poster³⁵ for children and youth.

- Describe what self-determination is and why it is important for reconciliation. (PROCESS OF RECONCILIATION: **ACKNOWLEDGING**)
- What does free, prior, and informed consent mean, and why is that important to self-determination? (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **RELATING, RESTORING**)
- Identify ways to support the self-determination of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **RELATING, RESTORING**)
- Acknowledge that First Nations peoples and Inuit have lived on and maintained distinct and sacred relationships to their homelands and territories since time immemorial (meaning forever). (PROCESS OF RECONCILIATION: **ACKNOWLEDGING**)
- Describe the relationships and responsibilities that the Government of Canada has with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Describe the Government of Canada's inequities that affect First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples as an ongoing process. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **TRUTH TELLING, ACKNOWLEDGING**)
- Explore what self-determination means to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada, respectively, and what self-determination means to Nations and communities locally, and beyond. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **TRUTH TELLING, ACKNOWLEDGING, RELATING**)
- Identify ways the Government of Canada has tried to stop First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples from exercising self-determination. Compare and contrast how the Government of Canada did this historically, and how it continues to do this today (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **TRUTH TELLING, ACKNOWLEDGING**).
- Reflect on the responsibilities that all people living in Canada have towards reconciliation, and how we can each enact these responsibilities (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **RELATING, RESTORING**).

What Does the Self-Determination Touchstone Mean for Teachers and Learners?

First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities have never surrendered their lands or ability to make decisions and laws about themselves; this is called “sovereignty.” They hold distinct, collective, and inherent Aboriginal rights and title flowing from their own legal and political systems and relationships to their lands. This is affirmed through the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**. These rights vary across nations and communities, but broadly include rights to land (title), resources, self-determination, and self-government, as well as culture and language. While Aboriginal

³⁵ https://fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/touchstones_youth_poster_eng.pdf

rights are recognized by Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution, by Section 25 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and in various Supreme Court of Canada decisions, Canada does not honour its responsibilities towards First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) also codifies the right to self-determination and sets out that free, prior, and informed consent is required for Indigenous Peoples to exercise self-determination over their lands, resources, and other matters. Consent is the collective ability of respective Indigenous Peoples to make the best-informed decision for themselves, free of any coercion or retaliation.³⁶

The Self-Determination Touchstone respectfully affirms decision-making by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities and their collective and specific visions of education, governance, health, kinship, and guardianship of lands and waters. This Touchstone invites teachers and learners to take responsibility and shift their mindsets by building their capacity to work respectfully with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities, children, youth, and families.



Touchstone of Hope for Learning: Culture and Language

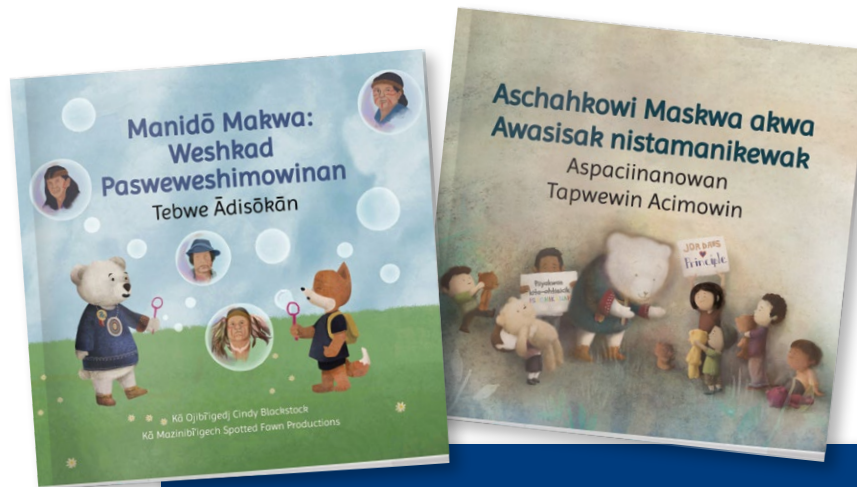
This Touchstone for Learning helps learners understand how culture and language are the foundation for strong, healthy, and proud First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities. It affirms that language and culture are inseparable. This Touchstone calls on teachers and students to recognize their own culture and worldviews so they can understand why culture and language is so important to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Knowing your own culture and worldviews can also help prevent unintentionally imposing those views on First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children, youth, and families.

Learning and Citizenship Goals

- Be aware and open to how your own culture, worldview, and education (through school and other sources) influence your beliefs and understandings about First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Engage in self-reflection and respectfully acknowledge your current understandings. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **TRUTH TELLING, ACKNOWLEDGING**)

³⁶ For more information on the meaning of free, prior, and informed consent, see the UN's manual *Free Prior and Informed Consent: An Indigenous Peoples' Right and a Good Practice for Local Communities*: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/publications/2016/10/free-prior-and-informed-consent-an-indigenous-peoples-right-and-a-good-practice-for-local-communities-fao/#>

- Seek to understand how culture and language are so essential for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **ACKNOWLEDGING, RESTORING**)
- Learn about how the Canadian government's role in colonialism, including its role in residential schools, eroded First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples' cultures and languages. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **TRUTH TELLING, ACKNOWLEDGING**)
- Describe how First Nations, and Inuit and Métis peoples and communities, are revitalizing their languages and cultures. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **ACKNOWLEDGING, RESTORING**)
- Take Action: learn the language of the First Nations, Inuit, and/or Métis territory you live in and how you, your school, and your community can support First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people in revitalizing their languages and cultures. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **ACKNOWLEDGING, RELATING**)



Far left: *Spirit Bear: Echoes of the Past*, Algonquin translation; Left: *Spirit Bear and Children Make History*, Cree translation

Both Indigenous peoples and Canadians should be involved in the revitalization of Indigenous cultures because everyone has something to learn. Our languages and cultures are coded with a deep respect for creation. Learn the Indigenous language of the land you live on and support language revitalization projects.

—Fayant et al., 2020, p. 21

What Does the Culture and Language Touchstone Mean for Teachers and Learners?

The Culture and Language Touchstone for Learning asks us to recognize that culture and language are ways of life for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and are ingrained in all communities. The TRC and the UNDRIP say that language is the essence of culture.

Since Canadian confederation, the federal government has sought to assimilate First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples by destroying their cultures, languages, and governance systems, and by removing their children, whilst imposing western cultures, systems, and languages. Residential schools were only one of many destructive colonial tools used for assimilation. Many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples are (re)learning and (re)claiming who they are, even to this day. This process is called revitalization.

Teachers and students are encouraged to take up these responsibilities in relation to Canadian citizenship and the inherent sovereignty and rights of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Acknowledging that the culture and language of Western educational systems themselves are rooted in assimilation of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples requires teachers and students to situate themselves within their own worldviews and histories (Battiste et al., 2010; Blackstock, 2009a; Grande, 2004; 2015).



Touchstone of Hope for Learning: Holistic Approach

Drawing from First Nations ways of knowing, being, and doing, the Holistic Approach invites us all to situate learning and teaching in a relational framework that recognizes and considers the interconnectedness of all life across time and space. Holistic approaches to learning engage and nourish the whole learner, seek comprehensive and collective justice, and honour past, present, and future generations.

Learning and Citizenship Goals

- Acknowledge that education and most schools are grounded in Eurocentric worldviews and examine how this impacts what we know, how we know, and how we consider First Nations, Inuit, and Métis worldviews.

(PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **TRUTH TELLING, ACKNOWLEDGING**)

Image from Spirit Bear: Fishing for Knowledge, Catching Dreams (2018), illustrated by Amanda Strong

- Consider how the past, present, and future are connected. Assess how the past, including the experiences and actions of our ancestors, impact us today. Assess how our actions, or lack of action, will impact future generations. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **TRUTH TELLING, ACKNOWLEDGING**)
- Consider the beginnings of Canada. How does colonialism affect relationships between First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, and other people living in Canada? What responsibilities do non-Indigenous peoples have in relation to enacting reconciliation? (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **TRUTH TELLING, ACKNOWLEDGING**)
- Identify actions you can take to build mutually reciprocal relationships with First Nations, Inuit, and/or Métis peoples of the lands you are situated on.

(PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **ACKNOWLEDGING, RELATING, RESTORING**)



- Observe how we are all connected to and shaped by the land, animals, waters, plants, birds, fish, and other living beings. Assess how our (in)actions affect them. Identify ways you can take care of the land. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **ACKNOWLEDGING, RELATING, RESTORING**)
- Make space in your learning, teaching, and living for the emotional, spiritual, reflexive, and experiential. Honour these ways of learning and reflect on how they can enrich and extend our work and connection to one another. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **TRUTH TELLING, RELATING**)
 - Teach the potential challenges of objectivity (ideas of single and indisputable truth). Embrace or encourage multiple perspectives and perceptions of reality in your learning community. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **TRUTH TELLING, RELATING**)

What Does the Holistic Approach Touchstone Mean for Teachers and Learners?

The Holistic Approach invites us to consider the whole learner within their interconnected spaces of school, family, friends, community, and the world, and the impacts of learning across time and space. This approach is rooted in First Nations ways of knowing, being, and doing (Blackstock, 2007; 2009b; 2011). The Holistic Approach situates learning in a relational framework. This framework affirms the interconnectedness of all things, multiple dimensions of reality, expansive conceptions of time, and the agency and value of other-than-human beings.

Image from *Spirit Bear: Fishing for Knowledge, Catching Dreams* (2018), illustrated by Amanda Strong.

If this concept sounds daunting, think about it as acknowledging that no one person is unaffected by the past, by others, and by the environment, and that everyone will leave an imprint for future generations. Think about the multiple identities you have (i.e., you may be a vegetarian, a soccer player, a teacher, a parent, etc.) and how your worldview and lived experience was, and continues to be, shaped by the stories, decisions, and traditions handed down through the generations of your ancestors and how you are passing those traditions along. A holistic approach encourages learners and educators to consider how we are all connected to each other and to the land across time and space and the impact of our actions or (in)action on our relationships, including those within the living world and future generations.

Grounded in the premise of abundance (that there are enough essential resources – food, land, water, housing, and love – for everyone), the Holistic Approach invites us to explore our relationships to those resources to understand why some have more and others have less (this also links to the Structural Interventions Touchstone that follows). Reconciliation cannot be realized without truth-telling and acknowledgement of past and present harms and working towards the revitalization of respectful relationships between non-Indigenous and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, and our collective relationship with the living world.

The Holistic Approach invites all educators to consider how their practice engages and nourishes students holistically and honours their connections to community, culture, place, and land. When we take a holistic approach to learning, we think collectively and affirm emotional, reflective, reflexive, spiritual, and experiential aspects of the learning process. Like the other Touchstones, the Holistic Approach encourages all teachers and learners to continue to learn about the dominance of Eurocentric worldviews in education. This Touchstone asks teachers and students to learn from First Nations, Inuit, and Métis experiences, perspectives, and distinct ways of knowing, being, and doing, while embracing the responsibilities that accompany these gifts.



Touchstone of Hope for Learning: Structural Interventions

The Structural Interventions Touchstone calls on educators and students to identify and address the causes of disadvantage for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. For example, poorer education outcomes for First Nations students have been linked to inequities in funding for First Nations education and schools, poor housing and poverty that flow from residential schools, and lack of curriculum content that honours and respects First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples' cultures, languages, histories, and realities.

This Touchstone also encourages learners to look to see if solutions are already on the books to address specific problems. For example, *Shannen’s Dream*³⁷ proposes a solution to the inequalities in First Nations schools and education, and *The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*³⁸ and the TRC also put solutions forward. Once we know what solutions have already been proposed, we can help advocate with those who are already taking action to create positive change.

Learning and Citizenship Goals

- Describe equality and substantive equality. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **TRUTH TELLING, ACKNOWLEDGING**)
- Learn why substantive equality in public services is important to addressing the multi-generational impacts of residential schools and other forms of colonialism. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **TRUTH TELLING, ACKNOWLEDGING**)
- Discuss the historical systems and inequities that continue to impact the wellbeing of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **TRUTH TELLING, ACKNOWLEDGING**)
- Gain knowledge and understanding about the importance of justice and substantive equality for all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **TRUTH TELLING, ACKNOWLEDGING**)
- Compare differences in funding affecting various First Nations peoples living on reserves and how it impacts daily living, including access to services. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **TRUTH TELLING, ACKNOWLEDGING**)
- Learn about Shannen Koostachin (*Shannen’s Dream*³⁹) and Jordan River Anderson (*Jordan’s Principle*,⁴⁰ *I Am a Witness*⁴¹). Teach others what you have learned about the inequalities that Jordan River Anderson and Shannen Koostachin experienced and why Jordan’s Principle and Shannen’s Dream are important for reconciliation. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **TRUTH TELLING, ACKNOWLEDGING, RESTORING**)



Image from *Spirit Bear: Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams* (2019), illustrated by Amanda Strong.

37 <https://fncaringsociety.com/shannens-dream>

38 <https://publications.gc.ca/Collection-R/LoPBdP/EB/prb9924-e.htm>

39 <https://fncaringsociety.com/shannens-dream>

40 <https://fncaringsociety.com/jordans-principle>

41 <https://fncaringsociety.com/i-am-witness>

- Bear witness by learning about the I Am a Witness campaign that educates the public on a landmark human rights case called **First Nations Child and Family Caring Society et al. v. Attorney General of Canada**⁴² to address the federal government's discriminatory provision of First Nations child welfare approach to Jordan's Principle. Describe what the impacts of the discrimination had on First Nations children, youth, and families and develop ethical and evidence-based opinions about the decisions of the Tribunal, government appeals, Tribunal orders, and take action. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **TRUTH TELLING, ACKNOWLEDGING, RELATING, RESTORING**)
- Become a supporter by speaking out about discrimination in First Nations public services and take action against these injustices in ways that support First Nations. Identify how other inequities in public services impact Inuit and Métis communities and take action to help fix the problems. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **RESTORING, RELATING**)
- Listen to the testimonies of IRSS Survivors. Honour their truths by learning about residential schools, teaching others about it, and taking action on the TRC Calls to Action. Express your thoughts and feelings about these learning experiences. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **TRUTH TELLING, ACKNOWLEDGING**)
- Learn about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and their Calls to Action. Think about how the Calls to Action relate to your own life as an educator, student, citizen in Canada, or other roles you have. How might you reimagine your learning (and your life) in relation to the Calls to Action? How will you respond to the Calls to Action? (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **ACKNOWLEDGING, RELATING, RESTORING**)

What Does the Structural Interventions Touchstone Mean for Teachers and Learners?

This Touchstone for Learning asks us to demand comprehensive justice and equity in Canada and take action to end discrimination against First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children, youth, and families. Many of the TRC Calls to Action are structural interventions that can be responded to by leaders who care about equity-based decision making and substantive equality, but all of us can work towards making sure they are acted upon.

42 <https://fncaringsociety.com/publications/2016-chrt-2-2016-tcdp-2>

This Touchstone encourages and supports learning about, and taking action to ensure, culturally based equity for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children. Through Caring Society campaigns such as Shannen's Dream, Jordan's Principle, and I Am a Witness, students and teachers can learn about inequities specifically facing First Nations children, youth, and families and work to make change. The actions that we take must support social justice and not infringe on the rights of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

The Caring Society campaigns are pathways to teach students in ways that support their learning and emotional, cognitive, physical, and spiritual growth (McCracken, 2021). Structural Interventions for learning consider amplifying student voices and initiatives, both in the school community, and across the country. There are many ways the campaigns can challenge Eurocentric teaching styles, such as using inquiry approaches to learning, as well as supporting student-led clubs and assemblies. These approaches have the potential to involve the entire school community with the campaigns (McCracken, 2021), rather than involving only one or two classes. The Spirit Bear Virtual School can also be looked at as a structural intervention in that it helps teachers, administrators, and support staff do the work of reconciliation in their classrooms.

The dreams, strength, and resilience of Indigenous youth cannot be overlooked. The decisions we make today will affect us in seven generations, and the youth of today have a right to be involved in decision-making that will undoubtedly affect not only them but their descendants as well.

—Fayant et al., 2020, p. 20

Image from *Spirit Bear and Children Make History* (2020), illustrated by Amanda Strong.





Touchstone for Learning: Non-Discrimination

This Touchstone for Learning helps learners, educators, and all peoples develop understandings of the intersections between colonialism, racism, sexism, ableism, classism, intellectualism, homophobia, transphobia, and other systems of oppression. It guides learners to come to deeper understandings about the terms equity, fairness, discrimination, stereotypes, bias, and prejudice in relation to systems and structures, such as government, schools, healthcare, and so on. This Touchstone engages learners in social justice, affirming that when we respect each other's worldviews and treat each other with kindness, regardless of our differences, we can create a better Canada.

Learning and Citizenship Goals

- Learn what the words non-discrimination, social justice, equity, and fairness mean, and what you can do to put them into practice. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **TRUTH TELLING, RESTORING**)
- Develop an understanding of how the Government of Canada has and continues to act in discriminatory ways toward First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **TRUTH TELLING, ACKNOWLEDGING**)
- Learn what the types of discrimination Jordan River Anderson (founder of Jordan's Principle) and Shannen Koostachin (founder of Shannen's Dream) faced, and how Jordan's Principle and Shannen's Dream work towards ending these types of discrimination. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **TRUTH TELLING, ACKNOWLEDGING**)
- Develop understandings of how a culture that enables one form of discrimination can contribute to other forms of discrimination (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **TRUTH TELLING, ACKNOWLEDGING**).
- Seek to understand how discriminatory practices towards First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples have become embedded in Canadian laws, policies, and society. Reflect on how they have impacted or benefited you in your life and in the lives of those around you and those who have come before you. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **TRUTH TELLING, ACKNOWLEDGING**)
- Imagine what it means to you to be a person in Canada who is committed to equity and non-discrimination. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **ACKNOWLEDGING, RELATING, RESTORING**)
- Create a plan to take action against discrimination in your school or community. Collaborate with school or community members during this process. (PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION: **RESTORING, RELATING**)

What Does the Non-Discrimination Touchstone Mean for Teachers and Learners?

This Touchstone for Learning asks teachers and learners to engage in reflection about their own understandings of historical and present systems in Canada. Educators must be committed to social justice approaches, and continuously reflect upon what discrimination is and why it often takes a long time to fix.

The Non-Discrimination Touchstone guides our understandings of the ways in which discriminatory systems have impacted our lives and those of our ancestors. People living in Canada can take responsibility as citizens and stand up in support of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples to stop Canada's discrimination against these communities. In the context of the Caring Society campaigns, non-discrimination means that First Nations should never be refused services because they are First Nations.

This Touchstone affirms the place of social justice in schools and recognizes how social justice work often results in transformational experiences for students and teachers. More importantly, social justice work allows students to learn and be leaders in reconciliation (Howell, 2017; Smith, 2017). The Non-Discrimination Touchstone includes opportunities for children to engage with issues that affect them, an important right according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and UNDRIP.

Finally, the Non-Discrimination Touchstone for Learning serves as a continuous reminder of the impacts of the Caring Society campaigns on students and teachers. The Caring Society's engagement in reconciliation-based practices and learning about First Nations, Inuit, and Métis experiences is based in love, empathy, respect, and passion (McCracken, 2021).

The learning that teachers and students are engaged in is transformative and integral to a society that respects and uplifts everyone, regardless of difference.

Image adapted from Spirit Bear: Fishing for Knowledge, Catching Dreams (2018), illustrated by Amanda Strong.



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