



Engagement Towards Ending Canada's Discrimination in First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS)

On August 20, 2025, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (Tribunal) issued 2025 CHRT 80, ordering Canada, along with the co-complainants in *First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada et al. v. Attorney General of Canada*, to move forward on national FNCFS long-term reform without further delay. The order requires the parties to submit their remedies for national long-term reform, created either separately or together, by December 22, 2025. This shall happen concurrently and separately from the Ontario long-term Final Agreement (OFA).

To read the full ruling and other information sheets, please go to fnwitness.ca.

Since early October, engagement sessions have been held across the country to gather input from First Nations leadership, rights holders, technical experts, caregivers, and individuals with lived experience on a plan to permanently end Canada's discrimination. Over the next several weeks, engagement feedback will be carefully reviewed and consolidated into a plan, then submitted to the Tribunal.

On September 19, 2025, Canada filed a judicial review of 2025 CHRT 80. While the judicial review is ongoing, it does not suspend or alter the Tribunal's orders, nor does it change the requirement for the parties to move forward with FNCFS long-term reform.

Tribunal Grants Interested Party Status in OFA Proceedings to Two First Nations

The Tribunal continues to manage proceedings related to the OFA. In early February 2025, the Chiefs of Ontario (COO), Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN), and Canada released the OFA. On March 7, COO and NAN filed a joint motion with the Tribunal seeking the following: an order approving the OFA without condition; an order that the OFA and Trilateral Agreement Respecting Reform of the 1965 Agreement will satisfy, supersede, and replace all orders of the Tribunal related to its findings of discrimination; and an order ending the Tribunal's jurisdiction with respect to Ontario, except regarding Jordan's Principle. These actions prompted 14 First Nations to file motions seeking interested party status in the Tribunal proceedings.

In 2025 CHRT 85, the Tribunal granted interested party status to two of the First Nations that applied: the Taykwa Tagamou Nation and the Chippewas of Georgina Island. The Tribunal determined that these Nations offer distinct perspectives as Ontario-based communities directly affected by the OFA. Both Nations asserted that the OFA does not provide lasting reform, fails to address discrimination and funding inequities within FNCFS, overlooks certain remoteness challenges, and was developed without meaningful engagement. All parties are now working to finalize a schedule for submissions and hearing dates before the Tribunal.



Pumpkin Carving Contest

The 2025 Pumpkin Carving Contest saw lots of great carvings from children and youth! To demonstrate our appreciation to all the carvers, each individual or group that submitted images of their pumpkins received a gift card to spend at goodminds.com, a First Nations family-owned business that hosts First Nations, Métis, and Inuit educational books, products, and resources. On behalf of Spirit Bear and our team, thank you to all those who participated and made this year's pumpkin carving contest extra special!

Pumpkin carved by students from Village Union Public School, Oshawa, ON.



Orange Shirt Day 2025

On September 30, over 1,250 students, educators, and members of the public gathered at Beechwood Cemetery and in downtown Ottawa to honour Orange Shirt Day and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. The Caring Society was privileged to partner with the Assembly of Seven Generations (A7G) and Beechwood Cemetery to make this day of learning and action possible.

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

- **Art and letter writing at Action Tables.** Led by students from St. Monica elementary school, participants had the opportunity to visit

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

- **Special honouring.** To honour the children who passed away at residential schools and their families, members of the public gathered at the Children's Sacred Forest at Beechwood Cemetery. Elder Barbara Dumont-Hill opened the honouring, and Brittany Mathews (Caring Society) and Josh Lewis (A7G) introduced former Commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Marie Wilson, and former Northwest Territories Premier, Stephen Kawkfi, to share a few words. We were also honoured to have jingle dress dancer Dara Wawatie-Chabot and drummer Nimkeehns Wemigwans share a song.

- **Public tours at Beechwood.** In the afternoon, A7G members and Beechwood staff led public tours in English and French. We were also excited to partner with Arran Mills to offer a tour with ASL interpretation.

- **Public walking tours downtown.** Members of A7G also led Reconciling History Walking Tours in downtown Ottawa, stopping at 15 sites along Sparks Street and throughout the Byward Market to provide participants with opportunities

to learn more about the role of the federal government and bureaucracy in the residential school system. We were honoured to have Anishinàbe Odjibikan and Buffalo Cultural Collective provide cultural exhibits and teachings as part of the walking tour this year.

- **Art exhibit.** With thanks to Beechwood, an exhibit displaying artwork that engaged with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action, reconciliation, and truth telling was featured inside the Beechwood National Memorial Centre.

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

fncaringsociety.com/reconciling-history.

Update on Jordan's Principle Cases Before the Courts

The Federal Court has issued precedent-setting decisions in cases relating to Jordan's Principle requests denied by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC). In both *Cully v. Canada* and *Powless v. Canada*, the Federal Court decisions affirmed that the Tribunal's orders limit ISC's discretion when determining Jordan's Principle requests. Further, the decisions confirm that ISC must implement Jordan's Principle broadly and in a manner that respects substantive equality, cultural appropriateness, and the best interests of the child.

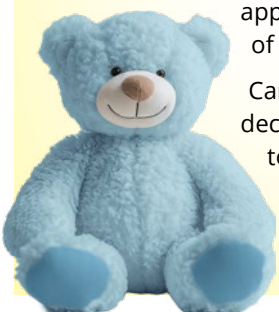
Canada appealed the Federal Court's decision in *Powless v. Canada*, and the hearing took place on October 6 at the Federal Court of Appeal. The Caring Society and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs applied

for and were granted interested party status for the appeal. Importantly, the Federal Court's decision stands, unless it is overturned by the Federal Court of Appeal.

The Caring Society has developed information sheets and resources in both French and English to assist families in learning about these important decisions and to share the avenues available when a Jordan's Principle request is delayed or denied.

To find out more, visit fncaringsociety.com/knowledge-portal/information-sheets and search for:

- [Powless v. Canada Information Sheet](#)
- [Cully v. Canada Information Sheet](#)
- [Remedies for Denied or Delayed Jordan's Principle Requests Information Sheet](#)



15th Annual Caring Society Gala

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

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

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

For more information, visit fncaringsociety.com/events/annual-caring-society-gala

Spirit Bear enjoying the Gala with his masquerade mask, beaded by Harmony Eshkawkogan.



Spirit Bear's Guide to Reconciliation 2026 Calendar is Here!

We are pleased to announce that the 10th edition of Spirit Bear's Guide to Reconciliation calendar is available for pre-order!

With thanks to photographer James Doyle, the images in the 2026 edition feature photos of the sets and puppets from the *Spirit Bear and Children Make History* exhibition, which premiered at The Exploration Place in Prince George, British Columbia, between June 21 and November 11, 2024.

Don't forget to pre-order your copy of the 2026 calendar, available in both French and English, at fncaringsociety.com/shop. Along with the calendar, there is a free activity book, also available in English and French, for you to print and enjoy. fncaringsociety.com/spirit-bear/calendar



Senator Brian Francis Calls on the Senate of Canada to Recognize Bear Witness Day

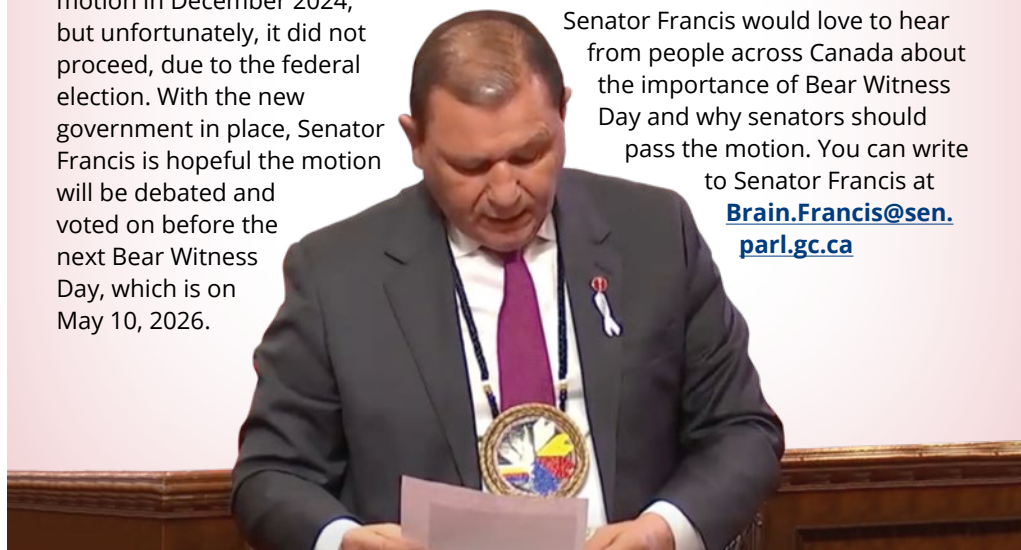
Senator Brian Francis of Prince Edward Island has reintroduced a motion in the Senate to formally recognize Bear Witness Day!

Senator Francis is Mi'kmaw/Lnu from Lennox Island First Nation and a long-time supporter of Jordan's Principle. Most recently, Senator Francis joined with Senators Audette, Greenwood, Harder, Klyne, and White to honour the 20th anniversary of Jordan's Principle with a Bear Witness Day celebration for elementary and high-school students at the Senate of Canada, hosted in collaboration with A7G and the Caring Society.

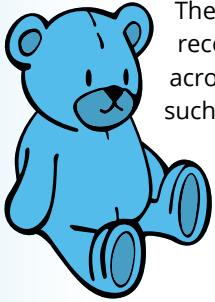
Senator Francis first introduced the motion in December 2024, but unfortunately, it did not proceed, due to the federal election. With the new government in place, Senator Francis is hopeful the motion will be debated and voted on before the next Bear Witness Day, which is on May 10, 2026.

By formally recognizing Bear Witness Day, the Senate would take an important step to reaffirm its shared commitment to equity for First Nations children and to ensure that Canada properly implements Jordan's Principle. The step toward formal federal recognition of Bear Witness Day is particularly important given the ongoing lack of full implementation of Jordan's Principle by Canada. Senator Francis calls the motion a small but meaningful step toward recognizing Jordan's lasting impact, his family's extraordinary strength and advocacy, and all those who have worked to uphold the rights of First Nations children.

Senator Francis would love to hear from people across Canada about the importance of Bear Witness Day and why senators should pass the motion. You can write to Senator Francis at Brain.Francis@sen.parl.gc.ca



Jordan's Principle Scholarship



The 2025 Jordan's Principle Scholarship received close to 100 applications from all across the country, spanning many fields, such as social work, law, medicine, and healthcare management. We were really impressed with the quality of applications we received; they are a true testament of Jordan River Anderson's legacy. Two \$5,000 and two \$2,500 scholarships were awarded. The second \$5,000 scholarship was made possible in memory of Joan Glode.

We are thrilled to announce that the four recipients are **Leah Bodnar-McLeod, Meagan Girard, Sheanna Bannon, and Pamela Angees!** You can see their photos and bios on our website: fncaringsociety.com/awards-scholarships/jordans-principle-scholarship.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

from Spirit Bear and Sunny

Please note that our office will be closed from December 24 to 26.



First Nations Child & Family Caring Society

Membership Information

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

Individual Membership: \$75

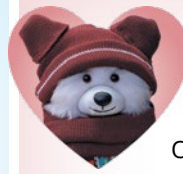
Student Membership with ID or Elder: \$5

Small FNCFCs Agency Membership (1-50 employees): \$500

Large FNCFCs Agency Membership (50+ employees): \$1,000

Small Associate Membership (Organizations with 1-50 employees): \$500

Large Associate Membership (Organizations with 50+ employees): \$1,000



SAVE THE DATE

Have a Heart Day 2026

On February 14, 2026, as they have since 2012, communities across Canada will come together to honour Have a Heart Day, a youth-led event that inspires action and conversation around reconciliation and support for First Nations children, families, and communities.

Have a Heart Day encourages people of all ages and backgrounds to stand with children and youth who are raising their voices for change. It is about building relationships, learning from one another, and taking steps towards a future where every First Nations child can grow up connected to their family, community, and culture. We want to ensure that First Nations children grow up safely within their homes while receiving a good education and being proud of their culture.

Visit haveaheartday.ca for resources, stories, and ideas about how to host your own event at school, work, or in your community, and register your Have a Heart Day celebration to appear on the national event map!

Together, let's take another step forward on the path of reconciliation, one heart at a time.

Awards and Scholarships

In the new year, we will be opening the 2026 round of awards and scholarships.

- **Shannen's Dream Scholarship.** This is a "pay-it-forward" scholarship to assist First Nations youth with post-secondary education costs.
- **Jordan's Principle Scholarship.** This scholarship is for First Nations students studying children's holistic health and wellbeing.
- **Spirit Bear Award.** This award is for demonstrated commitment by a group of young people to reconciliation and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

Keep an eye out for application deadlines and new awards on our social media feeds and our website: fncaringsociety.com/awards-scholarships.

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