

newsletter

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Updates on Long-Term Reform of First Nations Child and Family Services

Interested Party Status

On May 25, 2026, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (Tribunal) issued 2026 CHRT 50, granting limited Interested Party status to the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission and the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador. The Tribunal also directed that proceedings involving these parties be conducted in both official languages and established a streamlined process for translating key documents.

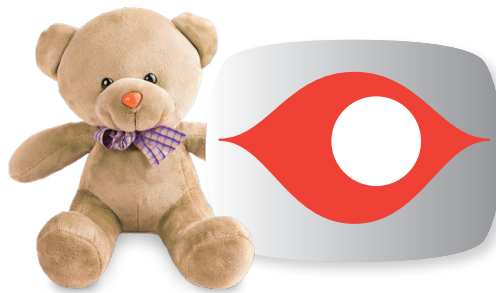
On June 4, 2026, the Tribunal released 2026 CHRT 56, providing reasons granting, in part, Interested Party status to the National Children's Chiefs Commission (NCCC). The Tribunal found that the NCCC's expertise, mandate from the First Nations-in-Assembly, and role in developing *The Loving Justice Plan* would assist the Tribunal in determining First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) long-term reform.

First Nations-in-Assembly Resolutions

At the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Annual General Assembly in July 2026, First Nations-in-Assembly passed several resolutions relating to reform of FNCFS outside Ontario. AFN Resolution 24/2026 calls for clear communications throughout the FNCFS reform process. AFN Resolution 23/2026 affirms that long-term reform outside Ontario must meet the minimum standards set out in *The Loving Justice Plan*, including:

- First Nations-led decision making;
- the upholding of human rights;

- needs-based funding;
- durable protections against discrimination;
- independent enforcement and oversight;
- access to remedies and enforcement; and
- funding for capacity-building.



Canada's Request to Reconstitute Tribunal Panel Dismissed

On July 7, 2026, Panel Member Edward Lustig resigned from the proceedings at the Tribunal and subsequently indicated he will not have further involvement in the detailed reasons concerning the Ontario Final Agreement (OFA). On July 28, 2026, Canada requested the appointment of two additional members to restore the panel to the original three-member composition, and subsequently opposed Member Marchildon's proposal to release the full OFA decision on her own. The Caring Society, AFN, Chiefs of Ontario (COO), and Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) expressed their support for Member Marchildon to release the full OFA written decision on her own and

further submitted that reconstitution of the Panel is neither required by law nor appropriate at this advanced stage of the proceedings. The First Nations parties affirmed that appointing new members would create unnecessary delays, disrupt the established timeline, and undermine the continuity and expertise needed to adjudicate the remaining long-term reform issues affecting First Nations children and families. On August 18, 2026, the Chairperson of the Tribunal dismissed Canada's request to appoint additional members to the panel, with reasons to follow.

The Caring Society wishes to acknowledge and thank Member Lustig for his dedication and commitment to upholding human rights for all persons in Canada, including First Peoples.

Canada Challenges Exemption of Two First Nations from Ontario Final Agreement

On April 29, 2026, Canada applied for judicial review of the OFA on the grounds that the Tribunal's March 30, 2026 letter-decision, which approved the OFA, exempted Georgina Island First Nation and Taykwa Tagamou Nation from the agreement. The Tribunal's letter-decision said that Canada must negotiate custom remedies for those communities pending longer-term agreements. Despite Canada's application for judicial review, implementation of the OFA began on May 29, 2026.

Learn more at fnwitness.ca.

Jordan's Principle Update



Tribunal Proceedings Continue

The Tribunal is currently examining how Canada is implementing the Tribunal's binding orders in 2025 CHRT 6 to determine whether Jordan's Principle is being delivered in a manner that achieves substantive equality and eliminates discrimination against First Nations children.

A key issue before the Tribunal is Canada's approach to substantive equality and its decision-making framework. In June 2026, Canada confirmed that it does not have a publicly available operational definition of substantive equality or a formal decision-making framework for processing Jordan's Principle requests. Concerns have been raised that Indigenous Services Canada is using internal operational guidance, including its 2025 Operational Bulletin, without a transparent framework explaining how substantive equality is applied in practice. As a result, it is difficult to assess whether current practices comply with Tribunal orders and achieve substantively equal outcomes for First Nations children.

On July 30, the Caring Society, AFN, COO, and NAN jointly proposed a process for resolving outstanding matters from 2025 CHRT 6 involving the disclosure of operational materials, written submissions, cross-examinations, and, if necessary, an oral hearing. On August 13, Canada opposed the proposal and suggested a more formal process. Canada argued that further Tribunal orders could adversely affect current operations and efforts to reduce the Jordan's Principle backlog. The Tribunal is now considering the Parties' submissions and will determine next steps.

To learn more about the latest proceedings and key issues before the Tribunal, read the information sheet *What is Happening at the Tribunal Regarding Jordan's Principle?* by going to the Information Sheet page in the Knowledge Portal at fncaringociety.com/knowledge-portal

Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams

As Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams came to a close at the end of June, we were reminded that reconciliation is strengthened through shared intention and action. Across the country, individuals, groups, schools, and organizations expressed their commitment through the creation of heart gardens that honoured residential school Survivors and remembered the children who never made it home.

We are grateful to everyone who contributed to this year's campaign and to those who shared their heart gardens and reflections with others. Each contribution added to a growing movement of people dedicated to honouring the past while helping build a more respectful and understanding future.



Check out Our New Bear Witness Child-Friendly Timeline

We are excited to share a new child-friendly timeline that traces the 10-year journey since the landmark 2016 Canadian Human Rights Tribunal decision, which found that Canada was discriminating against First Nations children and families.

Designed for young learners, families, educators, and community members, the timeline highlights key milestones and important moments in the movement for equity and non-discrimination.

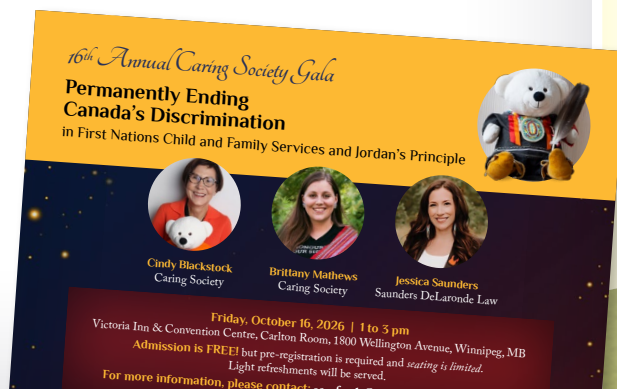
We invite you to explore and share this new resource with the children in your life. Download the timeline by visiting fncaringociety.com/publications/bearing-witness-child-friendly-timeline

Caring Society Annual Gala

As part of the 16th Annual Caring Society Gala, join us for a free information session on Permanently Ending Canada's Discrimination in First Nations Child and Family Services and Jordan's Principle.

The event takes place in Winnipeg on October 16, 2026, from 1 to 3 p.m. CST at the Victoria Inn (Carlton Room). The gala will follow at 5 p.m., featuring food, entertainment, and a special appearance by our Spirit Bear mascot!

Please contact ocncfsgala@ocncfs.ca or 204-627-7240 for more info.



New Spirit Bear Resources

Just released! *Spirit Bear's ABCs*

Spirit Bear's ABCs invites pre-schoolers to learn the alphabet alongside Spirit Bear. From A to Z, this delightful book welcomes young children into Spirit Bear's world, where they can learn, grow, and discover that just because they're small doesn't mean they can't stand tall!

"A must-have resource for introducing important concepts related to truth and reconciliation."

—Michelle McKay and Klara Redford,
award-winning Early Years Educators

Order *Spirit Bear's ABCs* through independent bookstores and major retailers (\$12.95 each). For bulk orders (10+ copies), contact University of Toronto Press at utpbooks@utpress.utoronto.ca.



Spirit Bear in 3D: Bear Shares 2.0 is Officially LIVE!

We are thrilled to announce the release of Bear Shares 2.0! Bear Shares is a free online game and educational resource that lets players interact with Spirit Bear like never before.

Followers may remember that the first version of Bear Shares was launched in June 2024 as part of the *Spirit Bear and Children Make History* Exhibition. With the support of Canada Council for the Arts, we teamed up again with our incredible project partners at Spotted Fawn Productions and Steamlabs to create Bear Shares 2.0. Some of the many upgrades include enhanced animation, new "paw portals" and a new character, interactive quizzes, a music soundtrack, and French subtitles. Bear Shares is a game for all ages, but is best suited for children aged 6–12.

Special thanks to the children who gave feedback on the first version of the game and helped make Bear Shares even better.

Visit fncaringociety.com/spirit-bear/bear-shares today to play!



Photo by Magnific

Save the Dates!

Join Us for Orange Shirt Day 2026

On September 30, 2026, the Caring Society, in partnership with the Assembly of Seven Generations (A7G) and Beechwood Cemetery, will once again host a public education event on unceded Algonquin Territory to mark Orange Shirt Day and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

Now in its sixth year, this annual gathering honours residential school Survivors, their families, and the children who never returned home, while creating opportunities for learning, reflection, and action. Inspired by the story of Phyllis Webstad, Orange Shirt Day reminds us of the lasting impacts of residential schools and the importance of advancing reconciliation through education and awareness.

Morning programming will include Reconciling History tours for school groups led by A7G as well as a military heritage tour for the general public led by Beechwood Cemetery. Afternoon activities will feature A7G-led Reconciling History Walking Tours and Action Tables, where participants can learn more about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and express their commitment to reconciliation.

Whether joining in person or participating online through virtual tours and education resources, everyone is invited to learn, reflect, and take action.

To learn more, register for a tour, or explore ways to participate, visit fncaringociety.com/orange-shirt-day.

School is a Time for Dreams

Celebrated each November, School is a Time for Dreams invites people from across the country to support equitable education for First Nations young people, which includes safe and comfy schools and education that honours their cultures and languages.

The campaign is named in loving memory of Shannen Koostachin and the movement she founded to ensure First Nations children and youth have culturally appropriate, equitable education opportunities so that they, too, can achieve their dreams.

Visit shannensdream.ca to learn more about Shannen and Shannen's Dream, and visit fncaringociety.com/school-time-dreams to learn more about School is a Time for Dreams and explore the resources available to support your participation.



Awards and Scholarships

Raymond Shingoose Leadership Award Winner

Created in honour of Raymond Shingoose, this award recognizes exceptional leadership, dedication, and unwavering commitment to improving the lives of First Nations children, youth, and families. On June 21, 2026, we were honoured to announce Phyllis Sock as the inaugural recipient of the Raymond Shingoose Leadership Award.



As the first-ever recipient, Phyllis Sock was recognized for her outstanding leadership and advocacy. Through her tireless dedication, she has helped create meaningful and lasting change for First Nations children, youth, and families. Her work continues to inspire communities and strengthen opportunities for generations to come.

We are also pleased to recognize Arnold Wapass and Michelle Sacobie Claybourn, who received Honourable Mentions for their significant contributions to First Nations Child and Family Services.

Spirit Bear Award Winners

This year, the Spirit Bear Award went to the Charging Thunder Singerz, the Youth Advisory Council, and Arklan Community Public School (Room 115). Honourable mentions go to Appleby College's Reconcili-ACTION Club and Gathering Strength Community Services Society.

The Spirit Bear Award recognizes groups of young people who demonstrate a strong commitment to reconciliation

and the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action. Each year, three prizes of \$500 are given to children and youth to apply to their continued work toward reconciliation. We are grateful to the Olive Tree Foundation (Mohamed and Opheera Nasir Endowment Fund) for their continued support.

The Jordan's Principle Scholarship Is Open for submissions!

This scholarship is open to First Nations students who are studying children's holistic health and wellbeing at a Canadian post-secondary institution. The deadline to submit applications is **September 7, 2026**.

Mary Teegee Caring Award

We are honoured to announce the creation of the Mary Teegee Caring Award: a new award recognizing the love, courage, respect, and dedication shown by frontline workers who support First Nations children and youth in care, their families, and alternative carers.

Named in honour of Mary Teegee, whose exceptional and courageous leadership has uplifted so many First Nations children, youth, and families, this award celebrates a social worker or frontline worker nominated by a First Nation, a First Nations child and family service agency, or a First Nations child and family services organization.

More information about our awards and scholarships can be found on our website at fncaringsociety.com/awards-scholarships

Spirit Bear's 2026 Pumpkin Carving Contest!

From October 1 to 31, children and youth are invited to share photos of bear-themed pumpkin carvings or decorations. Send pictures of your creations to info@fncaringsociety.com to enter the contest. If you share your pumpkin masterpiece on social media, be sure to tag the Caring Society in your post.

Most importantly, have fun, get creative, and show off your *beary* best work! We can't wait to see your pumpkin creations.



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

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