

First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada

ANNUAL REPORT

2014 | 2015





First Nations Child & Family
Caring Society of Canada

Please note that this annual report reflects activities from September 2014 to August 2015.

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Honouring

The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada (the Caring Society) expresses our sincere appreciation to First Nations child and family service agencies, our members, funding organizations and partners who have made outstanding contributions to the wellbeing of Aboriginal children, youth and families in 2014/2015. Special thanks to children and youth throughout Canada who are standing with First Nations children and families and to:

Alanis Obomsawin	Goodmans LLP	Project of Heart
Alberta Centre for Child, Family & Community Research	Harold Tarbell	Public Service Alliance of Canada
Alberta Child and Youth Advocate	Indigenous Bar Association	The Printing House
Amnesty International Canada	Indigenous Physicians Association	Robert Grant, Gall, Legge, Grant and Munroe, LLP
Andrew Bryce	ISI Global	Rideau Hall
Assembly of First Nations	J.W. McConnell Family Foundation	SSHRC
Assembly of First Nations Quebec and Labrador	KAIROS Canada	Sandy Tunwell Accounting
Anderson Family, Norway	Andrew Koostachin, Jenny Nakogee and Family	Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth
House Cree Nation	Law Foundation of Ontario	Sebastien Grammond, University of Ottawa
Bentall Corporation	Leah Gryfe Designs	Siem Smun'eem Indigenous Child Wellbeing Research Network
Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions	Liam Sharp, Liam Sharp Photography	Sisters of Service
Canadian Human Rights Commission	Manitoba First Nations CFS Gala Committee	SNAICC (Australia)
Canadian Labour Congress	Many Hands One Dream Coalition	Stikeman Elliott, LLP
Canadian Paediatric Society	Maurina Beadle and Philippa Pictou	Tammy Morgan
Canadian Teachers' Federation	McGill University	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
Carleton University	Melanie Vincent	The Bryce Family
Clarke Child and Family Law	National Centre for Truth & Reconciliation	United Food and Commercial Workers Union
Counselling Foundation of Canada	National Film Board	UNICEF
CUPE	National Indian Child Welfare Association	UNIFOR
Editorial Board of First Peoples Child & Family Review	Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, Ontario	University of Alberta
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario	Ontario Public Services Employees Union	University of Ottawa
Elder Elmer Courchene	Ousley, Hanvey and Deep, LLP	University of Toronto
Extremeline Productions	Power Law	University of Victoria
Factor Inwentash, Faculty of Social Work		Vancouver Foundation
Feathers of Hope		Web Kitchen

Key Accomplishments for 2014/2015

- The Caring Society, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, KAIROS and Project of Heart worked with communities across Canada to plant over 6,000 hearts in memory of children lost in residential schools during the Honouring Memories; Planting Dreams event.
- 1000 hearts were planted in a beautiful garden at Rideau Hall as part of the closing ceremony for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
- Closing arguments were heard in the Canadian Human Rights Case on First Nations Child Welfare on October 20–24, 2015.
- Over 400 children gathered on Parliament Hill to celebrate Have a Heart Day for First Nations children and thousands joined in across Canada.
- Published two volumes of the *First Peoples Child & Family Review* featuring children's views on reconciliation and a special edition on custom adoption.
- An independent evaluation of the Caring Society's reconciliation work demonstrates high quality and impact.
- Completed over 100 presentations across Canada and in the United States and Australia.

Please support the Caring Society by becoming a member or making a donation online at **fncaringociety.com**

About Us

Building on the interest of First Nations child and family services leaders to create a national networking organization, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada (the Caring Society) was developed at the Squamish First Nation in 1998 at a national meeting of First Nations child and family service agencies (FNCFSA). Meeting delegates agreed that a national non-profit organization was required to provide research, policy, professional development and networking to support First Nations child and family service agencies in caring for First Nations children, youth and families. An interim board was elected and the plan was approved at a second national meeting at Kingsclear First Nation in 1999.

Using a reconciliation framework that educates and engages First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples, the Caring Society provides quality resources to support First Nations communities to ensure the wellbeing of their children, youth and families. The award-winning Caring Society proudly works with our partners in Canada and around the world to promote the rights of Indigenous children.

The Caring Society Board of Directors

Raymond Shingoose	President, Yorkton Tribal Council Child and Family Services
Kenn Richard	Vice-President, Native CFS of Toronto
Bill Gillespie	Treasurer, Elder
Theresa Stevens	Board Member, Anishinaabe Abinoojii Family Services
Mary Teegee	Board Member, Carrier Sekani Family Services
Landon Pearson	Board Member, Carleton University
Judy Levi	Board Member, Representative for New Brunswick
Derek Montour	Board Member, Kahnawake Shakotia Takehnhas Community Services
Joan Glode	Board Member, Elder



The Caring Society Staff

Cindy Blackstock	Executive Director
Andrea Auger	Research and Reconciliation
Courtney Powless	Community Engagement and Education
Kayla Power	Office Administrator

The Caring Society also acknowledges the contributions of **Tammy Morgan**, **Jennifer King** and **Brittany Martell** for their dedication and service to the Caring Society and First Nations children, youth and families.

Projects and Services: The Caring Society at Work

First Peoples Child & Family Review



Children and youth engagement is an essential part of our work at the Caring Society. In October 2014, we proudly published a special issue of the *First Peoples Child & Family Review* (FPCFR) featuring the voices and perspectives of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and youth from across Canada. This edition features twenty-six publications on the importance of reconciliation and equity for First Nations children and youth. All publications were framed within the Touchstones of Hope reconciliation process: truth telling, acknowledging, restoring, and relating. As this issue was child and youth focused, we invited children and youth to draw the cover, to write two of the three editorials and to peer review all submissions. In October 2014, we launched the issue with Pierre Elliot Trudeau Elementary School in Gatineau.

In early 2015, we launched a special issue on custom adoption in collaboration with the Siem Smun'eem Indigenous Child Wellbeing Research Network at the University of Victoria. Publications included research highlighting historical and contemporary perspectives on custom adoption, as well as cultural perspectives and personal stories.

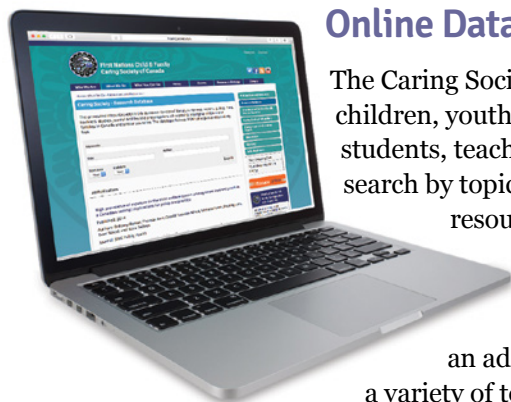
We are currently reviewing submissions for the second 2015 issue of FPCFR on the theme of reconciliation. This edition, produced in collaboration with the National Indian Child Welfare Association in the United States, will be released this fall to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Touchstones of Hope for Indigenous Children, Youth and Families.

Planning for the 2016 year is already underway. We are planning a general call for manuscripts and an issue on the 60's Scoop and child welfare. The FPCFR promotes accessibility and Indigenous languages by welcoming submissions in English, French and Indigenous languages (with English or French translation) as well as recorded publications via video or audio.

All current and archived publications are available at journals.sfu.ca/fpcfr/index.php/FPCFR/index. We welcome new reviewers and authors.

The Editorial Board would like to thank all authors, reviewers and others who have continuously supported and contributed to the FPCFR.

Online Database



The Caring Society hosts one of the largest free resource databases on Aboriginal children, youth and families in Canada. The database is a great resource for students, teachers, researchers and the general public. Database users can search by topic, title or author and locate annotated descriptions of relevant resources. Although the database does not include full copies of the resources, the annotations do provide the information needed to access a copy via libraries, by visiting the URL or contacting the publisher. From September 2014 to August 2015, we added an additional 20 resources including reports and publications on a variety of topics related to Indigenous peoples like health, child welfare, justice, children's rights, structural interventions and promising practices.

Search the free database at fncaringsociety.com/publications/search



Touchstones of Hope

2015 marks a special year for reconciliation with the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)'s final report and many commitments to reconciliation by organizations across the country. It also marks the 10th anniversary of the Touchstones of Hope for Indigenous children, youth and families, a reconciliation framework intended to guide work with Indigenous children and families. The Touchstones framework was originally developed for Indigenous child welfare, however, the five Touchstones principles (culture and language, self-determination, non-discrimination, structural interventions and holistic approach), have been adapted to other disciplines and organizations. We are pleased that the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW), the largest private sector union in Canada, use the Touchstones principles to educate their workers on Indigenous issues as well as create a platform for respectfully working with peoples of all cultures. Another milestone for Touchstones this past year was the adoption of the Touchstones by the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences to guide their work in a way that honours Indigenous peoples and includes more Indigenous views and dialogue in their work.

As reconciliation in Canada is being more widely talked about following the TRC report, we encourage organizations to explore the Touchstones of Hope principles to guide work with Indigenous communities. The movement is about supporting community visions, interpreted within the unique contexts of Indigenous communities, for healthy Indigenous children and communities, while undergoing a reconciliation process of truth telling, acknowledging, restoring, and relating.

Our public engagement activities with the Touchstones of Hope have been widely received. In November 2014, Andrea Auger collaborated with the Saskatchewan Ministry of Social Services (MSS) to provide two Touchstones of Hope "champion" sessions with Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants working in both the MSS and First Nations child and family service agencies. Saskatchewan now has over 30 Touchstones of Hope trainers.

In January 2015, Cindy Blackstock worked in partnership with the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) to provide a full day training event on Touchstones of Hope for approximately 20 NICWA staff to prepare them to expand the Touchstones of Hope movement throughout the United States. She also delivered a presentation to over 200 delegates attending a conference in Yellowknife, Northwest Territory on the Touchstones of Hope movement as well as structural interventions in child welfare for challenges like poverty.

In order to make information on the Touchstones of Hope more accessible to people across Canada and around the world, the Caring Society created a free online webinar. This webinar provides an overview of the Touchstones of Hope movement goals, implementation and results. The presentation also provides guidance on how to adapt the Touchstones of Hope principles and reconciliation process for other contexts. We hope to generate more interest in the movement since the momentum of the reconciliation movement seems to be growing. Watch the free webinar at: [youtube.com/watch?v=ayDkk6AgWck](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ayDkk6AgWck)

We acknowledge the generous support of the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation in supporting our Touchstones of Hope reconciliation initiative

Independent Evaluation of Caring Society's Reconciliation Work

I'm definitely more open minded towards social justice issues and I realize the power that just talking to other people about the issues can have.

—Youth participant in the evaluation

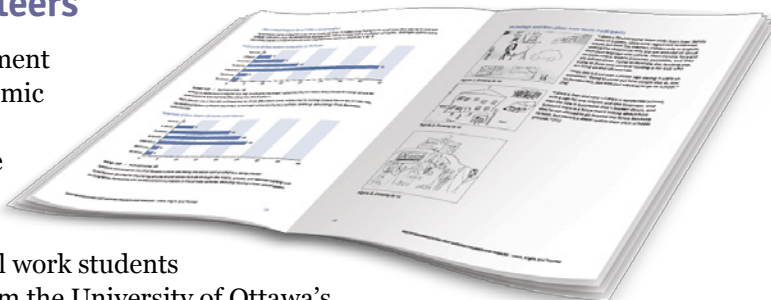
From September 2014 until July 2015, a team of Master of Social Work students from Carleton University, under the supervision of Dr. Anje van de Sande, completed an evaluation on the effectiveness of the Caring Society's reconciliation and equity initiatives relating to I am a Witness, Jordan's Principle and Shannen's Dream. The evaluation was guided by an advisory committee composed of teachers, students, and staff persons from KAIROS and from the Caring Society. Research included collecting data through a national survey as well as a focus group with youth in the Ottawa area. Sixty-eight respondents who were familiar with the Caring Society's work completed the survey including Elders, youth, students, educators, parents, politicians and members of the general public. The evaluation's findings show the Caring Society is having a significant and positive impact in terms of public education and engagement in reconciliation. These impacts include respectful engagement of children and young people in reconciliation. One of the main recommendations from the report was to increase the diffusion of information and ways to make a difference using mainstream media, through mobilizing additional people to speak about the issues affecting First Nations communities and through social media. Another recommendation came from the youth focus group that there needs to be specific activities to engage youth of high school age.

The evaluation report, *Reconciliation and equity movements for First Nations children and families: An evaluation of Shannen's Dream, Jordan's Principle and I am a Witness*, is available at: fncaringsociety.com/publications/reconciliation-and-equity-movements-evaluation

A special thank you goes to Christina Anglin, Zahide Alaca, Krystal-Jyl Thomas, Adje Van Sande and the research advisory committee and to the Sisters of Service for making this evaluation possible!

Student Placement and Volunteers

Each year, the Caring Society hosts placement students from various domains and academic institutions. We are grateful to be consistently given the opportunity to have extra help in the office as well as mentor students in their learning. During the 2014/2015 year, we welcomed three social work students from Carleton University, one student from the University of Ottawa's Community Service Learning program and a McGill University law student. We offer our most sincere "thank you" to these students, placement supervisors and the universities for helping us make a difference for First Nations children and their families.



In addition, we would like to thank all of the dedicated volunteers who devoted their time and energy to helping out with Have a Heart Day and Honouring Memories; Planting Dreams.

The Caring Society team looks forward with excitement to meeting new students and volunteers in the coming year!

Coming Soon! Online Indigenous Kids' Rights Path

The Caring Society acknowledges the generous support of the Law Foundation of Ontario in creating an online human rights website and accompanying resources. Through this initiative, our goal is to provide information about First Nations children's rights in Canada by identifying international and domestic laws, treaties and norms affecting First Nations children's rights, as well as provide resources for Ontario, Canada and abroad. The website will be tested by children and youth as well as other Caring Society partners to ensure that it is accessible, comprehensive and easy to use. This youth friendly website will be launched on November 20, 2015 for the Universal Children's Day.

Website and Online Learning Resources

The Caring Society has one of the most resource rich websites on Indigenous children in the world and we are always looking for ways to increase quality content and improve access. In addition to regular website updates and social media postings, the Caring Society has made it easier to donate, become a member, and learn about Caring Society programs online.

Streamlining Donations and Memberships for More Impactful Giving

In summer 2015, the Caring Society introduced secure donation and membership application processes on the Caring Society website. The centralization of these processes will reduce the demand on staff time for membership management and outreach, provide more control over donation management, and reduce processing fees for online payments through a third party platform. This will result in more impactful giving—98 per cent of funds received will directly support the work of the Caring Society.

The Caring Society will continue to accept membership applications and donations over the phone or by mail to accommodate individuals who lack access to a computer or the Internet.

The donation and membership pages can be found at the following web addresses:

Donate: **fncaringsociety.com/donate**

Become a Member: **fncaringsociety.com/becomeamember**

Expanding our Reach through Webinars and Online Training

This past year, we expanded our national reach through the delivery of webinars and online training sessions. See our first training video "Touchstone of Hope: Information Session" on the Caring Society website: **fncaringsociety.com/touchstones-hope-gallery-and-resources**

You can also find the video on our YouTube channel: **youtube.com/user/fncaringsociety/videos**

"I am a witness" Vignettes Raise Awareness about First Nations Child Welfare Case

Cindy Blackstock, Justice Murray Sinclair and other caring, compassionate Canadians speak about equality, justice and reconciliation in "I am a witness" vignettes, available on the Caring Society website. Produced in collaboration by KAIROS Canada and Extremeline Productions, the videos were created to raise awareness about the First Nations child welfare case currently awaiting the final ruling from the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal.

To view and share the videos, visit the "I am a witness" page of Caring Society website: **fncaringsociety.com/i-am-witness-media-gallery**, or the Caring Society YouTube channel: **youtube.com/user/fncaringsociety/videos**



First Nations Children's Action Research and Education Service (fncaringsociety.com/fncares)

June 2014 marked the completion of the second year of operation for the First Nations Children's Action Research and Education Service (FNCARES), a partnership between the University of Alberta and the Caring Society.

Using a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach, and drawing on well-established research on the structural drivers of disadvantage for First Nations children, youth, and families, FNCARES is committed to translating this research into pragmatic, community-based solutions that improve safety, well-being, and success for First Nations children and youth.

FNCARES has active collaborations with over 20 researchers throughout Canada, the USA and Australia in fields as diverse as economics, community development, education, law, social work and First Nations studies. Along with research, we also organize public events to educate about the structural drivers of disadvantage and promote further discussion and action to ensure culturally based equity for First Nations children and youth.

Activities Carried Out This Year

Educational Seminars

- Information and Privacy seminar presented in collaboration with Faculty of Extension Colleague Wayne MacDonald.

Research in Progress

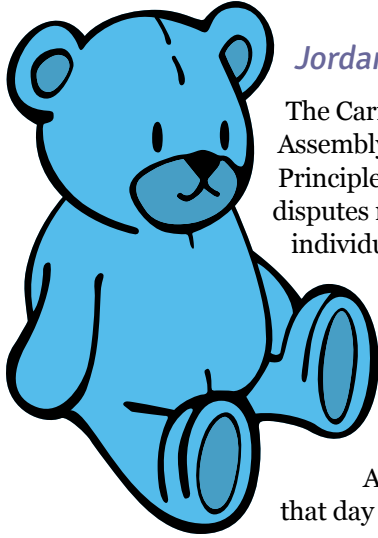
- *What Works? A Literature Review on First Nations Child Poverty and Intervention Trials.* Supported by a grant from the Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta and by the University of Alberta Grant Assists Program
- Co-Investigators on the SSHRC-funded project *Building Research Capacity with First Nations and Mainstream Youth Protection Services in Quebec*
- Collaborators on SSHRC-funded project *Exploring the rights of the First Nations child through the arts: Our dreams matter too* with Dr. Mary-Elizabeth Manley of York University.

Research Grants

- *The First Peoples Child & Family Review* is an interdisciplinary, peer reviewed, free e-journal that focuses primarily on First Peoples and Aboriginal child welfare administration, practices, policies and research. This past year we were honoured to receive a three-year grant from the *SSHRC Aid to Scholarly Journals Grant* to support the *First Peoples Child & Family Review*.

Child and Youth Rights

The Caring Society believes all children, including First Nations children, have a right to grow up safely in their families, go to good schools, be healthy, and be proud of who they are. These rights are enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The Canadian Government has ratified the UNCRC and has expressed support for UNDRIP and thus we work actively to ensure the realization of these rights for First Nations children, youth and families.



Jordan's Principle (jordansprinciple.ca)

The Caring Society has worked with the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and Norway House Cree Nation to promote Jordan's Principle. This child first principle to resolving governmental jurisdictional disputes regarding funding for children's services has been endorsed by over 9,300 individuals and organizations. In May of 2007, MP Jean Crowder (NDP) tabled a private members motion in the House of Commons in support of Jordan's Principle. On December 12, 2007, Private Members Motion 296 in support of Jordan's Principle was passed unanimously by the House of Commons. Jordan's father, Ernest Anderson and his older sister, Jerlene, were joined by other children and families from Norway House in the gallery of the House of Commons to witness this historic moment.

As Ernest Anderson so rightly pointed out the good done in Jordan's name that day would be nothing but a moral victory unless the provincial and federal governments implemented it. Unfortunately, the Federal Government of Canada's response to Jordan's Principle narrows it to apply only to children with complex medical needs with multiple service providers and excludes disputes among federal government departments.

This past year, the Caring Society re-organized the Jordan's Principle website to make it easier to navigate, and published a new information sheet on the role of Jordan's Principle in the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal case on First Nations child welfare. We were pleased to promote an excellent research report on Jordan's Principle entitled "Without denial, delay or disruption: ensuring First Nations children access to equitable services through Jordan's Principle." This report was prepared by the Assembly of First Nations, UNICEF, the Canadian Paediatric Society, and researchers at McGill University, the University of Manitoba and the University of Michigan. It confirms that governments have not implemented Jordan's Principle properly resulting in ongoing service delays, denials and disruptions for First Nations children and recommends reforms to ensure all children receive full benefit from Jordan's Principle. You can read the full report here: **health.afn.ca/uploads/files/jordans_principle_english.pdf**

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada listed the proper implementation and adoption of Jordan's Principle among its top three calls for action. In response to this call, the Legislature for the Province of Manitoba passed a unanimous motion in support of Jordan's Principle this past summer!

Jordan's Principle is supported by close to 9,300 people and organizations making it one of the most broadly supported child rights initiatives in Canadian history. The Caring Society has just released an updated information sheet on Jordan's Principle which is available in French and English.

Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on First Nations Child Welfare (fnwitness.ca)

Allegation Before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal

In February of 2007, the Caring Society and the Assembly of First Nations filed a complaint alleging that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada's provision of First Nations child and family services was flawed, inequitable and thus discriminatory under the *Canadian Human Rights Act*.



The Feathers of Hope youth group at the Tribunal Closing Arguments (October, 2014)

The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (chrt-tcdp.gc.ca)

The Tribunal adjudicates complaints filed under the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. The Tribunal has the authority to make a legal determination of discrimination and order remedies.

Parties to the Proceeding

Complainants: First Nations Child and Family Caring Society & Assembly of First Nations

Commission: Canadian Human Rights Commission (representing the public interest)

Respondent: Attorney General of Canada (representing the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC))

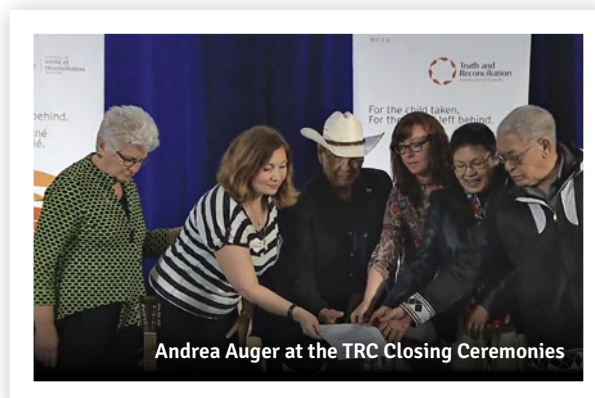
Interested Parties: Chiefs of Ontario & Amnesty International

Case History

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) requires First Nations child and family service agencies to operate pursuant to provincial/territorial child welfare laws. The federal government controls the nature and extent of child welfare delivery on reserve through a variety of policies, programs and funding regimes. Internal AANDC reviews and Auditor General of Canada reports (2008, 2011) found AANDC's flawed and inequitable approaches contribute to growing numbers of First Nations children in child welfare care. The complaint was filed in the best interests of First Nations children after AANDC failed to implement two solutions it jointly developed with First Nations.

The Federal Government Response to the Case

The Federal Government denies the allegations and has spent over 3 million dollars in its unsuccessful efforts to get the case dismissed on technical grounds arguing that child welfare services delivered to First Nations should not be compared to those delivered to all other Canadians (known as the comparator argument) and that funding is not a service pursuant to the *Canadian Human Rights Act* (known as the service argument).



Hearing Evidence

The Tribunal began hearing testimony from 25 witnesses (18 for the Commission and the Complainants and 7 for the Attorney General) on February 25, 2013 and concluded on May 30, 2014. Final arguments on the case were heard on October 20–24, 2015. Approximately 500 documents were filed as evidence during the proceedings. This case will set an important precedent for addressing inequitable Federal Government service delivery to First Nations peoples in other areas such as education, health, housing, and water.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Lists Child Welfare as Number One Call to Action

In June of 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation listed child welfare reform and the need for adequate resources as the *number one* Call for Action. This reinforces the importance of the Caring Society's engagement in the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal hearings. You can read the TRC Calls to Action here: trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

New Resources

Thanks to ISI Global, the final closing arguments for the case were web-cast to 194 locations across Canada and around the world including England, South Africa, Scotland, the United States, and Spain. The average length of time that people watched was 1:41 hours. The webcast has been archived on the fnwitness.ca website as a learning resource.

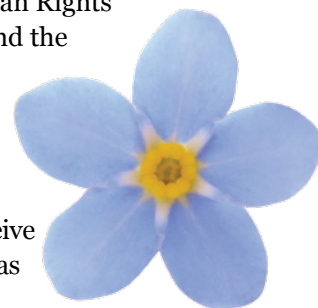
The Caring Society also published updated briefing notes in both official languages on the case.

Next Steps and More Information

The ruling in the children's case is expected in 2015. For updates and more information visit fnwitness.ca

In Appreciation

The Caring Society would like to express our deepest appreciation to our legal team: Robert Grant, Gall, Legge, Grant & Munroe; Sebastien Grammond, University of Ottawa Faculty of Law; Anne Levesque, David Taylor and Michael Sabet of Power Law; and Sarah Clarke, Clarke Child and Family Law. We also acknowledge the significant contributions of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, the Assembly of First Nations, Amnesty International Canada and the Chiefs of Ontario in ensuring the very best case for the children was placed before the Tribunal for their consideration.



Shannen's Dream (shannensdream.ca)

The Auditor General of Canada has found that First Nations children do not receive equitable education funding on reserves and the Parliamentary Budget Officer has raised serious concerns about the condition of many on reserve schools. On the ground, these inequities mean First Nations children often have fewer teachers, books, learning resources and many go to run down schools or live in communities where there is no school at all. These inequities have persisted for many years, so thousands of First Nations and other children and youth are joining the Shannen's Dream campaign to educate Canadians and promote positive change. This child and youth led movement was started by teen education champion Shannen Koostachin of Attawapiskat First Nation, who wanted "safe and comfy schools" and equitable education for First Nations children.

Shannen never went to a proper school. The only school in her community sat on a site contaminated by diesel fuel located beside an active airstrip. The school was closed by health officials in 2000, so the federal government brought up portable trailers and put them on the playground of the contaminated school. Over time the condition of the portables deteriorated, making learning almost impossible. The children of Attawapiskat thought that if the federal government heard first-hand how bad things were they would build a new school and provide equitable education. Shannen helped organize the younger children in her community to write letters to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and she created YouTube videos inviting non-Aboriginal children to join the letter writing campaign. Thousands of children responded and joined the letter writing campaign.

Shannen was mindful of all the other First Nations children who did not have good schools so she vowed to continue the campaign. For her efforts, Shannen was one of 45 children in the world to be nominated for the International Children's Peace Prize awarded by the Nobel Laureates. Tragically, Shannen passed away in a traffic accident in 2010. Inspired by Shannen's passionate message, the Caring Society proudly partnered with Shannen's family, community and many supporters to launch Shannen's Dream on Wednesday, November 17, 2010 in Ottawa. Shannen's Dream calls on caring Canadians of all ages, especially children and youth, to sign up to support Shannen's call for

safe and comfy schools and culturally based, equitable education. Thanks to the children's efforts, a new school opened in the fall of 2014 in Attawapiskat! The community chose the school name Kattawapiskak, which means "people of the partings rocks."

It has been another great year for Shannen's Dream! There are now over 11,432 Shannen's Dream supporters, children across Canada continue to be inspired by her example. Charlie Angus recently released a book on Shannen Koostachin entitled *Children of a Broken Treaty: Canada's Lost Promise and One Girl's Dream*. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission also noted the importance of providing all children in Canada with a proper education on Aboriginal peoples and residential schools. The growing number of resources on the Shannen's Dream website, **ShannensDream.ca** assists educators in bringing education to students in ways that promote positive citizenship and engagement in reconciliation. Look for new learning resources in the coming year that provide historical information on residential schools in ways that better position children today to engage in critical thinking, learning and reconciliation.

Progress has been made, but there's still more to do. Thousands of First Nations children are still attending unsafe schools, without a proper education. In the 2011 AFN School Survey, 47% of First Nations schools surveyed self-identified the need for a new building.¹ Of those schools, over 60% have been waiting for five years or more. Shannen's Dream is about ensuring that every First Nation child has a safe and comfy school and quality education.

Interested in learning how to nurture reconciliation and student citizenship in your area? Check out Shannen's Dream, Jordan's Principle, and I am Witness school resource pages for resources and examples of learning in action: **fncaringssociety.com/shannens-dream-school-resources**

Honouring Memories; Planting Dreams

The Caring Society was honoured to partner with Rideau Hall, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, KAIROS and Project of Heart to present Honouring Memories; Planting Dreams as part of the TRC Closing event in Ottawa in June of 2015. Children and young people across Canada were invited to create hearts in memory of children lost in residential schools and as a public demonstration of their commitment to reconciliation. The children placed the hearts on planting stakes and planted them at their home, schools, and communities. Over 500 of the hearts were sent to Ottawa to join over 500 additional hearts made by local school students. The hearts were then planted on the grounds of Rideau Hall by children, residential school survivors and TRC dignitaries during the closing ceremonies of the TRC.

It was a beautiful ceremony on Rideau Hall featuring First Nations children drumming and singing, Metis youth playing the fiddle and performing the jig and Inuit children throat singing. The



¹ Assembly of First Nations. (2012). *2011 AFN School Survey Results*. Retrieved from Education: <http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education2/education-survey-results.pdf>

event also included a girls' choir performing the song "Sing" by Gary Barlow. The whole planting event happened as children blew bubbles representing the dreams for reconciliation.

We would like to thank the children, youth, families and community members who planted over 7,300 hearts in 200 heart gardens across Canada.

Have a Heart Day: February 14, 2015

Have a Heart Day is a national, annual event to educate children on the rights First Nations children have under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and engage them in respectful citizenship actions to ensure First Nations children have an equitable chance to grow up safely at home, get a

good education, be healthy, and proud of their cultures. People of all ages can participate by either hosting a party on February 14 to raise awareness, sending a Have a Heart Day postcard to elected leaders, or by spreading the word through social media, like YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. Like all Caring Society activities, participation is designed to be fun, free, respectful, non-partisan and easy to do.



National Chiefs past and present and children at Have a Heart day 2015.

The Caring Society supports Have a Heart Day celebrations across Canada with free education and event resources available on the event web page. The event page also offers a gallery with links to videos and other resources to support video and audio learning preferences. Have a Heart Day would not be possible

without the generous support of our partners, such as the labour movement, professional teachers' organizations, Project of Heart, KAIROS and Amnesty International Canada.

This past year, participants across Canada celebrated love and fairness by taking part in Have a Heart Day for First Nations children. Over 400 e-valentines were sent, along with countless letters from events across the country. In Ottawa, over 400 children and young people from Ontario and Quebec gathered on Parliament Hill for the Have a Heart Day celebration.

Our Dreams Matter Too: June 2015

Like Have a Heart Day, Our Dreams Matter Too is an annual, national event educating students on reconciliation, citizenship and culturally based equity for First Nations children. It is another opportunity for people of all ages to stand with First Nations children to ensure they receive proper services that make them feel proud of who they are. Children, families, schools, communities, and agencies are encouraged to research the situation of First Nations children and get involved by writing letters to elected officials so that First Nations children can grow up safely at home, get a good education, be healthy, and be proud of who they are.



This year the Our Dreams Matter Too walk coincided with Honouring Memories; Planting Dreams providing people with two reconciliation activity options. We would like to thank the over 1,500 people across Canada who participated in the Our Dreams Matter Too walk to educate Canadians

about the need for culturally based equity for First Nations children, youth and families and we look forward to next year! The Caring Society provides a variety of materials to help promote events on the event web page, including: posters, bookmarks, buttons, a sample letter, tips for organizing a walk in your community and much more.

The Caring Society would like to extend a sincere and heartfelt thank you to all those who took part in Have a Heart Day, Honouring Memories; Planting Dreams and Our Dreams Matter Too this year. Your dedication to learning and citizenship matters and truly makes a difference!

Future Directions

Our vision of Canada is one where all First Nations children are loved, respected and honoured. We know just what to do to make that vision a reality and it will require the education and active engagement of caring Canadians and organizations to make it happen. Over the next year we look forward to making the following visions a reality:

- Launch the Indigenous Kids' Rights Path
- Produce a children's video on how to learn about and engage in reconciliation
- Publish two editions of the *First Peoples Child & Family Review* and continue updating the online database.
- Promote the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action relevant to First Nations children, youth and families
- Support First Nations child and family service agencies, governments and stakeholders' engagement in the Touchstones of Hope Movement.
- Publish a comprehensive literature review on the effects of poverty on Indigenous children and best practices for remediating poverty.
- Continue to participate in the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on First Nations Child Welfare and look forward to a ruling in 2015!
- Developing more educational resources for Shannen's Dream, Jordan's Principle and the promotion of children's engagement in research and positive social change.
- Host Have a Heart Day and Our Dreams Matter Too for another year!

A warm thank you to our members, volunteers and the many thousands of caring citizens of all ages who have joined the effort to ensure culturally based equity for First Nations children, youth and their families.

Want to Make A Difference for Aboriginal Children?

Go to **fncaringsociety.com** to learn more and join the movement for culturally based equity for First Nations children, young people and families. You will find seven ways you can make a difference for Aboriginal children and youth in under 15 minutes. Also, think about supporting the Caring Society by becoming a member or making an online donation at **fncaringsociety.com/donating-caring-society**

7 free ways
to make a
difference

fncaringsociety.com



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