



FIRST NATIONS CHILD & FAMILY CARING SOCIETY OF CANADA

ANNUAL REPORT 2012/2013



First Nations Child & Family
Caring Society of Canada

Please note that this annual report reflects activities from September 2012 to August 2013

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Honoring

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 2012/2013. Special thanks to children and youth throughout Canada who are standing with First Nations children and families and to:

Alanis Obomsawin	Georges Vanier Catholic School	National Indian Child Welfare Association
Amnesty International Canada	Human Concern International	Northern BC Touchstones
Ashoka Foundation	Indigenous Bar Association	Advisory Committee
Assembly of First Nations	Indigenous Physicians Association	Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, Ontario
Anderson Family, Norway	Irving Shipbuilder	Ontario Arts Council
House Cree Nation	John Paul II CSS	Ontario Public Services Employees Union
Bentall Corporation	J.W. McConnell Family Foundation	Ontario Principals Council (OPC)
Canadian Auto Workers Union	KAIROS Canada	Ousley, Hanvey and Deep, LLP
Canadian Coalition on the Rights of the Child	Andrew Koostachin, Jenny Nakogee and Family	Paul Champ Law
Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions	Leah Gryfe Designs	Project of Heart
Canadian Journalists for Free Expression	Liam Sharp, Liam Sharp Photography	Public Service Alliance of Canada
Canadian Paediatric Society	Manitoba First Nations CFS Gala Committee	The Printing House
Canadian Teachers' Federation	Many Hands One Dream Coalition	Sandy Tunwell Accounting
Carleton University	McGill University Faculty of Law	Saskatchewan Child Advocate
Communications Energy & Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEPUC)	McGill University School of Social Work	School District No. 83
Counselling Foundation of Canada	Melisa Brittain	SNAICC (Australia)
CUPE	Melanie Vincent	Stikeman Elliott, LLP
Editorial Board of First Peoples Review	Morning Star Middle School	Sisters of Service
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario	National Union	Harold Tarbell
First Nations Technical Institute	National Association of Friendship Centres	United Food and Commercial Workers Union
Factor Inwentash, Faculty of Social Work	National Collaborating Centre on Aboriginal Health	UNICEF
First Call	National Film Board	University of Alberta
		University of Ottawa
		York University

The Caring Society Made a Difference for Children in 2012/2013

The Caring Society, in collaboration with our partners and many members of the public has been proud to achieve the following in 2012/2013:

- Launched our newly redesigned website in January 2013 increasing the number of resources and ease of navigation.
- Completed over 200 presentations in Canada, the United States, Norway, New Zealand and Australia to over 10,000 people.
- Began historic hearings in February 2013 at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal to determine if the federal government's provision of First Nations child welfare is discriminatory. This historic case could end decades of unequal treatment for children (www.fnwitness.ca).
- Witnessed the Federal Court of Appeal dismiss Canada's effort to overturn the Federal Court decision clearing the way for hearings at the Tribunal to proceed.
- Engaged thousands of children and young people throughout Canada to stand with First Nations children so they can have the same chance to grow up safely at home, be healthy, go to good schools and be proud of who they are.
- Continued our work on the implementation of Jordan's Principle and Shannen's Dream.
- Collaborated with First Nations and the Government of Saskatchewan to launch the Touchstones of Hope: Reconciliation in Child Welfare movement in that region.
- Published the First Peoples Child and Family Review and updated our research database.
- The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society is the only national organization focusing on Indigenous children, youth and families.
- The Caring society has two full time staff, two part time staff and many volunteers.

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

Did You Know?

- The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada is an independent organization that receives no federal government funding.
- Website hits to fncaringsociety.com have increased 126 percent since 2009. This year we welcomed over 10 million hits making it the most visited website resource for First Nations children, youth and families.
- Close to 40,000 registered individual and organizational supporters of our various campaigns represent the support of millions of people in Canada who want to see a better future for First Nations children, youth and families.
- We have done over 170 presentations last year to educate the public on First Nations children, youth and families.
- We shipped 245 information packages to people across Canada last year.
- Jordan's Principle and Shannen's Dream are two of the most widely supported child policies in Canadian history.
- The Caring Society takes pride in the integrity of our financial management and consistently has clean financial audits.

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 (FNCFSAs). 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.



Using a reconciliation framework that respectfully engages First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples, the Caring Society provides high quality resources to support First Nations communities to support children, youth and families. The award winning Caring Society is proud to work with our partners in Canada and around the world to promote the rights of Indigenous children, youth and families.

The Caring Society Board of Directors

Elsie Flette, President
Southern First Nations Authority, Manitoba

Joan Glode, Vice President
Mi'kmaw Family and Children's Services

Bill Gillespie, Treasurer
Southern First Nations Authority, Manitoba

Raymond Shingoose, Board Member
Yorkton Tribal Council Child and Family Services

Derek Montour, Board Member
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Kenn Richard, Board Member
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Landon Pearson, Board Member
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Judy Levi, Board Member
First Nations agency delegate – New Brunswick

Mary Teegee, Board Member
Carrier Sekani Family Services

The Caring Society Staff

Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director, Ottawa

Tammy Morgan, Executive Assistant, Ottawa

Andrea Auger, Touchstones of Hope Coordinator, Ottawa

Jennifer King, Education and Public Engagement Coordinator, Ottawa

Mandate and Project Summary for 2012/2013

Research

- Collaboration with University of Alberta to create the First Nations Children's Action Research and Education Services (FNCARES)
- Published 2 two editions of the *First Peoples Child and Family Review*

Child Rights

- Jordan's Principle
- Shannen's Dream
- Human rights case on First Nations Child Welfare
- Have a Heart Day and Our Dreams Matter Too walks for equity
- Collaborated with children and educators to produce *Letters to Canada* film that has been viewed over 7,000 times since its release in February 2013

Education

- Quarterly newsletter
- Added over 50 new articles to the database
- Redesigned the website and maintained the Caring Society YouTube channel
- Redesign of Caring Society Facebook pages
- Touchstones of Hope presentations/workshops in Saskatchewan and Ontario

Projects and Services: Living our Mission Statement

First Peoples Child and Family Review

2013 marks the 10th anniversary of the *First Peoples Child and Family Review* and we are celebrating by reformatting the journal for on line delivery to include a wider array of media formats. In 2012/2013, two issues of the journal were published (Volume 7, Numbers 1 and 2.)

We also have been working hard to transition the journal to a fully on line format and have redesigned the journal layout to improve its readability on mobile devices.

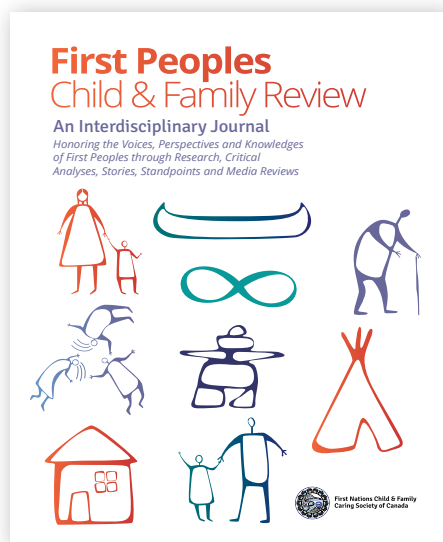
Looking forward to 2014, we are planning to publish an edition of the journal focusing on Aboriginal child and youth mental, spiritual and cultural health in collaboration with the Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research and a special edition featuring contributions by children and young people.

Administration and Event Support

The Caring Society has had a very active year! Our staff and students have been working hard on our campaigns and the Human Rights Tribunal. The hearings of this landmark case began February 25, 2013. We have had some positive outcomes and also some hurdles but we are not giving up on our justice system and we are working around the clock to make the sure the facts are presented in their truest form. We at the Caring Society are indebted to our

legal team at Champ & Associates, Stikeman Elliott. We would also like to acknowledge the contributions of the Assembly of First Nations, the Canadian Human Rights Commission, the Chiefs of Ontario and Amnesty International to this landmark children's rights case. Caring Society staff have been busy preparing for the

Canadian Human Rights Tribunal as well as our many public education and engagement campaigns such as Shannen's Dream, I Am a Witness, Jordan's Principle and the Touchstones of Hope. We are happy to announce that our Have a Heart Day and Our Dreams Matter Too walk have become annual events and have been supported by organizations and schools in provinces/territories across Canada. What a way for all of us to unite Canada!



Here are a few interesting things we have been working on:

- Dr. Blackstock has provided 171 different presentations/keynotes all over the world since April 1, 2012. We have adapted some new procedures for inviting and booking Dr. Blackstock for presentations. If you would like to have Dr. Blackstock come and speak at your event please find the form at: www.fncaresociety.com/presentation-request
- Dr. Blackstock travelled a total of five times to the following International locations:
 - Sweden – 2012 Joint World Conference

- Wellington, New Zealand – New Zealand Public Health Association Conference
- Darwin, Yirrkala, Brisbane and Sydney, Australia – Community workshops and presentations

- One of our qualified students had our organization set up with CanadaHelps in 2008 which allowed us to accept online donations for a nominal fee. We are pleased to let you know that over the past fiscal year we received over 400 generous donations from people and organizations across Canada. Thank you for your support!
- We would like to express our gratitude to our nearly 200 members who support the Caring Society in conducting its work.

If you are not a member of the Caring Society, please join at: www.fncaringsociety.com/become-member

- This past year the Caring Society shipped over 245 packages of educational material such as books, bookmarks or buttons and newsletters to individuals, schools/ universities and community organizations so they can learn more about First Nations children, youth and families.
- The staff members are very excited to announce that we have transformed the format of our Caring Across Boundaries Exhibit featuring photography by Liam Sharp from an exhibit of 40 large panels to a roll up banner format that is easier to set up and more economical to ship to locations across the country. If you would like to book our Photo Exhibit for display at an event or your organization please visit our website at: www.fncaringsociety.com/hosting-caring-across-boundaries-photo-exhibition or contact us at info@fncaringsociety.com
- We would like to express our appreciation to the Board of Directors who guided us in

the development and publication of our new strategic directions at: fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/38065%20strategic%20directions%20v3f.pdf

- We would also like to welcome our two newest Board Members, Derek Montour and Mary Teegee. Derek is the Director at Kahnawake Shakotia'takehnhas and Mary is the Director at Carrier Sekani Family Services.

Caring Society Website Gets a Makeover!

Visitors to the Caring Society website saw big changes in 2012/2013. Building on the advice of volunteers with expertise in communications, the Caring Society substantially redesigned the website making it easier to locate the information using either a mobile or desktop device. In the redesign process, Caring Society staff worked with graphic designer Leah Gryfe and Web Kitchen to redesign the programming and look of the Caring Society website.

Launched in January 2013, our new website features not only technical improvements, but refreshed design and branding. The new



design is based on the Caring Society logo (designed in 1999 by artist Wade Baker), and incorporates a fresh colour scheme reflecting the hopeful and uplifting nature our work. The new website was also designed to support Caring Society staff to manage and edit virtually all content in-house thus further reducing our IT expenses. Staff can now make immediate changes and updates to the site so that website visitors have the most current information available. This has proved especially important since the start of hearings in the First Nations child welfare case at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal in February 2013 as events change frequently. Also, given the importance of the case to all First Nations in Canada, it is essential that we provide timely and accurate information on the site.

First Nations Children's Action Research and Education Service
www.extension.ualberta.ca/research/institutes-and-centres/fncares

Over the last year, the Caring Society has proudly collaborated with the University of Alberta to establish FNCARES: First Nations Children's Action Research and Education Service. FNCARES is a research site devoted to translating the well-established research on the structural drivers of disadvantage for First Nations children and youth into pragmatic, community-based solutions.

Located at the University of Alberta's Faculty of Extension (Edmonton), FNCARES has established a multi-disciplinary network of 21 leading researchers and practitioners from across Canada, and from the U.S. and Australia. Initial consultations with research collaborators have determined that our first research focus will be on strategies for alleviating the effects

of child poverty in First Nations communities. Since poverty is at the root of all other structural risk factors—substandard housing, substance misuse, and underfunding in education, health services, and child welfare—addressing poverty first will enable the greatest possible change in all areas of structural disadvantage for First Nations children and youth.

FNCARES has developed a set of Guidelines for Ethical Research for carrying out projects that respect and support First Nations self-determination by engaging communities as partners and co-researchers from the earliest stages of project conception. This process ensures that First Nations priorities and interests determine project goals, and that the research process and outcomes will benefit the community in meaningful, discernible and lasting ways. We are especially dedicated to engaging children and youth in self-determined research, and developing practical tools to alleviate the multiple and deep effects of inequity on First Nations children and their families.

As part of our education initiative, we established a lecture series at the University of Alberta, and held our inaugural event on March 19, 2013. Cindy Blackstock presented on how researchers can respect First Nations cultures, ontology, worldview and self-determination in all research projects pertaining to First Nations. Over 60 people attended, and the diversity of the group (faculty, students, university staff, practitioners, and members of community organizations and government) indicates that there is a broad and large audience eager for more knowledge about our research and approach. We are currently planning for our second lecture for the fall of



First Nations Children's Action Research and Education Service

2013, and envision a series that will expand to four lectures per year, featuring both local and visiting experts in the field.

FNCARES has also created a bibliography of the existing research on structural risk for First Nations children and youth, and is currently collating the published research on strategies for poverty reduction in Indigenous communities worldwide. Our FNCARES website, which we launched in February, provides an important resource for research on the structural risks undermining the success of First Nations children and their families, and will feed into the growing resource material currently available on the Caring Society's Research Database. FNCARES is on both Facebook and Twitter, and continues to make connections locally and globally to carry out research and develop practices that promote the equity of First Nations children and youth.

Many thanks to the University of Alberta Faculty of Extension and FNCARES research assistant Dr. Melisa Brittain for their great work and support in the development and operation of FNCARES.

Research and Information Database

The Caring Society maintains a free annotated database on Aboriginal children, youth and families. The database currently has over 3,000 articles and we add up to 50 new articles each year.

Scholars, students and members of the public frequently use the database to inform their own research, write papers or learn more about Aboriginal children, youth and families in Canada. The database can be accessed at fncaringsociety.com/publications-database

Student Placement and Volunteers

The Caring Society welcomes the opportunity to provide learning and engagement for those pursuing post-secondary education. Placements and volunteer opportunities provide students with valuable experiences to build on and guide their professional and scholarly development. All Caring Society staff members take an active role to mentor students and volunteers to ensure that they receive optimal and meaningful experiences while at the organization. During the 2012/2013 year, the Caring Society proudly hosted two students from the University of Ottawa's Community Service Learning program, two social work students from Carleton University, one social work student from Lakehead University and two volunteers. As these students and volunteers have significantly contributed to the work we do at the Caring Society, we offer our heartfelt appreciation to them, their placement supervisors or coordinators and to the universities.

We would like to honour and thank the students from McGill, the University of Ottawa, volunteers from the Indigenous Bar Association and others who provided valuable assistance with the First Nations child welfare case. In addition, we recognize the dedicated volunteers who devoted their time and energy to helping out with Have a Heart Day and the Our Dreams Matter Too walk (despite the rain!). In the fall of 2013, staff members are looking forward to another great year with our students and volunteers!

Reconciliation in Child Welfare: Touchstones of Hope

The Touchstones of Hope movement is a community driven child welfare change process premised on five Touchstone principles (self-determination, holistic response, structural interventions, non-discrimination and culture and language). The process engages First Nations and other stakeholders to re-vision child welfare in a culturally based way and then supports the realization of that vision using sustainable change processes that are continually evaluated to inform the process of positive change for children. The movement was piloted with great success in British Columbia from 2008 to 2012. In concluding our collaboration with First Nations and the Province of British Columbia in 2012 on the Northern BC Touchstones of Hope movement, we reported back to participating First Nations Child and Family Service agencies, provincial government employees and other stakeholders on the evaluation completed by the University of Toronto. We also updated the Touchstones of Hopes CD toolkit which provides a comprehensive set of resources ranging from beginning a conversation on Touchstones to evaluating its impact. Thank you to everyone who participated in the Northern BC Touchstones of Hope movement and all the best to those continuing their important work for First Nations children, youth and families in northern BC!

In 2013, the Caring Society collaborated with organizations and agencies in Saskatchewan wanting to learn more about the Touchstones of Hope movement. In April, there was a Touchstones of Hope regional session in Saskatoon with First Nations child and

family service agencies, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and the Ministry of Social Services. In May, two community based organizations in Regina completed the Touchstones Train-the-Trainer program. The Caring Society looks forward to supporting this important work in Saskatchewan to ensure the full sustainability and impact of the Touchstones of Hope movement.

The Caring Society has also expanded the Touchstones of Hope section of the Caring Society website to include a new section on Reconciliation Initiatives across North America and regularly updates the site with current Touchstones of Hope initiatives and resources.



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 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

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 7,600 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 Jordan's Principle to apply only to children with complex medical needs. In keeping with Motion 296, we support the application of Jordan's Principle across all federal/provincial/territorial government services and will continue to work with our partners to ensure the full and proper implementation of Jordan's Principle.

While the Federal Government has repeatedly claimed that there have been no Jordan's Principle cases since 2010, research by Dr. Roberta Woodgate found evidence of multiple Jordan's Principle cases in Manitoba and reports of such cases from community members continue to arise across the country.

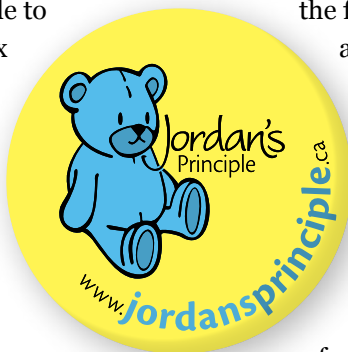
This past year the Federal Court found Canada had breached its obligation to implement Jordan's Principle in a case involving Jeremy, a youth from Pictou Landing First Nation, with significant medical needs. The teen's mother, Maurina Beadle, cared for the child with limited support until she suffered a traumatic stroke

when Jeremy was 15 years of age. The stroke was so severe she had difficulty walking and could not manage Jeremy's physical care. Health professionals assessed the family and recommended respite care for Jeremy while Maurina recovered. The Government of Canada suggested that Jeremy would only be entitled to the fixed amount of care set out in Nova Scotia policy. The Supreme Court of Nova Scotia had reviewed that policy and found that the care provided must be in accordance with the child's needs versus an arbitrary fixed value set by government officials. Canada discounted the application of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia's decision and set out several options for Maurina: (1) place Jeremy in an institution far away from his family (2) somehow secure

the funds via non-government sources and pay for his additional needs or (3) place Jeremy in child welfare care. Maurina rejected all of these suggestions as they were clearly not in Jeremy's best interests. Maurina Beadle and Pictou Landing Band Council brought a legal case against Canada for failure to properly implement

Jordan's Principle. The case was argued on June 11, 2012 and the Federal Court decision was released in the spring of 2013 ordering the Government of Canada to pay for Jeremy's care as well as the legal fees for Maurina Beadle and Pictou Landing Band Council. As the editorial board of the Ottawa Citizen newspaper rightly observed, it is hard to understand why the Government of Canada would have to be taken to court to get it to implement a principle Parliament unanimously adopted. The Government of Canada has appealed the decision to the Federal Court of Appeal and the case will likely be heard in the winter of 2013.

Jordan's Principle is supported by over 7,600 people and organizations making it



one of the most broadly supported child rights initiatives in Canadian history. One of those supporters, the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions has completed an important educational video on Jordan's Principle for nursing professionals which is available at www.jordansprinciple.ca

Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on First Nations Child Welfare

In February of 2007, the Assembly of First Nations and the Caring Society (www.fncaresociety.com) filed a human rights case alleging that the Government of Canada's provision of First Nations child and family services is discriminatory. The case was filed as a last resort. First Nations had worked with the Government of Canada for over a decade to document inequalities in service provision and develop evidence-informed solutions to fix the problem. The Government of Canada failed to implement either solution despite supporting the solutions when they were released and running surplus budgets in the billions of dollars or spending billions on economic stimulus programs. Meanwhile, the Government's own documents linked the inequities in child welfare funding with the record number of First Nations children being removed from their families. The children could not wait any longer for the Government to do the right thing so the complaint was filed in order to force Canada to uphold its obligations to First Nations children pursuant to domestic and international human rights law. The complaint would set a precedent for addressing other areas of funding inequities affecting First Nations children and their families such as education, health, water and housing.



The Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC), which vets human rights complaints, referred the matter to the independent Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (Tribunal) for a full hearing in September of 2008. In line with its legislation, the CHRC viewed this case as so essential to human rights in Canada that it joined the case before the Tribunal representing the public good. The Government of Canada repeatedly tried to get the case dismissed on legal technicalities 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 where discrimination occurs it is the service delivery agency, not the funder, who should be held accountable even when

inequitable funding is the source of the discrimination (known as the funding is not a service argument). The Federal Court refused two applications by the Government of Canada to get the case dismissed before Canada brought a motion to dismiss on the same grounds at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal in December 2009.

The Tribunal heard the case in June of 2010 and ruled in the Government's favour on the comparator issue in March 2011. If the decision were upheld, First Nations citizens would be denied the benefits of human rights protections afforded to all other Canadians pursuant to the Canadian Human Rights Act. The CHRC, AFN and Caring Society appealed the decision to Federal Court and in April 2012, the Tribunal decision was overturned clearing the way for a full hearing on the discrimination matter before a differently constituted Tribunal panel.

In March of 2013, the Government of Canada unsuccessfully appealed the Federal Court ruling to the Federal Court of Appeal. Given that the Government had been unsuccessful

in its legal arguments on the comparator issue, hearings at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal began on February 25, 2013 to determine if the Government's provision of First Nations child and family services is discriminatory.

As a matter of fairness, all parties have an obligation to disclose any relevant material to the Tribunal and the other parties prior to the hearings beginning. The Caring Society met this obligation but unfortunately, as the Tribunal would rule in July of 2013, the Government of Canada withheld two-thirds of its disclosure (over 50,000 documents) in what the Tribunal termed "far from irreproachable" conduct. The failure of the Government of Canada to meet its legal disclosure obligations resulted in some delays but the hearings recommenced in July of 2013 and are scheduled throughout the remainder of the year.

Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) is providing on line broadcasting of the witness testimony and nightly news updates. APTN maintains an on line archive of all testimony which is available at aptn.ca/pages/news/tag/kids-in-care. This archive provides an important and valuable mechanism for First Nations families and members of the public to follow the proceedings and also serves as an excellent educational tool for students in social work, law, Native studies and political science.

We look forward to the Tribunal's historic ruling in 2014 and we continue to hope that the Government of Canada commits fully to equity and culturally based services for all First Nations children in Canada.

Shannen's Dream

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 activist 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 Indian Affairs and she created You Tube videos inviting non-Aboriginal children to join the letter writing campaign. Thousands of children responded and in the winter of 2009, the Government of Canada promised the children of Attawapiskat



a new school and construction began in 2012. 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 First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada was proud to partner 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.

This past year, the Caring Society has continued to collaborate with educators, students and members of the public to share Shannen's Dream by creating a wider array of educational materials and supporting the participation of schools in the annual Our Dreams Matter Too walk.

National Film Board of Canada filmmaker, Alanis Obomsawin, completed her landmark documentary on Shannen's Dream entitled *Hi-Ho Mistakey* which will premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival in September of 2013. We are excited to promote awareness of this documentary given its high value as a public education tool.

To date 9,960 people and organizations have supported Shannen's Dream making it one of the most broadly supported child rights initiatives in Canadian history.

Have a Heart Day: February 14, 2013

Have a Heart Day is a national, annual event supporting the rights of First Nations children to get the same chance to grow up safely at home, get a good education, be healthy, and proud of their cultures. People of all ages participate by either hosting a party on



Michael Montgomery from the Canadian Coalition on the Rights of the Child presents Child Rights Supporter awards to students from Lady Evelyn, Devonshire and Pierre Elliot Trudeau Schools at Have a Heart Day 2013.



February 14 to raise awareness, sending a Have a Day card to the Prime Minister or their Member of Parliament, or by spreading the word through social media like YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. Like all Caring Society initiatives, participation is designed to be fun, free, and easy to do.

The Caring Society supports Have a Heart celebrations across Canada by developing free education and event materials. New this year was a downloadable poster that can be personalized to promote community events. As part of our website redesign, we developed a new Have a Heart website with a dedicated news page to highlight community celebrations. The page also offers a gallery with links to videos and other resources that can be used to raise awareness and engage people with visual or audio learning preferences. A mailing list of schools that have

participated in the Shannen's Dream, Jordan's Principle, and I am a witness campaigns ensures educators across the country are kept informed of new learning tools and can provide the Caring Society with feedback on how we can improve our campaigns, events and resources. 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 the Heart, KAIROS and Amnesty International Canada.

As a child-focused event, Have a Heart Day is also about hearing from children and young people: their thoughts on justice, fairness, and the sort of Canada they would like to grow up in. The Caring Society fully supports Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child stating that children have a right to participate in matters affecting them. In keeping with this commitment, Caring Society staff engaged children in the planning for the Have a Heart event in Ottawa in 2013 by organizing Saturday meetings with interested students, parents and teachers throughout the school year to plan Have a Heart Day and Our Dreams Matter Too in Ottawa. These meetings were also a chance to directly engage children and young people in other areas of our work, inviting input and feedback on a variety of Caring Society initiatives.

Have a Heart Day 2013 was a great success with many innovative events at schools, community organizations and universities across Canada. At the Ottawa event alone, over 500 children and young people from nine elementary and high schools participated. Students from St. Willibrord School and Community Learning Centre travelled from Montreal to participate, while youth representing Anishinaabe Child and Family Services journeyed all the way from Manitoba to show their support. The event closed with a special award from the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of the Child. Pierre

Elliot Trudeau School in (Gatineau, Quebec), Lady Evelyn Alternative School, and Devonshire Elementary School (both in Ottawa) were presented with the Coalition's annual Child Rights Supporter Award, recognizing individuals and groups demonstrating exemplary efforts to respect the rights of children.

Our Dreams Matter Too: June 11, 2013

Like Have a Heart Day, Our Dreams Matter Too is an annual, national event supporting culturally based equity for First Nations children. It another opportunity for people of all ages to stand with First Nations children to ensure they receive proper services that make



Children and young people gather at Parliament to read letters to the Government supporting equity for First Nations children and young people (2012).

them feel proud of who they are. Children, families, schools, communities and agencies are encouraged to get involved by writing letters and organizing an Our Dreams Matter Too walk to a mailbox in their community.

The response from people across the country was, once again, phenomenal this year. There were more than 35 walks across the country, with more than 5,000 walkers participating. Although the number of walks was slightly fewer than in 2012, the overall number of walkers actually increased!

Most of the walks were organized by schools, children and youth, and First Nations communities or agencies. While there were many return organizers, there were also many new participants, including the very first Our Dreams



Fairness matters—rain or shine. Children at the Our Dreams Matter Too Walk in Ottawa/Gatineau 2012.

Matter Too walk in the Northwest Territories! All walk organizers received a Certificate of Appreciation thanking them for their leadership and participation. A full list of supporting organizations is available on the Our Dreams Matter Too website at: www.fncaringsociety.com/our-dreams-matter-too

In Ottawa, Caring Society staff were honoured to celebrate Our Dreams Matter Too with more 600 children and youth from 11 different schools, as well as educators, community

supporters, and Members of Parliament. Despite the wind and pouring rain, students from schools in Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia were determined to carry on with the walk and read their letters on the importance of equitable services for First Nations children on Parliament Hill. Bubbles floated through the rain, mixing with uplifting cheers and chants for fairness. In the spirit of reconciliation, four high school students from Charles Hays Secondary School in Prince Rupert, British Columbia, travelled to Ottawa to present the people of Canada with a special gift, called the Grizzly Bear Box of Hope during the Our Dreams Matter Too celebrations. The Box represents a dream for equity and fairness for all Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children. You can learn more about the Box in our Summer 2013 Newsletter.

The Caring Society would like to extend a sincere and heartfelt thank you to all those who took part in Have a Heart Day and Our Dreams Matter Too this year. Your voice matters and truly makes a huge difference. The movement for change is growing every day!

International Relationships

The Caring Society is proud of its relationships with Indigenous peoples and organizations throughout the world. The over-representation of Indigenous children amongst poor health, education and wellbeing indicators worldwide compels us to work in collaboration with organizations such as UNICEF, the Secretariat on National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (Australia) and the National Indian Child Welfare Association (USA).

We were also pleased to participate in Canada's review before the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and were particularly honoured to join with our partners to support the attendance of six First

Nations youth at a meeting with the UNCRC in February of 2012. In October, 2012, the UNCRC released its concluding observations and recommendations for Canada emphasizing the need for Canada to undertake special measures to address the over-representation of First Nations children in child welfare care, juvenile justice and amongst poor educational outcomes. The UNCRC called on Canada to ensure equitable investments in services for Aboriginal children. Copies of the recommendations are available at provincialadvocate.on.ca/documents/en/concluding_observations_in_youth_friendly_language_EN.pdf

Future Directions

Our vision of Canada is one where all First Nations children are treated with equity, respect and justice. We know just what to do to make that vision a reality and it will require the active engagement of caring Canadians and organizations to make it happen. The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society blends high quality research, public education and skilful policy change in ways that fuel the social movement of equity for First Nations children, youth and families. Over the next year we look forward to making the following visions a reality:

- Support the National Film Board production *Hi-Ho Mistahay* as an important educational resource for Shannen's Dream.
- Continue to participate in the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on First Nations Child Welfare and look forward to a ruling in 2014!
- Support Jordan's Principle and keep Canadians updated on the *Beadle/Pictou Landing First Nation v. Attorney General*

of Canada case before the Federal Court of Appeal.

- Complete the transition of the *First Peoples Child and Family Review* to an on line format and publish an edition on mental, spiritual and cultural health as well as a children's edition of the journal.
- Continue to support First Nations child and family service agencies, governments and stakeholders' engagement in the Touchstones of Hope Movement.
- Expand the distribution of the photography exhibit "Caring Across Boundaries" and compliment it with additional educational materials.

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 on line to www.fncaringsociety.com 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 and think about supporting the Caring Society by becoming a member or making an on line donation at fncaringsociety.com/donating-caring-society

7 free ways
to make a
difference



www.fncaresociety.com



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