



# Information Sheet: First Nations Child & Family Caring Society (Caring Society)

January 2016

## About the Caring Society

The First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada (Caring Society) is the national voice for the safety and wellbeing of First Nations children and their families. Using a reconciliation framework that addresses contemporary hardships for Aboriginal families in ways that uplift all Canadians, the Caring Society undertakes research and education initiatives, and public policy campaigns that champion culturally based equity for First Nations children and their families. The importance of the Caring Society's pioneering work for reconciliation is reflected in the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), released in June 2015. Redressing inequities in First Nations child welfare is the first recommendation.

The Caring Society provides opportunities for children and youth of all backgrounds to collaborate, think creatively about the future and inspire one another to lead social change. In partnership with caring and compassionate children, youth, educators, researchers and other allied individuals and organizations, the Caring Society is creating a movement where the landscape in Canada is only one of honour and possibility for First Nations children.

## History

First Nations Child and Family Service Agencies (FNCFSAs) were established in the 1980s, and began networking to share promising practices and work on areas of common concern. These networks were largely informal and unfunded; consequently, as years passed the FNCFSAs agreed there was a need for a national body in First Nations child welfare. These efforts resulted in the creation of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society (Caring Society) at a national meeting held in the Squamish Nation in 1998. An initial working group of First Nations child and family service agency directors drafted the mandate, values and objectives of the organization, which were approved at a meeting held in the Kingsclear First Nation in 1999.

## The Logo

The logo was designed by Wade Stephen Baker of Sky Spirit Studio in North Vancouver. The design is named "The Cherished Child" with the crow cradling an egg with a healthy fetus inside, surrounded by several hands meant to represent all that is needed to raise a healthy child.

## Spirit Bear and Era Bear

Spirit Bear was gifted to the Caring Society by Carrier Sekani Family Services in 2008 and has attended all of the hearings on the First Nations child welfare case before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. Era Bear joined the Caring Society in 2013, seven years after the complaint was launched. In many First Nations traditions, seven years marks a new generation, and so, Era Bear joined Spirit Bear to witness the proceedings.

## Reconciliation Campaigns

### 7 Free Ways to Make a Difference!

The Caring Society has seven free ways that you can make a difference in under two-minutes. Peoples of all ages and backgrounds can take action that will help in a meaningful way.

## Shannen's Dream

Shannen's Dream unites Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples to understand, and take action against, education inequities for First Nations children and youth in Canada. Shannen Koostachin and her classmates advocated for safe and comfy schools, and culturally based education for First Nations children. Shannen was from Attawapiskat and the school in her community was closed because of a diesel fuel spill that contaminated the school grounds. The school was left closed and students were forced to learn in portables with no heat in the winter and without enough school supplies like books and computers. Shannen was nominated for the International Children's Peace Prize by the Nobel Laureate in 2009, representing all the children from Attawapiskat (AANDC, 2012).



Attawapiskat received a new school in the 2013/2014 school year.

## Jordan's Principle

Jordan's Principle is a child-first principle to resolve jurisdictional disputes within, or between, federal and provincial governments that can delay or deny government services to First Nations children on-reserve. Jordan's Principle is in honor of Jordan River Anderson, a young First Nations boy from Norway House Cree Nation who was born with complex medical needs. Jordan sadly passed before the dispute was resolved at the age of 5 never having spent a day in a family home. Jordan's Principle, Motion 296, was passed by the House of Commons, and was later re-affirmed by Private Members Motion 363. Jordan's Principle has helped over 37 children receive the care they needed.

## I am a witness

I am a witness invites the public to witness the ongoing Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on whether the government is providing equitable funding for child welfare for First Nations children and youth. In 2007, the Caring Society and the Assembly of First Nations filed a human rights complaint against the Federal government, alleging that Canada's failure to provide equitable and culturally based child welfare services to First Nations children on-reserve amounts to discrimination on the basis of race and ethnic origin. The closing arguments for the case occurred in October 2014 and the ruling is scheduled for release January 2016.

## Touchstones of Hope

Reconciliation is a process restoring relationships that have been damaged to a place of mutual respect and understanding (Blackstock, *et al.*, 2006). The relationship between First Nations and the government has been harmed by colonization, historical and current racial discrimination, and assimilationist public policy. Assimilation is a process of trying to conform all of society into one way of being and knowing through coercive public policy (OED, 2013).

Reconciliation in the context of child welfare means approaching issues from different perspectives, acknowledging responsibility for past wrongs, and for First Nations peoples and non-Aboriginal peoples to work together to pave a new way forward with a commitment to optimizing outcomes for First Nations children, youth, and their families (Blackstock, *et al.*, 2006).

The Touchstones of Hope are a set of principles to guide services to Aboriginal children. The Touchstones of Hope movement focuses on building relationships and creating space to have honest and

respectful conversations about child welfare to work towards a new way forward for Aboriginal children. The Touchstones of Hope upholds the Caring Society's vision of working towards a reality of equitable opportunities for First Nations children and their families to grow up safely at home, be healthy, achieve their dreams, and be proud of who they are. The approach was mentioned in the TRC's final report (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p.85).

The Touchstones principles are applicable in many domains to guide work with Indigenous peoples and communities. The Caring Society has many resources for implementing the Touchstones of Hope principles, including a tool kit and other resources.

## Many Hands, One Dream

Many Hands, One Dream is a long-term initiative dedicated to the improving the health of Aboriginal children in Canada. The goal of Many Hands, One Dream is to generate commitment, foster collaboration, and implement sustainable solutions. In 2005, 160 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal leaders in health came together to define health and discuss the strengths and barriers of the current system to determine what a positive way forward might be. From this gathering a report titled Principles for a new perspective on the health of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children and youth (2006) was developed.

## Make a Donation

Generous donations help support equity for First Nations children and youth, and reconciliation based activities for all children in Canada. If you would like to make a donation, you can call, use regular mail, or donate online.

## Child and Youth Engagement

It is a point of pride for the Caring Society that children and youth are the largest group of supporters. Engaging and uplifting children and youth in culturally-based equity and social justice movements provides young people with the opportunity to raise awareness among their peers and speak out on issues of importance to them.

For organizations wanting to engage young people, the Guidelines for Ethical Child and Youth Engagement is a tool to assist organizations that are, or are planning to, work with children and youth in ways that respect and uplift their rights. You can access the guidelines at:

<http://www.fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/Guidelines-Ethical-Youth-Engagement.pdf>. The voices of children and youth are

valuable and they have a right to be heard. It is through working together that real change will be made possible.

Active engagement by organizations, communities and schools also promotes ways that children, youth, and communities can work together to think creatively about the future and ensure that all children have the same opportunities to succeed.

## Have a Heart Day

Have a Heart Day is a child and youth-led reconciliation campaign that brings together caring Canadians to help ensure First Nations children have the services they need to grow up safely at home, get a good education, be healthy, and be proud of who they are. On February 14, people across the country celebrate by hosting parties, sending letters and Valentine cards to the Prime Minister and Members of Parliament, by hosting an awareness raising event in their school or community, or by spreading the word through social media like YouTube, Twitter, or Facebook.

## Our Dreams Matter Too

Our Dreams Matter Too is a walk and letter writing event on June 11 supporting culturally based equity for First Nations children. Since its start in 2012, there have been over 10,000 young people, organizations and others, who walked to mailboxes in their communities with letters to Members of Parliament and the Prime Minister supporting reconciliation campaigns like I am a witness, Jordan's Principle and Shannen's Dream.

## Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams

As a legacy to the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada, former students of Indian Residential Schools and their families, the TRC, the Caring Society, KAIROS and Project of Heart invite children and youth across the country to create a Heart Garden. The idea is to create and decorate hearts to honour those lost to the IRS along with why reconciliation is important to you. People can plant any type of garden. We encourage you to consult with a local Elder if you would like to plant sacred medicines (eg. tobacco, sage, cedar, and sweetgrass) in the garden to create a more permanent recognition of residential school students and the shared commitment to reconciliation.

## Students and Volunteers

In addition, the Caring Society regularly provides student placement and volunteer positions where young people from various educational backgrounds are welcomed. Student and volunteer

placements are a mutually beneficial opportunity where students are provided with work to support their professional development and build their resume, while supporting the work of the Caring Society at the same time.

## Ongoing initiatives

One of the strategic directions of the Caring Society is to address evidence-based causes of disadvantage for First Nations children and youth by building on cultural strengths and evidence-based solutions that support the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the United Nations Commission on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

## First Peoples Child & Family Review

The Caring Society publishes the *First Peoples Child and Family Review (FPCFR)* twice a year. The journal is dedicated to honouring the voices, perspectives and knowledge of First Peoples through research, critical analyses, stories, standpoints and media reviews. The purpose of the *FPCFR* is to promote interdisciplinary research, practice, policy and educational publications that focus on Indigenous worldviews and perspectives that advance innovative research, policy and practice.

The Caring Society welcomes submission(s) from interested authors with manuscript(s) related to child, family, and/or community issues. Journal policy, guidelines, and resources for interested authors are all available at [journals.sfu.ca/fpcfr/index.php/FPCFR/index](http://journals.sfu.ca/fpcfr/index.php/FPCFR/index). We especially encourage young people to submit!

## Research & Publications

Research and knowledge mobilization involves working with partner researchers and research institutions to further our collective understanding of issues that disadvantage First Nations children and youth, as well as identifying sustainable solutions in ways that respect and uplift their rights.

The Caring Society houses an online database with a collection of titles of reviews, reports, guides, films, booklets, studies, journal articles, and presentations that are related to Aboriginal children and youth. The online database is free to better support the pursuit of evidence-based solutions through sharing of information and resources. Next time you have a project or report and are looking for resources, check it out!

Other Publications include:

- Information Sheets
- Quarterly Newsletters
- Annual Report
- Campaign Resources
- Touchstones of Hope Toolkit & Resources
- Research and Knowledge Mobilization Projects & Publications

## Presentations & Events

Each year, the Caring Society gives over 200 presentations including as key note addresses, workshops, trainings, educational outreach in schools, and more. Because of the high volume of requests, the earlier you get your request in the better! You can submit a presentation request online at: [fncaringsociety.com/presentation-request](http://fncaringsociety.com/presentation-request).

## Indigenous Kids Rights Path

In November 2015, the Caring Society launched a website called Indigenous Kids Rights Path - IKRP ([indigenoukidsrightspath.ca](http://indigenoukidsrightspath.ca)). This online tool provides resources and links to help for First Nations children and youth on and off reserve and other Indigenous young people if they feel their rights are not being respected. IKRP also includes resources on individual rights matters and contact information for emergency services such as child welfare complaints. Anyone can access the free online tool to search for resources on human and child rights. It is designed to be accessible to persons of all ages and we hope it will fill an important gap in human rights education.

## Caring Across Boundaries

In the spirit of reconciliation, the Caring Society also has a travelling photo exhibit called *Caring Across Boundaries*. The exhibit explores the daily lives of people living in three First Nations communities, and invites all Canadians to support and uplift First Nations children and youth. The exhibit has been displayed in communities across the country and is available as a stand-up exhibit or as an electronic slide show.

## Becoming a Member

Membership at the Caring Society is an opportunity to support the work of the agency, as well as becoming engaged and remaining updated on current issues.

Membership Type	Cost
Individual Membership	\$75
Elder Membership and Student Membership with ID	\$5
<b>Benefits:</b> Quarterly newsletter, Access to online database & resources, Updates on conferences & events.	
Small FNCFS Agency Membership (10 - 50 employees)	\$500
Large FNCFS Agency Membership (50+ employees)	\$1000
<b>Benefits:</b> Copy of most recent publication, Remain informed on current issues & conferences.	
In addition, FNCFS agencies are entitled to participate in teleconferences, and receive discounts on workshops & publications. FNCFS agencies in Good Standing are eligible for a position on the Board of Directors.	
Small Associate Membership (Organizations with 1 - 50 employees)	\$500
Large Associate Membership (Organizations with 50+ employees)	\$1000
<b>Benefits:</b> Copy of most recent publication, Remain informed on current issues & conferences.	

*Thank you for your interest and support!*

## Website and Social Media

Find us on online and on social media!

**Website:** [fncaringsociety.com](http://fncaringsociety.com)

**Twitter:** @Caringsociety, #Witness4FNKids, #ourdreamsmattertoo, #HaveAHeartDay, #OurDreamsMatterToo

**Facebook:** CaringSociety

**YouTube:** [fncaringsociety](http://fncaringsociety)

**Instagram:** [fncaringsociety](http://fncaringsociety)

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