

# Annual Report 2015 | 2016



First Nations Child & Family  
Caring Society of Canada

## The Kids Won!

On January 26, 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) found that the Canadian government is racially discriminating against 163,000 First Nations children and their families by providing flawed and inequitable child welfare services and by not properly implementing Jordan's Principle to ensure equitable access to government services available to other children.

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.



\*Please note that this annual report reflects activities from September 2015 to August 2016

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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 2015/2016. Special thanks to children and youth throughout Canada who are standing with First Nations children and families and to:

Alanis Obomsawin	Jason Leroux	The Printing House
Alberta Child and Youth Advocate	J.W. McConnell Family Foundation	Rhiana Chinapen
Amnesty International Canada	KAIROS Canada	Robert Grant, Gall, Legge, Grant and Munroe, LLP
Andrew Bryce	Andrew Koostachin, Jenny Nakogee and Family	Robert Patterson
APTN	Law Foundation of Ontario	SSHRC
Assembly of First Nations	Leah Gryfe Designs	Sandy Tunwell Accounting
Assembly of First Nations Quebec and Labrador	Liam Sharp, Liam Sharp Photography	Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth
Anderson Family, Norway House Cree Nation	Lillian Meighen	Sébastien Grammond, University of Ottawa
Bentall Corporation	Manitoba First Nations CFS Gala Committee	Sisters of Service
Canada Council for the Arts	Many Hands One Dream Coalition	SNAICC (Australia)
Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions	Maurina Beadle and Philippa Pictou	Stikeman Elliott, LLP
Canadian Human Rights Commission	McGill University	Tammy Morgan
Canadian Labour Congress	Melanie Vincent	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
Canadian Paediatric Society	National Centre for Truth & Reconciliation	The Bryce Family
Canadian Teachers' Federation	National Film Board	The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada
Carleton University	National Indian Child Welfare Association	The Stevens Family
Clarke Child and Family Law	Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, Ontario	United Church of Canada
CUPE	Ontario Public Services Employees Union	United Food and Commercial Workers Union
Don Wright Foundation	Ousley, Hanvey and Deep, LLP	UNICEF
Editorial Board of First Peoples Child and Family Review	Power Law	UNIFOR
Factor Inwentash, Faculty of Social Work	Presbyterian Church in Canada	University of Alberta
Feathers of Hope	Productions Cazabon	University of Ottawa
Goodmans LLP	Project of Heart	University of Toronto
Harold Tarbell	Public Service Alliance of Canada	University of Victoria
Indigenous Bar Association		Web Kitchen
Indigenous Physicians Association		West Region Child & Family Services Inc.

## Key Accomplishments for 2015/2016

- The kids won! On January 26, 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal found that the government discriminates against 163,000 First Nations child by providing inequitable child welfare funding and failing to implement Jordan's Principle. Read the decision 2016 CHRT 2 at [fnwitness.ca](http://fnwitness.ca).
- People across the country brought their bears to daycare, school and work to celebrate Jordan's Principle on May 10, 2016.
- Over 500 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 and Family Review one to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Touchstones of Hope and the other on various topics pertaining to Indigenous children, youth and families.
- Completed 65 presentations across Canada, the United States, New Zealand and Australia to over 20,000 people.
- Collaborated with Beechwood Cemetery, TRC Commissioner Marie Wilson, historian John Milloy, KAIROS, Project of Heart, the Bryce family, and the Dominion Chalmers Church to erect historical plaques marking the history of residential schools.

## 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 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

### **Judy Levi**

Treasurer, New Brunswick Representative

### **Theresa Stevens**

Board Member,  
Anishinaabe Abinoojii Family Services

### **Mary Teegee**

Board Member, Carrier Sekani Family  
Services

### **Landon Pearson**

Board Member, Carleton University

### **Elsie Flette**

Board Member, Manitoba Representative

### **Derek Montour**

Board Member,  
Kahnawake Shakotiiia'takehnhas  
Community Services

### **Teresa Steinhauer**

Board Member,  
Mamowe Opikihawasowin Tribal Chief  
Child and Family Services West Society

### **Marilyn Lefrank**

Board Member, Mi'kmaq Confederacy of  
Prince Edward Island

## **The Caring Society Staff**

### **Cindy Blackstock**

Executive Director

### **Andrea Auger**

Research and Reconciliation

### **Courtney Powless**

Community Engagement and Education

### **Danielle Bigras**

Office Administrator

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

## Child and Youth Led Campaigns

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.

### **I Am a Witness: Case on First Nations Child Welfare** ([fnwitness.ca](http://fnwitness.ca))

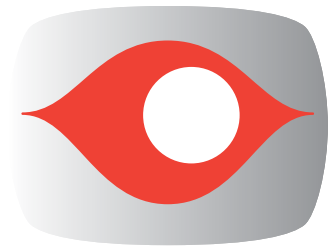
The kids won this historic equity seeking case after nine long years. The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society (Caring Society) and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) filed the case in February 2007, alleging that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC)'s provision of First Nations child and family services to 163,000 First Nations children and their families was flawed, inequitable and thus discriminatory under the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. The case will be showcased in a documentary film by Alanis Obomsawin, premiering at TIFF 2016. It is called "We Can't Make the Same Mistake Twice."

### **The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal** ([chrt-tcdp.gc.ca](http://chrt-tcdp.gc.ca))

The Canadian Human Rights 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. All Tribunal decisions are posted on their website.

### **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 were granted interested party status in September 2009 and the Nishnawbe Aski Nation in May of 2016 for the remedy phase of the proceedings.



### **Case History**

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 further alleges that Canada's improper implementation of Jordan's Principle (**jordansprinciple.ca**) created service denials, delays and disruptions for First Nations children placing them at higher risk for child welfare placement. The case 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 denied the allegations and spent over 8 million dollars in its unsuccessful efforts to get the case dismissed on technical grounds arguing that child welfare services provided to First Nations based on federal funding should not be compared to those delivered to other people in Canada funded by provinces/territories (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 heard testimony from 25 witnesses (18 for the Commission and the Complainants and 7 for the Attorney General) from February 25, 2013 to May 30, 2014. Final arguments on the case were heard on November 20–24, 2014. Approximately 500 documents were filed as evidence during the proceedings.

### ***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 to 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](http://trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf)

### ***The Decision (2016 CHRT2)***

In a landmark decision for Indigenous children's rights in Canada and around the world, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal found the Canadian Government is racially discriminating against First Nations children by failing to provide equitable child welfare services and by failing to implement Jordan's Principle properly. The Tribunal ordered the Canadian Government to cease its discriminatory practices and immediately fully implement Jordan's Principle.

The Tribunal noted that Canada's discriminatory treatment is widening the disadvantage of residential schools by "incentivizing" the removal of First Nations children from their families by failing to provide adequate family support services. In addition, the Tribunal noted that the remedy to the discrimination must account for the historical disadvantage created by Canada's residential school policy, the 60's scoop and contemporary discriminatory treatment of First Nations children. Overall the Tribunal found Canada's arguments to be "unreasonable, unconvincing and not supported by the preponderance of evidence."

The Tribunal retained jurisdiction over the remedies stage.



## **Remedies**

The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ordered Canada to cease its discriminatory practices and to immediately implement Jordan's Principle. The Tribunal also held jurisdiction in the case and advised the parties that they will address remedies in three phases: 1) immediate relief (things that can be done immediately to relieve the discrimination) 2) mid-term relief (actions that can further relieve the discrimination pending full reform and 3) long-term reform to eliminate the discrimination and prevent its resurgence. In April of 2016, the Tribunal issued an order (2016 CHRT 10) expressing concern about Canada's slow compliance with the January decision and ordered Canada to immediately implement Jordan's Principle across all children, all jurisdictional disputes and without any delay. The Tribunal also ordered Canada to produce detailed reports evidencing how it has alleviated the discrimination in child and family services funding. The Tribunal is expected to issue a second compliance order shortly.

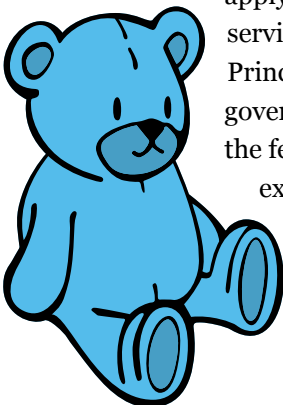
## **Next Steps and More Information**

The Tribunal ruling was a victory not only for First Nations kids, but for all Canadians who believe in love and fairness. Implementation of the Tribunal remedies is slow so kids still need your help – here's what you can do:

- Read about the ruling and find out what it means.
- Write to the Prime Minister or your Member of Parliament to demand: 1) Immediate implementation of these actions to relieve children's suffering, and 2) Canada work with First Nations to set things right and put an end to discrimination.
- Follow @Caringsociety on Twitter and Facebook and repost updates.
- Keep the Caring Society updated if you have a Jordan's Principle case.

## **Jordan's Principle** ([jordansprinciple.ca](http://jordansprinciple.ca))

The January 26, 2016 Tribunal ruling was also a victory for Jordan's Principle. The Tribunal ruled that the federal government discriminates against First Nations children in failing to implement Jordan's Principle. They found that the government's definition of Jordan's Principle narrows the scope and original intent of Jordan's Principle and therefore First Nations children are often delayed services or denied the services altogether. They ordered the federal government to immediately stop discrimination and apply Jordan's Principle as it was originally intended, covering all children, across all services and all jurisdictions. In April, after no immediate progress or action on Jordan's Principle, the Tribunal ordered the government to outline its progress. Although the government committed to implementation of JP, we have seen little progress. In July, the federal government submitted a compliance report to the Tribunal outlining that they expanded the definition of Jordan's Principle to include "the needs of First Nations children living on-reserve with a disability or a short-term condition requiring health or social services." In that report, the government also reiterated that they allotted monies to Jordan's Principle, which appear to largely go back into the department, and did not consult with any of the parties to the Tribunal regarding



the amount of funding or its distribution. The Tribunal is expected to issue a second compliance order on Jordan's Principle in the coming days.

We are now approaching the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jordan's Principle being unanimously passed in the House of Commons. On December 12, 2007, Jordan's father, Ernest Anderson, his older sister, Jerlene, and other children and families from Norway witnessed the historic passing of Motion 296 in support of Jordan's Principle. As Ernest Anderson cautioned at the time, he did not want the good done in Jordan's name to be nothing but a moral victory. The federal and provincial governments needed to implement it to ensure no First Nations child was ever denied public services available to other children. Unfortunately, the Government of Canada has made little progress on Jordan's Principle despite the Tribunal ruling and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission listing Jordan's Principle as its third call to action.

Jordan's Principle is supported by over 10,100 people and organizations making it one of the most broadly supported child rights initiatives in Canadian history.

On May 10, 2016, the Caring Society invited people across the country to bring their Teddy bears to work, school and daycare to honour Jordan River Anderson and Jordan's Principle for equity in services for First Nations children. Thousands of bears came out of hibernation for the day and social media was full of Jordan's Principle support messages. The largest bear party was at Norway House Cree Nation, Jordan's home community, where dozens of children appeared with their bears to honor Jordan, his legacy and his family.

Norway House also hosted a Jordan's Principle parade on August 1, 2016 which was attended by Jordan's family and hundreds of the Norway House Cree Nation and guests from Jordan's mom's community Peter Ballantyne First Nation in Saskatchewan. The parade featured prizes for best Jordan's Principle themed bike, stroller, wheelchair and float!

The Caring Society will continue its work to ensure full and proper implementation of Jordan's Principle so that all First Nations children can access public services on the same terms as other children.

### **Shannen's Dream** ([shannensdream.ca](http://shannensdream.ca))

The inequities in First Nations education continue, and so First Nations children across Canada continue their support for Shannen's Dream campaign to ensure all First Nations children get a proper education in safe and comfy schools. There are over 12,200 people across the country and around the world that support this campaign. This child and youth led movement was started by teen education champion Shannen Koostachin of Attawapiskat First Nation, who wanted First Nations children and all children to have the same opportunities for equitable education.

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. 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 is opened in the fall of 2014 in Attawapiskat. The community chose the school name Kattawapiskak, which means "people of the partings rocks."

The growing number of resources on the Shannen's Dream website assists educators in bringing education to students in ways that promote positive citizenship and engagement in reconciliation.

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: [fncaringsociety.com/shannens-dream-school-resources](http://fncaringsociety.com/shannens-dream-school-resources).

## The Caring Society at Work: Services, Projects, Events

### Services

***First Peoples Child and Family Review*** ([journals.sfu.ca/fpcfr/index.php/FPCFR](http://journals.sfu.ca/fpcfr/index.php/FPCFR))

The First Peoples Child & Family Review is an interdisciplinary journal that honours the voices, perspectives and knowledges of First Peoples through research, critical analyses, community stories and artistic expression. The FPCFR accepts submissions in different formats (video, voice recording, written) and in various languages: English, French or Indigenous languages (with English translation provided).

We welcome submissions by academics, Elders and community members and encourage children and youth to contribute to our FPCFR community. Out of the four issues published since 2014, we were honored to partner with children and young people to publish a special edition featuring only the voices of children and youth and two others have featured the contribution of at least one youth.



Issue 11(1) also includes a youth perspective; the youth attended the case on First Nations child welfare and wanted to share her viewpoints. In general, 11(1) features a diversity of publications on culturally-based equity, reconciliation, ways to strive towards better health and social outcomes for Indigenous children, families and communities and respectful approaches to working with Indigenous communities.

Issue 11(2) will be published in December of 2016. It is a special Edition on the 60's Scoop and Indigenous child welfare, in partnership with the Thunderbird Circle (Indigenous Social Work Educator's Network) of the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE). We are particularly interested in manuscripts that address the cultural practice, policy, legislation, and research dimensions of the 60s Scoop and Indigenous child welfare including, but not limited to: transracial adoption, Indigenous child welfare policy and practice, Indigenous foster and adoptive care, Identity issues, and the class action lawsuits.

### ***Online Research 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-August, we added an additional 30 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](http://fncaringsociety.com/publications/search)**.

### ***Touchstones of Hope***

In 2015, the FPCFR published 10(2), a special edition on reconciliation and the Touchstones of Hope. The original authors of the Touchstones booklet (Cross, Blackstock, Formsma, George, and Brown), endorsed the Touchstones approach in their publication "Editorial: Touchstones of Hope: Still the best guide for Indigenous child welfare." They argued that "the Touchstones are most valuable when applied to all aspects of the field (education, administration, services, etc.) versus being implemented as an event or restricting the approach only within services to Indigenous peoples" (p. 10). The authors also mentioned that the Touchstones approach was before its time. Ten years after the original Touchstones gathering, we can see a shift in the landscape in Canada with respect to reconciliation and we see it as an opportune time for the Touchstones of Hope, especially after the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and final reports.

The TRC's Calls to Action prioritized child welfare for Aboriginal children as top recommendations as Indigenous children continue to be overrepresented in the child welfare system. In a Touchstones of Hope reconciliation process, a central aim is to improve child welfare based on visions and action plans for child and family wellbeing.



It is a movement to rebuild or build relationships between those serving Indigenous child and families where Indigenous peoples take a central leadership role with non-Indigenous peoples as allies and helpers.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report recommended the Touchstones of Hope movement noting that it "seeks to stimulate a process for community-specific, community-driven plans for child safety" but that "communities must have the resources and powers necessary to implement their own creative community solutions to the child welfare crisis" (p. 56–57, [myrobust.com/websites/trcinstitution/File/Reports/Volume\\_5\\_Legacy\\_English\\_Web.pdf](http://myrobust.com/websites/trcinstitution/File/Reports/Volume_5_Legacy_English_Web.pdf)). The process of reconciliation the Touchstones of Hope movement provides creates a complete suite of tools to put reconciliation into action in order to achieve the TRC's Calls to Action. We have already seen organizations adapting the Touchstones of Hope to suit their unique organizational contexts in order to work more effectively and respectfully with Indigenous communities.

In 2015, the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW), the largest private sector union in Canada representing employees in the food and beverage and hospitality industries, created a poster with the Touchstones of Hope principles and process interpreted in the labour movement context. UFCW is a great ambassador for reconciliation and is moving forward to educate their workers on issues of importance to Indigenous peoples and to promote the engagement of all their members on the TRC's Calls to Action. In 2016, UFCW created a tool kit and a curriculum based on the Touchstones of Hope principles and process of reconciliation.

Like UFCW, other organizations in Canada are taking an interest in the Touchstones of Hope movement as a model for respectfully engaging with Indigenous communities. Some have incorporated the principles into their work and others have adapted the principles to reflect their work with Indigenous peoples. In order to facilitate the incorporation of the Touchstones in a broader context of reconciliation in Canada including implementation of the TRC's Calls to Action, the Caring Society created a poster called Touchstones of Hope for Aboriginal Children, Youth and Families: Reconciliation in Canada. It outlines ways that organizations can work effectively with Indigenous organizations and communities ([fncaringsociety.com/touchstones-hope](http://fncaringsociety.com/touchstones-hope)). In the coming year, we will be working on updating and expanding our website and resources as we see that the Touchstones has the potential to be an effective framework for reconciliation in Canada.

### ***Student Placement and Volunteers***

The Caring Society consistently welcomes placement students to assist in Caring Society projects while also focusing on the strengths and passions of the students. During the 2015/2016 year, we welcomed two social work students (BSW and MSW) from Carleton University and one volunteer. **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 offer a warm **thank you** to all of the dedicated volunteers who devoted their time and energy to helping out with Have a Heart Day and the special I am a witness celebration on Parliament Hill, including the singers and performers, speakers and those on Parliament Hill who accommodated our visit.

## Events

### ***Have a Heart Day: Showing Love for First Nations Children***

Have a Heart Day is a child- and youth-led reconciliation campaign that brings together caring Canadians to help ensure First Nations children have what others have. This year, there were more than 40 Have a Heart Day events across Canada with over 5,500 Canadians celebrating.



2016 Parliament Hill Have a Heart celebration.

On February 10, more than 600 children and young people from across Ottawa and beyond gathered on Parliament Hill to celebrate love and fairness for First Nations kids. Students read letters, and shared songs and poems calling on the Prime Minister to give First Nations kids the childhood they deserve.

“Next year for Have a Heart Day, I want to be up here celebrating Indigenous culture, not demanding that basic human rights be met,” said Daxton Rhead, a Grade 10 student from Glebe Collegiate.

Have a Heart Day is a national, annual event that invites people of all ages to learn about the rights of First Nations children, and engage in respectful citizenship actions. All First Nations children deserve a fair chance to grow up safely at home, get a good education, be healthy and proud of who they are. Visit the Have a Heart Day website to view photos and listen to an inspirational audio recording of students reading their letters to the prime minister:

**[fncaringsociety.com/have-heart-day-gallery-and-resources](http://fncaringsociety.com/have-heart-day-gallery-and-resources)**

### ***Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams & Our Dreams Matter Too***

This spring, thousands of children, young people and adults demonstrated their commitment to reconciliation by celebrating Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams and Our Dreams Matter Too. More than 5,000 hearts were planted in gardens across Canada, and more than 1,300 letters were sent to our elected leaders asking them to give First Nations children an equitable chance to achieve their dreams.

In addition to helping make sure the landscape of Canada is one of honour and possibility for First Nations children, taking part in these reconciliation events offers educators, parents and mentors the chance to build up and impart critical lessons to children and young people. To demonstrate the impact, we have included a message from Mrs. Sherry Garland, a teacher in Barrie, Ontario, who introduced her kindergarten students to reconciliation by celebrating Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams.

*Nurturing empathy and deep listening: a kindergarten teacher’s experience bringing reconciliation into the classroom*

*We wanted to take part in Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams, but I was having trouble figuring out how to explain residential schools to my Kinders. Well, it was not a topic to tackle with them so I worked on the reconciliation part – what do we do when we hurt someone either through our words or actions? We sat in a circle with the talking sticks we each made and a silent stone. If*

*your name was called, you picked up your talking stick and everyone picked up their silent stone. You talked while the rest of us listened. Each child's name was called to talk, if they wanted to share.*

*After, we made heart flowers to decorate and to write a word on it that pertained to showing someone that you were sorry. We then "planted" our flowers out the front of the school in our naturalized garden.*

*Mrs. Sherry Garland, St. John Paul II School, Barrie, Ontario*

Mrs. Garland's message reminds us what reconciliation is all about: building relationships and communities based on trust and mutual respect, and where we look out for one another.

Reconciliation is all of us. To learn more about these events and see photos of heart gardens and Our Dreams Matter Too walks, visit

**HonouringMemoriesPlantingDreams.ca** and **OurDreamsMatterToo.ca**.

## Projects

### ***Kids Teaching Kids About Reconciliation Educational Film***

*Youth and children, we all play a role in this life.* —Thelana K., Grade 7

At the Caring Society, we believe that reconciliation rests on each of us understanding the historic and current successes and challenges of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, and gathering the courage and peace-building skills to stand up for love and equity. We welcome young people to find their place in reconciliation, and to teach and inspire their peers to get involved in making sure the landscape of our country is one of honour and possibility for all children. In sharing what they know, children can educate and encourage all of us to make a difference.

Over the last year, the Caring Society collaborated with a local filmmaker, Rhiana Chinapen, to produce a short film and teaser to inspire young Canadians to learn about reconciliation, and to take steps in their school or community to promote fairness and equality for Indigenous children and their families.

The full video "Reconciliation Begins with You and Me," and the promotion video

"Together, We Can Make a Difference," are available on the Caring Society YouTube page:

**[YouTube.com/user/fncaringsociety/videos](https://www.youtube.com/user/fncaringsociety/videos)**.

We extend sincere thanks to the Lillian Meighen and Don Wright Foundation, and to Rhiana Chinapen, for helping bring this film to life.

### ***Reconciliation Film Project***

The Caring Society, in partnership with young people active in reconciliation and Productions Cazabon, has been working for this past year on the Reconciliation Film Project, an educational film on reconciliation. This film presents Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal young people's views on



reconciliation and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action around child welfare, education and Jordan's Principle.

*Aboriginal studies and fighting for Aboriginal rights – grounded me. It made me feel important and it made me just want to stay involved which meant I had to stay in school and I had to be the best me I could be for the people who don't have the chance to be the best version of themselves.*

—Summer, age 23

We shared three vignettes as a lead up to the film's release, and they are available on the Caring Society's Child and Youth Engagement web page and YouTube account. Watch for the film's release this fall and show it in your workplace, schools and community gatherings!

This initiative was made possible due to the generosity of the Canada Council for the Arts, the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, the Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples, the United Church of Canada and the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

## Website and Social Media

### Keeping the Public Informed on First Nations Child Rights

The Caring Society website is our primary tool for keeping the public up to date on latest in Caring Society news and First Nations child rights. The I am a Witness and Jordan's Principle sections feature current news stories and information sheets, and legal updates regarding the First Nations child welfare human rights case and the implementation of Jordan's Principle. We have also added new resources to Child & Youth Engagement to support young people in getting involved in reconciliation, and are updating Touchstones of Hope to widen its applicability to other spheres (e.g., research, education, and health care).

Since last September, we have seen a tremendous increase in our web traffic, from 5,000 sessions in September to nearly 16,500 in January with the release of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling on First Nations child welfare. The website now regularly hosts more than 10,000 sessions a month, and the number of new visitors has increased by 72 per cent this past year.

In addition, the Caring Society's Twitter following has doubled since last fall thanks to much publicity regarding the Tribunal case and Jordan's Principle.

Stay up to date with Caring Society at [fncaringsociety.com](http://fncaringsociety.com). Be sure to check out the Gallery and Resources pages of the campaigns to view videos, photos, reports and articles. For real-time updates, follow us on Twitter ([Twitter.com/CaringSociety](https://twitter.com/CaringSociety)) and like us on Facebook ([Facebook.com/CaringSociety](https://facebook.com/CaringSociety)).

### Indigenous Kids Rights Path

On November 20, 2015, the Caring Society launched the website Indigenous Kids Rights Path ([indigenoustokidsrightspath.ca](http://indigenoustokidsrightspath.ca)). This online tool provides resources and links for Indigenous young people if they feel their rights are not being respected and others





who want to learn more about Indigenous rights and child rights. IKRP also includes resources on individual rights matters and contact information for emergency services such as child welfare complaints. Through this initiative, our goal was also 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 and to provide resources for Ontario, Canada and abroad.

### **First Nations Children's Action Research and Education Service** ([fncaringsociety.com/fncares](http://fncaringsociety.com/fncares))

The First Nations Children's Action Research and Education Service (FNCARES) is 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.

This past year, FNCARES was busy at work! In our recently published First Nations Child Poverty: A Literature Review and Analysis, we examine existing research on First Nations child poverty within the historical and contemporary manifestations of colonialism in Canada. We found that there is an alarming overrepresentation of First Nations children among the poor, with 50% of First Nations children living below the poverty line. Overwhelming evidence shows that these alarmingly high poverty rates are a result of centuries of colonial policy and practice, including starvation, murder, wrongful expropriation of land and resources, the reserve system, discriminatory laws, residential schools, child welfare displacement, broken treaties, and underfunding in education and child welfare.



FNCARES also created a short video about the case on First Nations child welfare featuring, Cindy Blackstock. She explains that poverty, poor housing and the federal government's underfunding of child welfare, education and health services drive First Nations children into the child welfare system, causing the crisis in overrepresentation.

The video gives the history of the case and provides other useful information. Be on the lookout this coming year for more films from FNCARES including a film documenting the experiences of youth and former youth in care in Alberta.

FNCARES Activities this year include:

- **Educational Seminars:** Public Lecture by Dr. Cindy Blackstock – The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on First Nations child welfare on March 15, 2016:
- **Research Grants:** *The First Peoples Child and 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 honored to receive a three-year grant from the *SSHRC Aid to Scholarly Journals Grant* to support the *First Peoples Child and Family Review*.

## Future Directions

Our vision of Canada is one where all First Nations children are loved, respected and honored. 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:

- Continue adding resources to the Indigenous Kids Rights Path.
- Publish two editions of the *First Peoples Child and Family Review* and continue updating the on line database.
- Promote film resources including Alanis Obomsawin's "We Can't Make the Same Mistake Twice" and the Reconciliation Film Project.
- Support First Nations child and family service agencies, governments and stakeholders' engagement in the Touchstones of Hope Movement.
- Continue to work with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal and the government on First Nations child welfare and implementation of Jordan's Principle.
- Develop 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 on line to [fncaringsociety.com](http://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 and think about supporting the Caring Society by becoming a member or making an on line donation at [fncaringsociety.com/donate](http://fncaringsociety.com/donate).

**7** free ways  
to make a  
**difference**



**fncaringsociety.com**



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