

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
November 26, 2020
BC Directors Forum

Defining our Families is an Indigenous Right and a Human Right

Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) ruling puts power to define belonging back in the hands of First Nation Governments

Coast Salish Territory- Indigenous Child Welfare Directors are applauding a Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling affirming that the right to define Indigenous identity and eligibility for Jordan's Principle belongs to First Nations communities and not the Government of Canada.

The latest ruling recognizes that Indigenous children with or without status, and regardless of residency, who are recognized by their First Nation are eligible for Jordan's Principle services.

Further, the ruling affirms that Jordan's Principle is a needs-based program and that expanding eligibility for critical health, social and educational programs does not shrink available resources for children with First Nations status.

"Severing Jordan's Principle eligibility from the Indian Act will mean many more Indigenous kids will get the help they need" said Mary Teegee, Executive Director of Carrier Sekani Child and Family Services and Chair of the Directors Forum "Previous to this ruling funding for our kids came divide and conquer style. Forcing us to administer our own poverty and exclude our relatives in order to protect the small pool of resources available."

Today's ruling also instructs Canada to provide funding to First Nations to develop their own recognition processes for their communities. Funding essential to develop community-driven processes.

"Our members who are away from home, sometimes for generations, have been the most disenfranchised by federal policy" said Jennifer Chuckry, Directors Forum Executive Member and Executive Director of Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services. "They live with the negative impacts of colonialism but have no access to the healing services made available to status First Nations. Today we witness an important step in righting that wrong."

About Jordan's Principle

Jordan's Principle was established to make sure all First Nations children living in Canada can access the health, social and educational supports and services they need when they need them and without prejudice. Jordan's Principle is a needs-based program. Regardless of residency or

status First Nation children should receive services that are substantively equal and culturally appropriate. This Tribunal order ensures the intention of Jordan's Principle is fully realized.

About the Directors Forum

The Directors Forum, a coalition of executives responsible for managing the 24 delegated Aboriginal Agencies in BC, agencies representing 60% of First Nations in the province. As a collective and expert voice on child welfare matters, the Directors Forum bring decades of frontline experience working with Indigenous children and families.

Read the full ruling here: https://fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/2020_chrt_36.pdf

Media contact

Mary Teegee (Maaxw Gibuu), IMBA

Chair, Directors Forum

Delegated Aboriginal Agencies

Ph: 250-612-8710