



NEWS RELEASE

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OTTAWA:

In a landmark ruling for the rights of First Nations children, the Federal Court of Canada has found that Jordan's Principle is binding on the Government of Canada, and ordered Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development to reimburse the Pictou Landing Band for costs associated with caring for a disabled teen-ager living at home on the reserve. Jordan's Principle is the child-first principle that requires governments to put jurisdictional disputes aside and ensure First Nations children receive the same level of care, support and services as Canadian children living off reserve.

Jeremy Meawasige is a severely disabled youth who lives with his mother Maurina Beadle on the Pictou Landing Band in Nova Scotia. Maurina provided for all of Jeremy's care until she suffered a severe stroke in 2010 making it impossible for her to continue on her own. The Pictou Landing Band stepped in to provide the home care health experts said Jeremy needed to ensure he could stay at home and in his community. The Pictou Landing Band then asked the federal government to reimburse the costs for home care services to the level that Jeremy would have received from the provincial government if he lived off reserve. Aboriginal Affairs refused, and advised the Band and Jeremy's mother that the only other option was placing Jeremy in an institution far away from his home at a cost to taxpayers that would exceed the in home care option. It made no sense.

The Pictou Landing Band and Maurina Beadle challenged the decision in Federal Court, invoking Jordan's Principle, a concept that received unanimous support from the House of Commons in 2007. Jordan's Principle was developed in response to a Manitoba case involving Jordan Anderson, a severely disabled First Nations child, who remained in hospital due to jurisdictional disputes between the federal and provincial governments over payment of home care services. Jordan and his family waited over two years for governments to resolve the dispute but sadly Jordan died at age 5 without ever having an opportunity to live in a family environment.

The Federal Court ruled in favour of Jeremy and his community, holding that the federal government must provide social or health services otherwise legally available to persons off reserve. The Court concluded, "The participating federal departments, particularly AANDC, have adopted Jordan's Principle. In my view, they are now required by their adoption of Jordan's Principle to fulfill this assumed obligation and adequately reimburse the PLBC for carrying out the terms of the funding agreements in accordance with Jordan's Principle."

The Court found there were strong parallels between Jeremy's case and Jordan Anderson's situation. The Court chastised the federal government for pushing the Band and Maurina to place Jeremy in a facility far away from the reserve:

Jeremy would be disconnected from his community and his culture. He, like sad little Jordan, would be institutionalized, removed from family and the only home he has known.

Jeremy's mother and the Pictou Landing Band community were overjoyed with the ruling as it is not only a big victory for Maurina Beadle, her son Jeremy and the Band, it also sets an important precedent to ensure all First Nations children across Canada are given equal access to essential government services. Maurina Beadle commented, "I'm overwhelmed with winning the Jordan's Principle case, knowing the children will finally get the help that is much needed. I have a sense of inner peace knowing that there will be a change for the children across Canada." Ms Beadle also praised Jordan's family, adding, "I'm sure the Anderson Family will feel the same way as I do."

For more information, please contact:

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For more information on Jordan's Principle, go to:

<http://www.fncaringsociety.com/jordans-principle>