



Did You Know?

National Indigenous History Month 2021

Did You Know? is a series run by the University of Waterloo Indigenous Initiatives Office for the duration of Indigenous History Month 2021. “Did You Know” posts were uploaded weekly on Mondays and Wednesdays, featuring information on various topics pertaining to Indigenous histories in Canada. Please share this resource widely.

JORDAN’S PRINCIPLE



Jordan River Anderson, The Messenger ([film](#) by Alanis Obomsawin)

Credit: [Toronto International Film Festival Inc.](#)

Jordan River Anderson, from [Norway House Cree Nation](#), was born in 1999 with a rare muscle disorder known as [Carey-Fineman-Ziter syndrome](#) and stayed in the hospital from birth. When he was two years old, doctors said he could move to a special home for his medical needs. However, the Canadian federal and Manitoban provincial governments could not agree on who should pay for his home-based care.

As the federal and provincial governments argued, Jordan stayed in the hospital until he passed away at the age of five.

Every child deserves access to services such as health care and supports at school; however, First Nations children often face many challenges accessing the same services as other children in Canada. This is because different levels of government fund different services for First Nations children, especially those living on-reserve.



In 2007, in response to public criticism and recommendations from Indigenous groups, Canada's Parliament passed a motion in support of "[Jordan's Principle](#)," a policy meant to ensure that First Nations children have equitable access to government-funded health, social, and educational services. Although practice took an exhausting 10 years to live up to the aspiration of the principle, we've finally reached a time when justice is possible.

Today, Jordan's Principle is a legal obligation. This means it has no end date. While programs and initiatives to support it may only exist for short periods of time, Jordan's Principle will always be there and will support First Nations children for generations to come.

This is the legacy of Jordan River Anderson.

Between July 2016 and March 31, 2021, more than 911,000 products, services and supports were approved under Jordan's Principle. (Government of Canada, 2021)

"When we step back from Jordan's Principle and really think about it, what we're really talking about is ending racial discrimination against little kids," says [Cindy Blackstock](#), Executive Director of the [First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada](#).

"No child should be left behind because of their race. We owe it to the kids, and we owe it to the ancestors." - Cindy Blackstock

The [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#) (TRC) reports comment extensively on child welfare, referencing it as a continuation of [Indian residential schools](#), in which the removal of Indigenous children from their families and communities continues through a different system.

With this continued crisis resulting in children losing their languages, cultures and ties to their communities, the TRC cited changes to child welfare as its top Calls to Action.

These Calls to Action include:

- Reducing the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in the care of child welfare;
- Publishing data on the exact numbers of Indigenous children in child welfare and the reasons for apprehension and costs associated with these services;
- Fully implementing Jordan's Principle;
- Ensuring that legislation allows for Indigenous communities to be in control of their own child welfare services; and
- Developing culturally appropriate parenting programs (TRC, 2015).



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It is important to acknowledge and consider the legacy of the Indian residential school system when looking at [Indigenous child welfare in Canada](#) in order to contextualize the roots of the child welfare crisis and ongoing removal of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children from their homes and communities.

Find more resources by browsing the [Indigenous History Month resources webpage](#).