

Jordan's Principle

Premier Gordon Campbell

January 24, 2008

Check against delivery

It was about two years ago when we first established a leadership council. We had a number of meetings – I remember sitting with the leadership council and they said to me, “you know Premier what we really have to do – we have to focus on our children.”

You face a challenge in First Nations services towards children who are First Nations children. I believe that one of the lessons that we have to learn is that if we can give as much as we can to our children then we have to recognize and we have to respect the traditions of those children.

I think the real answers to how we make sure Aboriginal children have the kind of future that they deserve lie in the hearts and the minds of the elders in Aboriginal communities across this province. So when you come together as you have, to talk – I think you're doing something that's very important for British Columbia and I believe it's important for First Nations children.

I am proud of the work that Lesley du Toit is doing with all the members in her ministry, but I'm mostly proud of the fact that they're willing to say we must listen, we must learn, we must act with the direction of First Nations.

This is not a question of us saying this is what's best, this a question of you saying this is what's best, and us replying how can we help and how can we reinforce that.

When I heard the story of Jordan – it is a story that should not be told in Canada – it is not a story that should be told in British Columbia. So I can tell you that this government embraces Jordan's Principle. This government will fully support Jordan's Principle and this government will work with you to put Jordan's Principle into effect across the province of British Columbia.

The last thing that any of us want to do is load our problems, our challenges and our difficulties on our children – my children or your children.

When I was in Ahousat, I was walking through the community and there was a little girl there and her eyes were just on fire. She had that joy, that excitement – that sort of zest for living.

Unfortunately in Canada, over the last too many hundred years, too often as Aboriginal children have grown up through to their adulthood, some of that life has disappeared.

This is what we have to do. We have to be sure that every Aboriginal child has that light burning brightly in their eyes every day, every week, every year of their life. We have to be sure that those children have the kinds of dreams they need, have the support they need, love they need from all of us – from all of us in the community – to be sure they can reach their full potential.

The Federal Government has made a clear statement that they are committed to Jordan's Principle and I can tell you we will hold them to that. But we will not wait for the firm commitment from them – we will act in British Columbia. We will make sure that jurisdiction does not get in the way of what we hope is right for our children in this province.

And for Aboriginal children, the children of First Nations – the people who carry that responsibility, who I ask to actually share with our government the direction we should take, are the people in this room and the people scattered across our province who are working hard everyday to be sure that children have the kind of lives that they deserve.

So I wanted to come here today to say thank you. I wanted to come here today to say how much I appreciate the fact that you're spending time thinking about children. I noticed goals and objectives you had that defined the role of children play in the agenda as we build a New Relationship. So at least I can tell you where I would like them to be – I would like them to be first. I would like them never to be forgotten. I would like us to try to make each day a little bit better for them, each month, each year.

I don't think we can solve the challenges in front of us overnight. But I know this – if we maintain a mutual commitment, if we maintain and build a level of trust in this province between First Nations leadership and the provincial services that should be there for you – if we continue to work in partnerships and bring the federal government to the table to make sure they are doing what's best for First Nations people, we will accomplish our objective.

And in 20 years, in 30 years, in 40 years, First Nations children will look back to this time in our history and say we made the right choices. We made them for them, not for us. We didn't say what someone else will do, we said this is what we'll do for our children.

I'm committed to working with you on that. Minister Christensen is (as well). Most importantly, again I want to thank you for your commitment to First Nations children across this province. Their future should be brighter. We will make it brighter – their dreams will come true. Thank you very much.