

Jordan's Principle Regional Working Group Meeting Summary – March 5, 2024

Purpose of the Meeting

The Jordan's Principle Regional Working Group convened on March 5, 2024, to discuss the pivotal role of information in the operationalization and governance of Jordan's Principle. The exchange focused on the necessity of gathering and analyzing data to understand the well-being of children, recognize needs, and assess changes over time.

What We Heard

A critical concern was identified in the discussions: the current national data for Jordan's Principle, predominantly administrative in nature, fails to capture the complex and unique needs of First Nations children. This data does not reflect the realities on the ground, nor the specific needs of the children, families, and communities seeking support from Jordan's Principle.

To address the gap between a community's reality and requests to Jordan's Principle, it was proposed that local data about First Nations should be gathered by First Nations to establish a baseline of well-being (in compliance with OCAP® principles). This community-level information on well-being could be used to help contextualize requests to Jordan's Principle. This dual approach of community data with administrative data could offer a more comprehensive view of the needs and challenges faced by First Nations children.

Regionally, administrative practices to data gathering share many commonalities with some variations (see Appendix A).

There is a recognized opportunity to develop a comprehensive set of indicators to test data gathering methods specific to Jordan's Principle. The working group underscored the importance of self-reliance in these processes to ensure that control over information remains with the First Nations and their designated organizations.

To address these challenges, the working group identified several areas in need of development:

- 1) **Support for capacity building for data collection:** training for people, the right tools, and processes are needed to equip First Nations and their organizations for data gathering and analysis.
- 2) **Gap analysis of existing federal programs:** Jordan's Principle helps a lot of children but it also covers gaps in existing federal program areas. Those gaps need to be identified and quantified.
- 3) **Data management infrastructure:** it would be powerful to have a consistent approach for First Nations-led data gathering and analysis for Jordan's Principle. Such infrastructure would support the aggregation of data in a manner that facilitates comparative analysis and transparent reporting.
- 4) **Data disaggregation:** the working group called on ISC to disaggregate and report on data by territory (Northwest Territories, Yukon, Nunavut), rather than rolling it up into an aggregate category.

The working group shared concerns over the potential misuse of Jordan's Principle. Whether the spirit and intent of Jordan's Principle was misunderstood or whether there were deliberate

abuses, it will be imperative for First Nations to lead on solutions. There were also concerns raised about commercial entities offering services to access Jordan's Principle and others raising rates if they knew Jordan's Principle was paying. These issues merit attention.

Takeaways

The meeting concluded with takeaways on what we know about data and measurement in Jordan's Principle, what we don't know, and what can change.

What We Know:

Local knowledge in First Nations and among their organizations is abundant and underused. Service coordinators, First Nations, intake workers, hold a wealth of knowledge and case specific information, e.g., letters of support, case notes, etc. that can help to contextualize needs. It will be important to capture that information to better understand the needs of children.

ISC gathers a lot of information on Jordan's Principle. Even if the information is imperfect, it should be provided in disaggregated formats at the request of the First Nation or their trusted regional organization. First Nations can use that data to understand how Jordan's Principle is being utilized and the nature of the services provided.

What We Don't Know:

The working group identified several areas where knowledge is notably absent. The lack of baseline metrics remains a primary concern, as it is critical to evaluate progress, understand community needs, and monitor developmental trajectories over time.

The delineation of accountability and the clarity of roles within the framework of Jordan's Principle require further definition. For example, there remains uncertainty surrounding the specific responsibilities of the Jordan's Principle Operations Committee (JPOC) and the Jordan's Principle Action Team (JPAT), among others. A precise understanding of each entity's role is important for an effective operation.

Equally important is establishing uniform criteria for the administration of Jordan's Principle, particularly concerning the grounds for denial of services. The absence of standardized guidelines raises questions about the consistency and equity of decisions made under Jordan's Principle.

The outcomes of interventions and support services provided through Jordan's Principle lack clear documentation. This means that we don't know how children are faring after receiving supports from Jordan's Principle, e.g., are follow-ups needed? has their health improved? Understanding the impact of interventions is vital for assessing the success of Jordan's Principle and for informing future policy and practice.

Substantive equality is a fundamental goal of Jordan's Principle, yet we have not established a framework for measuring the achievement of this goal. It is essential to develop metrics that can accurately reflect the extent to which substantive equality is being realized.

Lastly, the extent of potential misapplications or misinterpretations of Jordan's Principle is not well understood. It is imperative to quantify and address these issues to maintain the integrity of Jordan's Principle while safeguarding access for those it aims to serve.

What We Can Change:

In the context of enhancing Jordan's Principle's implementation, the discussion highlighted the criticality of localized data collection. Next steps will be defining what data should be gathered to support the delivery of Jordan's Principle.

It was agreed that ISC should adopt a mandate to report on all Jordan's Principle requests at the level of the First Nation or at their directed level. The reporting should be regular and consistent to ensure First Nations and their organizations have the data about the supports and services being sought in their communities.

Defining gaps in existing programs is crucial for supporting Jordan's Principle. Jordan's Principle is intended to promote substantive equality, not cover up the shortfalls of existing programs.

Conclusion

At the conclusion of the meeting, there was consensus that those working to administer Jordan's Principle in First Nations should move ahead of the federal government on data gathering and analysis.

Inconsistency in decision-making can mean inconsistency in access to Jordan's Principle. While the legal foundations of Jordan's Principle are secure, it is reliant on the administrative decisions of public servants and other actors. With the reliance on administrative decisions, there is an imperative to gather relevant data to demonstrate needs, successes, and areas for action.

Next Steps

- 1) IFSD to prepare a draft gap analysis of programs for working group review.
- 2) IFSD to undertake analysis of ISC's GC Case data:
 - a. Prepare the list of available variables provided by ISC.
 - b. Produce provincial and territorial analysis with the data (based on availability).
 - c. Prepare analysis on: group requests, individual requests.
 - d. Clarify reporting for requests that implicate multiple children or a family. Is reporting consistent?
- 3) IFSD to prepare potential indicators for local data gathering for review by the working group.
- 4) IFSD to explore the feasibility of the following analysis:
 - a. Economy of scale in service delivery, i.e., building service locally rather than sending child out of community for services.
 - b. Defining portraits of available services and access to services by First Nation.

IFSD will share progress updates with the regional working group as information is available.

IFSD is grateful to the regional working group for their on-going efforts and looks forward to continuing this important work.

Appendix A – Data capture

Region	Information captured (notes from working group discussion)
Alberta	Applications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographics (applications to consortium) • Item/service requested
	Finance (all of Alberta other than capital) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excel • \$ requested/approved • Process and payment time • Invoice etc. • Recurring y/n • Output data • Compliance to processing times Areas of expenditure
British Columbia	Decentralized network, 3 years of development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No central data systems • Therefore, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) data only
	Database will be based on willingness
	AB + additional elements for ISC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of employee • Time to respond • Obstacles/barriers
	*Community-level view for delivery of Jordan’s Principle (Not ISC Aggregate view) Goal = using First Nations own data to understand service and program needs for planning, advocacy, and jurisdiction.
Saskatchewan (Tribal Council)	1) Demographics; Applications details including \$ requested and approved, including products/services; Payment to vendors; Any applications through ISC pending
	2) Basic necessities/social needs tracked separately (Totally managed funds)
	3) Respite tracking
	Additional notes, except circumstances of family and risk factors (general Saskatchewan = Alberta + notes)
	Reporting differs! Always ISC but also First Nations and organizations.
Manitoba	70+ providers in Manitoba

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjudication (approvals with First Nation) • Limits reliability of info because of lack of consistency
	Reporting varies/localized adjudication
	Even basic Alberta data not consistently captured.
	Attempts to establish common database have failed. Governance, OCAP, \$, etc. are challenges.
	Different data capacity and infrastructure starting points for First Nations and other providers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group requests for First Nation programming different reporting.
Ontario (Independent First Nations [IFN])	Political Territorial Organizations (PTO) govern data for Jordan's Principle
	IFN = Alberta + [Interest to capture needs for planning and advocacy] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track requests per child throughout interactions • Areas of need (education, social, medical, etc.) • Demographics
	Data Band systems, * on and off reserve <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other PTOs using
Quebec	All approvals/adjudications go through ISC.
	British Columbia (attempt) and/or Alberta+ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinators in each First Nation • ISC works with coordination in First Nation • Approvals influenced by relationships • ISC hold database • First Nations coordinators keep own data but time/capacity limits use. • Data systems being created through child and family services; attempt to link to Jordan's Principle data (privacy concerns)
Nova Scotia	Same as Alberta and service quality through outcomes for kids (progress reports from vendors)
New Brunswick	Different approaches within province among First Nation/Tribal Councils
	First Nations data base linked to child for all services provided by First Nation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linked to clinical practice via First Nation specific to Jordan's Principle
	Alberta and interactions with other services within FN <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linked to clinical practice via First Nation specific to Jordan's Principle
Prince Edward Island (Lennox Island)	Alberta or Nova Scotia
	On/off-reserve and demographics
	Approved/denied requests linked to final \$

	One-page consent form (summary)
Yukon	Alberta + First Nation/Inuit
	Database system from Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN) used to track claims <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographics and those of parents • Final tracking linked to database
	ONLY FOR APPLICANTS THROUGH CYFN Respite, counselling, necessities of life, day care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CYFN can issue payments for necessities of life
	CYFN has general intake process to which data is linked <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including why support sought etc.
Northwest Territories	Basic necessities/general <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single form (developed by Dene Nation) • Name/First Nation; Request for produce/service; \$ amount requested; First Nation ID #
	Dene Nation tracks ALL applications + statuses
	Dene Nations approves basic necessities
	Case files linked to payment
	Reporting is ISC only