



500-211 Yonge Street Toronto ON M5B 1M4 (T)416.408.4041 or 3967
Toll Free 844-633-2886 (F)416.408.1568 (E)alst@web.ca www.aboriginallegal.ca

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For Immediate Release:

Jordan Wabasse' s Reacts to the Verdict of the First Nations Youth Inquest

THUNDER BAY, ON: Jordan Wabasse's family welcomes the recommendations the jury released today. Jordan's parents Bernice and Derek Jacob are glad that the recommendations strongly stated that both on and off reserve students deserve equity in education and that funding should not be determined based on their residence but on needs. Bernice and Derek believe that now that the inquest is over, the real work of implementing the recommendations needs to start.

The inquest heard evidence about how First Nation families often cannot afford to move off-reserve for school attendance. The inquest also heard that funding was insufficient and excluded First Nation students whose parents leave reserves to provide safe households in the city. Bernice explained that "it is not easy for families to just move away from home to stay with their kids while they attend school. It is too costly." Derek added "that is why we are glad the jury recommended early childhood education, elementary school, high school facilities and resources in First Nation communities. These are valuable recommendations that can increase our children's success if they are implemented."

Derek noted that there are risks to moving a whole family to a city for a high school student. He said "sometimes you cannot find the same job in a city that you have been doing on the reserve. First Nation people are sometimes even denied housing or job opportunities because of their race." Bernice added, "Not all Aboriginal people fit the stereotypes that are assumed about First Nation people from reserves. Many of us do well in our communities and we want to keep building communities with strong youth that have real opportunities. Leaving our families, culture, language and traditional ways is not a good option"

Bernice said "our family participated in the inquest because we did not want any other family to go through what we went through. Some communities do not even have a high school and no choice but to send their children away for school. We have kept our younger sons home but at the cost of improving their learning opportunities." She added that "When Jordan was missing for so long, we were hopeful. When his body was found, we lost our son and his bright future but everyone else lost the opportunity to learn from our son a love for hockey, love for nature, love for hunting and our family lost the knowledge he could pass on to his younger brothers and other community members. No family should have to feel this type of loss. No family should have to send young teenagers away from home for education---that is why it is so important that the recommendations the jury made about education in First Nation communities are actually put into place."

For more information please contact:

Christa Big Canoe, Legal Advocacy Director – Aboriginal Legal Services Toronto (416) 408-4041 x 225 or 647-227-4392 or by email canoecd@lao.on.ca