

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) will sign on to the campaigns for "Jordan's Principle" and "Shannen's Dream" via their respective websites and will make its support for these campaigns known to its jurisdictional and associate members.

**Submitted by** Michelle Martinson, RN, BSN — Chair of the B.C. Nurses' Union's Aboriginal Leadership Circle and the BCNU Convention 2012.

### **Rationale**

For over 10 years, the children and youth of Attawapiskat did not have access to a safe school environment in which to learn and grow. Despite promises, the Federal Government has done nothing more than place temporary portables next to the school ground contaminated with over 50,000 gallons of diesel fuel. Shannen Koostachin became the face and voice for the young children of Attawapiskat, advocating for a new school to replace the make-shift portables in her community. Koostachin was known for standing up to government officials — federally and at the international level — to raise awareness about the conditions in Attawapiskat and ensure that all children had access to safe and comfortable schools. Tragically, Shannen was killed in a car accident on May 30th, 2011. Her voice was silenced, but her dream still lives on. The Shannen's Dream Campaign was initiated to ensure that her important work will continue.

To be successful, First Nations children need:

- **Safe and Secure Places to Learn** — A number of First Nations communities do not even have schools; in which case children must either leave their families and communities to attend school or forfeit their education. Many existing schools require renovations to ensure children have safe and secure places to learn.
- Many First Nations children do not have the most basic learning tools, such as gyms, libraries, textbooks, computers and science labs. The reason is that First Nations schools are funded in a completely different way than provincial schools. The funding approach is outdated, unstable and is not based on the actual number of students in the classroom. On average, First Nations schools receive at least \$2000 less per child, which accounts for the lack of learning materials. It is also difficult to retain qualified teachers in First Nations schools, because they earn some of the lowest salaries among teachers in Canada.
- First Nations schools require support from First Nations school boards and management authorities. Although many have been established, they are not empowered through the same funding, policy and legislation as are those in the provincial education systems. Strengthening First Nations control involves providing parents with meaningful involvement in the education of their children. It means having classes and curricula that reflect First Nations identities and needs; it means strengthening linkages to other jurisdictions and other education providers; and it means providing high-quality, culturally-relevant education to First Nations children wherever they attend school.
- **Education in First Nations Languages** — First Nations languages are the core of First Nations identity. First Nations must have the opportunity to be educated in First Nations languages, just as members of Anglophone and Francophone language groups have to receive an education in those languages. Support for language teachers and relevant curricula is essential.

The campaign's website is at: [shannensdream.ca](http://shannensdream.ca)

The "Jordan's principle" campaign speaks to a child-first principle resolving any jurisdictional disputes within and between federal and provincial governments. This campaign is a result of inadequate

accountability and decision-making that goes on in services for First Nations/Aboriginal children within Canada.

Jordan River Anderson of Norway House Cree Nation was ready to go home from hospital when he was two years old. Instead, he went on to spend over two years unnecessarily in hospital, as the Province of Manitoba and the Government of Canada could not agree on who should pay for his at-home care. Tragically, while governments continued to argue, Jordan passed away at the age of five, never having spent a day in a family home.

First Nations children are often denied services available to all other children because of payment and jurisdictional disputes within and between the federal and provincial/territorial governments. Jordan's Principle is a child-first principle named in memory of Jordan River Anderson. It calls on the government-of-first-contact to pay for child services, while it seeks reimbursement later, so the child does not get tragically caught in the middle of government red tape. Jordan's Principle applies to *all* government services and must be adopted and fully implemented by the Government of Canada and all provinces and territories. Jordan left a legacy of equity for all other children. Now it is our turn to make sure it is implemented

This campaign's website is at: [jordansprinciple.ca](http://jordansprinciple.ca)

### **Relevance to CNA's mission and goals**

The CNA's Mission for 2010-2014 states that CNA is the national professional voice of registered nurses, advancing the practice of nursing and the profession to improve health outcomes in a publicly funded, not-for-profit health system — by unifying the voices of registered nurses, strengthening nursing leadership, promoting nursing excellence and a vibrant profession, advocating for healthy public policy and a quality health system and serving the public interest.

We believe this resolution fits within the scope of “healthy public policy” and “serving the public interest,” because the “Shannen's Dream” campaign speaks to the disparities in funding for quality education in our First Nations/Aboriginal communities.

The Jordan's Principle Members Motion (296), passed in the House of Commons on Dec. 12, 2007, has yet to receive a full provincial/territorial government implementation. As a result, First Nations children still do not have the same access to services that other Canadian children enjoy.

We also believe that CNA's biennial convention, with its theme of “Nurses: Movers and Shapers,” is just the place to bring forward such a resolution. Not only is this a gathering of nurse leaders from across our country, the slogan is also about nurses' “national collective voice” for making social change a reality.

The B.C. Nurses' Union passed a resolution at their Convention 2012, promoting a movement amongst its members to sign on to these two national campaigns with a majority by National Aboriginal Day 2012 (June 21).

### **Key stakeholders**

Members of the CNA, Members of the BCNU

### **Resources required or expected outcomes**

The CNA will advocate that the associate members of CNA will initiate a campaign by publicizing these campaigns and noting them on their websites with links for members to access. Cost of publicizing the campaign on website is yet to be determined.