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tbnews.com file photograph

NAN Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler

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By tbnews.com

Officials with Nishnawbe Aski Nation have released a statement further explaining their request to expand the scope of a coroner's inquest.

The inquest is examine the circumstances surrounding the deaths of several First Nations students in this city. On Monday NAN announced that it would be making a formal request Tuesday to expand the scope of that inquest.

### The new statement follows:

THUNDER BAY: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) is going to Court to argue for the broadening of the scope of the Inquest into the deaths of First Nation students to include substantive issues such as the quality of the police investigation into the deaths and the impact of racism in Thunder Bay during a motion beginning Tuesday, April 14 at the Thunder Bay Courthouse.

"It is important that this inquest include a close examination of how the Thunder Bay Police handled each of these cases, from the early stage of issuing missing person notices, to the steps taken to locate them, through to how the investigations concluded," said Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler, who hold the justice portfolio at NAN. "I am mindful of the nationally publicized failures by the authorities to properly investigate missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada; we need to examine these investigations to see if there is a parallel here in the City of Thunder Bay."

The hearing arises as a response to the Coroner's original scope statement.

NAN has taken the position that the scope of the Inquest is overly narrow and fails to include issues of importance to NAN and to the families of the lost youth.

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"This goes beyond just general 'discrimination'. We need to look closely at how racism affects the daily life of the students who come here for school, and how racist views are woven throughout the education system," said Fiddler. "To leave out this important topic would seriously limit what the jury would learn about the current reality our students face."

NAN has standing at the inquest, which has faced repeated delays, most recently due to the Thunder Bay District jury roll being declared invalid because of a lack of representation of First Nation people.

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