



## Lawyer at Thunder Bay inquest introduces possibility some students murdered

National News | October 7, 2015 by Wayne Rivers | 0 Comments

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(Lawyer Julian Falconer, file photo.  
University of Toronto)

### Wayne Rivers

#### APTN National News

THUNDER BAY — At the end of an emotion filled day at the Ontario inquest into the deaths of seven First Nation students in Thunder Bay, the lawyer representing the Nishnawbe Aski Nation grilled a pathologist on her work reviewing each of the cases and whether some of the students drowned or were killed.

Julian Falconer cross-examined Dr. Toby Rose, who was assigned to review the work done by the original coroner on the case, at length on whether she properly took into account all the information contained in the autopsy files including the abrasions found on some of the students found in waters in and around Thunder Bay.

Five of the seven dead students were pulled from the city's rivers drowned.

Jethro Anderson and Jordan Wabasse, both 15, were found in the Kaministiquia river while Curran Strang, 18, Reggie Bushie, 15 and Kyle Morriseau, 17 were discovered in the McIntyre river.

Falconer's cross-examination raised the possibility some of the students may have been murdered.

Rose responded saying nothing in the autopsies suggested that theory, but she couldn't absolutely rule it out.

Falconer pressed Rose on whether abrasions found on some of the students including marks on the face and knees, could suggest that the students had been forced into the water rather than the pathologist's determination that they had found themselves in the water and could not get out because of high states of intoxication.

Falconer told APTN National News that investigators, pathologists and toxicologists who worked on the cases between 2000 and 2011 focused on the "drunken Indian" scenario where alcohol was the root cause.

"These students were obviously in distress, why aren't we in distress? And why aren't we focussing on that aspect of this inquest" he said.

Falconer said Rose's testimony revealed that homicide couldn't be ruled out yet.



“Our challenge is that the investigations in the early stages were so superficial that it is very difficult to get a narrative together that tells us anything – what we do know after Dr. Rose finished testifying we know that anything is possible – that she can’t rule out homicide – she can’t definitively say accident – we just don’t know”

Rose said the family of Paul Panacheese may never know what killed the 17 year old. He was found at home and authorities believe he died of heart failure.

Robyn Harper, 18, was found in the boarding house where she was staying. The inquest was told she died of acute ethanol toxicity or alcohol poisoning.

The inquest is years in the making and has had to overcome a number of hurdles including the province’s inability to put together a jury roll made up of First Nation jurors.

The Nishnawbe Aski Nation makes up 49 First Nations in northern Ontario.

To this day, hundreds of students from remote First Nation students travel to Thunder Bay for school.

The inquest, the largest in Ontario history, is expected to call 200 witnesses and continue through to March 2016.

For more information on the seven students and the inquest, click here.

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