

First Nations student survives being thrown in river by attackers, inquest hears

Bodies of five of the seven First Nations students who died were found in rivers in Thunder Bay

By Jody Porter, [CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 08, 2016 6:30 AM ET Last Updated: Apr 08, 2016 4:44 PM ET



'There's no way that I think he'd go in there on his own,' Christian Morriseau says of his son Kyle's body being found in a Thunder Bay river in 2009. (Ron Desmoulins/CBC)

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First Nation Student Inquest - Jonathan Rudin

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A former student at the First Nations high school in Thunder Bay says he was attacked by strangers and thrown in a river in 2008.

His story came to light Thursday during the inquest into the deaths of seven First Nations students in the northern Ontario city. The bodies of five of the seven students were found in a river.

Lawyers for the families of the students, the Nishnawbe Aski Nation and the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth had prepared a motion asking that the inquest hear testimony from the young man, who is now in his 20s.

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Instead, an agreed statement of facts was read into the record by coroner's counsel Trevor Jukes.

"He came across a group of young males who were unknown to him. He had a short conversation with them and they attacked him," Jukes said. "He was thrown into the river by these males. He swam to the opposite side of the river and ultimately managed to escape this attack."



Nishnawbe Aski Nation lawyer Meaghan Daniel questioned a pathologist's conclusion that four of the students' deaths were accidental. (Falconers LLP)

The statement went on to say that the student went back to his community almost immediately after the attack and never returned to Dennis Franklin Cromarty school because he felt unsafe in Thunder Bay.

None of the lawyers would comment on the matter.

The story fuels suspicions some parents have about how their children died in the city.

Christian Morriseau's son Kyle's body was found in the river in 2009.

"There's no way that I think he'd go in [the water] on his own," Morriseau said. "He wasn't suicidal, he knew he had a family he knew he had a dad that loved him a lot."

A forensic pathologist told jurors it is her opinion that Morriseau, and three of the other boys whose bodies were found in the water, died accidentally after putting themselves at risk by being intoxicated near the river.

But some lawyers questioned the conclusions drawn by Dr. Toby Rose, who was not present for the months of evidence at the inquest.

"If you have alcohol on one side of the balance and six months worth of testimony of what happened that night with those kids, you still tip in favour of the alcohol?" asked Meaghan Daniel, the lawyer for the Nishnawbe Aski Nation.

"People who are drunk can also be murdered, so that's not the precise reason," Rose responded. "I've gone through my thinking."

Evidence at the inquest is scheduled to wrap up on Friday.

In June, jurors at the inquest are expected to make recommendations about keeping First Nations students safe in Thunder Bay.

Watch live streaming [video from the First Nation student deaths inquest here](#).

Follow CBC Thunder Bay reporter Jody Porter [as she tweets from the inquest](#).