

Out there: First Nations kids are travelling hundreds of kilometres to attend high school



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Mishkeegogamang is an Ojibway First Nation about 500 km north of Thunder Bay, Ontario. (Marc Apollonio/CBC)

For many First Nations kids, high school means separation from loved ones. That's because some remote northern communities don't have high schools. Teens have to fly hundreds of kilometres and be away from their families to attend grade nine. But leaving home isn't just making kids lonely — it's putting their lives at risk.



Maryanne Panacheese, Mishkeegogamang member and mother of Paul Panacheese (in photo) who died in Thunder Bay, while attending Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School in 2006. (Marc Apollonio/CBC)

In October, 2015 coroner David Eden launched one of the largest inquests in Ontario's history: an inquest into the deaths of seven First Nations students who left their homes in northern Ontario and travelled to Thunder Bay for high school. The testimonies of nearly 200 witnesses are filled with stories of loneliness, racism, alcohol and drug abuse, accusations of inadequate police investigations, and a systemic failure that's putting young lives in danger. But at the heart of this are families; some who have lost children forever and others who are looking for reassurance that kids who are down south right now will survive.

HOW FAR

MISHKEEGOGAMANG STUDENTS MUST TRAVEL TO HIGH SCHOOL

CHIEF CONNIE GRAY MCKAY
IS THE MOTHER OF
SAVANNAH GRAY MCKAY



MANITOBA

MISHKEEGOGAMANG

WINNIPEG

500 KM

ONTARIO

THUNDER BAY



SAVANNAH GRAY MCKAY
TRAVELS 500 KM TO LIVE IN
THUNDER BAY TO ATTEND
DENNIS FRANKLIN CROMARTY
HIGH SCHOOL



MICHIGAN

The Current

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