

# Jury in First Nations student deaths inquest set to deliver recommendations in Thunder Bay, Ont.

**7 students from remote First Nations died in Thunder Bay, Ont., between 2000 and 2011**

By Jody Porter, [CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 28, 2016 5:00 AM ET Last Updated: Jun 28, 2016 5:00 AM ET



The seven students who have died in Thunder Bay since 2000 are, from top left, Jethro Anderson, 15, Curran Strang, 18, Paul Panacheese, 17, Robyn Harper, 18, Reggie Bushie, 15, Kyle Morriseau, 17, and Jordan Wabasse, 15. (CBC)

A coroner's inquest into the deaths of seven First Nations youth in Thunder Bay, Ont., is expected to issue dozens of recommendations on Tuesday for keeping Indigenous students safe in the city, but it's the verdict on how the students died that could prove most contentious.

The inquest is examining the deaths of Jethro Anderson, Curran Strang, Paul Panacheese, Robyn Harper, Reggie Bushie, Kyle Morriseau and Jordan Wabasse. All of the students came from remote First Nations to attend high school in Thunder Bay. They died between 2000 and 2011.

Bodies of five of the students were found in rivers in Thunder Bay. Months of testimony from police, schoolmates and family members have not revealed how the boys got into the water. There has been no indication of suicide.

On Tuesday, the jury of four women and one man will issue a verdict indicating whether they believe the drowning deaths were accidental or undetermined.

An undetermined ruling leaves the door open for the theory that at least some of the boys were pushed into the river, perhaps in a racially motivated altercation.

A former student told the inquest about swimming for his life after being thrown into a river at night by a group of young men he didn't know.

Many other students have testified about food, bottles and hate speech being hurled at them from passing cars in the city.

## Family seeks homicide verdict

The family of another student, Robyn Harper, 18, who died on the floor of her boarding home after a night of binge-drinking, has asked the jury to rule her death a homicide.

Their lawyer argued that Harper's boarding home parent and school support staff ought to have taken the severely intoxicated teen to hospital.

The **long-awaited inquest** began in October 2015 and heard many days of emotional testimony from parents of the students, as well as heated legal arguments from the 11 parties represented in the proceedings.

Here's some of what was revealed about each of the students:



Jethro Anderson, 15, was found dead on Nov. 11, 2000. (CBC)

**Jethro Anderson** of Kasibonika Lake First Nation had just turned 15 when he went missing in October 2000. It took **six days for Thunder Bay police** to launch a criminal investigation into his disappearance. His body was found nearly two weeks later in the Kaministiquia River by a First Nations search party on Nov. 11, 2000.



Curran Strang, 18, was found dead on Sept. 26, 2005. (CBC)

**Curran Strang**, 18, of Pikangikum First Nation **was found dead in the McIntyre River** on Sept. 26, 2005. He had disappeared four days earlier after drinking with friends near the water's edge.



Paul Panacheese, 21, was found dead on Nov. 11, 2006.

**Paul Panacheese** of Mishkeegogamang First Nation collapsed on the floor of his mother's home on Nov. 11, 2006. His mother had moved to the city **to support her son through his final semester of high school**. An

autopsy was unable to determine any anatomical or toxicological cause of the 21-year-old's death. A pathologist testified that it could have been an undetected heart condition.

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Robin Harper, 18, was found dead on Jan. 13, 2007. (CBC)

**Robyn Harper**, 18, of Keewaywin First Nation was found dead on Jan. 13, 2007. School support workers had picked up the highly intoxicated teen at a city bus station and left her passed out in the entrance hallway of her boarding home. It was her **first week away from home at school**.

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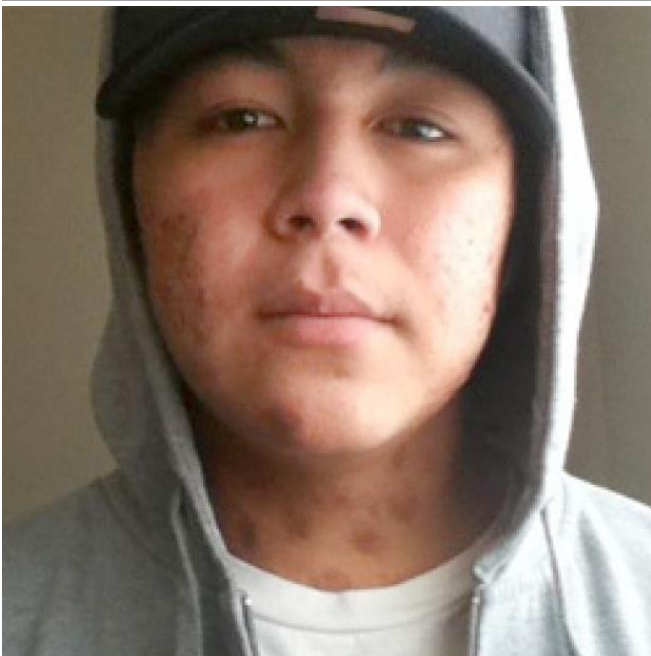
Reggie Bushie, 15, was found dead in 2007. (CBC)

**Reggie Bushie**, 15, of Poplar Hill First Nation **was found dead in the McIntyre River on Nov. 1, 2007**. His older brother, Ricki Strang, was with him, drinking near the river, when Bushie was last seen on Oct. 27. Strang's memory of the night is clouded by alcohol, but he testified that he believed the pair were mugged that night.



Kyle Morriseau, 17, was found dead on Nov. 10, 2009. (CBC)

**Kyle Morriseau**, 17, of Keewaywin First Nation was found dead in the McIntyre River on Nov. 10, 2009. He was last seen on Oct. 26, 2009. **Thunder Bay police faced many questions** at the inquest about why they waited until Morriseau's body was found to interview the man last seen with him. Police said they believed Kyle was "alive and well" until the day his body was found.



Jordan Wabasse, 15, was found dead on May 10, 2011. (CBC)

**Jordan Wabasse**, 15, of Webequie First Nation was last seen within steps of his boarding home on Feb. 7, 2011. His body was found in the Kaministiquia River, nearly two kilometres away on May 10, 2011. No one who testified could explain how Wabasse got into the river. During testimony, **a man was accused of killing Wabasse**, but police said they ruled out that theory.

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