

Trailer-hitch attack on First Nations woman called 'hate crime'

Thunder Bay First Nations resident Barbara Kentner hit in abdomen with trailer hitch thrown from a passing car. Her sister says she heard someone in the car say: "I (expletive) got one of them."



Barbara Kentner was hit by something thrown at her in Thunder Bay. Her family calls it a hate crime. (FACEBOOK)

By [PETER EDWARDS](#) Star Reporter
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Thunder Bay First Nations resident Melissa Kentner says she has no doubt it was a hate crime that left her sister Barbara suffering from what may turn out to be fatal injuries.

She said she and her sister were walking together in a residential neighbourhood of Thunder Bay early in the morning on Jan. 29 when a [car drove towards them](#) and a blond passenger wearing a plaid shirt and a baseball cap hurled something in their direction.

Barbara, 34, was hit in the abdomen with a [metal trailer hitch](#) and Melissa, 37, says she heard someone in the car say, “I (expletive) got one of them.”

“It came from the passenger side,” Melissa said in a phone interview from Thunder Bay.

Barbara required surgery for her injuries.

Melissa said Barbara’s body appears to be shutting down and she has been told by doctors that her liver and kidneys are shutting down.

“She looks like a skeleton,” Melissa said.

“She said, ‘I can feel it. I’m dying. It’s my body that’s giving up,’ ” Melissa said.

“She just cries about it,” Melissa said. “She says, ‘I hate that it happened to me.’ ”

About 100 community members took part in a Solidarity walk in her honour last month.

Police initially said the incident was investigated as assault with a weapon, but Melissa Kentner said it should be considered a hate crime.

In an inquiry last year into the deaths of First Nations youths in the city, several community members said they had eggs, garbage and other objects thrown at them on city streets.

A week after the attack, police made an arrest in the case and Brayden Bushby, 18, was been charged with aggravated assault.

[Police said at the time](#) of Bushby's arrest that they were consulting with the Crown office to determine whether it could be motivated by hate and classified as a hate-related incident and that this "part of the investigation is ongoing."

"The Thunder Bay Police Service acknowledges the impact this incident has on the community," police said in their statement.

"The Thunder Bay Police are aware of the reporting by members of the aboriginal community that they have been victim to objects being thrown at them by person(s) in passing vehicles," the police statement continued. "The police are also very aware that many incidents go unreported. Police are encouraging anyone who is a victim of this type of incident to contact the police as soon as possible so a timely police response may be initiated."

A Thunder Bay police spokesperson was not available for comment early Tuesday afternoon.