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Thunder Bay

Mayor, chief call for united action to protect Indigenous kids in Thunder Bay, Ont.

'I'm not doing my job if children that come to this community don't feel safe': Mayor Keith Hobbs

By Jody Porter, [CBC News](#) Posted: May 24, 2017 7:00 AM ET Last Updated: May 24, 2017 9:15 AM ET



Ontario Regional Chief Isadore Day says First Nations people are asking "is there one individual or a set of individuals targeting Indigenous people" in Thunder Bay? (CBC)

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Thunder Bay needs more help to keep Indigenous kids safe in the northern Ontario city, says a provincial First Nations leader — and Thunder Bay's mayor agrees.

Seven First Nations teens have been found dead in rivers that run through Thunder Bay since 2000. The body of Josiah Begg, 14, was pulled from the

McIntyre River on May 18, less than two weeks after Tammy Keeash, 17, was found dead in the same river.

All of the teens who were found dead in the city had come to Thunder Bay to access education, health or support services not available in their remote First Nations.

"There are some real concerns, you know, can you send your kids out after dark?," says Ontario Regional Chief Isadore Day. "What is actually happening? Is there one individual or a set of individuals targeting Indigenous people?"

"These are real fears."

Day said he discussed the concerns with Thunder Bay Mayor Keith Hobbs when he reached out to Hobbs by phone on Monday night to express his support and willingness to work together on solutions.



Thunder Bay mayor Keith Hobbs is proposing Indigenous and non-Indigenous citizens jointly patrol the river banks to keep kids safe.

"We have to be there for the families [of Begg and Keeash]

and we need to depoliticize the grieving process," Day said. "We need to make sure we're all supportive. It doesn't matter what our political loyalties or gripes are."

Hobbs said he too feels it is important to work together and is proposing the immediate launch of a "unity" patrol of river banks in the city.

"Let's walk the river 24/7, 365 days a year, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people," Hobbs suggested in an interview with CBC News.

'Beat down racism'

"When people come here from other communities up north they're our residents, they're Thunder Bay residents and that's something we need to get into people's heads in our community," he said. "We've got to beat down racism to do that. That's a huge issue in Thunder Bay."

Both leaders said more help is needed from provincial and federal governments and area First Nations to support Indigenous people living in Thunder Bay.

"The city is certainly not equipped to deal with the depth and magnitude of the challenges that First Nations people face," Day said.



First Nations people gather on the banks of the McIntyre River on May 18 as news spread a body had been found during the search for 14-year-old Josiah Begg. (Martine Laberge/Radio-Canada)

For his part, Hobbs reiterated an apology he said he first issued to students from Dennis Franklin Cromarty First Nations high school last week.

"I apologized because as mayor, my job is to keep this city safe, with the police, obviously the police are in charge of that," he said. "But I'm not doing my job if children that come to this community don't feel safe and don't think they can go out at night."

On Tuesday afternoon, provincial police issued a news release saying **Thunder Bay Police Chief J.P. Levesque was charged with breach of trust and obstructing justice.**