## Responses to Jury Recommendations Seven First Nations Youths Inquest Q2016-26

(Jethro Anderson, Reggie Bushie, Robyn Harper, Kyle Morriseau, Paul Panacheese, Curran Strang & Jordan Wabasse)

#### **NISHNAWBE ASKI NATION**

#### Introduction

Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) remembers the Seven Youth, their families, and their communities on this, the fourth anniversary of the Seven Youth Inquest (the Inquest) verdict as we continue with the implementation of recommendations intended to prevent any further loss of our children.

The following progress report will provide an update on the Inquest recommendations that were directed to NAN. However, NAN's involvement continues to extend beyond the scope of the recommendations listed below, and updates will also be provided on NAN's supportive role in additional Inquest recommendations directed to other parties.

#### Mandate & Approach

NAN Chiefs-in-Assembly passed Resolution 16/78: *Implementation of the Seven Youth Inquest Recommendations* to formally express appreciation of the Inquest jury's tireless work, and also to direct the NAN Executive Council to take all reasonable steps to advocate for implementation of the recommendations. To this end, Inquest tables were created: 1) the Political Table, and 2) the Education Table.

The Political Table serves is a forum to hold all Inquest Parties accountable for their role in implementing the recommendations, and includes representatives from all parties named in the Inquest recommendations (the Inquest Parties). To date, seven (7) Political Table meetings were organized.

The Education Table focuses on the education-specific recommendations, and includes representatives from NAN, KO, MLC, NNEC and DFCHS (the First Nation Inquest Partners), Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), and provincial ministries. There are three task teams that address the education-specific recommendations related to: 1) infrastructure, 2) programs, services and funding, and 3) student well being. The task teams are composed of Education Table members and other parties who can contribute significantly to implementation activities. To date, eight (8) Education Table meetings and five (5) task team meetings have been organized.

#### **Community-Level Recommendations**

NAN continues to advocate for the implementation of Inquest recommendations targeting onreserve education, healthy learning environments and living conditions at the community-level in NAN territory. While we appreciate that progress has been made by Inquest Parties to improve student safety off-reserve, there is a definite need for more action with respect to the communitylevel recommendations.

The First Nation Inquest Partners have considered and discussed options on how best to actively engage and bring the NAN First Nations into the implementation process. The recommendations focused on changes that should be made with respect to off-reserve First Nations high schools are

actively addressed at Inquest tables, and we need this important work to continue. However, the journeys of First Nations students attending off-reserve high schools begin on-reserve, which is why it is so important that the recommendations at the community level are addressed, with the accompanying commitments from the governments of Canada and Ontario that will be necessary to support the actions proposed to engage with the NAN First Nations.

NAN will continue to organize and coordinate meetings in order to ensure a coordinated and transparent response to the Inquest recommendations, and will seek a new mandate from the NAN Chiefs via resolution, if necessary.

#### **Funding Concerns**

As a result of the Inquest, First Nations education – both on-reserve and off-reserve – was supposed to undergo a range of improvements. Infrastructure issues were to be fixed, and gaps in education (and health) outcomes that disadvantage First Nations students were to be closed. The practice of proposal-based funding for core or ongoing education activities was to cease.

In 2019-2020, the First Nation Inquest Partners continued to rely on proposal-based funding for the necessary student supports to fill gaps in programming or services. First Nation Inquest Partners have consistently raised concerns about this approach, as short-term proposal-based funding inhibits any long-term planning. Unfortunately, the issues reported last year with proposal-based funding continue to exist. Funding commitments in 2019/2020 were late, which led to delays in program or service delivery or the implementation of Inquest recommendations. This also negatively affected the ability of First Nation Inquest Partners to retain qualified staff, due to the instability and lack of security in employment that is inherent when funding for positions is proposal-based.

In the case of the Education Partnership Program (EPP), which has funded Inquest Coordination activities since 2016, the funding guidelines were changed, with no increase to the funding available. At the same time, the funding opportunity was opened up to a greater number of First Nations applicants across Canada. While this is positive, it is an issue for the First Nation Inquest Partners when they have had to rely heavily on EPP funding each year because no separate pot of funding was ever identified to fund the Inquest implementation despite requests by the First Nations Inquest Partners. As at June 28, 2020 the First Nation Inquest Partners still have no commitment for Inquest Coordination in 2020-2021, and there is further uncertainty in the current fiscal period because of the increased competition for EPP funding.

Uncertainties also remain in the student safety funded activities which resulted from concerns raised by parents, First Nations and partner organizations regarding the safety of students attending high school in Thunder Bay following the deaths of Josiah Begg and Tammy Keeash in 2017. The Inquest examined the circumstances of youth who died while attending high school in Thunder Bay, with the goal of preventing future deaths. Student safety funding is imperative to keep youth safe.

Throughout the Inquest recommendations, there are at least 100 instances where the word "funding" is used with key words such as sufficient, adequate, stable, predictable, reliable, and sustainable. The terms "on-reserve" and "off-reserve" should also not represent difficult jurisdictional restrictions to any First Nations education (and health care) funding framework, nor a restriction for First Nations children to receive the same advantages as other children in Canada regardless of where they live or where they attend school. Jurisdiction should not be an issue where divisions within or between governments threatens to delay or impede services or funding for First Nations children, when Treaty No. 9 partners include Canada and Ontario. Yet, to this day, the First

Nation Inquest Partners are still in the position of trying to address jurisdictional issues that prevent them from providing the programs and services for students off-reserve.

The Education Transformation is the federal government's new policy approach to the new funding framework for First Nations education. It is the federal government's approach to what may be called 'even greater First Nations local control of education'. ISC developed the three-year Interim Funding Formula (the Formula) with the end result being structural reform in First Nations education. The key idea behind the reform is for First Nations to identify how they plan to spend their allocation of funding going forward. However, issues and concerns have been raised from First Nations and organizations about how the process, engagement and timeframe are occurring, including concerns from KO, MLC and NNEC. The Formula still mostly excludes the First Nations mandated off-reserve schools. Once again, because of jurisdiction.

ISC has stated the Formula is currently the greatest opportunity which is designed to provide ongoing, predictable, sustainable funding going forward, and it is the solution to eliminating proposal-based funding. This is the response from ISC to the First Nation Inquest Partners at Inquest Tables when they request longer-term commitments, (e.g. five-year commitments) to sustain their school programs and services. Any new framework or mechanism developed should ensure that the First Nation Inquest Partners are able to achieve sound planning and budgeting, and allows them to conduct long-term strategic planning. More work remains to be done to ensure that the First Nations mandated off-reserve schools also benefit from the federal government's Education Transformation. This is their goal.

#### Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Verdict of the Coroner's Jury into the deaths of First Nations youth called upon Canada to provide additional funding to meet a host of NAN First Nations' educational needs, including but not limited to: new or renovated infrastructure to address overcrowding in homes and schools, encouraging teacher retention, providing healthy learning environments, and ensuring adequate internet bandwidth to support full access to all available online learning for all learners.

While both Canada and Ontario have made inroads on some of the Inquest recommendations, there are a number of important recommendations at the community level that have not been addressed at all. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, communities are finding themselves struggling to maintain educational programming with subpar access to broadband/internet services, outdated and overcrowded schools that cannot accommodate safe social distancing practices, a shortage of proper teacherages and poor teacher retention.

On top of these pre-existing educational deficiencies, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced communities to consider how to implement alternative approaches to the delivery of education programs and services. As communities work to adapt curricula in these extraordinary circumstances, and to support children and youth through these uncertain and stressful times, they are facing significant challenges in several areas. For example, enhanced mental health supports for students are urgently needed to address the mental health impacts of COVID-19. Specialized training and access to technical equipment and devices is required for teachers to begin utilizing technology-based platforms on an ongoing basis, and for special education teachers to support special needs students while homeschooling.

Had Canada been more responsive to the Inquest's recommendations (at the community level), NAN First Nations would be better situated to address some of these new requirements made necessary by the pandemic. It is clear that the pandemic will increase costs of education delivery, in order to ensure safety guidelines are upheld. For example, enhanced maintenance and cleaning of schools and school buses, and hiring additional staff, including hall monitors. Yet, no additional

education-specific funding has been identified by governments, putting First Nations students even further behind their provincial counterparts.

#### **OIPRD** Reinvestigations

The reinvestigation of nine (9) deaths of Indigenous people in Thunder Bay was recommended by the Office of the Independent Police Review Director (OIPRD) in its review of the Thunder Bay Police Service. Four (4) of the nine (9) cases are related to Jethro Anderson, Curran Strang, Kyle Morriseau and Jordan Wabasse, whose deaths were the subject of the Inquest. Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler participates on the Executive Governance Committee, the oversight group overseeing the investigation process. The Nishnawbe-Aski Police Service is part of the investigation team, while Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services provides victim support for families of the four youth.

Regular updates about the investigations process are brought to Inquest Political Table meetings to keep Inquest Parties informed on the progress. NAN remains committed to supporting the reinvestigation process, and stands with the families of Jethro Anderson, Curran Strang, Kyle Morriseau and Jordan Wabasse in their pursuit of answers through this process.

#### Families of the Inquest

In November 2019, NAN organized and hosted the NAN Families Gathering. Six (6) families of the Seven Youth attended this three-day event in Thunder Bay, which included workshops on coping with grief, sharing circles and debriefing to help families in their healing journeys. The families were glad to be back together in their shared experience, and to speak about their children.

Inquest Parties had the opportunity to present updates on the positive changes made possible through the implementation of the Inquest recommendations since the Inquest concluded in June 2016. The families were very pleased that student safety was being addressed, and were surprised by the progress that has been made so far by the Inquest Parties. The families expressed that they would like to see the implementation of the Inquest recommendations continue.

#### **Participation in Other Inquest Recommendations**

NAN continues to be actively involved in Inquest recommendations directed to other Inquest Parties. Some of these efforts include:

- Recommendation 32: This recommendation was assigned to Canada and Ontario and required both levels of government to provide resources for a working group to conduct a number of educational assessments in NAN territory. Through funds provided by the Ministry of Education, a preliminary report was completed on the education achievement gap. There are, however, other assessments which remain to be completed and NAN will conduct these outstanding assessments in 2020-2021.
- **Recommendation 112**: This recommendation was assigned to the City of Thunder Bay. A working group continues to develop a public awareness campaign to educate the public about racially motivated crimes affecting Indigenous people in Thunder Bay.
- Recommendation 115: This recommendation was assigned to the City of Thunder Bay (the City), TBPS, NNEC, KO, DFCHS, and MLC. The Watercourse and River Safety Audit was conducted in 2017 by completing the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) assessment, which resulted in recommendations. In November 2019, a walkabout took place along the waterways and other high-risk areas to see some of the changes made by the City from the CPTED recommendations.

#### Conclusion

The recommendations and issues raised in testimony during the Inquest require all Inquest Parties to acknowledge their ongoing responsibility to First Nation youth on-reserve and off-reserve. Inquest Parties must also continue to work together in an earnest, collaborative effort to achieve the vital systemic change that is needed to dismantle barriers, and to improve outcomes for First Nation youth.

NAN was extremely honoured to be with the families of the Seven Youth at the NAN Families Gathering. NAN believes it was important that the families and Inquest Parties be brought together to not only highlight the progress made to date on implementation activities, but for Inquest Parties to hear directly from the families about their perspectives on the Inquest, and the loss of their children. The families indicated they want progress to continue and to see the implementation of the 145 Inquest recommendations. Moving forward beyond year four (4), this should be a big part of what guides the actions of all Inquest Parties.

The federal government's Education Transformation was a dominant theme in the last year. This process was touted as the solution to reform First Nations education. However, it has actually introduced new issues or gaps and created new challenges and obstacles, especially for the First Nations mandated off-reserve schools. More work is therefore required to try to improve the health and education outcomes of youth and students from the NAN First Nations, as that window of opportunity closes. The COVID-19 pandemic has also further highlighted the gaps faced by First Nations students in the NAN territory at the community-level. As noted above, had the community-level recommendations been addressed, NAN First Nations and organizations would be better positioned to address the new challenges that have emerged as a result of COVID-19. While we are encouraged by the quick government response in some areas of response, more resources need to be immediately directed to supporting students.

NAN continues to prioritize First Nations-led processes on health transformation and education jurisdiction. NAN is hopeful that the intended systemic changes, as envisioned by the people of Nishnawbe Aski Nation, will be achieved according to the vision and goals of NAN communities, as opposed to the top-down, government approaches to reform, based on colonial policy.

### RECOMMENDATIONS DIRECTED TO NAN:

#s: 5, 7, 21, 33, 35, 36, 40, 44, 47, 49, 50, 61, 76, 77, 81, 87, 90, 91, 94, 114, 116, 137, 143 through 145

REC.	ORGANIZATION'S RESPONSE	OCC RESPONSE CODE
5	Living Space or Supported Living Arrangements for Students	
	Recommendation was accepted and completed insofar as the content and intent of the recommendation is already in place.	8
	NAN supports and advocates for KO, MLC, and NNEC, upon request or at Inquest tables, so that no student is denied access to a provincial or First Nations high school program for lack of space or supported living arrangements.	
	New School Facility and Student Living Centre for NNEC	
	NAN continues to work collaboratively with NNEC and Indigenous Services Canada ("ISC") for a new school facility and student living centre for Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School in Thunder Bay, and for upgrades and renovations for Pelican Falls First Nations High School and Pelican Falls Centre in Sioux Lookout. This work is also related to Recommendation 59.	
	Housing Capacity Issues	
	The lack of housing for staff and students in the Sioux Lookout area remains an ongoing issue that impacts KO and NNEC as the housing shortage limits the number of students from remote NAN First Nations that are able to attend high school in Sioux Lookout.	
	Reciprocal Education Approach	
	In May 2018, the Ontario government passed amendments to the <i>Education Act</i> , which set out the legislative framework for the Reciprocal Education Approach (REA). The regulations to initiate REA came into force on September 1, 2019. REA is a new framework designed to improve access, remove barriers and strengthen parent and guardian choice for First Nation students transitioning between schools of school boards and First Nation schools in Ontario. It will help to ensure that First Nation students are not denied a place in a publicly-funded school.	
7	Reconciliation: Principles of Interpretation	
	Recommendation was accepted and completed insofar as both the content and intent of the recommendation is already in place.	8
	The spirit behind the principles of interpretation was incorporated into the Charter of Relationship Principles Governing Health System Transformation in the NAN Territory between its Treaty Partners (Canada and Ontario). The NAN Chiefs formally reaffirmed their	

commitment through Resolution 19/10: *Nishnawbe Aski Nation Health Self-Determination*.

#### **Guiding Statements**

NAN continues to be guided by the document "A Declaration of Nishnawbe Aski (The People and the Land)", and further affirms its inherent rights and jurisdiction on its territory.

- i. Working with Treaty Partners is an ongoing process towards fulfilling obligations and recognition of rights in Treaty No. 9. In April 2018, NAN signed a Treaty Relationship Agreement with Ontario which provides a foundation for more meaningful discussions on priority issues, including education. NAN has been working to develop strong relationships at the provincial level in order to continue having meaningful discussions and advocate to improve the quality of life for the people of NAN. For example, NAN and Ontario have developed a process known as the NAN-Ontario Relationship Table, coordinated in partnership with the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs. The primary objective of the relationship process is to establish consistent government to government relationships and develop solutions to issues. There were three meetings of the Relationship Table in 2019-2020, which provided a forum for informed discussions about priorities and emerging issues for NAN First Nations, including funding concerns relating to Inquest recommendations.
- ii. The NAN First Nations exercise inherent control over their education systems.
- iii. The NAN First Nations have the right to govern their own spiritual, cultural, social and economic affairs.
- iv. NAN will continue to advocate for improved conditions in NAN First Nations in areas of housing, water, health, mental health, social issues, and to close the gap in education outcomes between First Nations and non-First Nations students.
- v. NAN supports the NAN First Nations as they develop local solutions to the effects of the doctrine of discovery and imposed colonial policy including paternalistic legislation and government policy, and assimilation through the Indian residential school system and the Sixties Scoop.
- vi. NAN continues to advocate for the NAN First Nations in the application of Jordan's Principle in order to ensure access to and the timely delivery of publicly funded services for children.

#### 21 Youth Leadership Training Program

Recommendation is accepted and is in progress.

#### Youth Leadership Manual

The content for the Youth Leadership Manual (YLM) is complete, and NAN will continue to pull the manual together so it can be shared with youth in the NAN territory. NAN is working with a

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graphic designer to format the manual, and an Indigenous artist will supply his unique woodland artwork which will be incorporated into the manual. There are four chapters to the YLM:

- 1. Group Focus 1: Leadership Development
- 2. Group Focus 2: Personality & Authentic Leadership
- 3. Group Focus 3: Skills of Leadership
- 4. Group Focus 4: Communications and Social Media

Several topics are covered within each chapter or Group Focus. NAN will provide this training and engagement sessions with youth in the NAN First Nations.

#### The First Annual Youth Leadership Summer Program

NAN and Carleton University jointly hosted the First Annual Youth Leadership Summer Program on July 20-27, 2019 in Ottawa. Experts and educators from NAN and Carleton University jointly delivered leadership workshops and information sessions to support the ability of youth to shape the future of their communities. Activities included:

- Tour of the Canadian Museum of History First Peoples Hall
- NAN Historical Journey Presentation
- Community Leaders Panel
- NAN-Canada Negotiations Process
- Understanding Contemporary Indigenous Leadership Styles
- Connection to the Land Teachings
- Carleton Career Service Workshop: Identifying your strengths and promoting them for employment
- Visit to Parliament
- Carleton Leadership Workshop
- NAN Oshkaatisak Council Presentation
- Carrying Community Art Project
- Sharing Circle with Elders and Facilitator

#### 33 NAN-Wide Education System

Recommendation was accepted and completed insofar as both the content and intent of the recommendation is already in place.

NAN and Canada signed a Framework Agreement in 1999, in which the parties committed to the negotiation of an Agreement-in-Principle (AIP) with respect to Education Jurisdiction in elementary and secondary education.

In an historic event in December 2018, an Education Jurisdiction AIP was signed by NAN and Canada. NAN continues to negotiate with Canada to further the education jurisdiction process towards a Final Agreement. The Final Agreement will lead to self-determination in education for participating NAN First Nations. They will exercise their inherent jurisdiction by delivering education through a system that is designed and run by the First Nations themselves. This will bring these First Nations out from the *Indian Act* provisions on education, putting First Nations in control of their

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own education systems with the ability to pass their own laws pertaining to education and related educational resources.

In February 2020, a NAN Chiefs Special Assembly on Education was held in Thunder Bay. An update was provided on the NAN education jurisdiction negotiations, community readiness and participation. Presentations were made on the education achievement gap report, the NAN Special Needs Strategy and the federal government's Interim Funding Formula. Apart from the NAN Chiefs assemblies, NAN Education Jurisdiction also conducted engagement sessions in two NAN First Nations in the last year.

One of the challenges in the Inquest process is the disconnect between existing work and how it is related to Inquest recommendations. At times, NAN addresses recommendations through its current work or strategies aimed at improving educational outcomes for students, and often does so outside of the Inquest process. Regardless, NAN continues to meet with the NAN First Nations through regular or special Chiefs-in-Assembly meetings to keep Chiefs apprised of innovations in First Nation education.

## Method for Measuring and Establishing Equivalence in Health Outcomes and Services

Recommendation remains rejected and an alternative approach will be implemented.

#### **Health Transformation**

In November 2019, the NAN Chiefs-in-Assembly passed three resolutions regarding transformative change in health care in the NAN territory by mandating NAN to work towards:

- Bringing paramedicine into all NAN First Nations.
- Establishing a new hospital in one of the northwestern communities served by the Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority.
- Improving the level of care available at nursing stations in remote First Nations.

Partnerships were also developed with Ornge, University Health Network–Peter Munk Cardiac Unit, Canadian Red Cross, Paramedics Association of Canada, Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, Ontario College of Family Physicians, College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, College of Nurses of Ontario, Northern Ontario School of Medicine, and Association of Midwives.

#### Community Participation

In 2019-2020, the NAN Health Transformation team visited 10 NAN First Nations and completed four Urban Community Participation sessions, bringing NAN to a total of 26 initial Community Participation sessions completed to date. The purpose of each NAN Health Transformation visit has always been to keep the First Nations informed on the work of Health Transformation and to

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gather feedback that will inform the design of the new wellness system.

Additionally, as part of the initial phase of community participation, the NAN Health Transformation team met with and provided presentations to approximately 100 groups and organizations in 2019-2020. This included tribal councils, First Nations, health authorities, health organizations, federal and provincial officials, and others.

In July 2019, an urban community participation session was held in Thunder Bay where mental health issues concerning First Nation students transitioning from community to urban centres was raised.

In November 2019, NAN Health Transformation was honoured to participate in the update to the families of the Seven Youth Inquest at the NAN Families Gathering.

#### Health Advocates

NAN received a one-year commitment to begin the initial phase of the Health Transformation Advocates (HTA) Plan. The plan focused on capacity building with recruiting and training individuals in health advocacy, planning and governance. NAN provided training, coordination and support to the HTAs such as First Nations Health Managers Association training, ASIST Mental Health, orientation and literacy support. Two Health Transformation Advocates were recruited in November 2019.

#### **Immediate Needs**

The Immediate Needs process identifies five categories of Immediate Needs: 1) person–specific issues, 2) barriers to safe & effective care, 3) advocacy and strategy development across sectors (NAN-Wide), 4) community priorities, and 5) regional priorities. NAN continues to be informed on Immediate Needs through community participation visits, gatherings, regional meetings, partners, other NAN departments, and person-specific situations.

To date, work on Immediate Needs includes:

- Follow-up on approximately 48 person-specific issues between April 1, 2019 and March 31, 2020. This includes assistance with advocacy and overcoming barriers in health, and it is done in collaboration with others (i.e. community and tribal council health directors, navigators, etc.).
- Continual learning on the barriers to safe & effective care, tracking themes and policy applications.
- Advocacy and strategy development across sectors related to health.

Attending meetings and supporting regional priorities. Overall themes have included mental health, diabetes, dialysis, long term care, medical transportation, and public health.

36 Suicide Prevention Strategy

Recommendation is accepted and is in progress.

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#### Choose Life

NAN continues to work with NAN First Nations on the Choose Life program. In 2019-2020, 20,664 children and youth have benefited from the funding provided to the NAN First Nations and First Nation organizations. Many youth and students continue to access mental health supports and student well-being activities through Choose Life, e.g. mental health professionals and services, and cultural and land-based programming. An evaluation of the program is ongoing and NAN continues to advocate for this very important life-saving program to become a permanent funding program for NAN First Nations and organizations.

#### Mental Health System Coordinator and Information Specialist

In September 2019, with guidance from the NAN Health Advisory Group, the NAN Health Transformation Health Policy Unit submitted a proposal to acquire Ministry of Health funding to hire a Mental Health System Coordinator and Mental Health Information Specialist. The proposal was approved but funding was received very late in the 2019-2020 fiscal year. The positions will be filled in 2020-2021. The Mental Health System Coordinator will work to research, review and monitor provincial and federal programs, services and initiatives that impact the mental health, mental health services and self-determination in health for NAN members. The coordinator will also collaborate with partners and the NAN Health Transformation team, and advise the NAN Executive Council, Health Advisory Group, Health Transformation Advisory Council and Chiefs Council on Health Transformation on mental health and substance use issues. The Mental Health Information Specialist will work to conduct literature reviews, apply extensive mental health system knowledge, and incorporate analysis techniques designed to support research projects of broad scope and complexities.

#### Payakatisowin Pimiwicihitowin Mamow Ashitamakwonan

In February 2020, the Payakatisowin Pimiwicihitowin Mamow Ashitamakwonan (Mamow) met to review all work conducted to date as part of Mamow. The group determined that a NAN departmental inventory and asset mapping exercise was needed. Mental Health and Addictions Environmental Scans from the Northwest LHIN were shared. A consultant working on the Sioux Lookout Area Mental Health and Addictions Scan presented on the proposed approach to the scan, which would include mental health services for youth.

#### NAN-Wide Life Promotion Strategy

NAN has struggled to implement this recommendation as well as the NAN Resolution 17/04: *NAN-Wide Life Promotion Strategy*. Choose Life was intended as an interim solution in response to a suicide crisis occurring among youth in 2017, and it is understood and widely acknowledged that a suicide prevention strategy is very much needed to address a decades-long suicide crisis across NAN territory. The climbing high rates of suicides are clear evidence of this. Suicide is complex. NAN envisions a First Nation-led wholistic

strategy with innovative approaches to offer a diverse range of healing practices, and life-promotion programs, and access to clinicians, mental health professionals and other health service providers.

Last year, a draft three-year strategic plan on life promotion was created. In 2019-2020, this work was further developed to include five pillars that would collectively form the essential problems that NAN is seeking to address through the NAN Life Promotion Strategy. All five pillars must be engaged for the Life Promotion Strategy to be successful. The five pillars of the NAN Life Promotion Strategy include:

- 1. Suicide prevention,
- 2. Acknowledging sexual abuse and ending sexual violence,
- 3. Mental health promotion,
- 4. Pathways to recovery from substance abuse, and
- 5. Ending homelessness and developing housing solutions.

In early 2020, NAN proposed the launch of a Community Hubs Pilot Project, as part of its larger Life Promotion Strategy, to be developed and implemented across NAN territory. NAN envisions a First Nation-led wholistic strategy with innovative approaches and investments in capital infrastructure to offer a diverse range of healing practices, and life-promotion programs, and access to clinicians, mental health professionals and other health service providers. Without a safe, dedicated, purpose-built spaces, such as "hubs" to access these supports, the most vulnerable community members face fundamental and often insurmountable barriers in their efforts to heal. A concept paper on Life Promotion Hubs was prepared and presented to ISC Minister Marc Miller in February 2020. The proposal was re-submitted very recently, and we hope that a response from the federal government with respect to their willingness to support the strategy will be positive.

#### 40 Health Promotion to Address Youth Substance Abuse

Recommendation is accepted and is in progress.

After consultation with external partners and engagement with district health units and health authorities, it was determined that health promotion materials in the following areas would be most helpful to youth and adults in the NAN First Nations: 1) a resource on youth binge drinking, 2) strategies to help parents talk to their kids about alcohol and drugs, and 3) an info graph on cannabis and opioids. Information was adapted from existing resources, and permissions were requested and granted from each source used. Further work is required to complete the resources by the end of July 2020. The resources will be distributed to youth and adults in NAN First Nations and to students attending off-reserve First Nation schools. In recognition of the fact that radio is one of the most popular forms of media in NAN First Nations, and that the broad audience can be reached via this format, NAN and a local partner will also co-develop a radio show and radio commercial to raise

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	awareness regarding the consequences of alcohol/substance misuse.	
44	Comprehensive Information Package of School Options	
	Recommendation is accepted and completed.	1
	A website was developed to provide students with an interactive database where they can research off-reserve high school options based on various criteria, including geographical location, school type, academic programs, extracurricular opportunities, and Indigenous student specific supports available. Students can use this web site to easily access a summary profile that provides detailed information about what each school has to offer, as well as links to each schools' websites. The database currently includes off-reserve high schools from Kenora to North Bay. A print version of the school profiles will be available for students in NAN First Nations who might have limited Internet access or insufficient bandwidth to search an interactive database. A poster was also produced to promote the website and interactive database to students and parents in NAN First Nations.	
47	Expanding the Role of Education Counsellors	
	Recommendation is accepted and is completed.	1
	In August 2019, NAN hosted a meeting where First Nation education representatives were able to liaise and discuss best practices with their counterparts in the provincial school boards and the off-reserve First Nations schools or education organizations. The meeting included discussion and collaboration on how to help students with a better transition between their communities and high schools off-reserve. Further engagement is needed to determine the interest and feasibility of expanding the role of First Nation education counsellors to include secondary schools off-reserve. The meeting was also intended to assess progress to date and determine further actions required to support the implementation of Recommendations 46, 47, 81 and 87. A meeting report was prepared which included information exchange strategies, and takeaways and considerations. Another session was planned for June 2020 to further engage with education representatives from the NAN First Nations and provincial schools, but it had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and travel and group restrictions. This will be rescheduled as soon as possible post-COVID-19.	
49	Community Partner Visits to NAN First Nations	
	Recommendation is accepted and is completed.	1
	A "Community Visit Protocol Guide" was produced to encourage community partners to visit and engage with students on-reserve and to provide information on how to approach NAN First Nations to develop good relationships. The 12-page guide was distributed electronically to organizations in Thunder Bay, Sioux Lookout and Timmins, and it was also printed. Due to COVID-19 travel and group	

	restrictions, training sessions for the guide had to be postponed. Community responses to the initial call for the training sessions was positive, so these sessions will be rescheduled in Thunder Bay, Sioux Lookout, Dryden, and Timmins as soon as possible post-COVID-19.	
50	Youth Participation in Decisions	
	Recommendation was accepted and remains completed.	1
	The "Youth Voices Survey" and the creation of a youth council or a youth leadership position in the community was brought to the attention of the NAN Chiefs at the Emergency Special Chiefs Assembly in July 2017.	
61	Duplication of Resources and Facilities	
	Recommendation was rejected due to flaws and remains rejected due to flaws.	4A
	It remains NAN's position that there is no duplication of services provided by NNEC and KO on the Secondary Student Support Programs. NAN respects the autonomy of partner organizations to coordinate activities and resources for their students.	
76	Quality Boarding Homes	
	Recommendation is accepted and remains completed.	1
	In February 2020, an Ontario-Wide Boarding Home Review gathering was held in Thunder Bay where best practices for boarding homes was discussed. The current draft report addresses boarding home standards, property codes, guardianship, student safety, student wellness, communication and best practices, and management and administration. The report will inform future work in establishing standards for Ontario boarding parents and boarding homes. The goal of the report, once completed and released, is to provide a basic standard for student boarding homes that must be met.	
77	Standardized Procedures for Boarding Homes	
	Recommendation is accepted and remains completed.	1
	In February 2020, an Ontario-Wide Boarding Home Review gathering was held in Thunder Bay where best practices for boarding homes was discussed. The current draft report addresses boarding home standards, property codes, guardianship, student safety, student wellness, communication and best practices, and management and administration. The report will inform future work in establishing standards for Ontario boarding parents and boarding homes. The goal of the report, once completed and released, is to provide a basic standard for student boarding homes that must be met.	
81	Annual Harm Reduction Training Strategies	<u> </u>

Recommendation was accepted and is in progress. 1A A more fulsome strategy needs to developed to ensure school staff, (boarding home) parents and others are trained in suicide prevention, crisis intervention, the care of intoxicated individuals, and first aid and CPR. Off-reserve First Nation organizations train their staff and boarding home parents in these areas, but there is a need to engage NAN First Nations to determine their actual needs for harm reduction training. Inquest Task Team on Student Well-Being This recommendation is being addressed by the Student Well-Being Task Team, and hopefully the NAN First Nations can be successfully brought into the Inquest process so that their specific needs can be identified and plans developed to ensure harm reduction training is accessible at the community level on an annual basis. Mental Health Supports The Choose Life program continues to address the gaps in mental health services for NAN First Nations children and youth at risk of suicide. The program allows communities to develop in-community services to prevent the loss of youth. It also provides youth the opportunities to access mental health supports and counsellors in and out of the community. Other supports include detox treatment centres, aftercare programs, suicide prevention training, and first aid and CPR courses. The NAN First Nations can also request to include this type of training in Choose Life applications. The NAN Choose Life department also arranges two to three training opportunities annually with Choose Life Coordinators on topics revolving around mental health and wellness. **Harm Reduction Training** In 2019-2020, NAN Social Development delivered harm reduction training in the following communities: ASIST: Wahgoshig and Constance Lake First Nations Gender Based Violence: Thunder Bay • Mental Health First Aid: Missinabie Cree First Nation, Thunder Bay and Sioux Lookout Module 4 Traditional Family Awareness: Timmins and Thunder Module 5 Critical Incident Group Debriefing: Thunder Bay 87 **Continuity of Care** Recommendation is accepted and is in progress. 1A **Engaging Education Representatives** In August 2019, NAN hosted a meeting to specifically address

strategies to help meet the ongoing need for comprehensive student counselling services for NAN students attending provincially funded high schools. The meeting was intended to assess progress to date and determine further actions required to support the implementation of Recommendations 46, 47, 81 and 87. The meeting was attended by education representatives of First Nation and provincial school systems serving First Nation students in the Thunder Bay and broader Northern Ontario area. A meeting report was prepared which includes: 1) a SWOT analysis of off-reserve student counselling services, 2) student information discussions on comprehensive assessments and progress reporting, continuity of care, and information exchange strategies, and 3) takeaways and considerations. Another session with education representatives from the First Nations and provincial schools was planned for June 2020 but it had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. This session will be rescheduled as soon as possible, post-COVID-19.

#### **Health Supports**

Although barriers still exist around community health supports, some partners have shared that improvements through expanded clinical and resource capacity at the high school level (e.g. access to Elders, nurses, nurse practitioners, etc.) have led to improved student attendance, student retention, and communication.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, NAN received several concerns from community leadership and members that the quarantines and lockdowns were having a negative impact on youth mental health, and that these public health measures may lead to a disruption in the drug supply to NAN First Nations, which could lead to increases in withdrawals and acute mental health and behavioural issues. As a result, the Mental Health & Substance Use Working Group, a subcommittee of the NAN COVID-19 Task Team, was established with the following purpose and scope:

- 1. To gather and provide vital information to support NAN members with physical, mental, emotional and spiritual challenges as a result of COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2. To mobilize service providers to support community and urban members with counselling and support.
- 3. To identify professional services and consulting professional services for community professionals who are managing serious mental health conditions and require client management and treatment advice.
- 4. To identify cultural and spiritual considerations to support each community impacted by COVID-19 positive tests.

NAN is currently supporting a collaborative proposal that will support and enhance existing services during COVID-19. This approach will provide 24/7 mental health supports to all of NAN territory through virtual and telephone supports, in order to provide immediate care to someone in crisis, and work to support them into closer ongoing services that can be accessed in community or through existing mental health supports in their area. The advocacy work to address gaps in mental health and substance use supports is ongoing. NAN Health Transformation is exploring how to align temporary COVID-19 efforts with long-term transformative efforts.

90	Youth Participation in Decisions		
	The recommendation was accepted and remains completed.		1
	KO and NNEC created a youth representative position on their board of directors. MLC pursued an alternative option for youth representation within the Matawa First Nations Management organization.		
91	Missing Person Investigations and Searches		
	The recommendation is accepted and is completed, in progress, or does not apply depending on subsection.		
	NAN facilitated and participated in discussions through the working group created to address this recommendation and its subsections.		
	i. In the last year, the organizations who are to create policies and procedures continued to develop these documents on their own. Should the need arise to discuss any component of the policies and procedures, NAN will help to facilitate discussions.	i.	1
	This subsection remains completed.		
	ii. "Am I Missing?" is a public awareness campaign developed in 2018 to draw attention to the importance of reporting missing persons to police without delay. The campaign consisted of a video and post cards. It was first launched in June 2018 in Thunder Bay. A second launch took place in June and September 2019, and it included the following resources:	ii.	1
	<ul> <li>a) Post cards translated into Oji-Cree, Mushkego Cree, Hudson Bay Cree, and Ojibway;</li> <li>b) Poster;</li> <li>c) Interior bus cards;</li> <li>d) Billboard; and</li> <li>e) A 30-second video.</li> </ul>		
	Print resources were distributed to NAN First Nations to raise awareness among community members. A third launch is planned for August 2020.		
	This subsection remains completed.		
	iii. The working group developed the student information template and consent form.	iii.	1
	This subsection remains completed.		
	iv. In 2018, the Thunder Bay Police Service developed the social media guide, "Missing Persons & Social Media: Limit misinformation & protect the privacy of missing persons", which the working group reviewed.	iv.	1
	This subsection remains completed.		
	v. The Thunder Bay Police Service previously stated the service has a process in place for issuing releases. The working group has not discussed this subsection.	V.	1

		This subsection remains completed.		
	vi.	The Thunder Bay Police Service previously stated the service has an arrangement with Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services Corporation or works directly with the First Nation education organizations, band councils, elders and NAN. The working group has not discussed this subsection.	vi.	1
		This subsection remains completed.		
	vii.	Rather than continuing to develop an internal search plan, NAN is instead developing a missing persons guide as an educational resource for the NAN First Nations.	vii.	1A
		This subsection is in progress.		
	viii.	Rather than continuing to develop a global search plan, NAN is instead developing an internal protocol on how NAN will respond to missing person matters in the future due to liability concerns.	∨iii.	1A
		This subsection is in progress.		
	ix.	The risk factors were identified by the working group.	ix.	1
		This subsection remains completed.		
	x.	The working group developed the following: 1) a missing person questionnaire, 2) a missing persons poster, 3) a consent form for a parent or guardian to grant permission to an organization to collect, use and disclose a child's personal information for use in a missing person questionnaire, and 4) a consent form for the Thunder Bay Police Service to release information about a missing student to a school or education organization.	X.	1
		This subsection remains completed.		
	xi.	This subsection does not apply to NAN.	xi.	5
	xii.	NAN and TBPS developed the best practices for non-police community volunteer searchers, which was provided to KO, MLO and NNEC for their consideration in their policies and procedures.	xii.	1
		This subsection remains completed.		
	xiii.	This subsection does not apply to NAN.	xiii.	5
94	Join	nt Protocol		
	The	recommendation was accepted and remains completed.		1
	deve	handout on best practices for community searchers was jointly eloped by NAN and the Thunder Bay Police Service, and it was slated into the syllabic versions in Mushkego Cree, Hudson Bay e, Ojibway, Oji-Cree, and the long vowel translation in Ojibway.		
114	Alte	rnative Facility for Intoxicated Youth		
	The	recommendation is accepted and is in progress.		1A

#### Safe Sobering Sites

NAN supported KO, MLC, and NNEC in the creation of their Safe Sobering Sites in Thunder Bay. The organizations and schools have worked hard to make these sites available and fully operational to ensure the safety of their students. The sites have received positive feedback, especially from police and EMS. The sites were initially funded for three years only, and discussions will need to take place for the sites to continue to be funded. Turning the funding into evergreen funding was requested by the organizations.

#### Student Help & Dispatch Line

In 2019-2020, NAN worked with KO, MLC and NNEC and the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre to revise the hospital discharge protocol for unaccompanied students so that the hospital can use the Student Help & Dispatch Line to connect discharged students to their on-call worker or a Safe Sobering Site. More detail on this policy change is provided under Recommendation 116.

#### Fourth Detox Facility

The working group created for the recommendation continues to try to create a fourth facility to serve all youth in the City of Thunder Bay. Youth detox is a desperately needed service, especially for youth under 18 years of age. Research was conducted and data collected from the hospital, police and EMS, as well as provincial data. Data reviewed included emergency department visits, EMS calls for service, and police contact for intoxicated youth. A draft project charter was developed. In October 2019, a stakeholder engagement session was held where stakeholders were presented information about the Safe Sobering Sites and asked about what they were seeing or experiencing regarding youth intoxication, gaps in community services, how could their organization's mandate assist, and their interest to collaborate in developing a business case or proposal to offer this service. A survey was also created to reach stakeholders unable to attend the engagement session. The City of Thunder Bay's Drug Strategy has mostly coordinated these efforts and their commitment is acknowledged.

#### NAN Health Transformation

For NAN Health Transformation, access to a range of culturally sensitive treatment options has been a key theme in any engagement. NAN Health Transformation continues to support this recommendation and has prioritized community-led solutions to mental health and substance use issues as an immediate need.

#### Indigenous Mental Health and Addiction Treatment Centres

The Ka-Na-Chi-Hih Specialized Solvent Abuse Treatment Center (Ka-Na-Chi-Hih) operates two Indigenous Mental Health and Addiction Treatment Centres. Both sites were secured in Timmins and Sioux Lookout. There is ongoing collaboration and relationship building with partner organizations in the region. Ka-Na-Chi-Hih is currently in the process of obtaining the required operational

	licensing from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. First intakes should tentatively take place in December 2020 or January 2021.	
116	Local and Social Media Campaign and Public Forum	
	The recommendation is accepted and complete insofar as the content or intent of the recommendation is already in place.	8
	Public Awareness Campaign	
	NAN continues to participate in the working group working on the social media campaign to educate people in Thunder Bay on the issues that First Nations students face in Thunder Bay. The development of the campaign is ongoing, and it will include a video and other resources. Youth input was obtained at their school, while both youth and adults were engaged during the Wake the Giant event in September 2019. The campaign was planned to be launched in late summer 2020 and this may change due to the COVID-19 pandemic.	
	Student Obstacle and Challenges Including Racism	
	The obstacles and challenges that First Nation youth and students have reported experiencing in the City of Thunder Bay will continue to occur until all Inquest Parties, local organizations and service providers start to seriously consider how they may contribute to those obstacles and challenges, and how this can be addressed. For example, it took a systemic review by the Office of the Independent Police Review Director into the Thunder Bay Police Service for nine First Nations sudden death investigations to be reinvestigated. Four of these reinvestigations are investigations into the deaths of Curran Strang, Jethro Anderson, Kyle Morriseau, and Jordan Wabasse, who were the subject of the Inquest. In September 2019, a 21-year old NAN First Nation youth died by suicide after being forcefully escorted off the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre property where he had gone to seek help. NAN will continue to work to increase public awareness of the health and social issues experienced by First Nations youth in Thunder Bay, and will work to try to address any obstacles, challenges or issues experienced by First Nations youth. Student safety is of utmost importance while youth from the NAN First Nations have to attend high school off-reserve.	
	Working Together to Address Issues Experienced by NAN Students at the Hospital	
	In July 2019, NAN coordinated a meeting between representatives from KO, MLC and the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre (the Hospital) to work together to address specific issues raised at Inquest Political Table meetings regarding challenges faced by NAN students at the Hospital. Discussions at this meeting included topics such as consent requirements to disclose information regarding NAN students to the off-reserve schools' oncall workers to arrange transportation, protocols between the Hospital and child welfare agencies, and improving communications	

between the off-reserve schools or guardians and the Hospital's Emergency Department.

An important outcome of these productive discussions was the revision of the Hospital's protocol for unaccompanied students to include the Student Help & Dispatch Line, ensuring that discharged students can be connected to on-call workers so that they can be picked up at the Hospital and transported either to their boarding home or to a Safe Sobering Site. Other issues have since been raised at the Inquest Political Table and NAN will continue to work with the Hospital and the First Nation Inquest Partners to identify and implement practical solutions collaboratively.

#### **NAN Youth Gathering**

NAN hosts an annual youth gathering in Thunder Bay. Approximately 100 youth from across NAN territory attend this annual event. Keynote speakers and guest presenters speak to youth about challenges they may experience and the youth get to learn about their culture, identity and life skills.

The most recent gathering was held on February 14-16, 2020 and it was attended by 74 youth from 21 NAN First Nations. This year's topics included healthy relationships, sexual violence, addiction and drugs, coping strategies, grassroots activism, and the importance of identity. A local Indigenous LQBTQ2S+ Elder shared her personal story on the challenges and adversity she has faced as a two-spirited individual. Youth also learned about art and culture, Indigenous business, resume writing, money management, and had opportunities to apply onsite for a health card or social insurance number – important pieces of identification that are not easily accessible for NAN youth from remote northern communities – the lack of which often results in barriers to services.

At this year's gathering, there were engagement sessions with the youth regarding their experiences while in Thunder Bay. They were asked to answer questions about:

- Transportation;
- How welcomed they felt while living in the city:
- The kinds of events they would like to see;
- Their favourite place or hangout:
- Who they reach out to for support or where they feel best supported;
- Homesickness and how they deal with it;
- If they have a network of family or friends; and,
- If they felt the adults in their life listened to them.

These questions were intended to identify the challenges or obstacles as youth see them, with the hope that the information informs other work or future planning of youth events, activities or supports to have in place.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action – Recommendations 18 through 20

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	The recommendation is accepted and complete insofar as the content or intent of the recommendation is already in place.	8
	NAN Health Entity	
	In May 2019, the NAN Chiefs-in-Assembly passed Resolution 19/10: <i>Nishnawbe Aski Nation Health Self-Determination</i> directing NAN to proceed with health self-determination and develop a wholistic health framework that would form a NAN health system outside of the provincial system. A NAN-wide entity such as a "commission" is being explored. This entity would support the NAN-wide system and would be the vehicle to carry the ongoing process of Health Transformation forward. A well-known First Nations nurse practitioner was recruited to lead this process. A NAN Health Commission Reference Group was developed to guide the work of the ever-evolving development of the health commission concept. It is comprised of representatives from the health authorities, tribal councils and the Health Transformation Advisory Council (which includes youth representation). Additionally, a Health Human Resources group was established to aid in developing potential solutions to address the shortage of health care professionals in NAN First Nations. A draft concept of the NAN Health Commission's functions, legal structure and governance model(s) is being developed and a draft is to be shared with leadership in the Fall of 2020.	
143	Annual Reporting	
	The recommendation is accepted and complete insofar as the content or intent of the recommendation is already in place.	8
	NAN prepared its annual reports on June 28 for 2017, 2018 and 2019. NAN will submit its fourth annual report on June 28, 2020, and will continue to provide an annual report thereafter on each anniversary date until NAN indicates that all recommendations it received are rejected or implemented. NAN will send by email a copy of the annual report to any person who requests the report.	
144	Posting of Annual Reports	
	The recommendation is accepted and complete insofar as the content or intent of the recommendation is already in place.	8
	At the Political Table held on June 22, 2017 in Thunder Bay, the organizations receiving recommendations agreed for NAN to post the annual reports on its website. The annual reports for 2017, 2018 and 2019 were posted to the NAN website. Annual reports will be posted to the NAN website until such time it is determined there are no more annual reports to be posted.	
145	Revision of Internal Policies	
	The recommendation is accepted and complete insofar as the content or intent of the recommendation is already in place.	8
	NAN revises its policies as necessary according to its internal policy revision procedures.	

## **OCC Response Codes**

Response Code	Response Legend
1	Recommendation has been implemented
1A	Recommendation will be implemented
1B	Alternate recommendation has been implemented
2	Under consideration
3	Unresolved issues
4	Rejected
4A	Rejected due to flaws
4B	Rejected due to lack of resources
5	Not applicable to agency assigned
6	No response
7	Unable to evaluate
8	Content or intent of recommendation is already in place

# List of Organizations Requested to Respond to Jury Recommendations Seven First Nations Youths Inquest Q2016-26

(Jethro Anderson, Reggie Bushie, Robyn Harper, Kyle Morrisseau, Paul Panacheese, Curran Strang & Jordan Wabasse)

Canada (Ministry of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada)

City of Thunder Bay

Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School (DFCHS)

Health Canada

Keewaytinook Okimakanak (KO)

Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO)

Matawa Learning Centre (MLC)

Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN)

Nishnawbe Aski Police Service (NAPS)

Northern Nishnawbe Education Council (NNEC)

Office of the Chief Coroner

Ontario (Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation)

P.A.R.T.Y. Program of Thunder Bay

Thunder Bay Police Service (TBPS)