

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday June 30, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MATAWA EDUCATION AND CARE CENTRE PROVIDES 5TH ANNUAL REPORT ON FOLLOW-UP TO JURY RECOMMENDATIONS IN INQUEST INTO THE DEATH OF SEVEN FIRST NATIONS YOUTH

THUNDER BAY, ON: Pursuant to the Office of the Chief Coroner’s recommendations for annual reporting on follow-up, the Matawa Education and Care Centre (MECC), formerly, the ‘Matawa Learning Centre,’ yesterday released their report entitled [‘Matawa Education and Care Centre 5th Annual Report on the Seven Youth Inquest - Academic 2020-2021.’](#) It was dedicated to “all First Nation children and youth who did not make it home,” namely the remains of about 215 children near the Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia in May and the preliminary findings of an estimated 751 unmarked graves near the former Marieval Indian Residential School in Saskatchewan last week.

For the first time—it included an alert regarding MECC’s potential inability to meet inquest recommendations 64, 71, 81, 83, 84, 85, 114 as a result of the lack of federal government commitment to funding the *Jordan’s Principle and Choose Life* programs past March 2022. The continuation of these programs has been advocated over the past number of months and more recently, in a joint Nishnawbe-Aski Nation (NAN), Keewaytinook Okimakanak (KO), Northern Nishnawbe Education Council (NNEC) [letter to Indigenous Services Canada Minister Marc Miller](#) on June 10, 2021.

Without this commitment, MECCC will lose the following programs and services for its students: Mental Health Staff and Services; Special Education Staff and Services; Outdoor Education Staff and Services; Elders Program; Cultural Program; Staff Professional Development; Student Education and Training; a partnership with St. Joseph’s Care Group which includes in-school access to a: Clinical Supervisor; Mental Health and Addiction Counsellors; Child and Youth Workers; Nurse Practitioner; Psychologist; Family Therapist and a Psychiatrist.

Besides an impact on education, discontinued or scaled-back *Jordan’s Principle and Choose Life* funding will negatively impact on mental health and addictions in MECC students’ communities as noted in the the Matawa Health & Social Meno Biimadeswin’s latest report: [Review of Back to Our Roots: Chii Kee Way Meno Biimadeseyung | The Strategy to Overcome Prescription Drug Abuse/Misuse in Matawa Communities.](#)

“It is incumbent upon Canada to provide funding via a stable and predictable mechanism that allows for long term strategic planning and discretionary decision making as stated in Inquest Recommendation



#12,” said MECC Principal, Brad Battiston. “Stable reliable funding moving forward will provide adequate academic and mental wellness programming for our students.”

“Overall, our 5th annual report draws attention to the need to implement community-level inquest recommendations that call on Canada to address on-reserve education infrastructure, funding needs, living conditions, health and mental wellness needs,” said Matawa Education Department Executive Director, Sharon Nate. “We have been advocating for Canada to address these areas to improve the conditions within the Matawa First Nations communities and eliminate the gap in education outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Not providing these supports, will take us backwards and will further widen this gap.”

— 30 —

For more information, contact: Carol Audet, Matawa Communications Manager at: 1-807-632-9663 or at: caudet@matawa.on.ca

