

MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**MATAWA CHIEFS CALL FOR IMPROVEMENT IN SOLVING HOMICIDE CASES AS
WEBEQUIE FIRST NATION LOSES 2ND YOUTH IN THUNDER BAY ON THE EVE OF THE
OIPRD SYSTEMIC REVIEW**

THUNDER BAY, ON: The Matawa Chiefs today called for improvement in the Thunder Bay Police Services (TBPS) record in solving homicide cases involving Indigenous peoples as Webequie First Nation loses their 2nd youth in Thunder Bay.

The Matawa Chiefs—responding to the deaths of 15 year-old Jordan Wabasse whose body was discovered in the Kaministiquia River in 2011, and 17 year-old Braiden Jacob whose body was found in Chapples Park on December 9, 2018—made the call on these unsolved cases on the eve of the Office of the Independent Police Review Director (OIPRD) systemic review. OIPRD Director, Gerry McNeilly, releases the systemic review *‘Thunder Bay Police Service Practices for Policing Indigenous Peoples’* tomorrow at 11:00 a.m. after beginning it on November 2016. It is the first and only systemic review of a police service since the OIPRD was established in 2007. An investigation led by Senator Murray Sinclair into how the Thunder Bay Police Services Board has provided oversight to the embattled police service is also expected to be made public this week.

On December 4, 2018, the Matawa Chiefs issued a statement responding to an incident caught on video that occurred on December 1, 2018 that appeared to show a female TBPS Uniform Patrol Officer striking a student of the Matawa Education and Care student while restrained in a Superior North EMS stretcher. On December 5, 2018 Nibinamik First Nation Chief Yellowhead expressed his outrage at the violence done to this student at the hands of the TBPS saying “the actions were entirely inexcusable by a person in a position of power and authority.”

In the days since this event has taken place, non-Indigenous members of the Thunder Bay community have blamed the victim and appear to absolve the said female Uniform Patrol Officer of responsibility in striking the youth. On December 6, 2018, the Thunder Bay Police Association came out in defence of the Officer saying that they were “confident that our member will be vindicated once the investigation is concluded.” TBPS have said they will conduct their internal investigation into the incident, despite being asked to have a third party complete the task.

The Matawa Chiefs will meet with TBPS Chief Sylvie Hauth, Nishnawbe Aski Nation Police Services Acting Chief Rolland Morrison, and City of Thunder Bay Mayor Bill Mauro tomorrow to discuss these events and other public safety issues in Thunder Bay and region shortly before the OIPRD report is released. As part of the call for improvement in solving homicide cases, the Matawa Chiefs will be discussing investigative approaches, reasons for unsolved homicides, how they can assist helping them be solved, and more accountability in reporting.

The Matawa Chiefs offer their condolences to Braiden Jacob’s family and Webequie community. A GoFundMe page named ‘The Jacob Family and Webequie First Nation’ has been set up to collect donations for the victim’s family at: <https://bit.ly/2Gd32zy>

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Matawa First Nations Management is a Tribal Council providing a variety of advisory services and programs to 8 Ojibway and Cree First Nations in James Bay Treaty No. 9 and 1 First Nation in the Robinson-Superior Treaty area. Follow them on Facebook or Twitter @MatawaFN

