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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

‘Something happened there that night’: Mackenzie Moonias’ family seeking answers about her death

TORONTO, ON – It’s been four months since the tragic loss of 14-year-old Mackenzie Moonias who went missing on December 13, 2023 and was found dead at the Thunder Bay marina on December 18, 2023. Mackenzie had just moved to Thunder Bay from Neskantaga First Nation for her first year of high school at the Matawa Education and Care Centre. The last time Mackenzie’s family received any updates from the Thunder Bay Police Service (TBPS) about the investigation into her death was December 23, 2023.

“I can feel it in my body. Something happened there that night,” said Mackenzie’s mother, Vanessa Sakanee, who also spoke at a news conference today held at Queen’s Park. Mackenzie’s grandparents also want to share the impact that Mackenzie’s death, and the opaque police investigation, has had on them. The following is a statement from Mackenzie’s paternal grandparents, Sarah and William Moonias:

“Mackenzie was staying with us while she was attending high school in Thunder Bay. The first time we called the TBPS, they said someone would call us right back, but I never received that call. After the police finally issued a missing persons report, they came to search our home. They didn’t say why they were searching our home, and it felt like they didn’t believe us that she was missing. Earlier this month, we travelled to Neskantaga to visit Mackenzie’s gravesite. At the cemetery, Sarah stood at her grave and cried. Every morning when she prays, she asks the Lord to help Mackenzie reach her final destination where she can be happy, until we can see our granddaughter again. It’s been hard for us, very hard.”

The following statement is from Mackenzie’s maternal grandparents, Dorothy and Tony Sakanee:

“Our experience during the TBPS investigation into Mackenzie’s death – leading up to and following the missing persons report – was and continues to be frustrating. Records will show that Mackenzie’s mother and the rest of her family communicated with the TBPS multiple times before we were taken seriously. Our whole family, and other families, searched many long hours before the TBPS intervened. On one occasion, we called the police to let them know we found evidence we thought would be useful, and they told us not to come to the police station. We did anyway. The police promised us they would get answers, but there’s been nothing yet.”

The ongoing investigation by TBPS has not offered any insight into circumstances surrounding Mackenzie’s death. Without answers, there has been no closure for Mackenzie’s family, who continue to grieve the loss of their loved one. Neskantaga First Nation Chief and Council support Mackenzie Moonias’ family in their quest for answers. “We continue to offer our condolences to Mackenzie’s family and vow that we will do our utmost to ensure the truth behind her death will be brought to light,” said Neskantaga First Nation Chief Chris Moonias.

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