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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 30, Toronto ON

Lawyers for the families of six of the seven youth who were the subject of the First Nations Youth Inquest in Thunder Bay from October 2015 to June 2016 today issued a report card on the progress made in Year Four in meeting the inquest jury's 145 recommendations.

Jonathan Rudin and Caitlyn Kasper of Aboriginal Legal Services and counsel for the families of Jethro Anderson, Reggie Bushie, Robyn Harper, Kyle Morrisseau, Paul Panacheese and Jordan Wabasse gave an overall grade of B+ for the efforts made in the fourth year to implement the jury's recommendations. This grade is up from C+ in Year One but down from an A- in 2019.

In addition to providing an overall grade, each of the parties were graded as well. The grades for the non-Indigenous government parties are all down from 2019: Canada C+ (2019 B+); Ontario B- (2019 B+); City of Thunder Bay B (2019 A). For the Indigenous parties the grades all stayed the same from 2019 or increased: Nishnawbe Aski Nation A- (2019 A-); Matawa Learning Centre A+ (2019 A-); Northern Nishnawbe Education Council and Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School A+ (2019 A+); and Keewaytinook Okimakanak A+ (2019 A+).

As with the Year Two and Three Report Card, the Thunder Bay Police Service (TBPS) was not given a final grade. When the TBPS has addressed the concerns raised by the Office of the Independent Police Review Director (OIPRD) as set out in its report - Broken Trust released in December 2018 - and regained the confidence of the Indigenous community in Thunder Bay, then they will once again receive a grade.

The reason for the overall drop in grades is because progress by non-Indigenous governments has stalled on addressing some of the jury's short term and medium terms recommendations.

Of the grades Jonathan Rudin said: "It's good to see that progress has been made on implementing the recommendations over the past four years. The fact grades have dropped since last year speaks to the challenge of keeping the momentum going to address some of the more challenging recommendations the

jury made. The realities imposed by the pandemic make it even more crucial that these recommendations are addressed sooner than later.”

Caitlyn Kasper, who has been in contact with the families, said: “The last year has been difficult for many families in the north, who now have to factor in the spread of COVID-19 as a risk to their children when moving to Thunder Bay. The families are grateful for the work that places like Matawa Learning Centre have done to ensure that the youth continue to learn, either in person or through remote means. The families recognize the work that has been completed so far in the jury recommendations but echo the disappointment that non-Indigenous governments have not done more. Indigenous students traveling to Thunder Bay require continued and improved support for their safety and success and every party to this Inquest has a role in ensuring that.”

All grades were based on reports filed by the parties with the Office of Chief Coroner with regard to their progress on meeting the recommendations. A mathematical formula was created to determine the grades. All the material used to compile the grades and the grade calculations, including those for the TBPS, can be found at Aboriginal Legal Services’ website - aboriginallegal.ca/fnyyear4.html.

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