





Statement of Commitment to First Nation Youth and Families

The escalation of incidents of violence and racial tensions in the City of Thunder Bay have created a crisis for the leadership and citizens of Fort William First Nation, the City of Thunder Bay, and Nishnawbe Aski Nation, who share concern for the safety and well-being of Indigenous people who live in, and visit the City. Especially youth, who must relocate to Thunder Bay from their home communities in order to pursue their education at secondary school, college and university.

As leaders of Fort William First Nation, the City of Thunder Bay and Nishnawbe Aski Nation, we are united in our commitment to peaceful co-existence and reconciliation. We recognize the urgent need to improve relations among the Indigenous population who reside in and visit the City to access education, medical and health care, employment, cultural and recreation activities, and the non-Indigenous population.

As signatories to this *Commitment to First Nation Youth and Families* we hereby declare our resolve to work collaboratively to ensure the safety and well-being of First Nation students while in the City of Thunder Bay. We also declare our intent to work together, and with other community organizations, to address issues affecting the health, safety and security of all residents, regardless of ethnicity, in a respectful and appropriate manner.

We Hereby Acknowledge That:

- 1. The City of Thunder Bay was built on the traditional territory of Fort William First Nation, signatory to the Robinson-Superior Treaty of 1850. The City and Fort William First Nation continue to strive for prosperity for their communities and residents, and signed a historic *Declaration of Commitment* in 2011 to strengthen this relationship.
- 2. The safety and well-being of First Nation students attending high school in Thunder Bay is a priority and demands immediate action.
- 3. Individual racism exists in Thunder Bay and must not be tolerated, but actively and fervently challenged by all members of the community.

- 4. Systemic racism exists in Thunder Bay and must be dismantled, with appropriate accountability by all organizations, institutions and members of the community.
- 5. Unjust practices of past and present governments have resulted in social and economic disadvantages for Canada's Indigenous Peoples. These inequities have often resulted in challenging and unsafe circumstances for First Nations youth, especially those who must leave their home communities to complete their education.
- 6. First Nation and municipal leaders must set an example for tolerance and peaceful co-existence by advocating for and leading dialogue and activities to discourage and challenge racism in all its forms.
- 7. Healthy, safe municipalities help strengthen and provide economic prosperity for Ontario and Canada. The provincial and federal governments must acknowledge this and provide funding and resources to support these efforts.

We Hereby Commit To:

- 1. Provide leadership, in the spirit of Treaty and reconciliation, to support and enable local governments, municipal leaders and community members to address this crisis with the goal of creating a safe and welcoming community for all.
- 2. Develop an anti-racism campaign to raise awareness and eliminate racism against Indigenous people in Thunder Bay by challenging racist, hateful, ignorant discourse directed toward Indigenous people; address systemic racism in organizations and institutions in our community.
- 3. Work collaboratively on the development and implementation of a *Student Safety Plan* with short-term actions to protect youth who come to Thunder Bay in September, as part of the *NAN Education Action Plan*.
- 4. Partner for the provision of dedicated space(s) and transportation for gatherings of First Nation students, families, Elders and others to come together in a safe environment and participate in culturally appropriate programming and activities.
- 5. Advocate for funding to support the interests of youth and their families, including immediate needs under the *Student Safety Plan* and longer-term efforts such as the City's *Youth Inclusion Program*.
- 6. Publicly declare this as leaders of Fort William First Nation, the City of Thunder Bay, and Nishnawbe Aski Nation, to our members and the governments of Ontario and Canada.

Chief Peter Collins, Fort William First Nation

Acting Mayor Joe Virdiramo, City of Thunder Bay Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler, Nishnawbe Aski Nation