



ANISHINABEK NATION

NEWS RELEASE

Anishinabek Nation leadership encourage implementation of recommendations in Devon Freeman inquest

ANISHINABEK NATION HEAD OFFICE (October 25, 2022) – On behalf of the Anishinabek Nation, Grand Council Chief Reg Niganobe and Anishinabek Nation Children’s Commissioner Duke Peltier have issued a statement in response to the long-awaited inquest into the death of Devon Freeman from Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation.

“We continue to stand with the family of Devon Freeman and Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation who have been courageous throughout this entire process. Evolving policies to eliminate the discriminatory and harmful treatment of Indigenous children and youth in-care must be done swiftly, without additional barriers,” states Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Chief Niganobe.

In 2017, 16-year-old Devon Russell James Freeman (Muska’abo) went missing from the Flamborough site of the Lynwood Charlton Centre in Hamilton, Ontario. Over six months later, in April of 2018, his body was found in a tree on the grounds of the Centre. An autopsy determined his cause of death to be suicide. Tragically, Freeman’s history of suicidal ideation and a previous suicide attempt went unaddressed while he was in-care at the Centre.

Following conclusion of the four-week inquest into Freeman’s death on October 21, 2022, the jury released 75 recommendations aimed at preventing similar tragedies. Recommendations include supporting “the implementation of models of service to enable children and youth to have meaningful, lifelong connections to their family, community, and culture; a sense of belonging; a sense of identity and well-being and physical, cultural, and emotional safety; and that plans of care are reflective of the child’s physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and cultural identities”.

The inquest has also resulted in “Devon’s Principle” - the right of Indigenous children and youth “to return to their home communities when receiving services under the *Child, Youth, and Family Services Act*”.

“Devon should have had the opportunity to reintegrate with his community. Connection to culture is integral for mental health and identity. Indigenous children and youth placed in non-Indigenous out-of-home care settings, like Devon, face an even greater struggle with connection – they’re caught between two cultures,” states Commissioner Peltier. “The Anishinabek Nation has been working tirelessly to advocate for and protect the rights of Anishinaabe children and youth. Through the *Anishinabek Nation Child Well-Being Law*, the Anishinabek Child, Youth, and Family Well-Being System, and the Anishinabek Nation Children and Youth Bill of Rights, we are exercising inherent jurisdiction over child welfare to protect and promote the well-being of Anishinaabe children and youth like Devon.”

“We send our appreciation to Legal Counsel Leanna Farr and the rest of the Legal Team for their extraordinary efforts on behalf of the Freeman family, and all Anishinaabe children who have been impacted by the child welfare system,” adds Grand Council Chief Niganobe.

Anishinabek Nation leadership encourage expedient and strong implementation of the recommendations in the Devon Freeman inquest – ensuring children and youth remaining in-care are prioritized, and the right of Indigenous children and youth to return to their home community is upheld under Devon’s Principle.

Associated Links:

- [Anishinabek Nation Children and Youth Bill of Rights](#)
- [Draft Anishinabek Nation Child Well-Being Law](#)

The Anishinabek Nation is a political advocate for 39 member First Nations across Ontario, representing approximately 65,000 citizens. The Anishinabek Nation is the oldest political organization in Ontario and can trace its roots back to the Confederacy of Three Fires, which existed long before European contact.

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