IPAC stands in solidarity with the family of Miranda Mamakwa, Fort Severn First Nation, Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority and Nishnawbe Aski Nation

September 24, 2026

The Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada (IPAC) extends our deepest condolences to the family, children, loved ones, and community of Miranda Heather Mamakwa, a 31-year-old mother of three from Fort Severn First Nation.

According to a joint statement issued by the Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority (SLFNHA) and Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) on September 10, 2026, Miranda underwent cardiac surgery on April 23, 2026. SLFNHA and NAN state that, in the months that followed, the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program failed to arrange the travel and accommodations required for four follow-up appointments they described as essential to her recovery.[1]

On August 19, Miranda posted publicly about the appointments she had been unable to attend. She ended her post with seven words:

> *"If I die, please go after them."*

Miranda died on September 8, 2026, after being transported from Fort Severn to Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre. Her family, SLFNHA and NAN are calling for an immediate independent investigation and accountability regarding the circumstances surrounding her care.[1][2]

IPAC stands with them.

Medical transportation is part of health care

For people living in First Nations and Inuit communities, medical transportation is not simply an administrative service. It is part of access to health care.

When follow-up care, specialist assessment, diagnostic testing, or treatment is unavailable in a patient's home community, the ability to reach that care determines whether a treatment plan can actually be carried out.

Indigenous Services Canada's NIHB Medical Transportation Policy Framework recognizes this reality by providing medical transportation to help eligible First Nations and Inuit patients access medically required health services that are unavailable in their community.[3]

The responsibility for coordinating medically necessary care cannot rest solely on a person who is sick, recovering from major surgery or otherwise medically vulnerable. Health systems must recognize when necessary care has not occurred, communicate across services, and act when a patient may be at risk.

For physicians and other health professionals, a treatment plan only works when a patient can access it. Care does not end with surgery. Follow-up, monitoring, and reassessment are part of treatment.

> **“Medical transportation is not just a paper exercise - these are matters of life and death.”**
> — Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler, Nishnawbe Aski Nation[1]

Rights require accountability

This September marks 19 years since the United Nations General Assembly adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.[4]

Article 23 affirms the right of Indigenous Peoples to be actively involved in developing and determining health programs that affect them. Article 24 affirms the right of Indigenous Peoples to access health services without discrimination and to the highest attainable standard of health.[4]

Canada has committed in law to implementing the Declaration. The federal *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* requires measures to ensure federal laws are consistent with the Declaration and an action plan that includes monitoring, oversight, recourse, remedy, and other forms of accountability.[4]

Those commitments must be reflected in the everyday systems through which Indigenous Peoples access health care.

When a federal program determines whether a First Nations patient can reach medically necessary care, there must be effective mechanisms to identify failures, establish responsibility, and prevent them from happening again.

IPAC supports the call for an independent investigation

SLFNHA and NAN have called for an immediate independent investigation into the circumstances surrounding Miranda's death, including the administrative decisions and travel coordination related to her follow-up appointments. They have also called for accountability and systemic changes to the NIHB medical transportation framework.[1]

IPAC supports these calls.

An independent investigation is needed to establish what happened, where responsibility lies, what safeguards or processes failed, and what needs to change. It should examine how the systems responsible for ensuring patients can access ongoing medically necessary care work together, including gaps in responsibility, coordination, and accountability.

First Nations must be directly involved in determining how the medical transportation systems their citizens depend upon are designed, delivered, and held accountable.

Miranda was more than a missed appointment

Miranda was not a travel request, a file number, or a missed appointment.

She was a 31-year-old mother of three, a loved member of her family and a member of Fort Severn First Nation.

Her family deserves answers. The concerns raised by First Nations leaders about medical transportation deserve action.

IPAC stands in solidarity with Miranda's family, Fort Severn First Nation, Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority, and Nishnawbe Aski Nation in their call for accountability and meaningful change. We join their call to ensure that the circumstances surrounding Miranda's death are fully examined, that lessons are acted upon, and that another family does not experience a loss under similar circumstances.

In solidarity,
Board of Directors
Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada (IPAC)

Sources

[1] Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority and Nishnawbe Aski Nation. *Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority and Nishnawbe Aski Nation Demand Accountability in the Death of Miranda Mamakwa.* September 10, 2026.

[2] APTN News. *NAN blames Ottawa for death of Fort Severn First Nations woman.* September 11, 2026.

[3] Indigenous Services Canada. *Non-Insured Health Benefits Program for First Nations and Inuit: Medical Transportation Policy Framework.*

[4] Government of Canada. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.*

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