
FAQ

What is the Safeguarding Commission?

The Oblate Safeguarding Commission is an independent review of historical allegations of sexual abuse relating to Johannes Rivoire in present-day Nunavut, including the circumstances under which he left Canada. It aims to better understand how past allegations of abuse were addressed within our congregation and identify any improvements to Oblate policies and governance in order to better safeguard minors and ensure a high level of accountability.

The commission is led by the Honourable André Denis who will issue a final written report in English, French and Inuktitut no later than April 1, 2024. The report will outline findings and provide recommendations on policy and governance improvements for addressing any future complaints.

Who is Justice Denis?

Justice Denis is a retired judge of the Superior Court of Quebec who has had a distinguished career in the judiciary, including as the first judge in Canada to preside over a trial involving the *Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act*. In December 2020, he was hired by the Archdiocese of Montreal to work on two mandates regarding allegations of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable people.

Denis reviewed almost 10,000 files dating from 1940 to 2021 and compiled a report covering the nine dioceses of the Ecclesiastical Province of Montreal and the Ecclesiastical Province of Gatineau. The report that he oversaw uncovered 87 employees who were the subjects of confirmed or well-founded sex abuse allegations involving minors or vulnerable adults, providing the Archdiocese with information that helped it understand the scope of the problem before taking concrete steps in pursuit of truth, transparency, and transformation.

How have the Oblates responded to the allegations against Johannes Rivoire?

Johannes Rivoire has been accused, and formally charged, for sexually abusing Inuit children in the 1960s and 1970s while working in Nunavut, Canada. These long-standing allegations have caused great suffering, anger and intergenerational wounds in the people the Oblates have served for 150 years.

As Oblates, we are fully committed to healing these wounds, and to the larger journey of healing and reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous Peoples. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Canada have urged Rivoire to make himself available to the justice system, and to engage in this process for truth, transparency, and eventual reconciliation. We have also proactively supported Canada's extradition request and proactively reached out to the Ministry of Justice, offering to cooperate with any investigation.



The Oblates have been working directly with survivors to provide support to the Inuit community. This commission follows a commitment to independently review the congregation's response to sexual abuse allegations against Johannes Rivoire, including the circumstances under which he left Canada.

What will the Commission's work entail?

Justice Denis will hear from victims and their families and identify any improvements to Oblate policies and processes that can better safeguard children and ensure a high level of accountability.

We recognize that this subject matter is inherently difficult for many survivors or intergenerational survivors to engage in and expect Justice Denis to take reasonable steps to accommodate them at times and formats that meet their respective needs.

All relevant personnel records and other archival material from the Oblate provinces of OMI Lacombe Canada and France will be made available to Justice Denis, and we expect to receive a final written report no later than April 1, 2024.

What do the Oblates intend to do with the Commission's findings?

The goal of the commission is to better understand how past allegations of abuse were addressed by our congregation, with emphasis on claims made against Johannes Rivoire and other complaints in Nunavut, and to identify any improvements to Oblate policies and processes that can better safeguard children and ensure a high level of accountability.

The Oblates hope this commission contributes to the process of healing for the survivors and intergenerational survivors of clergy abuse. The congregation recognizes their immense courage as we seek to learn from historical wrongdoings and move forward with meaningful improvements.

Why is the Commission focused on allegations against Johannes Rivoire?

This commission meets a previous commitment to independently review the congregation's response to sexual abuse allegations against Johannes Rivoire, including the circumstances under which he left Canada. The Oblates recognize the tragic legacy of clergy abuse and are sincerely committed to support the Inuit Peoples who advocate for truth, justice, healing, and reconciliation.

How can I participate?

To contribute to the Oblate Safeguarding Commission and contact Justice André Denis: j.andredenis@icloud.com.