

Oblates of Mary Immaculate Receive Report on the Oblate Safeguarding Commission

*Congregation thanks Justice André Denis for independent review, stands in
solidarity with victims and survivors of abuse*

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate of OMI Lacombe Canada and the Province of France (the “Oblates”) wish to thank Justice André Denis for completing a thorough, independent review of historical allegations against Joannès Rivoire, including the circumstances under which he left Canada. The commission aimed to better understand how these allegations were addressed by Oblates, listen to victims and their families and identify any improvements to Oblate governance, policies and processes that can safeguard children and ensure a high level of accountability.

Justice Denis concluded that on the ‘preponderance of evidence,’ Joannès Rivoire was guilty of sexually assaulting five minor children in Naujaat, Nunavut, between 1968 and 1970, and one minor child in Arviat and Whale Cove, Nunavut, between 1974 and 1979.

We accept the report’s conclusions with a heavy heart. We wish to apologize unequivocally to anyone who was harmed by an Oblate priest and to continue taking concrete steps towards transparency and transformation, informed by guidance from victims, survivors and Inuit representatives. While most witnesses spoke to Justice Denis with an expectation of confidentiality, we are available to meet with anyone who chooses to come forward and discuss any measures we can take to offer our support.

Findings on Oblate Response, Policies and Processes

In reviewing the Oblate response to these allegations, Justice Denis found that:

- The Oblates in Canada and the ecclesiastical authorities in Nunavut neither concealed nor organized Joannès Rivoire’s flight from Canada to France in 1993;
- The Oblates were unaware that he was wanted by the Canadian justice system when he arrived in France on sabbatical in 1993;
- As soon as they learned of the Canadian proceedings, Oblate authorities removed Joannès Rivoire from any ecclesiastical mission and from any function in the Oblate community and;
- The Oblates did “everything in their power to ensure that he returned to Canada to stand trial or be extradited.”

None of Justice Denis’s findings, in any way, excuse or diminish the gravity and consequences of Joannès Rivoire’s actions. Nor should they divert attention from the culture of systemic racism and the insufficient institutional protocols and safeguards that, in many respects, allowed for Rivoire’s crimes to unfold and for his escape from justice.

We have taken significant steps to develop and continually enhance our [“Exercising Responsibility in Our Ministry: Safeguarding Minors & Vulnerable Persons,”](#) which sets processes and best practices to preserve the safety of minors and vulnerable persons. Justice Denis refers to this policy as comprehensive, covering everything from prevention to denunciation to intervention by authorities.

Next Steps

Justice Denis expressed his disappointment that Joannès Rivoire remains a Catholic priest and a member of the Oblate Community in France. We share this disappointment.

We have shared this report with the Oblate General Administration, as well as secular authorities in Canada and France and will support any steps that can be taken to hold Joannès Rivoire to account. At the same time, we understand that with his declining health and advanced cancer treatments, he may never be formally removed as a priest or face a court trial. We apologize for our failure to act earlier and are committed to the long journey of working with victims, family members, or members of the Inuit community who need our support.

We sincerely thank those who had the courage to come forward, the Inuit community for their guidance, and all who have participated in this process. Their strength and wisdom light the path we will follow in pursuit of justice, healing, and reconciliation.

While nothing can reverse the harm and tragic legacy of clerical abuse, it is our hope this report provides some validation for those who were silenced and ignored countless times by numerous institutions and authority figures across this country.

Moving forward, we will continue to cooperate fully with legal authorities and the Inuit community and are determined to ensure our governance and policies reflect the highest standards of safeguarding and ethical accountability.

In humility and hope,



Fr. Ken Thorson, OMI
Provincial
OMI Lacombe Canada



Fr. Renaud Saliba, OMI
Provincial
Oblates of the Province of France