



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Métis Nation–Saskatchewan Representatives head to the Vatican to meet with Pope Francis

March 24, 2022 –The Métis Nation–Saskatchewan (MN–S) welcomes the opportunity to share the stories of survivors of the residential school system in Saskatchewan with the Holy See.

While Canadians have been facing the horrific details of the residential school system, the Métis experience remains largely forgotten and ignored, particularly by the federal government. Survivors and families from the Île-à-la-Crosse and Timber Bay residential schools were denied the Indian Residential School Settlements and apologies that other survivors have received.

Opening in the 1820s and operating until the mid-1970s, Île-à-la-Crosse housed children from across northern Saskatchewan. The school is one of the oldest in Canada, but the Métis survivors have been denied the compensation and recognition from the federal government that others have received. Métis survivors and their families have never been compensated for the loss of their culture, languages, and traditions, or for the abuse they endured while attending the school.

In 2019, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between MN–S, the Government of Canada and a steering committee representing Île-à-la-Crosse Boarding School survivors to begin discussion to resolve the legacy of the Boarding School. A copy of the MOU is available [here](#). This work is still ongoing. Every year we lose more survivors making this work more imperative than ever.

“Time is of the essence. We need closure for boarding and residential school survivors and their families. Saskatchewan has some of the oldest residential schools in the country, and our communities have suffered inter-generationally for far too long,” said Michelle LeClair MN–S Vice President, Minister of Justice and lead on Métis Children and Residential School Graves.



Elder Antoinette LaFleur, a member of the Survivors of the Île-à-la-Crosse Boarding School Steering Committee, is representing Saskatchewan and MN–S on the trip to the Vatican.

“I am humbled by this opportunity to tell our story,” said Elder LaFleur. “It’s so hard for people to understand everything that happened at Île-à-la-Crosse school – not far from where so many of us live now. It’s important for our healing journey to make sure that the Church understands exactly what happened to us under its watch.”

While in Rome, survivor of the Île-à-la-Crosse Boarding School, Elder Emilien Janvier will deliver a prayer in his Dene language and ultimately hopes for an apology from the Catholic Church. “Let’s make it right what was done to us. Let me go to bed without this on my mind. Let’s move on. We can learn from the mistakes and improve upon them. We talk about truth and reconciliation, who do you reconcile with without sorry?”

Vice President Michelle LeClair, Elder Antoinette LaFleur and Elder Emilien Janvier are a part of the official Métis Nation delegation that will share the stories of survivors, the effects on families, and the legacy of intergenerational trauma that affects Métis citizens today.

The General audience with Pope Francis and the Métis Nation delegates will be held on Friday, April 1. It will be livestreamed on the Métis National Council’s Facebook page [here](#), at 5:00am CST. More information on the Métis National Council trip to the Vatican is [here](#).

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About Métis Nation–Saskatchewan

Métis Nation–Saskatchewan (MN–S) is the recognized government of the Métis Nation in Saskatchewan. MN–S is built on a foundation of Métis identity, culture, values, and language. MN–S works to advance Métis rights and recognition. MN–S represents the political, socioeconomic, cultural, and educational interests of more than 80,000 Métis in the province through an elected representative system at local, regional, and provincial levels.



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