



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Métis Nation–Saskatchewan calls for further reconciliation and justice after Elder’s visit to the Vatican**

April 1, 2022 – Delegates from the Métis Nation–Saskatchewan (MN–S) return home after an audience with Pope Francis in Rome this week, where Survivors shared their truths and lived experiences about residential schools. They were also present when Pope Francis delivered this message: “For the deplorable conduct of those members of the Catholic Church. I ask for God’s forgiveness, and I want to say with all my heart: I am very sorry.”

“Actions speak louder than words. The Pope’s apology today is a first step to accountability, justice and most importantly, to healing,” said MN–S Vice-President Michelle LeClair, “We need the Pope to acknowledge the Church’s role in Residential schools for any apology to translate into true and meaningful reconciliation. In Saskatchewan, that process may begin when the Church, the federal and provincial governments formally acknowledge their roles in the Île-à-la-Crosse boarding school before the survivors are gone.”

For the MN-S, the trip to the Vatican represented a chance for the world to learn the history of residential schools from the Métis perspective, which has largely been ignored or forgotten. Historic compensation agreements have often omitted Métis survivors and families.

“For many years, we have struggled with the damage done by residential schools and the lack of support and healing for Métis, First Nations and Inuit. There are many Métis who have lost our distinct ways, principles, identity, culture, values and language. There has been a lot of broken families. An apology has to have substance and hopefully support a legacy for our future generations. Today’s apology must be followed by tangible and real action for our citizens,” said MN–S President Glen McCallum.

The MN–S is extremely proud of the courage and strength of Elders Emilien Janvier and Antoinette Lafleur, both Survivors of the Île-à-la-Crosse boarding school in northern Saskatchewan, for representing Saskatchewan’s Métis survivors on this trip, and sharing their stories of survival and resiliency.



During the private audience on Monday with Pope Francis and the Métis delegation, Elder Janvier delivered a prayer in his native Dene language and both Elders recounted their boarding school experiences.

Elder Lafleur, who has long advocated on behalf of the survivors, for the recognition of the experiences of the students of the Île-à-la-Crosse boarding school, said she hoped this trip to the Vatican could help provide closure. “Young people I meet – they don’t know, they weren’t there – but they’re still hurting. It’s being passed down. It’s like a hatred being passed down from generation to generation.”

In operation for over 100 years, the Île-à-la-Crosse boarding school housed children from across northern Saskatchewan, many of which were Métis. While Survivors and families of other residential schools were compensated through the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA), Île-à-la-Crosse boarding school was omitted. In 2019, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between 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. It is imperative that this process is finalized before more Survivors are lost.

For the MN-S, the trip to the Vatican represents only one step in pursuing reconciliation and justice for our survivors, their families and our communities.

- 30 -

## **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.

FOR MEDIA INQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT:



Julia Burns  
jburns@mns.work  
306-850-1670

