

United4 Survivors.ca

Île-à-la-Crosse Residential School Injustice

Backgrounder: Île-à-la-Crosse Residential School

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission forced Canada to confront the realities of its troubled history and face the truths of what First Nation, Inuit and Métis children were forced to endure while students in the residential school system. Unfortunately, the experience of Métis Survivors and their families is not as widely known to the general public, and they have been left out of earlier legal settlements..

The Île-à-la-Crosse school was in operation from the 1820s until it burned down for the last time in the mid-1970s. Over the course of the school's 100-plus-year existence, Métis and First Nation children were forcibly removed from loving households and subjected to violence, terror, and neglect from those charged with their care and education. They often endured physical and sexual abuse at the hands of school staff.

In keeping with the stated mission of the residential school system policy to “kill the Indian in the child”, students at Île-à-la-Crosse were forbidden from practicing their traditional cultural practices. The community of Île-à-la-Crosse is a Métis community and was primarily Cree-Michif-speaking, and many children from neighbouring Dene communities were also sent to the school. Attendance at the School often resulted in Survivors losing their traditional languages, as they were banned from speaking their own languages and frequently beaten if they did not speak English or French.

Métis children lost their culture, identity, and traditional languages as a direct result of their treatment within the school's walls. These losses have had a profound effect on the Métis community and the descendants of the Survivors. The Métis Nation and its citizens face, to this day, the lasting repercussions of the residential school system and the intergenerational trauma that continues.

The Île-à-la-Crosse residential school Survivors were excluded from the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement because the school was determined not to qualify as an “Indian Residential School”. They have also been left out of all subsequent “Indigenous childhood claims” settlements.

Although a memorandum of understanding was signed in 2019 between the Métis Nation—Saskatchewan, the Government of Canada, and the steering committee representing Île-à-la-Crosse School Survivors to discuss a process for a fair resolution, those discussions were unsuccessful.

The Plaintiffs in the newly filed proposed class action lawsuit, Gardiner et al v Canada et al, consist of six Survivors and intergenerational Survivors, who are suing the Governments of Canada and Saskatchewan for breaching their statutory/constitutional, fiduciary, and common law duties to all of the Île-à-la-Crosse school Survivors and their close family members. With



support from the Île-à-la-Crosse Survivors' Committee and the Métis Nation—Saskatchewan, the Plaintiffs are working to rectify the Survivors' unjust exclusion from the legal recognition of, and compensation for, the harms that they endured.

More information can be found at United4Survivors.ca.

