



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mixed emotion as Government of Canada settles with Île-à-la-Crosse Boarding School Survivors

March 3, 2025 – Treaty Ten Territory and Heartland of the Métis, Île-à-la-Crosse, SK – After two decades of calling for proper recognition of the abuse suffered by thousands of Métis and First Nations youth who attended the Île-à-la-Crosse Boarding School (ILEX), an Agreement in Principle has been reached between the ILEX Survivors' Committee and Canada. This is a historic step on the journey to justice and reconciliation for the school Survivors.

Survivor, Committee member and Elder Antoinette LaFleur said, "I was only barely five years old when I went in [to ILEX School] which was 76 years [ago] – took me that long to hear what I heard today."

The Île-à-la-Crosse Boarding School was one of the oldest of its kind in Canada and didn't cease operations until the mid-1970's. From the early 1820's, thousands of Métis children were removed from their loving homes and forced to assimilate. Many were well under the age of ten, forbidden to see brothers and sisters attending the same school, prevented from speaking their native tongue, and coerced into learning English.

"We went through hell just to get an education. We went through abuse, mental abuse, physical abuse and loneliness just to get an education...no person should be treated like that...it affects the children too," said Survivor and Elder Emile Janvier.

Recognizing no numerical figure could ever erase the injustices committed, Survivor and Committee member Louis Gardiner emphasized the importance of beginning to resolve these legal claims, "We're losing the survivors at a rapid pace and so we just feel that it's time to at least honour some of our survivors and look after them the way we should be looking after them and respect that...I guess based on that...we find this one of the first steps in justice...in healing for us."

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There are two main compensatory components under the terms of the Agreement in Principle:

- Experience Payments for Survivors (up to \$27.355 million in total)
- A Legacy Fund (\$10 million) which will be operated by a Not-for-Profit Group, and invested. It will fund projects to address healing, wellness, education, language, culture and commemoration for Survivors and Intergenerational Survivors.

Métis Nation–Saskatchewan (MN–S) President Glen McCallum said, “It has been a long road to get to this point today. We are proud of all the work the committee has done in the best interests of the Survivors. Since the first pivotal meeting with MN–S in 2017, MN–S elected officials, legal counsel and employees have all worked tirelessly to support the committee. We also recognize those who’ve come before us and worked on this file over the years as well as the many Survivors that we lost while they awaited justice. We remember them and their resilience today.”

The Survivors and the Government of Canada are now working on drafting the final, formal Settlement Agreement. Once that happens the claims process will be expedited and accessible and the Trust for the Legacy Fund will be led by ILEX Survivors and Intergenerational Survivors. Claims of physical or sexual abuse aren’t included in the Agreement in Principle with Canada. Survivors now pursue those in court with Saskatchewan.

As with others around the table, Elder LaFleur’s response to the Agreement in Principle with Canada was mixed. “Even though I think the agreement is a good idea overall, because of what I had went through, the ten years I was in the Boarding school, the abuse that I got, I was kind of disappointed that the government doesn’t acknowledge us as kids that went through a lot of physical harm, sexual harm... They know what we went through and yet not giving us what we were supposed to get.”

“On behalf of the Survivors, MN–S met with Saskatchewan’s new Minister of Justice last month and pushed for a settlement to resolve,” said MN–S Minister of Justice, Vice President Michelle LeClair. LeClair was instrumental leading the MN–S on the ILEX file, continuing to call for action. LeClair said, “There can never be true reconciliation or justice for the Survivors until Saskatchewan fulfils its obligations on this file. After such a tumultuous journey, at least Canada has stepped forward with *something*. We’re relieved for our Survivors and hope they can at least start the healing process.”

While the ILEX Survivors will likely always be haunted by their years of physical, mental, and sexual abuse at the hands of school operators, they agree they can take some comfort in this acknowledgement, know their truth is *finally* being believed, and move on.



Rewatch the Survivors' media conference and find more information on how you can help ILEX school survivors continue their quest for justice, visit <https://www.united4survivors.ca/>. If you or someone you know is a residential school survivor requiring support, please contact the 24-hour toll-free crisis line at 1-866-925-4419.

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About the Île-à-la-Crosse Boarding School Steering Committee

The Île-à-la-Crosse Boarding School Steering Committee Inc. is comprised of 12 board members representing twenty communities in Northwest Saskatchewan. The committee has been actively advocating for Survivors of the Ile a la Crosse Boarding School for over twenty years. Founding members of the committee include Antoinette Lafleur, Emile Janvier, Margaret Aubichon, and Duane Favel.

About Métis Nation–Saskatchewan

Métis Nation–Saskatchewan (MN–S) is the recognized government of the Métis Nation in Saskatchewan and the exclusive representative of section 35 rights holders 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 Métis in the province through an elected representative system at local, regional, and provincial levels.

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