



L'HONORABLE ANDRÉ DENIS
JUGE RETRAITÉ DE LA COUR SUPÉRIEURE DU QUÉBEC

March 15th, 2024

Father Ken Thorson
Provincial
OMI Lacombe Canada

Dear Father Thorson

I have the honour to submit to you the Report of the Oblate Safeguarding Commission following the mandate entrusted by OMI Lacombe Canada and the Oblates of France in the "Johannès Rivoire Affair". This document is written in English, French and Inuktitut.

This Report is accompanied by an Executive Summary.

Warm regards.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'André Denis', written in a cursive style.

André Denis

REPORT OF THE OBLATE SAFEGUARDING COMMISSION

CHAired BY THE HONOURABLE ANDRÉ DENIS

RETIRED JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT OF QUEBEC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MARCH 15, 2024

In the spring of 2023, the Oblates of Canada, in collaboration with their confrères in France, entrusted me with a mandate of investigation-truth-reconciliation centred on what had become known as the Joannès Rivoire affair.

Members of the Inuit community in Nunavut, Oblates from France and Canada, members of the media and pressure groups from Canada and other countries around the world wanted an independent perspective on the departure from Canada to France in 1993 of Joannès Rivoire, an Oblate missionary who had ministered in Nunavut and against whom an arrest warrant had just been issued in 2022 by a Nunavut court.

As for all similar mandates I have accepted in recent years, I demanded and obtained from the Oblates carte blanche in my research and access to all existing Oblate archives, as well as the collaboration of any member of the community I might wish to meet in Canada, France or elsewhere in the world.

I visited Marseille, Lyon, Ottawa, Winnipeg, the Heritage Centre of the St. Boniface Historical Society, Nunavut and Montreal, where I consulted all the archives I needed. I met all the people who wanted to meet me, and others whom I wished to meet on my own initiative. I consulted the archives of all these sites and obtained the collaboration of all the archivists as well as from people who had public or private documents I wished to consult. I also obtained access to the archives of the Oblate General House in Rome.

I met with members of groups in Europe who have taken it upon themselves to denounce Joannès Rivoire and demand that the French state extradite him to Canada. I also heard their demands.

I made three visits to Nunavut, where I met the current and former bishops of the Churchill-Hudson Bay diocese, who assured me of their full co-operation. I met members of the Inuit community at my request and at the request of members of the Inuit community. I listened to everyone who wanted to meet me.

History of indictments and arrest warrants against Joannès Rivoire

Between January 20 and February 28, 1993, plaintiffs #1-2-3-4 went to the RCMP station in Nunavut to sign a statement accusing Joannès Rivoire of sexual assaults committed between 1968 and 1970 in the village of Naujaat (at the time Repulse Bay).

End of December 1998, RCMP filed four complaints with a justice of the peace in Nunavut (NWT at the time) and arrest warrant was issued for Joannès Rivoire. These complaints and arrest warrant were never served on Joannès Rivoire, who had left Canada on Jan. 16, 1993.

October 4, 2017, the attorney general, who did not think holding a trial in Canada would be possible in the foreseeable future, issued a stay of proceedings order and returned the cancelled arrest warrant to the court.

September 8, 2021, plaintiff #5 met with an RCMP officer and filed a complaint against Joannès Rivoire for sexual assaults allegedly committed between 1974 and 1979 in Arviat and Whale Cove.

February 23, 2022, a complaint was sworn by an RCMP officer before a Nunavut justice of the peace, and a warrant was issued the same day for the arrest of Joannès Rivoire for sexual assaults allegedly committed between 1974 and 1979 in Arviat and Whale Cove.

At the present time, Joannès Rivoire faces only one complaint of sexual assault, and if he were to appear in Nunavut for trial, he could be tried only for this offence.

Throughout my work, I acted as a judge would behave in court. I relied on precise, serious and concordant facts to arrive at conclusions based on testimony and documents that had a satisfactory degree of proof. Regarding the reputation of individuals and institutions, I discarded hearsay, public rumour and focused only on what I considered to be preponderantly proven. As far as the victims were concerned, I tried to act with empathy, welcoming, listening and all the humanity that circumstances demanded.

The conclusions I reach in Chapters 15 and 16 are based on the “preponderance of evidence” gathered during this investigation, not on “proof beyond a reasonable doubt.” In no way do I wish to substitute myself for the decision of a judge or jury who would have to rule on the innocence or guilt of Joannès Rivoire during a criminal trial.

On Feb. 7, 2023, urged by the Oblate authorities to intervene to obtain Joannès Rivoire’s extradition, the **French minister of justice and Keeper of the seals** sent the Oblate authorities a letter in which he refused to extradite Joannès Rivoire, as French law did not allow him to do so.

I conclude from the long exercise of studying, listening to witnesses and examining all available archives on two continents that the preponderant evidence shows that:

- 1- **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.**
- 2- **I don’t believe the version of events he gave me when we met in the spring of 2023 in Lyon, France.**

- 3- He left Canada hiding this terrible reality from his Oblate superiors and the bishop of the Churchill-Hudson Bay diocese, preferring to tell the true but incomplete story of his filial obligation to his ailing parents.
- 4- The Oblates in Canada and the ecclesiastical authorities in Nunavut neither concealed nor organized Joannès Rivoire's "flight" from Canada to France in 1993, and they too were victims of his duplicity and prevarication.
- 5- The Oblates in France were unaware that Joannès Rivoire was wanted by the Canadian justice system when he arrived in France on sabbatical in 1993, and therefore never participated in his "flight" from Canada, nor did they hide him from judicial responsibility.
- 6- Given the publication ban issued by the Canadian court, no one was notified of the charges brought against Joannès Rivoire in December 1998.
- 7- Joannès Rivoire hid his criminal past in Canada from his Oblate superiors in France.
- 8- The Oblates in France only learned on Nov. 29, 2013, that Canadian justice was seeking Joannès Rivoire to stand trial in Canada. They did everything in their power to ensure that he returned to Canada to stand trial or be extradited by the competent authority. Joannès Rivoire failed to obey the instructions of his Oblate superiors, and the French government refused to extradite him.
- 9- As soon as they learned of the Canadian proceedings, the Oblate authorities in France removed Joannès Rivoire from any ecclesiastical mission on French territory and from any function in the Oblate community.

Joannès Rivoire is 92 years old and (93 in March 2024) and was removed from any ecclesiastical mission but is still a member of the Oblates. The scandal for the plaintiffs is that Joannès Rivoire remains a religious despite all he has done. This is a reality the victims do not accept.

Joannès Rivoire refused to comply with his provincial's order to travel voluntarily to Canada to stand trial when Canadian justice demanded his presence. This reason alone militates in favour of his exclusion from the community. I respectfully suggest that the Superior General of the Oblates in Rome review his decision and allow Joannès Rivoire to be excluded from the Oblate community in France. This would be a largely symbolic measure, since, as Father Vincent Gruber, then provincial of France, has stated, there is no question of throwing Joannès Rivoire out into the street. He could remain where he is, but outside the Oblate community.

A symbolic measure, but a balm for the victims' wounds.

Perhaps the only one...

REPORT OF THE OBLATE SAFEGUARDING COMMISSION

CHAired BY THE HONOURABLE ANDRÉ DENIS

RETIRED JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT OF QUEBEC

PRESENTED TO:

*FATHER KEN THORSON
PROVINCIAL
OMI CANADA INC*

And

*FATHER RENAUD SALIBA
PROVINCIAL
OBLATS DE FRANCE*

MARCH 15, 2024

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1. PREAMBLE

In the spring of 2023, the Oblates of Canada, in collaboration with their confrères in France, entrusted me with a mandate of investigation-truth-reconciliation centred on what had become known as the Joannès Rivoire affair.

2. THE MANDATE

This mandate was formalized on May 5, 2023, in the following form:

MANDATE AGREEMENT

BETWEEN

OMI LACOMBE CANADA INC., represented by Father Ken Thorson,

AND

THE HONOURABLE ANDRÉ DENIS, a retired Québec Superior Court Justice.

The Mandate will include the following steps:

Undertake an independent review of the Oblates' policies and processes as they relate to Joannès Rivoire and the circumstances under which he left Canada;

Determine how accusations and complaints, if any, were dealt with at the time;

Review policies and processes that kept other potential cases from being addressed;

Review the Oblates' current Safeguarding Policy;

Interview pertinent members of the Oblates;

Consult with the Inuit communities, the Diocese of Churchill-Hudson Bay, alleged victims and their families (to the extent they wish to participate), and other stakeholders.

Produce a final public report (the Report) that will:

Outline findings and governance issues that need to be addressed,

Recommend procedural and governance improvements for addressing any future complaints.

It was agreed that the report would be submitted by April 1, 2024, at the latest and made public thereafter.

3. THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE CREATION OF THE COMMISSION

Members of the Inuit community in Nunavut, Oblates from France and Canada, members of the media and pressure groups from Canada and other countries around the world wanted an independent perspective on the departure from Canada to France in 1993 of Joannès Rivoire, an Oblate missionary who had ministered in Nunavut and against whom an arrest warrant had just been issued in 2022 by a Nunavut court.

This request coincided with Pope Francis's visit to Nunavut on July 29, 2022, which focused on meeting survivors of the residential schools set up by the federal government and administered by religious communities and subsequently by Indigenous communities until they were abolished in the early 1990s.

In contemporary times, in September 2022, a Canadian delegation travelled to the Oblates of France headquarters in Lyon to meet with Joannès Rivoire and demand his extradition from France to Canada to stand trial. The provincial¹ of the Oblates of France, Father Vincent Gruber, welcomed the delegation.

¹ The « provincial » is responsible for an Oblate province.

4. MY SOURCES

As for all similar mandates I have accepted in recent years, I demanded and obtained from the Oblates carte blanche in my research and access to all existing Oblate archives, as well as the collaboration of any member of the community I might wish to meet in Canada, France or elsewhere in the world.

I visited Marseille, Lyon, Ottawa, Winnipeg, the Heritage Centre of the St. Boniface Historical Society, Nunavut and Montreal, where I consulted all the archives I needed. I met all the people who wanted to meet me, and others whom I wished to meet on my own initiative. I consulted the archives of all these sites and obtained the collaboration of all the archivists as well as from people who had public or private documents I wished to consult. I also obtained access to the archives of the Oblate General House in Rome.

I met with members of groups in Europe who have taken it upon themselves to denounce Joannès Rivoire and demand that the French state extradite him to Canada. I also heard their demands.

I made three visits to Nunavut, where I met the current and former bishops of the Churchill-Hudson Bay diocese, who assured me of their full co-operation. I met members of the Inuit community at my request and at the request of members of the Inuit community. I listened to everyone who wanted to meet me.

This report shows that five formal complaints were filed with the Nunavut court against Joannès Rivoire. Two of the plaintiffs are deceased. I contacted and met with the plaintiffs and the families of the deceased plaintiffs who agreed to meet with me.

From all these meetings, all the documentation submitted to me and, finally, after studying all the existing archives at my leisure, I concluded that I was in a position to fulfil the mandate entrusted to me.

5. ANONYMITY

I agreed with all the witnesses I met to keep their identities confidential as far as possible. This request was an essential condition for certain meetings. Some witnesses agreed to have their names published. I respect the wishes of those who have been kind enough to agree to take part in this commission's research.

Similarly, I must keep confidential certain information relating to cases that have been brought before the Nunavut court against Joannès Rivoire. In these active or abandoned cases, a publication ban has been ordered by the court. I have obtained a copy of the indictments and arrest warrants from a witness. I will have further occasion to briefly explain the state of Canadian criminal law on this issue. Suffice it to say that Canadian justice still wants a trial to be held so that Joannès Rivoire can answer the charges against him.

6. OBLATES AROUND THE WORLD AND IN CANADA²

The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) are a Catholic religious congregation dedicated primarily to missions.

The congregation of the OMI, first called the Society of Missionaries of Provence, was founded in France in 1816 by Eugène de Mazenod. The group received the approval of Pope Leo XII in 1826.

Following several requests from the bishop of Montreal, Ignace Bourget, the community sent six missionaries to Canada in 1841 to preach and found missions. These first Oblates were soon joined by new French missionaries. Their main task was to convert the Indigenous to Christianity.

The congregation is headed by a superior general, the first having been its founder, Eugène de Mazenod, from 1816 to 1861, the year of his death. Now elected for a six-year term, renewable once, the superior general is assisted by a vicar general, a first assistant general, a second assistant general, five general councillors, each responsible for a region of the world, a secretary general and a treasurer general. The General House is in Rome, on Via Aurelia.

There are four Oblate “provinces” in North America: three in Canada (one of which accompanies a mission in Kenya) and one in the United States (which also looks after the mission in Zambia). The three Canadian Oblate provinces are Notre-Dame-du-Cap, which groups together the French-speaking works of Eastern Canada; Lacombe, the English-speaking province; and Assumption, which groups together the Polish works and is based in Toronto.

In Canada, the Oblates founded the University of Ottawa in 1848 under the name College of Bytown. They ran it until 1966. In 1885, the Oblates built the vast St. Joseph’s Scholasticate in Ottawa, housing several hundred seminarians.

The Oblates are famous for their important missions to the Inuit (then called Eskimos) from the second half of the 19th century onwards. A wealth of missionary literature about Canada’s Far North captured the imagination of Catholic households until the middle of the 20th century, sparking numerous vocations in Europe and North America.

The Oblates are involved in numerous rehabilitation projects around the world and are at the origin of missionary work among the poorest populations.

The congregation also set up missions among the Anishinabe (Algonquin), Attikamekw, Cree, Innu (Montagnais) and Inuit (Eskimo) nations, notably in James Bay, the Far North and on Lake Saint-Jean, on the Oujatchouan (Mashteuatsh) native reserve. OMI were located mainly in the western regions.

² Sources: OMI Monde, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Père Charles Choquet OMI and Portail du Christianisme and witnesses from the Inuit community

On July 15, 1925, the territory inhabited by Canadian Inuit became the Apostolic Prefecture of Hudson Bay, headed by Bishop Arsène Turquetil, OMI, the founder of Chesterfield Inlet (now known as Igluligaarjuk). Numerous missions were founded by the Oblates in the Hudson Bay-Nunavut territory in the 20th century.

“The Inuit are a nomadic population of hunters living in igloos or tents, scattered in camps that are often far apart. A mission priest travels from one camp to the next by dogsled, dressed like the Inuit in caribou skin. He lodges under the same snow dome, sharing frozen meat, the snow platform serving as his bed. Under the snow house, he teaches, baptizes, says mass and blesses newlyweds³.”

On July 13, 1967, the apostolic vicariate became the Diocese of Churchill.

On May 21, 1970, Father Omer Robidoux (1913-1986) was ordained Bishop of Churchill-Hudson Bay.

In 2020, there were 3,631 Oblates worldwide (priests, brothers and scholastics) spread across Africa, Latin America, Asia-Oceania, Canada, the United States and Europe. At the same time, there were 345 Oblates in Canada and 109 in France.

Numerous Inuit witnesses interviewed for this study praised the benefits of the Oblate missionaries’ work over the years in the various Inuit communities and missions they founded in Canada’s Far North. They translated numerous sacred and secular texts into Inuit and wrote grammatical works and dictionaries in Inuktitut. Most missionaries communicated with the Inuit in Inuktitut.

³ Source: Father Charles Choquet OMI

7. CANADIAN CRIMINAL LAW

In Canada, criminal law is a matter of federal legislative jurisdiction under s. 91(27) of the Constitution Act, 1867. The prosecuting party is therefore His Majesty the King, known as the Crown.

The Criminal Code applies throughout Canada. However, its implementation is the responsibility of the provinces and territories and their respective attorneys general. As a result, the Criminal Code may operate differently depending on the jurisdiction.

In the application of criminal law, the attorney general or the lawyers in his office are also referred to, depending on the place and time involved, as Crown prosecutor, prosecuting attorney or prosecutor (we will use prosecuting attorney for the purposes hereof).

In Canada, there is no school for prosecuting attorneys. They are lawyers from local bar associations employed by the attorney general.

In Nunavut (part of the Northwest Territories until April 1, 1999), depending on the time, the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) may act as a local police force and conduct criminal investigations into sexual assault offences. As part of these investigations, it may also lay a complaint (by filing a report) before a justice of the peace. It is only once the complaint has been filed that the prosecuting attorney steps in and takes over the case on behalf of His Majesty. The RCMP acted in these cases.

Once a police officer has laid a complaint, he or she no longer has any decision-making power over the course of the legal proceedings, which are then administered by the prosecuting attorneys and the court. Police officers may be called upon to testify at trial about the facts they have gathered during their investigation. Plaintiffs will also be called to testify. The Crown must prove all elements of the case beyond a reasonable doubt. The accused has a constitutionally protected right to silence and cannot be compelled to testify. He or she may remain silent and offer no defence, either during the police investigation or in court. No negative inference may be drawn from the exercise of this right.

During proceedings, the attorney general may file a stay of proceedings under s. 579 of the Criminal Code. This highly discretionary measure, which the courts can only review in the event of abuse, halts proceedings for a period of one year. Such a stay must be authorized by the attorney general himself or under his direct order. A simple prosecuting attorney cannot, of his own accord, file a stay of proceedings.

If these proceedings are not resumed within one year, they cease to have any legal existence. It remains possible, however, to file a new complaint and to hold the trial based on a possible new indictment. So, while the one-year deadline signifies the end of legal proceedings already commenced and covered by the judgment, it does not mean that the crime may go unpunished forever.

In Canada, sexual assault offences such as those with which Joannès Rivoire is charged are not subject to the statute of limitations under criminal law, unlike in France, where the statute of limitations expires after a certain number of years. In Canadian sexual assault law, the protection of victims' identity is the rule, hence the court's publication bans in cases involving Joannès Rivoire.

There are no civil parties intervening as such in Canadian criminal law proceedings.

A victim of sexual assault who wishes to obtain civil compensation for the harm caused must therefore bring a separate civil action against his or her assailant. Since civil law falls under provincial jurisdiction by virtue of art. 92(13) of the Constitution Act, 1867, the limitation period for bringing a suit will vary from province to province and territory to territory.

In Quebec, for example, where there is a French-inspired civil code, article 2926.1 C.C.Q. stipulates that there is no statute of limitations on actions resulting from sexual assault.

Finally, it is important to specify that in civil proceedings, the degree of proof required is that of a preponderance of evidence, not proof beyond all reasonable doubt.

8. HISTORY OF INDICTMENTS AND ARREST WARRANTS AGAINST JOANNÈS RIVOIRE

I contacted the management of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), who provided me with a liaison officer who helped me establish the chronology of the police force's actions in this case and of the proceedings before the Nunavut Court.

8.1 First complaints: assaults from 1968 to 1970

20/01/1993 to 28/02/1993 - Plaintiffs #1-2-3-4 went to the RCMP station in Nunavut to sign a statement accusing Joannès Rivoire of sexual assaults committed between 1968 and 1970 in the village of Naujaat (at the time Repulse Bay).

12/29/1998 - The RCMP filed four complaints with a justice of the peace in Nunavut (NWT at the time) and arrest warrants were issued for Joannès Rivoire. These complaints and arrest warrants were never served on Joannès Rivoire, who had left Canada on Jan. 16, 1993.

04/10/2017 - The attorney general, who did not think holding a trial in Canada would be possible in the foreseeable future, issued a stay of proceedings order and returned the cancelled arrest warrants to the court. The Crown did not resume proceedings at the end of the one-year stay of proceedings. The formula used at the time was: *"There was no longer a reasonable prospect of conviction regarding the charges against Joannès Rivoire."*

04/10/2018 - The four complaints of plaintiffs #1-2-3 and 4 for acts committed between 1968-70 were abandoned and no longer have legal existence. They can only be resumed if new information is filed. At present, Joannès Rivoire is no longer charged with these crimes in Canada.

8.2 Second complaint: assaults from 1974 to 1979

08/09/2021 - Plaintiff #5 met with an RCMP officer and filed a complaint against Joannès Rivoire for sexual assaults allegedly committed between 1974 and 1979 in Arviat and Whale Cove.

23/02/2022 - A complaint was sworn by an RCMP officer before a Nunavut justice of the peace, and a warrant was issued the same day for the arrest of Joannès Rivoire for sexual assaults allegedly committed between 1974 and 1979 in Arviat and Whale Cove. The charge read: *"did indecently assault #5, a female person, contrary to Section 149 of the Criminal Code."* This is art. 149 in force at the time the assaults were committed.

2023 - At the present time, Joannès Rivoire faces only one complaint of sexual assault, and if he were to appear in Nunavut for trial, he could be tried only for this offence.

8.3 Delays and service of process

In an email to the undersigned dated Nov. 2, 2023, the RCMP liaison officer explains the delay of nearly six years between the first meetings with the plaintiffs (January 1993) and the laying of charges (December 1998) in court as follows:

“The largest reason for the delay was the Chesterfield Inlet Task Force conducted inquiries into the Bernier Federal Day School from Sept 1993 until later 1995, essentially trying to determine if there were any additional complaints that warranted charges. The initial complaint was on hold until the task force completed its work. Then from late 1995 until 1998 additional witnesses and potential victims were interviewed into historical allegations. As you are aware travel across the territory can be challenging.”

The RCMP realized, as my investigation shows, that Joannès Rivoire had nothing to do with Sir Joseph Bernier School in Chesterfield Inlet.

The file was therefore inactive from 1998 until Oct. 4, 2017, when the legal proceedings against Joannès Rivoire were terminated.

Neither the 1998 complaints, nor the arrest warrant, nor any legal proceedings emanating from Nunavut were ever served on Joannès Rivoire or the Oblates. In fact, the RCMP had no communication with the Oblates, nor did they notify them of anything throughout the legal process. The same goes for the plaintiffs.

8.4 Nunavut Court of Justice

I have contacted the Nunavut Court of Justice to obtain information and a copy of available documents on the five complaints filed in 1993 and 2021 by members of the Inuit community against Joannès Rivoire. I did not get any co-operation from this intelligence source.

9. RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS AND THIS COMMISSION

Residential schools for Aboriginal children existed in Canada from the 17th century until the late 1990s.

In 1954, the federal government set up several large schools in the Northwest Territories, including one in Chesterfield Inlet, Nunavut, known as Sir Joseph Bernier. Most of the students who attended these schools were housed in residences newly built by the government. These residential schools were usually administered by the Anglican or Catholic churches in each locality.

Turquetil Hall boarding school opened in 1954 in Chesterfield Inlet, administered by the Sisters of Charity (or Grey Nuns) and the Oblates (twenty-eight Grey Nuns and three Oblates: two brothers and a priest). It was in operation from 1955 to 1969, housing 325 students over the years. The school is said to have closed in 1969⁴.

Public rumour has associated Joannès Rivoire with the Sir Joseph Bernier School in Chesterfield Inlet. My research, as well as that of the RCMP, shows that Joannès Rivoire has never been remotely associated with this school. He neither taught nor ministered at the school. In fact, he never ministered at Chesterfield Inlet. We'll get back to this.

⁴ Source : School website and Peter Irniq

10.EVIDENCE FROM CANADA

I met several priests from the Oblate community of Canada and members of the Inuit community from Nunavut, Winnipeg, St. Boniface, British Columbia, Ottawa and Montreal. I also met with the authorities of the Churchill-Hudson Bay diocese. I have consulted all the archives available in these sites, and I have come up with the following elements, which I believe to be proven.

10.1 Diocese of Churchill-Hudson Bay

I met the current bishop of the Churchill-Hudson Bay diocese, Anthony Wieslaw Krotki, who was appointed bishop of the diocese in May 2013, and his predecessor, Reynald Rouleau, bishop of the diocese from July 1987 to May 2013. Both offered me their fullest co-operation, and I was given access to the diocesan archives.

Bishop Krotki, an Oblate, was ordained to the priesthood in 1990 in his native Poland. After serving as a priest in Poland, he arrived in Canada in October 1990 and served briefly in Winnipeg and Toronto while waiting to move to Nunavut. He arrived in Nunavut by the end of 1990, where he served as pastor in various missions until his appointment as bishop. Bishop Krotki became a Canadian citizen on May 14, 1996. He is fluent in Polish and English and can communicate in Inuktitut⁵.

What Bishop Krotki knew of Joannès Rivoire when he was appointed bishop was that he had left Canada in 1993 due to the illness and advanced age of his parents. He had never heard any complaints about him, either on his appointment or since. It must be said that the missionary “*was not a member of the diocese.*” The bishop had no authority over him. The provincial oblate was the only authority for missionary Oblates in Nunavut.

At the time of his appointment as bishop, there were two Oblate provincials and one bishop in the diocese. If a priest was needed for a mission, an agreement was usually reached between the provincial and the bishop, and an Oblate was appointed. Obediences were given by the Oblate provincial and the bishop was notified. The provincial remained superior and responsible for the priest.

A first pastoral meeting took place in 1994, when Father Krotki was a missionary priest. Joannès Rivoire was not present, and no one spoke of him. Father Krotki went to Arviat several times, but nobody spoke to him about Joannès Rivoire.

“No one has ever told me about sexual assaults by Joannès Rivoire from that time until now. I’ve asked Inuit leaders, I’ve asked everyone, no one has anything to say about Joannès Rivoire. I’m told he went to help his sick parents. I don’t understand why the people of Arviat didn’t tell me. As far as I know, the Inuit have never complained. No one in Arviat has said a word about him in 25 years. The newspapers talk about it, not the Inuit.”

⁵ Source : Diocesan website

The first time the diocese addressed the issue of pedophilia was with the publication of ‘From Pain to Hope’⁶ received by the diocese on Sept. 25, 1992. Today, a rigorous protocol is in place for reporting any form of abuse. The principle is very simple: *“Come and see me and tell me,”* and we will deal with it immediately.

As bishop, Bishop Krotki has never received any communication from the RCMP about Joannès Rivoire from the time of his appointment until now.

I met Bishop Reynald Rouleau, bishop of the diocese from July 1987 to May 2013. He was preceded by Bishop Omer Robidoux and replaced by Bishop Anthony Krotki until today.

Bishop Rouleau handed me a map of the Churchill-Hudson Bay diocese from 2016. In his day, there were 17 Catholic missions in the 21 or 22 villages of Nunavut. He still went to the villages where there were no missions. Nunavut is the only territory where the Inuit are a majority, at around 70 per cent of the population.

At the time of his appointment in 1987, Bishop Rouleau did not know Joannès Rivoire, but knew that the latter had or had had an important role to play in the leadership of the Oblates in Nunavut.

In 1993, when Joannès Rivoire left, Bishop Rouleau had never heard of any allegations or complaints of misconduct against him. In fact, if there had been any allegations of assault or complaints from the Inuit community, Joannès Rivoire would have been arrested while in Nunavut.

No complaints of any kind were made against him while he was working in Nunavut, nor were they brought to the attention of the bishop during Bishop Rouleau’s mandate, subject to the two exceptions explained below.

Bishop Rouleau had no role to play in Joannès Rivoire’s departure. The Oblate provincial proposes priests for ministry and the bishop appoints him as pastor and gives him faculties. The authority over Oblate missionaries remains that of the Oblate provincial.

No one consulted Bishop Rouleau about Joannès Rivoire’s departure, and no one had to. There was no permission to ask, and no reasons to give, since Joannès Rivoire depended on Oblate authorities, not the bishop. What Bishop Rouleau did hear was that Joannès Rivoire was leaving to care for his ailing parents.

Before ‘From Pain to Hope’ was published in 1992, there was no protocol for handling complaints against priests. Today there is, and Bishop Trudeau provided me a copy of a document of July 2021 entitled “Protocols for Responsible Ministry and a Safe Working Environment in the Diocese of Churchill-Hudson Bay.” In those days, if a complaint came from the Inuit community to the diocese for any reason, it was referred to the diocesan lawyer for study and recommendation to the bishop.

On Jan. 13, 1999, Sgt. Mark Hennigar of the RCMP Rankin Inlet Detachment wrote to Bishop Rouleau (letter dated Jan. 7, 1999):

“Dear Sir,

⁶ Source: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) website - https://www.cccb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/From_Pain_To_Hope.pdf

This letter is being forwarded to simply inform you that our office is investigating the actions of Father Joannès RIVOIRE.

Official court documents have been sworn before a justice and a warrant for the arrest of Father RIVOIRE has been issued. Allegations have been made by residents of the Kivalliq region indicating that this man committed various assaults. These assaults occurred a number of years ago while he was working in the area on behalf of the Catholic Church.

Our office is aware that this man no longer resides in Canada. We are initiating contact with your office in an effort to locate this man. The plaintiffs in this matter, as well as our office desire to bring this matter to a successful conclusion, hopefully with the help from your office.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Mark Hennigar at the Rankin Inlet Detachment by phone. Thank you,

†. Mark Hennigar Rankin Inlet Detachment”

On the same day, January 13, 1999, Bishop Rouleau wrote to Sgt. Hennigar:

“Following your letter of Jan. 7, 1999, here is the address of Rev Joannès Rivoire: Notre-Dame de Lumières, 84220 Goult, France, Phone 011-33-(phone number).

Yours truly.

Reynald Rouleau”

This was the first time the RCMP had contacted the Diocese of Churchill-Hudson Bay about Joannès Rivoire. It was the last.

From 2010 to 2014, negotiations were undertaken between lawyers for Inuit plaintiffs and the lawyer for the Diocese of Churchill-Hudson Bay concerning allegations of sexual assault against Inuit children. They mainly concerned Eric Dejaeger, a Belgian Oblate who pleaded guilty to various charges of sexual assault against Nunavut children and was sentenced to a lengthy prison term. The diocese has settled out-of-court complaints of sexual abuse of Inuit children involving Eric Dejaeger.

During this period, two complaints were filed against Joannès Rivoire and forwarded to the diocesan lawyer in accordance with the policy in force at the time. On July 28, 2010, the bishop wrote to the diocesan lawyer informing him that Joannès Rivoire had left Canada to care for his ailing father.

When the complaints reached the diocese, the latter’s lawyer contacted Joannès Rivoire, who formally denied any allegations of improper conduct. He believed that his role as a nurse “*by default*” could have led to a misperception of certain actions he had taken for medical purposes during his ministry in Nunavut.

On Aug. 14, 2012, the diocesan prosecutor recommended that the diocese pay compensation to two Inuit plaintiffs who were claiming compensation for actions taken by Joannès Rivoire between 1968 and 1970. This was done. Both parties insisted on a non-disclosure agreement prohibiting any comment on the settlement.

I contacted one of the people involved in the settlement with the diocese and she made it clear that she no longer wished to talk about these events and refused to meet me. One might think that these confidentiality clauses were to the diocese's advantage, but my investigation leads me to believe that some victims wished to put these painful events behind them and think about the future. Some victims themselves insisted on signing such agreements, with the obligation never to speak of them again. They saw this as a step in their healing process.

My investigation shows that the Oblate authorities were not informed of the RCMP's 1999 letter, nor of the settlement of two complaints by the diocese concerning Joannès Rivoire.

I found in the Oblate archives of Manitoba a letter dated March 9, 1992, in which Joannès Rivoire writes to the bishop to point out difficulties in human relations and in the way the parish was organized at Arviat. There seems to be a personality conflict between diocesan workers, and Father Rivoire sees this as a cause of division in the parish's pastoral mission. He explains:

"My perception is that there are two parishes in Arviat.

(...)

If this is the kind of community and parish you want to see develop, all you have to do is agree and redefine everyone's role.

(...)

It's certainly not interesting to work in such an atmosphere. It's almost impossible to maintain enthusiasm, lucidity and concentration. But I can survive for a while yet. But I'm thinking about who will take my place. Personally, as superior, I won't ask anyone to come here under the present conditions, and if no one, knowing the reality, volunteers, well, Arviat will be without a priest (oblate).

(...)

Many have advised me to leave without worrying about the rest. I've thought about taking a sabbatical this year, but I can't do that before the end of my term, although perhaps the board would agree to pre-empt the appointment of a new superior. I could simply leave Arviat and move to Rankin to do Baker-Whale Cove.

(...)"

He ends his letter by pointing out that he has just received a communication from Father General to represent the Inuit communities at the General Chapter in autumn 1992. This document may explain why Joannès Rivoire did not return to Arviat.

10.2 The Oblate Community

During my investigation in Canada, I met various members of the Oblate community, all of whom gave me the same warm welcome. The following facts shed some useful light on my investigation.

A former provincial of Manitoba assures me that he never knew, never thought or imagined that complaints could have been made against Joannès Rivoire. He visited the missions regularly before and after his provincialate, and no one ever spoke to him about anything. Joannès Rivoire was perceived as an exceptional missionary and priest. In his travels, the provincial spoke to everyone. If there had been any complaints, he would have been told about them. No suspicion ever crossed his mind about Joannès Rivoire's conduct. The provincial was surprised to see that Joannès Rivoire had left, but he would never have believed it was for any wrongdoing.

Father Alain Piché, provincial of the Oblates in Manitoba from 1988 to 1994, has unfortunately passed away and I was unable to gather his testimony.

Another former provincial of Manitoba tells me that rumours had circulated about possible complaints against Joannès Rivoire at the time of his departure, but that Bishop Rouleau never knew of these rumours. In everything, the bishop had to go through the Oblate provincial. Bishop Rouleau was a man of great integrity and knew nothing of Joannès Rivoire's doings. This witness makes the same point about Father Provincial Alain Piché.

This provincial informs me that the RCMP contacted him on a few occasions about various issues during his term as provincial, but never about Joannès Rivoire.

"The Oblates didn't hide it. He went to the General Chapter in the fall of 1992 and did not return to Arviat. He left for France on sabbatical to take care of his father," he says.

10.3 The Inuit community

I met all the members of the Inuit community who wished to meet me, notably during three visits to Nunavut. I also met other members whose testimonies I wished to hear. I respected the wishes of those who did not accept my invitation, seeing it only as a desire to put behind them a reality they no longer wished to talk about. I report hereafter the main elements of these meetings and, given the available archives I consulted, I consider the following elements to be proven.

I met the family of plaintiff #3, a prominent representative of the Inuit community and the first whistleblower to expose a certain reality of life in residential schools created by the federal government in the 1950s. His family campaigned for recognition of his suffering. He died prematurely in 2012.

Plaintiff #3 had a particularly difficult life. He was what his family calls a "damaged person." He experienced every conceivable human difficulty, especially those experienced by many Inuit of his generation. His human relationships were difficult, and he found peace only in the wilds of Nunavut.

He was sent to Sir Joseph Bernier School in Chesterfield Inlet from age five to 12 and complained to his then-wife that a cleric had sexually abused him (not Joannès Rivoire).

At the age of 12, he returned to Naujaat to work in the co-operative set up and run by Joannès Rivoire. The plaintiff was clever and intelligent, and Joannès Rivoire showed him how to work. The plaintiff told his then-wife that Joannès Rivoire sexually abused him but would not say anything more while he's still alive.

His ex-wife maintains that there was a breach of trust between Joannès Rivoire and plaintiff #3. The latter's parents were devout Catholics. His mother went to church every day. The priest was very powerful in the community. Plaintiff #3 was afraid to talk to his parents about this. He never would. These things weren't talked about.

He filed a complaint with the RCMP on a date unknown to the family, but the RCMP file shows that the statement was made between Jan. 20, 1993, and the end of February 1993. The family's witnesses inform me of numerous details associated with the extended family of plaintiff #3 that I do not consider relevant to my investigation.

Family members of plaintiff #3 claim that Joannès Rivoire was a priest in Arviat in 1991-92. He disappeared in the middle of the night without anyone knowing why. He left in 91-92. He was the head of the mission, and he left without saying a word. They believe it's because he was being investigated by the RCMP. They claim he abused other people, including a woman.

My investigation revealed that Joannès Rivoire was a priest in Arviat until autumn 1992, when he was sent as a delegate of his community to the General Chapter. He did not return to Arviat (except to pick up his personal belongings) and left Canada on Jan. 16, 1993.

Family members of plaintiff #3 criticize the RCMP for not taking care of them.

"They are contemptuous and racist towards Inuit. They never take us seriously. They didn't do anything until 1998, despite #3's complaint."

"They maintain that the Church has done good things. Priests served as doctors/nurses because there was no service. They went from camp to camp, and in addition to evangelizing, they served as doctors, nurses, teachers and any other task where they could be useful to the Inuit population. Unfortunately, 'the villages were backward, and some priests took advantage of this.'"

"We only had an oral culture. The priests wrote and translated texts in Inuktitut. Father la Rousselière was an avant-gardist. Father Papion was also a good man, but members of the Church destroyed plaintiff #3."

"Bishop Rouleau and plaintiff #3 respected each other. But the bishop washed his hands of the case and did nothing for Joannès Rivoire's extradition. Plaintiff #3 had a love/hate relationship with religion."

In the diocesan archives, I found a letter from plaintiff #3 dated Jan. 15, 1998, addressed to Bishop Rouleau, which includes the following:

"Dear Bishop Rouleau;

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us on the 6th of January. We look forward to a successful conclusion to our request. I appreciate your assistance on this matter of our annulment.

I also wanted to take this opportunity to express my feelings on your statement of apology to former students of residential schools, as late as it is. To be completely frank, I did not expect any change prior to your statement, as I had been so involved in the process. I must say, however, that I felt more at peace with my past and I no longer have ill feelings against the Church. Thank you for having the courage and faith to face the past head-on.

With the Statement of Reconciliation issued by the Government of Canada, we are now another step closer to bringing this matter to rest. As you may know, many former students and their families are still in pain and will require help. Let us hope and pray that we will be guided to bring about peace of mind and healing in the weeks and months ahead. We have an opportunity to work together to bring about hope to many people.

Thank you again for everything that you have done. Please feel free to call or write if you feel that we can help you in any way.

Sincerely.”

Plaintiff #3’s daughter points out that her father rarely spoke of Joannès Rivoire. He was haunted and tortured by his memory. He didn’t talk about government schools or Joannès Rivoire. Nothing at all.

She was part of the Inuit delegation to Lyon in 2022. She met Joannès Rivoire in a hall of the Oblate community in Lyon.

“There were five of us. I looked at him for 10 seconds. He abused my father and ruined his life: you’ll die in prison or here. Either way, you’re going to hell. I hope you have nightmares for the rest of your life. I don’t want to hear it.”

And out she went.

She cried,

“Daddy, I did this for you. It takes a huge weight off my shoulders.

I’m honouring a vow made by my father. I wanted to see Joannès Rivoire. I think he should have faced justice. I think the Oblates helped him escape.”

She thinks her father would have liked to see Joannès Rivoire again.

Another Inuit witness I met in Nunavut told me at the beginning of my interview:

“I used to be a child but I’m not a child anymore...”

He was removed from his family and taken to Sir Joseph Bernier School in Chesterfield Inlet from age eight to 13. His mother was very religious.

“At Bernier School, children were molested by religious men and women.”

At the age of 13 (he was born in 1955), he lived in Naujaat

“where I was an altar boy. Joannès Rivoire used to take me to the back room of the church where he changed his priestly vestments, and he sexually assaulted me several times. He would touch my penis and make me touch his. It was in the Burntown Old Church.”

The events he reports took place between 1968 and 1970.

“The effects of these assaults have made me become [...] mad very easy. I don’t know how to be a parent. I’ve had four children, two of whom are still alive. My parents didn’t drink or fight. I never told anyone about the assaults. I was embarrassed and ashamed. I didn’t know what was happening. We lived in a very backward community. It wasn’t while Joannès Rivoire was serving as a nurse, it was really an assault. I don’t know if he did this to other children, we didn’t talk about these things. I never saw him do it.

“Joannès Rivoire was very friendly with children. He gave me sweets, which was very important in those days. He told me not to tell anyone because they wouldn’t believe you. He especially abused me on Sundays after mass.

“I’m not so much angry with Joannès Rivoire as with the whole Church system, which knows and remains silent.

“The Church controls people. The system is broken. I don’t believe them anymore. I still go to church for funerals and weddings, but I don’t participate in any rites. I’m not there anymore.”

“The government, the RCMP and the Church form a caste. They have the power and the money, and they do what they want.”

“I never told anyone about my experience because no one would believe me. I never told my mother or my children. It was only last year that I was able to tell my wife after 50 years. I don’t know why Joannès Rivoire left. I decided to talk to you a few minutes ago.”

I met plaintiff #1, who was part of the Inuit delegation to France. Born in 1957, he went to France to meet Joannès Rivoire and bring him back to Canada to stand trial. He met him in a hall of the Oblate community in Lyon and was able to talk to him.

“I told him he knew what he had done to me. He said he didn’t remember. He denied having done anything wrong.”

The meeting, though short-lived, lifted an enormous weight off his shoulders. The witness wished Joannès Rivoire had gone to trial.

He was sexually abused by Joannès Rivoire around the age of 13 in Naujaat, where the latter was a missionary. He told his parents, but they didn’t believe him. He left home to live with a relative. He came back when she died, and his parents apologized for not

believing him. He managed to shake off the scars of these assaults and became a prominent member of the Inuit community.

He maintains that the priests did good deeds for the Inuit community, and that Joannès Rivoire was an exception.

He tells me that plaintiff #2 was also assaulted by Joannès Rivoire, but plaintiff #2 refuses to talk about this period of his life and to meet me.

During the Inuit delegation's visit to Lyon, Joannès Rivoire's lawyer, Thierry Dumoulin, told the media that

"the accusations against his client were totally unfounded and that he had always served his mission and his community loyally and faithfully throughout his life."

I met another prominent member of the Inuit community. He has been deeply involved in the political and cultural life of the Inuit of Nunavut, and still is. He speaks regularly at conferences across Canada.

He tells me about the residential schools set up by the federal government. Children were taken to residential schools without the consent of either the children or their parents. If parents refused, they were told that the RCMP would take them by force, or that they would be arrested. The aim was "to take the child's savage out" and bring him or her into the real world of white people. He was taken to one of these schools at the age of 11, from 1958 to 1963.

Boys and girls are sexually abused in these schools. He himself was sexually assaulted. No one talks about it. Even the parents wouldn't believe their children. Witness #3 confided to him that he had been sexually assaulted at Chesterfield school. Joannès Rivoire was not one of these assailants. These confidences will lead to the public inquiry ordered by the federal government.

"The RCMP aren't doing their job," he says, "maybe because we were Inuit."

In July 1993, there was a meeting of several days in Chesterfield about the school and the abuses that allegedly occurred there. For the first time, plaintiff #3 spoke of Joannès Rivoire's assaults in a village where he was a missionary.

Joannès Rivoire helped the Inuit organize the co-operative in the 1960s in Naujaat. He was its leader. He allegedly sexually abused witness #3, who worked at the co-op. He often talks about this to his friend the witness.

In 1993, rumours began to circulate about Joannès Rivoire's assaults. This witness believes this is why Bishop Rouleau sent him to France. For his part, he never told Bishop Rouleau about Joannès Rivoire's assaults.

"We don't talk about these things to anyone, not even to parents who wouldn't have believed us."

"The Church did some very good things. It was the government's agent, took care of health, communications, but . . . sexual assault!"

According to the witness, plaintiff #3 tried to forget Joannès Rivoire's assaults by drinking. One day, while drunk, he repeats over and over to the witness: "*Rivoire, Rivoire, Rivoire.*" The witness said, "I told him not to let himself die for Rivoire." Plaintiff #3 died at the age of 55.

There was a settlement between the Inuit and the government over the abuse suffered in the residential school. Money wasn't the priority, but rather acknowledging abuse and reconciliation. But people received money from the government, and plaintiff #3 more than the others.

The witness met Pope Francis during his visit to Nunavut in 2022 and told him of the genocide suffered by the Inuit. The Pope asked for forgiveness on behalf of the Church and seemed distraught. "*He's a good Pope,*" concluded the witness.

He adds that if Joannès Rivoire were to admit his assaults and appear in court, it would begin the process of reconciliation and healing for many people. For him to go to prison would help that process. The witness has nothing against the Church, but against abusers.

I met with plaintiff #5, a member of the Inuit community. The meeting was extremely painful. She burst into long, irrepressible sobs as soon as the interview began, and took many minutes before she could speak.

She was born in 1968. Her father is very involved in the Catholic church, where Joannès Rivoire was pastor. Her family lived in Naujaat, Arviat, Whale Cove and Rankin Inlet from 1972 to 1986. She now lives in Arviat.

She explained that Joannès Rivoire was a missionary in Arviat (Eskimo Point) from 1974 until his departure for France in 1993.

Joannès Rivoire sexually abused her from the age of six to 11. "*Again and again and again,*" she said. The events took place between 1974 and 1979. She described the details of the assaults to me, which it's pointless to go into here. In 1979, he showed her a threatening poster showing the devil and the fires of hell, and told her that if she told anyone what he was doing, she would burn eternally in hell. She promised not to tell. In any case, her parents, especially her father, who is very involved in church work, wouldn't believe her. She told no one.

She filed a complaint with the RCMP in 1995. It was the first time she had talked about it. She was told she didn't have enough evidence to convict him. She had no witnesses. The RCMP later told her that he had left for France.

My meeting with an RCMP liaison officer indicated that, according to her file, it was on Sept. 8, 2021, that plaintiff #5 first met with a Nunavut RCMP officer and made allegations against Joannès Rivoire for acts allegedly committed between 1974 and 1979 in Arviat and Whale Cove. A complaint was sworn by an RCMP officer before the Nunavut Court on Feb. 23, 2022, and on the same day a warrant was issued for Joannès Rivoire's arrest on the charge that he "did indecently assault #5, a female person, contrary to Section 149 of the Criminal Code."

She felt attacked from all sides and wounded inside. At times, the pain was unbearable. She refused to take refuge in alcohol and drugs for the sake of her children.

She has never forgotten Joannès Rivoire and would like to see him again to confront him. The fact that he's old and sick leaves her indifferent.

“He lied all his life, denying the assaults. He’s a monster.”

She has no idea why he left Canada in 1993. She's been looking for him since 1995. She'd like him to admit he was wrong and apologize for his behaviour. That would mean a lot to her.

“He violated my body and I’ve always felt different from other women because of him.

He would molest me in a back room where there was a toilet and the communion wine, while my father at the other end of the church was working on Bible assignments. Our house was a stone’s throw from the church.”

She never forgot, and our interview was interspersed with heavy sobbing. I consider this witness entirely credible, despite the confusion and imprecision of certain dates.

11.EVIDENCE COLLECTED IN FRANCE

I met many religious from the Oblate community of France.

I have consulted all the archives available in their houses in Lyon and Marseille, and I have had access to the archives of the Oblates' General House in Rome, and the evidence gathered allows me to arrive at the following elements, which I hold to be proven.

On Nov. 29, 2013, the Oblates in France learned with dismay of the existence of criminal proceedings in Canada against their confrère Joannès Rivoire.

Father Yves Chalvet de Récy, OMI, provincial of France from 2008 to 2014, had been warned of this by an appeal from CORREF (*La Conférence des religieux et religieuses de France*), which referred to an article on the Huffington Post website that had just been published. According to the newspaper, a Canadian arrest warrant had been issued against Joannès Rivoire by a court in Nunavut, Canada, for the sexual assault of three minors between 1968 and 1970 while he was a missionary with the Catholic OMI community in Rankin Inlet, in Nunavut⁷. According to the article, Joannès Rivoire fled Nunavut in 1993 to escape the denunciations against him.

A few days later, on Dec. 5, 2013, Father Chalvet met with Joannès Rivoire to hear his version of events and retained the following elements reported to him by Joannès Rivoire.

Joannès Rivoire says he returned to France in 1993 primarily to look after his elderly parents. He never went to Rankin Inlet at that time. From 1965 to 1974, he was a missionary in Naujaat (formerly Repulse Bay).

There have been allegations of sexual assaults he committed between 1968-70 on underage girls, not boys.

"I'm not innocent", he said, "and there are various degrees of touching that I'm accused of having done on Eskimos. In the Eskimo environment, children were looking for tenderness that they didn't have in their families."

"I contacted a lawyer in 1968-70 in Edmonton. There was no follow-up. If I'm not innocent, the children aren't either, but we don't say that. For years, we were 'carers' long before there were nurses. It's true that I'm not innocent, but allegations of sexual abuse of underage girls are a fabrication. I've never laid a hand on anyone," he tells Father Chalvet, "especially not a child." Joannès Rivoire repeats: "Tell me what I'm accused of, and by whom and where. I'll be able to answer."

He added,

"I came back to France a little too because of this (the allegations and rumours of sexual assault). I informed the superior who welcomed me to France."

⁷ My research shows that the indictments relate to offences committed between 1968 and 1970 in Repulse Bay (now *Naujaat*), not Rankin Inlet. Joannès Rivoire was a missionary in Naujaat at the time.)

On Dec. 26, 2013, Father Chalvet denounced the situation to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome.

On Feb. 4, 2014, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith replied to Father Chalvet and asked that a temporary precautionary measure be issued against Joannès Rivoire until the outcome of the Canadian proceedings, prohibiting him from any public ministry with the obligation to reside in a specific community.

On Feb. 10, 2014, Father Chalvet, in his capacity as provincial of France, issued a decree against Joannès Rivoire that included:

To Joannès Rivoire:

Considering that a criminal investigation, opened by the Federal Police in the Nunavut Territories (Canada), is underway before the Canadian Judicial Authority concerning accusations of sexual assaults on native minors which allegedly took place during the years of your presence in the Oblate Missions in Canada's Far North,

After personally meeting you on December 5, 2013, at Notre-Dame de Lumières to hear your position and defences on the allegations made,

In accordance with OMI Constitution no. 100, as a precautionary and temporary measure, I forbid you to work in public ministry, in particular any ministry that might bring you into contact with minors,

And

I require you to reside in our OMI community of Notre-Dame de Lumières (84220 Goult). In the event of transgression of this precept, further sanctions may be imposed.

This temporary, prudential order will remain in force until the end of the civil proceedings underway in Canada.

Joannès Rivoire told Father Chalvet in 2013 that he had informed the superior who welcomed him to France in 1993. The fundamental question remains: did he warn him, and of what precisely? Joannès Rivoire returned to France in January 1993, and the indictments were brought in December 1998. The Oblates in France and Canada were never notified of these indictments, which were never served on Joannès Rivoire. He was unable to warn them of these indictments, which would be brought almost six years later. He could only speak of rumours: those of 1968-1970 or those of 1993, if they existed at all.

I've come to the conclusion that he didn't.

My investigations in France have shown me that all those who knew Joannès Rivoire during his stay in France were appalled by his indictment in Canada, as his dedication and zeal since his return to France in 1993 have been above suspicion. No reproach, complaint or pejorative remark of any kind has ever been noted, either in the archives or by those who have known and associated with him over the years to the present day. Since his return to France in 1993, his apostolate has been exemplary both in the community and in the circles where he served. Everyone praised his collaboration and his unstinting commitment.

On his arrival in France, Joannès Rivoire came under the authority of Father Jean-Pierre Bonnafoux, provincial of the OMI Province du Midi. Between 1993 and 1996, this province was reunited with the Province du Nord et de l'Est to become the Province de France of the OMI.

A meticulous study of the archives and meetings with people who lived contemporaneously with Father Jean-Pierre Bonnafoux convince me that Father Bonnafoux would never have “covered up” for Joannès Rivoire if he had known about the allegations against him and would have denounced him if he had known about the criminal charges, which, it should be remembered, would not be presented to the tribunal until December 1998. Father Bonnafoux was a rigorous man who did not accept any deviant acts, especially sexual assaults. Throughout his career, he denounced such attitudes to the authorities and defended the victims.

Unfortunately, I was unable to interview Father Bonnafoux, who is still alive in Corsica, but unable to answer my questions intellectually for reasons of dementia.

Father Chalvet, whom I met, would be astonished if Father Bonnafoux had hidden anything important from the community about Joannès Rivoire's actions. This is the sort of thing that was always discussed at the community's general council. The minutes of the general council meetings must be sent to the General House in Rome. They should contain everything that's important. I had the opportunity to examine these archives in Marseille and Rome and found nothing about Joannès Rivoire's reprehensible conduct.

Father George Laudin (1993-96) became provincial of France when the three existing provinces merged. Father Maxime Chaigne was provincial from 1996 to 2002. Father Bernard Dullier was provincial from 2002 to 2008.

Father Bernard Dullier, whom I met in Marseille, testifies to the provincial chapter's dismay at the 2013 announcement.

The evidence I have gathered confirms that Fathers George Laudin (1993-1996) and Maxime Chaigne (1996-2002) were unaware of the complaints about Joannès Rivoire, whom they would have immediately denounced to the Provincial Council if necessary. The same is true of Provincial Bernard Dullier and Father Yves Chalvet (2008-2014). The latter, moreover, as soon as he learned of the accusations against Joannès Rivoire, immediately intervened and removed him from all pastoral missions and Oblate activities and denounced him to Rome. All these people are trustworthy. I believe in their complete good faith in this matter.

I believe that Father Jean-Pierre Bonnafoux was acting in good faith and that if he had known anything serious about Joannès Rivoire, he would have shared it and would never have appointed him to a position as moderator at Notre-Dame de Lumières or to any other ecclesiastical position. Joannès Rivoire's version of returning to France is to look after his elderly parents. This was one of the things he did. This is the version he shared with all his colleagues in France, and it's the one I'm keeping.

I conclude that Joannès Rivoire never informed Father Bonnafoux of his misconduct in Canada when he arrived in France in 1993. Nor did he mention them to his Oblate confrères over the years. No one in the Oblates in France knew or could have known.

Joannès Rivoire was appointed to Notre-Dame de Lumières in 1993 by Father Bonnafox. Notre-Dame de Lumières is a sanctuary where the Oblates organize pilgrimages, retreats and work in the parish sector. Joannès Rivoire was bursar and treasurer. He carried out his ministry everywhere with zeal and competence.

An Oblate was recently verbally abused after a sermon in which a Canadian citizen accused him of hiding Joannès Rivoire from the Canadian authorities. My investigation has shown me that this assertion is inaccurate. The Oblates have never hidden either Joannès Rivoire, his place of residence or his pastoral mission in France since his arrival in 1993. After 2013, they removed him from any pastoral mission and did everything in their power to convince him to travel to Canada to face Canadian justice and ordered him to do so.

Joannès Rivoire has always refused to submit to the demands of his superiors.

The Oblates have asked Rome to expel Joannès Rivoire from the Oblate community. His lawyer pleaded his advanced age, his state of health and the statute of limitations for the acts complained of.

The Superior General of the Oblates in Rome refused Provincial Vincent Gruber's request for dismissal. Joannès Rivoire is still a Catholic priest and a member of the Oblate community in France. In view of Rome's response, it is up to the provincial of France to deal with the situation in accordance with canon law.

Assigned to the Notre-Dame de Lumières residence in 2013 by Provincial Yves Chalvet, Joannès Rivoire received an obedience on Sept. 1, 2014, to the "Communauté des Aînés de Strasbourg" given the closure of Notre-Dame de Lumières. On Dec. 23, 2020, he received an obedience for the "établissement d'hébergement pour personnes âgées dépendantes" (EHPAD, a care facility for dependent elderly people) St-François in Lyon for health reasons. Joannès Rivoire holds no pastoral position in the Church or in the Oblate community.

In January 2023, following demonstrations by a group of people in front of the Lyon EHPAD demanding his extradition, and given the fear of the residents, it was decided to repatriate Joannès Rivoire to the Maison des Oblats in Lyon, where he could not benefit from the services reserved for residents of an EHPAD in France.

In September 2022, a delegation of Inuits travelled to the Oblate House in Lyon, where they were received by Provincial Vincent Gruber. A member of the delegation threatened the provincial:

"You have two days to get him on the plane, or you'll be criminally prosecuted."

A vexatious and pointless threat. The delegation had with them a plane ticket in the name of Joannès Rivoire. Members of the Canadian delegation met with Joannès Rivoire. The meeting was short-lived, with Joannès Rivoire denying any wrongdoing.

Obviously, no one knew that the charges brought against Joannès Rivoire by four plaintiffs in 1998 were dropped by the Canadian prosecutor.

In 2023, French activists asked the Oblates to force Joannès Rivoire to leave for Canada, or, at the very least, to put him out on the street. Provincial Gruber and Oblate Bertrand Evelin did their utmost to convince Joannès Rivoire to face Canadian justice. They almost

succeeded, but his lawyer suggested he do nothing about it, and he himself refuses to return to Canada and stand trial.

As for making him homeless, the provincial refuses to do so as a Frenchman and as an Oblate. A human being does not treat a human being as the militants demand. You don't correct one possible infamy with another infamy. Joannès Rivoire is fully supported by the French and Canadian states (pension and social care) and is lodged with the Oblates, who do not cover his living expenses. His family paid his lawyer, not the Oblates.

French activists I met by videoconference are convinced that Joannès Rivoire was exfiltrated from Canada with the complicity of the Oblates of Canada and France. They have no proof of this, "but everyone knows it," they say. If he's innocent, let him go to Canada.

My investigation, based on precise, verified facts, shows that this belief is erroneous.

These activists are not aware of the letter from the French minister of justice to the Oblate authorities refusing to extradite Joannès Rivoire under French law. This document does not seem confidential to me, and I decided to send them a copy. It contains the following information:

In a letter dated September 13, 2022, you drew my attention to France's refusal to extradite Joannès Rivoire, who is the subject of criminal proceedings in Canada for alleged sexual assault and rape of minors.

On April 29, 2022, the French Ministry of Justice received an extradition request from the Canadian authorities to hand over Joannès Rivoire, on the basis of the extradition agreement between the Government of the French Republic and the Government of Canada of November 17, 1988.

Rest assured that this situation has been examined with the utmost attention, given the seriousness of the charges against Mr. Rivoire. My services have maintained close contact with the Canadian authorities in the processing of this request.

Article 3.1 of the extradition agreement between our two countries stipulates that the requested State is not obliged to extradite its own nationals, and article 4.5 of the same agreement states that extradition cannot be granted when the statute of limitations has expired in the requested State.

After a meticulous analysis of the documents and additional information submitted by the Canadian authorities, it became clear that the acts referred to in the extradition request were time-barred under French criminal law. In the absence of any interruptive act, the statute of limitations for the public prosecution of the acts of which Joannès Rivoire was accused had expired on October 17, 1996.

The checks carried out also confirmed Mr Joannès Rivoire's French nationality. However, the legal provisions applicable under French law prohibit any extradition by France of one of its nationals.

I am aware of the emotion aroused by the charges against Mr. Joannès Rivoire and the disappointment resulting from the impossibility of extraditing him, an impossibility which nevertheless results from the application of the Extradition Convention by which Canada and France are bound, and the principles governing any extradition process under French law.

Last autumn, a delegation from the Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. association was received at the Ministry of Justice. We told them of France's commitment to the fight against sexual violence against minors but had to explain the constraints of French law that prevent the extradition of Father Rivoire, while understanding their disappointment.

(s) Éric Dupont-Moretti

Minister of Justice

Garde des Sceaux

These activists are putting pressure on the French state to change the law. I'm being asked to say that France's policy is inappropriate. It's certainly not up to a Canadian judge, a retired one at that, to tell the French government how to administer its laws. That's not part of my mandate. All I can say is that Canadian criminal and civil law is different from French law.

I reminded these activists that Joannès Rivoire does not live "off the breadline" of the Oblate community as they claim, but off his Canadian government pension and French government social benefits. The Oblates do not cover his expenses.

They told me that the reason they demonstrated outside the EHPAD in Lyon was to alert public opinion. They also demonstrated in front of the Oblate house in Lyon where he lives. They said, We want him extradited, and we'll use every means at our disposal to achieve this.

12. INTERVIEW WITH JOANNÈS RIVOIRE

I met Joannès Rivoire at length in his room at the Maison des Oblats in Lyon in April 2023.

“I didn’t leave Canada in 1993 either as a matter of urgency or at the request of my superiors. I came back because my mother had just died, and my sick father needed me. When I arrived, I took steps to help him and find him a home for the elderly. I didn’t know if I would return to the Far North. After a sabbatical in France, I was 63 and tired, so I decided not to go back.”

“I arrived in Chesterfield Inlet in 1959 and was assigned to Igloolik in 1960 (1960-1964). I lived with Father Fournier for a while and then I was on my own. Then I went to Naujaat (formerly Repulse Bay from 1965 to 1973) and then to Arviat (formerly Eskimo Point from 1974-1993). They called me Atta Atta Rivoire in Inuit.”

“At the 2022 delegation meeting, I met two delegates alone. We speak English and Inuit (he says Eskimo). I also met a plaintiff who tells me I assaulted him. I ask him, ‘What have I done to you?’ He loses his temper, starts screaming, bursts into tears and leaves the room. A woman also comes to see me and tells me that I attacked her father, who was driven to suicide. She loses her temper, screams and leaves the room. I didn’t recognize these people.”

“Another woman told me that I used to masturbate while fondling her when I was in Rankin Inlet between 1968-70. I’ve never been to Rankin Inlet and, at that time, I was in Igloolik. I couldn’t answer her because she screamed and left. I never did that.”

“I’ve never molested a child, but I admit to having had a sexual relationship with an Inuit woman of full age who came to me waving a packet of condoms. I think these people may be trying to get money out of the Oblates, given the current situation of sexual abuse.”

“I came back to France to rest and see my family every two or three years. Maybe after five years the first time. We didn’t ask anyone’s permission, that was the custom. In any case, the provincial was hundreds of kilometres from my mission, and he knew that all missionaries took a break in this way. We let him know without any further formality.”

“We were sent there with a basic medical kit, and I was supposed to treat the people who came to see me. It’s true that I had to look at men and women who were complaining of various ailments, and I would call a doctor who was two hundred kilometres away and who would tell me what to do.”

“I’m not completely innocent, nobody’s perfect, but I haven’t done anything with children. I was talking about a sexual relationship with a woman. No ambiguous

gestures. In all conscience, I did not fondle children. What have I done? I say it again and nobody tells me anything.”

“A mission had been built and we were alone there. On Sundays, there was mass. We drew a curtain and there was the altar. Afterwards, the curtain was removed, and the room was used as a meeting place. There was also a fur-trading post, and we were often together. They were nomads, living in igloos in winter and tents in summer. There were no roads. We didn’t move from village to village. If there was a birth, we travelled by dog sled, but over short distances.”

“When they started building villages, the Eskimos started drinking. It became a problem. In the mission, it was a small community of no more than a hundred people, but since they were nomads, it always varied.”

“In the beginning, a ship would come by once a year and supply the mission. I hunted for food. There was a room or two in the mission and a big common room and nothing else. I lived there.”

“There were rumours about me. There were rumours about everyone, but I left because of my family. My mother had died, and I had to take care of my father. I was entitled to return to the country every three years. I did it several times. I didn’t come back after 1993 because I’d been there for thirty years, and I was tired. It was possible for me to come back, but I decided not to.”

“I loved my time in Canada. It was a hard life. The house had to be heated. A boat came once a year to supply the mission. Later, when they built the village, they came by plane and supplies were more frequent, but you had to hunt if you wanted to eat. We ate raw and frozen meat. We were close to the water, to the river. The Eskimos also travelled by river.”

“Every evening, we’d get on the radio and chat with Oblates from other missions. It was the only way we could meet. It was a monastic life. I joined when I was thirty, it was a late vocation, and I left when I was 63-64.”

“My health is poor. I just had a urinary catheter put in last week. I spend my time at the computer and studying.”

This interview confirms my conclusion that, on his arrival in France in 1993, Joannès Rivoire gave as his sole reason for returning a sabbatical year made compulsory for the care of his elderly parents, and that he never referred to any culpable action with the possible exception of a breach of his vow of celibacy with a consenting adult woman.

This was the same version he had given to his Canadian superior, to his Canadian colleagues when he left Canada, to his French superior when he arrived in 1993, and to his French colleagues thereafter.

13. CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS RELATING TO JOANNÈS RIVOIRE

After investigation, I can establish the chronology of events surrounding the Joannès Rivoire affair as follows:

13.1 French period

- 03/20/1931** Birth in Rontalon, Rhône, France.
- 1950-1952** Philosophate at the Séminaire St-Joseph de Lyon.
- 1953-1959** Theology at the Oblate scholasticate in Solignac (Haute-Vienne).
- 08/09/1958** First vows in La Brosse-Montceaux (Seine-et-Marne).
- 08/09/1958** Perpetual vows in Solignac.
- 28/12/1958** Vows of ordination in Mornant (Rhône).

13.2 Canadian period

- May 1959** Arrival in Canada at Chesterfield Inlet for a three-month stay.
- 01/09/1959** Study of English in Arnprior, Ont.
- 1960-1964** Mission to Igloodik, Nunavut, with pastoral visits to Hall Beach.
- 1965-1973** Mission to Naujaat (formerly Repulse Bay).
- 1967** Acquisition of Canadian citizenship certificate.
- 1974-1993** Mission to Arviat (formerly Eskimo Point) with pastoral visits to Whale Cove.
- 22/02/1987** First three-year term as superior of the Hudson's Bay delegation.
- 1987-1988** Sabbatical year in Lyon.
- 2002/17/1990** Second three-year term as superior of the Hudson's Bay delegation.
- Autumn '92** Delegate to the Oblate chapter, after which he announced to his superiors he was taking a sabbatical year in France to care for his elderly parents.
- 13/01/1993** Letter from Joannès Rivoire to Extended Health Benefits informing of his departure from Canada and his new address in France.
- 01/16/1993** Departure for France.

13.3 Second French period

- 01/16/1993** Departure from Manitoba for France to spend a sabbatical year with his father in Rontalon (and with the Oblates in Lyon-Choulans), caring for his

elderly parents. He spent a few months helping his family and looking after the family farm.

- 18/07/1993** Obedience for Notre-Dame de Lumières (Goult-Vaucluse) by the provincial of France-Midi.
- 06/08/1993** Officially loaned to the Province of France Midi for two years (evaluation to follow) for a sabbatical year.
- 05/10/1995** Two-year extension of the loan to the Province of France-Midi.
- 29/12/1998** Swearing in of four complaints by the RCMP and filing of an indictment with the Nunavut Court. Issuance of an arrest warrant by the Nunavut Court for Joannès Rivoire.
- This document and the entire file are subject to a court-imposed publication ban. No one has been informed of these confidential proceedings.
- 2000-2009** Treasurer of the Oblate community of France.
- 06/07/2004** Obedience for the Province of France by the Superior General at the Communauté Notre-Dame de Lumières in Goult, France.
- 11/29/2013** The Oblates of France learn that an arrest warrant has been issued in Canada for Joannès Rivoire.
- 05/12/2013** Meeting with the provincial of France and Joannès Rivoire to get his version of events.
- 12/26/2013** Denunciation of the situation by Provincial Yves Chalvet to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome.
- 04/02/2013** Response from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to the Provincial of France.
- 10/02/2014** Decree of the provincial of France, Yves Chalvet, against Joannès Rivoire forbidding him any public ministry and requiring him to remain at the Oblate community of Notre-Dame de Lumières in Goult, France. This prudential order was to remain in force until the end of the civil proceedings in Canada.
- 01/09/2014** Closure, due to lack of resources, of the Notre-Dame de Lumières community and obedience of Joannès Rivoire to the Oblate community of Strasbourg.
- 04/10/2017** The Public Prosecution Service of Canada (PPSC) concludes that there is no longer a reasonable prospect of conviction for the sexual charges Mr. Rivoire was facing. The Crown suspends the charges against him.
- The Crown has one year to resume proceedings, which it does not do.
- 09/04/2018** Letter from the provincial of France to the public prosecutor at the Strasbourg Tribunal de Grande Instance of Joannès Rivoire's arrival at the Oblate community of Strasbourg.

- 04/10/2018** The four charges brought against Joannès Rivoire on Dec. 29, 1998, have been dropped and he can no longer be prosecuted for these criminal acts under Canadian law.
- 23/12/2020** Obedience at EHPAD St-François d'Assise in Lyon for health reasons.
- 04/29/2021** French extradition request for Joannès Rivoire to Canada for trial.
- 07/25/2021** Letter from a Canadian MP to the French minister of justice requesting the extradition of Joannès Rivoire to Canada.
- 08/09/2021** Plaintiff #5 meets an RCMP officer for the first time and alleges that Joannès Rivoire committed acts against him between 1974 and 1979 in Arviat and Whale Cove.
- 23/02/2022** Swearing in of a complaint by the RCMP and filing of an indictment with the Nunavut Court of Justice regarding a sexual assault against a minor that allegedly occurred between 1974 and 1979 in Arviat and Whale Cove, Nunavut.
- On the same date, the Nunavut court issues an arrest warrant for Joannès Rivoire in connection with this complaint. Both documents are subject to a publication ban issued by the court and will never be served on Joannès Rivoire or the Oblate authorities in Canada and France.
- 09/13/2022** Extradition request for Joannès Rivoire from the Canadian government to the French ministry of justice.
- 09/13/2022** Letter from three Oblate provincials to the French minister of justice requesting the extradition of Joannès Rivoire.
- 07/02/2023** Letter from the French minister of justice and keeper of the seals to the provincial of France refusing the extradition of Joannès Rivoire, explaining that the laws of the republic forbade it.

14. HANDLING COMPLAINTS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

14.1 Existing texts

The Oblate authorities in Nunavut and the Diocese of Churchill-Hudson Bay whom I met during my investigation acknowledge that, prior to the publication of “From Pain to Hope,” there was no clearly defined policy for handling complaints of sexual abuse in Nunavut. Each case was treated individually.

In June 1992, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) produced the report “From Pain to Hope.” This report was produced by an ad hoc committee set up by the CCCB on child sexual abuse in the Church.

The foreword includes the following words:

“We acknowledge that media headlines, incriminating priests or religious as the actual or presumed perpetrators of sexual offences against children, have been the source of very real suffering. In our opinion, the Catholic Church in Canada has lived through truly difficult times as we confronted the numerous accusations of reprehensible conduct on the part of some of its ministers. In the eyes of a good number of our fellow citizens, the Church has lost a great deal of credibility over the past few years due to these scandals and the suspicion that there were attempts to conceal these intolerable acts.

Yet, these disheartening facts did not weaken our determination to assume our responsibilities and, with integrity, take up the task entrusted to us. We were asked to propose ways and means to deal effectively with the results of the sexual scandals that have affected our Church, and ways and means to prevent recurrences of sexual abuse of children. Our Christian faith teaches us that hope, and life can arise out of pain and suffering. Saint Augustine was bold enough to say that even sin itself might, retrospectively, become an unforeseen occasion of grace.”

The committee issued a series of recommendations to serve as a guide for Canadian Catholic dioceses and religious communities handling complaints involving priests and religious on pastoral missions. The Oblates and the Diocese of Churchill-Hudson Bay received a copy in the fall of 1992. This report was a prelude to a series of policies for handling complaints of abuse of children and vulnerable persons by Catholic religious.

On April 30, 2008, OMI Lacombe Canada adopted the document “Policy and Procedures for Cases of Alleged Misconduct,” which set out the steps to be taken by Oblate authorities when the conduct of an Oblate is called into question in the community where he is a missionary.

This was followed by a series of directives on the subject over the years, culminating in a document from December 2022 that summarizes the current policy of the Oblates of OMI

Lacombe Canada entitled “Exercising Responsibility in Our Ministry: Safeguarding Minors & Vulnerable Persons,” which can be found on the OMI Lacombe Canada website⁸.

The preface to this document sets the tone for current Oblate thinking on the issue:

“The sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable persons is a serious crime in society and in the Church. OMI Lacombe Canada unites with all persons of good will to eliminate this grave and evil misconduct.

On 20 August 2018, in a “Letter to the People of God,” Pope Francis addressed sexual abuse in a candid fashion:”

« If one member suffers, all suffer together with it » (1 Cor 12:26). These words of Saint Paul forcefully echo in my heart as I acknowledge once more the suffering endured by many minors due to sexual abuse, the abuse of power and the abuse of conscience perpetrated by a significant number of clerics and consecrated persons. Crimes that inflict deep wounds of pain and powerlessness, primarily among the victims, but also in their family members and in the larger community of believers and nonbelievers alike. Looking back to the past, no effort to beg pardon and to seek to repair the harm done will ever be sufficient. Looking ahead to the future, no effort must be spared to create a culture able to prevent such situations from happening, but also to prevent the possibility of their being covered up and perpetuated. The pain of the victims and their families is also our pain, and so it is urgent that we once more reaffirm our commitment to ensure the protection of minors and of vulnerable adults. »

This protocol for dealing with complaints or allegations of misconduct mirrors that found in most Catholic dioceses in Canada and France. It is comprehensive and, if applied rigorously, is sufficient to deal with complaints in both Nunavut and Canada. Everything is covered, from prevention to denunciation to intervention by the authorities to whom the complaint has been reported. I have nothing to add.

It’s obvious that in the years from 1960 to 1993, when Joannès Rivoire was on mission in Canada, such a document and such a daily preoccupation did not exist. Just as it’s obvious that in the Church and in the civil community at that time, “we didn't talk about these things.” As I pointed out with sadness, children who wanted to talk about sexual assault to their parents or any member of the Nunavut community at the time could not do so. The same reality existed in other parts of the country.

In Nunavut, it took the courage of some Inuit whistleblowers to change things.

There is no need to repeat here the entire protocol implemented by the Oblates in Canada. As I have said, if it is correctly applied, and if all members of the religious and civil

⁸ <https://omilacombe.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Exercising-Responsibility-in-our-Ministry-Safeguarding-Children-Vulnerable-Persons-June-17-2021-FINAL.pdf>

community adhere to it, cases like that of Joannès Rivoire cannot be repeated without consequences.

But this is no miracle cure. Sexual abuse of children and vulnerable people will cease if the entire human community feels challenged by this infamy. If everyone involved refuses to remain silent about the abuse they witness. If, above all, abusers recognize the pain and after-effects their actions cause children, admit their crimes and their consequences, and accept psychological help.

It's a battle that must be fought again and again. Starting with the religious community, some of whose members are failing in their mission and the message they are charged with spreading. I have seen nothing sadder, during this investigation, than meeting people of faith who have lost their faith because of the criminal actions of those who were charged with bringing a message of love.

The reader who wishes will have access to two excellent documents produced by the Archdiocese of Gatineau entitled "A guide for creating a safe environment — For the sake of the little one, ...Protect minor and vulnerable adults", as well as "Management of an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor in a context ecclesial." The reader will be able to find these documents on the archdiocese website⁹. They could constitute an interesting complement to the Oblate text.

14.2 The Relationship between Missionary Oblates and the diocese

Finally, I recommend greater communication between Oblate authorities and the Diocese of Churchill-Hudson Bay in the appointment of Oblate missionaries to the various missions in Nunavut. Most dioceses in Canada use the "Testimonial Letter regarding the suitability of a Cleric," which presents the bishop with a priest who will be called to work in the diocese. It reads as follows:

After presenting the priest, the Provincial must affirm to the Bishop:

After examining his personnel file in our diocese, after due consultation with his collaborators in ministry, and with all my personal knowledge, I give my assurance that Father (*name*):

- 1. Has never incurred any canonical penalty;**
- 2. Has never been accused or pronounced guilty, in any place, of a criminal act or an omission therefore that may be considered as an infringement (cf. Revised Laws of Canada, 1985, C-45);**
- 3. Has never shown unlikely behaviour against minors or adults;**

⁹ Source : Gatineau Diocese Website

https://www.diocesegatineau.org/sn_uploads/fck/Guide_for_the_Protection_of_minors_and_vulnerable_persons_English_translation_October_19_2022.pdf

And

https://www.diocesegatineau.org/sn_uploads/fck/Abridged_version_of_protocol.pdf

4. Has never been involved in an incident that would put into question his aptitude or his ministerial responsibilities due to abuse of alcohol, drugs or similar causes;
5. Has no adverse physical or mental condition that will have a negative effect on his priestly ministry;
6. Has no difficulty with regards to the management of his personal finances.

I hereby give my assurance that Father (*name*) has a good moral character and reputation and has the required qualities needed in his priestly ministry in the Archdiocese of¹⁰

Similarly, the diocese could use this form for any priest leaving the diocese to take up a position outside the Churchill-Hudson Bay diocese, if this is not already the case. Such a form, used today, would not allow an Oblate leader to recommend Joannès Rivoire for any clerical position in the Church.

¹⁰ The proposed model has been kindly provided by the Catholic Archdiocese of Montreal

15. DISCUSSION

Throughout my work, I acted as a judge would behave in court. I relied on precise, serious and concordant facts to arrive at conclusions based on testimony and documents that had a satisfactory degree of proof. Regarding the reputation of individuals and institutions, I discarded hearsay, public rumour, and focused only on what I considered to be preponderantly proven. As far as the victims were concerned, I tried to act with empathy, welcoming, listening and all the humanity that circumstances demanded.

The conclusions I reach in Chapters 15 and 16 are based on the “preponderance of evidence” gathered during this investigation, not on “proof beyond a reasonable doubt.” In no way do I wish to substitute myself for the decision of a judge or jury who would have to rule on the innocence or guilt of Joannès Rivoire during a criminal trial.

Joannès Rivoire arrived in Canada at the end of 1959 as a missionary in Nunavut. From 1960 to 1993, he oversaw various missions and villages. He left Canada on Jan. 16, 1993.

In 1968-1970, he consulted a lawyer in Edmonton following rumours about his behaviour. The case was never pursued, and no complaint was ever filed against him. There is no evidence that he ever shared this episode with his Oblate superiors or anyone else.

My investigation shows conclusively that Joannès Rivoire sexually abused under-age children while working as a mission leader in Naujaat (formerly Repulse Bay), Nunavut, during 1968 and 1970.

I also conclude that he sexually assaulted a minor child in Arviat and Whale Cove, Nunavut, between 1974 and 1979.

The victims, as is very often the case, and without any blame being attached to them, never spoke of these assaults at the time they occurred. The victims were children. This “kind of thing” was not talked about, either with the parents, or with the authorities of any kind, especially as the aggressor represented the authority. Unfortunately, the evidence shows that abused children could not find comfort with their parents, who would not have believed their distress. This is certainly not a reproach, but an observation made by the victims themselves.

In autumn 1992, Joannès Rivoire was delegated to his community’s General Chapter and would not be returning to his mission in Arviat, Nunavut. He informed his provincial superior, Father Alain Piché, of his intention to take a sabbatical in France to care for his elderly parents. The motive is true, at least in part, and his superior had no reason to doubt it. Moreover, at a contemporary period, his mother died, and his severely diminished father was placed in a care facility by his son Joannès Rivoire, who had returned to France.

On Jan. 13, 1993, Joannès Rivoire sent a letter to the Department of Health of the Government of Canada informing them of his sabbatical leave in France. He picked up his personal belongings at the Arviat mission and left Canada on Jan. 16, 1993, for Rontalon, France, at his father’s residence. The leave was for a period of two years.

At the beginning of 1993, it seems that rumours were circulating in Nunavut about Joannès Rivoire’s moral attitude, although neither the origin nor the certainty can be ascertained. After his departure for France at the end of January and February 1993, four people went

to the local Nunavut RCMP station and filed complaints of sexual assault against Joannès Rivoire.

It wasn't until Dec. 29, 1998, almost six years later, that sworn statements by an RCMP officer were filed with the Nunavut Court, and four indictments were issued against Joannès Rivoire. On the same day, an arrest warrant was issued by the tribunal against Joannès Rivoire. Joannès Rivoire will never be served with these proceedings.

These proceedings were set aside for many years by the Crown prosecutor representing the prosecution and dropped by the prosecution in October 2018.

In 2022, a new complaint was lodged against Joannès Rivoire.

Since Joannès Rivoire has always denied, and still denies, any sexual assault on children, he obviously never informed his Oblate superiors. In fact, it's safe to assume that before the story broke in the newspapers in November 2013, he had no knowledge of the acts of which he was accused by the Canadian justice system, since a publication ban had been imposed on the contents of the file and he was never notified of the proceedings. A publication ban is the rule in Canadian criminal law when the alleged victim is a minor.

He may have alluded to certain rumours, those of 1968-70 or more recent ones, but I have been unable to find any evidence of this either in all the testimonies heard or in the archives. In any case, as I pointed out, if he referred to anything, it was to deny its veracity.

I can affirm that the good faith and sincerity of Father Alain Piché, provincial of the Oblates in Manitoba in 1993, and of the bishop of the diocese at the time, were amply demonstrated in the events surrounding Joannès Rivoire's departure for France. There was never any question of encouraging his escape to France, nor of hiding any scandal. The facts show that when a complaint reached the bishop, it was immediately referred to the diocesan lawyer for investigation and consideration.

I have carefully studied the testimonies and contemporary archives, and I am convinced that Father Piché, his fellow Oblates and the diocesan bishop would have denounced Joannès Rivoire had they known of his abuses and/or the criminal proceedings that followed his departure for France. They had to do so in other circumstances and did so. The legal proceedings were issued in December 1998 by the Nunavut Court, and the religious authorities could not have known about them in 1993.

Needless to say, the missionaries' work in Nunavut was solitary, in remote villages where life was harsh and demanding. This isolation, among a largely nomadic population, may unfortunately have served to conceal reprehensible acts by Joannès Rivoire.

When he returned to France on Jan. 16, 1993, he didn't tell anyone about the rumours of 1968-70, nor about other rumours of which he may subsequently have been aware, if they existed. After helping on the family farm and seeing to his father's placement in a suitable residence, he received an obedience to the Sanctuaire Notre-Dame de Lumières, an institution administered by the Oblates, from the provincial of the Province of the South of France, Father Jean-Pierre Bonnafoux.

I was unable to meet Father Bonnafoux, who is still alive but intellectually incapable of receiving me due to dementia. I have met many of Father Bonnafoux's colleagues and can confirm that if he had known of the abuses of which Joannès Rivoire is accused, he would

have denounced them to the Oblate authorities and would not have entrusted him with a pastoral mandate. My study shows that Father Bonnafoux always stood up for the victims and denounced any deviant behavior when he witnessed it.

The Notre-Dame de Lumières seniors community partially closed its doors in 2014, due to a lack of resources, and Joannès Rivoire received an obedience at the Maison des Aînés in Strasbourg and then at the EHPAD St-François in Lyon. He is currently housed at the Maison des Oblats in Lyon, after protests drove him out of the EHPAD St-François d'Assise in Lyon.

My study shows that from 1993, when he arrived in France, to 2013, Joannès Rivoire's behaviour was beyond reproach. Respected by his colleagues, dedicated and respectful of the people and tasks entrusted to him, he has not elicited the slightest negative comment from French citizens, colleagues or anyone else since his arrival in France.

In November 2013, the Oblates in France learned from the newspapers that Joannès Rivoire was wanted in Canada on criminal charges. The Oblate leaders and confrères I met were appalled. They could never have believed their confrère guilty of such acts. His immediate superior, Provincial Yves Chalvet, immediately denounced the situation to Rome and suspended Joannès Rivoire from all ecclesiastical missions after meeting him.

Since 2013, Joannès Rivoire has been meeting his own expenses. It should be remembered that he receives a pension from the Canadian government for the twenty-five years he has worked in Canada, and equivalent assistance from the French government like any other worker in that country. He is housed at his own expense at the Maison des Oblats in Lyon. He is now 92 years old and does not take on any ecclesiastical mission.

The Oblates of France have repeatedly asked the French government since 2013 to force Joannès Rivoire to return to Canada so that he can answer the charges against him. The Oblates, and particularly Father Vincent Gruber, provincial of the Oblates of France and immediate superior, has requested and ordered Joannès Rivoire to travel to Canada to answer to Canadian justice. To no avail.

A lawyer instructed by Joannès Rivoire's brother made representations opposing his extradition, reiterating that his client was innocent of the charges brought against him by the Canadian justice system. He rightly pointed out that, under Canadian criminal law, Joannès Rivoire is presumed innocent of the crimes of which he is accused until a court hears and convicts him.

Need I remind you of what my investigation showed, and which obviously no one knew about then and doesn't know today, that the charges brought against Joannès Rivoire in December 1998 by four plaintiffs were dropped by the Canadian Crown prosecutor in 2018.

On Feb. 7, 2023, urged by the Oblate authorities to intervene to obtain Joannès Rivoire's extradition, the French minister of justice and keeper of the seals sent the Oblate authorities a letter in which he refused to extradite Joannès Rivoire, as French law did not allow him to do so.

I conclude from the long exercise of studying, listening to witnesses and examining all available archives on two continents that the preponderant evidence shows that:

1. 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.
2. I don't believe the version of events he gave me when we met in the spring of 2023 in Lyon, France.
3. He left Canada hiding this terrible reality from his Oblate superiors and the bishop of the Churchill-Hudson Bay diocese, preferring to tell the true but incomplete story of his filial obligation to his ailing parents.
4. The Oblates in Canada and the ecclesiastical authorities in Nunavut neither concealed nor organized Joannès Rivoire's "flight" from Canada to France in 1993, and they too were victims of his duplicity and prevarication.
5. The Oblates in France were unaware that Joannès Rivoire was wanted by the Canadian justice system when he arrived in France on sabbatical in 1993, and therefore never participated in his "flight" from Canada, nor did they hide him from judicial responsibility.
6. Given the publication ban issued by the Canadian court, no one was notified of the charges brought against Joannès Rivoire in December 1998.
7. Joannès Rivoire hid his criminal past in Canada from his Oblate superiors in France.
8. The Oblates in France only learned on Nov. 29, 2013, that Canadian justice was seeking Joannès Rivoire to stand trial in Canada. They did everything in their power to ensure that he returned to Canada to stand trial or be extradited by the competent authority. Joannès Rivoire failed to obey the instructions of his Oblate superiors, and the French government refused to extradite him.
9. As soon as they learned of the Canadian proceedings, the Oblate authorities in France removed Joannès Rivoire from any ecclesiastical mission on French territory and from any function in the Oblate community.

16. CONCLUSION

Some of the people I met during my investigation are convinced that Joannès Rivoire's departure on Jan. 16, 1993, was planned with the complicity of the Oblates of Nunavut and France, in order to hide him from the Canadian justice system.

My investigation, based on serious, precise and concordant facts and testimony, and on meticulous research and study of archives in both Canada and France, leads me to irreparably different conclusions.

I say this with great respect for the opposing opinion, but the truth is much simpler if we look at the facts.

Joannès Rivoire did not tell the whole truth to his superiors, to his confrères, to the Inuit for whom he had pastoral responsibility, and he himself denies a reality that has nevertheless been demonstrated. He told Father Chalvet in 2013, who had just learned that a warrant had been issued for his arrest in Canada:

"I'm not innocent, and the touching I'm accused of having done on Eskimos is of varying degrees. In the Eskimo environment, the children were looking for tenderness that they didn't have in their families. If I'm not innocent, the children aren't either, but we don't say so. For years, we were 'carers' long before nurses. It's true that I'm not innocent, but allegations of sexual assaults on minors are a fabrication. That's why I came back to France in the first place (allegations and rumours of sexual assault)."

The last excuse an adult can use for sexually abusing children is to claim that the children accepted or wanted the abuse. This excuse is odious, because it shifts onto the victims' part of the responsibility that lies exclusively with the adult.

Joannès Rivoire's disclosure to Father Chalvet 20 years after his departure from Canada is the first time he admits that there were allegations against him in 1968-70, for which he had consulted a lawyer, and that he is "not innocent of the touching I am accused of having practiced on 'Eskimos.'"

If he had spoken honestly to his superiors or colleagues at the time, he could have faced up to his responsibilities and possibly received appropriate psychological help. He is the first and only person responsible for the mess that ensued.

It is possible, though I have not been able to prove it, that rumours circulated in the Inuit community in late 1992 about possible assaults by Joannès Rivoire. He chose the convenient, if truthful, means of helping his ailing parents as his reason for leaving Canada. He didn't tell the whole story.

The evidence I have gathered overwhelmingly demonstrates that Joannès Rivoire sexually assaulted four Inuit children between 1968 and 1970 in Naujaat and another Inuit child in Arviat between 1974 and 1979.

I've also seen evidence of another minor Inuit victim in Naujaat around 1968-70, for whom no complaint was ever filed.

The evidence gathered during all these months of investigation convinces me that, when he left on Jan. 16, 1993, neither his Oblate superior nor the bishop of the Diocese of Churchill-Hudson Bay was aware of the suspicions hanging over Joannès Rivoire. Nor were the Oblate authorities in France aware of Joannès Rivoire's past. The Oblates in France, I repeat, were dismayed to learn that he was wanted in Canada. On learning of this, they immediately reacted by removing him from priestly ministry and from any responsibility in the Oblate community in France.

The Inuit of Nunavut complained about the lack of consideration they received from RCMP authorities after their complaints in January and February 1993. It's hard to prove them wrong when we learn today that the RCMP didn't act on these complaints until December 1998, almost six years after they were made. Had these complaints been brought before the court in 1993, it is possible to believe that Joannès Rivoire would have returned to Nunavut to face Canadian justice. He probably could have been persuaded to do so.

It is important to remember that the proceedings finally instituted in 1998 were never served on either the Oblate authorities or Joannès Rivoire. They were abandoned in 2017 without the plaintiffs or their families being informed. It is no doubt through this report that they will learn that there is only one remaining valid complaint against Joannès Rivoire before the Nunavut court. Their dismay is understandable.

However, I must point out a reality that people who have never been to Nunavut should be aware of. Nunavut has a small population in an immense territory of over two million square kilometres. Nunavut's population ranged from 36,000 to 40,000 between 2016 and 2023. Today, the Diocese of Churchill-Hudson Bay has 17 parishes and missions for some 9,000 Catholics.

Many services are provided by volunteers, and we must be careful not to apply the same administrative criteria to Churchill, Winnipeg, Toronto or Montreal. This was even more true in 1960 or 1993 than it is today.

It's an illusion to think that when Joannès Rivoire left Nunavut, the means of communication and technology were the same as in the south of the country. It's worth pointing this out.

Nothing in my investigation calls into question the good faith of the Oblate authorities in Nunavut and France, nor that of the diocesan authorities. It is unfair to accuse them of having organized the escape and of having hidden Joannès Rivoire since January 1993. After a rigorous analysis of the facts and the available documentation, there is no evidence of this.

At the end of this demanding exercise, a feeling of incompleteness remains. My conclusion is that Joannès Rivoire was guilty of sexual abuse of Inuit children. I can affirm that the Oblates in France did everything in their power to convince him to return to Canada and answer for his actions. To no avail.

The Inuit delegation that visited Lyon in 2022 would have liked to bring Joannès Rivoire back to Canada. This was impossible. Forcing him to stand trial for the acts of which he is accused would have been a balm to the victims' wounds. An apology or acknowledgment on his part of the suffering he caused the victims could have started a much-needed healing process. This did not happen.

Joannès Rivoire remains a Catholic priest and a member of the Oblate community of France. I note that a priest remains a priest for life according to Catholic tradition. What is more difficult to understand is that the Oblate authorities in Rome rejected the request of the provincial of France to exclude Joannès Rivoire from the Oblate community of France.

The evangelist Matthew (Matthew 18: 4-6)

“Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

If anyone causes one of these little ones — those who believe in me — to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

The scandal for the plaintiffs is that Joannès Rivoire remains a religious despite all he has done. This is a reality the victims do not accept.

Joannès Rivoire’s advanced age, his physical condition and, above all, the fact that the acts of which he is accused are time-barred do not stand up to analysis any more than they respond to the teachings that Pope Francis has sought to inculcate regarding sexual abuse committed by a priest.

Joannès Rivoire refused to comply with his provincial’s order to travel voluntarily to Canada to stand trial when Canadian justice demanded his presence. This reason alone militates in favour of his exclusion from the community. I respectfully suggest that the Superior General of the Oblates in Rome review his decision and allow Joannès Rivoire to be excluded from the Oblate community in France. This would be a largely symbolic measure, since, as Father Vincent Gruber, then provincial of France, has stated, there is no question of throwing Joannès Rivoire out into the street. He could remain where he is, but outside the Oblate community.

A symbolic measure, but a balm for the victims’ wounds.

Perhaps the only one.