



About the Release of Names of Accused Clergy

Frequently Asked Questions

Do the Jesuits of Canada intend to release lists of priests credibly accused of sexual abuse?

The Jesuits of Canada have consulted with the American Jesuit Provinces and the auditors of many American Diocese over the past five years to discuss what the most appropriate and consistent response should be both in the United States and Canada. That conversation continues to this day.

The media have been widely reporting on the recent initiative to provide lists of “credibly accused” clergy, following the recommendations of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report.

We have listened to the voice of the victims of childhood sexual abuse in Canada. Lists that provide the public with information about these men are important to healing. It is the right thing for us to do in the promotion of institutional transparency and accountability.

The Jesuits in Canada intend to publish a list of credibly accused following an audit of both the Personnel and Provincial’s files, including personnel records, delegate and consultor’s files and correspondence with leadership.

The consolidation of files in preparation for this audit began in the fall of 2019 and is largely complete.

The auditors have been retained and set up with the necessary office space and equipment. It is anticipated that work will begin in earnest in January of 2020.

What are the criteria for the audit?

In our conversations with our counterparts in the United States, we learned that some of the American lists are comprised of individual clergy who were tried and convicted in criminal proceedings or were defendants in actions where compensation was paid based on civil jury verdicts. In other words, the lists are a consolidation of the names of individuals who were already known to the public.

Clergy who were deceased and unable to defend themselves or present their side of the story, are accordingly not represented in many of the American lists.

None of the Jesuits who were accused in civil proceedings to date had complaints of child sexual abuse made against them during their lifetime. It is a tragic consequence of the esteem

that clergy were held in, that victims did not come forward because of fear that they would not be believed, or that there would be reprisals.

It is intended that our list will feature the names of historic offenders whether they were dead or living at the time that complaints were brought forward against them. Rather than employ legalistic tests such “on the preponderance of evidence” the list will deal with allegations where it appears more likely than not that an offence occurred. Criteria that would be taken into consideration include cases where a Jesuit was accused by parishioners, civil authorities or other clergy, even if no charges or civil actions were ever forthcoming. It may also include plausible hearsay evidence that would not be considered in legal proceedings.

What information will be on this list?

The information that will eventually be published will include detailed information about the postings of an accused Jesuit and the years that they were in different communities. It will include date of birth, the year that an individual entered the Society of Jesus and the date that they left or passed away.

It will also include a detailed chronology of their whereabouts and assignments at any point in time.

The information published will enable communities and superiors in different locations to determine whether or not an offender was ever in their area, and what ministry or institution they were associated with.

The lists are a living document that will be updated as additional information is presented.

Who is conducting the audit?

The audit report is being commissioned from the King International Advisory Group, which provides independent compliance review services for many respected Canadian institutions.

They will have access to all Jesuit files involving accused clergy, whether or not they were convicted or deceased at the time of their accusations. No limitations have been placed on their access to information or conclusions.

Brian King, who will be directing the audit, is considered one of Canada’s foremost private investigators and has more than three decades of experience in carrying out independent internal reviews.

When will the list be released?

By January 2021 at the latest. Since the project entails the manual review and scanning of thousands of documents and a wider scope of reference than that of the United States, we are hopeful to be able to have an overview in place by the end of the first quarter of 2020.

It is anticipated that the audit will be completed by the third quarter of 2020 and that a preliminary version list can subsequently be published.

This date may be subject to change, if the work goes faster than expected.

Why are you beginning this process now? Why not sooner?

On August 1, 2018, the former Jesuit provinces of French and English Canada were “suppressed” by the Society of Jesus, and a new entity, the Jesuits of Canada was created in their place.

This refounding of the Jesuits in Canada has involved a great deal of administrative work over the past year, including the consolidation of old records, the creation of new policies and procedures, and the updating of older practices.

At the same time, the underlying causes that led to a culture of secrecy and cover-ups are deep and complex. Recent revelations about sexual abuse of minors by priests are leading the People of God rightly to desire greater accountability from the leadership of the Church. We are releasing this information to provide that kind of transparency. We view this disclosure as part of our commitment now to preventing abuse.

Once we are satisfied that our legal obligations have been met and our audit has been completed, we will release names. We wish to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information. In addition to integrity, we seek to act promptly and diligently.

How many Jesuits have been credibly accused of child sexual abuse since 1950?

At least 90 percent or more of the complaints that have been made against the Jesuits since 1958 pertain to the actions of two identified individuals: Fr. George Epoch and Br. Norman Hinton, both of whom were active in the Northern Missions of Ontario.

The complaints that involve the actions of Jesuits in the 1950’s relate almost exclusively to historic allegations arising from the actions of staff at the Spanish Indian Residential School. These claims were settled, and survivors were compensated under the Spanish Residential School Settlement Agreement.

One of the primary purposes of the audit is to come up with an accurate summary of credibly accused clergy that will enable the Jesuits to answer this question and publish a responding list.

How many complaints have the Jesuits had since 2000?

Since 2000, the Society of Jesus has had roughly 14 complaints in English Canada and 4 or 5 in French Canada. This includes boundary issues and allegations made against clergy from other nations who were visitors to the Canadian Provinces.

There have been no accusations of sexual abuse against minors in the past 25 years that did not involve historic allegations.

The Jesuits have recently been named as a defendant in a class action lawsuit in Northern Ontario alleging that there are additional individuals from the Wiikwemikoong First Nation who were not compensated in the two previous lawsuits which were settled in 1993 and 2004.

How will you ensure transparency and accountability in your handling of cases of abuse going forward?

The Jesuits of Canada Province has a zero-tolerance policy regarding instances of inappropriate conduct between a Jesuit and a minor. Our protocols have been in place for years. They include a comprehensive set of procedures for receiving and addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors. The policy also includes guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability, and prevention of future acts of abuse.

The policy was updated and made public this fall, and copies available. An online reference will soon be posted on the websites of the Jesuits of Canada. The most substantial development, compared to past policies, is the addition of texts aimed at defining and preventing sexual harassment, whether of adults or children, employees or parishioners.

It also includes strict procedures to bar from ministry anyone who is a danger to children, to reach out to victim-survivors and to hold accountable those who fail in their sacred duty to protect the vulnerable. However, the publication and implementation of such a policy is only a partial response to the crisis; a profound transformation is needed.

What steps has the Province taken to ensure that those who apply to become a member of the Society of Jesus are suitable for ministry?

Before a Jesuit is accepted as a novice, he undergoes in-depth screening, including psychosexual and social media screening, and an extensive criminal background check.

Our formation program fosters healthy development both in terms of the spiritual life of the Jesuit as well as his psychosexual health and well-being. Jesuits at every stage of their ministry and formation receive regular safe-environment training to promote ethical conduct in ministry and awareness and sensitivity of professional boundaries.

What else are the Jesuits of Canada doing to tackle the causes of this crisis?

The Jesuits of Canada are taking action at different levels. The goal is both to understand the breadth, depth and causes of this crisis and to take effective short-term and long-term measures that promote real transformation. This includes:

Listening and solidarity with victims. Over and above the judicial procedures, there is the issue of sincere and authentic reconciliation with the victims. Listening is about being attentive to the suffering of others, about entering into a process of responsibility and solidarity that ultimately leads to the conversion and transformation of attitudes, behaviours and structures that have made abuse possible and have refused to acknowledge the suffering and anguish of the victims. If we do not, then we will be tempted to relate to the victims, at worst, defensively or, at best, dispassionately, as an inconvenience to be endured. Yes, we must walk towards the future, but we must do it arm in arm with those who have been wounded.

Understanding the systemic causes of the crisis. Beyond individual cases, the crisis experienced within the ecclesial institution has brought to light the structural issues. The release last February of a reflection document on the tragedy of the abuse crisis, being used by Jesuits and lay colleagues across the country, aims to help local Jesuit communities and works engage in a process of conversion that explores the systemic causes, such as clericalism, a patriarchal

mentality, an obsession with institutional self-preservation and insensitivity to the suffering of victims, as well as other elements that promote a culture of abuse of power, cover ups and a lack of accountability.

Implementing changes. We're implementing changes at different stages, from the onboarding and formation of Jesuits in Canada to their work. The objective is to promote a profound reform of our way of doing things. These changes are rooted, for example, in ideals of equality, of greater participation of the laity in leadership positions, not only to prevent abuses, but also to promote a culture of transparency and accountability.

How can I report allegations of abuse by a Jesuit in Canada?

The Jesuits of Canada Province of the Society of Jesus takes allegations of sexual abuse seriously and will promptly and thoroughly investigate every allegation and complaint that is brought to its attention.

If you or someone you know has experienced abuse by a Jesuit, you are urged to report the incident to the appropriate law enforcement or child protection agency in the jurisdiction where it happened.

You may also contact the Jesuits of Canada Province by reaching out to William Blakeney, Delegate for allegations of misconduct at wblakeney@jesuits.org, or in writing to the Jesuits of Canada, 25 Jarry St W, Montreal, QC H2P 1S6.

We also report accusations involving a minor to law enforcement in the jurisdiction where the abuse occurred.