



Bishop Pierre-Olivier Tremblay OMI

Diocese of Hearst-Moosonee

Listen, Welcome, Act

February 14, 2024

Following the broadcast of *Radio-Canada's Enquête* program on March 2, 2023 on sexual abuse committed by priests in the diocese, I decided to reach out to people in all the Christian communities in our area. I have met many survivors of abuse, who have courageously allowed me to hear their stories.

Today, on this Ash Wednesday, I am speaking to all the communities of the Diocese of Hearst-Moosonee to help us better understand the experience of these people, to show solidarity with them and to propose ways forward for living, safe and responsible communities.

To this end, as your bishop, I want to share with you the actions that have been taken and propose others for the future.

Here are some of the things I have done: I have appointed a new bishop's delegate to receive complaints; I have removed from ministry priests against whom an allegation had been made; I have asked every parish to do a new criminal background check on every employee and volunteer; I have visited the communities of the diocese to receive your feedback. With lawyers, I am working to set up an out-of-court process to offer financial reparation to survivors who want it. We will soon be able to announce the appointment of a judge to preside over this process. Finally, through various communications, I have kept you abreast of what is being done.

I am convinced that reaching out to survivors of abuse, listening to them and leading them in prayer is the best way to honor God in this moment. In each of them, we find sacred ground, and there too God awaits us. Let us seek to rediscover our basic option of solidarity and compassion, to rebuild this world where there is so much pain and injury. Perhaps that is how we will respond to the mission of revealing and putting into practice God's love for all.

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I am not the same person, I am not the same bishop I was a year and a half ago, when I arrived in Hearst. Listening to the survivors touched, moved and transformed me. During those meetings, I asked for their forgiveness in the name of the Church. I do it again today, and I will do it again. It is important that I do so, without any expectations.

In closing, I invite us all to solidarity, compassion and prayer.

I now present the diocese's action plan for moving forward.

+ Pierre-Olivier Tremblay OMI

✠ Pierre-Olivier Tremblay OMI
Bishop of Hearst-Moosonee

PS: I encourage all those who may have been a victim or witness to abuse to come forward to the police or the diocese to Mona Comeau 705-362-4903 ext. 6 or cceshm@outlook.com to ensure those responsible may be subject to an investigation and held to account.



Bishop Pierre-Olivier Tremblay OMI

Diocese of Hearst-Moosonee

Action Plan

February 14, 2024

I address you, brothers and sisters, as your Bishop of Hearst-Moosonee. I pledge to continue to make a difference in our community, to help survivors obtain justice and reparation, to transform our ways and prevent further abuse. Thank you for your help in imagining and realizing new paths, because I don't have all the solutions and ideas. In the diocese, here is the action plan I want us to implement, or continue to implement. I am presenting it to you together with the priests of the diocese with whom I have already shared it. These are actions to repair, prevent, remember and build.

Restorative action

For the survivors who have suffered such great harm, we will continue to do all we can to support them in their quest for well-being:

- ◆ Be there to welcome them, meet them and listen to them, overcoming our discomforts and prejudices.
- ◆ Continue to work on the ethical settlement of lawsuits.
- ◆ Offer outside psychological help when needed.
- ◆ Set up self-help groups wherever needed.
- ◆ Identify, in collaboration with civil organizations, a local charity that helps victims of any abuse and works towards prevention. The diocese will provide financial support. Everyone can also consider supporting these organizations.

Action to prevent abuse

A crisis like the current one must never happen again. We will continue to make every effort to prevent abuse:

- ◆ Sanction, in accordance with the law, all priests, employees or volunteers who have committed abuses.
- ◆ Support the work of the bishop's delegate and the Healthy Environment Committee.
- ◆ Continue and strengthen criminal background checks for all priests, employees and volunteers working in the diocese.
- ◆ Improve our complaint intake protocols and procedures.
- ◆ Train stakeholders and communities to recognize and reduce all possible risks.
- ◆ Provide regular training on abuse and power dynamics for clergy and other pastoral workers. Do this in conjunction with other social and educational bodies.
- ◆ Provide in-depth training for seminarians and more consistent psychological support for future priests.
- ◆ Collaborate with other dioceses, communities or organizations to share and welcome best practices in abuse prevention.

Actions to raise awareness and preserve memory

I don't want the experience of the survivors to be forgotten. To this end, we will :

- ◆ Consult them to find the best way, at the Hearst Cathedral, to dedicate a place so that we don't forget what they went through, and to make us aware of the role we have to play. This action is not intended to make us feel guilty, but to be a call for us to remain open to them, to act differently and to do so over the long term.
- ◆ To study the possibility of celebrating a vigil of prayer and respect for survivors and their families. In general, I invite all of us who are believers to pray for them and their families.

Actions to build

We need to take action to build together a new way of living in the Church. Pope Francis is showing us the way with a worldwide process of consultation and discernment called the “synod”. I am convinced that this word, which means walking together, expresses the way forward. In communion with what’s happening around the world, we are going to take steps towards a more vibrant communion. Among other things, we will

- ◆ Support priests and church workers by giving them a healthy environment through our friendship and prayers.
- ◆ Support and revitalize all the forums for participation and consultation that already exist in the diocese: pastoral committees, economic affairs councils, presbyteral councils, etc.
- ◆ Create new spaces for participation and discernment: diocesan assembly, etc.
- ◆ Work at all levels for better collaboration between priests and laypeople, for a communion that respects each and every one.
- ◆ Do all we can to become a truly welcoming and inclusive community, open to the people of today.