

## Old residential school to be torn down in Île-à-la-Crosse

Survivors still waiting for compensation

By Katie Raskina, [CBC News](#) Posted: Sep 14, 2016 1:22 PM CT Last Updated: Sep 14, 2016 1:22 PM CT

An old residential school in Île-à-la-Crosse, Sask., where thousands of Métis children were abused and neglected from the 1880s to the mid 1970s, is set to be demolished in two weeks.

For the survivors who live in the village 60 kilometres southeast of Buffalo Narrows, the school is a constant reminder of the pain and trauma they experienced there.

Max Morin attended the school from 1956 to the early 1960s and is the former mayor of the village.

"The building has always been a reminder of what happened," he said. "It happened to pretty well all of us," he said when asked if he was abused at the school.

Morin said when he first went to the school, he was also told he had to stop speaking his native Cree language.

The residential school is located by the village's elementary school and high school. Morin said he drives by it on a daily basis.

In April, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Métis people are the responsibility of the federal government. Despite this ruling, the provincial and federal government continue to argue over who is responsible for providing compensation to the survivors who attended the school in Île-à-la-Crosse.

"It doesn't matter who was responsible," Morin said. "We were abused and a lot of them were sexually abused. I think the government has a responsibility to deal with it."

- [Unanimous ruling says Ottawa has jurisdiction over all indigenous people](#)

Survivors have been lobbying the government for over 10 years for compensation.

*'It doesn't matter who was responsible. We were abused and a lot of them were sexually abused. I think the government has a responsibility to deal with it.' - Max Morin, survivor who attended Île-à-la-Crosse school*

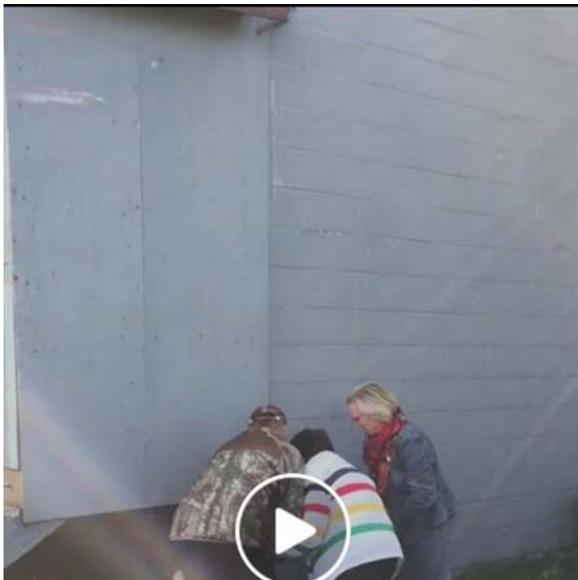
"We are trying to get the minister to not only identify a process but implement a process that leads to truth and reconciliation for all the survivors," Duane Favel, mayor of the village, said.

The Métis community brought their concerns to Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Carolyn Bennett when she was in La Loche in February.

Minister Bennett said she would visit the village and she fulfilled this promise last week. Bennett and two survivors participated in a symbolic demolition of the school.

The three of them together grasped a sledge hammer and hit a side of the building a few times. Survivors and family members of survivors came from all across western Canada to attend the ceremony and to

share their stories with the minister.



Morin got up to share his story.

"I am prepared to forgive the federal government and the church but you guys have to meet us halfway," he said he told Minister Bennett. "You can't continue blaming each other."

## Building became a rehab centre

The school was shut down in the mid 1970s and was later turned into an alcohol rehabilitation centre said Favel. He called this move "ironic".

"A lot of the people that were experiencing these addictions were the ones that actually attended this particular residential school," he said.

Favel said the treatment the survivors received there was not successful. The centre closed around six years ago. It has since been abandoned.

The village council voted on Monday night to tender out the land for demolition.

"It's an eyesore and certainly I think still triggers a lot of memories when survivors from Île-à-la-Crosse pass by."

## Two lawsuits filed

At the moment there are two separate class action lawsuits against the government that have been filed on behalf of the survivors who attended the school. Bennett's office said in an email that the government is aware of them.

"The government of Canada is committed to resolving these claims in a compassionate, respectful and fair manner," the email from the minister went on to say.

Favel said a resolution can't come any sooner.

"Untreated trauma trickles down to the family members, to generations," he said.

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