

## Statement by President Aluki Kotierk Regarding Rivoire

Press Club of Lyon, September 15, 2022

Today, I want to talk about courage and bravery, Inuit courage and bravery.

I will begin by acknowledging and honoring the late Marius Tungilik, who was the **first ever Inuk** to publicly disclose the criminal acts of sexual, physical and mental abuse committed against him as a young child into his youth. Thank you to his children, Jesse and Tanya Tungilik for being here with us today, and continuing your fathers fight to seek justice.

I also want to thank Steven Mapsalak, one of the first of a few Inuit to press charges against Johannes Rivoire, for also being here and brining strength and courage not only to our delegation here, but for Inuit everywhere.

I am imploring. France, it is now time to have the courage and be brave.

The abuse of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada is a French problem, not just a Canadian problem. I have no doubt that in the coming years, there will be other Indigenous Canadians traveling here to seek justice.

Yesterday, in the Oblate House, I was overwhelmed with the history shared between that building and Indigenous Canadians. The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, an order of Roman Catholics, was founded in France, and their first foreign mission was to Canada in 1841, a hundred and eighty-one years ago.

Roman Catholics established more than half of the 130 residential schools in Canada and most of these were opened and operated by the Oblates. The Kamloops Indian Residential School was opened by French Oblates in 1890.

In Naujaat, where Joannes Rivoire abused Marius Tungilik and Steve Mapsalak, the Oblate mission was established in 1933 by a French national. In comparison, the first permanent police presence, in Naujaat, was twenty years ago, in 2002.

Throughout this week, it has become clear to me that our shared history is a surprise to many French people. Canada's residential school history is also a story of France. There is much work needed in France for this to be understood.

In preparation for this trip, we expected French people to want justice. Rivoire is accused of raping six-year-old Inuit children! Our work in France is not done.

It takes a village to raise a child. Also, the opposite is true, it takes a village to harm a child. There have been and there continue to be many other people who participated in the protection of Rivoire.

We are not satisfied with the dismissal of Joannes Rivoire.

Inuit truth needs to be heard. Inuit deserve justice.

We have purchased a ticket for Joannes to travel to Canada with us. There is no barrier for him to returning to Canada to face charges in court.

The truth of Joannes actions is exposed. He can no longer live anonymously. For this, I turn to the survivors.

Steve, Rivoire was an adult. You were a child. You are so strong. You are not a victim anymore. You are a survivor.

Tanya and Jesse, I am so sorry your father died because of Rivoire. Your father's memory lives on, as the first to speak about Rivoire's abuse. You have carried out his legacy. You are survivors.

To the other survivors in Nunavut, you were children. You did nothing wrong. You are survivors.

Inuit held Rivoire to justice this week. Inuit have done more to hold Rivoire to justice than any government or religious organizations. It is now time for the Government of France, the Government of Canada and the Roman Catholics to step up and take action.