



KING
INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY GROUP

PRIVILEGED & CONFIDENTIAL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

King International Advisory Group

PERTAINING TO THE INVESTIGATION OF

FATHER LEON LAJOIE, S.J.
&
ST. FRANCIS-XAVIER MISSION

PREPARED FOR

Jesuits of Canada

at the request of

Father Erik Oland, S.J.

National Provincial

Your File | Father Leon Lajoie, S.J.

Our File | KGT210729-1 LAJOIE

February 28, 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

King International Advisory Group (“KIAG”) was retained on October 19, 2021 to conduct an independent third-party investigation into allegations of child sexual abuse by Father Leon Lajoie, S.J., a Catholic Jesuit Priest assigned to St. Francis-Xavier Mission located in Kahnawà:ke on the Kahnawà:ke First Nation reserve between the period of circa 1956-1990 at the request of the Jesuits of Canada (“Jesuits”).

This investigation commenced November 3, 2021 and the current phase of the investigation concluded February 25, 2022. A draft report was completed by KIAG and submitted on March 13, 2022 to the Jesuits. Due to the sensitive nature of the inquiry and the confidentiality of participants, we do not support the full report being disclosed publicly.

The report includes:

- An introduction
- Background on Father Leon Lajoie, S.J.
- Background history leading up to the discovery of the current allegations
- Details of KIAG’s engagement
- The scope of the investigation and methodology implemented
- Details on the known and discovered complainants and their allegations
- High level interview summaries
- Findings of KIAG investigators
- Summary details of selected witness interviews
- Additional noteworthy matters
- Executive summary of the findings

It should be noted that the investigation was brought to a conclusion on February 25, 2022 to allow for the high level details of the results of this investigation to be shared with members of the Kahnawà:ke community with respect to a community vote that is scheduled to take place regarding the unrelated matter of the exhumation of Father Lajoie’s remains from St. Francis-Xavier and repatriation to the Jesuit gravesite in St. Jerome, Quebec. It should be pointed out that KIAG takes no position, nor does it offer an opinion on this issue, nor was it considered during the course of our mandate.

The investigation was primarily conducted and overseen by Brian D. King, lead team member of KIAG. KIAG has conducted numerous third-party investigations of historical sexual abuse similar matters such as Human Rights complaints for various regulatory bodies, religious orders and similar organizations in the past.

The investigation process included but, was not necessarily limited to the following:

- Various consultations with the Jesuits of Canada and its delegate, William Blakeney
- Various consultations with the members of Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke, present and past members of St. Francis-Xavier Mission administration staff and church committee
- Extensive interviews of in-person and via video conference and by telephone of Kahnawà:ke community members
- Extensive review of all known documents from the archival records in the possession of the Jesuits of Canada¹
- Selected interviews with surviving Jesuits from the time period in question
- Interviews and attempts to interview identified alleged victims who were identified through media accounts and or who were identified to KIAG through the investigative process

The investigation took place between November 2, 2021 and February 25, 2022 with various attendances by KIAG's investigators to Kahnawà:ke. Where possibly we attempted to complete our interviews in person, however, it should be noted the period mentioned above was during extensive restrictions and lockdown measures in Quebec due to the COVID-19 pandemic and as such, several of the interviews had to be scheduled by video conference and telephone.

Prior to KIAG's engagement, no previous or current individual complainant had come forward directly to the Jesuits of Canada to make a formal complaint of abuse by Father Lajoie, S.J. The initial disclosure of the current allegations that gave rise to this investigation was primarily discovered through comments made during the extensive media coverage of the community protest group following the Kamloops announcement in May 2021 and through allegations presented through the designated spokesperson at the August 22, 2021 community meeting held at Kateri Hall that was attended by the Jesuit Delegate and Provincial Superior.

To assist in providing maximum exposure of the investigation to any potential complainant or community member wishing to participate in this investigation, the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke agreed to publicly announce through a news release, the details of this investigation being conducted by the Jesuits and provide various mediums for contact by the community with KIAG. This announcement was released on November 3, 2021. It was repeated through local newspaper and radio broadcasts. We feel confident

¹ KIAG was provided with complete access to archival documents contained within the possession of the Jesuits of Canada. This included several hundred pages of documents that were reviewed.

that the announcement by the MCK and local news media was broad enough in support that immediate members of the community were aware of the investigation and had sufficient contact information to reach out to KIAG should they desire to officially participate in the investigation.

A further news release by the MCK was posted on February 16, 2022 advising the community that the investigation by KIAG would be coming to a conclusion from the standpoint of our initial report on February 25, 2022² to allow for the findings to date to be shared with the community.

KIAG would like to point out that it was not directed or instructed in any form or manner during the course of this independent third party investigation by any of the potentially interested parties including the Jesuits of Canada, MCK or Church Administration Committee, etc. nor were we unduly influenced by any of these parties. For the most part, we were met with great kindness and assistance from the members of the Kahnawà:ke community that we did contact or who alternatively reached out to KIAG to provide input.

Several members of the Kahnawà:ke community were spoken to and in excess of 20 formal interviews were conducted from those individuals who had pertinent information to the investigation to share. The witnesses that participated included members of the Catholic and other Christian faiths, Traditional First Nation faith followers and non-faith practicing members of the community.

Investigation of alleged historical sexual assault can be a difficult undertaking, in particular when the activity is alleged to have occurred decades earlier.

The fact that a victim may not speak out as a child or during early adulthood and may choose to speak out in later adulthood and several years after an event, is not uncommon in matters of childhood abuse cases. Some may choose never to come forward. It has been reported that approximately 95% of sexual assault cases are not reported.

There are several reasons why an individual may not immediately report an allegation of abuse. Some of these include the fear of being ostracized by family members, members of the community, a feeling of shame, a fear of disrupting the lives of loved ones, the fear of being branded a liar, etc. It is KIAG's position that any allegation should be taken seriously and steps be taken that participants not be revictimized by speaking out. It is not uncommon for significant events happening later in an individual's life that trigger

² We have been advised by the Jesuits of Canada that this is not a mandated date by their organization for complainants to potentially come forward and it is for the benefit of this current report being submitted.

them to come forward. The media coverage of the Residential School children's graves could potentially be such an event.

Also, the possible deterioration of the psychological state of someone in later life who makes an allegation of childhood abuse needs to be delicately balanced. It is not uncommon for survivors of abuse to manifest psychological issues as a result of previous abuse or social economic issues they endured throughout life, either as children or in other stages of their life. It is easy for members of society and a community to brand survivors of abuse who speak out as liars and untruthful, in particular when mental health issues may be readily apparent. This is why many survivors choose never to come forward.

Likewise, it can be difficult when the person accused of an activity is deceased and those attempting to verify facts or events are unable to speak with the subject accused of the allegations. The reverse can then occur for the reputation of the alleged deceased abuser.

It is not uncommon in childhood cases of abuse for confabulation of events to occur due to the age of the child at the time of the event and the passage of time and for victims to be survivors of multiple abuses inside the family unit and community throughout the years. This all has to be considered.

In some instances, no conclusions of fact can be determined even after exhaustive investigation steps are taken.

In spite of the aforementioned, the author of this report believes that all alleged victims of sexual violence should be taken seriously and there is a social responsibility to assist alleged survivors in a healing process.

CONCLUSIONS

During the course of our investigation, three alleged complainants were identified despite KIAG noting from news media coverage it reviewed that as many as 20 individuals had come forward to members of a community protest group that had formed following the May 2021 Kamloops discovery. To date, none of the alleged seventeen additional victims have come forward, nor have they been identified if they exist. The designated spokesperson for the protest group has not participated, despite repeated requests by KIAG.

Of the three complainants identified, one refused to participate despite being public with news media about the allegations in the summer and fall of 2021. As a result, KIAG cannot offer an opinion regarding this person's allegations as they relate to Father Leon Lajoie, S.J. beyond what other witnesses have advised us.

Two of the alleged victims did participate. One of the alleged victim's allegations date back to when that person was six years of age. The individual has been subjected to extreme emotional and physical abuse throughout their life. It is conceivable that this person's childhood memories have been subject to various degrees of confabulation. For reasons known to KIAG investigators that cannot be shared publicly, we believe based on the balance of probabilities, that the allegations from this individual as it pertains to Father Lajoie are not substantiated.

The third complainant disclosed being the victim of a sexual assault at St. Francis-Xavier Mission when that individual was likely between the ages of 8-11 years of age and would have occurred between 1976 and 1979. This individual had no association with the Church or Mission. KIAG supports a Finding of Fact that this individual was the victim of a serious sexual assault on one occasion at St. Francis-Xavier Mission during that time period. Although the victim currently identifies Father Lajoie as the perpetrator for reasons uncovered during the course of our investigation and based on the balance of probability, KIAG does not support the position that Father Leon Lajoie, S.J. was the perpetrator of this incident. Notwithstanding, the St. Francis-Xavier Mission and its staff were under the supervision of the Jesuit Province of French Canada during this time period. KIAG has made recommendations for support of this person by the Jesuits of Canada and the Kahnawà:ke community.

Witnesses did express and provide limited background on three individuals associated to St. Francis-Xavier Mission that had been suspected of child related abuse in the period circa 1950-1970. KIAG has not had the opportunity to investigate the activities of these individuals to its fullest extent to date due to the hastened timelines for this phase of the investigation to be completed and reported on. We draw attention to these individuals only for the purposes of the possibility of mistaken identity by any of the existing complainants.

The conclusions to date by KIAG, subject to any further information and as presented in our detailed report do not currently support any allegation of childhood sexual abuse by Father Leon Lajoie, S.J. in Kahnawà:ke during the period between 1956-1990.