

Historic Sault Ste. Marie Métis Council

Policy Name: Heritage Centre Bell Ringing Policy

Adopted: Mar. 18 2025

Review Period: As Required

- Historically, Métis communities would often mark special occasions with the ringing of their local church bells.
- Bells would be rung for funerals, announcing the death of community members.
- The original Sacred Heart Church in Sault Ste. Marie was built by the Métis community in the 1840s, and a small bell was used by this church. In 1904, a new bell was installed in the bell tower of the Cathedral which replaced the original church.
- In Sault Ste. Marie, Joseph “Joe the Bell” Boissoneau was known to have been responsible for ringing the bell at the Precious Blood, formerly Sacred Heart Church.
- The Sault Ste. Marie Métis Heritage Centre is located in the former St. John’s Anglican Church which is home to a church bell.

The Historic Sault Ste. Marie Métis Council (“Community Council”) adopts the following protocol for the ringing of “The Bell”

- The Bell will be rung at midnight of December 31 to ring in the New Year.
 - (rung quickly and jubilantly)
- The Bell will be rung each year on October 21 marking the date in 1850 when the Sault Ste. Marie Métis Community petitioned the Crown to protect their River Lots homes, and shall ring once for each year that has passed since this petition has gone unanswered.
 - (rung slowly and solemnly)
- The Bell will be rung on each year on Sept. 19th to commemorate the anniversary of the Sault Ste. Marie Métis Community’s victory in *R. v Powley*.
 - (rung quickly and jubilantly)
- The Bell will be rung to signify the start of the fall harvest season.
 - (rung quickly and jubilantly)
- The Bell will be rung to acknowledge the death of any community member who has made a significant contribution to the community. The Community Council executive, or Regional Councilor may decide when and for whom the bell shall ring.
 - The bell will toll one stroke for each year of the deceased’s life (rung slowly and solemnly)
 - The obituary of the deceased shall be posted in the Heritage Centre and recorded in a memory book to be maintained in the Heritage Centre, which shall record all the occasions on which the bell is rung.
 - Métis Nation citizens can request the bell to be rung on the occasion of or the anniversary of the death of another community member by contacting the Community Council.
- The Bell will be rung on such special occasions and anniversaries as the Council sees fit.

- Requests to have the bell rung can be sent to the Historic Sault Ste. Marie Métis Council via any member of Council or Staff.
- For additional information contact the Historic Sault Ste. Marie Métis Council.