

Former priest guilty of sex charge

BY TREVOR McNALLY

CAMPBELLTON ► Former Dalhousie priest Charles Jean Picot was found guilty of indecent assault arising out of an incident that happened more than 30 years when he appeared to hear verdict in his case in Campbellton Provincial Court May 5.

Picot was charged with committing the offence on John Derek Lapointe some time between Jan. 1 1978 and Dec. 31, 1978. Picot had been a priest at St. Jean Baptiste Roman Catholic Church in Dalhousie.

Judge Ronald LeBlanc ruled that the testimony of the victim, 46-year-old John Derek Lapointe, who was 14 or 15 at the time of the assault, was too detailed and more believable than Picot's testimony during the trial held earlier this year.

Picot was found guilty of sexually touching Lapointe in August 1977 in a room in the presbytery of the church where Picot was a priest. He had met Lapointe through the Scouting movement, in which Picot was involved.

Lapointe, who asked the court not to place a publication ban on his name, had testified that he had met Picot while a scout. Picot had invited him into the rectory of the church, where they listened to the *Saturday Night Fever* album. Picot sat Lapointe on his lap and shortly thereafter put his hand down the front of Lapointe's pants and groped the boy.

During the trial earlier this year, Picot's lawyer Gilles Lemieux questioned Lapointe's credibility, based on the time period when Lapointe had originally said the offence had taken place. Picot was supposedly away from the area during the time in question.

This led to procedural wrangling between Lemieux and Crown Prosecutor François Doucet. LeBlanc refused the Crown's request to reopen its case, but allowed the dates in the charge to be amended. LeBlanc then reserved his decision.

Rendering his verdict on Thursday, LeBlanc said that even though Lapointe had some memory issues, the fact he could so clearly remember the day in question while Picot could not recall vivid details was the turning point.



Former Dalhousie priest Charles Picot walks outside the Campbellton Provincial Courthouse with two female supporters during a court appearance earlier this year. He was convicted of indecent assault on Thursday for an incident that occurred in 1978. (Trevor McNally/Tribune)

whether the incident took place or not said LeBlanc.

When LeBlanc announced that Picot was guilty, the accused sat motionless in the third row with a pair of supporters.

He will return to court on July 22 for sentencing, which will allow time for the preparation of a pre-sentence report and victim impact statement.

Picot was acquitted in March, 2010 of committing an almost identical indecent assault on another boy, in the same rectory, in 1975. That verdict was appealed to the New Brunswick Court of Appeal, which has not yet rendered its decision. In the 1990s he served seven months in jail for sexual assault and indecent assault arising out of incidents which occurred in Bathurst while he was a priest there.